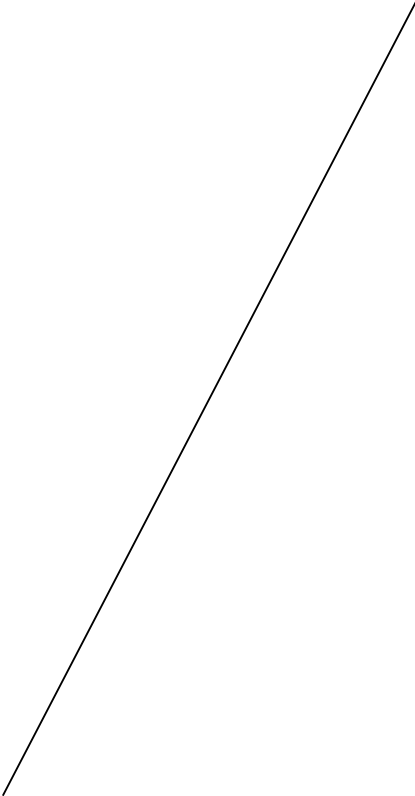
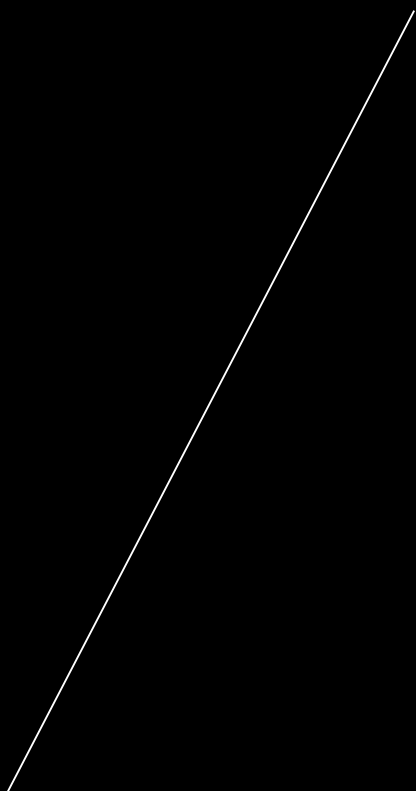


Records Ruin the Landscape



DAVID GRUBBS



RECORDS RUIN THE LANDSCAPE

John Cage, the Sixties, and Sound Recording

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The rejected chapters have taken over. For a long time it was as though only the most patient scholar or the recording angel himself would ever interest himself in them. Now it seems as though that angel had begun to dominate the whole story: he who was supposed only to copy it all down has joined forces with the misshapen, misfit pieces that were never meant to go into it but at best to stay on the sidelines so as to point up how everything else belonged together, and the resulting mountain of data threatens us.

—JOHN ASHBERRY, "The System" (1972)

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Preface

What does it mean to come to know a period through its recordings? What does it mean to know a period through the recorded artifacts of composers and musicians who largely disdained recordings?

An early impulse to write this book came from observing how listeners' understandings of experimental and avant-garde music from the 1960s change on the basis of access to sound recordings. Simply put, what circulates in recorded form at a given time helps to delineate a historical landscape of musical activity. But for many practitioners of experimental music from the 1960s, sound recordings register as an odd, counterintuitive object of study. I encountered this firsthand when discussing the project with a number of musicians, composers, and producers who came of age in the 1960s, most of whom remain of the opinion that audio recordings are at best curiously incomplete representations of their efforts.

I was born in the late 1960s, and I often gravitate toward music created in that decade. Fundamental to my interest in music from this period is the challenge of understanding that part of the past that lies just beyond memory's reach. My fascination with the recent but experientially inaccessible past found its first and most enduring subject in the popular music of the 1960s. From an early age, I felt that I knew the pop music of this time through an itinerary of its landmark albums and singles, and through arranging these recordings on an increasingly detailed time line. If your passion centers on pop music from the 1960s, it becomes second nature to know by date particular albums or songs or events in the careers of the Beatles or the Rolling Stones or Bob Dylan or James Brown. It begins with the release dates of iconic recordings: *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in the summer of 1967, *Blonde on Blonde* in the summer of 1966, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" and "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" in the

summer of 1965. Or the first stirrings of the Velvet Underground, or the deaths of John Coltrane, Brian Jones, Albert Ayler, and Jimi Hendrix.

My own strongest, most formative experiences with culture had to do with objects set adrift, obscure recordings randomly encountered. A primary appeal of records had to do with transcending age and geography. As a teenager in Louisville, Kentucky, in the early 1980s—and with few opportunities to see live music that I truly cared about—I immersed myself in fanzines and punk and post-punk records pressed on tiny, often one-off labels. When you're a high school fanzine editor, it's extraordinary what simply shows up in your mailbox: anarchist literature, Situationist-inspired altered comics, micro-sized literary magazines, fussily handwritten broadsheets, and obsessive reportage of one local punk scene after another, to the point where all of these dispatches could come to seem the stuff of fiction, were you not holding a *record*—the potentially enlightening, potentially misleading record—in your pulse-quicken hands.

The objectness of the record was crucial. Chief among reasons for this is, as the British post-punk group the Fall put it, “repetition, repetition, repetition.” I needed those multiple listens, those toe- and footholds. I needed repeated listens to decide whether Public Image Ltd’s “Death Disco” single—an unsettling listening experience for an adolescent—was supposed to be played at 45 or at 33⅓ rpm. I eventually recognized that “Death Disco” was intended to be played at 45 rpm, but John Lydon’s brays and howls were that much more inexplicable and that much more animal, and the already-dominant bass that much more satisfying, when the song was dragged down to 33⅓. Public Image Ltd’s single was not the only one for which I was uncertain about the ostensibly correct playing speed. I needed repetition, repetition, repetition to make sense of various instructive examples of what at first blush passed as formless, unvectored noise but which eventually resolved itself into something with memorable, recognizable details—with aural breadcrumbs and semisecure grips suggesting musical form. If particular records created first impressions of randomness, of scatterings—mystifying randomness of intent, mystifying randomness of execution, mystifying purpose in opting to send this recording out into the world, and ultimate mystification that it found its way to my mailbox—then subsequent spins, whether at the intended speed or not, helped to clear the fog and to make apparent abstruse musical patterns.

A hypothetical practitioner of one of the kinds of 1960s experimental music that I'm addressing in this book might say that my mistake was to press forward, through repetitions, endeavoring to accrue meanings. Why not leave things well enough? This individual might argue that the first listen, disorienting or not, is the experience that will always be the richest, and the most true to the spirit of the work. As the improvising guitarist Derek Bailey mused, "If you could only play a record *once*, imagine the intensity you'd have to bring into the listening."¹

Beyond repeated listening, a second attraction for me to the record was its compound, multidisciplinary character. It was never only about music. The record presented itself as a medium for sound, but also as a medium for text, art, design, and a general confrontation with the world. At the time its relative cheapness to produce — as well as the existence of an engaged community of peers ready and willing to buy the thing — made the record an expressive medium with bracing democratic potential. Most of the self-produced records that began to arrive in my mailbox in the early 1980s indeed were exceptionally multidisciplinary, by which I mean that the artist who wrote and performed the music was also likely to be the artist who started and ran the record label, wrote the press release, designed the record's artwork, perhaps folded or glued the cover, stuck the cover in a plastic sleeve, addressed the envelope, purchased and licked the stamps, and stood in line at the post office. The handwriting on the cardboard mailer announced itself as part of the selfsame artistic project that included the music.

My experiences are not uncommon among people of my generation, for whom recordings — primarily in their material form as singles, LPs, cassettes, and compact discs — have served as a widely available means of time travel as well as an introduction to geography and the found object. That's why it has always intrigued me to encounter the more extreme negative period attitudes toward recording among creators of experimental and avant-garde music in the 1960s. It is an attitude that is so different from my own, and from that of so many curious, sympathetic, hungry listeners for whom seeking out new musical experiences or broadening their cultural knowledge through recorded sound has been one of the most powerful through lines in their lives.

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As much as I was introduced to diverse and far-flung musics through records, these same records steered me toward living in larger cities, and in turn toward live performance. Suddenly, the need to transcend place through recordings — as I had felt growing up in Kentucky — did not seem as crucial.

When I moved to Chicago in 1990, a number of concerts of free jazz and improvised music spun me around and thoroughly engaged my imagination. This string of stellar live performances vividly impressed upon me the reasons so many musicians judge recordings insufficient to the task of representing their practice, and I came to understand better why an earlier generation of avant-garde musicians placed such a premium on live performance.

Like many others, I was first attracted to free jazz and improvised music through some of the most abstract, otherworldly recordings of Sun Ra and his Arkestra. I could make very little sense of them on first encounter. With albums such as *Nothing Is* and *It's After the End of the World*, repeated listens often had the quality of hearing this music for the first time.² Cacophonous group interjections appeared as unique events. As with my first encounters with records of idiosyncratic post-punk, I found the music of Sun Ra from this period difficult to revisit mentally. I simply had to listen again. One major difference between the two styles was that music that is largely improvised brings with it an implicit demand, per Derek Bailey, that you attend to a first listening with maximum focus — just as the musicians themselves are hearing the music for the first time while playing it. By contrast, much post-punk owes its counterintuitive quality to rough musicianship, raw editing and overdubbing, and accidents of an especially in-the-studio nature.

Spending time at concerts of improvised music, I was excited by music that appeared to flow through its players. I understood these sounds as oscillating between the noncomposed and that which is composed in real time through wordless negotiation. I loved what this music, in performance, did to my experience of time. It swore to never repeat. The real-time aspect of improvised music — where the length or scale of the piece isn't known in advance — proved to be an invigorating counterpoint to listening to recordings of improvisations.

Much of what had seemed inexplicable about improvised music on record—especially combinations of musicians in which each player exhibits a high degree of autonomy, and where certain types of sonic concatenations owe largely to chance and unforeseen collisions—gradually melted away as I became more familiar with the processes by which this music was often created. There were long-standing groups and musical partnerships, such as the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), founded in 1965, and there were fleeting first-time and perhaps last-time encounters between musicians, as was often the case when improvisers from out of town performed with Chicago's steadily expanding pool of players. There were performances that bore the marks of high musicianship and years of dedication, and there were sometimes equally thrilling seat-of-the-pants, scrappy, smoke-pouring-out-of-ears (brains locking gears, failing) performances by much younger players who seemed just as surprised as anyone else by the unplanned musical outcomes. There were intriguing hybrid encounters when vastly more seasoned, more confident, and more versatile musicians shared the stage with bold, occasionally terrified neophytes—meetings that were all the more compelling by virtue of awkward musical seams and joints and odd matches displayed front and center. There were performances that used experimental systems of notation or agreed-upon verbal road maps, and there were performances in which you could imagine that the players shunned both advance planning and Monday-morning quarterbacking. There were performances with both feet unmistakably in a jazz lineage; there were performances for which the operative context was the mode of improvised music pioneered more recently by players such as the British musicians Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, and Paul Lytton; and there were performances where these overlapping traditions of improvisation were extended, subverted, and caught unawares by younger musicians equally conversant in experimental rock and electronic music.

I am certain that my taking to improvised music in performance in the early 1990s was in part a reaction to purchasing a CD player and beginning to acclimate myself to living with music in digital form. The fact of becoming more cognizant of music measured in clock time made live performances of improvised music increasingly appealing. When listening at home I suddenly had the experience of knowing the exact duration of a piece of music. Previously I would have rounded off a given duration in

my head, if I even thought to quantify the length of a piece. A pop song lasted three minutes; an early rock and roll song said what it needed to say in two minutes; and an album side ran between fifteen and twenty-five minutes. That was all there was to it: the basic units of recorded-music measurement.

The digital display of time on a CD player was an entirely new experience. In retrospect, it's not as distressing as the omnipresent timeline in software such as iTunes, through which you can tell from the most cursory and innocent of glimpses how much is water under the bridge and how much is yet to come. With the CD player's time display, actual effort (pushing a button) was required to view both the time elapsed and the time remaining in a piece of music. Even stranger was the previously unimaginable seventy-four-minute slice of uninterrupted sound.

One of the initial consequences of the CD player was a propensity to have music playing in the background, always. The CD player was only fractionally as demanding of one's attention as the increasingly needy-seeming turntable. Once you cleared the creepy hurdle of getting used to "digital black"—recorded silences on CD being an altogether different creature than vinyl LPs' louder, more textured silences—the reward was a greater dynamic range, the upshot of which is that it became possible to listen to more radically quiet music. One could listen to recordings of works by Morton Feldman and not have the troubling suspicion that there were sounds buried in an LP's grooves that the needle failed to uncover, faint attacks obscured by a brush fire of surface noise. But as listening became a more rationalized experience through the digital time display and a more ambient experience through the longer, uninterrupted playthroughs of quieter, more abstract music, concerts began to make stronger claims on my imagination. I was ready for music in which my experience of time was more subjective and more immersive, and in which I found myself confronted with an imperative to listen deeply.

I recall the shock that I experienced upon first hearing Morton Feldman's music in performance. At the time I had been familiar with his music through recordings. Feldman's death in 1987 was followed by a tremendous quantity of commercially released recordings of his music, such that by the beginning of the present century more than forty full-length CDs of Feldman's work were in print. Digital audio—all of those CDs with their broad dynamic ranges and running times upwards of seventy

minutes — unquestionably played a role in expanding Morton Feldman's listenership.³ In spite of caveats appended to recordings of his work such as "A lower volume setting will produce a more realistic sound level," I had not experienced Feldman's uniquely hushed music as being radically quiet.⁴ That is, until I heard Steffen Schleiermacher play one of Feldman's late piano pieces at DePaul University at the close of a program dedicated to the music of Stefan Wolpe and his students. I was seated in the second row, and yet I had the sensation that the individual tones from the piano were doing their damndest to travel all that way, and arriving in a state of collapse from the nearly insurmountable distance from the back of the stage. The previous works in the concert had me leaning back in my seat. The Feldman piano piece had me pitched forward, straining to listen, suddenly aware of the exact physical distance between performer and listener; aware of the space of the performance, both sonically and visually; aware of the concentration exercised by individual listeners around me; and awake to the possibilities of music with profoundly quiet dynamics.⁵ Much as I had appreciated recordings of Morton Feldman's work, this was an encounter with his music that could only have occurred in the space of the live performance, and in the presence of the performer. The experience stuck with me.

Persuasive arguments can be made that the current availability of an unprecedented amount of recorded music has contributed to a leveling of musical hierarchies. Records were my entrée into multiple musics in Chicago — free improvisation, jazz, country, blues, contemporary composition, electronic music, dub reggae, Javanese gamelan. But even as I was schooling myself in these forms through recordings, the thing that did more to level the hierarchies of genre than filing my LPs in one genre-free alphabetical sequence was to meet, usually through the social space of the performance venue, individuals hailing from diverse musical backgrounds. This proved to be an unanticipated but truly excellent fact of the metropolis. There was value, certainly, in coming to my own conclusion that the pleasure taken in listening to (to use the examples that we'll find in chapter 1, "Henry Flynt on the Air") avant-garde music, country, and blues can't be objectively compared. The fact of meeting skilled jazz players who loved and respected unschooled, ungainly experimental rock, or experimental rock folks who had begun to grapple with contemporary composition, or DJs and record store clerks with an encyclopedic knowledge

of most forms, or classical folks who had a passion for soul and hip-hop (I might be inventing this) was the single thing that most fundamentally altered my relationship to music. I learned that there was no reason for musical life to be lived like a record store, with discrete sections for rock and pop, jazz, blues, soul, hip-hop, oldies, and classical, and the maximum possible separation between the classical and the pop sections.

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But . . . ah, the conversations that we have in record stores. Had.

I recall a conversation with a visual-artist friend in the A-Musik store in Cologne, Germany, probably in 1997 or 1998. I was always a bit jealous that this friend, a painter, seemed to have all the time in the world to listen to music. Musicians don't have that luxury; how can you listen to other people's music when you're trying to create your own? (I suppose that musicians have all the time in the world to look at images.) On previous outings with him to record stores, I was amazed at how quickly he could amass a foot-high stack of vinyl. Cheap albums, expensive albums, legitimate finds, dross. Big-band jazz, funk, industrial music, solo steel-string guitar music. Stuff to lug back to the studio to listen to while working. The main thing that I remember is the rapidity with which he'd suddenly return clutching an armful of albums.

At the time of this conversation, A-Musik was a tiny, meticulously curated basement shop that specialized in the multiple strands of electronic music gathered at the intersection of pop, dance, and experimental musics. It was where remix culture and contemporary composition saw eye to eye — or at least didn't mind sitting shoulder to shoulder. I knew people who frequented A-Musik who were conservatory-trained composers, as well as self-taught musicians who had followed an increasingly familiar trajectory from growing up playing in bands to seeking more ad hoc modes of creating music. A-Musik also had its share of patrons from a third category of music producers — individuals making real strides in the field of electronic music who were loath to identify themselves as musicians, in much the same spirit with which Brian Eno listed his occupation on a British passport application as "non-musician." It wasn't uncommon to see a glazed-over musician emerge from the studio abutting the shop

(actually an apartment with a spare room), seeking human contact and a respite from hours spent scrutinizing and manipulating waveforms on a computer screen. A number of the albums and singles for sale in A-Musik were recorded on the other side of the wall behind the shop's front counter. Homegrown, truly.

Like many record stores, this particular basement iteration of A-Musik was a social space where knowledge was shared through recommending, listening, and discussing. In 1998, when the team of artist Cosima von Bonin and writer Christoph Gurk were asked to program music from Cologne for the Steirischer Herbst festival in Graz, Austria, in lieu of concerts they proposed to curate a series of record stores that in turn would organize their own events and performances. Bonin and Gurk argued that the social space of the record store was fundamental to musical culture in their city, and that people in Graz would learn more about music from Cologne by being able to spend time in a handful of Cologne's more interesting record shops. This simple idea was the basis for the project "4 Plattenläden für Graz" ("Four Record Stores for Graz"). Steirischer Herbst rented commercial space in downtown Graz for a month, and every week a different record store from Cologne representing a different type of music moved its stock and its staff to Graz. One week A-Musik brought abstract electronic music to town—along with the opportunity to observe, browse, query, play, listen, agree, disagree, and play the devil's advocate.

On that afternoon in A-Musik, the painter friend with all the time in the world asked me where he should begin with recordings of John Cage's prepared-piano music. I suggested a recording of Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes* (1946–48), together with the Wergo anthology *Works for Piano and Prepared Piano, Volume I (1943–1952)*.⁶ My rationale was that it would be best to pair *Sonatas and Interludes*, the multiple-movement summation of Cage's writing for prepared piano, with a compilation of earlier, more brief attempts at composing for this instrument of his devising. The friend held one CD in each hand and compared them, looking back and forth as if trying to decide which disc was physically heavier. Finally he returned both CDs to the rack and came back with the second volume of the *Works for Piano and Prepared Piano*.

"I always start with volume two."

As we were leaving the store, he offered an observation that I've since

pondered. “If there were anything for which I’d sell my soul,” said the person leaving the record store with many pounds of vinyl LPs, “it would be to never have to listen to the same album twice.”

I’m glad that he didn’t sell his soul. It turned out to be unnecessary. Just one brief decade after this conversation, anyone with an Internet connection would never have to listen to the same recording twice. And yet, his willingness to contemplate an eternal deal speaks to a fundamental, widespread ambivalence about recorded sound that is expressed by many individuals and in many forms in this book. Repetition has always been experimental musicians’ most fundamental objection to recordings: they are not true to the nature of performance because you can listen again and again. What would it mean to not listen to the same recording twice? What’s the lure of encountering music in recorded form, apart from the possibility of repeated listening? With the record enthusiast who doesn’t want to listen to the same record twice we have the opportunity to describe the encounter with music in recorded form while bracketing the experience of repetition.

The recording brings with it a broad array of benefits — hence the trip to the record store, the conversation that’s structured around particular artists and their recordings, and the exchange of cash for an armful of albums. The recording allows my friend in the example to bring music into his home, and to start and to interrupt it at any time that he wishes, and at nearly any volume that he desires. He can listen to the spare, restrained sonorities of Morton Feldman at the proper volume for Metallica, and he can listen to Metallica at Feldman volume.

The album is stamped with a date — the date or dates of its recording. The album is stamped with a second date — the date of its release. The recording helps to construct a chronology. It participates in multiple chronologies having to do with a given musician’s sequence of compositions and sequence of recordings — of songs, of albums. It also participates in chronologies having to do with a particular genre of music, or of a particular producer or record label, or coming from a particular country, region, city, or neighborhood, or a particular decade, year, month, or day.⁷

The recording allows the listener to experience the representation of a musical performance separated from the time and space of its originating event. The recording allows the listener to experience the representation of a musical performance separate from the physical presence of a performer,

who heretofore had the possibility, at least in theory, of looking the audience member directly in the eye. The audience member has become the listener, no longer a participant, communicant, or even viewer, except in viewing—perhaps studying—the sanctioned images that accompany the recording. In the late 1960s, at the time that the improvising bass player Gavin Bryars was in the process of becoming the composer Gavin Bryars, he felt the need to absent himself from the space of performance. He explained, “The creator is there making the music and is identified with the music and the music with the person. It’s like standing a painter next to his picture so that every time you see the painting you see the painter as well.”⁸

The recording allows the listener a quality of individual, isolated concentration that is lacking in the shared space of performance. Conversely, the recording allows the listener to be as distracted, as not-present as circumstances or temperaments dictate. The experience can be as focused or as diffuse as the listener desires. I never cease to marvel at the breadth of the spectrum that describes acquaintances’ listening practices when it comes to recorded sound. For some, a recording played at home is a distant hue of audio ambience experienced intermittently from two rooms or two floors away, and for others it’s akin to attending a mastering session in a commercial facility, listening with the kind of intensity that you bring to the final audition before a recording is approved and sent to the pressing plant. For some, speakers go where speakers fit: one all the way down here on the lowest level of a bookshelf, partially blocked by a stack of magazines, and one practically touching the ceiling; for others, the listener is meant to sit equidistant from two speakers that are equidistant from one another—the listener occupying the third point of an isosceles triangle.

The recording allows the listener to experience something other than a representation of an integral musical performance. The recording itself is likely to be a representation (a copy) of a representation (a composite) of a musical performance. As a composite, it can consist of fragments of takes edited together horizontally; it can consist of fragments edited together vertically through overdubbing; it can, and is likely to, consist of some combination of fragments pieced together both horizontally and vertically. As a composite, it can consist of superimposed recordings of the same sonic event from multiple sound perspectives; this can be as simple as a pair of stereo microphones deployed to create a stereo image that more or less recognizably represents the space in which the musical performance

occurred, or it can be as complex as a large array of microphones — a variety of different microphones, each selected on the basis of its precise task — aimed at each individual sound source. As a composite, it can include all variety of postproduction; this can be as basic as the perhaps apocryphal tale of a recording engineer's pencil employed in a London studio on May 18, 1964, at the behest of producer Mickie Most to give the analog tape a quick, infinitesimally small tug to momentarily raise and correct the pitch of a flat note in the vocal performance in what was otherwise a keeper of a take of the Animals' version of "The House of the Rising Sun," or it can be as advanced (now, via the bend in space by which complex algorithmic functions are accomplished with simple keystroke commands) as digitally altering the pitch, duration, and placement of sound samples, or of reshaping waveforms through a graphical interface by which they are merely "redrawn." The engineer's pencil has become virtual, a pencil-function.

The recording allows the listener to experience the presentation of a musical or artistic persona, beginning with the artist's name — pseudonymous, collective, or occasionally bestowed at birth — and including the images packaged together with the recording. The recording plays its particular role in the construction of the artist's biography. Is this single album or track the entirety of this artist's recorded legacy? Is it one of dozens or hundreds or even thousands of commercial recordings on which this artist can be heard? Was it the breakthrough or the career-ender, a respectable step forward or an ominous repetition or regression? What percentage of the discography does it constitute? Did the artist double as producer, laboring on both sides of the console? What was the artist's relationship to the record label on which this appeared? Did the bulk of the artist's releases appear on this label, or was this an incongruous one-off? Is this recording a release that was authorized by the artist? Apart from bootlegs, think of Howlin' Wolf's Cadet Concept LP *The Howlin' Wolf Album* (1969), whose cover consists exclusively of the following text, in stark, generic-product black on white:

This is Howlin' Wolf's new album.

He doesn't like it.

He didn't like his electric guitar at first either.⁹

Perhaps the recording deliberately withholds. It can be crafted to reveal precious little about the artist or the context of its production — and there

are countless examples of recordings that are that much more meaningful or affecting on the basis of what they ultimately obscure. Perhaps information about the recording artist is simply not available. The ease of access to information through the Internet has altered the experience of listening to recordings for which historical context was previously more difficult to acquire. This cuts both ways, and historical context can become a casualty of online listening, especially owing to incomplete and often mistaken information attached to audio files circulating on the web. But the web also makes information that much more available regarding obscure recordings that previously were cloaked in an aura of tantalizingly incomplete details. This has been the case with recordings of experimental music, in which an earlier release might have been the sole circulating recording of the work of a particular individual, but now that artist is represented by a lifetime's worth of audio recordings that are easily accessed online.

The recording allows all of these things to happen, even if you sold your soul and never had to listen to the same record twice.

In *Records Ruin the Landscape: John Cage, the Sixties, and Sound Recording*, my purpose is to consider the distance between experimental music in the 1960s and the ways in which this music is experienced at present through the medium of sound recording. I offer the preceding details of my experience as a listener to stress the role that recordings played in my coming to various musics — and also to stress the limitations in attending to certain kinds of musical practice primarily through recordings.

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Introduction

Daniel Charles: Records, according to you,
are nothing more than postcards . . .
John Cage: Which ruin the landscape.
—John Cage and Daniel Charles,
For the Birds

Most genres in experimental and avant-garde music in the 1960s were ill suited to be represented in the form of a recording. These various activities — including indeterminate music, long-duration minimalism, text scores, happenings, live electronic music, free jazz, and free improvisation — were not only predicated on being experienced in live performance, but they can also be said to have actively undermined the form of the sound recording. Music that changes with each performance such that individual realizations cannot necessarily be recognized as a performance of a given work (indeterminate music); music whose unbroken movements — and sometimes unbroken stasis — extend far beyond the twenty-minute length of an LP side (minimalism); music that is probably not best served by the category “music,” and whose instructions take the form of intentionally ambiguous, open-ended, poetic

instructions and descriptions (text scores); music in which a circuitry diagram often assumes greater importance than a written score (live electronic music); and music that dispenses with composition altogether and in some cases is described as a “non-idiomatic” practice (free jazz and free improvisation) — how could these adequately be represented on an LP?

To the extent that one can generalize about multiple practices that are often grouped together with the terms “experimental” and “avant-garde,” this is work intended to be encountered in the time and space of its production, created by individuals whose relationship toward sound recording has ranged from merely uninterested to positively disdainful. I am choosing to use the terms “experimental” and “avant-garde” in the colloquial manner in which they have tended to be used by musicians and listeners from the 1960s forward.¹ In specifying what is experimental about experimental music, a familiar reference point is John Cage’s evocation of “an act the outcome of which is unknown.”² In his short text “Experimental Music,” Cage explains that formerly the term had offended him (“It seemed to me that composers knew what they were doing and that the experiments that had been made had taken place prior to the finished works, just as sketches are made before paintings”), but as his perceptual focus shifted from that of a composer to that of a listener, he found himself adopting it enthusiastically.³

Unlike recordings of works from most other genres of music in the 1960s, comparatively few of the recordings of experimental music that are widely and immediately accessible today — many of which have become canonical representations of this period — circulated at the time they were created. There simply was little in the way of the infrastructure that would later emerge for producing and distributing this decidedly noncommercial work. The sparse number of releases of experimental music that appeared in the 1960s represents an altogether different landscape of musical activity from one that would be recognized by subsequent listeners with access to archival recordings. There are isolated examples of artist-directed record labels in the 1960s, notably two series of LP releases directed by Cage’s colleagues Earle Brown (the Contemporary Sound Series) and David Behrman (Columbia Records’ Music of Our Time), and there was much informed critical writing in the period (often coming from musicians and composers themselves), but there was nothing resembling the scale of contemporary networks of distribution and dissemination for

recordings. To give an example, Pauline Oliveros is a composer whose work is currently available on dozens of commercially released recordings, but before 1970 her music was represented exclusively by her contributions to two Music of Our Time compilation albums: *Extended Voices* and *New Sounds in Electronic Music*.⁴ *Sound Patterns*, her piece on *Extended Voices*, lasts a fleeting four minutes. By contrast, to celebrate Oliveros's eightieth birthday in 2012, Important Records released *Reverberations*, a twelve-CD collection containing more than ten hours of her largely unreleased tape and electronic music from the 1960s, beginning with a 1961 work of *musique concrète* that utilizes recordings made in her bathtub and moving through thirty-four works created at the San Francisco Tape Music Center and early electronic music studios at the University of Toronto, Mills College, and the University of California, San Diego.⁵

The task thus emerges to articulate the conceptual distance between the creation of this music in the 1960s and its historicization and consumption in the present. In *Records Ruin the Landscape*, I have chosen to approach experimental music through the medium of sound recording because when this work is experienced today — unlike the time of its creation — it is most often encountered in the form of a recording. This is not to deny that many of these works (Cage's compositions in particular) are still being performed; rather, it is to emphasize our unprecedented access to recorded materials from this earlier period. Many listeners today are inclined to view these materials as unproblematic representations of experimental music from the 1960s. In *Records Ruin the Landscape*, I consider what it means for contemporary listeners to construct narratives of experimental music in the 1960s through the lens of recordings.

The majority of these recordings currently in circulation were initially made available as archival releases, surfacing years or decades after their date of recording. The first small waves of these archival releases appeared on LPs in the 1970s and 1980s. A more significant number of releases occurred in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s owing to the economics of compact discs, which were inexpensive to produce and which sold for a higher list price than LPs. In the 1990s, nearly every genre of music saw the introduction of reissue labels that specialized in repackaged and remastered releases of out-of-print recordings. This fueled an interest in unreleased archival recordings, and experimental music of the 1960s proved to be a particularly rich, varied, underexplored, and (from the perspective



FIGURE INTRO.1. John Cage and Max Neuhaus celebrating the release of the *Fontana Mix—Feed LP* (Mass Art Inc.), December 29, 1966. Photographer unknown.

of numerous record labels) underexploited trove. The flood of archival releases on compact disc in the 1990s — at the time it seemed like a flood — has since been eclipsed by the number of archival recordings that are available online, whether as purchasable digital files (primarily through artists' and record labels' websites) or, especially, as files made available for streaming or download free of charge (through online resources such as UbuWeb, Archive.org, and countless fan sites and MP3 blogs).

The cost of schooling oneself in the more esoteric music of this period — and doing so with access to a vastly greater range of materials — has plummeted to nothing. Consider the example of recordings of performances by the percussionist and live electronic music pioneer Max Neuhaus. It used to be that if you were interested in Neuhaus's realizations of music

by Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Sylvano Bussotti, Earle Brown, and Morton Feldman, you would have had to pay dearly for an out-of-print copy of his LP *Electronics and Percussion: Five Realizations* (1968) from Columbia Records' Music of Our Time series.⁶ It's a marvel that Neuhaus's work was even represented on a major label; surely this ranks as one of the most abrasive and dynamically extreme records ever released by Columbia. (Neuhaus's performance of Feldman's *The King of Denmark* is aptly and marvelously hushed, and the label did justice to the piece by not significantly raising its volume level in the mastering process.) *Electronics and Percussion* remained out of print until it was reissued on compact disc by Sony Japan in 2003—and thus could be had a bit more cheaply than a vintage

FIGURE INTRO.2. Cover of Max Neuhaus, *Electronics and Percussion: Five Realizations* LP (Columbia Records).



copy of the original LP. In 2003 and 2004, archival releases of previously unissued performances by Neuhaus appeared on three compact discs released by Alga Marghen, an Italian record label that specializes in archival editions of avant-garde music.⁷ Its *Fontana Mix—Feed* CD contains two unreleased performances of Cage's *Fontana Mix* as well as the four performances of *Fontana Mix* that originally appeared on a 1966 LP on the obscure Mass Art Inc. label, whose distribution was considerably more limited than Neuhaus's Columbia LP from two years later.⁸

The result is that instead of there being only the one Cage and one Stockhausen realization on the original *Electronics and Percussion* LP, suddenly there are separate, complete CDs dedicated to six versions of Cage's *Fontana Mix* and four versions of Stockhausen's *Zyklus*. Listeners can now experience an hour's worth of Neuhaus's performances of a single piece. One can imagine that for Cage—that wry, voluble detractor of LPs—this would have been a preferable form for a commercial release: multiple iterations of a single indeterminate composition, showing how the piece varies from performance to performance. (Note that this was the case with the Mass Art Inc. LP release of *Fontana Mix—Feed* [1966], which contains four versions of the piece.) Given Neuhaus's employment in *Fontana Mix—Feed* of contact microphones, loudspeakers, percussion instruments, and—crucially—feedback, these realizations were fundamentally shaped by the physical environment in which they took place. Neuhaus explains:

Although the execution of the score is identical in each of these performances, the actual sounds that make up each realization are completely different as they are determined by which percussion instruments are used, the acoustics of the room and the position of the mikes in relation to the loudspeakers and the instruments at each specific moment. . . . The factors here are so complex that even if the piece were to be performed twice in the same room with the same audience, the same instruments, and the same loudspeakers, it would have completely different sound and structures each time. It seems something alive.⁹

Neuhaus's description is borne out when comparing six recorded versions of the piece executed on an itinerary that ranged from the University of Chicago's Mandel Hall to the University of Madrid to the Cologne Studios of Westdeutscher Rundfunk.

Around the time that Alga Marghen issued its three CDs of Neuhaus

performances, Kenneth Goldsmith's online resource UbuWeb (www.ubu.com) posted for download, free of charge, digital versions of the avant-garde multimedia magazine *Aspen* (one issue of which contains recordings of Neuhaus's performances of *Fontana Mix—Feed* and Feldman's *The King of Denmark*) as well as an MP3 of a previously unreleased, two-hour interactive radio work by Neuhaus entitled *Radio Net*. UbuWeb subsequently posted MP3 files of the Columbia *Electronics and Percussion* LP, and the album has been available for download in that form for nearly a decade. Thus in a few short years Neuhaus's solo percussion and live electronics work went from being represented to a listening public by two LPs that had been out of print for more than three decades—and available only periodically at exorbitant prices—to many times that number of recordings, including multiple realizations of the same composition, some of which are available at no cost to the listener. Max Neuhaus presents us with just one of numerous examples of an artist whose work was represented by a scant few commercially released recordings in the 1960s—if their work saw release at all in that decade; Neuhaus appears moderately well represented on record when compared with others in this period—but for whom archival releases now provide a significantly more detailed and more accessible representation of their musical activities.

Music of Our Time and the Contemporary Sound Series were two of the most prominent means by which listeners encountered experimental and avant-garde music on record in the 1960s. From 1967 until 1970, composer and musician David Behrman produced the Music of Our Time series for Columbia Records and its bargain-priced Odyssey label.¹⁰ As an undergraduate at Harvard in the late 1950s, Behrman met Cage and David Tudor through the composers Frederic Rzewski and Christian Wolff. Behrman is an interestingly polyvalent figure, a pioneer in live electronic music with a day job (to be precise, it began in 1965 as an overnight job) at Columbia Records. His first position at Columbia was as tape editor, and his projects included Robert Craft's recordings of Stravinsky's works as well as recordings by the pianist Glenn Gould. Over the course of Behrman's three years of directing Music of Our Time, he produced recordings of work by, among others, Cage, Feldman, Robert Ashley, Pauline Oliveros, Alvin Lucier, Richard Maxfield, Steve Reich, and Terry Riley, whose *In C* and *A Rainbow in Curved Air* became the most commercially successful releases in the series. The Music of Our Time LPs typically had an initial

shipment of two thousand copies, and most releases sold between three thousand and six thousand copies in their first year.¹¹ These composers had a valuable, unique ally in Behrman. The Music of Our Time performances and productions are consistently inventive and on the mark, the breadth of the series is impressive (of note is its embrace of minimalism), and the records still function as icons of the period. Behrman, however, eventually could foresee the end of his tenure at Columbia: “The economic realities started getting through to me. The people in charge of sales had this term ‘dollar return per cubic foot,’ referring to record stores. That’s about as far away from music as you can get.”¹² Behrman recently summarized this period, remarking, “I hope that spirit of the Sixties can remain with me. Recently Bob Ashley remarked that if he performs a piece of music and if after five minutes the entire audience hasn’t walked out, then he has failed. I thought that was a good expression of protest against the imposition these days of mass tastes by the superstar culture we have to live in.”¹³

The relatively small number of titles produced by Behrman between 1967 and 1970 should be taken as representative of an American avant-garde only in a narrow sense. But as tips of icebergs go, this one is especially sharp and glistening, and the legacy of the Columbia Music of Our Time albums is significant. Even in their out-of-print status, even with increasingly daunting prices for increasingly battered LPs, they serve an important function to the many listeners who come to this music at a later date.

In addition to Music of Our Time, the other most reliable source for experimental and avant-garde music on record at this time was Earle Brown’s Contemporary Sound Series. Brown, together with Cage, Feldman, and Christian Wolff, is primarily known as one of the “New York School” of composers who employed indeterminacy in works dating from the 1950s. Brown’s innovations in notation resulted in compositions that are striking for their use of open form and proportional notation. Brown met Cage in 1951, moved to New York the following year, and became involved in the Project for Music for Magnetic Tape alongside Cage, Tudor, and Louis and Bebe Barron. The project produced Cage’s *Williams Mix* and Brown’s *Octet I*, and the experience of working with tape gave Brown the background he needed to land a job as recording engineer at Capitol Records from 1955 to 1960.¹⁴

From 1960 until 1973, Brown served as producer and A & R (“artist and repertoire”) director for the Contemporary Sound Series, a group of LP re-

leases that first appeared on the Time record label, and were subsequently reissued when the project resumed on Mainstream Records. Between 1961 and 1963, Brown produced ten Contemporary Sound Series albums for Time that include works by Cage, Feldman, Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel, Luigi Nono, Luciano Berio, Lou Harrison, Christian Wolff, and Brown himself. The releases highlight both American and European avant-gardes, and while lacking the distribution of Columbia's Music of Our Time, the Contemporary Sound Series albums were renowned not only for Brown's sure curatorial hand but also for their excellent productions, comprehensive liner notes, and adroitly designed gatefold sleeves.

In 1970, Mainstream reissued the original ten Contemporary Sound Series albums, and from 1970 to 1973, Brown produced an additional eight LPs for the series. (Mainstream also produced jazz albums and the sorts of kitschy, difficult-to-classify, absurdist hi-fi demonstration records that—unlike the Contemporary Sound Series albums—can still be found at most any thrift store.)¹⁵ Each of the Contemporary Sound Series albums on Mainstream contains a straightforward thematic focus, encapsulated in such titles as *New Music for Piano(s)*, *New Music from London*, and *New Music from South America for Chamber Orchestra*.¹⁶ Two of the most important, unprecedented releases that appeared in the revived series on Mainstream are *Live Electronic Music Improvised*, which apportions one side each to AMM and MEV (*Musica Elettronica Viva*), and *Electric Sound*, which collects works by the Sonic Arts Union: Alvin Lucier, Robert Ashley, Gordon Mumma, and David Behrman.¹⁷ Mainstream Records ceased operations in 1978, and the Contemporary Sound Series titles went out of print for two decades, until the German Wergo label began reissuing the complete eighteen-LP series in three-CD anthologies in 2009.

When asked recently about experimental music on record in the 1960s, composer Tony Conrad reached back across the decades and provided valuable context: "LPs or 45s or whatever were so removed from my worldview in the early Sixties that they were almost irrelevant. . . . It was almost a miracle, in that sense, to find that an actual LP of Stockhausen came on the market. Or that an LP of Ali Akbar Khan came on the market. Today that seems very quaint, but at that time it was really fascinating."¹⁸ Conrad recalled owning recordings of Arnold Schoenberg's music that appeared on Dial Records in the early 1950s, as well as hearing but not

owning Robert Ashley's *The Wolfman*, which was released by the journal *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde* on a ten-inch disc in 1966.¹⁹ Emphasizing the scarcity of experimental music on record, he concluded, "Most of the recordings that I became involved with and that I cherished were pop music recordings that had to do with just what was on the radio. I found that stuff initially very hard to like. It was a big challenge to like easy listening. That was probably the hardest thing that I ever overcame. In a specific sense I set about that effort to learn to like this or that in response to my reading—in quotes—of Cage."²⁰

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A number of musicians that I've spoken to about this project acknowledged with reluctance the fact that much of their musical activity in the 1960s would be known through the medium of the recording. I repeatedly heard that this was not the spirit in which the music was made, nor in which the recordings were undertaken. Instead of being the most important outcome of a musical activity, recordings were often made for hire, as documents of group dynamics or of fleeting encounters, as a means of getting gigs, and perhaps eventually to sell at gigs. Keith Rowe, longtime member of the British free improvisation group AMM, summed up, "I think we took that quite seriously as an AMM idea, that recordings were really undesirable."²¹

If composers and performers in this period tended to hold sound recordings in low esteem, John Cage set the standard for antipathy toward commercially released recordings of musical works. Cage's disdain for records was legendary. He claimed not to have any in his home and repeatedly spoke of the ways in which records were antithetical to his work. In 1985, he told an interviewer, "I don't use records, and I give the example of someone who lives happily without records." He went on to describe records as "destroy[ing] one's need for real music. [They] make people think that they're engaging in a musical activity when they're actually not."²² Cage's position cannot be written off as the irritable affectations of an older composer; on January 17, 1950, he wrote in a letter to Pierre Boulez, "I am starting a society called 'Capitalists Inc' (so that we will not be accused of being Communists); everyone who wants to join has to show he has destroyed

not less than 100 discs of music or one sound recording device; also everyone who joins automatically becomes President.”²³

Cage’s disparagement of records is complicated by a number of basic facts about his career. He was one of the first composers to work in the medium of magnetic tape; he was an early and influential theorist of tape opening up a total field of sound (in the performance text “45’ for a Speaker” [1954], he notes, “The most enlivening thing / about magnetic tape is this: whether we actually do it or not, everything / we do do, say what we’re doing, is affected radically, / by it”); he was a pioneer of using records in performances; he participated in recordings of his works, both as a performer and as a supervisor; and even after his death in 1992, his works are sufficiently amenable to the medium of recorded sound to make him one of the most widely recorded composers of the twentieth century.²⁴

On the one hand Cage’s opposition to the fixed form of the record, the tedium of the medium, could not be more straightforward. It is the expression of a pioneer of works that are indeterminate as regards performance, works that on the basis of their design change significantly with each iteration — except when they are instantiated in the form of a recording. One fundamental objection: records don’t change. Cage viewed sound recording (the revelation of magnetic tape for him being the potential of working with all sound) and *records* (as objects, as commodities, and above all as fixed representations of musical works) as fundamentally different entities.²⁵ For Cage, magnetic tape and commercially released records served a shared purpose only when treated as a means of manipulating sound, whether through editing and superimposing magnetic tape or through collaging and overlaying multiple records in performance. Later on in the present book we will see what Derek Bailey meant when he said in an interview, “Recording’s fine if it wasn’t for fucking records.”²⁶ It’s difficult to imagine Cage expressing himself in precisely these words, although the sentiment might have been much the same.

But one also would have expected Cage to acknowledge the potential embodied by the record as a medium of communication across geographic distances, to say nothing of time. Cage was an exceptional, tireless correspondent and a cheerfully committed internationalist who maintained a vast network of contacts. This is the person whose second collection of writings, *A Year from Monday*, is dedicated “To us and all those who hate

us, that the U.S.A. may become just another part of the world, no more, no less.”²⁷

Cage demonstrated his dislike of records — and his contention that his work is antithetical to the form of the record — in an instructive written exchange in March 1967 with Wesleyan University Press production editor Raymond M. Grimaila. Grimaila’s proposed cover design for *A Year from Monday* features a circular pattern with concentric rings that looks like a stylized representation of an LP. In a letter to Cage accompanying the mock-up, he explains, “As you can see, I am alluding to music and sound by having the graphic design suggest a record jacket.” Cage’s response could not be more characteristic: “I can see that the jacket design is interesting, but I think the direction taken is not in the spirit of my work which is relatively speaking asymmetrical and unfocused. This wd. work for La Monte Young. I would like (seriously) the book title, the line NEW LECTURES AND WRITINGS BY and my signature printed boldly in three different type faces over (preferably) a map of Mexico or over a calendar for the year 1967 or 8 or 1972 (the end of the present critical period) or 2000.”²⁸

Records may not change, but they do travel. The record allows for the distribution of organized as well as disorganized sound. The record, unlike the conventionally notated musical score, presents itself as the dream medium for the type of individuals that the British composer Cornelius Cardew described as “people who by some fluke have . . . escaped a musical education and . . . have nevertheless become musicians, i.e. play music to the full capacity of their beings.”²⁹ The record is the medium where the dichotomies of musician/nonmusician and professional/amateur lose force — except when reasserted for the frisson of crudeness, for reveling in the status of the profoundly amateur or the strikingly nonmusical. However, lest the preceding quotation would lead you to believe that Cardew himself was writing appreciatively of sound recordings, note that later in the same essay he argues, regarding improvisation, “Documents such as tape-recordings of improvisation are essentially empty, as they preserve chiefly the form that something took and give at best an indistinct hint as to the feeling and cannot of course convey any sense of time and place.”³⁰

From the perspective of a number of composers and musicians from this period, it could well seem that, as in the excerpt from John Ashbery’s prose poem “The System” (1972), which provides this book’s epigraph,

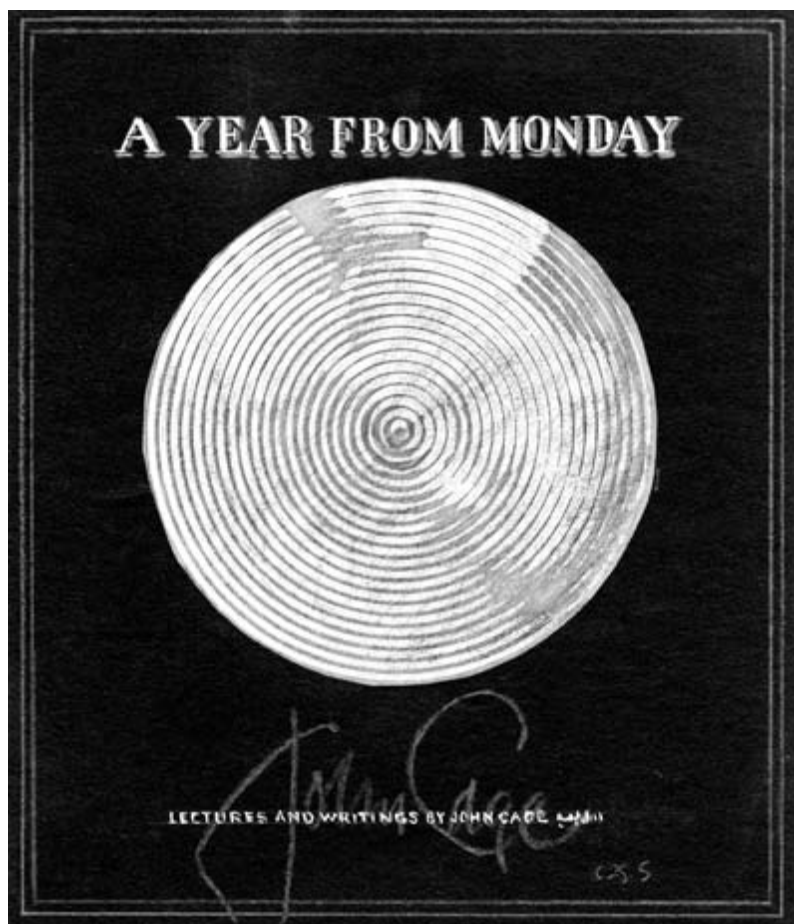


FIGURE INTRO.3. Raymond Grimaila's rejected book cover design for John Cage's *A Year from Monday* (Wesleyan University Press), March 1967. John Cage Correspondence, Northwestern University Library Music Library, Evanston, Illinois, Box 7, Folder 1, Sleeve 2. Courtesy Northwestern University Library and Wesleyan University Press.

“the rejected chapters have taken over.” Recordings that were not previously central to the tale have increasingly become the content of the telling as well as the medium by which it is told. The angel that, in Ashbery’s poem, has “begun to dominate the whole story” stands revealed as the Recording Angel, and the “resulting mountain of data [that] threatens us” seems, at present, more or less self-explanatory.

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Chapter 1, “Henry Flynt on the Air,” considers the idiosyncratic composer and musician Henry Flynt as an emblematic figure for this study as a whole. Apart from an obscure cassette released in West Germany in 1986, Flynt’s music did not see commercial release until the turn of the twenty-first century. Starting in 2001, several independent record labels quickly published ten compact discs of archival recordings of Flynt’s self-described “avant-garde hillbilly music,” but prior to these releases listeners interested in the history of 1960s musical avant-gardes knew Flynt primarily as an intriguingly enigmatic footnote.

“Henry Flynt on the Air” argues that successive generations have come to view musical genres and hierarchies in more fluid and less genuflective ways, and that this is due in part to listeners’ unprecedented access to recordings. In 1961, some of the remaining scales fell from the young musician Henry Flynt’s eyes when he realized that John Cage was proud of his ignorance of popular music. Four decades later, in a 2004 radio interview, Flynt sounds particularly surprised to hear WFMU DJ Kenneth Goldsmith say, “Nobody thinks twice about listening to country, blues, and avant-garde music today. It’s quite natural to like everything.”³¹ In the radio conversation with Goldsmith, Flynt speaks from experience when he takes it as a given that most people who admire the music of John Cage or Karlheinz Stockhausen would have little interest in blues, jazz, rock, or various kinds of country music. But Goldsmith also speaks from experience when he argues that the current audience for experimental and avant-garde music takes pleasure in a significantly broader range of musical styles than was true in the early 1960s, when an active hostility to folk and pop forms compelled Flynt to protest the orthodoxies of avant-garde music.³² The three-hour WFMU radio broadcast with Flynt can now be downloaded as an MP3 file from UbuWeb. The ease of access to this recording

illustrates a simple fact that undergirds *Records Ruin the Landscape*: music that was accessible only to small, geographically concentrated groups of individuals in the 1960s can now be heard by what would have been an incomprehensibly broad, dispersed audience.

John Cage stands as the most influential figure for the various stripes of experimentalism covered in this project. A signature challenge for a number of younger composers and musicians in this period was to move beyond Cage's legacy, and this was true of artists involved in Fluxus, minimalism, live electronic music, and free improvisation. Chapter 2, "Landscape with Cage," delineates the space around Cage at this time—his curious celebrity—as it details the numerous fields and practices that had their moment of coming to his work in the 1960s. The first half of the chapter presents an overview of these various disciplines in which one discovers all manner of responses to Cage's example. In addition to music, the presence of Cage's work can be felt in, among other fields, visual art, poetry, dance, and philosophy. In the second half of the chapter, I look closely at a single work that creatively engages with Cage's legacy: Luc Ferrari's tape piece *Presque rien ou le lever du jour au bord de la mer* (Almost Nothing, or Daybreak at the Seaside; 1967–70). This work of aural landscape is of particular relevance to *Records Ruin the Landscape* as its conversation with Cage is enacted on the terrain of recorded sound.

John Cage fulminated against records. He would not have them in his home. Still, he continued to make them. Chapter 3, "John Cage, Recording Artist," considers the impact that Cage's commercially released albums had on a generation that began producing work in the 1960s. What role did records play in making John Cage the figure he was to become in the 1960s? How were his works disseminated in this period? What innovations resulted from his attempts to overcome the fixed medium of the record? What did Cage's listeners get that his readers did not? This chapter describes the significance of three of his albums: *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage*, *Indeterminacy*, and *John Cage / Christian Wolff*. While stylistically and strategically all over the map, these albums have proved particularly influential—even as Cage expressed ambivalence toward the medium of recorded sound.

In "John Cage, Recording Artist," Cage's attitudes toward recording are analyzed in the context of chance as it has been postulated with photography, sound recording, and cinema. The experience of chance in moder-

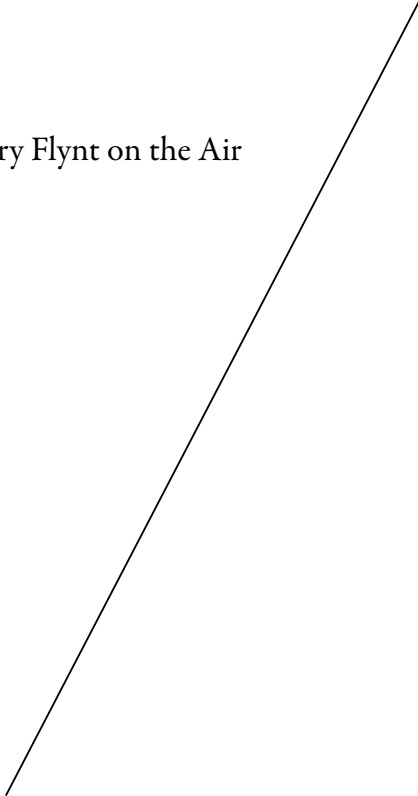
nity has frequently been invoked with reference to these media, and indexical modes of representation such as these have been seen as ideal to the task of representing chance. Sound recording captures the error and the otherwise-unrepeatable, and recordings make accidents happen. Beyond a period of fascination with magnetic tape, why didn't Cage, with his interest in chance, nonintentionality, technological innovation, and sound as such, gravitate toward these phenomena in recordings of musical works?

In chapter 4, "The Antiques Trade: Free Improvisation and Record Culture," John Cage finds a match for his wit in the person of guitarist Derek Bailey. Cage and Bailey are an unlikely pair to contemplate—the composer and the improviser; comings-of-age in the south of California and the north of England; the student of Schoenberg and the dance-band jazz guitarist who took to Webern; the score-maker and the score-ignorer; the contemplative advocate of silence—and conversely of all sound—and the contemplative advocate of a lifetime of mastering a single instrument. Cage and Bailey, polarizers both, are influential figures who could always be counted on to provide withering words about encountering their work in recorded form. And yet they are both among the most widely recorded artists in their fields—fields largely of their creations.

In "The Antiques Trade," Derek Bailey's efforts are considered alongside those of AMM, the pioneering, still-extant free-improvisation group that was founded in 1965 and that has included Eddie Prévost, Keith Rowe, Cornelius Cardew, and John Tilbury among its members. AMM is a group that once described its music as "apparently unsuited to mechanical reproduction."³³ Like Henry Flynt, AMM plays an intriguing role with regard to the fringes of popular music of the 1960s. In this chapter, I trace the history of AMM's album *AMMMusic* (1966), taking into account the group members' subsequent writings about free improvisation and sound recording, especially in the context of the release decades later of an expanded version of *AMMMusic* on compact disc.

Chapter 5, "Remove the Records from Texas: Online Resources and Impermanent Archives," considers the dramatic change in access to archival recordings that has taken place through the online dissemination of digital files. In this chapter, I argue that online resources have begun to affect the very category of the archive, and I provide analyses of two particularly influential and structurally distinct online resources. The first of these is DRAM (originally the Database of Recorded American Music), a subscription-

based project that is rigorous in securing permissions for its holdings. Its forty thousand tracks are available as streaming audio; it charges a subscription fee, but the site is funded primarily through grants from institutions. DRAM can be seen as an extension into the digital domain of an ambitious series of LPs produced in the mid-1970s by the Recorded Anthology of American Music. The second analysis focuses on UbuWeb, an online collection that does not seek permissions, does not raise money, and does not charge a fee to its users, but instead operates through tactical alliances with an ensemble of institutions that provide bandwidth and server space. UbuWeb founder Kenneth Goldsmith recently titled an online posting “If We Had to Ask for Permission, We Wouldn’t Exist,” and this summation provides a starting point to discussing this controversial entity. As with many other online resources, UbuWeb and DRAM can be understood as contributing to the ongoing transformation of listeners’ means of historicizing experimental music from the 1960s.



On February 26, 2004, the sixty-three-year-old violinist, composer, philosopher, and writer Henry Flynt made a rare appearance on the radio. He was the guest of Kenny G (the other Kenny G, not the smooth-jazz star), also known as Kenneth Goldsmith—radio host, conceptual poet, and founder of the online archive UbuWeb. Don't worry if you missed Flynt's appearance at the time of the live broadcast on WFMU of Jersey City, New Jersey—it was immediately posted on UbuWeb as a three-hour MP3 file with a playlist detailing the names of the tracks that appeared in the broadcast.

It may be misleading to persist in describing Flynt as a violinist and composer, as by his own account he had given up performing music in 1984. Yet here he was, twenty years after hanging up his fiddle, discussing his musical trajectory, his education—like that of Henry Adams or Flau-



FIGURE 1.1. Insert for Henry Flynt, *You Are My Everlovin / Celestial Power* cassette (Edition Hundertmark). Courtesy Alan Licht.

bert's Frederic Moreau, it led to disillusionment—and the role that music played in it.¹

With the single exception of a cassette released in 1986 in an edition of 350 copies by Cologne's Edition Hundertmark, Henry Flynt's music didn't see commercial release until the twenty-first century. And then, at the century's turn, the floodwall gave. Within three years, three American independent record labels had released ten compact discs featuring hours upon hours of archival recordings of Flynt's music.

Descriptions of Flynt's recordings often hinge upon words like "personal," "informal," and "solitary." These terms are especially apropos of the two volumes of *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues* (recorded in the early and middle 1960s, but first released in 2002), home-quality solo recordings for violin, ukulele, guitar, and occasional vocal accompaniment, in which Flynt's voice veers between the extremely nasal, high-lonesome wail of "Sky Turned Red" and the gentle, wordless moan of "Blue Sky, Highway and Tyme." The greatest incongruity with these pieces is not their meeting of avant-garde and hillbilly styles so much as the fact that these spirited, soulful performances are unaccompanied by other musicians. The affect-

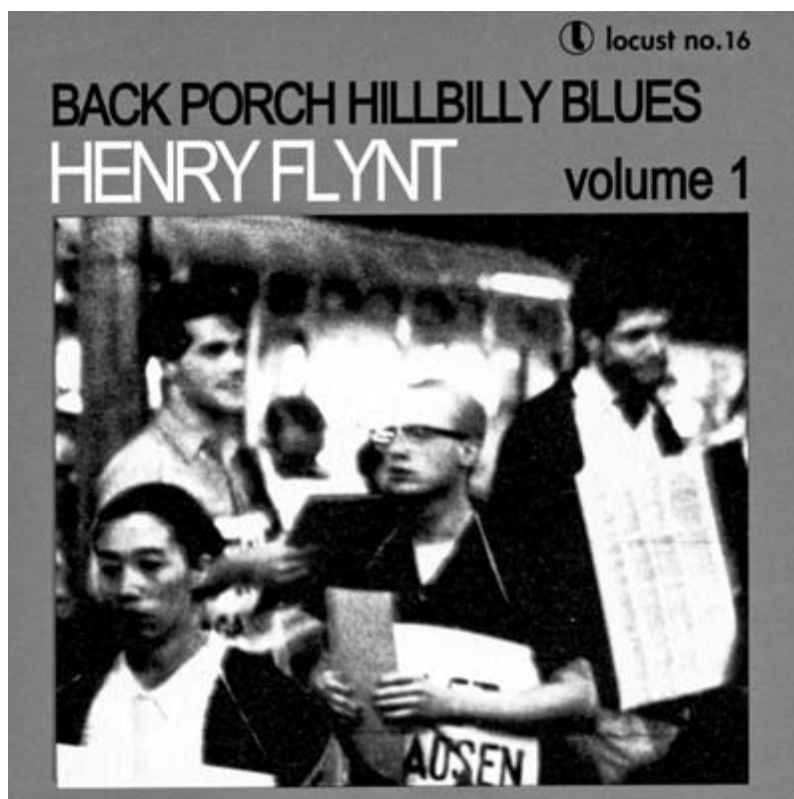


FIGURE 1.2. Cover of Henry Flynt, *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues, Volume 1* CD (Locust Music).

ing down-home music of *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues* differs in the number of participants, if not necessarily in feel, from the “Social Music” volume of Harry Smith’s *Anthology of American of Folk Music*. Flynt’s avant-garde hillbilly music comes across as a movement consisting of a single practitioner; it is and it isn’t social music. In particular, his exuberant solo fiddle tunes such as “White Lightning” and “Informal Hillbilly Jive” cry out for accompaniment, for some kind of musical response to drive their headlong tempos toward even greater abandon. These solo fiddle workouts appear in memorable recordings that combine Flynt’s inventive playing with abrasive amplified timbres, occasionally plunging a performance into a Mammoth Cave of reverb. On a number of these, echo is employed well in ex-

cess of the comparatively judicious, benchmark use associated with Sam Phillips's productions from Sun Studio.

Back Porch Hillbilly Blues proves to be only one of a number of musical destinations in Henry Flynt's recently revealed itinerary. Other previously unreleased works include the garage-punk protest music of Henry Flynt and the Insurrections' *I Don't Wanna* (recorded in 1966 but first released in 2004); miscellaneous experiments for wild, unhinged solo voice (the "Central Park Transverse Vocal" series from 1963), freeform alto saxophone, and overdriven electric slide guitar with wordless vocals (recordings from 1963 to 1971, collected and released in 2002 on *Raga Electric*); the mellower, groove-oriented ensemble performances of "contemporary cowboy raga" — Flynt's description — on *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music* (recorded in the late 1970s, first released in 2001); as well as numerous releases of Flynt's ecstatically charged amplified-violin and tamboura music from the 1970s and 1980s.²

While it might be a challenge to guess the date of origin of many of these recordings on the basis of musical style, *I Don't Wanna* (1966) comes across as pointedly of its time, with satirical lyrics about napalm, Uncle Sam, and CIA-backed coups. Flynt's preferred vocal delivery on *I Don't Wanna* is a snotty harangue with a southern twang, a voice suited to the songs' vituperation and somewhat reminiscent of Peter Stampfel's and Steve Weber's singing in the Holy Modal Rounders. Flynt accompanies his invectives with a brittle, blues-inflected electric guitar that locks together in suitably Bo Diddley-esque fashion with sculptor Walter De Maria's shuffling, imperturbable drumming. Art Murphy's roller-rink electric organ periodically joins the fray and reminds you that 1966 was the year that ? and the Mysterians' "96 Tears" was a Billboard number one single. The electric organ's signaling of innocent fun contrasts jarringly and winningly with the Insurrections' political bile in much the same way that the Velvet Underground's sweetest, most cheerful moments often sit alongside Lou Reed's poetry of dread. Reed himself gave the classically trained violinist Flynt his first tips on playing the electric guitar, although Flynt's ambitious and messy fingerpicking is miles away from Reed's clean, schematic strumming.³ From the perspective of the present, *I Don't Wanna* seems sufficiently of its moment (lyrically topical and barbed; sonically co-existing in present, past, and future; threatening to collapse or to splinter into something new, like all the best rock music) as to create the impres-

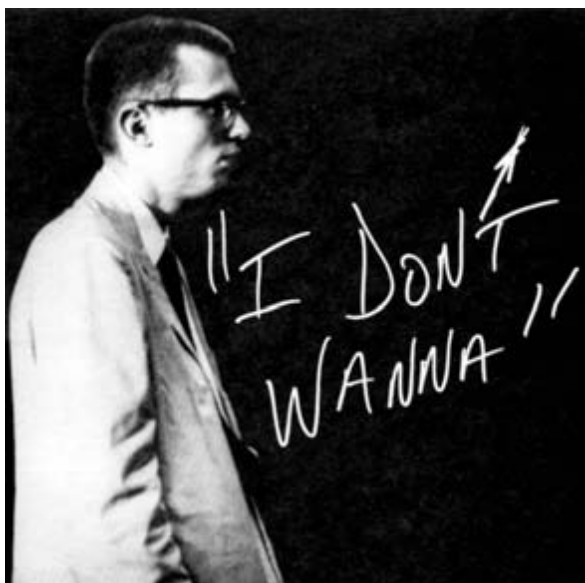


FIGURE 1.3. Cover of Henry Flynt and the Insurrections, *I Don't Wanna* CD (Locust Music).

sion that it was released in 1966, and that it must have intervened in the pop music, pop culture, and politics of its day.

It is an interesting illusion, as this timely album was released thirty-eight years after it was recorded.⁴ This disorienting listening experience—what do you mean that people weren't talking about this album in 1966?—points to anachronisms that often accompany the reception of archival releases. From what is now almost half a century later, *I Don't Wanna* increasingly comes to resemble just another recording from 1966 that participated in the culture of its moment. In terms of musical style and lyrical subject matter, you could file *I Don't Wanna* between politicized popular music from that time that reached thousands of listeners (such as Ed Sanders's and Tuli Kupferberg's group the Fugs) or that reached millions of listeners (such as Bob Dylan, whose "Subterranean Homesick Blues" inspired Flynt to try his hand at songwriting). A listener can easily forget that this music went unheard for decades in spite of its status as a bracing artifact of the year 1966.

At the present moment, Henry Flynt's musical activities are represented

as never before. He comes across as a unique, eccentric figure of historical interest, one whose protean musical activity referenced, abutted, or overlapped with post-Cagean experimental music in the early 1960s; free jazz in the style of Ornette Coleman; rhythm and blues; Delta blues; hillbilly fiddle music; garage-rock protest music; country rock; and North Indian classical music (he studied the Kirana vocal style with Hindustani singer Pandit Pran Nath). From a musically more pluralist era, we recognize Flynt as a prescient figure. A contemporary, postmodern musical culture is better prepared to hear an artist play hillbilly violin licks in a repurposed Hindustani raga or to hear him manifest his vocal studies with Pandit Pran Nath while fronting a country band. Recordings of Flynt's hybridizations, which he terms "New American Ethnic Music" (in order to distinguish these efforts from European art music and its rhetorical default position of constituting music proper), have a complex relation to the time of their creation. They are both of their time and ahead of their time, even as they have served time in a personal archive of unreleased recordings.

While we may be better prepared today to appreciate Flynt's music and are perhaps eager to slot it into a revised chronology of pluralistic musical activity starting in the mid-1960s, we must consider the ways in which these materials have been disseminated. What does it mean to describe a recording as being of a moment in which it did not circulate? Conversely, what does it mean to describe previously inaccessible music as participating in a later moment in which it resonates more powerfully?

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What was known about Henry Flynt's music prior to these archival releases? In what form did his music—or knowledge thereof—circulate?

Prior to the series of releases on compact disc that began just after the turn of the twenty-first century, those interested in the history of experimental or avant-garde music in the 1960s might have known Flynt's work by hearsay, as a recurring citation. The anecdotes were compelling, a dance at the edge of more official histories, tantalizing in its obscurity. The music was simply not available.

Flynt might have been known as a figure with a complicated, antagonistic relationship to Fluxus. (A page on his website describes Flynt as "a philosopher, musician, anti-art activist and exhibited artist, whom unsympa-

thetic reviewers often link to Fluxus.”)⁵ He might have been known as the author of “Essay: Concept Art (Provisional Version)” (1961), published in La Monte Young’s *An Anthology of Chance Operations, Indeterminacy, Concept Art, Anti-Art, Meaningless Work, Natural Disasters, Stories, Poetry, Essays, Diagrams, Music, Dance Constructions, Plans of Action, Mathematics, Compositions*. This essay’s relation to conceptual art continues to be discussed.⁶ He might have been known as the author of the expansive, memoiristic essay “La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62,” which ranges beyond its ostensible subject to render a personal, trenchant perspective on a historical moment in which a group of young artists and composers were determined to move away from the influence of John Cage.⁷ This essay vividly describes the significance of Cage’s presence for a number of younger artists: “[La Monte] Young has explained that everywhere you turned in 1960, people were saying ‘Cage,’ ‘Cage.’ They were talking as if Cage was the end of history. (That was exactly Cage’s claim . . .).”⁸ In “La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62,” Flynt minces no words in expressing what he takes to be Cage’s shortcomings: “[Cage] persisted in a professional life which could not be reconciled with his own pronouncements. Not to be overly subtle about it, Cage’s occupation was to provide the music for a ballet company. . . . The job involved upholding a specifically European art-form; it also involved upholding the cooperative distinctness of the European art trades.”⁹ Given Flynt’s characteristically combative prose, one can understand the interest that this polemical, fascinating essay might have provoked as regards hearing his own unreleased, under-the-radar music.

What else might have been known about Flynt prior to the release of his recordings? Perhaps that he was from North Carolina and had studied mathematics at Harvard in the late 1950s and early 1960s, at the same time as Tony Conrad, the future composer and filmmaker, and Ted Kaczynski, the future Unabomber. The experimental-music activity at Harvard at this time centered around the graduate students Christian Wolff and Fred-eric Rzewski, who promoted the work of John Cage and allied composers through their roles as concert organizers.

Perhaps it would have been known that Flynt performed in the now-legendary series of monthly concerts at Yoko Ono’s Chambers Street loft. The series was organized by La Monte Young, ran between December 1960 and June 1961, and included performances from an array of artists includ-

ing poet Jackson Mac Low, composer Richard Maxfield, dancer and choreographer Simone Forti, and artist Robert Morris. Perhaps listeners would have encountered Flynt's name through an early La Monte Young composition from April 1960 entitled *Arabic Numeral (Any Integer) to H.F.*, also known as (*To Henry Flynt*) and *X for Henry Flynt*.¹⁰ *X for Henry Flynt* calls for X number of forearm clusters on a piano to be repeated at an interval of between one and two seconds; an alternate realization permits the use of a gong and a drumstick. David Tudor's controversial August 30, 1961, performance of the work — could there be any other kind? — at the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (International Summer Courses for New Music) in Darmstadt, Germany, consisted of his striking a tam-tam 566 times at roughly one attack per second, hence the title for this particular iteration: *566 (to Henry Flynt)*.¹¹ Finally, people interested in experimental and avant-garde music of this period might have been familiar with tales of Tony Conrad, Jack Smith, and Flynt picketing the Museum of Modern Art and Lincoln Center, or of Flynt's "Picket Stockhausen Concert!" text — part of an incident that culminated in the excommunication of Philip Corner, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Benjamin Patterson, Nam Jun Paik, and Takehisa Kosugi from Fluxus.¹²

Then what? Numerous essays on philosophy and economics, most of which remained unpublished until they appeared at the turn of the new century on the website henryflynt.org. An obscure 1975 publication of selected writings, offered under the title *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization*.¹³ An exhibition entitled *Classic Modernism and Authentic Concept Art* (1989) at New York's Emily Harvey Gallery, a concept-art installation entitled "Logically Impossible Space" at the 1990 Venice Biennale, and exhibitions of a photographic portfolio — but little public activity as a musician. That Flynt has reveled in his status as scourge is attested to in *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization* by the inclusion of letters on the subject of his anti-art activism from contemporaries such as Terry Riley, Walter De Maria, Robert Morris, and poet Diane Wakoski. Responding to a March 1963 lecture by Flynt, Wakoski writes, "I'm for Henry Flynt but not for his ideas. . . . I am not against art and think that any artist who would say that he is or think that he is would be masochistic enough to need psychiatric care. Since you make no claims to being an artist this does not refer to you."¹⁴

The Edition Hundertmark cassette *You Are My Everlovin / Celestial*

Power (1986) comes from recordings made in 1980 and 1981, and marks the first time that Flynt's music was made available commercially. This release appeared a quarter of a century after his performance in the La Monte Young–curated series at Yoko Ono's loft. With this overdue debut, listeners were able to encounter an idiosyncratic violin music that references and synthesizes the drone of minimalism and of North Indian classical music, the sarod virtuosity of Ali Akbar Khan, and the slide guitar artistry of John Lee Hooker. Additional reference points for Flynt's music on this recording could include any number of Delta blues performers, the Old Time Texas fiddler Eck Robertson, early rock and roll, John Coltrane, Bismillah Khan, and V. G. Jog, the first master of the violin in Hindustani music. As Flynt explains, "I often eliminate chord progressions . . . because I experience changes of root like stoplights on a highway."¹⁵

In his essay "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music" (first drafted in 1980 and revised in 2002), Flynt proposes that his work does for hillbilly music what Ornette Coleman's did for jazz, namely, that it allows the artist, as fictive "folk creature," to bring elements of contemporary music into what is basically a folk form: "I intensify and elevate the American ethnic musics to produce a sophisticated music whose nearest correlative would be Hindustani music. . . . I aspire to a beauty which is ecstatic and perpetual, while at the same time being concretely human and emotionally profound. The specificity of sentiment and passion to which I am committed requires for its expression an ethnic musical language, a musical language which embodies the tradition of experience of autochthonous communities."¹⁶

The inverse of the "folk creature" — and in Flynt's view a figure deserving of profound scorn — is the high-cultural avant-garde composer who delivers so-called folk content within the idioms of European art music, a lineage that includes composers as diverse as Debussy, Bartók, Stravinsky, Janáček, and Stockhausen. Flynt identifies a relatively small number of artists importing elements of contemporary music into folk forms (Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane are his examples), while noting that many composers have been celebrated for incorporating folk traditions into what is conventionally presented as a more sophisticated musical practice. The German composer and musicologist H. H. Stuckenschmidt, who taught at the Ferienkurse in Darmstadt, provides us with an example of the ideology that Flynt rails against in "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hill-

billy and Blues Music”: “The ivory tower is the appropriate dwelling for those contemporary composers who have greater claims to consideration. No one should make modern music easy to listen to and to understand by providing listeners with short cuts. Injecting music with songs and dance rhythms would be as inartistic and misguided as daubing abstract paintings with representational images. A *reversion* to folk music is impossible in any case, because a notion of reversion presupposes a notion of progress and this has long been discredited. Folk music has to be justified by avant-garde music, not vice versa.”¹⁷

Unfortunately, by the time that an initial handful of people were able to hear the immersive, exhilarating, often delirious music on *You Are My Everlovin / Celestial Power*, Flynt had already given up composing and playing. In “The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly Music,” he writes, “I was competing with musicians for whom the last step in composing a piece is the sale — musicians for whom a bad piece that sells is a good piece. . . . My pursuit of music proved to be an eccentric hobby.”¹⁸

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By the time of Flynt’s surfacing on WFMU in 2004, the musical landscape had decidedly changed. Flynt’s private recordings of his eccentric hobby were in print and widely available. Because of the confluence of two musical resurgences in the late 1990s, Flynt’s avant-garde hillbilly music finally seemed to resonate with a musical zeitgeist.

The first of these was a growing interest in minimalist music, and in particular the research into and the recovery of its unsung or underrepresented figures. This development owed in part to Flynt’s old friend Tony Conrad’s emphatic, barnstorming return to musical performance throughout the 1990s, as well as the release of his *Early Minimalism: Volume One* (1997) boxed set of CDs and writings.¹⁹ Conrad’s critically incisive but also compellingly personal essays that are included with the *Early Minimalism* box, much like Flynt’s own “La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62,” open a window onto a period of musical activity for which comparatively little aural documentation had ever been available. The result was that these writings helped to fuel an appetite for unreleased recordings from the earliest days of minimalism. It didn’t hurt that Conrad’s musical compatriot John Cale’s work with the Velvet Underground remained

as popular and as influential as ever, and that increasing amounts of material posted online added to the accelerating interest in recovering the work of obscure, often unheard artists who operated near the various fault lines between pop and experimental music in the 1960s. Until the 1990s, the polymath Conrad — composer, filmmaker, artist, media activist, writer, and educator — had created music that, as with the work of so many others, was known far more by reputation than by actually having been heard. As with Flynt, until the 1990s Conrad's discography consisted of a single title. In Conrad's case, this was *Outside the Dream Syndicate*, a one-off collaboration with the German experimental rock group Faust. *Outside the Dream Syndicate* presents Conrad's patient, strategic cycling through sustained intervals on the violin; his playing perches comfortably and confidently atop Faust's monolithic, caveman-like, slowed-down rock and roll for two LP side-length tracks, and the shorter of the two pieces still exceeds twenty-six minutes. The album was released on the then-fledgling Caroline Records in 1973, and it quickly and unceremoniously disappeared.²⁰ After an interval of twenty years, it returned to significant acclaim.

Prior to his work circulating in recorded form, Tony Conrad's name had been part of the lore of minimalism on the basis of his involvement from 1962 to 1965 in a group composed of La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela, John Cale, and Conrad — sometimes also including the percussionist Angus MacLise — alternately known as either the Theatre of Eternal Music or, in Conrad's preferred designation, the Dream Syndicate. Conrad is recognized as having introduced the tuning system known as just intonation to minimalism through his violin playing in this group. While dozens of recordings of the ensemble were made, few were aired publicly, and none were commercially released; the tape archive remains the possession of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, and requests for copies by other members of the group have been met with the request that they first sign a document identifying Young as the composer of the work represented by these recordings.²¹ Conrad and Cale have expressed the belief that signing a statement such as the one that Young proposed — an agreement that stipulates individual authorship — flies in the face of their understanding that the group collectively produced an authorless music. As Conrad argued in an open letter in 2000, "By 1966, after John Cale had quit the collaboration for the Velvet Underground and I to work in film, Young found himself left with the physical recordings which embodied and remained

from the collective process of Dream Music—a residue that had not been ‘marketed,’ and which he found he could only ‘market’ effectively by reinscribing the work within the cultural paradigm of ‘composition,’ however this function might have been displaced from its locus in the Western musical tradition by Young’s Orientalism.”²²

This impasse set Conrad to the task of revisiting and articulating what he took to be the convictions of the period in which the tapes were made. Conrad first met Young at a time when one of the signal challenges to composers was to respond to John Cage’s indeterminate music. On first seeing and hearing Young perform, in Conrad’s words, “I heard an abrupt disjunction from the post-Cagean crisis in music composition; here the composer was taking the choice of sounds directly in hand. . . . in short, I saw redefinitions of composition, of the composer, and of the artist’s relation to the work and the audience.”²³

A quarter of a century later, in response to Young’s contention that this archive does not represent a collection of composer-less recordings, Conrad began work on a series of new pieces entitled *Early Minimalism*. *Early Minimalism* comprises a series of seven works for amplified strings; each is given a title with a month and a year—thus the series begins in 1987 with the composition *Early Minimalism: December 1964* and ends in 1994 with *Early Minimalism: June 1965*. It’s a wily conceit, and more than a mere end run.

How does Tony Conrad’s *Early Minimalism* compare to the music produced by the group in 1965? One of Conrad’s essays on *Early Minimalism* ends with a curious caveat. Regarding the largely unheard recordings of the Theatre of Eternal Music, Conrad writes, “There is room for a final confession—it was indeed amateurish; our recordings, should anyone ever be able to hear them, are of poor quality, with outrageously poor balance in the mix; La Monte always turned himself up loudest; the group was frequently too stoned to play long enough with adequate focus; our heterogeneity as performers often overcame our ability to muster group discipline.”²⁴ In 2000, people were finally able to hear one of these recordings. Table of the Elements, the Atlanta-based record label that had shepherded into existence several Conrad projects in the preceding decade, went out on a legal limb and released a thirty-minute recording entitled *Inside the Dream Syndicate, Vol. I: Day of Niagara*.²⁵ The recording dates from April 25, 1965, and includes the lineup of John Cale, Conrad, Angus MacLise, La

Monte Young, and Marian Zazeela. The source tape turns out to have been surreptitiously copied in 1976 by the composer and artist Arnold Dreyblatt — a onetime employee of Young's and Zazeela's, as well as a former student of both Conrad and Young — and eventually passed along to Table of the Elements. It marked the first time that this mythic group could be heard in a commercially distributed release, and the interest generated by this crude, harsh-sounding recording, as well as its legal controversy, was substantial. Table of the Elements attempted to cover itself legally by ascribing compositional credit to the five performers, as per Conrad's contention, and despite a vociferous protest by Young in the form of a lengthy press release — Young contends that this recording represents “an unauthorized release of my music from my ongoing composition *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys* (1964–present)” — the lawsuit that Table of the Elements likely anticipated never materialized.²⁶

Score one for postmodernism. The entire project of *Early Minimalism* is something more and quite other than a settle-for-second-best recreation of otherwise unavailable recordings from the 1960s. *Early Minimalism* comprises a series of compositions (perversely put forward by Tony Conrad, as composer, in part as an effort to draw attention to what he maintains was the composer-less activity of the original Dream Music), newly made recordings (benefiting from excellent recording and mastering that far exceeds the quality of the archival *Day of Niagara*), critical writings (benefiting from being presented together with more than three hours of audio material), and a series of concerts in which musicians were visible only as shadows on a scrim stretched across the front of a stage.²⁷ When one of the recordings from Young's archive was finally released, *Early Minimalism* was undiminished. In the wake of *Early Minimalism*'s extensively detailed, ingenious intervention into the historicization of the period, a fragment of the elusive original took its place as something like a footnote — albeit a caterwauling, strident, generally captivating one.

Conrad's story demonstrates how accepted histories of experimental music in the 1960s were rewritten in the 1990s and beyond in light of access to archival recordings — or, in Conrad's singular case, in light of reconstructing, recomposing, and performing an earlier music whose documentation had been rendered inaccessible. The curiosity about Henry Flynt's music that resulted in his numerous archival releases belongs to this same wellspring of interest.²⁸

The second important musical resurgence in the 1990s that would have an impact on the reception of music such as Flynt's was the renewed interest in rural American vernacular musics inspired by the celebrated 1997 Smithsonian Folkways reissue of Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*.²⁹ In 1952, Folkways Records released three double LPs edited and annotated by Harry Smith, artist, experimental filmmaker, anthropologist, and expert on string games, Ukrainian Easter eggs, things occult, and early recordings of country, blues, and various traditional musics. The eighty-four tracks that constitute the three-volume *Anthology of American Folk Music* were recorded and released between 1927 and 1932, that miraculous period bookended by the explosive growth in record sales that followed the introduction of electrical recording and the severe scaling back of the recording industry caused by the Great Depression. The Depression more than reversed the growth in the music industry that had been brought on by electrical recording. Where 1 million record players had been sold in the United States in 1927, only 40,000 were sold in 1932. Where 128 million records had been sold in the United States in 1926, only 6 million were sold in 1932.³⁰ By 1932, the window had closed on most record labels' brief interest in releasing records by all variety of rural musicians.

Unlike collections of field recordings of traditional music such as those made by John and Alan Lomax, the *Anthology* consists exclusively of songs that first appeared on commercially released records. Surely this is at the heart of the *Anthology*'s ability to fascinate: the fact of communities representing themselves to themselves through recorded music. In the same year that Smithsonian Folkways reissued the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, Greil Marcus published *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes*, which considers the impact of the Harry Smith anthology on the music of Bob Dylan. Marcus emphasizes the material history of the compilation's eighty-four songs: "Smith's definition of 'American folk music' would have satisfied no one else. He ignored all field recordings, Library of Congress archives, anything validated only by scholarship or carrying the must of the museum. He wanted music to which people had really responded: records put on sale that at least somebody thought were worth paying for."³¹

Few of these records had received a nationwide audience. The Acadian music from Louisiana, Sacred-Harp singing from Alabama, Memphis jug band music, and sermons from Georgia — to name only a few of the styles

that Smith collected — appeared on 78 rpm records that were for the most part sold within their region of origin. In 1952, a mere two decades after some of the recordings, the *Anthology* spread out the past as a map that would have been difficult to recognize. It was far from a unified American musical heritage. It was also the stuff of inspiration. As the guitarist John Fahey testified, “I’d match the *Anthology* up against any other single compendium of important information ever assembled. Dead Sea Scrolls? Nah. I’ll take the *Anthology*.”³²

Concurrent with Smithsonian Folkways’ reissue of the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, John Fahey and Dean Blackwood started Revenant Records to showcase what they called “Raw Music.” Revenant specialized in providing a still more detailed view of the mosaic that was Harry Smith’s *American Anthology*, and the new label produced extensively annotated releases such as Dock Boggs’s *Country Blues* and the compilation *American Primitive, Volume 1: Raw Pre-war Gospel*.³³ In 2000, Revenant raised a few eyebrows by releasing the two-CD *Anthology of American Folk Music, Volume Four*, whose track selection and sequence derive from notes that Harry Smith made in the early 1950s.³⁴ (One of the reasons that Smith neglected to see the fourth volume through to completion is that he disagreed with Folkways’ wish to include a track celebrating Franklin Roosevelt’s election victory.)

As would happen with Flynt’s music, obscure recordings of country blues, gospel, country music, Cajun music, jug band music, fife and drum music, hillbilly fiddle tunes, harmonica virtuosi, minstrelsy, sermons — you name it — suddenly became available on compact disc. The appealingly rough sound quality of Flynt’s hours of unreleased recordings meshed nicely with the sound and sensibility of much older recordings that saw the light of day on Revenant and similar reissue labels. Greil Marcus was as likely to be found writing about the Depression-era banjo player and singer Dock Boggs as he was to be covering the latest morphings of post-punk. Geoffrey O’Brien was on to something when he likened the *American Anthology* to a preferred activity of later generations: “Designed to be heard precisely in the order laid down, it anticipated the sort of musical collage that would become perhaps the most widely practiced American art form: the personal mix tape of favorite songs.”³⁵ Reissues and archival releases multiplied, and suddenly the race was on for searching out and rereleasing obscure, old-timey music recorded in the half decade between

1927 and 1932 that was represented by the *American Anthology*. Listeners experienced the vertiginous thrill of seeing vast amounts of archival releases hitting the racks of their local record store.

The 1990s were a boom time for reissues and archival recordings, in no small part because compact disc manufacturing prices stayed low, list prices stayed high, and downloading music from the Internet was as yet beyond the horizon. The year 1999 saw unprecedented profits totaling \$14.6 billion for recorded-music sales; it was also the year that eighteen-year-old Shawn Fanning launched the file-sharing service Napster, which would soon boast fifty million users and permanently alter the business and culture of selling recorded sound through physical media.³⁶ But for the moment, the economics of producing and selling compact discs meant that works that could not justify reissue on vinyl LP now turned a profit when released on CD.

One further important change has been the creation of an audience of listeners who have turned out to be equally interested in twentieth-century classical music, minimalism, country, blues, traditional Indian music, and early rock and roll. This is only to mention the touchstones of Henry Flynt's syncretistic music. Flynt's gravitation toward simultaneous extremes of avant-garde and folk forms — and putting these forms to work in a folk practice, a “New American Ethnic Music” — while comparatively uncommon in the early 1960s, is decidedly congruent with the habits of numerous listeners of the present.

Access to recorded music has been fundamental to this change. Who listens to only one genre of music? Who believes that segregation among genres should be the law of the land? Because of the increased accessibility of disparate musical cultures through sound recordings — and above all through music made available online — listeners are now more likely to approach music within a larger, more inclusive frame of reference that can include all manner of popular and unpopular, high and low, Western and non-Western musics. But this was far from Henry Flynt's experience as a musician first encountering New York's experimental-music scene in the early 1960s.

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Henry Flynt's wide-ranging, three-hour WFMU interview with Kenneth Goldsmith from 2004 testifies to a time when a musical avant-garde, in its disdain for recorded and popular music, was profoundly and even proudly ignorant of the larger musical landscape. The changes in listening habits — and the resulting changes in attitudes — over the past five decades are striking.

The success of freeform radio is one modest indication of this change in listeners' habits. The radio interview with Flynt took place on WFMU, which is the New York area's preeminent freeform radio station.³⁷ Kenneth Goldsmith, as founder of UbuWeb, stands for a lot of the same things that WFMU stands for — an informed appreciation of an almost comically broad range of obscure musics that is at once scholarly and bordering on the fanatical. Goldsmith started UbuWeb in 1996; this not-for-profit, free online resource contains thousands of digital files representing works of concrete poetry, literary criticism, sound art, experimental music, artists' films, lectures, found objects, and more. As Goldsmith explains, "What I wished to achieve with UbuWeb [is] the creation of a distribution center for out of print, hard-to-find, small run, obscure materials, available at no cost from any point on the globe."³⁸ This quality of enthusiastic advocacy and research and recovery of obscure avant-garde practice is shared by UbuWeb and WFMU — fans' endeavors, both.

The increasingly freeform audience of the present is predicated on the ability to encounter a nearly limitless breadth of musics in recorded form, whether through streaming or downloading digital files from the Internet, buying CDs or LPs, or hearing any of these on college, public, or web radio. These listeners' omnivorous diets would not have developed without access to recordings of a wide array of otherwise inaccessible music.

To once again use the example of Tony Conrad, how do descriptions of his music compare to the experience of being able to listen to it? Descriptions of Conrad's music often begin by explaining his abandonment of equal temperament in favor of the tuning system known as just intonation, which utilizes intervals based on whole-number frequency ratios. One can explain just intonation, but an explanation alone is no substitute for spending time listening to — really acclimatizing oneself to — the sonic qualities of these initially unfamiliar intervals. A fundamental aspect of Conrad's

string music is the use of difference tones, in which through amplification and equalization (boosting selected lower frequencies, for example) sustained, double-stopped intervals on the violin summon a third tone, one whose pitch is determined by the difference in frequency between the two pitches of the interval. Conrad is skillful at subtly modulating difference tones, such that slight changes in fingering and bow pressure bring forth billowing apparitions of low-frequency sound, pitches far below the conventional range of the violin that can sound like interruptive swells of uncannily musical low-end feedback. I can describe it, but it really should be heard. Or physically felt. I recall laughing—that was my honest response, pure laughter, like laughter at feeling perilously out of control on a roller coaster, the laughter of not believing what you're experiencing—when first witnessing Conrad draw out eruptive, disruptive difference tones from a massively amplified violin. My first impression was that the PA was feeding back, that this was unintended and unwanted noise, followed by the impression of not believing what my eyes and ears were together telling me—that these ridiculously outsized, internal organ–jostling sounds were made by a violin. It was akin to the disbelief most people feel at first encountering and slowly comprehending multiphonic singing, as in Khoomei or Tuvan throat singing, in which through the manipulation of overtones one voice is heard to produce two or more notes.

The experience of hearing Tony Conrad's amplified-string music—in particular his use of just intonation and difference tones—goes a long way toward mitigating the forbidding nature of explanations of music based on acoustical phenomena. The use of just intonation and difference tones can, in the abstract, make this music seem intimidatingly cerebral—music by and for math majors, if not professional mathematicians. What makes much music seem so esoteric or forbidding has to do with puzzling over explanations in the absence of sound. Conrad's music, like Henry Flynt's, and like the music of so many others whose recordings have only recently begun to circulate, possesses rewards beyond merely conveying information about its materials and its means of organization. Listeners who, by the end of the twentieth century, were finally able to hear Conrad's and Flynt's music, heard much more than the filling in of gaps in a historical record. They heard music that reflects both the post-Cagean moment of the early 1960s (repetition and the beginnings of minimalism, extended performance durations, investigations into pitch outside of equal tempera-

ment, the movement beyond traditional concert halls, the influences of jazz and North Indian music, sly humor, and so on) and the amplified timbres of rock, rhythm and blues, and country music so familiar from pop music of that decade. Importantly, they heard music that combines many of the pleasures found in these disparate strands of musical activity.

In Benjamin Piekut's video portrait *Henry Flynt in New York* (2008), which presents a series of interviews with Flynt conducted in front of various meaningful locations from his years in New York City, Flynt describes the scene in the mid-1960s around Tony Conrad's 56 Ludlow Street apartment as one where he could drop in to talk about rock and roll and listen to recordings of Phil Spector, Bo Diddley, "Tobacco Road," and James Brown.³⁹ So much for the formerly one-dimensional image of Conrad as the math whiz violinist who introduced just intonation to minimalism. When armed with evidence in the form of recordings, listeners can now hear that Conrad's amplified-string music contains many of the same qualities prized by rock fans when listening to John Cale's amplified viola in the Velvet Underground. Similarly, La Monte Young's music — which may seem daunting when introduced by means of explanations of frequency ratios — can be surprisingly easy and pleasing to enter into sonically, from the rich, locationally precise standing waves of the *Dream House* installation to the extremely tranquil eight-trumpet recording of *The Melodic Version of the Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer from "The Four Dreams of China."*⁴⁰

In the WFMU interview, Flynt starts with his musical education. Growing up in North Carolina in the 1950s, he familiarized himself with Schoenberg and Bartók through acquiring scores of their works. When he was a student at Harvard, he became acquainted with the music of John Cage and what would later be called the New York School through concerts organized by a small coterie of people who knew Cage. In 1960 and 1961, when he attended Yoko Ono's loft concerts as both a listener and a musician, these performances were virtually the only way to encounter the work of composers such as La Monte Young, Richard Maxfield, Joseph Byrd, and Terry Jennings. These were tightly circumscribed spheres of listeners, geographically delimited, whose presence and participation rested on a small number of factors. Where did you go to school? Who did you know who knows whom? Flynt, who would drop out of Harvard as well as out of the scene around Yoko Ono's loft performances, experienced both

as untenably elitist. In *Henry Flynt in New York*, he describes the downtown musical avant-garde as “the debris of privilege”: “Today I look back at it not only with total contempt, but it actually horrifies me that this was sort of an ordeal I had to pass through in order to gain my admission ticket to the scene.”⁴¹

In 2004, not a one of Kenneth Goldsmith’s listeners would have been moved to protest the mingling of the avant-garde and the popular when he and Flynt spun selections that ranged from Flynt’s utterly out-there, solo “Central Park Transverse Vocal” pieces to Jimmy McGriff’s “I’ve Got a Woman,” The Coasters’ “Run Red Run,” and even Simon and Garfunkel’s “I Am a Rock.”⁴²

As he recounts in the WFMU interview, in December 1960 Flynt traveled from Cambridge to New York for a concert by Terry Jennings at Yoko Ono’s loft, and it was there that he met composer La Monte Young, recently arrived from California. Flynt was less impressed by Young’s early compositions than by Young’s chops as a jazz saxophonist, a skill that he would typically display, tellingly, only after a concert. (As Flynt explains elsewhere, “The wing of modern music called new music was vehemently opposed to any accommodation with jazz. . . . The fact that Young and some of his friends were proficient, and assertive, as jazz musicians was a turning point in new music.”)⁴³ Flynt turned on to the saxophonist John Coltrane through hearing him on record—particularly the album *Blue Train*. It’s difficult to overemphasize the difference between these two listening experiences—on the one hand, seeing and hearing the anarchic, impossible-to-repeat performances from the Ono loft concerts, and on the other, listening to the Coltrane album that could be played over and over again.

Around this time Flynt had what he refers to in the WFMU interview as a “conversion” upon reading Samuel B. Charters’s *The Country Blues* (1959) and first hearing recordings of Delta blues artists.⁴⁴ Growing up white in the 1940s and 1950s in segregated North Carolina, Flynt heard gospel music on the radio, but had never come face-to-face with country blues. This is the basis of Flynt’s conception of himself in “The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music” as a fictive “folk creature.” In spite of the North Carolina lilt to his speaking voice, he came to approach these folk forms in the role of an outsider, and he makes it clear that his appropriations contain no claims whatsoever as to regional authenticity.

In the radio interview, Flynt tells a story in which he and Tony Conrad first hear a recording of Ali Akbar Khan. The two of them spin a theory in which this recording of the great Indian musician was actually cooked up in the off-hours by members of the New York Philharmonic in someone's basement in Brooklyn. This speaks to one of the mysteries of sound recording — and one that seems to have appealed to Flynt — namely, that a dearth of information surrounding the circumstances of a recording can allow the imagination to jump to the fore. After all, Flynt's "conversion" experience happened when hearing recordings of Delta blues, in which biographical information about its most transcendent artists — Robert Johnson being the classic example — is intriguingly scant and consequently necessitates drawing the maximum amount of information out of repeatedly scrutinized recordings.⁴⁵ In spite of Flynt's enthusiasm for the jazz of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman — and despite the fact that he lived in New York City — he seems to have encountered their music almost exclusively on record. In the WFMU interview, he recalls that the only time he went to a jazz club was when Walter De Maria took him to one in 1964.

Flynt's newfound enthusiasm for recordings of blues, jazz, and rock and roll soon found an interlocutor in the person of John Cage. In February 1961, Flynt performed his own music in two concerts at Yoko Ono's loft. Following one of the performances, he had an exchange with Cage that loomed large in his choosing to exit this scene. Flynt had attempted a piano piece — by his own account, unsuccessfully — that was inspired by Ornette Coleman's free jazz. In their conversation after the concert, he and Cage found themselves speaking two entirely different languages. When pressed to explain the piece, Flynt told Cage of his interest not only in jazz but also in the rock and roll and rhythm and blues of Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry. None of these names rang a bell for Cage, and someone had to explain just exactly who these people were that Flynt was talking about.⁴⁶ Flynt recounts: "Cage said, 'If that's what you're interested in, well, what are you doing here?' And he was right, actually."⁴⁷

Not yet twenty-two years old, Flynt had already rejected serialist music and was fast becoming disenchanted with Cage and his circle. In his disdainful words, "Serious modern music had created some sort of intellectual argument which it had won." Even though Flynt expresses no regret in breaking with a high-art practice that has its roots in European classical music, there is still a palpable sadness and disbelief in his recounting

of this story more than forty years after the fact. Four decades on, Flynt still sounds aghast at Cage's willful ignorance toward popular music and culture. As Flynt says in the WFMU interview, exasperation intact, "Cage was proud of how out of touch he was." More recently George E. Lewis has written about the extent to which jazz and African American musics have disappeared in the construction of a nearly all-white "experimental" musical tradition: "Coded qualifiers to the word 'music' — such as 'experimental,' 'new,' 'art,' 'concert,' 'serious,' 'avant-garde,' and 'contemporary' — are used . . . to delineate a racialized location of this tradition within the space of whiteness."⁴⁸ Lewis cites Anthony Braxton on this same issue: "Both aleatory and indeterminism are words which have been coined . . . to bypass the word improvisation and as such the influence of nonwhite sensibility."⁴⁹

In the essay "La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62," Flynt analyzes the "quest for refined sensibility" characteristic of Cage and his circle. He explains that as composers expected little in the way of the financial success enjoyed by visual artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, extremes in refinement became the primary means by which they claimed distinction: "To retrieve the mentality which Cage and his school embodied in the fifties — a mentality which viewed commercialism and garishness with contempt — requires a historical excavation."⁵⁰ In a 1989 interview with Stewart Home, Flynt addresses the disdain toward African American music shown by the most "advanced" composers at the time of Flynt's coming-of-age, as well as the lingering effects of his encounters with Cage's music:

I was listening to black music and I began to think that the best musicians were receiving the worst treatment. The people who were doing the greatest work were despised as lower class, with no dignity accorded to what they did. . . . I became very angry about the fact that I'd been talked into going to these Cage concerts when I was in college, that I'd sat and tried to make myself like that stuff and think in those terms. I felt I'd been brainwashed, that it was a kind of damage to my sensibilities. I'm still mad about this, I still feel I've not recovered from the experience.⁵¹

Generational mind-sets collide. Cage doesn't get Flynt. But Flynt doesn't necessarily get the extent to which things have changed in the intervening

years. Radio host Kenneth Goldsmith, who after all treasures his right as a freeform DJ to play both John Cage and Henry Flynt — not to mention Anthony Braxton or the Trashmen or Charles Ives or Robin Kahn's a cappella version of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, expresses surprise at this bit of history, which evidently still haunts Flynt. In what leads to the most striking exchange in the interview, Goldsmith replies, "Nobody blinks twice about listening to country, blues, and avant-garde music today. It's quite natural to like everything."

Flynt sounds utterly taken aback. It's an intense, fascinating moment, a report sounded across more than a generation. Goldsmith's blithe, upbeat report on the present clearly doesn't square with Flynt's personal history. "OK . . . well," Flynt stammers politely, melodiously, "as a matter of fact, my experience . . . was that international style and *Die Reihe* magazine . . . and Cage in his own way . . . they wanted to be the most intimidating . . . this was totally a product of the high rationale for European art music."⁵²

Goldsmith responds with a dismissive finality that comes with speaking on behalf of the present: "It's hard to imagine such attitudes today."

To be fair, it may be as odd to offer Goldsmith as a representative figure of the present as it is to offer Flynt for testimony regarding period attitudes from the 1960s. Both are fascinatingly dissident figures. But in this way they do assert themselves as representatives of particular cultural moments — and as distinctive voices. Goldsmith's literal speaking voice, on-mic, is flat, knowing, wry, and philosophical; as is often noted, his preferred method of self-presentation shows that he's learned lessons from both Cage and Andy Warhol. When Goldsmith reports — opines — "Nobody blinks twice about listening to country, blues, and avant-garde music today," his position is both Panglossian and futurian. But he does have a point in exaggerating in this manner — that there has been and that there continues to be a sea change in musical tastes owing to the increased accessibility to a broad array of musical cultures. Cage's attitude in which he seemed proud of his ignorance of jazz or rock and roll has become harder to imagine as a tenable position for a contemporary composer or musician or sound artist interested not only in new sounds but also in reconfiguring the relationships among artist and audience.

Goldsmith then plays a recording of "Missionary Stew," a squalling, adenoidal proto-punk number from 1966 that appears on Henry Flynt and the Insurrections' *I Don't Wanna*. After the track is finished, Flynt re-

turns to the subject of Cage, explaining that Cage exemplified the thinking that music with a consistent beat “showed an inferior sensibility. . . . I took that to heart, that kind of intimidation.”

The pathos! Histories of modern music are rife with tales of personal intimidation underwritten by aesthetics.

Flynt’s story speaks to the rewriting of musical histories of the 1960s. It also speaks to a leveling of musical hierarchies that has occurred in the course of his lifetime. I’ve been resisting the urge to cast him as a Rip Van Winkle who wakes up four decades later to find out that adventurous listeners of the present don’t give a rip about genre distinctions, or more precisely don’t reflexively subscribe to a hierarchy of genres at which European-derived art music necessarily balances at the summit. And that those people who are unable or unwilling to cross the many bridges connecting high, low, and points between are dwindling, and perhaps doomed. In Flynt’s case, the contemporary appeal—in addition to the overheated, generally inspired character of his music and the no-punches-held tenor of his writings and interviews—is that his music went unheard not because of its “advanced” nature but rather because of its syncretism. His musical trajectory might have seemed perplexing in the mid-1960s, but it now appears wise and forward-thinking. As per Goldsmith’s on-air remark, there are many listeners today who enjoy to a more or less equal extent country, blues, and avant-garde music, and what a discovery to find it all wrapped up in one bundle in the previously unheard music of Henry Flynt. Especially, that is, in an era of digital music, where a countervailing sentiment sets listeners in search of the rawest analog musics and the grittiest private recordings.

It is difficult to imagine that people who have listened to Kenneth Goldsmith’s WFMU interview with Henry Flynt, whether in real time on the radio, or by downloading it as an MP3 file from UbuWeb, are put off by Flynt’s importation of avant-garde musical techniques into folk forms. If anything, they’re probably sympathetic to Flynt in finding the reverse—borrowings of folk forms by avant-garde composers—to be a fundamentally hegemonic enterprise. Most of the listeners to Goldsmith’s program are likely to be familiar, primarily via recordings, with the many mile markers along the path of Flynt’s education: Schoenberg, Cage, La Monte Young, Yoko Ono, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Robert John-

son, Ali Akbar Khan, Pandit Pran Nath, John Lee Hooker, Bo Diddley, James Brown.

When the term “avant-garde” is used at present, it doesn’t denote a single, monopolistic entity understood to be at the forefront of musical practice generally. Instead, we speak in a decidedly less grandiose fashion about avant-garde jazz, avant-garde pop music, avant-garde disco, avant-garde big-band music, avant-garde lounge music, avant funk, avant metal, and so on, where “avant-garde” refers less to a stylistic purity or sobriety — contrast this with Flynt’s description of Cage’s “quest for refined sensibility” — than to a music’s unlikely hybrid nature.⁵³

To the extent that musical hierarchies have undergone a leveling in the last four decades, the circulation of musical works in recorded form has been decisive. The provenance of the recording of Goldsmith’s interview with Flynt provides an opportunity to illustrate the object of study of the present book: music that was heard by the smallest of coteries in the early 1960s but that is now available to what would have been an unimaginable audience of potential listeners.

I don't think of technology as technology. I think of it as landscape. We're born and brought up in a landscape and there's not much you can do about the fact that there are EEG amplifiers. I mean you could hardly pass a law ending it, right?

—Alvin Lucier

At 16, I was so enwrapped in Cage's ideas that I began to feel guilty listening to records when I could be outside listening to traffic.

—Kyle Gann, *Music Downtown*

One of the defining challenges faced by the various musical and multidisciplinary avant-gardes that sprung up in the 1960s was that of grappling with the immediate legacy of John Cage. Why, for example, would Cage's response to a younger artist's work weigh as heavily as it did on Henry Flynt? Composer Yasunao Tone, a onetime member of Fluxus and Group Ongaku, likely speaks for many of his peers when he describes his relationship to Cage's work: "The idea of encountering John Cage reminds me of Jasper Johns's remark, 'The best criticism of a painting is to put another painting next to it.' I perhaps encounter Cage when I am composing and reaching a point at which I am trying to get beyond his music."¹ Cage's former student Christian Wolff similarly notes, "He himself is so persuasive, and when his ideas first

came onto the scene, they were so powerful in the context in which they first appeared that one wanted to embrace them lock, stock, and barrel.”² Robert Ashley attests to the strange celebrity that Cage attained in the 1960s, owing largely to the publication in 1961 of Cage’s *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, which he describes as “arguably . . . the most intelligent and influential book on music theory in the second half of the twentieth century”: “He became a celebrity for many important and admirable reasons. He became a celebrity because contemporary music had a political power in the nineteen-sixties that it has lost now, and he was its best-known composer.”³

This chapter details the landscape around John Cage in the 1960s. One way of making the case for Cage’s stature in this period is by exploring the exceptionally diverse range of responses that his work provoked. For younger composers and musicians, the limits of that legacy—the task of putting distance between themselves and Cage—was often played out on the contested turf of sound recording. For some musicians this meant producing work that couldn’t possibly be represented (not even grudgingly) as a recording, while for others this meant explicitly embracing the technology of the recording studio and pop-music production techniques. But responses to Cage’s work from the sphere of music only hint at his broader cultural relevance at this time. This was a decade in which younger composers and musicians were not unique in assessing his ideas; it was a period in which numerous fields—visual art, poetry, dance, and philosophy, among others—displayed their moment of coming to Cage. In this chapter, I look at the forms taken by these various responses to Cage’s work and consider the conversations that took place through these engagements with his ideas in multiple media and disciplines.

I have chosen to use the term “landscape” in two distinctly different ways. The first is that of describing the constellation of a cultural moment: the landscape of experimental music, the landscape in which Cage’s ideas circulated, and so on. But “landscape” has a specific resonance when it comes to Cage. It has proved to be an especially compelling, durable metaphor within the discourse of experimental music, and this context comes directly from the title of Cage’s *Imaginary Landscape* series of pioneering electronic works. (One should never underestimate the power of a brilliantly chosen title.)

As Cage quipped in conversation with philosopher Daniel Charles,

records are like postcards to the extent that both “ruin the landscape” — they destroy the experience of one’s surroundings. Without postcards, or any other fixed representations, landscape can be experienced from a limitless sequence of perspectives. Beyond Cage’s metaphor of electronic works as imaginary landscapes (especially owing to the veiling of the visual signifiers of their source material), his “silent” piece 4’33” (1952) directed listeners’ attention to a world of unintended, noncomposed sounds — a landscape of sounds. For some, this precedent pointed toward acoustic ecology and the study of the naturally occurring soundscape. For others, it led to sound recording as a means of framing and representing the sounds of a particular physical site.⁴

After a broader survey of responses to Cage’s work in the 1960s, I will narrow the focus to consider a single work and the dialogue with Cage that it enacts. In concluding the chapter by looking at Luc Ferrari’s tape piece *Presque rien ou le lever du jour au bord de la mer* (1967–70) — a twenty-one-minute representation in sound of daybreak in a fishing village in Yugoslavia — we can better explore the category of the aural landscape as a feature of Cage’s legacy.

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Following Cage, new genres of experimentalism in the 1960s — developments in indeterminate music, minimalism, live electronic music, and free improvisation, as well as Fluxus performances, happenings, and early sound installations — were predicated on not being able to be represented satisfactorily in the form of a sound recording. Cage’s complex relationship to recorded sound became a touchstone in this decade, and it’s an attitude that one can see refracted through each of these genres. Fluxus artists created text scores that demanded to be experienced in performance. Minimalists made works that could last for hours or, in La Monte Young’s case, weeks or months or years. Live electronic music and free improvisation defined themselves against the portability and repeatability of recorded music. Visual artists who worked with sound did so in performances and installations that emphasized the sculptural qualities of sound reproduction, as in Bruce Nauman’s use of tape loops in his installation *Six Sound Problems for Konrad Fischer* (1968).⁵

Cage made his opinion abundantly clear that recordings did an injus-

tice to his work. For a number of younger musicians, the effort to forge their own paths and to move beyond Cage's work took the form of one of two extremes: either making work that would be ever more ephemeral and difficult to document (in certain cases creating performances that were hard to detect as even having taken place) or making work for which the recording studio becomes central to one's artistic practice.

La Monte Young's early work with text scores provides a paradigmatic example of the former category. Even before he decided in 1964 that much of his subsequent output would be part of an ongoing composition entitled *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys*, his *Composition 1960* series of scores thwarts representation that would be divorced from the context of their mise-en-scène. To briefly describe a few of these works, *Composition 1960 #2* instructs the performer to build a fire in front of an audience. *Composition 1960 #5* involves letting loose one or more butterflies in a performance space. *Composition 1960 #9* consists of a three-by-five-inch card enclosed in an envelope; on the back of the envelope is the note "the enclosed score is right side / up when the line is horizontal / and slightly above center." The enclosed card contains a straight line. *Composition 1960 #10 (To Bob Morris)* famously consists of the instruction "Draw a straight line / and follow it."⁶ These works, which depend so much on the experience of their instantiation in performance, and which could be realized through a nearly endless variety of strategies and solutions, would prove utterly baffling if reduced to an aural representation. In his "Lecture 1960," Young recounts a discussion with Diane Wakoski about whether *Composition 1960 #2* was more "music" than *Composition 1960 #5*: "I said that I felt certain that the butterfly made sounds, not only with the motion of its wings but also with the functioning of its body, and that unless one was going to dictate how loud or soft the sounds had to be before they would be allowed into the realms of music that the butterfly piece was music as much as the fire piece."⁷ Liz Kotz offers the insight that "when critics of minimalism use the awkward metaphor of 'theatricality' to describe a certain focused perceptual and bodily relation to objects in real time and space, it is Young's 1961 work [e.g., *Compositions 1961 #s 1-29*, twenty-nine realizations of *Composition 1960 #10 (To Bob Morris)*] . . . that is perhaps the template."⁸ Beyond these early compositions that could not possibly be represented with success in the medium of recorded sound, Young has also created works whose open-ended durations and site specificity would by

definition rule out their representation in the form of a recording. The current version of his *Dream House* installation, created together with Marian Zazeela, has been running since 1985 on Church Street in lower Manhattan, and an earlier version ran on nearby Harrison Street for six years.

La Monte Young's reputation as an artist who maintains strict control over the access to his music derives in part from the relatively small amount of his music that has circulated in the form of commercially released recordings. Young, like Henry Flynt, points out that his music has been rejected for commercial release on numerous occasions. In a section entitled "On the Release of Recordings of My Music" in a recent essay, Young states that he has consistently been unable to find a label to release his early music.⁹ In the 1960s, Columbia rejected his 1964 recording of *The Well-Tuned Piano*, and John Cale's efforts to help him find a label came to naught. David Behrman included Young's music as one of the two final projects that he proposed for Columbia's Music of Our Time series — projects that were rejected.¹⁰

Other younger musicians moved well out of Cage's shadow by taking to a different extreme and embracing the practice of making studio recordings of works along the fringes of popular music. John Cale and Joseph Byrd were two of the more prominent avant-garde musicians who in the mid-1960s formed rock bands and started crafting albums of experimental pop music. Both Cale and Byrd had come to New York in part because of their interest in Cage, several years before they were to wind up as celebrated studio auteurs with major-label contracts. Following his time in the Velvet Underground, Cale became known for beautifully constructed solo albums such as *Vintage Violence*, for his collaborative record with minimalist composer Terry Riley (*The Church of Anthrax*), and for his work as a producer for the Stooges and as a producer and arranger for Nico.¹¹ Joseph Byrd, who had performed at Yoko Ono's loft series in March 1961 and contributed work to La Monte Young's *An Anthology*, later formed the group the United States of America, which in 1968 made a revered, cult-favorite LP for CBS that combined psychedelic pop with accomplished tape manipulation.¹² Even though Cage himself would eventually be championed by all manner of questing rock stars, the gulf that separated experimental composers from out-there pop musicians in the second half of the 1960s largely came down to the role of the recording studio. As Robert Ashley explained in a 1966 interview:

We can't be popular musicians, where the fairly exciting things happen. This is excluded. We can't do that. We have to be what we are and create those situations where the same kind of thing happens. . . . The one thing I like about popular music is that they record it. They record it, record it, record it, record it! The astute producer cuts out the magic from the different tapes (*laughter*) and puts them in a certain order and gets a whole piece. It's very beautiful, because it's really aural magic. The performers have not made that whole piece in that one cutting. The producer has made an artificial piece that comprises mainly magical moments. We have to invent social situations to allow that magic to happen.¹³

Outside of music proper, an intriguing cadre of younger artists who began producing hybrid, difficult-to-categorize work in the early 1960s had been Cage's students, particularly those who had taken his courses between 1956 and 1960 at New York's New School for Social Research. Students in his "Composition of Experimental Music" class (1958–59) included George Brecht, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, Jackson Mac Low, and Toshi Ichiyanagi, a number of whom would soon be central to the Fluxus and Happenings movements. With the exception of Ichiyanagi, none of these artists would identify himself primarily as a composer of music, and this can be taken as an index of Cage's pedagogical drift away from music per se in the decade since he had taken on the sixteen-year-old Christian Wolff as a composition student in 1951. It's interesting to note that when Cage speaks of teaching at the New School on his and David Tudor's Folkways LP *Indeterminacy* (1959), he mentions the class that he taught on mushrooms—and not the course in experimental-music composition.¹⁴

In dance, Cage's collaborations with his partner, choreographer Merce Cunningham, found a generation of interlocutors in the choreographers associated with the Judson Church in New York in the 1960s—among them, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, and Steve Paxton. In poetry, Jackson Mac Low began to explore a number of Cage's ideas about chance and indeterminacy in the mid-1950s.¹⁵ Mac Low's use of chance was crucial for what Jerome Rothenberg refers to as "a period in which one (I mean myself and others like me) began to push our work past the initial breakthroughs of the 1950s—in our case expressionistic & imaginal—toward the even more open & unexplored terrain of the 1960s."¹⁶

In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Cage's close relationship with Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg helped to spread his ideas among visual artists. A growing interest in and reappraisal of the work of Marcel Duchamp in this decade also contributed to visual artists' contemplating the relevance of Cage's work and ideas for their own practice. As Robert Morris wrote in a letter to Henry Flynt in August 1962, "The problem has been for some time one of ideas — those most admired are the ones with the biggest, most incisive ideas (e.g., Cage & Duchamp)." ¹⁷ In 1962 Morris had the idea to create a not-so-subtly symbolic sculpture of Cage's shadow cast in concrete. The piece was never made, although Morris did create a similar, later-destroyed work using Jasper Johns's shadow. ¹⁸ Where a number of musicians and composers who had initially gravitated toward Cage changed course and explicitly sought to project their distance from him, younger visual artists at this time appear to have had a less turbulent, less divided experience of engaging with his ideas.

Opposition to Cage's work among visual artists in the 1960s came primarily from older artists — ones closer to Cage's own generation. One artist to mention in this context is the painter Ad Reinhardt (besides Cage, another of Robert Morris's signal influences and admired elders), who famously insisted that "the first word of an artist is against other artists" — and Cage and Marcel Duchamp were two artists for whom Reinhardt had a number of choice words. On the subject of "the whole mixture, the number of poets and musicians and writers mixed up with art," Reinhardt judged them "disreputable. Cage, Cunningham, Johns, Rauschenberg. I'm against the mixture of all the arts, against the mixture of art and life." ¹⁹ In 1965 Reinhardt wrote a blistering handwritten letter, in his trademark calligraphy, to Cage rejecting the latter's request for the donation of an artwork to benefit the fledgling Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, which had been started by Cage and Johns the previous year and which relied to a large extent on donations of works from visual artists: "You think that's a nice picture — painters selling themselves to keep performers free, artists whoring around or teaching so that musicians, dancers, actors don't have to?" ²⁰

Cage's presence in the discourse of contemporary art criticism in this period is attested to by the prominent, strongly negative reference to his work in Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood" (1967): "A failure to register the enormous difference in value between, say, the music of [Elliott]

Carter and that of Cage or between the paintings of [Morris] Louis and those of Rauschenberg means that the real distinctions—between music and theatre in the first instance and between painting and theatre in the second—are displaced by the illusion that the barriers between the arts are in the process of crumbling . . . and that the arts themselves are at last sliding towards some kind of final, implosive, hugely desirable synthesis.”²¹ In “Art and Objecthood,” Fried acknowledges the example of Stanley Cavell’s “Music Discomposed,” an essay in which Cage’s music is interpreted primarily as an illustration of his concept of chance. Cavell neglects to distinguish between Cage’s earlier compositions that employed chance operations as a compositional method and the later works that are indeterminate with regard to performance, concluding, “That his work is performed as music—rather than a kind of paratheater or parareligious exercise—is only another sign of the confusions of the age.”²²

Dance, poetry, and the visual arts are not alone in having their periods of coming to Cage in the 1960s. In his study *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (1969), philosopher Nelson Goodman submitted an excerpt from Cage’s score for his *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957–58) to a set of criteria that he proposes for establishing the identity of a work by means of compliance between performances and a score that belongs to a notational system. Goodman writes, “A score, we found, defines a work but is a peculiar and privileged definition, without competitors. . . . All scores for a given performance are coextensive—have all the same performances as compliants.”²³ In short, Cage’s *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* doesn’t pass Goodman’s test, because its score does not operate on the basis of what Goodman would recognize as a notational system, and because it is not necessarily possible to identify multiple performances of *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* as being performances of one and the same composition. Goodman’s example in *Languages of Art* led numerous philosophers to mine Cage’s musical indeterminism for limit cases when asserting the qualities that define a musical work.²⁴

It can seem that in the 1960s nearly everyone was eager to voice an opinion about John Cage. A fascinating, emblematic, and yet truly odd artifact of this period is a 1963 radio interview with Cage by nineteen-year-old Jonathan Cott, who would later become an editor of *Rolling Stone*.²⁵ The audibly nervous Cott begins by reading a voluminous, confrontational quasi question containing two lengthy quotations about Cage that are not

critical so much as they are fundamentally dismissive. It's a prime example of an anti-Cage backlash in full swing — as well as a remarkable document of teen chutzpah. The first quotation that Cott cites comes from Michael Steinberg's essay "Tradition and Responsibility," in which Cage's "Lecture on Nothing" is offered as an example of the "cynicism" characteristic of "music that is totally without social commitment."²⁶ (At one point during the reading of the charges, the hitherto-silent Cage gives one of the more perfectly timed coughs in the history of broadcast media, a piece of punctuation that's more cagey than Cagean.) The second quotation is a parenthetical, jeremiadaic bleat from Norman Mailer that appears in an essay on Sonny Liston and Floyd Patterson. It's worth quoting in full:

I had a moment of vast hatred then for that bleak, gluttonous void of the Establishment, that liberal power at the center of our lives which . . . alienated emotion from its roots and man from his past, cut the giant of our half-wakened arts to fit a bed of Procrustes, Leonard Bernstein on the podium, John Cage in silence [*sic*] offered a National Art Center which would be to art as canned butter is to butter, and existed in a terror of eternity which built a new religion of the psyche on a god who died, old doctor Freud, of cancer.²⁷

Ah, yes, that arch-rationalist, that Enlightenment explicator and Freud worshiper, canned butter himself, Cage. Where does he even start?

He starts with a little personal history. Cage responds to Jonathan Cott's audaciously insulting prologue — made even more surreal by the fact that Cott sounds very much like the teenager that he then was — by telling the story of having composed an early prepared-piano piece, *The Perilous Night* (1944), with the goal of expressing a welter of turbulent emotions. He describes the Babelian situation in which the piece, to his profound disappointment, turned out to have communicated nothing. Cage explains that this failure to communicate led him to reconsider the very goal of expressivity in modern music. He offers his response in a controlled manner that is comically and profoundly the opposite of Mailer's Beat running prose style. Cage speaks slowly, offering phrase after phrase of lulling even lengths, creating a carefully balanced rhetorical model of Ciceronian periodicity. He sounds like he's speaking according to predetermined time brackets for individual phrases, as in his "Lecture on Nothing." One senses that if this were taken as dictation, it would read in perfectly ordered sen-

tences and paragraphs. He doesn't directly respond to either Mailer's or Steinberg's charges.

What a strange display of dichotomies it is: chest-thumping, Dionysian Mailer and deadpan Cage, the unimpassioned voice of a faction of a generation. By the end of the 1960s, Cage's open-ended, indeterminate compositions, his multimedia presentations, and his embrace of the *I Ching* would be widely recognizable as signposts of the decade. Todd Gitlin describes the tenor of the 1960s as "at once ancient and avant-garde . . . astrology, the I Ching, etc., were perfectly suited for transcendental alibis because their instructions were so vague. . . . If the I Ching coins turned up an abstract lesson you couldn't grasp or didn't like, you could stretch for another interpretation, or toss the coins again. These were systems you could relax into."²⁸ Beyond a certain point, these ideas were out of Cage's hands. The landscape of the 1960s saw Cage's example transformed through responses from a curiously, tellingly broad array of perspectives.

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Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package. —W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape"

Let us now shift focus to a single example to look at the creative engagement with Cage's legacy in *Presque rien ou le lever du jour au bord de la mer* (1967–70), a work of *musique concrète* by Luc Ferrari. Ferrari said of his encounter with Cage at the 1958 Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt, "The meeting which was the most enlightening for me, in terms of philosophy and aesthetics, was with John Cage."²⁹ To consider the conversation that is played out in *Presque rien*, we must begin by reviewing Cage's *Imaginary Landscape* series and its relation to the tradition of *musique concrète* as initially theorized by the French engineer and composer Pierre Schaeffer.

Cage's *Imaginary Landscape* series sparked a number of responses from composers working in electronic and electroacoustic music, and had an especial relevance for artists in the 1960s who utilized recordings as part of their compositions. It inspired in part because of the innovative, unprece-

dented nature of this series of compositions, but also because of the simple power of the metaphor of representing landscape in a sound composition. Cage's enunciation of an "imaginary landscape" effectively put a finger on some of the elements that have proved most suggestive about working with the medium of recorded sound. (I stipulate "with" and not necessarily "in" the medium of recorded sound, as a number of the *Imaginary Landscape* pieces are realized in live performance but include elements such as LP records and radios.)

Between 1939 and 1952, Cage executed five numbered works with the title *Imaginary Landscape*. Numbers one, four, and five in the series have had a broad and lasting impact on electroacoustic music, particularly in the use of found materials in live performance and in recordings. In what ways are these pieces landscapes? Why are they designated as "imaginary"? Cutting off the sight of a sound source is crucial to the series' status as "imaginary" representations. To give an example, the use of variable-speed turntables and frequency recordings in *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (1939) — and the fact that the score calls for the piece to be executed either as a recording or as a radio broadcast — separates the listener from the sight of the sound source. Watching someone play a turntable in the twenty-first century may be no more mystifying than watching someone play the piano, but this was not always the case, and the ghostly, swooping glissandi created with the manipulated speeds of frequency test recordings on Cage's *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* are likely to have inspired different visual images than they do today, when the turntable has become a recognizable musical instrument.

The second "imaginary" element is the pioneering sonic representation of heterogeneous, impossible spaces. Most sound recordings are representations of space, and the spatial perception of sound is a fundamental way in which people make sense of their surroundings.³⁰ Recordings contain information about the spaces in which they were made, whether or not the represented space is made explicit in, for example, representing the recognizable acoustics of a concert hall. The opposite can occur when spaces are sonically decontextualized, as with exceptionally close microphone placement, inverted or counterintuitive volume relations among elements in a mix, in the fragmentation of sounds through editing, and in any of a multitude of sound-processing effects.

The *Imaginary Landscape* pieces are early efforts to upend the conven-

tions of recording—and specifically the conventions of professionalism found in commercially produced records. A record of a piece of music typically presents a representation of a unified, homogeneous space of performance; it also aims to render the recording medium transparent. By contrast, the representation of heterogeneous, “imaginary” spaces, whether accomplished through the superimposition of multiple and diverse recordings or through the discontinuities of editing, foregrounds the mediated nature of sound reproduction. One such representation of a heterogeneous space is Cage’s *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* (1952), whose score calls for any forty-two recordings as source material to be realized in the form of a magnetic tape. Conceiving of each of these sound recordings as a representation of the space in which it was executed, a realization of *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* that collages forty-two separate recordings results in a representation of a new and decidedly unreal space.

Where does Cage’s metaphor of a sonic landscape fit with another term that sprung up in its wake—the “soundscape”? The term “soundscape” tends to be used to refer to both the distribution of sounds in a given space (with the implication that this space is *defined* or *described* in the perceiving of the sounds it contains), as well as any sonic representation of space. It is an aural view of an environment as well as a mediated representation of an environment. This doubleness informs composer Barry Truax’s enunciation of both “music within the soundscape” (soundscape as sonic environment and the space in which music exists) and “the soundscape within the music” (the sonic space created within music).³¹

The use of the term “soundscape” by composers, critics, and sound engineers has also been animated by a focus on environmentalism. The Canadian composer, writer, and educator R. Murray Schafer exemplifies a commitment to sensitizing listeners to the sonic environments that they inhabit. His undertaking has been musical in the sense of underscoring the pleasures of ambient sound, but also ecological in addressing various forms of noise pollution, including the use of background sound such as Muzak. On his efforts at redressing the emphasis on music as the preeminent art of sound, he writes, “For years I have tried to draw musicologists’ attention to the fact that most of the world’s music exists in counterpoise to the soundscape. This is easiest to appreciate in environments studied by ethnomusicologists but seems less evident when music moves indoors.”³²

The French tradition of *musique concrète* has had its moments of

coming into dialogue — sometimes contentiously — with Cage, and this was especially true in the 1960s. In 1959, Cage described his *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (1939) as “a piece of proto-*musique concrète*”: “The original performance took place in two separate studios, the sound being picked up by microphones and mixed in the control booth.”³³ Cage’s characterization of *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* as “proto-*musique concrète*” is of interest to the extent that the *Imaginary Landscape* series separates aural experience from the visual experience of the production of its source sounds.

Pierre Schaeffer, the Parisian radio engineer who founded *musique concrète* in 1948, termed the separation of sound from the sight of its source an “acousmatic” experience.³⁴ In *Guide des objets sonores*, a source book on Schaeffer’s *Traité des objets musicaux*, the composer and critic Michel Chion defines “acousmatic” as an adjective “that describes a sound heard without seeing the cause of its origin.”³⁵ Acousmatic listening is frequently cited as the ideal mode of aural perception in *musique concrète*. Chion explains that “Acousmatics” was the name given to Pythagorean initiates who received lectures delivered from behind a curtain, thus requiring that they focus their energies exclusively on aural perception. Supplementing the term “acousmatic,” Schaeffer characterizes this ideal mode of listening as *écoute réduite*, or “reduced listening,” with the designation “reduced” referring to the obstruction of visual perception. Schaeffer defined the basic unit of perception in acousmatic listening as the sound object, “a sound for which we are incapable of identifying the origin . . . independently of all causal reference designated by the terms *sounding body*, *sound source*, or *instrument*.”³⁶ In Schaeffer’s system, the masking of sound events is necessitated by what he termed the listener’s own act of masking—that is, the listener’s propensity for identifying a sound on the basis of its source and relying on familiar visual narratives of causation, rather than truly listening to the individual attributes of a sound. Luc Ferrari, one of Schaeffer’s early associates, describes putting Schaeffer’s ideology into practice: “I really learned to listen a lot. First you record the metal, springs, or whatever, but as soon as you can’t see them any more, you’re listening to tapes and what *they* have to say. You’re not listening to images or causality any more. So the ideology was that: use sounds as instruments, as sounds on tape, without the causality.”³⁷

Early *musique concrète* is thus characterized by the creation of sound objects through techniques that aim to render the origins of recorded

sounds unrecognizable. Methods used included eliminating the attack or decay of a sound event, manipulating pitch by varying the playback speed of either turntable or tape machine, and extending the duration of sounds by means such as a closed phonograph groove or loops of magnetic tape.

By the late 1960s, Cage was eager to clarify his ideological differences with Pierre Schaeffer. Schaeffer labored to devise a *solfège* of *musique concrète*, in which particular types of sounds would be categorized. For Cage, this ran counter to his own interest in the asystematic sounds of the world, and in conversation with Daniel Charles he appears almost comically exasperated with Schaeffer's attempt to organize sound objects:

I'm afraid that such an *attempt at an organization* is a regression to the very process of copying from the classics that we just discussed. The idea of a *solfeggio of noises* includes the word "solfeggio," doesn't it? And what could be more worn-out than that notion? . . . What always made me ill at ease with Schaeffer's work from the very beginning was his concern for relationships—in particular the relationships between sounds. . . . For example, the phonogene, he was convinced, had to run at twelve speeds; how could he not end up with anything but a twelve-tone system? Even though he insisted that that was what he didn't want to do! . . . We inevitably fall back into sounds, in the "musical" sense of the term: noises which can go only with certain noises and not with others. Yet, what I wanted to accomplish was exactly the opposite.³⁸

Cage used recordings in his compositions precisely because they didn't demand or even imply an established method of composing music—any element, conventionally musical or not, could be combined with any other element. He sums up the difference between himself and Schaeffer with the following explanation: "I think that he and I do not agree with each other on the difference between the number two and the number one. [I always sought to grasp the plurality of the figure one, while for Schaeffer, plurality only begins with the figure two.]"³⁹

Late in his life, Pierre Schaeffer gave a wide-ranging interview that surprised many for its assertion of failure. Schaeffer comes across as unsparing in his self-criticism, and it's a fascinating document of how significantly his attitudes had shifted from the ideology of *musique concrète*. Looking back at his career, Schaeffer compares himself to an explorer who devoted his life to looking for a natural passage that ultimately does not exist.

He spent decades attempting to reconcile music and the world of sound, and he considers the effort to have been futile: “Unfortunately it took me forty years to conclude that nothing is possible outside DoReMi . . . in other words, I wasted my life. . . . Music Concrète in its work of assembling sound, produces sound-works, sound-structures, but not music. We have to not call music things which are simply sound-structures.”⁴⁰ Urged by the interviewer to define this strict separation between music and the world of sound, Schaeffer gives as an example of music Bach compositions that do not specify the work’s instrumentation: “That’s music, a schema capable of several realisations in sound.”⁴¹ In Schaeffer’s view, the search for a new musical language proved to be farcical, and composers and theorists should instead look to the Baroque period as a model for synthesizing new technical developments with existing musical forms.

What a strange thing, then, that the category of “music” would prove for Schaeffer to be the stumbling block of a lifetime. *Musique concrète* began with the basic concept of reversing the polarity of “abstract music.” Music composition traditionally begins with abstract elements—pitches, scales, compositional forms—and ultimately finds realization in concrete sound. *Musique concrète*, by contrast, begins with sounds and their material representations in recorded form, and creates the possibility for abstract arrangements of these sound objects in musical compositions. In Cage’s view, the shortcoming of this was precisely the weight that it ceded to traditional means of composing—for instance, in organizing a *solfège* of concrete sounds. One would have thought that when Schaeffer coined the term “*musique concrète*” he had accepted that the world of sound could itself be experienced as musical, and that concrete sounds would not require a particular system to deliver—to elevate—them into the realm of music. This was where Cage and Schaeffer differed, and they differed both at the outset of their experiments with recorded sound and at the conclusion of decades of work. There’s a melancholy exchange in this late conversation with Schaeffer in which the interviewer, hoping for something other than Schaeffer’s remarkable self-laceration, asks if the founder of *musique concrète* has anything to say to people now composing with recorded sound. Schaeffer replies that “they have the great satisfaction of discovering the world of sound,” but he reiterates unambiguously that they must not fool themselves into thinking that they are making music.⁴²

Among the generation of *musique concrète* composers who encoun-



FIGURE 2.1. Luc Ferrari composing *Tête et queue du dragon*, 1959.
Photograph by Brunhild Ferrari.

tered Pierre Schaeffer in the 1950s, Luc Ferrari is an appealingly dissident figure. Ferrari had been a regular attendee at the Darmstadt summer courses since 1954 when Cage and David Tudor arrived for the 1958 session. Ferrari describes Cage's arrival as follows: "Cage was totally provocative. We laughed our heads off, and he loved it! I have to say, that even Boulez laughed, a little bit. But not for real."⁴³ In 1958, Ferrari was already somewhat afield of Darmstadt's reigning serialists on the basis of his association with Schaeffer — he had first gone to Schaeffer's studio earlier that year — as well as his antiauthoritarian inclinations. While physically passing through the most inclement hotbeds of postwar music ideology, Ferrari time and again emerged free of ideological scarring. To all appearances he held on to his sociality, generosity, indignation, and humor. His work progressed not by the more familiar path of episodic renunciation of forms but rather through a continual accumulation of means. As the 1960s progressed, Ferrari found himself further and further afield of Schaeffer's increasingly detailed models for working with concrete sounds. Dan Warburton describes Ferrari's *Music Promenade* (1969) as, with Cage's *Variations IV* (1963), Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* (1968–69), and Stockhausen's *Hymnen* (1966–67)

and *Telemusik* (1966) (this list clearly shows the effect that commercial recordings have had on creating a canon of avant-garde music), “perfectly encapsulat[ing] the polystylistic cultural turmoil of the Sixties.”⁴⁴ In comments on *Music Promenade*, Ferrari notes the distance that he had traveled in the course of a decade of working with concrete sounds: “*Musique concrète* was a kind of *abstractisation* [*sic*] of sound — we didn’t want to know its origin, its causality. Whereas here I *wanted* you to recognize causality . . . it wasn’t just to make music with but to say: this is traffic noise! [Laughs.] Cage’s influence, perhaps.”⁴⁵

Ferrari made his stylistic break with Schaefferian *musique concrète* that much more decisive with *Presque rien ou le lever du jour au bord de la mer*, one of the best-known and most bruited works for tape.⁴⁶ This first *Presque rien* (Ferrari would eventually complete five *Presque rien* pieces, his transfigured echo of Cage’s five *Imaginary Landscape* works) is a twenty-one-minute sound portrait of the beginning of a day in a Dalmatian fishing village, and all its sound sources were collected using a microphone perched in a window overlooking the Adriatic Sea. It has the quality of an unaltered real-time environmental recording (in point of fact it combines numerous recordings of this site that Ferrari made on his vacation), and its feel of uninterrupted continuity proposes, somewhat fictively, that the hand of the composer has been stayed — in a manner that brings to mind Cage’s description of his revolution in perception, the movement from being a composer to being a listener. The tape editor’s hand — so crucial to and often so conspicuous in *musique concrète* — similarly appears stilled. There is no effort to ventriloquize the source material, to render it particularly musical. It is a work that suggests the freedom to move in any direction, including across those stylistic and contextual borders that conventionally make the terms “music,” “sound,” “audio art,” and “documentary” separately and individually meaningful.

Ferrari, who unproblematically conceived of *Presque rien no. 1* as a piece of music, clearly enjoyed recounting the horror with which the work was greeted by his fellow composers in the Groupe de Recherches Musicales: “It was badly received by my GRM colleagues, who said it wasn’t music! [Laughs] I remember the session where I played it to them in the studio, and their faces turned to stone.”⁴⁷

Presque rien no. 1 is an aural representation of a landscape — no need to bother with “imaginary.” The very title *Presque rien* (speaking, as of

Imaginary Landscape, of a title that proposes a successful jump-starting characterization) offers a preemptive rejoinder, a caveat in advance, to the charge that the work is dull or uneventful. In numerous ways, *Presque rien no. 1* has been to Luc Ferrari what 4'33" has been to Cage: his most famous work, his most notorious work, a work in which the composer has been accused of definitively abdicating responsibility (and, by some, of taking leave of his senses), and, more objectively, a work in which sounds not explicitly shaped by the composer are framed for presentation.

The crucial difference is that 4'33" varies significantly every time it is performed, but there has never been a "performance" of *Presque rien no. 1* outside of a concert of tape music. The listener senses that *Presque rien no. 1* is informed by a Cagean quality of simply letting sounds be, of listening to the sounds that surround us, but which so often go unnoticed. On the basis of its inscription as a recording of a single, stationary sound perspective (and as a recording that neatly matches the duration of a side-length of an LP), *Presque rien no. 1* marks its distance from Cage's work. Cage asked listeners to notice the sounds around them, and sometimes he brought these sounds or representations of these sounds into his work through recordings or broadcast media. When he brought environmental recordings into his works (and this is true from *Williams Mix* [1952] through to his *Roaratorio: An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake* [1979]), he typically presented a vast multiplicity of sounds deployed in rapid succession and dense overlays.⁴⁸ Cage used found sound, but rarely in isolation—one element or one layer at a time—to be aurally contemplated at length, with leisure.

Presque rien no. 1 is almost as literal an example as one can find of an art of sound that is akin to the art of photography. In it, the mimetic capability of sound recording is used to select, frame, and represent an aural landscape. For many listeners, it would not even seem to refer to music. But if *Presque rien no. 1* evokes comparisons to photography, it does so with reference to amateur photography, to the snapshot; as Eric Drott observes, "Ferrari saw in this and other such tape works a model for a new kind of amateur artistic activity, one that would draw upon the ease and affordability of the portable tape recorder in order to open up the domain of experimental music to nonspecialists."⁴⁹ Drott senses that Ferrari's numerous comments from this time likening *Presque rien no. 1* to holiday photographs (e.g., "My intention was to pave the way for amateur concrete music much as people take snapshots during vacations") purposely



FIGURE 2.2. Luc Ferrari recording in Studio Baden-Baden, 1971.
Photographer unknown. Courtesy Brunhild Ferrari.

sought to scandalize the electroacoustic music establishment, such as it was, by deflating the pretenses of experimental music and attempting to bring it into the orbit of middlebrow culture.⁵⁰ As we will see in the next chapter, Cage likened his indeterminate compositions to cameras—tools to produce a multiplicity of outcomes—but never to the merely reproducible photograph.

Ferrari's *Presque rien no. 1* is a work that signifies broadly in numerous conversations in music and society from the time of its creation. It also demonstrates a unique response to Cage's example, and it is intriguing that where Cage's and Ferrari's efforts diverge, sound recording—in particular the use of recording technology to represent an aural landscape—is the site of their difference.

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In the interview "Landscape with Pauline Oliveros" in *Music with Roots in the Aether*, Robert Ashley asks Oliveros about the mode of consciousness that animates her music. Oliveros replies, "It comes from a task that I gave myself about 1957 as a result of listening to recorded environments where I would put a microphone in my window and record for the length of the tape and then play it back. And I realized that I wasn't listening to very much. I then gave myself the task of listening to everything all of the time, and reminding myself when I wasn't listening."⁵¹ Oliveros's phrase "I realized that I wasn't listening to very much" is wonderfully ambiguous. It could mean that in her exercise of listening to the almost nothing (*presque rien*) of her landscape recording she realized that there wasn't much to focus on, or it could mean that she realized that her focus as a listener was insufficiently acute. This experiment, which invites comparisons with *4'33"* and *Presque rien no. 1*, differs from both works in that it remained for Oliveros within the realm of private exercise.

But even if Luc Ferrari and Pauline Oliveros forged different paths from Cage with their recordings of aural landscapes, they did ultimately share his basic attitude toward recordings of experimental music. In the interview with Robert Ashley, Oliveros notes, "I'm not interested in trading tapes very much. I find that so much of the work involves the real presence of the person, and you don't get that in a document. So it's important for me to be wherever the activity is taking place. . . . We hear the legendary



FIGURE 2.3. Cherry tree with compact discs blooming in the snow.
Photograph by Brunhild Ferrari.

commentary and we hear descriptions—which are almost more valuable than the recorded document.” (Ashley: “I agree.”)⁵²

Luc Ferrari passed away in 2005, but the backyard of his home in Montreuil, just outside of Paris, still contains a cherry tree festooned with compact discs. It is a truly unexpected feature in the landscape. As he told an interviewer who admired the sudden appearance of these shiny, round, five-inch aluminum blooms, “They’re things I don’t listen to very much, so I hang them on the trees.”⁵³

I've all along spoken against records at the same time that I've permitted their being made and have even encouraged it; but I've always said that a record is not faithful to the nature of music.

—John Cage

Certain details may “prick” me. If they do not, it is doubtless because the photographer has put them there intentionally.

—Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

In Frank Scheffer's short film *19 Questions*, John Cage submits to an interview in which the durations of his responses have been determined in advance by chance operations. The seventy-four-year-old Cage seems amused by the process, especially when allotted twenty-four seconds to speak about death, twenty seconds about New York, three seconds on Zen Buddhism, and one second on the subject of writer Octavio Paz. (For Paz, Cage clicks the stopwatch, says “Indian,” and clicks the watch again.) Given twenty-three seconds on the subject of “John Cage,” he collects his thoughts, clicks the stopwatch, and says, “Thoreau was very happy to be little known when he was alive. He said it enabled him to do what he had to do. I'm now very well known. It makes me happy because I'm able to do what I have to do.”¹ Then he clicks the watch, laughs, and asks the filmmaker if the reply is satisfactory.

Cage's celebrity, unique thing that it was, had much to do with the creation of objects. Even though Cage's name came to be inextricably linked with the aesthetic deployment of chance and indeterminacy, and even as he told philosopher Daniel Charles, "I should like to make it clear that I do not have *any* records in my home,"² Cage's fame in the 1960s was bound up with an increasing number of recordings of his music and publications of his writing. The most important of these was the 1961 publication of *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, which would become one of the decade's defining works of aesthetics.³ In the intervening fifty years, *Silence* has sold more than 500,000 copies and appeared in forty languages. Cage's music in the 1960s was well served by a number of key recordings, and much of his renown in this decade had to do with his music having been made available in recorded form. From the vantage point of our recording-glutted present, it's difficult to conceive of a situation such as that in the 1950s and 1960s in which the recordings of a figure such as Cage were few and far between. To give a sense of how matters have changed in the intervening decades, in a 1995–96 special issue of the classical-music record guide *Schwann Opus* dedicated to Cage, Mark Swed describes Cage as the most recorded of twentieth-century composers.⁴

In the 1950s, Cage's work had been represented by only a handful of commercial releases. This began to change with the 1958 release of the triple-LP boxed set *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage*.⁵ *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert* has proved to be an indispensable document of the first half of Cage's career, one that makes available to a dispersed audience recordings of first-rate, historical performances of his music as well as excerpts from his scores and writings. The boxed set feels like a test run for *Silence* in that it collects a number of Cage's writings for the first time. *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert* also resembles *Silence* in that it assembles a diverse group of works representing a significant period of time, and both collections stress the breadth of Cage's output. The boxed *25-Year Retrospective Concert* functions much like Cage's friend Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise*, the artwork that contains reproductions of numerous of Duchamp's works in miniature.⁶

The 25-Year Retrospective Concert was followed by Cage and David Tudor's double LP *Indeterminacy: New Aspect of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music* (1959), which combines Cage's reading of ninety one-minute anecdotal stories with Tudor's performance of material from

Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* and elements from Cage's tape realization of his *Fontana Mix*. Thanks to this recording, by the time readers encountered *Silence* in 1961, many of them already had Cage's voice and his distinctive manner of reading firmly registered in their aural memory.

So it went throughout the 1960s. The recordings that Cage oversaw during the coming decade tended to be innovative releases that represented his current interests as opposed to offering up earlier, potentially more accessible compositions. To give two examples, the Time Records' Contemporary Sound Series recording of *Cartridge Music* and the Columbia Records' Music of Our Time recording of *Variations II* are two of the more abrasive, more seemingly formless commercial releases of the decade.⁷ These were both made with Cage's involvement, and Cage is one of the two performers on this recording of *Cartridge Music*. Most of Cage's releases in this period differed significantly from the previous ones; each release was a dispatch, a timely update. One hundred Cage CDs hadn't yet bloomed. There weren't, and wouldn't be for years, CDs. The idea of an online archive, of dematerialized audio data available for download, often free . . . all of this was unthinkable far in the future.

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"This is quite probably the first concert in which audience disagreement has been recorded."⁸ In his notes to *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*, promoter and record publisher George Avakian seems particularly proud of this claim. He likens the clamor at Cage's 1958 retrospective concert, pro and con, to the legendary uproar at the 1913 Paris premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*. Leading up to the concert, New York's contemporary-music audience had been abundantly prepared; the retrospective was produced by artists Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Emile de Antonio, and to coincide with the event the Stable Gallery showed manuscript copies of the composer's scores, in an exhibition organized by Johns and Rauschenberg.⁹

The recorded audience disagreement still has the ability to unsettle. On *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*, you can hear the mass grumbles that follow the prerecorded tape piece *Williams Mix*, as well as the outright interruptions that occur during *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*. In the latter there is mocking, disruptive applause as well as bursts of laughter

that, when they first appear, sound like the tape-music interjections of musique concrète. The interruptions demand an engaged listening experience: Which side are you on? *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert* may well have been the first instance of audience disapproval appearing on record — and of it appearing so prominently, and being touted in a commercial release as a badge of honor — but it would not be the last time that audience protest made its way onto one of Cage’s recordings. Nor would it be the most intense document of opprobrium from an audience. The Italian record label Cramps released a 1977 recording of Cage reading the third part of his text *Empty Words*, during which a number of leftist students in Milan try to shout down the gently whispering, greatly amplified Cage. On this recording of *Empty Words*, it’s clear that Cage isn’t in the 1960s (and definitely not the 1950s) anymore.¹⁰

No recordings exist of Stravinsky’s *succès de scandale* and thus the event — the “riot” — has grown enormous in its retelling. Avakian quotes a painter who was present at both the *Sacre du printemps* premiere and the 1958 Cage concert: “I think tonight’s big burst of applause was more of a disturbance than anything that happened at the Champs Élysées.” In his guise as concert promoter and album producer, Avakian concludes, “Too bad, in a way, that tonight’s concert was recorded. What stories my grandchildren’s grandchildren could have heard about how Cage and Merce Cunningham and I had to be escorted to New Jersey by the police!”¹¹

Rather than immediately fading out the recording after *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, which was the concert finale and which concludes this triple LP, nearly three minutes of audience response are left at the end of the album. It’s a canny decision to memorialize the dissent that followed the concert’s conclusion. Beginning with a shout of “bravo,” the thump of an instrument hitting the stage, and the metallic thwacking of music stands being moved, these three minutes sound, of course, downright Cagean. As a coda, the effect is that of extending the real-time, durational feel of *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, with its long rests and pointillistic bursts of sound. It also retroactively describes the tense, tendentious atmosphere in which *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* was performed. The recorded postlude includes difficult-to-understand postperformance audience chatter (one minute into the crowd sounds, I believe I can make out “I hated it,” “Where are you from?,” and “I think we gotta go”) as well as

unpredictable swells of noise — cheering loses force, booing gets the upper hand, but eventually cheering regains its footing and drowns out the boos.

Given its polarized reception, one surprising element about the concert was how long ago much of this music had been written. At the time of the concert, Cage was a youthful forty-five years of age. The first piece on the program, *Six Short Inventions for Seven Instruments* (1934), predates Cage's period of study with Arnold Schoenberg. It's still striking to see the 1939 date of composition for the two works *First Construction in Metal* and *Imaginary Landscape No. 1*. The *First Construction* was Cage's earliest composition to use a rhythmic structure based on durations of time. What piqued the interest of an audience nearly twenty years after the work's composition, however, was more likely the eclectic instrumentation of its percussion ensemble, which included orchestral bells, thunder sheets, an early version of the prepared piano (strings muted by metal cylinders), gamelan instruments, cowbells, Japanese temple gongs, automobile brake drums, anvils, Turkish and Chinese cymbals, muted gongs, and a gong submerged in water.¹² The interest and frisson in seeing this ensemble of instruments collected onstage finds its match, after the fact, in the experience of hearing the instruments on a recording, and not being able to pin down how individual sounds are produced. Both are extremes in a listener's experience — the visual interest in an exotic collection of instruments or in a display of unconventional techniques, as well as the time-honored aural interest that results from not being able to identify a sound's source.

The composer Gavin Bryars provides an example of how a recording such as *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert* inspired younger musicians, especially with its arsenal of mysterious, novel sounds. Bryars recalls listening with percussionist Tony Oxley to Cage's *First Construction in Metal* in the version that appears on *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*: "I remember buying the 1958 retrospective Cage concert album from George Avakian, you could only get it direct from a mail-order in New York. We used to listen to that stuff. I remember Tony spending hours trying to bend the sound of cymbals because in Cage's *First Construction in Metal* you hear this gong played and the pitch dips: 'Shit, how the hell do you do that?' That's because we didn't have the score. Cage actually dips it in water! But Tony didn't know that."¹³

Two of the pieces at the 25-Year Retrospective Concert were presented

in the form of recordings, which is certain to have been taken as a provocation by many in the audience. The first of these was *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (1939), which Cage specified “was written to be subsequently broadcast or heard as a recording.”¹⁴ On the recording from the Town Hall, one can hear that the piece was met with tentative, weak applause that likely had to do with an audience’s ambivalence about clapping for a performance that consisted merely of playback. It’s not a forcefully negative response — that comes later in the concert — but a degree of audience perplexity is palpable.

The other work that was presented at Cage’s Town Hall retrospective in the form of a recording — and of which a “live” recording also appears on *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert* — was *Williams Mix* (1952), a work for eight tracks of magnetic tape that blazes through a library of more than five hundred recorded sounds in four and a half minutes. *Williams Mix* is such a perceptual blur that it’s difficult to imagine a first-time listener being able to estimate the number of sound sources, or having any way to know that this comparatively brief sound collage exhausts 192 pages of score. In the case of *Williams Mix*, the score functions as instructions for fabrication. Indeed, the work took months to record and assemble, and Cage referred to the score — a one-to-one-scale graphic representation of the eight monaural tapes — as being akin to “a dress-maker’s pattern.”¹⁵ As *Williams Mix* zips by at little more than a second allotted to each page of the score, it would be impossible to use the score to follow the piece in real time.

Williams Mix was the penultimate piece of the evening, and by this time one finds an audience divided, and vocally so. Following the piece, there’s a massed rumble of dissent in the midst of loud cheering. Someone shouts “Encore!” — and it’s difficult to know whether the spectator’s irony registers pleasure or protest following this prerecorded work.

Decades after the Town Hall concert, composer James Tenney described the impact of *Williams Mix* on his early work. Tenney was present at the concert, but somewhat unexpectedly his reflection on *Williams Mix* focuses on encountering it on the album *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*: “Much of my knowledge of new music was from records. . . . The recording of that concert with *Williams Mix* included came out a couple of years later and I first heard it when I was in Illinois. It was dense and you could hear audience noise and everything, because it was a recording made from

a mike in a hall off the loudspeakers. Obviously, it was an essential influence on my *Collage No. 1 (Blue Suede)* (1961). The idea of collaging, quick cutting through this kind of material was from that.”¹⁶

Williams Mix differs from the monaural *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* in that Cage executed its playback on eight separate monaural tape machines, such that synchronization among the tapes differs slightly with each playback. As he later explained to Richard Kostelanetz, “Synchronization of eight things is not possible. That’s why multitrack came into existence . . . but I constantly refused to use it . . . because that would give *one* fixed relation to separate tracks.”¹⁷ Cage’s insistence that there is no definitive version of the tape piece *Williams Mix* comes across as excessive protest. Subsequent performances of *Williams Mix* differ from one another only by virtue of individual tape machines’ starting times varying by a brief interval. The work is not significantly altered in subsequent performances in the way that, for example, Cage’s indeterminate works sometimes cannot be recognized from performance to performance as a given composition.¹⁸ Cage’s explanation of *Williams Mix* to Kostelanetz prompted him to reiterate his views on the subject of recordings, this time using a novel argument: “I’ve always been a proper member of the musicians’ union, in favor of live music.”¹⁹

Is there a contradiction between producing a record from the Town Hall concert and Cage’s statement, quoted earlier, that “a record is not faithful to the nature of music”? The more apt question would be: What is the nature of this contradiction? The broader context of Cage’s statement includes that he has chosen to speak “against records at the same time that I’ve permitted their being made and have even encouraged it.” Cage’s music, as well as his writings and lectures, frequently proceeded by means of this sort of purposeful, productive contradiction. It must be noted, however, that in Cage’s statement that “a record is not faithful to the nature of music,” the explicit reference is to “a record” — referring to a commercially produced and distributed object — rather than to recordings in general, and certainly not to a multiplicity of recordings simultaneously heard in a concert performance, as in *Williams Mix*. Cage’s decision to program recorded works as part of the Town Hall retrospective speaks to the fact that he was able to place the loudspeakers as he wished, and that these two relatively brief works were heard in single iterations, just like all the other pieces included in the 25-Year Retrospective Concert.

For Cage a major problem with records—as opposed to the potential embodied in sound recording generally—is what people do with them. When beginning to work with recorded sound on tape in the early 1950s, he chose to operate in a manner that cut against the grain of the familiar domestic experience of listening to commercially released records, which at the time featured monaural reproduction (as opposed to *Williams Mix*'s eight tracks) and recognizable musical instruments and sound sources. In his lecture “45' for a Speaker” (1954), Cage declares, “There are two great dangers for / magnetic tape: one is music (all the / history and thinking about it); and the other / is feeling obliged to have an instrument.”²⁰ Records can easily become background music, where repeated plays counteract or nullify the kind of attention that an audience focuses on a performance that will be heard only once. For members of the Town Hall audience who took seriously the experience of listening to tape music in a concert setting, it's likely that their powers of attention were taxed even further than when encountering works whose sound-producing materials are visible onstage. *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* and *Williams Mix* present dissimilar but equally alien sound worlds. Where potentially recognizable sounds from the natural world appear in *Williams Mix*, they are often edited in ways that alter or eliminate telltale attacks or anticipated decays. When encountered in a single audition in a concert setting, this wind tunnel (eight-chambered) of sound shards selected, edited, and assembled using chance operations bears little relation to the convenience and ease of use that is the experience of living with records.

Cage's dislike of records, however, can't be explained as mere resentment toward distracted listening. Quite to the contrary, in his enthusiastic advocacy of the work of Erik Satie, Cage underscored Satie's theorizing of a diffuse, environmental music that short-circuits attentive listening. In the text “Erik Satie” (1958)—an imagined conversation between Satie and Cage in which Satie's words originate in his writings or in reported speech—the first topic to be raised is Satie's so-called furniture music. In Satie's words, “Nevertheless, we must bring about a music which is like furniture—a music, that is, which will be part of the noises of the environment, will take them into consideration. I think of it as melodious, softening the noises of the knives and forks, not dominating them, not imposing itself. It would fill up those heavy silences that sometimes fall between friends dining together.”²¹ Cage put his passion for Satie into practice on

September 9 and 10, 1963, when he organized a concert at New York's Pocket Theatre of Satie's *Vexations*, a composition that calls for 840 repetitions of a fifty-two-beat piece of music. This eighteen-hour performance of *Vexations* is about as paradigmatic an occasion for distracted listening in a concert setting as one is likely to find. As Cage famously counseled his listeners in "Lecture on Nothing," "If anybody / is sleepy / , / let him go to sleep / ." ²² The distinction that Cage often made between sound recording and commercially released records remains in force in the imaginary dialogue "Erik Satie." Cage responds to Satie's description of furniture music with an objection to records as a medium for a continuous, all-over sound environment: "Records, too, are available. But it would be an act of charity even to oneself to smash them whenever they are discovered. They are useless except for that." ²³ By contrast, furniture music's potential is likened to that of magnetic tape. For Cage, tape possesses the ability to admit any and all sounds: "It's the same thing: working in terms of totality." ²⁴

On November 21, 1969, Cage presented a daylong event at the University of California at Davis entitled *Mewantemooseicday*. (His original title for the event, *Godamusicday*, was rejected by the university.) Concurrent with a performance of Satie's *Vexations*—although occurring in different spaces—Cage gave lectures; organized a more conventional concert of his two-piano transcription of Satie's *Socrate*; and mounted an evening concert of a new work entitled *33 1/3*, with Satie's *Furniture Music* played continuously in the lobby. In *33 1/3*, the audience was free to choose from a collection of three hundred LPs and to play their selections on the twelve different phonographs that ringed the performance space. As John Dinwiddie recounts, "Cage made no overt choices in his three hundred records. He simply called a local record store and asked the manager to sell him three hundred records, to include a wide range of musics chosen at the manager's discretion. (The records seemed to be those which a music store might find difficult to sell.) At the end of the evening, most of the records had been appropriated by the audience/participants, evidently to be added to their private record collections. Cage didn't seem to mind." ²⁵

On the subject of distracted listening, Cage is clear: do not try this at home.

George Avakian's notes to *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*—and in particular his ironic wistfulness at the fact that this legendary occasion for disagreement and dissent had been recorded—reflect a very different

era from the present, one in which there was a palpable fear that concerts would be replaced by listeners sitting at home with their records. This concern only increased over the course of the 1960s, as preeminent artists such as Glenn Gould and the Beatles retired from performance to concentrate on making records. Gould's final concert was in 1964; the Beatles', with the exception of the rooftop concert during the recording of their album *Let It Be*, took place in 1966. Gould was convinced that the death of the classical-music concert was inevitable, and he took unambiguous pleasure in diagnosing its fatal condition. In the essay "The Prospects of Recording" (1966), Gould writes: "In an unguarded moment several months ago, I predicted that the public concert as we know it today would no longer exist a century hence, that its functions would have been entirely taken over by electronic media. It had not occurred to me that this statement represented a particularly radical pronouncement. Indeed, I regarded it almost as self-evident truth."²⁶

How strange, then, these crossing paths of Gould and Cage, particularly over the issue of performance and recording. Gould's chosen mission was to put forth his eccentric canon of classical works in brilliant, pointed, and provocative recordings composed of edited performances — and then to disappear as quickly as possible from the concert stage. Cage, by contrast, was a pioneer in the counterintuitive use of recording technology within live performance, and he recognized no utopian dimension either to commercially released recordings or to pronouncements about the death of live performance.²⁷

The Italian philosopher Paolo Virno writes about the meanings of Gould's retirement from performance, playing on the term "virtuosity": "Every political action . . . shares with virtuosity a sense of contingency, the absence of a 'finished product,' the immediate and unavoidable presence of others."²⁸ Virno names Gould as a virtuoso who, by retiring to the solitude of the recording studio to produce commercial recordings — the "finished product" — chooses to forgo the political aspect of virtuosity. In an interview with Virno, Branden W. Joseph proposed Cage as a counterexample, to which Virno assented: "It is true; John Cage is the reversed image of Glenn Gould. Whereas Gould detests the exposure to other people's eyes and wants to produce 'works,' Cage desires instead to switch to that activity without work that is performance. Taken together, they aptly illustrate the difference between the sphere of production (*poiesis*, the Greeks

called it) and the sphere of public action (praxis).”²⁹ Virno’s evocation of Cage’s orientation toward an “activity without work” accurately describes Cage’s publicly expressed disdain for the reification of music in the form of commercially released records — call it also a lack of interest in records, a lack of interest in sharing space with them in his home — even as he ambivalently, or in the spirit of contradiction, takes part in producing them. But it is also true that Cage never ceased to create works in the form of copyrighted musical compositions that unambiguously identify Cage as the author and that are published by the C. F. Peters Corporation. Unlike records — at least as a record has been conventionally understood to function as an object to be collected, a terminus, and not as material for subsequent musical activity — Cage’s compositions and their published scores are works that lead to performance.

Virno’s comments neglect one of the more futuristic aspects of Gould’s praise of recordings over and against concert halls. In “The Prospects of Recording,” Gould looks forward to a time when listeners will become active participants by creating their own edited musical assemblages from multiple takes: “At the center of the technological debate, then, is a new kind of listener — a listener more participant in the musical experience. The emergence of this mid-twentieth-century phenomenon is the greatest achievement of the record industry. . . . There is, in fact, nothing to prevent a dedicated connoisseur from acting as his own tape editor and, with these devices, exercising such interpretive predilections as will permit him to create his own ideal performance.”³⁰ Given Gould’s exuberant love of his own version of the Western classical-music canon, his conclusion is mystifying: “In the best of all possible worlds, art would be unnecessary. . . . The audience would be the artist and their life would be the art.”³¹ This is a precise and unexpected sense of what would constitute an “audience” — by which Gould means not a massed public, much less a community, but rather a dispersed group of individual, mass-mediated listeners. (“The Prospects of Recording” generally postulates “the listener,” but not the constitution of audiences.) Cage also had his moments of disparaging art, most strikingly in his lecture “Composition as Process,” which was delivered at the 1958 Darmstadt Ferienkurse: “IF THERE WERE A PART OF LIFE DARK ENOUGH TO KEEP OUT OF IT A LIGHT FROM ART, I WOULD WANT TO BE IN THAT DARKNESS, FUMBLING AROUND IF NECESSARY, BUT ALIVE.”³²

TIME	VOLUME		TREBLE		BASS	
	CH+1	CH+2	CH+1	CH+2	CH+1	CH+2
0.00	1	2	2	4	4	3
.05	1	2	2	4	4	3
.10	1	2	2	4	4	4
.15	1	2	2	4	4	4
.20	1	2	2	4	4	4
.25	1	2	2	4	2	4
.30	1	2	2	4	2	0
.35	0	2	2	4	4	0
.40	0	2	2	4	4	0
.45	0	2	2	4	4	0
.50	0	2	2	4	4	0
.55	0	2	3	4	4	0
1.00	0	3	3	0	4	4
1.05	2	3	3	0	4	2
1.10	2	3	3	0	4	2
1.15	2	2	3	0	3	2
1.20	2	2	3	2	0	2
1.25	2	2	3	2	0	2
1.30	2	2	3	2	0	2
1.35	2	2	3	2	0	2
1.40	2	2	3	2	0	3
1.45	2	2	3	2	0	3
1.50	2	2	3	2	0	3
1.55	3	2	1	2	0	3
2.00	3	3	1	2	0	3
2.05	3	3	1	1	0	3
2.10	3	3	1	1	0	3
2.15	3	3	1	1	4	3
2.20	3	3	1	1	4	3
2.25	3	3	1	1	4	0
2.30	3	3	1	1	4	0
2.35	3	1	1	1	4	0
2.40	2	1	1	3	4	0
2.45	2	1	1	4	4	0
2.50	2	1	1	4	4	0
2.55	4	1	3	4	4	0
3.00	4	1	3	4	4	0
3.05	4	1	3	4	2	1
3.10	4	1	4	2	2	1
3.15	4	1	4	2	2	1
3.20	4	1	4	2	1	1

FIGURE 3.2. Detail of *Program (Knobs) for the Listener* from the original Nonesuch Records pressing of John Cage's and Lejaren Hiller's *HPSCHD* LP. Copyright © 1968 by Henmar Press, Inc. Used by permission of C. F. Peters Corporation. All rights reserved.

a plurality of ideal performances articulated through the connoisseurship of individual listeners.

It should also be said that Gould, like Cage, had the experience of recording technology opening his ears beyond music, or at least beyond music created by conventional instruments. In 1967, the year following the publication of “The Prospects of Recording,” Gould created the celebrated hour-long radio documentary *The Idea of North*, the first work in what would ultimately become *The Solitude Trilogy*. For all of Gould’s efforts to structure *The Idea of North* with techniques analogized from classical-music composition (the train functions as a basso continuo, there are fugue-inspired sections featuring five overlapping speaking voices, and Gould describes the project with the invented term “contrapuntal radio”), its representation of the landscape of northern Canada proceeds by virtue of the range of sonic materials made available by magnetic tape. *The Idea of*

North thematizes the solitude of the individual, mass-mediated listener — the radio listener, the record enthusiast — by finding a subject echo in the solitude of the five geographically remote individuals who make up the cast of this radio documentary.

As regards classical music, and particularly symphony orchestras, is it clear whether recordings or performances will outlast the other? Today, the uphill financial battles entailed in trying to maintain symphony orchestras are much publicized and rarely alleviated. Then again, there also has been the steady atrophy and outright disappearance of many record labels that specialize in classical and contemporary music. It looks like a long, perhaps evenly matched race toward extinction. One thing is clear: if symphony orchestras are dying a slow death in many midsize cities, recorded music can no longer be identified as the culprit. The dramatic predictions of the 1960s, pro or con, that live performance will wither and die in the face of classical-music fans who are content to collect recordings and listen at home — or in Glenn Gould's imagination, to splice together multiple takes into unique, well-informed alternate realizations — did not in fact come to pass.

When Eric Salzman reviewed *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*, the extent of his rancor toward it made for some of the most experimental prose to ever appear in the *New York Times*. Salzman judges Cage to be “strong on ideas and short on aural interest” — bad news in a record review, but a familiar motif in reviews of Cage's music — and notes that Cage's arousal of “so much anguish and partisan breast-beating is one of the minor mysteries of our time.”³⁴ On the question of whether or not Cage's work should be considered music, Salzman proposes the following: “Perhaps we need a new word. Say, ‘cisum.’ ‘Cisum’ takes everything that music does and then does it backwards.” Salzman concludes with an anguished crescendo: “The denial of will, of intelligence, of consciousness can only lead to spiritual nothingness and death.”³⁵

One can only hope that Cage, Avakian, and the concert's organizers were able to take a perverse pleasure in the extremity of Salzman's response. It's easy to imagine the extent to which this must have impressed young artists living in New York in 1960: forty-something John Cage was still able to send the *Times*' critic into existential dread and paroxysms of name-calling. It seems to have been a lively time. Perhaps more so than twenty years later, when *New York Times* critic Robert Palmer published a

reappraisal of *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*, saying that it “stands the test of time” and calling it “the most complete and useful Cage collection available at present.”³⁶

Where’s the controversy? What about the booing? The argument about whether it’s music or whether it’s circus? What about the three minutes of people raging and hollering at the end of the record? And what about the riot that famously resulted in Cage and Cunningham being escorted to New Jersey?

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Not long after George Avakian released *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*, Moe Asch’s legendarily pluralist Folkways label released Cage and David Tudor’s *Indeterminacy: New Aspect of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music*. The album’s subtitle provided Cage’s reliable foil Eric Salzman with an entrée into describing the work: “[*Indeterminacy*] has little to do with indeterminacy, nothing whatever to do with the Indeterminacy Principle, offers nothing particularly new, contains no notable aspects of form and relegates instrumental and electronic music to definitely secondary roles.”³⁷

Indeterminacy consists of ninety one-minute anecdotal, primarily autobiographical stories read by Cage to the piano accompaniment of David Tudor. Tudor plays material from *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, overlaid with tracks from Cage’s 1958–59 tape realization of his *Fontana Mix*.³⁸ The thing that Salzman does seem to have gotten right in his description of the piece is that it has less to do than one would expect with “indeterminacy,” as this term was employed by Cage to describe radically unfixed compositions that are indeterminate with regard to their realizations as performances: “A performance of a composition which is indeterminate of its performance is necessarily unique. It cannot be repeated. When performed for a second time, the outcome is other than it was. . . . A recording of such a work has no more value than a postcard; it provides a knowledge of something that happened, whereas the action was a non-knowledge of something that had not yet happened.”³⁹ While it is true that *Fontana Mix* and *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* are themselves indeterminate compositions, the focal point of the Folkways LP version of *Indeterminacy* for most listeners is Cage’s reading of his ninety brief stories. Indeed, *Indeter-*

minacy is an unexpected choice for a title given that Cage tended to be extraordinarily precise with his terminology. James Tenney makes the salient observation that “Cage’s definitions were very idiosyncratic. He undertook to personally redefine all those terms, so you must be aware what he intended to mean. By anybody’s definition chance is a form of indeterminacy, but Cage meant something functionally different by it. Chance for him meant the composer using an indeterminate method to make something determinate.”⁴⁰

Cage reads from a prepared text, and subsequent readings from this text are recognizable as performances of the work entitled *Indeterminacy*. The title *Indeterminacy* thus seems to be a misnomer, except in the sense that Cage’s frequently entertaining micronarratives underscore the indeterminate quality of the tape-music and piano parts, given the resolutely strange placement of various attacks, crashes, and interpolations of noise. *Indeterminacy* began as a 1958 lecture consisting of thirty stories, originally delivered without accompaniment. In 1959, Cage tripled the length of the lecture by adding sixty more one-minute stories, and David Tudor joined him for a performance of the work at Columbia University and for the Folkways recording. Cage and Tudor’s collaboration on *Indeterminacy* serves as an early instance of the practice of presenting simultaneous performances, such as the 1972 performance of Cage’s spoken text *Mureau* in combination with Tudor’s electronic work *Rainforest II*.⁴¹

A musician accompanying a reader is conventionally expected to respond to the content of the reading, or at least to create a sympathetic ambience that helps to shape the listener’s response. David Tudor’s description of his preparation for *Indeterminacy* offers insight into a collaboration with a striking degree of individual autonomy: “The method was that I looked over all the graphs from the Concertos which would only produce single ictii (accents). . . . Then I looked at all the graphs containing single points or which would produce single ictii. . . . With that in mind, I could play the whole thing in fifteen minutes if I were a genius or thirty minutes, or forty-five minutes, or an hour. Eventually we performed it for three hours and there was always plenty of sound material.”⁴² One might also expect that a basic rule of accompanying a reader would be to not drown out this person. In Cage’s notes to the Folkways release, he tells the story of their recording engineer suggesting that they do a second take of the record’s first side, with the engineer commenting that after their

first run-through he now understands how to balance Cage's reading and Tudor's performance. Cage responds that he has no objection to periodic interruptions: "I explained that a comparable visual experience is that of seeing someone across the street, and then not being able to see him because a truck passes between."⁴³

Indeterminacy is compellingly quixotic in that Cage's text consists largely of first-person anecdotes, while his techniques involving chance and indeterminacy are typically characterized as diminishing the role of expression in the compositional process. The contradiction of the autobiographical tales in *Indeterminacy* coming from a composer of indeterminate, allegedly impersonal music speaks to one of the great intrigues attending Cage's work—the challenge for the listener, reader, or viewer to entertain simultaneously Cage's gestures toward self-erasure and his unique, very public persona.

Exactly how revealing are these stories? Interpretations will vary. One tale from his childhood finds Cage as the unhappy victim of a soda fountain accident involving sticky syrup. The young Cage refuses the offer of a free, compensatory root beer. Is the listener surprised to hear an anecdote in which Cage comes across as fastidious and not easily bought?

Indeterminacy has its origins in Cage's "Lecture on Nothing" (1949), in which a talk is organized according to a rhythmic structure of the sort used at the time by Cage in his music compositions.⁴⁴ The arrangement of the text within the rhythmic structure results in a loosely scored performance, at some points denoting generous, occasionally audacious amounts of silence. In an introductory note to "Lecture on Nothing," Cage stipulates that "a rhythmic reading," in spite of the striking visual appearance of the four columns of text and their significant amount of blank space, "should not be done in an artificial manner (which might result from an attempt to be too strictly faithful to the position of the words on the page), but with the rubato which one uses in everyday speech."⁴⁵ "Lecture on Nothing" is divided into forty-eight units, each of which contains forty-eight measures; the entirety of the talk is divided into five sections consisting of the following numbers of units: 7, 6, 14, 14, 7. Thus the third and fourth sections of the talk are both twice as long as the first and fifth sections; the lengthy fourth section is the notoriously spare, repetitive one in which Cage intersperses variations on the phrase "I have the feeling / that we are getting / nowhere" with bleakly comic status reports on the

speaker's progress through the lecture: "Here we are now / at the beginning / of the / eleventh unit / of the fourth large part / of this talk."⁴⁶ In the fifth and final part of the lecture, there is an entire unit of forty-eight measures in which the speaker remains silent.

The one minute allotted to each of the stories in *Indeterminacy* at times results in Cage speaking extremely slowly, and at times results in Cage speaking pretty much as quickly as he can. The first of the stories included in the recording of *Indeterminacy* starts with Cage in what would appear to be the lowest gear but then further decelerates: "One evening while I was still living at Grand Street [pause] and Monroe [longer pause], Isamu Noguchi came to visit me [still longer pause]." The sound mix is such that from the start, the electronic and concrete material from *Fontana Mix* threatens to drown out Cage's speaking voice. The only reason that they do not regularly do so is that these elements tend to be quick jabs of sound, similar to Tudor's pointillistic attacks at the piano. The one-minute duration of the stories quickly becomes a familiar unit of length, flashing by like mile markers on a highway. In stories such as the sixth one, which concerns a malfunctioning jukebox smashing records (and Cage's evident pleasure at this miraculous, unreal spectacle), the listener can hear Cage markedly speed up halfway through the anecdote, presumably as he looks at his stopwatch and recalculates the rate at which he will need to read in order to complete the story in time. Is it an accident that most of the stories that concern his musical aesthetics are read ridiculously, perhaps self-deflatingly fast, as if dramatizing his own doubts that listeners will be able to—or will be interested to—follow his explanations? The most detailed, most specialist-oriented anecdotes about Cage's music often find him reading at breakneck speed, as in a moderately technical explanation of his piece *Water Walk*, in which Cage can be heard taking short, intense, rhythmically regular gasps of breath. There is a visual analogue to this careening through the text in the printed version of his "Composition as Process: II. Indeterminacy" (1958) in *Silence*, in which the use of minuscule type "is an attempt to emphasize the intentionally pontifical character of this lecture."⁴⁷

There is something marvelous about fixing Cage's voice in the listener's mind. It's a unique instrument, and his eccentric cadences and pronunciations belonged to no one else. Listeners to *Indeterminacy* hear Los Angeles native John Cage pronounce the name of his hometown "Los Anglès."

As with any realization of an indeterminate work, there are unscripted passages of serendipity. A textbook instance of this occurs when Webern's and Stockhausen's names are almost completely obliterated by violent, sci-fi electronic interjections from the *Fontana Mix* tape. Similarly, in a tale in which he comments on the difficulties of obtaining acceptable performances of *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, Cage concludes his one-minute anecdote with the memorable reflection "My problems have become social, rather than musical" — which is immediately followed by an outrageous, *Finnegans Wake*-sized thunderclap of a cluster from David Tudor, the loudest event yet from the piano (one that seems to rudely and comically contradict Cage's suggestion that his problems have migrated to the realm of the social; he's not out of the musical woods yet, and here's the portent of a storm in the form of a forearm cluster), and one that anticipates, in recorded-music aesthetics, the climactic chord and clinically long sustain at the conclusion of the Beatles' "A Day in the Life." Tudor's massive interruption is followed by the quasi non sequitur — one of *Indeterminacy*'s fundamental techniques — of Cage abruptly taking up a new story: "Was that what Sri Ramakrishna meant when he said to the disciple who asked him whether he should give up music and follow him?"

Ninety minutes is a significant length of time for this piecemeal, equal-to-the-sum-of-its-parts effort. Then again, the Folkways version of *Indeterminacy* is cut into four twenty-two- to twenty-three-minute LP sides that a listener can access however he or she best sees fit. When Cage printed the stories from *Indeterminacy* in *Silence*, he chose not to group them all together. Instead, he collected a portion under the title "Indeterminacy," deleted those that were made redundant by other texts (they're good stories, and he had a habit of telling them over and over again), and more or less evenly spread the remaining anecdotes throughout the book, "playing the function that odd bits of information play at the ends of columns in a small-town newspaper."⁴⁸ This innovative bit of problem solving and attention to composing a book paid off. In *Silence*, it's arguably more enjoyable to read these anecdotes not as a group but rather as between-act diversions while the stage is quietly being reset for the next, more substantial offering.

To the casual listener, *Indeterminacy* could hardly be more different from the recording of *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* that concludes *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*. *Indeterminacy* continues to be one of the

most popular of Cage's recordings for the same reasons that *Silence* remains popular — it is an accessible, funny, seemingly off-the-cuff yet ultimately serious setting forth of his ideas. It's flooded with content, conventionally understood. The recording of *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, by contrast, undoubtedly strikes listeners as occupying an extreme place, whether an extreme of randomness, or an extreme of impossible-to-comprehend, rarefied structural organization.

Robert Palmer, two decades after the release of *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*, described *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* as “typical of [Cage's] approach to music that before he composed this apparently random piece, he put in months of hard work studying the sound-producing capabilities of each instrument in the orchestra with experienced players and incorporated his findings into minutely detailed individual scores.”⁴⁹ As for an audience's first encounter with the work, well, just listen to the catcalls and disruptive mock applause captured on *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert*. To many listeners it must have appeared impenetrable. Barren. Farcical. *Indeterminacy* is a different kind of work altogether, one that foregrounds the effortlessly quotable, entertainingly notable dialectic of personality and impersonality that would be fundamental to the public persona of John Cage in the 1960s.

There is no redundancy in this sequence of LP releases.

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The symmetry of the two sides that make up an LP has resulted in numerous curatorially curious pairings. These sorts of matchups dwindled in the era of the CD, and pretty much have been eliminated in the present moment of sound files banging around online. Cage's friend and fellow retroactively labeled New York School composer Earle Brown came up with one of the more memorable releases in his Contemporary Sound Series when he paired Cage's composition *Cartridge Music* (1960) with three works by Christian Wolff.⁵⁰ You would think that it's an obvious match — Cage and his younger colleague Wolff, who had once been his pupil. Yet the result is an appealingly odd juxtaposition, given where these composers were at this particular moment in time.

The album has the truth-content of a snapshot.

The Wolff pieces are notable for their high ratio of silence to sound. This

is particularly true of *Duo for Violinist and Pianist* (1961), as performed by Kenji Kobayashi and David Tudor. Listening to Wolff's side of the album now, even on a copy in good condition and with little vinyl surface noise, it's difficult not to be aware of the medium of the LP. One really isn't used to this much silence, particularly in the LP era. Long stretches of silence ("digital black") and near silence in commercially released recordings became much more common after the introduction of the compact disc, especially given the medium's dynamic range and its absence of anything analogous to the surface noise of an LP.⁵¹ To give an example, the Wandelweiser Komponisten Ensemble's 1996 CD of Christian Wolff's *Stones* is surely one of the quietest, most spare of commercially distributed recordings; it is a beautifully recorded document of a seventy-minute performance that includes thirty minutes of two stones being rubbed together in a barely audible fashion, with additional transitory events — sounds made with stones — separated by sometimes minutes-long rests.⁵²

On the LP *John Cage / Christian Wolff* (1963), the sparseness of Wolff's music is aptly represented by the album's spartan jacket design: Cage's and Wolff's names appear in a black, blocky sans serif font that runs from margin to margin along the top of the LP cover, floating. The only other element on the cover is a small Time Records logo in the bottom right corner. Everything else is glossy white.

Until artist Richard Hamilton executed his design for the album *The Beatles* five years later, this was pretty much the White Album.

The Time Records LP recording of *Cartridge Music* is miles apart from anything on either *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert* or *Indeterminacy*. With *Cartridge Music*, and this realization in particular, Cage is onto something starkly different. In retrospect, the *John Cage / Christian Wolff* version of *Cartridge Music* points forward to Cage's and Tudor's pathbreaking work in live electronic music. But in 1963, if you were following Cage's career through or with the assistance of his recordings, it would have been difficult not to feel that this was a composer who was constitutionally incapable of repeating himself. This realization of *Cartridge Music* is demolition stuff, and the record begins with a nice squeal of feedback. Indeed, feedback is one of the most characteristic aspects of this recording — but it takes the form of wan, random, tentative iterations, and not the aesthetically sculpted, overdriven bursts of Pete Townshend or Jimi Hendrix that would become iconic of the 1960s' crash-landing conclusion. Other

The title, **CARTRIDGE MUSIC**, derives from the use in its performance of "Cartridges," phonograph pick-ups into which needles are inserted for playing recordings. Contact microphones are also used. These latter are applied to chairs, tables, waste baskets, etc.; various suitable objects (toothpicks, matches, slinkies, piano wires, feathers, etc.) are inserted in the cartridges. Both the microphones and cartridges are connected to amplifiers which go to loud speakers, the intensity of the sounds produced being small and requiring amplification in order to be heard. The dials of the amplifiers affecting volume and tone are controlled by the performers. Each performer makes his own part from materials supplied. These materials (Stony Point, New York, July 1960), all but one sheet of which are on transparent plastic, may be superimposed in any position. One then sees a complex of points, circles, biomorphic shapes, a circle representing clock time and a dotted curving line. Readings are taken which are useful in performance, enabling one to go about his business of making sounds, generally by percussive or fricative means, on the object in a cartridge, changing dial positions on the amplifiers, making "auxiliary sounds" by use of the objects to which the contact microphones are attached, removing an object from a cartridge and inserting another, and, finally, performing "loops," these are repeated actions, periodic in rhythm. The term "loop" is borrowed from tape music terminology. It describes a circle of magnetic tape which permits repeated playing of the material recorded on it.

The sounds which result are noises, some complex, others extremely simple such as amplifier feedback, loudspeaker hum, etc. (All sounds, even these ordinarily thought to be undesirable, are accepted in this music.)

By giving the readings meanings in reference to subject matter, the material of **CARTRIDGE MUSIC** was used to write several texts, among them: "Where Are We Going? and What Are We Going?" and "On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work" both of which are included in **SILENCE**, Wesleyan University Press 1961.

The objectives were uppermost in my mind when I supplied the material for **CARTRIDGE MUSIC**. First, to bring about a situation in which any determinations made by a performer would not necessarily be realizable. When, for instance, one of the performers changes a volume control, lowering it nearly to zero, the other performer's action, if it is affected by that particular amplification system, is inaudible. I had been concerned with composition which was indeterminate of its performances, but in this instance performance is made, so to say, indeterminate of itself.

Second, to make electronic music live. There are many ways to do this. The one I here chose was to make a theatrical situation involving amplifiers and loudspeakers and live musicians. The theatrical aspect is of course missing on the present record, a certain quality of mystery since one cannot see how the sounds are being produced taking its place.

Following the suggestion of David Tudor, the recording is the superimposition of four performances by the two of us. This is within the spirit of the directions given which accompany the material supplied ("There may be any number of performers equal at least to the number of cartridges and not greater than twice the number of cartridges"), and it takes advantage of physical possibilities in a recording studio which are not available in concert performance.

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FIGURE 3.3. Interior panel of gatefold sleeve of *John Cage / Christian Wolff* LP (Time Records). Photographs by Earle Brown.

sounds include scraping, dragging, ripping, and zipping. The photos inside the album's gatefold sleeve tell a tantalizingly incomplete tale: atop a piano, which is not heard recognizably as a piano (except on Wolff's side of the album), there rests a page of Cage's score, a stopwatch, a joy buzzer, four tacks, two coils of wire (one of them a Slinky), and a handful of difficult-to-identify implements. Cage's notes explain that phonograph cartridges were used to amplify these small objects: "Contact microphones are also used. These latter are applied to chairs, tables, waste baskets, etc.; various suitable objects (toothpicks, matches, slinkies, piano wires, feathers, etc.) are inserted in the cartridges."⁵³ In the interior photos, everyone is wear-

ing ties. It's men-only, and it's the last gasp of everyone looking like office workers — prior to, for example, the cover of Max Neuhaus's LP *Electronics and Percussion* (1968), in which he's shirtless, shaggy, bearded, and backlit.

Cartridge Music is a difficult listen, and different in character from the experimental-music pointillism of much of Cage's preceding indeterminate works for acoustic instruments. What else in 1963 represented squalling, difficult-to-identify noise so prominently? Perhaps for Earle Brown the temptation to release a phonograph record of sounds produced exclusively by phonographic cartridges — the sounds of malfunction, the sounds of misuse — was impossible to resist.

One thing that can be said for this recording of *Cartridge Music* is that up to a point it's likely to sound different with each subsequent listen. It's not easy for a listener to find his or her bearing in this environment of scrapes, zips, rattles, and pale, unintended feedback. Maybe this appealed to Cage or Brown — that this recording, in being so difficult to memorize, so seemingly formless and difficult to really get to know, creates the illusion of being less “fixed” than other recordings. The listener hears — which means focuses on — something different each time. I can personally say that this illusion is one reason that I am perpetually returning to this recording, seemingly anew, and that this is true of exceptionally “formless” pieces of music. They seem particularly well suited to the medium of recording.

A final odd, unpredictable element in this presentation of *Cartridge Music* is the unexpected revelation that — contradicting Cage's explanation to Richard Kostelanetz that he never used multitrack recording — “following the suggestion of David Tudor, the recording is the superimposition of four performances by the two of us.”⁵⁴ In his notes to *Cartridge Music*, Cage permitted himself a rare instance of speaking about the pleasures of a recording of this sort: “The theatrical aspect is of course missing on the present record, a certain quality of mystery (since one cannot see how the sounds are being produced) taking its place.”⁵⁵ This “quality of mystery” that Cage ascribes to *Cartridge Music* — a putting-into-play of contrasting experiences of the visible and the occluded — animates a number of his earlier works, especially *Williams Mix* and the *Imaginary Landscape* series.

Reluctant and contradiction-laden recording artist that he was, Cage has proved influential for future artists' approaches to making records. Chance and indeterminacy for Cage were antithetical to the form of the

record. Yet his recordings appealed to others precisely as explorations and representations of chance — and thus participated in a tradition of chance and technological mediation that has been central to modernity. This is the point, then, to consider the aesthetics of chance in modernity before it assumed a Cagian cast — back when the concept of chance was understood to be embodied in recording media.

Understood to be? When did recordings cease to represent chance?

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The category of chance is aptly described as a constitutive feature of modernity. The experience of chance in modernity has a strong basis in technological media, especially in photography, sound recording, and cinema. Experiences of these media have much to do with their claims of objectivity or nonarbitrariness of representation. The quality of indexicality in photography, sound recording, and cinema has been seen as a guarantor of objective, motivated representations within which the workings of chance are captured.

These media are the frames by which chance can be made visible — or audible.

To take the example of cinema, much writing on early cinema has focused on the ways in which the earliest single-shot films made chance occurrences visible. Dai Vaughan writes about the representation of chance and spontaneity in *A Boat Leaving the Harbour*, the film that concluded the Lumière brothers' first London program in February 1896. Vaughan summarizes the film with an attention to detail that is consistent with the experience of viewing a silent, short, single-shot film:

The action is simple. A rowing boat, with two men at the oars and one at the tiller, is entering boldly from the right foreground; and it proceeds, for fifty-odd seconds, towards the left background. On the tip of the jetty, which juts awkwardly into frame on the right, stand a child or two in frilly white and two women in black. Light shimmers on the water, though the sky seems leaden. The swell is not heavy; but as the boat passes beyond the jetty, leaving the protection of the harbour mouth, it is slewed around and caught broadside-on by the waves. The men are in difficulties; and one woman turns her attention from the children to

look at them. There it ends. Yet every time I have seen this film I have been overwhelmed by a sense of the *potentiality* of the medium: as if it had just been invented and lay waiting still to be explored.⁵⁶

Technological representations provide the spectator with a virtually inexhaustible wealth of indexically motivated, represented detail. Early cinema stands as a prime example of the richness and complexity of detail in filmic representation, because it marks a period in which “the *potentiality* of the medium” was widely and popularly savored. Vaughan cites Georges Sadoul’s *Histoire générale du cinéma* to make the point that “what impressed most early audiences was what would now be considered the incidentals of scenes: smoke from a forge, steam from a locomotive, brick-dust from a demolished wall,” noting as well that the still-hypnotizing rustling of leaves in the film *Le Dejeuner de bébé* was remarked upon by early filmmaker Georges Méliès after the first Paris Lumière program.⁵⁷ Vaughan memorably terms these eruptions of chance in early cinema “an escape of the represented from the representational act.”⁵⁸

There has been an enormous amount of writing about Cage’s deployments of chance and indeterminacy, so I will limit myself to a brief overview. From the beginning of the 1950s, Cage has been associated with the use of chance operations in composing music, and with the creation of compositions that are indeterminate with regard to their performance. Chance and indeterminacy, for Cage, are two separate and quite different categories.

Cage’s earliest use of chance in his compositions involved using chance operations to derive numerical values for measurable parameters that could subsequently be notated in a fully determinate score. In compositions from 1950 and 1951 such as *Music of Changes* and *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra*, Cage used the Chinese oracular work the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* to determine elements such as tempo, pitch value, duration, dynamics, and timbre.

Cage’s indeterminate works, by contrast, are intended to differ profoundly from performance to performance. Examples of his indeterminate works include the series of *Variations* composed between 1958 and 1966. In *Variations II* (1961) and *Variations III* (1962), a working score for each performance is prepared by haphazardly superimposing a series of transparencies, each of which contains marks that when placed atop one an-

other form a composite image. In these works, chance is not employed in the construction of a single determinate score, as was the case with *Music of Changes*; rather, the purpose of the *Variations* is to offer performers the means by which they may produce unique realizations. James Pritchett describes these pieces as “‘tools’ . . . works which do not describe events in either a determinate or an indeterminate way, but instead present a procedure by which to *create* any number of such descriptions or scores.”⁵⁹

In conversation with Daniel Charles, Cage defines chance compositionally as that element which enabled him to move beyond the impasse of repetition and variation he had encountered as a student of Arnold Schoenberg:

J.C.: For [Schoenberg], there was only repetition; he used to say that the principle of variation represented only the repetitions of something identical. . . . But I introduced into this opposition . . . that of something *other*, which cannot be cancelled out. . . . An element that has nothing to do with either repetition or variation. . . . That term is chance.

Cage subsequently offers the following summation:

D.C.: Whatever the role of chance may be in our daily life, don't we have to admit that chance often oversimplifies things?

J.C.: We owe this complexity to chance.⁶⁰

While he began by thinking of chance compositionally — trying to find an “outside” to repetition and variation — Cage increasingly came to define chance in terms of experience, often juxtaposing what he characterizes as the *complexity* of the real against musical form. Later in his career, Cage gave assent to readings of his work with chance in terms of a “complex realism,” in which an aesthetics of simultaneity emerges from his engagement with Zen “interpenetration and nonobstruction.”⁶¹

With regard to technology, Cage found the workings of chance in the play of technological mediation — but not in the final, fixed form of the record. Where Cage and Marcel Duchamp shared an appreciation of chance, in Duchamp's words, “as a way of going against logical reality,” the two differed in that Duchamp described himself as attracted to the idea of “canned chance.”⁶² If chance operations and indeterminacy were strategies to render Cage's work less personally expressive, then ascribing chance

to the interplay of such materials as radios, phonographs, and phono cartridges puts the composer at yet one more remove from the expressive, signature gestures unique to an individual. *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951) is scored for twelve radios, and, as we've seen, *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* calls for the use of any fifty-two records, and *Cartridge Music* uses phonograph cartridges to amplify "small sounds." With these and similar pieces, Cage sought to present the workings of chance through the real-time superimpositions of various technological media. For Cage, it was not enough that chance occurrences could be captured and represented in the form of a sound recording. It wasn't about the representation of leaves rustling or steam rising. Rather, he was drawn to the experience of chance that is possible when a number of elements are put into play simultaneously. To Cage the very idea of a record was bound up with the idea of a dull professionalism, of getting it right, of privileging text over sound — and perhaps, through repetition, of turning sound into text.

And yet, recordings also make accidents happen. Cinema-sound theorist James Lastra argues, "When modern technologies made it suddenly possible to record and reproduce images without the intervention of a human subject, the problems of contingency, chance, and arbitrariness thrust themselves into the realms of perception and of aesthetic production with equal force."⁶³ The sound recording is a frame that makes possible the representation of chance, much in the same way that many of the pleasures of early cinema were predicated on the representation of chance. Recordings are a means of making audible the sonic equivalent of — to use Dai Vaughan's evocations of one of the allures of early cinema — "steam from a locomotive, brick-dust from a demolished wall."

Media theorist Friedrich A. Kittler explores sound recording by linking it to the Lacanian category of the real, and in turn analogizing the typewriter and film, respectively, to the symbolic and the imaginary: "Phonographs can store articulate voices and musical intervals, but they are capable of more and different things. . . . An invention that subverts both literature and music (because it reproduces the unimaginable real they are both based on) must have struck even its inventor as something unheard of."⁶⁴ Whereas the register of the symbolic is that of the grid, of finite differentiation, and thus also of the written word (especially the typewritten word) and music composition (and finitely differentiated musical notation and compliance among scores, performances, and works as per Nelson Good-

man's *Languages of Art*), "the real" speaks to that noncomposed flux of material—in this instance, sound—that so energized Cage in his earliest encounters with magnetic tape:

Magnetic tape music makes it clear we
are in
totality
actively⁶⁵

As Branden W. Joseph notes, "In Cage's estimation, the capabilities of, for instance, magnetic tape allowed for the possibility not only of reproducing *any* sound, but, through various means of manipulation, producing *every* possible sound. Sound thereby became conceivable as a continuous expanse without gap, division, or lacuna."⁶⁶ The gap is precisely what disappears in the field of sound mechanically represented in a recording. It should be underscored that when Kittler writes about sound recording and the category of the real, he does so in the context of the phonograph. His account continually references the mass-cultural phenomenon of commercially distributed records—objects with material histories and at the center of any number of upheavals within culture—and not merely the condition of the possibility of being able to indexically represent a total field of sound through audio recording. Kittler's reading of Rainer Maria Rilke's short text "Primal Sound" (1919)—in which the author likens the skull's coronal suture to the grooves of a phonograph record and imagines the sound (he wonders if it would be music) that could come from tracing the bony suture with a phonographic needle—brings Rilke's reflections even closer to Cage's *Cartridge Music*, in which phonograph cartridges are used to similar ends. Kittler's gloss on "Primal Sound" reads like an argument for the otherness of much experimental music, that is, the inability to adequately represent it in a conventionally notated score: "A writer thus celebrates the very opposite of his own medium—the white noise no writing can store."⁶⁷ Furthermore, the phonograph facilitates writing with the absence of syntax or even an author. "Ever since the invention of the phonograph, there has been writing without a subject. It is no longer necessary to assign an author to every trace, not even God."⁶⁸

Phonographic representation, as interpreted by Kittler, can be aligned with many of the major themes in Cage's life and work. Functionally akin to recording's openness to all sounds, Cage's work with chance and inde-

terminacy — as well as his frequent exhortations to listen, to open one's ears to the excellence of the world — if not necessarily dissolving the function of the composer, points toward a transformation of the composer's expressivity. Cage's career constitutes a series of lessons in destabilizing syntax. When he turned to poetry, Cage explicitly developed techniques to suspend linguistic syntax: "Due to N. O. Brown's remark that syntax is the arrangement of the army, and Thoreau's that when he heard a sentence he heard feet marching, I became devoted to nonsyntactical 'demilitarized' language."⁶⁹

One can also say that records create accidents because a mistake or flaw or non sequitur on a recording is conventionally and contextually that much more remarkable than it would appear in a performance. With early cinema, it was some time before the represented was harnessed to more involved and involving forms of narrative representation. In recorded sound, there has been less of a movement toward a *narrative* smoothing over of "accidents." Most early records, like most commercially released sound recordings today, are recordings of music — of songs, of compositions, of a text. But often it is precisely the nontextual elements, the in-addition-to-song, the external-to-composition, that are most thrilling about records.

This is old news, perhaps. Try, for example, telling it to Henry Flynt as he's doing his best to explain Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley in 1961 to a perplexed John Cage. In his 2004 radio interview with Kenneth Goldsmith, Flynt's recounting of musical experiences has as much to do with commercial recordings as it does with live performances. Commercial recordings — the term can seem strained, because here I'm referring to a diverse collection of LP releases that includes Robert Johnson and Ali Akbar Khan and Samuel Charters' anthology, *The Country Blues* — collapse time and distance as well as, in Flynt's case, racial and economic barriers. Flynt's pleasure, as for so many people, in listening to a recording of Robert Johnson was, in Dai Vaughan's formulation, an "escape of the represented from the representational act." Individual details assert themselves — the unrepeatable slap of shoe leather on studio floor, the perfectly unique slide-guitar motif. The experience is of song and performance and the innumerable nuances that constitute its representation in the form of a recording. How is the guitar's tuning? How is its intonation? How do minute variations in pitch affect the instrument's timbre? What about the voice jumps out at you? What about the voice will you recall after one listen? Will you

be able to separate your memory of a voice from your memory of a song? What is the recorded-music equivalent of brick dust? At what point in subsequent listens does the previously happenstance, unscripted detail begin to be understood as serving a structural function? For how long do unscripted details continue to emerge? At what point do you sense that a recording has given up all of its secrets — or at least its most crucial ones? How do you respond to seemingly unplanned occurrences on the first listen? On the second listen? The fiftieth?

To use Cage's own words in a very different context, "We owe this complexity to chance." That, and the ability to represent chance by means of a sound recording.

And yet it would be a mistake to describe the extracompositional, the supplementary-to-song, solely with reference to chance. When hearing the recordings of Robert Johnson, contemporary listeners are bound to respond to the narrower frequency range and the various distortions that attest to the fact that these were undertaken eighty years ago. Even with remastering and sophisticated audio-restoration software, these recordings will likely continue to signify the period in which they were made. Their roughness and dated quality can be part of their appeal, but "chance" is not really the appropriate category with which to address this particular textural quality. "Contingency" can be the more operative term, given that it speaks to the compromises that are part of the process of making sound recordings — compromises made in the interest of time that may affect the selection of a take, the placement of microphones, the number of edits in a master recording, the amount of time devoted to a mix, and so on. The technical limitations of a period — call them temporal markers, the elements in the sonic profile of an era — play their role in the texture of a recording, as do professional (and all variety of antiprofessional) mores with regard to audio engineering, production, and performance standards and techniques when executing a recording. Cage's excitement notwithstanding, magnetic tape doesn't so much represent a total field of sound as it allows for a representation that points beyond the symbolic grid of music.

Whether you call this supplement "the real," material flux, "Primal Sound," noise, or "totality," sound recording comes to us as a means of representing this extracompositional excess that is crucial to, for lack of a better term, music.

But just as Flynt got it — that it isn't about the tune so much as how it gets across, and what previously unimagined sounds wind up in the grooves of a record — Cage helped others to get it. The scrapings and zippings and pale patches of feedback on Cage and Tudor's 1962 recording of *Cartridge Music* are as impossible to represent on paper as a crazily out-of-tune electric guitar. Or Howlin' Wolf's voice. Or Glenn Gould's disobliging Steinway piano's bizarre and utterly distracting "hiccup" on his recording of Bach's *Two- and Three-Part Inventions*,⁷⁰ or, to give one more example from a nearly limitless number, the memorable broken middle-C on jazz pianist Marilyn Crispell's trio album with Fred Anderson and Hamid Drake.⁷¹

The zippings and scrapings and puddles of contact-mic feedback on *Cartridge Music* are as unpredictable and as difficult to memorize as the rustle and flutter of leaves in the Lumière brothers' *Le Dejeuner de bébé*. Both experiences speak to the potentiality of these respective media. In some ways the experience of listening to *Cartridge Music* is even stranger, given that it speaks to the potentiality of a medium that's already nearly a century old. *Cartridge Music* is only one such example among many from this period, and it should be noted that Cage's and Tudor's interest in live electronic music — that most volatile of musics, especially given these performers' homemade, jerry-rigged arrays of analog electronics — coincided with a growing number of releases of Cage's music.⁷² Records have come to represent ever more eccentric, more unrepeatable performances — less conventionally musical performances — and Cage's unprecedented chaotic recordings from the early 1960s have shown the way forward.

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Just as histories of cinema have explored spectators' experience of chance in early films, there is a tradition of critical writing that addresses representations of chance and contingency in photography. These elements do not merely inhere in photography's physical medium; the practice of representing chance in photography also emerges from specific materials and techniques (think of the blur or, conversely, the stunningly precise, previously inaccessible tableau that results from representing an action through an inhumanly brief fraction of the time of its unfolding) as well as from the cultural significations of images that represent simultaneously an instant and a precise, identifiable moment in time (this photograph was

taken in the early evening of May 5, 1966, just before sunset, and so on). As James Lastra contends, “‘Photography’ refers not simply to a device but to an entire network of attitudes and practices determining the use of that device with the goal of producing images that render the world familiar and explicable through a structure of representation.” Lastra goes on to link this conception of photography as an array of practices and interpretations to audio: “When we invoke ‘sound recording’ we imply just such a network of interrelated practices.”⁷³

Walter Benjamin, in his essay “A Short History of Photography” (1931), posits that what is at stake is not whether photography counts as art, but rather what the practice of photography does to the category of art: “It is this fetishistic, fundamentally anti-technical notion of *Art* with which theorists of photography have tussled for almost a century without, of course, achieving the slightest result. For they sought nothing beyond acquiring credentials for the photographer from the judgment-seat which he had already overturned.”⁷⁴ Moving past what he takes to be a distracting, unnecessary debate, Benjamin describes the role of chance through what he terms “the optical unconscious”: “However skilful the photographer, however carefully he poses his model, the spectator feels an irresistible compulsion to look for that tiny spark of chance, of the here and now, with which reality has, as it were, seared the character in the picture.”⁷⁵ Among Benjamin’s various close readings of early photographs, one of his most memorable analyses—and one that is notable for the way in which it gently undercuts a common tendency toward describing chance and contingency in terms of extremes of affect—concerns the precise form of the wrinkles in a coat worn by the philosopher Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling in an 1850 portrait by an unknown photographer: “Everything in the early pictures was designed to last . . . even the folds assumed by a garment in these pictures last longer. One has only to look at Schelling’s coat; its immortality, too, rests assured; the shape it assumes upon its wearer is not unworthy of the creases in the latter’s face.”⁷⁶

In Roland Barthes’s terminology, Benjamin’s interest in the photograph of Schelling can be divided into two categories: the *studium* and the *punctum*. These categories emerge through Barthes’s reflection on the ontology of the photograph. The *studium* is above all cultural; Walter Benjamin is interested in the subject of philosophy and in the history of German philosophers including Schelling, and thus naturally he will be drawn toward

looking at a photographic representation of someone whose life and work are already meaningful to him. He will study the image in the hope that it furthers his knowledge of Schelling. With the *punctum*, by contrast, Barthes invokes the unexpected detail, the sudden eruption of chance, which the viewer, unprepared, experiences as a prick, a jab, and even a bruise. The *punctum* is that element in the photograph that provokes a physical response and that can be difficult to describe in cultural terms: “*punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole — and also a cast of the dice.”⁷⁷

In Benjamin’s reading of the photograph of Schelling, the wrinkles on the philosopher’s coat constitute a fortuitous detail, unforeseen, one that stops Benjamin cold. And while it is true that his analysis of this detail is comparatively dispassionate — he does not seem to be bruised by it, and whatever emotional valence it elicits goes unexpressed — the wrinkles on Schelling’s coat nonetheless constitute a detail that thrusts itself forward, and Benjamin finds himself reflecting on this unexpectedly apposite chance element, the muted *punctum*.

The *punctum* in a photograph is an element that you see — or, conversely, that captures your attention — without looking for it, without intending to do so. The *punctum* in a sound recording would be that extracompositional detail that unexpectedly snaps to the fore, that pierces you for reasons you did not anticipate and that you might be hard-pressed to explain.

In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag extends the analogy between photography and sound recording as technologies as well as techniques for representing chance. Sontag’s description of photography as a means of both “certifying” and “refusing” experience can be extended to sound recording: “A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it — by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir.”⁷⁸ Cage’s sentiment that records are like postcards that diminish our experience of the landscape is echoed by Sontag in a similar formulation: “Despite the illusion of giving understanding, what seeing through photographs really invites is an acquisitive relation to the world that nourishes aesthetic awareness and promotes emotional detachment.”⁷⁹ Sontag also articulates a number of photography’s qualities — qualities belonging to both the material conditions and the cultural practice of photography — that render it distinct from the practice of sound recording. Unlike an audio recording, a photograph is an arrested instant, and Sontag thinks that this is why photographs are

more memorable than images in film or television. (In the early 1970s, when Sontag was writing *On Photography*, it was incomparably easier to possess a photograph than it was to possess — much less to be able to access at will without having to own — a copy of a film.) The most important distinction that limits the analogy between photography and sound recording has to do with the sheer scale of the practice of photography. Nearly everyone takes pictures. Given its omnipresence, Sontag likens amateur photography to sex and dancing; by contrast, amateur sound recording has never become remotely as popular a cultural phenomenon.⁸⁰

While photography and sound recording have both been analyzed on the basis of representing chance, Cage evoked a different relationship between photography and the composition of experimental music. In one of his most influential essays, “Experimental Music” (1957), Cage likened the contemporary composer to the maker of a camera:

Those involved with the composition of experimental music find ways and means to remove themselves from the activities of the sounds they make. . . . Analogous to the Rorschach tests of psychology, the interpretation of imperfections in the paper upon which one is writing may provide a music free from one’s memory and imagination. . . . The total field of possibilities may be roughly divided and the actual sounds within these divisions may be indicated as to number but left to the performer or to the splicer to choose. In this latter case, the composer resembles the maker of a camera who allows someone else to take the picture.⁸¹

The composer is the camera’s maker; the indeterminate score is the camera; the performer is the photographer; the performance is the resulting image.⁸² The example that Cage provides is, on closer examination, a bit more complicated. The composer locates imperfections in a piece of paper and writes music based on these chance discoveries. The metaphor of the camera is multivalent; one could say that the composer acts like a camera when he or she detects chance imperfections in a piece of paper, in much the same way that photography indexically represents chance. But Cage does not say this. He doesn’t liken the composer to a camera; rather, the comparison is between the indeterminate score and a camera. (It’s helpful to remember James Pritchett’s description of Cage’s indeterminate scores as “tools.”) Camera or camera-maker, however, Cage’s analogy speaks to an interest in the experience of chance in the medium of the photograph,

as well as a desire to transform the composer into the composer function (which is in turn further abstracted as a toolmaker function).⁸³

The starting point of the analogy is that the composer/toolmaker to a certain extent removes him- or herself from the final outcome. Given this, how strange it is that Cage likens the search for chance imperfections in a piece of paper to a Rorschach test — which is intended to reveal a subject's unconscious feelings or emotions. The analogy to the Rorschach test is quite literally a Freudian slip, in which Cage, while attempting to explain how he removes himself from his compositions, winds up comparing that very process to a well-known psychological test. The withdrawal of personality in Cage's case, the self-portrait as maker of machines (it's relevant to note that his father was an inventor), ultimately rebounds, inverted, as information about his person. Or as an oscillation between these poles of personality and impersonality that continues to attract listeners and commentators.

In his essay "Chance as Ideology" (1967), the composer Konrad Boehmer takes Cage to task for the camera-maker analogy. He writes, "In a double sense, Cage's thinking reveals a tendency to naked reification: the composition becomes a mere instrument (a camera), while its realization in sound becomes a mere object, a natural panorama perhaps."⁸⁴ But Boehmer ignores a basic premise of the analogy — that the resulting performances are potentially as different from one another as a multitude of photos taken from a single camera. It also feels like a rather pointed taunt, for Boehmer surely was aware that for Cage the term "object" had an especially negative valence. Boehmer's most basic objection to Cage's work is that it is premised upon an unreflective "cult of unmediated nature," hence his comparison of the resulting performance to a photograph of a natural vista.⁸⁵ Boehmer wants to have it both ways with this critique: Cage's writing reifies performance — likening it to a photograph — while expressing an aesthetic that is based on "unmediated nature." Boehmer finds Cage to be dangerously solipsistic, and he argues that the ideology of chance results in the composer's utter isolation; without a method that permits value judgments, each composer works alone, and each composer's work says nothing about the next composer's work: "In the end, no musical context can be produced through the naked verdict of absolute isolation. All the more decisively, then, the challenge must be made to coordinate chance — which is an expression of the situation at which musical thinking has arrived —

with musical material, and thus allow it to emerge as functional within a comprehensive compositional method.”⁸⁶

It is true that Cage’s impact had in part to do with both the atomization of musical material and the radical expansion of the domain of the musical. Boehmer quotes Marx: “Abstract singularity is the freedom from existence, not the freedom in existence.”⁸⁷ It is also true that Cage’s famous story of his epiphanic understanding of silence involves an anechoic chamber—virtually a caricature of the isolated composer. But “isolation” is a term that would have been strongly contested by Cage. Witness the following exchange between Daniel Charles and Cage:

D.C.: Today, music no longer conceives of itself as isolated.

J.C.: We have more than just ears.⁸⁸

While Boehmer’s argument recalls the music and cultural criticism of Theodor W. Adorno, Adorno himself was intrigued by that small amount of Cage’s work to which he was exposed. In his essay “Vers une musique informelle” (1961), Adorno describes an encounter with a recording of a work by Cage: “I was also deeply moved by a single hearing of Cage’s Piano Concerto played on Cologne Radio, though I would be hard put to define the effect with any precision. Even at the best of times precise definition is anything but straightforward with works of this kind.”⁸⁹ Boehmer focuses on Cage’s idealization of nature, but Adorno instead considers the status of Cage’s compositions as works of anti-art: “The aspirations of Cage and his school have eradicated all topoi, without going into mourning for a subjective, organic ideal in which they suspect the topoi of maintaining an after-life. This is why to dismiss anti-art as pretentious cabaret and humour would be as great an error as to celebrate it. . . . As a joke they hurl culture into people’s faces, a fate which both culture and people richly deserve.”⁹⁰ Where in 1967 Boehmer would attack Cage with the charge that he had isolated the contemporary composer and musical material—Cage’s compositions, in his view, lacking internal differentiation and value—Adorno had already considered this objection: “Every work of art is always more than itself. This is confirmed by the fact that even works in which all interconnections have been rigorously eliminated, as in Cage’s Piano Concerto, nevertheless create new meanings by virtue of that very rigour.”⁹¹

The attempt to eliminate “interconnections” within a work has in part to do with Cagean indeterminacy—leaving it up to the performer to cre-

ate an ideally unique realization of the work. To take the photo. An issue with Cage's camera-maker analogy is that to speak of a camera is generally understood to suggest creating a representational image. Surely Adorno would have found the likening of one of Cage's indeterminate works (which he took to be occupying extremes of anti-art abstractness) to a photograph to be perverse. The photograph, for Adorno, marked an intensification of representational art. In his *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Adorno likened abstraction in painting to atonality in music, noting the role played by mechanical reproduction in the turn to abstraction: "The liberation of modern painting from objectivity, which was to art the break that atonality was to music, was determined by the defensive against the mechanized art commodity—above all, photography."⁹² From here, it's a short leap of logic to suggest that the development of atonality was in part a defensive reaction against phonography. It is certainly the case that, two decades after Adorno wrote the *Philosophy of Modern Music*, avant-garde approaches of the 1960s such as indeterminacy, minimalism, live electronic music, and free improvisation to varying extents presented themselves as alternatives to the experience of listening to recorded music. The explicit goal—whether for Cage, for performers of live electronic music, or for free improvisers—was to engage in a musical practice that would be unique with each instantiation.⁹³

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In Cage's work, there is no appreciation of the pathos of the dead letter that is the record. Thoreau is his writer, not the Melville of "Bartleby, the Scrivener."

Despite Cage's relatively unchanging aversion, the practice of making records changed as a result of Cage's work in the 1960s. How could it not, after people heard the scrapes and crackles and squeals of feedback on *Variations II* and *Cartridge Music*? How could it not, after the stand-up-comic informality with some kind of mystifying, undergirding rigor—the mystery—of his and David Tudor's *Indeterminacy*? Cage, while professing to find little or no value in the act of making records, nonetheless created unprecedented types of recordings. One has to imagine that the possibility of making records pushed Cage to record compositions that would result in more formless, more sonically barbed performances. The result was that

he inspired others to approach the creation of sound through the medium of recording. These records inspired musicians and nonmusicians alike.

Despite the fact that Cage's recordings helped him to become the figure that he was to be in the 1960s—the renown through which, in his words, “I’m able to do what I have to do”—it’s difficult to group his works together as exemplifying a particular aesthetic of recording. If this is so, it’s not because his recordings lacked for innovation. To give a very few examples, his *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* was arguably the first work to use the recording studio and its appurtenances—in this case, test-tone records and variable-speed turntables—as an instrument. *Williams Mix* features a technique of rapid-fire editing the likes of which had previously not been heard. *Cartridge Music* is a signal effort in a tradition of works that foreground the materiality of sound representation. The Time Records version of *Cartridge Music* is an early example of blind superimposition, the overlaying of parts that were recorded separately and without reference to one another, which would later become a familiar trope of experimental music on record. A number of Cage’s recordings have a dogged point-of-audition quality, even—and especially—if this results in the obscuring of elements one would otherwise imagine as demanding legibility. Recall, for example, Cage’s notes to *Indeterminacy*, in which he explains that having loud sounds periodically drown out his voice is a welcome effect.

All of these techniques—the studio as musical meta-instrument; the foregrounding of the materiality of recorded sound; extreme rapidity of editing; blind superimposition of multiple takes; and extremes in point-of-audition representation—can be counted as important and regularly revisited precedents in recorded-music aesthetics. Cage, owing to his disdain for records, never trumpeted these practices as part of an evolving aesthetics of recorded sound. His innovations that involved the recording studio and recorded sound tended to be specific to individual works, and not oriented toward creating a repertoire of techniques to which he would return. If Cage’s innovations are not immediately or conventionally recognized as advancing an aesthetics of recording, it’s because they’re more likely to be seen as practices or techniques bound up with individual compositions.

That, and because people have tended to take Cage, upstanding member of the musicians’ union, at his word.

Free Improvisation and Record Culture

The improvised music scene, at least in some quarters, seems to have sunk into an obsession with dates and who did what first. . . . For improvised music, in thirty-odd years, to have sunk to the level of the antiques trade is ludicrous. —Derek Bailey

I hate going to improvised music concerts. . . . I just want to buy the record. I mean, you've got people who are playing for you who have years and years of thought and trial and error with this form of music. What they're giving to you is information so dense that, unless you're fucking brilliant, you're not going to get all the possible trains of thought that are going on there. —Jim O'Rourke

It was a rant session. The occasion was a November 1998 “Invisible Jukebox” test for the monthly British new-music magazine *The Wire*, and its subject — or victim — was the improvising guitarist Derek Bailey. Critic Ben Watson, then in the process of writing a biography of Bailey, administered the test.

The “Invisible Jukebox” is an experiment in blindfolded listening in which its subject is challenged to identify and then urged to comment upon a number of recordings. For regular readers of this feature, it is not uncommon to see artists successfully identify eight, nine, or ten out of the dozen or so excerpts that are presented to them. The point of the feature is not so much to stump the artists — which shouldn't be so difficult to do — but rather to get them talking about particular influences or collaborations from different moments in their career. That said, it can be entertain-



FIGURE 4.1. Spontaneous Music Ensemble at Betterbooks Basement, London, March 22, 1967: Derek Bailey, foreground, with (left to right) Paul Rutherford, Chris Cambridge, and John Stevens. Not pictured: Evan Parker and Trevor Watts. Photograph by Jak Kilby.

ing and educational when someone fails to recognize a person or piece of music that you would have thought near and dear to their heart and their practice. Or, occasionally, when they fail to recognize themselves.

Bailey was the “Invisible Jukebox” ur-curmudgeon. It was as if he were being held and tested against his will. It’s unclear why he agreed to the process, except perhaps for the opportunity to air his dissident viewpoint. If Henry Flynt is a self-described “anti-art activist,” then this was an occasion for the antirecording activist Bailey to proselytize.

Bailey was given fourteen pieces to identify, and he failed to recognize a single one of them. In the transcript of the session, he seems alternately proud and defensive with regard to this distinction. Watson selected works by a number of composers and musicians whom Bailey had previously singled out as admiring, including Anton Webern, Flamenco guitarist Paco Peña (whom Bailey had interviewed for the BBC television series based on his book *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*), and the Clifford Brown and Max Roach Quintet. When presented with a snippet of music from the pioneering free-improvisation group AMM — who do

not sound remotely like any of the other artists represented in the test — and asked if he recognized the track, Bailey responded, “No. I don’t recognize any of ’em. All sound the bloody same to me.”¹ By which he meant that they all sounded like *records*: “There’s a lot of things about records I don’t like. Virtually everything about recording I do like. . . . Recording’s fine if it wasn’t for fucking records. . . . The whole of people’s listening lives is built around records if I understand it right. But it’s all endgame — it introduces the endgame to something that is for me not primarily about endgame.”²

And on he goes. Bailey remains true to form throughout, describing every one of this stylistically diverse batch of recordings as interchangeable — and solely on the basis of their ontological status as recordings. Bailey, an inarguably sophisticated musician, refuses to make any but the most fleeting of comments about the musical content of the pieces. Instead, his responses almost exclusively are focused on the experience of listening to music in recorded form: “The point of a record is that you can play it again. . . . It’ll all eventually become mood music, right?”³

Quarrelsome, certainly. But also entertainingly, undeviatingly, diabolically on point.

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This chapter focuses on two British artists who played important roles in shaping the practice of free improvised music in the 1960s: Derek Bailey and the group AMM, a cadre of young musicians and art students who for a number of years played and worked together in a unique alliance with the composer Cornelius Cardew. Bailey expressed his attitudes toward recording in any number of barbed, eminently quotable comments, while AMM — including Cardew, in the period during which he participated in the group — addressed issues of recording and documentation in more formal critical writings.⁴ How does this music function when encountered through the archival medium of the sound recording?

Free improvisation, in the form that it took in the United Kingdom and across Europe starting at the end of the 1960s, is nearly always described as a music that demands to be experienced in live performance. Its practitioners — who also tended to be, at least in this initial phase, its theorists and polemicists — collectively articulated the ideal of a music characterized

by the continual renewal of sonic material, real-time flow, and the absence of repetition. Composers were asked to remove themselves to the sidelines. The rhetorical emphasis steered toward the *practice* of improvisation, rather than toward the performance of a style of music that might be called “free improvisation.” European free improvised music thus emerged with a complex relation to tradition. At one and the same time free improvisation was posited as a kind of music degree zero, a break with both music composition and recognized forms of improvisation (including free jazz, its closest living relation), while simultaneously being documented, theorized, and historicized as a tradition in the making.

If John Cage occupies an extreme in experimental music with his disdain for records, his deadpan-comedic visions of demolishing LPs, and his repeated warnings that records are antithetical to the nature of music, these positions would become commonplace (perhaps with the exception of the fantasy of destroying records) in the discourse surrounding free improvisation. As with other new genres in experimental music in the 1960s, free improvisation was both explicitly theorized and conventionally understood to be ill suited to the form of the recording. Just as Cage spoke with dismay about records at the same time that he actively participated in their production — and in the production of a surprisingly large number of records — the situation with regard to free improvised music has proved to be similar. Antirecording rhetoric notwithstanding, there has rarely been a shortage of free improvised music on record. This has had to do in part with the prevalence in the sphere of free improvisation of artist-run record labels. In spite of their professed positions regarding the incommensurability between improvisation and sound recording, both Derek Bailey and AMM’s Eddie Prévoſt founded influential, long-running record labels (respectively, Incus and Matchless) dedicated primarily to improvised music. At times, it has seemed as if nearly every free improviser has set up his or her own record label or been a member of a collective that releases its own recordings. Even before professional-quality recording equipment became affordable to the average musician, recordings of improvised music were notably inexpensive to produce. These recordings represent music created in real time — in both theory and practice they multiply like rabbits — and for many musicians these releases have functioned both as a calling card and as a means of generating a modest income. Keith Rowe, who participated in AMM from 1965 until 2004 (with the exception of a three-year

gap between 1972 and 1975), comments that while “we took that quite seriously as an AMM idea, that recordings were really undesirable,” conversely “recordings are absolutely necessary if you want to play live music, which is really ironic.”⁵ The result has been that where much experimental music created in the 1960s did not circulate in recorded form until it appeared on archival releases decades later — remember that there was little in the way of infrastructure for distributing recordings, and that much experimental music in point of practice chafed against the strictures of the LP — a comparatively large amount of free improvisation circulated in recorded form in the time of its making.

The argument that free improvisation differs ontologically from sound recording continues to be a touchstone of theoretical writing about improvised music. The critic John Corbett references Roland Barthes’s distinction between “readerly” and “writerly” texts when he groups together scores and recordings as belonging to the category of readerly texts: “Re-reading music — listening again — thus allows for recognition of structural elements, presents new analytic possibilities, and reveals the constructed nature of a piece.”⁶ By contrast, Corbett likens improvisation to the Barthesian writerly text: “We should establish that records of improvised music . . . are not the same as improvisation, but are instead a more refined form of inscription, of composition. To render a writerly text readerly is to record it.”⁷ Corbett uses the example of free improvisation to emphasize that sound recording is never a neutral or merely mechanical process of inscription, but one that bespeaks numerous quasi-compositional decisions that are made before, during, and after the ostensible time and place of the recording. These include the effect that the situation of recording has on performance practices, selecting material for inclusion on an album, mixing, editing, devising titles, selecting artwork, and so on.

Commercial recordings of free improvised music bestow a work aspect on the musical result, one that brings it closer to the context of composed music. Suddenly performances are edited into or selected and sequenced as “pieces” of music. The LP side or the CD’s length imposes upon the work a standardized duration. If musicians wish to receive mechanical or broadcast royalties, they must file paperwork with the relevant agency, be it the Performing Right Society (United Kingdom), GEMA (Germany), SACEM (France), ASCAP or BMI (United States), or another entity, stipulating that these pieces of music indeed have composers. Once these

works — because that's what they become — appear on commercial recordings, they have to be filed somewhere. Perhaps you will find them filed in the jazz section of your local record store, unless it's the kind of specialty store that further subdivides its stock: free jazz, experimental music, free improvised music, electroacoustic improvisation, and on and on into ever-more-precise designations.

In this way, the practice of improvisation yields performances of improvised music; performances of improvised music become recordings; these recordings, through the process of being designated with a title and composer, become compositions; and improvisers, for better or worse, become recording artists.

Unlike Derek Bailey, when Corbett insists on an ontological difference between improvisation and its representation in the form of a recording, the purpose of the distinction is not to dismiss the pleasures of recordings of improvised music. His point is rather that they differ in kind. Indeed, listeners to free improvised music famously register as one of the more ravenous, tenacious species of record collectors, and an argument can be made about the masochistic quality of collecting recordings of free improvised music. These records tend to be issued in small batches, making them difficult to find; they sell for strikingly high prices once they're out-of-print; and they're often downplayed by the artists who made them.

The moralistic tone with which recordings of free improvisation were once more commonly disdained has lessened or, in some cases, disappeared entirely with new generations of listeners who are likely to have first encountered improvised music in recorded form. In much the same way that Henry Flynt was surprised to hear Kenneth Goldsmith attest to significantly broader contemporary listening habits ("Nobody blinks twice about listening to country, blues, and avant-garde music today"), the first generation of European free improvisers might be equally surprised when the younger composer and improviser Jim O'Rourke (born in 1969), who bridged a generational divide by performing with improvisers such as Derek Bailey and AMM's Eddie Prevost while still in his early twenties, argues that he would rather have the opportunity to encounter improvised music in recorded form, where the possibility of repeated listens allows him to better parse and to better appreciate the multiple, simultaneous contributions of its most nimbly accomplished players.

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Just as many free improvisers have described their practice as ill suited to the form of the recording, many performers and theorists have characterized free improvisation through what it excludes musically. In this version of events, free improvisation emerged in the 1960s by breaking away from both jazz and new music, including compositions with open or indeterminate forms as well as pieces that explicitly combine composition and improvisation.⁸ Free improvised music would be, in Derek Bailey's controversial formulation, "non-idiomatic."

What would it mean to create a non-idiomatic music? How do you escape working in a musical idiom? In the first edition of his book *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*, Derek Bailey insists upon a distinction between idiomatic and non-idiomatic improvisation with the following basically tautological description: "Idiomatic improvisation, much the most widely used, is mainly concerned with the expression of an idiom — such as jazz, flamenco or baroque — and takes its identity and motivation from that idiom. Non-idiomatic improvisation has other concerns and is most usually found in so-called 'free' improvisation and, while it can be highly stylized, is not usually tied to representing an idiomatic identity."⁹ But surely music emerges from this process; how do you describe it? How does the rhetoric of "idiom" sit with the musical results of free improvisation?

More than a decade later, in material added to a subsequent edition of *Improvisation*, Bailey reconsidered his distinction between free improvisation and idiomatic improvisation. His later conclusion is that the two do not fundamentally differ: "Freedom for the improviser is, like the ultimate idiomatic expression for the idiomatic improviser, something of a Shangri-la. In practice the focus of both players is probably more on means than ends. All improvisation takes place in relation to the known whether the known is traditional or newly acquired."¹⁰ But by this later date, unfortunately, the term "non-idiomatic improvisation" had achieved a certain currency as a way of describing a musical practice that imagined itself shorn of the influences of jazz and new music.

The composer, scholar, and improvising trombone player George E. Lewis has provided the most thorough critique of European free improvisation's attempts to obscure its relation to jazz improvisation.¹¹ Lewis writes,

“Buried within this Eurological definition of improvisation is a notion of spontaneity that excludes history or memory. In this regard, ‘real’ improvisation is often described in terms of eliminating reference to ‘known’ styles. Among the styles that are already ‘known,’ ‘jazz’ is the most often cited in the literature on the subject—perhaps by reason of its role as epistemological other.”¹² A plurality of first-generation European free improvisers came to improvisation through jazz, and specifically through an emerging tradition of free jazz for which musicians such as Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, and Albert Ayler were paramount. (AMM counts as an atypical hybrid in that it tilted more decisively—particularly through the influence of Cornelius Cardew and the brief participation of Christian Wolff in the group—toward a Cagean experimental-music tradition, even as Keith Rowe, Eddie Prévost, and original saxophonist Lou Gare had played in established jazz groups. It was not for nothing that AMM’s early manager Victor Schonfeld memorably referred to the group as “John Cage jazz.”)¹³ To be sure, European free improvisation is far from the first avant-garde musical practice to downplay its borrowings from jazz improvisation and to exclude African American musicians from its genealogy. Numerous musicians, critics, and historians who cast themselves as belonging to an American experimental-music tradition have often posited a dividing line between jazz and an experimental music for which “indeterminacy” and not “improvisation” denotes open-ended musical process.¹⁴ As George E. Lewis thoughtfully proposes, “A more nuanced view of improvised music might identify as more salient differentiating characteristics its welcoming of agency, social necessity, personality, and difference, as well as its strong relationship to popular and folk cultures.”¹⁵

What role does sound recording play in making sense of the overlapping, historically potent terms “jazz,” “free improvisation,” and “experimentalism”? Sound recording has functioned as a medium by which listeners, including performers, have in part come to know free improvised music. Some free improvisers never moved past their dissatisfaction with sound recording’s mirroring and its distortions, the processes by which the dream of a non-idiomatic music—the dream of a non-idiomatic activity—becomes broadly recognizable as a musical idiom.¹⁶ Jazz musicians have historically been much less inclined toward moralism and elaborate caveats about recordings. To give an example, Derek Bailey has been represented on well over a hundred full-length releases. When asked if the

number of records he's made gives him vertigo (or any other illness), Bailey replied, "There's a perspective on that. I was in New York about four or five years ago, and Ray Brown, the jazz player, had his seventieth birthday. He played six nights at the Blue Note, and it turns out that he's put out 1,200 records."¹⁷

Georgina Born argues that sound recording — both the fact of representing a musical performance in the form of a recording and the commodification of performances through commercially released recordings — is a crucial element in jazz's ontology:

On the one hand, there is the moment of performance . . . as a dialogical, participatory creative act grounded in an aesthetics of collaborative improvisation, one that entails a particular experience of musical intersubjectivity and place, in which the interaction is at once musical and social. On the other hand, there is the capture of that moment in commodity form by recording . . . , an objectification that is productive in enabling improvised performance to be disseminated and known beyond its original time and location — in which form it becomes the aural means of educating and socializing other musicians and later generations.¹⁸

She contrasts this situation with that of experimental music in a Cagean tradition: "If the use of live electronics suggests evidence of parallel invention to the black popular musics mentioned before, there is a telling difference. For in this lineage, each instance of improvisation or installation is limited and sufficient to itself; it generates only the performance event. Unlike the jazz genealogy, here recording and its circulation in commodity form play no role in distributed musical development; there is no cumulative creative relay, no building of an aesthetic language."¹⁹ Born's description of Cagean experimental music — in which recordings play no role in educating future generations, and where the music bespeaks a process that attempts to short-circuit the transformation of its ad hoc musical materials into a common language — approximates the rhetoric of early free improvisers. As regards the function of recordings, it is true that this first generation of free improvisers comes closer to Cage and his distrust of repetition than to a community of jazz improvisers for whom records are an important means for extending a tradition and for laying the groundwork to educate players yet to come. The ongoing dialogues in jazz are con-

ducted using musical materials that are not fundamentally altered when inscribed in the form of a recording.

It is, however, an overstatement to claim that recordings of experimental music “play no role in distributed musical development.” This description takes the Cagean experimental tradition (and by extension, in this context, free improvisation) too much according to its artists’ stated aims. In theory much experimental music actively seeks to avoid a constructive engagement with tradition. And yet, the experience of encountering this music in recorded form — especially given the dramatic shift in the volume of and ease of access to recorded materials — has resulted in contemporary musical practice increasingly characterized by its dialogue with obscure, furtive traditions that are only now coming into sharper focus. To take the example of free improvisation, the access to recordings has pushed free improvisation further from its quixotic ideal of a non-idiomatic music, and more toward a social aspect, a living engagement with tradition, a mode that Born ascribes specifically to jazz. When an improvising musician such as Jim O’Rourke expresses his preference for records of improvised music of concerts (“what they’re giving to you is information so dense that, unless you’re fucking brilliant, you’re not going to get all the possible trains of thought that are going on there”), what is that if not a testimony to “cumulative creative relay”?

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It seems to be such a vague thing, influences. For improvising musicians it seems to consist usually in studying the work of another musician, very often through recordings. I’ve never done that—maybe because I’ve never had a record collection. I think I’ve purchased fewer than half a dozen records in my life. —Derek Bailey

The guitar in free improvised music is largely identified with Derek Bailey’s playing.²⁰ Bailey’s guitar playing is an immediately recognizable thing, an ornery and radically individualistic vocabulary of preferred dissonances, spiky interjections, mercurial rhythmic discontinuity, and chords embellished by the most unlikely and most fragile of harmonics. His playing contains a repertoire of gestures—a slow pick slide down an open string; an open hand giving a quick, light, harmonic-producing stroke; various percussive notes struck above the guitar’s nut or below its bridge—that, not

surprisingly, have found their way into the vocabulary of numerous improvising guitarists. If the guitar in free improvised music has intermittently been a locus for extended techniques (strategies analogous to John Cage's prepared piano have figured into Keith Rowe's approach to the instrument since his beginnings with AMM in the mid-1960s and have found adherents in players as disparate as Fred Frith, Masayuki Takayanagi, and Kevin Drumm), Bailey's practice stands apart in that one doesn't describe him as literally dismantling the instrument — only in dismantling hitherto familiar performance styles.

Among the first generation of European free improvisers, there tended to be a high degree of autonomy claimed by the individual player. Group improvisation of this period is less characterized by the desire to create the harmonious or coherent blending of an ensemble than it is redolent of multiple sites of activity. Where there is recognizable interplay, it is more likely to take place at the level of a single element such as timbre — of an ensemble coming together by gravitating toward and exploring shared sounds — as in the example of AMM. It can seem that everyone, in a way, solos — or at least operates outside of the traditional foreground-background interplay of soloist and rhythm section. Even among his peers, Derek Bailey's playing registered as an extreme example of the tendency toward autonomy in improvised music; as AMM percussionist Eddie Prevost writes, "AMM differed . . . from the emergent musical philosophy associated with free-improvising guitarist Derek Bailey, who has gone far beyond Cagean anarchic liberalism. Bailey's aesthetic departs before commonality can congeal into a convention. He enjoys mismatch and confrontation. His mutuality seems to exist only at the point of agreeing to perform."²¹ This tendency revealed itself not only through Bailey's inclination toward ad hoc groupings and one-off improvisational meetings but also through a predilection for playing with artists whose sound production could be a challenge to describe primarily with reference to music, such as the Butoh dancer Min Tanaka, the tap dancer Will Gaines, and the artist known as Sonic Pleasure, who improvises using bricks.

Together with the musicians Evan Parker and Tony Oxley and investor Michael Walters, Derek Bailey started what is often described as the first U.K. musician-owned independent record label. Named for a bone in the middle ear (and Latin for "anvil"), Incus Records began releasing records of free improvised music in 1970. Karen Brookman would later

largely take over the label's duties, and she has continued to operate the label after Bailey's death. At present count, Incus has released 52 LPs, a slightly larger and still-growing number of CDs, and scattered releases on reel-to-reel tape, cassette, videocassette, DVD, and CD-R. Of the more "informal" media such as individually copied cassettes and CD-Rs, Bailey remarked, "I've always had to look for some way under the business, as it were. I used to make reel-to-reel tapes, I've put cassettes out. I suppose it's kind of a romantic idea about what a label should be—direct communication with the purchaser, which of course it isn't."²² Apart from releasing some of the most compelling and historically significant recordings of free improvisation, Incus has also functioned as an imprimatur, one of a handful of marks of approbation within the relatively circumscribed world of improvised music.

Around the time of setting up Incus Records, Bailey, Oxley, and Parker saw their early efforts sporadically picked up by major labels and by more established independent record companies. Tony Oxley made two LPs for CBS (*Four Compositions for Sextet* and *The Baptised Traveller*), and the Spontaneous Music Ensemble—at that time a quintet with Bailey, Parker, Kenny Wheeler, Dave Holland, and the group mainstay, percussionist John Stevens—made the album *Karyobin* for Island Records.²³ It did not appear until 1974, but Deutsche Grammophon's elegantly packaged boxed set of three LPs entitled *Free Improvisation* marked a moment, however brief, when one of the classical-music world's premier record labels felt that the time had come to showcase improvised music.²⁴ As one might have been able to predict, this would be the first and last such grand gesture toward improvisation from Deutsche Grammophon. The front cover of *Free Improvisation* consists of a photograph—although this rich, tenebrous image looks as if it could be a detail from a seventeenth-century painting by Georges de La Tour—of three fingers emerging from a lustrous void, gripping a lit match. The match in the photograph is being used to set fire to a musical score, a white treble clef atop the glossy black background (a waltz in B-flat major, just starting to go up in flames), with the individual staff lines terminating in fraying wicks.

It's an exquisitely executed image of a very precise type of hysteria.

The selection of artists for Deutsche Grammophon's *Free Improvisation* is a curious and not particularly representative one. This anthology lends itself well to George E. Lewis's analysis of the earliest wave of European



FIGURE 4.2. Cover of *Free Improvisation* triple LP (Deutsche Grammophon).

free improvisers as a “critically important first generation of musicians who confronted issues of European musical identity in jazz.”²⁵ *Free Improvisation* contains three LPs, representing three European ensembles, based in three different countries: France (New Phonic Art 1973, a quartet including the composer Vinko Globokar); the United Kingdom (Iskra 1903, the trio of Derek Bailey, Barry Guy, and Paul Rutherford); and Germany (an obscure, nearly one-off group called Wired; their cobbled-together recording is notable primarily as an early production by Conny Plank, who would soon become known for his work on recordings by Kraftwerk, Neu!, and Harmonia). Iskra 1903 conceived of itself as an ongoing group and thus differed from Bailey’s more habitual mode of fleeting collaborations. In the group’s statement included with *Free Improvisation*, it notes, “Unlike other ‘free music’ and ‘modern jazz’ ensembles, Iskra 1903 concentrated from the start on the development of a very consistent and coherent form of group improvisation (not improvisation in a group).” If one had been given the possibility of releasing three LPs with which to showcase the state of the art of free improvised music in the early 1970s, this would not

have been the way to do it. *Free Improvisation* thus has the effect of reminding listeners of the importance of small, ear-to-the-ground, artist-run independent labels.

Regarding the short-lived enthusiasm for free improvisation from larger labels such as Deutsche Grammophon, Derek Bailey sounded a final, wry note: “You could see there was a brick wall coming.”²⁶

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If Buster Keaton wasn't genuinely trying to put up his house it wouldn't be funny when it falls down on him. —Cornelius Cardew

Words attesting to the limitations of digital audio reproductions of analog source material have become nearly as common to the compact disc reissue as the phrase “close cover when striking” is to the book of matches.²⁷ Yet on the occasion of ReR Records' reissue of the album *AMMMusic* (1967), a caveat of a different nature was appended to the package: “We (AMM) think that the LP format was never adequate to convey what AMMMUSIC was like. This CD too is not perfect; and replication and repeated listenings change and maybe distort the richer meaning of improvisations.”²⁸ What seems to start off as a familiar warning to consumers about the inherent limitations of a medium — or, conversely, as a familiar marketing gesture (we, the makers of this music, applaud this medium as we may now finally present our music as we have always wished, and so on) — instead pivots away from the anticipated conclusion and transforms the warning into a statement of ambivalence about the nature of presenting improvised music in recorded form.

This was not the first time that AMM attached a warning of this sort to one of its releases. When Matchless Recordings released *The Crypt — 12th June 1968* (a reissue of material originally released in an edited form on the LP *Live Electronic Music Improvised* [1970]), the expanded version included notes and excerpts from writings by group members as well as a reprint of a brochure produced by the group in 1970.²⁹ The brochure contains a parable attributed to Kwang-sze that concludes with the question “What is there in uselessness to cause you distress?” It is a distinctly AMM question. The Kwang-sze parable is akin to those used by John Cage in *Indeterminacy*, if not as memorably pithy:



FIGURE 4.3. The group AMM in session, Langtry Road, London, 1968. Left to right: Keith Rowe, Cornelius Cardew, Eddie Prévost, and Lou Gare. Photograph by Frazer Pearce. Courtesy Frazer Pearce and Matchless Recordings.

Hui-size said to Kwang-size: “I have a large tree which men call *Ailantus Glandulosa*, or the ‘fetid tree.’ Its trunk swells out to a large size, but is not fit for a carpenter to apply his line to it. When he looks up at its smaller branches they are so twisted and crooked that they cannot be made into rafters and beams, when he looks down to its root, its trunk is divided into so many rounded portions that neither coffin nor shelf could be made from it. Lick one of its leaves and your mouth feels torn and wounded. . . .”

Kwang-size replied: “. . . You, Sir, have a large tree and are troubled because it is of no use; why do you not plant it in the realm of Nothing Whatever, or in the wilds of the unpastured desert? There you might saunter idly by its side, or in the enjoyment of untroubled ease sleep and dream beneath it. Neither bill nor axe would shorten its existence; there would be nothing to injure it. What is there in uselessness to cause you distress?”

An autobiographical note within the brochure alludes to the parable: “AMM was formed in 1965 and concerns itself—certainly outwardly—with musical improvisation of an experimental kind. This music is apparently unsuited to mechanical reproduction. AMM has made three records and broadcast in Britain, Denmark and Germany. In all this it has ‘displayed its uselessness’ (in the sense of the story quoted) for reproduction purposes.” The accompanying notes by group members Eddie Prévoist and Keith Rowe in the compact disc reissue comment on the 1970 writings: “The brochure reveals the qualms we had about selling AMM Music, because we recognized that ‘when somebody pays, they expect the goods.’ We could never be sure that we could come up with the goods.”

It is not necessarily clear that AMM has “displayed its uselessness” in the sense of Kwang-sze’s story about the unwanted *Ailantus Glandulosa*, or “fetid tree.” It has, however, successfully raised the issue of “uselessness” with regard to commercially released sound recordings of improvisation. Does the question “What is there in uselessness to cause you distress?” sound as fresh as it did forty years earlier? How has the distress occasioned by sound recordings of improvised music in the 1960s changed over time?

To begin with, there has come to be a more clearly defined audience for improvised music. The group’s concern about “com[ing] up with the goods” has been mitigated in that this audience is aware of free improvisation’s characteristic privileging of process over end result. This small but dedicated international community has created its own infrastructure not only for producing concerts, publishing criticism, and writing histories of improvised music but also for producing and distributing recordings. The record labels that specialize in improvised music are often either artist- or fan-run entities; with a profit motive that hovers between low and nonexistent, these labors almost always skew toward love. For years, it has seemed to be the case that in every city where one finds concerts of improvised music there is at least one person—a distinctive personality—who assumes the role of local documentarian, and whose chief duty it is to produce and maintain a personal archive of live recordings. The audience for improvised music has also taken effortlessly to the World Wide Web as a means for posting recordings and documentation. But no such coterie of listeners dedicated expressly to improvised music—committed to the very idea of free improvisation—existed at the time that AMM began.

The popularity of a genre and the passion with which its adherents

document it often exist in inverse proportion to one another. Free improvised music is a classic example of a small genre that has spawned a large number of extraordinarily precise chroniclers.³⁰ In this regard, however, musicians have often led by example. It is worth contemplating that AMM, a group that so publicly pondered the consequences of releasing recordings, has itself been prone to meticulous self-documentation. For example, AMM prepared and circulated an “AMM factsheet to Oct 70” that rivals the kind of documentation later produced by the most obsessive of fans.³¹ The factsheet lists all of the group’s concerts, workshops, and recording sessions, as well as lectures by individual members, that took place between June 1965 (the start date for AMM’s eleven months of weekly sessions at the Royal College of Art, London) through September 25, 1970. Readers will discover that AMM’s first public performance took place at the Cock Tavern, Regent Street Polytechnic, on September 28, 1965. This intriguing document includes the following prefatory description: “Where an entry in the list below consists merely of a date and a place the event referred to is an AMM concert: 1–2 hours of continuous improvisation with no prior discussion amongst musicians as to form or material.”³² In form and even in tone, the “AMM factsheet to Oct 70” is uncanny in its resemblance to the sorts of materials that are now regularly compiled and posted on the web; it seems a safe bet that it has provided a template for the work of a number of future documenters of improvised music. The conclusion to be drawn is that while recordings were downplayed as a means of representing these performances of ideally perfectly ephemeral, never-to-be-repeated music, other modes of documentation slipped to the fore: the detailed lists of concerts, the precise language about form, and even the explicit group protocol surrounding individual concerts (e.g., “no prior discussion amongst musicians”).

In 1966 and 1967, AMM was briefly viewed as occupying an unfamiliar nexus between new music, jazz improvisation, and, most curiously, pop music—especially in the context of London’s emerging psychedelic rock scene. As Keith Rowe explains, “The thing to remember is that at that time there was no distinction between, say, AMM and the Pink Floyd. They were regarded as roughly the same kind of thing. People didn’t seem to notice there wasn’t a rhythm section in the background.”³³ At the UFO Club in London’s Tottenham Court Road, attendees on January 27, 1967, took in the following attractions:

AMM factsheet to Oct 70

The present members of AMM are Eddie Prevost (born 1942), Keith Rowe (1940), Lou Gare (1939), Christopher Hobbs (1950) and Cornelius Cardew (1936). Laurence Sheaff was with AMM from its inception until Apr 67, and the American composer Christian Wolff joined AMM for the duration of his stay in England in 1968. From Spring 66 to Sep 70 AMM was under the management of Victor Schonfield. Note: Where an entry in the list below consists merely of a date and a place the event referred to is an AMM concert: 1-2 hours of continuous improvisation with no prior discussion amongst the musicians as to form or material. The weekly "plays" generally use the same format but are attended only by a handful of interested people. All concerts are in London unless otherwise stated.

Royal College of Art, London Weekly plays from Jun 65 - 4 May 66

28 Sep 65 Cock Tavern, Regent Street Polytechnic

29 Oct 65 All Stars Club

27 Nov 65 Mercury Theatre, recording for first disc

Jan 66 Little Theatre Club

10 Jan 66 Marquee Club

12 Feb 66 Padgate, near Liverpool

9 Mar 66 Interview with Granada TV

11 Mar 66 Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA)

13 Apr 66 ICA, record music for a play by John Sharkey

11 May 66 ditto, 2nd session

London School of Economics Weekly plays from 16 May - Sep 66

21 May 66 Conway Hall

8 Jun 66 Recording for Elektra Records

27 Jun 66 ditto, 2nd session

29 Jul 66 Recording of music for Allan King's film 'Warrendale'

Sep 66 Participation in DIAS (Destruction in Art Symposium) Concert at Conway Hall

15 Sep 66 Commonwealth Institute

All Saints Church Hall, Notting Hill Weekly plays Sep-Oct 66

Dec 66 Participation in Round House pop concert

19 Kingly St, London W1 Weekly plays 14 Jan-Apr 67

Jan 67 BBC Maida Vale Studios

26 Jan 67 UFO Club

4 Mar 67 Goldsmiths College

10 Apr 67 Watford College of Technology

20 Apr 67 Commonwealth Institute (later broadcast by BBC)

Progressive English Group, London Weekly plays 27 May-Jul 67

Jun 67 Concert at SPNM (Society for the Promotion of New Music)

26 Jul 67 Westbourne Park Working Men's Association

Lisson Gallery, Bell St Weekly plays Jul-Oct 67

8 Sep 67 Electric Garden

30 Oct 67 Electric Garden, performance of Cardew's 'The Tiger's Mind' (Daypiece)

Methodist Church Hall, Denbigh Rd, Notting Hill Weekly plays Nov-Dec 67

2-20 Nov 67 Cardew lectures to US colleges on Ethics of Improvisation and AMM

12 Dec 67 Electric Garden, performance of 'The Tiger's Mind' (Nightpiece)

The Studio, 1 Langtry Rd, London NW6 Weekly plays Jan-May 68

25 Feb 68 University of South Wales at Cardiff

28 Feb-10 Mar 68 AMM visit to USA

Domus Theatre, Buffalo 29 Feb, 1 & 2 Mar

Steinway Hall, New York 6, 7, 8 & 9 Mar

4 Apr 68 Anti-University of London

21 May 68 Queen Elizabeth Hall

29 May 68 Slade School of Fine Arts

12 Jun 68 The Crypt, Notting Hill Gate, recording for Mainstream Records

15 Jun 68 Commonwealth Institute, performance of Eddie Prevost's 'Spirals'

21 Jun 68 University of Coventry

The Arts Laboratory, Drury Lane Weekly plays from Jun 68-May 69

2 Jul 68 Lisson Gallery

25 Jan 69, City Hall, Carlisle

11 Mar 69 Guildford, at the University

Apr 69 Sarum House (Buddhist Community)

4 May 69 Round House performance of Prevost's 'Silver Pyramid'

9 May 69 Round House

Jun 69 'Pavilions in the Parks' afternoon concert

15 Jun 69 Clapham Common bandstand afternoon concert

21 Jun 69 Corn Exchange, Bristol

The Place, 17 Duke's Road Weekly plays from Jul 69- (still going on)

2 Aug 69 AMM in the park

11 Aug 69 The Place (public concert)

10-20 Dec 69 AMM visit to the continent of Europe

Akademie der Kunst, Berlin 11 Dec (later broadcast by Sender Freies Berlin)

Luisekirche, Berlin 12 Dec

Technische Universität, Berlin 13 Dec

Akademie der Kunst, Berlin 14 Dec

Arhus (Denmark) Conservatory of Music 16 Dec

Copenhagen, concert hall of the radio station (live broadcast) 18 Dec

27 Jan 70 Swansea, University Arts Festival

17 Mar 70 Bristol, University Arts Festival (preceded by Cardew lecture)

11 Apr 70 Birmingham and Midland Institute (preceded by lecture)

30 Apr 70 The Crypt

29 Jun 70 West Surrey College of Art, Guildford

Summer 70 'AMM: the Unknown Factor is You' lecture by Prevost

20-25 Sep 70 AMM visit to Berlin (*Arbeitskreis für Neue Musik*)

Concert at the *Akademie der Kunst* 22 Sep (later broadcast by West German Radio)

Practical workshop sessions for students 21, 22, 23 & 24 Sep

FIGURE 4.4. "AMM factsheet to Oct 70," included with AMM, *The Crypt*—12th June 1968 double LP (Matchless). Courtesy Matchless Recordings.

AMM Music
Pink Floyd
Five Acre Light
Flight of the Aerogenius Chpt 1
International Times IT Girl Beauty Contest³⁴

The UFO Club was started in 1966 by John Hopkins and Joe Boyd, the latter of whom would soon make his name with his productions of early albums by the Incredible String Band, the Fairport Convention, and Nick Drake. In the first year of its existence, the UFO was the place to catch early performances by the Soft Machine, the Crazy World of Arthur Brown, the Move, and the — they were “the” at the time — Pink Floyd, whose first single (“Arnold Layne” b/w “Candy and a Currant Bun”) Boyd produced. The UFO was also where you could take in films by Bruce Conner or the U.K. premiere of Jack Smith’s *Flaming Creatures*, and many of the UFO’s regulars appear in Peter Whitehead’s film *Tonite Let’s All Make Love in London* (1967). At this time, the early incarnation of AMM attracted Paul McCartney, Barry Miles, and Ornette Coleman to its performances.³⁵ Rowe notes that in this brief, productively chaotic period, “AMM would often be cited as the hottest band in town, which is ridiculous when you think about the Who and Eric Clapton, and all these kind of people.”³⁶ For those familiar with AMM through the association of Cornelius Cardew’s participation in the group, or through its later, more icily elegant incarnations — especially the time- and road-tested, time-arresting trio version with Rowe, Prévost, and pianist John Tilbury — the notion of AMM being mistaken for Pink Floyd can stop you in your tracks. But the Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd were themselves far from being what the name “Pink Floyd” now evokes; while crafting memorable singles with short-form psychedelic concoctions like “See Emily Play” and “Paintbox,” the group’s reverse-angle profile was defined by lengthy, noise-laden in-concert deviations such as “Interstellar Overdrive.”

Had AMM’s aims and expectations been otherwise, its lightning-brief tenure as Elektra Records recording artists might have proved traumatic. Elektra Records in 1966 was a very different proposition from having your free improvised music circulated on a private pressing, or of having your music presented through a publication such as the journal *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde* (which combined sound recordings with scores and writ-

ings by composers and performers), or as part of Music of Our Time or the Contemporary Sound Series, or even through the rare opportunity to release work on a classical-music label, as when Deutsche Grammophon released two excerpts from Cornelius Cardew's *The Great Learning* in 1971.³⁷

Thankfully, there is no evidence that AMM harbored any expectations that its signing to the label in 1966 would mark the beginning of a successful career as recording artists. Can we chalk up the affair to a case of mistaken identity? Or a compellingly bold decision by Elektra? Perhaps it's a case of "only in the Sixties." Elektra Records was founded in 1950 by Jac Holzman and Paul Rickolt, and the label made its name in conjunction with the folk revival, releasing albums by Tom Paxton, Theodore Bikel, Judy Collins, and Phil Ochs. Elektra was quick to pick up on psychedelic rock, and its releases included landmark albums by the Doors, Love, the Stooges, and the MC5. In the early 1970s, Elektra merged with Asylum Records, the label begun by David Geffen and Elliot Roberts, and the newly christened Elektra/Asylum went on to release blockbuster, industry-recalibrating (bigger, ever bigger) albums by the Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, Queen, and numerous others—by which point we've admittedly drifted some distance from AMM.

In June 1966, AMM went into London's Sound Techniques studio with Joe Boyd as producer—Boyd was also recording Pink Floyd at the same studio—but the session was unceremoniously aborted. As Rowe explains, "After a number of hours, the session was abandoned, because the technicians, the people on the mixing desk, didn't know what to do. They actually didn't know how to record it, what the level should be. . . . They were off seeing it as a dilemma, and we hadn't been in a recording studio anyway, so we wouldn't know. I think if they had asked us, we would have given them some very vague philosophical answer, which wasn't at all useful to them."³⁸ The label scheduled a second session, this time with Harry Davis and Jac Holzman, Elektra's cofounder. The members of AMM deemed Holzman a potentially sympathetic collaborator on the basis of the fact that he had recorded Japanese traditional music (later to be issued as part of Elektra's Nonesuch Explorer Series, which began in 1967). The goal of the second session was to do as clean a recording as possible. Imagine the group's surprise, then, upon the *AMMMusic* LP's release to discover that it had been, as Rowe describes it, "all played through this huge, Phil Spec-

tor, Wall of Sound spring reverb which washed everything into some kind of Color Field painting.”³⁹

When *AMMMusic* was released in 1967, the studio recordings were edited into two side-length, twenty-minute-plus pieces (take that, Pink Floyd), retroactively titled “Later During a Flaming Riviera Sunset” and “After Rapidly Circling the Plaza.” The title “Later During . . .” nicely captures the disorienting, in-progress feel with which the track begins. The piece starts with no preamble, as if the tape machine had been suddenly switched on midperformance. The CD reissue *AMMMusic 1966* presents both the LP edits of these pieces and the complete original takes, and thus reveals that the abrupt beginning of “Later During . . .” is in fact a resolutely unfinessed edit occurring some minutes into the performance. The group chose a deliberately rough, awkwardly midstride moment with which to begin, with all five musicians in the fray. There is feedback, but it’s impossible to tell from whom. Cornelius Cardew’s prepared piano quickly asserts itself as the most recognizable instrument within the ensemble. Lou Gare conducts an enthusiastic, wide-eyed exploration of the violin. Cardew’s ostinato attacks and dissonant arpeggios contribute to an atmosphere of tension. Keith Rowe’s prepared guitar—an electric guitar, by chance, on the operating table; electric-guitar surgery, amplified—yields a resonant hum amid shard-like interjections of finely articulated machine noise. Percussionist Eddie Prévost alternates between scraping the heads of toms and various techniques for activating a sound field of cymbals and metal percussion; the latter swerves unpredictably between a dull roar and painfully bright attacks. Lawrence Sheaff’s cello gradually settles into a richly textured drone, around which the other musicians fleetingly orient themselves. Rowe, Cardew, and Sheaff are armed with transistor radios. For anyone familiar with later iterations of AMM and their exceptionally patient, exponentially more gradual ensemble cross-fades between composite textures, as well as their exemplary evenhandedness in letting sound resolve into silence and silence reveal sound, *AMMMusic* comes across as a surprisingly frenzied, simultaneous, real-time pursuit of new sounds. It doesn’t immediately bespeak group listening in the way that later performances suggest the presence of a single organism.

As the improvisation progresses, it is Rowe and Prévost who establish more solid, static textures, whether with the friction of a stick scraped on

a drum head or cymbal or resonant, gong-like attacks from the partially disemboweled guitar. By contrast, Cardew continues his restless search, leaving precious little unoccupied, unmarked space. John Tilbury would later describe this quality of individual exploration within the ensemble: “In the music room at the London School of Economics, AMM demonstrated an aesthetic which represented a radical departure from Cage. In these sessions the sounds were not simply ‘heard,’ brought into focus and tendered to the listener in a condition of pristine objectivity. Rather the AMM musicians were *tracking* the sounds, in the way that a hunter tracks an animal and in doing so gains knowledge and gradually his attitude towards the hunted becomes a relationship *with* the animal.”⁴⁰ It’s more than ten minutes into the edited performance before the quintet yields to a trio of Cardew’s midregister prepared piano, Prévost’s more spare play of cymbals, and Gare’s violin, now far back in the mix. Gare puts down the violin and returns on tenor saxophone with monolithic, multiphonic textures suggestive of a slowed-down free jazz. The balance between instruments throughout the track (and throughout the whole of *AMMMusic*) puzzles. Recordings of rock ensembles from this period — no matter how freeform the performance — generally stick to conventions of mixes that reward playback at high volume. (Think of the many albums with the instruction “PLAY LOUD” and all its variants, even if the most successful rock mixes implicitly enact this demand.) *AMMMusic*, by contrast, with its shrill feedback, scraped cymbals (sounding like feedback), and brittle prepared piano, could hardly be less suited to high-volume listening. The fade-out at the end of the track suggests that the group is some ways from finding an ending.

The album’s other piece, “After Rapidly Circling the Plaza,” similarly lurches forward from an abrupt introductory edit, although one that’s not quite as jarring as the cut that begins the album’s first side. Cardew’s low-register stabs on the piano offer up an uneasy atmosphere, and Rowe’s prepared guitar returns with a seriously distorted sizzle. Once again, piercing metal percussion from Prévost — struck chimes mixed loud enough to momentarily obliterate the entire group — will keep anyone from playing the album too loudly. The placement in the mix of these extraordinarily bright sounds is difficult to explain, and it can seem as if there must be an aleatoric rationale for the shifting, counterintuitive balance. There is no obvious hierarchy of volume based on the instruments themselves; this is not an

ensemble with one soloist after another stepping to the fore. The swapping of instruments and the use of amplification with contact mics likely play a role in the unexpected changes in the group's balance. Individual timbres are even more aggressive on this side of the album. When Sheaff and Gare pick up their reed instruments and engage in honks and squawks that approximate the falling apart at the end of a free-jazz jam session, it's striking how far back in the mix they sit. Their timbres are mild in comparison to the more abrasive, more-difficult-to-identify sounds that often dominate the foreground. There are numerous small sounds amplified with contact mics and guitar pickups, such that their otherwise inaudible sources are obscured through inverted relations of scale.

The transistor radio — which Keith Rowe still uses in performance more than four decades later — plays a distinctive role in the *AMMMusic* recordings. The expanded *AMMMusic 1966* CD adds an unreleased track entitled “In the Realm of Nothing Whatsoever,” in which spoken announcements from radio broadcasts compete for the listener's attention. Eight minutes into the track, a canned voice suddenly intones: “I can drink most men under the table . . . being some pretty interesting mischief . . . Labour critics . . . they'd struck up an understanding.” There's a hoot of a whistle, laughter from a distant audience, and a switching of stations that results in the summoning of a stentorian, comically didactic voice: “The Romans call it ‘gravitas’ . . . weight, seriousness, above all authority.” Wild, ripping electronic sounds, presumably from Rowe's prepared guitar, make it difficult to comprehend much of the radio narration, and the effect is similar to John Cage's and David Tudor's Folkways recording of *Indeterminacy*, in which the piano and electronic sounds periodically drown out Cage's speaking voice. A major difference between this improvisation and *Indeterminacy* has to do with the degree of chance in what Rowe, or whoever in the group is operating the transistor radio, is able to isolate from the air-waves. The radio rends the fabric of the group improvisation, into which the peculiar commercial vernacular of on-air advertisements comes rushing in. As Prévost notes, “The unpredictability of the radio tests the ensemble's ability to accommodate whatever emerges (sometimes almost to the breaking point).”⁴¹

Compared with the rest of the group, the radio sounds as if its broadcasts are arriving from another planet. That is, in the context of the alien atmosphere that is AMM's sound world, the radio sounds precisely like it

originates from *this* planet. Whereas earlier uses of the radio in experimental music were novel by virtue of contents juxtaposed (the imposition of the spoken word, symphonic music, even popular music which attaches a date to the performance or registers temporal dissociation), the radio in AMM's music presents a recognizable acoustical standard against which the group's repertoire of sounds seems that much more unfamiliar. The entrance of symphonic music via the radio in "Later During a Flaming Riviera Sunset," the first track on *AMMMusic*, arouses interest not just because of the juxtaposition between tonal music and free noise but also because the radio smuggles in more conventional timbral qualities — both in the form of orchestral music and in the trebly, compressed, monophonic transistor radio that is the orchestra's conduit. In AMM, the radio serves a function of reference, of calibration with the everyday.⁴²

The group's next released material showed AMM as an increasingly coherent entity, now oriented more toward working collectively to create and to sustain unique improvised ambiances. *Live Electronic Music Improvised* is a 1970 split release between AMM and Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV) as part of Earle Brown's Contemporary Sound Series, which at this time was manufactured by Mainstream Records.⁴³ The group's side of the *Live Electronic Music Improvised* LP consists of a single untitled twenty-three-minute track credited to "AMM Group of London." The recording contains material from a June 12, 1968, two-hour concert at the London venue the Crypt, edited and interspersed with spliced-in silences. The group again consists of five musicians, but this time with percussionist Christopher Hobbs replacing Lawrence Sheaff. The difference in character between the untitled *Live Electronic Music Improvised* track and *AMMMusic* is stark. This is AMM in the process of developing, in John Tilbury's resonant description, "a 'fortress' aesthetic."⁴⁴ Instead of a simultaneous overlay of vigorous individual searches for novel timbres, the Crypt recording finds five musicians working together toward a complex, richly integrated group sound. As Rowe and Prévost note in their written materials accompanying the release of the full Crypt performance, "In the enclosed recording . . . it is virtually impossible to identify who is playing what." A later interview with Rowe and Prévost as part of a *Perspectives of New Music* forum on improvisation similarly finds the two members doing their nimble, entertaining best to avoid responding to an

interviewer's earnest request that they identify the source of a particularly menacing drone from this recording.⁴⁵

The untitled track by AMM on *Live Electronic Music Improvised* begins with midrange frequencies left unoccupied. Sonically, there's a gaping absence at the center. Each player finds a gesture and sticks with it, modifying it only slowly—remarkably slowly, when compared with *AMMMusic*. High-end feedback is deployed not for its interruptive, disruptive potential but as a controlled, sustained textural element; gorgeous low-frequency thuds emanate from the deeply detuned strings of Rowe's horizontally placed guitar. The balance between instruments in the recording appears to have been set and left that way—suggesting a more neutral documentation of a live performance than *AMMMusic*—and the stereo separation spatializes the musicians in a simple but effective manner, with a scraped gong (Prévost? Hobbs?) at the far left, and Rowe's ringing open strings placed at the far right of the stereo image. Interestingly, given that the period in which AMM was briefly mistaken for a psychedelic rock band had more or less passed, the Crypt recording presents a sonic modus operandi that would be a more likely candidate for appealing to a spaced-out audience for psychedelic music. (Note that the Musica Elettronica Viva contribution to *Live Electronic Music Improvised* is a side-length piece entitled “Spaceship.”) One could imagine a rock audience responding not only to the ensemble's thick drones but also to the shofar-like quality of Lou Gare's saxophone—the element that now seems the most dated.

The Crypt recording demonstrates AMM's emerging improvisational responsiveness at the level of timbre. This technique takes communication among improvising musicians outside of the standard forms of response; timbral modifications demand of the performers an investigative listening, a listening sharpened to correspond to the expanded range of each instrument. As John Tilbury explains, “For AMM a guitar, a piano, a drum were sound sources to be exploited rather than instruments to be played.”⁴⁶ A distinction such as this begs questions of boundaries; at what point does an instrument such as a guitar break with recognizable performance techniques so that it is better described more generically as a sound source? Cornelius Cardew once complimented Keith Rowe as bearing “more or less the same relation to the electric guitar as David Tudor did to the piano (I put that in the past tense because by no stretch of the imagination could

you now call them guitarist or pianist respectively).”⁴⁷ Perhaps the best characterization of the Crypt recordings is Prévost’s and Rowe’s recollection that “it was not uncommon for the musician to wonder who or what was producing a particular sound, stop playing, and discover that it was he himself that had been responsible.”

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Cornelius Cardew, who appears on *AMMMusic* and the Crypt LP, was already well established as a composer and performer of new music at the time that he took part in AMM’s weekly improvisations between 1966 and 1969. In his essay “Towards an Ethic of Improvisation,” Cardew addresses problems inherent in producing recordings of improvised music. First, he offers the reflection that the public nature of his experience of group improvisation might not accord with the private usage of a recording. Then he cites improvised music’s lack of a logical structure as an argument against recording it. He quotes Wittgenstein, from the *Tractatus*: “‘The gramophone record, the musical thought, the score, the waves of sound, all stand to one another in that pictorial international relation, which holds between language and the world. To all of them the logical structure is common.’ This logical structure is first what an improvisation lacks, hence it cannot be scored nor can it be recorded.”⁴⁸ Elsewhere in the essay Cardew insists upon searching for appearances of the musical score in transfigured form within the improvised performance. It seems that it is difficult for him to fully give up the idea of a musical score, and he imagines it in increasingly fantastical transformations. Cardew discerns the score in the environment in which the improvisation takes place: “The natural context provides a score in which the players are unconsciously interpreting their playing.”⁴⁹ He next locates the score in the physical body of the musician: “Not only can the natural environment carry you beyond, but the realization of your own body as part of that environment is an even stronger dissociative factor.”⁵⁰ Cardew maintains the force of Kwang-sze’s rhetorical question in his expression of disenchantment with existing structures of mediation: “News has to travel somehow and tape is probably in the last analysis just as adequate a vehicle as hearsay, and certainly just as inaccurate.”⁵¹ But why should sound recording be as inaccurate as hearsay? Cardew’s biographer John Tilbury, a formidable pianist and interpreter of

new music who would later become a member of AMM, describes his own experience of coming to the realization that sound is more than an “end-product”: “There would be an awareness of the sound-producing gesture, and of the fact that the resultant sound was not simply the end-product, the goal of an hierarchically-ordered series of actions, but was itself just one of several stages of a complex seamless process.”⁵²

The rhetoric of failure played a significant role both for AMM and for Cardew. As Cardew summed up in his July 21, 1970, introduction on the BBC to a performance of Paragraph 1 from his composition *The Great Learning*, “Humans have goals and so they have to fail. Often the wonderful configurations produced by failure reveal the pettiness of the goals. Of course we have to go on striving for success, otherwise we could not genuinely fail.”⁵³ But AMM was more deadpan when it wrote in quotation XII of the group’s original thirteen aphorisms, “Mistakes in and towards AMM could be due to constant references to sets of standards.”

Much of Cardew’s thinking about improvisation dates from 1963 to 1967, the period of composing *Treatise*. Cardew describes *Treatise* as “193 pages of graphic score with no systematic instructions as to the interpretation and only the barest hints (such as an empty pair of 5-line systems below every page) to indicate that the interpretation is to be musical.”⁵⁴ Cardew’s *Treatise Handbook* demonstrates his concern with issues of interpretation, particularly the possibility of opening the score to those who would “have (a) acquired a visual education, (b) escaped a musical education and (c) have nevertheless become musicians, i.e. play music to the full capacity of their beings.”⁵⁵ In his working notes for *Treatise*, he writes, “A composer who hears sounds will try to find a notation for sounds. One who has ideas will find that one who expresses his ideas, leaving their interpretation free, in confidence that his ideas have been accurately and concisely notated.”⁵⁶ Tilbury comments on the irony of *Treatise*—itself a unique experiment in score-making—leading Cardew toward free improvised music and, for a period, to abandon written scores: “Cardew’s involvement with AMM and improvised music began at a time when his mastery of the mis-conceived, misused art of musical notation had, with *Treatise*, reached a peak.”⁵⁷ For Tilbury, Cardew’s work in the 1960s demonstrates conceptions of the relationships between composer, performer, and score that differ considerably from Cage’s own indeterminate music: “Time and again Cage expressed a concern for the *inviolability* of the score, that is, of the

work of art. This led to a protectiveness and a consequent preference for professionals, ‘experts,’ rather than, say, a ragbag of students available at a given venue at a given time. In contrast, Cardew’s music was based on the acceptance of human vulnerability, fragility and imperfection, of contingency. Whereas with Cage generally little or no spontaneous expression was permitted during performance, Cardew never denied the performer’s history or background.”⁵⁸

In October 1972, after he had ceased his involvement in AMM, Cardew took the opportunity of the “International Symposium on the Problematic of Today’s Musical Notation” in Rome to demonstrate his conversion to Maoism by repudiating his work in experimental notation and directing his most extreme criticism at *Treatise*. In the 1972 lecture, later published in his book *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, he describes two “diseases of notation, cases where the notation seems to have become a malignant growth usurping an absolutely unjustifiable pre-eminence over the music.”⁵⁹ These two diseases are the complementary ideas “that each composition requires or deserves its own unique system of notation,” and “that a musical score can have some kind of aesthetic identity of its own, quite apart from its realisation in sound.”⁶⁰ This second disease finds its greatest manifestation in *Treatise*; describing it as an “obstacle” behind which musicians improvise, Cardew criticizes the separation between performer and audience that is created by the score, and not by the activity of improvisation itself. The formal contradictions within *Treatise* are such that its expression is “incoherent, like the words of a liar who has lost all hope of deceiving his audience.”⁶¹

Much of Cardew’s painful, long-standing ambivalence toward the figure of musician and composer as teacher was exacerbated by his relationship to improvised music. The rapid adoption and abandonment of various notations that characterizes his output from *Autumn ’60* through *The Great Learning* was decisively determined by questions of the relationship between education and improvisation.⁶² At the time of his joining AMM (Prévost, Rowe, and Lou Gare were the founding members in 1965; they were joined shortly thereafter by Lawrence Sheaff and then Cardew), he was a professor of music at Morley College in London. His own problematic self-conception as a teacher dates from his experience as a student working within the strict parameters of total serialism at the Royal Academy of Music. In “Towards an Ethic of Improvisation,” discussing

serialism, he admits that “sometimes the temptation occurs to me that if I were to infect my students with it [serial technique] I would at least be free of it myself.”⁶³ Christopher Hobbs, a composition student of Cardew’s who joined AMM shortly after his professor, wrote a brief memorial sketch for *Perspectives of New Music* entitled “Cardew as Teacher,” in which he illustrates the “teacher in spite of himself” with the extraordinary story of Cardew once leaving the classroom under some pretext and, locking the door behind himself, going home. A janitor was eventually enlisted to release the students. Hobbs reports that no students ever approached Cardew about the episode.

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Let’s go back to the fetid tree.

In the Kwang-sze parable that is printed in the AMM brochure, Hui-sze bemoans the presence of the tree that has no use whatsoever. Kwang-sze encourages Hui-sze to let the tree live, as it is equally useless intact as it would be if destroyed. In this instance, AMM portrays itself as distorted by nature. The group asserts that its natural character, prior to recording, and prior to the commercial release of that recording, accounts for the uselessness of reproduction. In the brochure included in the Crypt LP, the group writes, “The paradox is that continual failure on one plane is success on another. . . . We certainly must not look for failure any more than for success.” (You can’t help but feel, however, that AMM takes a distinct pride in thematizing failure.) As the group says of itself, “Nevertheless, with the kind of perversity that really belongs to Nature, AMM continues to play.”

Inasmuch as AMM makes AMMMusic—its acknowledgment of a method—it must be confessed: the fetid tree is valued equally for its uselessness as well as its uniqueness, that which makes it worth discussing in a publicity brochure.

In conversation in 2003, Keith Rowe visibly shuddered when asked to consider the fact that AMM would increasingly be known through its recordings. His wry humor was in evidence, but it was clear that to this artist who came of age in the 1960s, recordings were but an eccentric by-product of his group’s activities.

Useless, somewhat. Like so many protestations.

Online Resources and Impermanent Archives

Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less
clear today than the word “archive.”

—Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*

John Cage begins the forty-eighth and final unit in his “Lecture on Nothing” with the following lament: “A lady from / Texas said: / I live in Texas. / We have no music / in Texas. / The reason they’ve no / music in Texas / is because / they have recordings / in Texas. / Remove the records from Texas / and someone / will learn to sing.”¹ Why Cage lent credence to his unnamed correspondent’s claim that there was no music in Texas, I can’t exactly say. Nor do I know any details of how Cage imagined effecting the removal of records from Texas, but he certainly wasn’t contemplating their death at the hand of the Internet.

At the present moment, the flood of records and other physical media into and out of Texas has abated to a trickle. With the precipitous de-

cline in compact-disc sales in the first decade of the new century, the primary means by which people in Texas — and everywhere else — encounter recordings is through online resources.² Music that formerly would have been packaged and sold via physical media is now most commonly sold — when it is sold — in the form of digital files through iTunes, Amazon.com, individual record labels' websites, artists' websites, and resources such as Bandcamp.com. There has also been a surge in online resources in which music can be streamed for a small fee, not to mention countless sites where music can be streamed or downloaded free of charge.

In the case of recordings of experimental music from the 1960s, just as the introduction of the compact disc resulted in an unprecedented outpouring of archival releases of vintage experimental music, emerging online resources are responsible for a groundswell of previously out-of-print recordings that for too long circulated via the generally unreliable media of rumor, speculation, and hyperbole. These sites are responsible for the dissemination of a tremendous volume of previously unreleased material. Concert recordings, rehearsal tapes, radio broadcasts, alternate studio takes, works perceived as not meriting commercial release — these are among the categories of archival sound recordings of experimental music regularly being posted online. Perhaps individual performances had been considered subpar, the recording quality too rough, the mix constituting an unsatisfying balance, or the recording itself interrupted or incomplete (those reels of tape, forever running out).

The landscape of recordings of experimental music is undergoing an unprecedented shift not only in the ease of access to once-obscure recordings and related materials (scores, liner notes, photographs, writings by musicians, discographies, contemporary accounts, reviews, lists of performances, etc.), but also by virtue of the types of recordings that are now deemed acceptable to be made available to a listening public. With online archives — and we will see later in this chapter how the very category of “archive” is undergoing a transformation in light of online resources — ever greater amounts of rougher, more quotidian recordings are being made available. The current situation differs profoundly from that of the 1960s and 1970s, when numerous now-canonical musicians and composers were represented by the smallest handful of authorized recordings. We are experiencing a shift in which fewer and fewer archival recordings are held back.

With more recordings from the 1960s becoming available, listeners are more acutely aware of what actually was preserved on tape in that decade. At times it seems as if the only limitation to making work available is the finite number of recordings made in this period. There's only so much water in the well, one imagines. In this manner, the 1960s present a vivid contrast to our own moment, in which it is becoming more uncommon for experimental-music performances *not* to be recorded, with both audio and video, and not to be posted online. Viewed from half a century later, experimental music in the 1960s assumes the comparatively guileless, patchwork evanescence of a transitional period in which only a fraction of its performances were documented as recordings. As its archives come to be emptied out—to be turned inside out, like pants pockets, with less and less expectation of reward—one senses the finite dimensions of these archives. They are not, as would subsequently be the case (and most strikingly in a digital era), for all practical purposes endless. There's something quaintly reassuring and reorienting and of a human scale about touching bottom, about experiencing an archive—be it that of an individual composer or musician or of an electronic-music studio or radio show—in the fullness of its contours. To touch bottom in an analog stockpile, however initially daunting, of a given musical activity . . . don't expect this moment to come again.

The description of recorded music as a stockpile, with its association with nuclear stockpiles, or with stockpiling in advance of a catastrophe, is one of the most provocative, most compelling contributions made by Jacques Attali in his study *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977). Attali writes, "Transforming use-time into a stockpileable object makes it possible to sell and stockpile rights to usage without actually using anything, to exchange ad infinitum without extracting pleasure from the object, without experiencing its function."³ Attali makes a chilling and necessary point when he invokes the unknowable moment in the life of the collector-listener at which the amount of time represented by the stockpile of recordings exceeds the amount of time remaining in one's life: "The stockpiling of use-time in the commodity object is fundamentally a herald of death."⁴ But remember: *Noise* was written in the mid-1970s. Prior to the compact-disc era. Prior to digital downloads. Attali is contemplating the LP. In recent years, the physical recorded-music stockpile has become less and less of an image of time rendered material. It has lost its iconicity.

With the introduction of the MP3, the form of the stockpile began to change; the stockpile has become a composite of recorded-music objects and digital files.

Dematerializing, the stockpile's size becomes unfettered. When the total hours of one's hoard of recorded music are no longer determined by available physical space, the stockpile—the invisible, nearly weightless stockpile—can grow exponentially. But a funny thing happens. Because of the trajectory of technological developments with regard to ease of access; because of the suddenly not-insane desire to be able to lay hold of any recording whatsoever, whenever; and because of the awareness that one's lifetime minus the time represented by music that one might wish to hear leaves you with a negative sum, the stockpile comes to be held collectively. It's everyone's hoard. It merely becomes something to access.

Recall Keith Rowe and Eddie Prévost's genuine concern, regarding AMM's practice as an improvising group, that "we recognized that 'when somebody pays, they expect the goods.'" What happens when *paying* for individual titles—as album releases, as published works—is no longer part of the equation? How does eliminating the exchange of money—modifying expectations about what counts as "the goods"—affect the calculus of deciding which recordings will be made available to a public? What happens when discographies, if people are still keeping track, swell to absurd proportions such that their size obscures the actual interface between sound recordings and communities of listeners?⁵ A formidable number of entries in a discography used to suggest a sustained, reciprocal engagement between artist and audience; given the ease of producing recordings at present, it is no longer the case that the number of releases by a particular artist correlates with listener demand.

The swollen, out-of-proportion ranks of newly available recordings—more titles produced every year and fewer overall sales (or, more to the point, less time available for living with, for more deeply experiencing individual recordings)—arrive with pros and cons when it comes to representing avant-garde musical practices that emerged in the 1960s. Let's take the example of free improvised music, beginning with the argument that recordings encourage listening habits that are antithetical to the basic tenets of improvisation. The number of commercially released recordings of free improvised music has historically been predicated on what its extremely modest market would bear. Given the difficulty of making a living

playing, promoting, or writing about improvised music, what musician or independent label owner can afford to be sitting on boxes of unsold records? Every time that AMM convened to play, every time that Derek Bailey or Anthony Braxton or Tony Oxley or any number of other free improvisers simply played, the result was a musical action not previously heard, and one that could not be identified as a performance of a given composition. This is not to claim that free improvisation yields anything like absolute novelty; anyone with more than a passing familiarity with what has been grouped under this designation will recognize certain tropes, whether through the conventions of avoiding particular kinds of musical interaction (playing together in a recognizable key, maintaining metrical time, playing recognizable melodies or chord changes) or through the gradual incorporation of a personal array of tics and favored gestures that will ultimately identify nearly any improvising musician (unless, that is, you are Derek Bailey submitting to an Invisible Jukebox test, and you are asked to identify artists on the basis of their recordings). Free improvised music ideally echoes the title of Robert Morris's artwork *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (1969).⁶ And yet, even if the continuous project of free improvisation yields daily alterations—however extreme, however slight—does this persuasively argue for unleashing vast amounts of recordings of improvised music? Let's set aside AMM's reservations about audiences "expect[ing] the goods"; when it expressed that concern as a group, this was at a time when free improvisation was, from the perspective of its practitioners, insufficiently understood as a process and seen more commonly as a particular kind of musical result. Fans of improvised music—when a community of listeners for improvised music did in fact emerge, and weren't merely mistaking AMM for Pink Floyd—gradually developed variously mutable, up-for-grabs understandings of what qualifies as "goods." Let's also imagine that we are talking hypothetically about an improviser's or improvising group's or performance venue's tape archive being made available free of charge online. Wouldn't making significantly more material available result in listeners of improvised music spending still more time name-, date-, and number-crunching, mulling over minutiae, and turning more decisively toward the past? Using Bailey's terminology, the "antiques trade" would be surmounted by "antiques trivia."

Does making the archive available in its ominous, consuming scale further distort the meanings of improvisation as the fundamentally ephem-

eral practice described by its adherents? A compelling counterargument is that by putting the whole thing out there—the untold hours and days and sobering portions of lives documented by recordings—listeners can encounter recordings of improvised music in a manner that more closely approximates the fleeting, transitory experience of live performance. If the year is 1970 and you’ve heard tell of Derek Bailey’s curious manner of playing the guitar and would like to judge for yourself but can’t make it out to his weekly gigs in London, you have the option of sitting down and spending time with Incus Records LP 1, the album *The Topography of the Lungs* by the trio of Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, and Han Bennink. But when you do so, each listen increasingly resolves into something closer to a musical composition those tempestuously brittle, battling slivers of sound that otherwise arrive prefractured in a thousand sizes, shapes, and velocities. Jim O’Rourke is undoubtedly correct that repeated listens to this record can make manifest otherwise impossible-to-perceive details about the practice of each of these three exceptional, iconoclastic musicians and their brief alliance in this ensemble. By contrast, if you were to have access online to hours upon hours of Derek Bailey’s recordings from a career-length span representing the hundreds of different groupings and ensemble combinations in which this restless improviser found himself, you would be more likely to listen to individual recordings once and once only before moving on to others, and your practice as a listener would more closely approximate an improviser’s musical practice. You would better be able to immerse yourself in the sheer variety of collaborations and performance settings. You would not of necessity return to the same limited repertoire of recordings that had been historically defined by the economics of running an independent record label. In short, you would have a better sense of the improviser’s continuous and continuously altered project.

In the chapter “John Cage, Recording Artist,” I wrote about the ways in which a series of Cage’s LP releases between 1959 and 1963 played a role in forging his public identity in the 1960s. Today it is harder to point to album releases as constituting a shared set of materials to which one can expect other listeners to refer. Familiarity with the work of a particular musician often comes down to the accessibility of recorded materials, with “accessibility” verging on a euphemism for cost. Can I find it on the web? Do I have to pay for it? Can I find it on YouTube? Is it on UbuWeb? How representative is that previously unreleased concert recording from 1968

that I've been able to locate free of charge online? Is that really the best introduction to the work of a given artist?

If I want to point someone toward recordings of John Cage's and David Tudor's collaborative works from the late 1950s forward, I might recommend that he or she listen to *Indeterminacy*, as well as to the two volumes of Cage's *Variations IV* released by Everest Records in 1965–66 and the recording of *Variations II* that appeared in 1967 on the Music of Our Time *New Electronic Music* LP. If that person instead searches for “John Cage” (specifying “mediatype: audio”) on the Internet Archive (Archive.org), which currently contains more than 200,000 free sound files, his or her search will yield more than five hundred hits. Many of these will come from the Other Minds Audio Archive, which includes nearly two thousand entries, including concerts organized by Other Minds, Inc., as well as recordings of concerts, interviews, and radio programs from KPFA-FM in Berkeley, California. A search for “John Cage David Tudor” on Archive.org will yield previously unreleased marvels such as Cage and Tudor's January 16, 1965, concert at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, including realizations of *Variations IV* and Cage's “Duet for Cymbal” from *Cartridge Music*.⁷ After listening to the Cage and Tudor 1965 concert, this hypothetical listener will be three short, commonsensical clicks away from a 1972 interview with Cage and Tudor, also from Other Minds' collection of KPFA broadcasts.⁸

As artists, estates, and record labels are now more likely to allow for free-of-charge access to work that they did not initially select for official release or that was considered peripheral (you can verify this with many an artist who has given his or her approval to have work appear in free on-line collections such as UbuWeb or the Free Music Archive), the result is that much work previously deemed as being of secondary importance or of an inferior quality is now likely to be heard by an even greater number of listeners than work that has remained in print in the form of for-sale releases. Work previously filed away is now work to be given away, and lesser efforts can become the most widely encountered. It used to be that if someone had only the most glancing familiarity with the work of John Cage, it might consist of one or two skewed factoids: he was a composer who abrogated his responsibilities by flipping coins, rolling dice, something of the sort, or he was a world-class leg-puller who wrote a famous piece of silent music. (His *Dictionary of Received Ideas* entry would read,

“JOHN CAGE. More a philosopher than a composer.”) In 2012, the year of Cage’s centennial, his quirky January 1960 performance of *Water Walk* on the television show *I’ve Got a Secret* became a moderate YouTube hit (700,000+ views — not 70 million, but then again we are talking about a dadaistic, experimental-music performance), and appears to be on its way to becoming the most widely encountered document of his musical practice — even as, charming and surreal though it may be, *Water Walk* would probably not top anyone’s list of Cage works to experience.⁹

Composers’ and musicians’ attitudes about granting access to back catalogs and archives vary widely. Some artists may hold the conviction that the smaller number of sanctioned releases of their work count as their best, most assiduous efforts to represent their musical practice in the form of a recording. Think, for example, of the rigorously vetted and comparatively few authorized releases of the music of La Monte Young. For others, the economics of commercially released recordings put a profound kink in the cord of representing an artistic output that would otherwise be savored for its volume and its diversity. The business of releasing records put fetters on displaying these artists’ musical practice in the fullness of its scope. To this end, many composers and musicians have granted permission to post work that is out of print or available in notably expensive formats. It is probably safe to presume that Robert Ashley’s fourteen-hour *Music with Roots in the Aether*, his series of video portraits of seven composers, has reached a wider audience because of Ashley having chosen to grant UbuWeb permission not only to host the series of videos but also, interestingly, to separate the audio from the videos and to make the project available in the form of fourteen one-hour MP3 files.¹⁰ Lovely Music, Ltd. would be glad to sell you full-resolution versions of these videos (on DVD for \$35 apiece or \$200 for the set, and on VHS cassettes for \$60 apiece or \$350 for the set), but it’s significant that Ashley has chosen to make this work available free of charge even while unsold physical copies remain available. His example is certain to have been noted by other artists.

Experimental music and the record business always made for unlikely bedfellows — no matter how rarefied, how esoteric, or how unbusinesslike an arm (or small toe) of the recording business these labels might have constituted, even in their artist-run incarnations. Perhaps it gratifies some of its practitioners to see experimental music and the business of *selling* records becoming unlinked in the contemporary moment. As record-

ings of concert performances available online come to outnumber those of officially released studio recordings, a potential listener now encounters a much greater number and variety of documents of performances. Being able to compare a larger number of realizations of a particular piece (or, conversely, a series of performances by an improvising group) helps to drive home the point that many of these works varied so significantly from performance to performance as to problematize basic conventions of the identity of a musical work. In these ways, the increased number of recordings of experimental music from the 1960s — as well as a broader array of types of documentation — made available through online resources may ultimately provide a better sense of the contradictory and often marginal role that sound recording and commercial releases played in this period. Online resources lend themselves to a representation of a flatter, busier, more populous, more complex, more tendentious, and more statistically regular landscape of musical activities (i.e., these events were more geographically dispersed than the discographical record previously suggested), and one characterized not only by breathtaking Monument Valley-like topographical features (the rare LP release of experimental music in the 1960s) and their long, solitary shadows.

There is a familiar, instinctive tendency to refer to the succession of dominant media from the last several decades primarily in terms of their continuity. Releases of LPs are superseded by CDs, and CDs are superseded by online resources. It's not uncommon to see these disparate media treated as fundamentally similar — merely as upgrades within a chronology that resembles natural selection. This is particularly true in the case of experimental music: the specific form that the recording takes can seem of secondary importance to the greater conceptual chasm that has to do with encountering recordings of works that were predicated on the experience of live performance or that date from a period in which there was little or no infrastructure for distributing these recordings. What difference, then, if that recording ultimately circulates in the form of a beat-up, scratchy vinyl LP; a third-generation cassette passed among friends that warbles unforgivably over the first minute of each side; a CD whose scaled-down facsimile of an LP's liner notes make them almost unreadable; or an MP3 with the artist's name misspelled? Or even if the sound recording was contained in the Platonic ideal of each of these forms: the mint-condition LP, the pitch-perfect cassette, and so on?

Audio files circulating online need not hew to the ideally twenty-minute maximum side-length for an LP or to the seventy-four-minute length that was the initial industry standard for compact discs. (CDs and CD-Rs now contain audio of up to 79:59.) No such straitjackets—although “full-length album” is an especially roomy one—obtain with music accessed online.¹¹ Online resources—particularly ones that make available archival recordings that need not be tailored to the conventional dimensions of an album—possess an informality that doesn’t necessarily square with the work aspect associated with album releases.

Rather than gesturing toward online resources as a generic, catchall category for future listening practices, it’s necessary to draw distinctions among these online entities in the time of their emergence. UbuWeb’s Kenneth Goldsmith has referred to himself as an “amateur archivist.” What are the consequences of referring to many of the emerging online collections of recorded sound as “archives”? This same question could be asked of the Free Music Archive or the Other Minds Audio Archive on Archive.org or WFMU or any of the rapidly expanding number of music venues and performance series that are posting recordings of their concerts online, and making public the archives of their more or less contemporary, ongoing activity.

The rapidity with which the category of the archive is undergoing change is striking. In the case of many of these online resources, the appropriation and transformation of the term “archive” bespeaks a certain hubris—as if the category no longer implies aspirations toward permanence and no longer functions as a boundary with regard to past, present, and future.

In the chapter entitled “The Historical *a priori* and the Archive” from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault describes the archive as fundamentally separate from the discourse of the present. In Foucault’s words, the archive is “a privileged region: at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us.”¹² On the relation of the archive to the present, Jacques Derrida similarly asks, “Where does the archive commence? This question is the question of the archive. There are undoubtedly no others.”¹³ Derrida’s evocation of the category “archive” is premised on its being addressed toward the future: “The question of the archive is not,

we repeat, a question of the past. . . . It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what it will have meant, we will only know in times to come.”¹⁴

Adhering to Foucault’s fundamental distinction — that the archive is separate from the present, that the archive defines the discourse of the present in its being distinct — it would seem inapt to speak of the majority of these online resources as archives. But our relationship to “archive” is less and less constitutive of boundaries between past and present, and between the inside and outside of institutions. (In *Archive Fever*, Derrida notes the derivation of “archive” from the Greek *arkheion*: “initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded.”)¹⁵ With digital technology, the temporal focus of the category of “archive” is shifting to include the present. When a person backs up digital files to an external source, that person is “archiving” data. It is as if unspoken but entirely legitimate concerns about the longevity of data storage have resulted in the adoption of terminology that aims to reassure the user.

Media archaeologist Wolfgang Ernst argues that the term “archive” “belongs to paper-based memory,” and he distinguishes between traditional textual archives and multimedia reconceptualizations of the archive on the basis of interaction: “The traditional archive has, so far, been a read only memory — printed texts reproduced through inscription, not rewritten by reading. . . . In multi-media space, however, the act of reading, that is the act of re-activating the archive, can be dynamically coupled with feedback.”¹⁶ The fact that online archives are composed of digital materials is fundamental to reconceptualizations of the category of the archive. These are materials that above all can easily be retrieved and subsequently altered and reintroduced into circulation in different forms; as Georgina Born writes, “Digital music media both extend these potentials and afford entirely new modes of collaborative authorship. . . . Distributed across space, time and persons, music can become an object of recurrent decomposition, composition and re-composition by a series of creative agents.”¹⁷

Borrowing Walter Benjamin’s formulation about photography — namely, that the decisive question is not whether photography is an art form but rather what effect it has on the category of art more generally — we can say that the issue is not whether proliferating online resources are

to be counted as archives but rather what these collections, and our unprecedented access to them, does to the category of the archive.¹⁸

With regard to experimental music, these online resources generally assume one of the following forms: sites conventionally referred to as online archives, authorized or not, organized around a particular artist, an institution, or the vision of one or more curators; blogs that are usually the work of a single individual and more informal in nature but often substantial in terms of the amount of recordings posted; and file sharing that occurs with little or no contextualizing apparatus. This final category gives rise to what Goldsmith refers to as “nude media”: “Once a digital file is downloaded from the context of a site, it’s free or naked, stripped bare of the normative external signifiers that tend to give as much meaning to an artwork as the contents of the artwork itself.”¹⁹ There are multiple criteria by which online resources can be sorted. Does the site seek permission from copyright holders for the works that it contains? Does it charge for access? Is its content streamed or downloaded? Does one have to become a member of the site? Is it necessary to provide personal data? How focused or how diffuse are the organizing principles of the site as a collection? Does it contain work that has not previously been available? Is it connected to an institution? What is the nature of that connection? Is it connected to a record label? Or a particular artist? Or a venue or a radio station or a performance series?

What follows is a survey of two quite different examples of prominent online resources. DRAM is a website for experimental and avant-garde music that clears all copyrights, that has been successful at raising funds through institutional grants, and that can be seen as extending forward from a nonprofit initiative that was launched to coincide with the U.S. Bicentennial. The other online resource that we will consider is UbuWeb, an extraordinarily influential website that dates back to 1996.

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Originally the Database of Recorded American Music, but now representing work from throughout the world, DRAM (www.dramonline.org) has its roots in an ambitious, farsighted series of LP releases that appeared on the New World Records label in the mid-1970s. New World Records, Inc. was founded in 1975 under the name Recorded Anthology of American

Music. Its project was to mark the American Bicentennial with a hundred-LP anthology of a diverse range of American musics that had not necessarily found footing in the commercial marketplace. The records were to be characterized by extensive, scholarly liner notes, and the series was to be given away to libraries and educational institutions. The Rockefeller Foundation provided a four-million-dollar grant, and in the end what turned out to be a series of more than one hundred albums was distributed gratis to approximately seven thousand libraries nationally and internationally. New World Records continues to the present day, and has released more than 350 albums, representing the work of more than six hundred composers, although it has long since pulled back from what was once its ecumenical mission of representing a vast stylistic diversity of American music. In recent years, its strong suit has been recordings of works by composers forming a broad lineage of North American experimentalism; its recent projects include recordings of works by Ben Johnston, James Tenney, Alvin Curran, and many others, notably including the ten-CD *Music for Merce*, with previously unreleased works for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company by John Cage, Christian Wolff, Takehisa Kosugi, and numerous others, and a five-CD boxed set of primarily unreleased recordings from the ONCE Festival in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with works by composers including Robert Ashley, Pauline Oliveros, and Gordon Mumma.²⁰

The six-hour *Music from the ONCE Festival* is a prime example of an extensive, nearly exhaustive archival release of music that in its day rarely circulated in recorded form. In his notes to the collection, Robert Ashley registers his reservations about representing the ONCE Festival with a collection of audio recordings. Much of the experience at the time was predicated upon multimedia events, including film, dance, light projections, happenings, and the very fact of it being a festival—an occasion for Ann Arbor to be invaded by freaky out-of-towners, but also an occasion for Ann Arbor's locals to be on display. Numerous photographs picture large groups of composers, performers, audience members, beer drinkers, and hangers-on. Photos of innovative stage design (part of the 1965 festival took place on a three-story, *Hollywood Squares*-like scaffolding structure atop a parking garage) and guerrilla theater performances (Mary Ashley's *Truck* piece is described as "unscheduled private events in the midst of an unsuspecting public audience") help to both historicize these multimedia events and remind us of their unrecoverability.

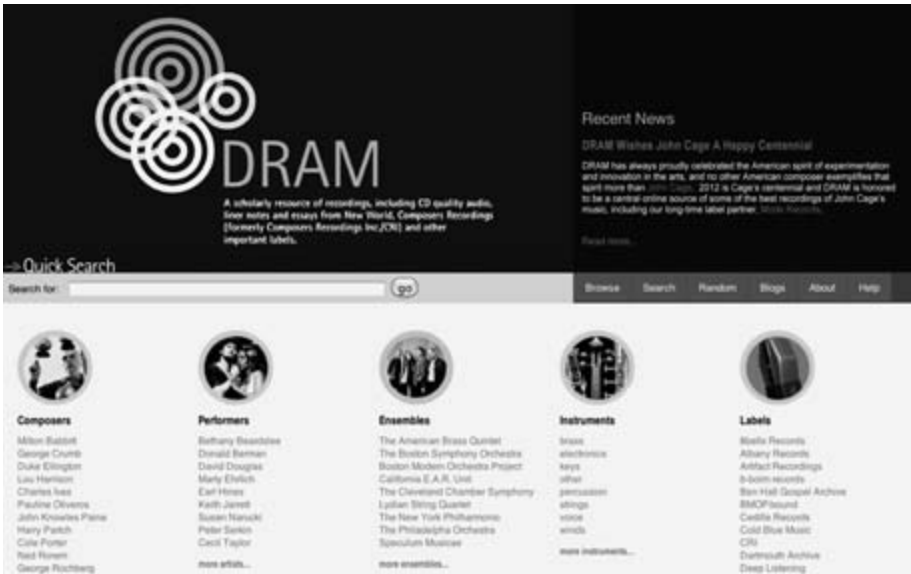


FIGURE 5.1. Detail of DRAM home page. Used by permission of Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc.

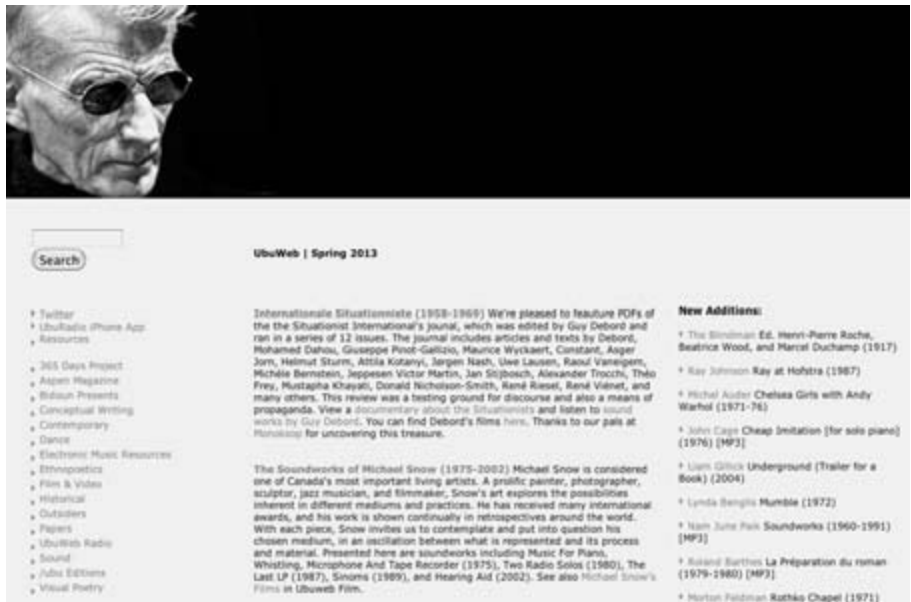


FIGURE 5.2. Detail of UbuWeb home page. Courtesy Kenneth Goldsmith.

Despite shifting the focus of its mission toward contemporary composition, New World's profile remains linked to the impressive Bicentennial bang with which it came into existence. The label's founding tale and its ambition to make a range of not especially commercial music available to the widest possible audience is an important reference for DRAM. Lisa Kahlden, the database's project director, explains that many years prior to working on this resource, she had been familiar with New World releases for the reason that they were in the collection of the public library in Hardin County, Kentucky.²¹ Library holdings of New World titles are the way that many individuals, particularly in smaller towns, were first able to hear recordings of music by Henry Cowell, Harry Partch, and Cecil Taylor, to name three artists almost at random whose work received distribution through New World.

Take the records out of Texas, or Kentucky, and no one will hear Harry Partch.

Because of declining CD sales in the late 1990s as well as the realization that music would increasingly be accessed online, New World Records' founder, Herman Krawitz, began to envision a way for the company to reinvent itself in a manner consistent with its original mission. New World had already gone online in 1995, offering downloads of its liner notes as PDFs. In 2000, the Database of Recorded American Music was started with fifty thousand dollars in seed money from the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation and, shortly thereafter, a matching grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In the course of the year, the Mellon Foundation provided an even more substantial investment, and it has continued to support the project to the present day. Server space initially came from the New York University Libraries. The database envisioned its role to be that of helping "academic institutions to free up storage space, reduce collection costs and labor, ensure against damage or loss and increase accessibility to materials."²²

The first job that DRAM set for itself was to compile a database of copyright holders for the works represented by New World Records' releases. This proved to be a considerable task, and one made that much more difficult both by primitive text-conversion tools and by the reluctance of many artists and publishers to see work made accessible online. It was four years into the project before DRAM had sufficiently streamlined rights clear-

ance — and the ground beneath everyone's feet had shifted — such that the Harry Fox Agency, the United States' largest mechanical licensing company, would even participate in discussions about the project.

The database steadily expanded by working with the catalogs of record labels that specialize in new music and jazz. It currently maintains works from approximately thirty record labels, totaling more than forty thousand tracks from nearly four thousand albums. More important, the list of labels impresses as being thoughtfully curated; it runs the gamut from larger, more established new-music labels, many of whose titles are no longer in print (New World, Mode Records, Lovely Music, CRI) to comparatively newer, small labels, whose works even when in print circulate in rarefied distribution channels (Edition Wandelweiser, Cold Blue Music, Firehouse 12). Furthermore, as Kahlden notes, "Extensive metadata has been entered for every musical selection in the repertory, including composer and performer; dates of composition, recording and publication; keywords and descriptors; and links (where available to resources outside the system, including the Library of Congress sheet music archives and the New World Records website)." ²³ The database has approximately 150 university libraries as subscribers, meaning that students, staff, and faculty at those schools ideally have access to the DRAM online archive. Its annual subscription fee for institutions runs from \$495 to \$1,995, and in its current form, DRAM streams audio. None of its works are available for download. Lisa Kahlden describes her dream version of the project as one in which funding sources would make DRAM available free of charge, and not reliant upon subscriptions. As she remarks, "That would be the ultimate achievement of this project, bringing it full circle with New World." ²⁴

In terms of its site architecture and design, DRAM's home page visually prioritizes five major content areas: Composers, Performers, Ensembles, Instruments, and Labels. Each of these categories is represented by a circular iconic image (Composers: Harry Partch about to strike one of his self-designed cloud chamber bowls; Ensembles: the tiniest imaginable recognizable image of the Kronos Quartet; Labels: a no-nonsense vintage microphone; and so on) followed by an alphabetical listing of the most prominent entries in each field. The home page list of one dozen featured composers begins with Milton Babbitt, George Crumb, Duke Ellington, Lou Harrison, and Charles Ives. Clicking on the image of Harry Partch

takes you to the searchable complete listing of 5,118 composers, from Kari Aava and Michael Abels through Ellen Taaffe Zwilich and Samuel Zyman.

The “Instruments” category was the last of the five that I found myself accessing in my own months- and now years-long itinerary into DRAM’s holdings, an itinerary of specific destinations, more often than not purposeful in nature. And yet when I finally did make my way into the “Instruments” category, I found it a satisfyingly concrete reminder of the fact that expanded instrumental resources have always been central to the types of musical work that DRAM brings together. To give an example, under “Electronics,” an eyebrow-raising 134 separate instruments appear. In addition to familiar suspects such as the Emulator sampler, Moog synthesizer, ondes martenot, sine wave generator, and theremin, you’ll find linkable entries for cracklebox (there’s but a single use in all of DRAM for Michel Waisvisz’s defiantly crude, handheld, battery-powered synthesizer: Warren Po plays it on Guillermo Gregorio’s *Coplanar* album); no-input mixer (once again, a single instance: Ulrich Krieger, on a recording of John Cage’s *Sculptures Musicales*); as well as — among the many instrument names that call out for immediate research — ambrazier,ocolase, namastitar, Space Plate, and thunder scrape. The “Other” section under “Instruments” contains 122 entries clustered around extremes of the prosaic and the poetic, with not much in between: adhesive tape, brandy snifter (a dead giveaway: it’s composer-pianist Charlemagne Palestine), “chalkboard strategies” (Anthony Braxton), drugs (you’ll have to look up that one yourself), egg whisk, firecrackers, garden hose, hiyoshigi, Indian elephant horn, Jicara de agua, leather jacket, metronome, Nigerian shepherd’s horn, Pez Eater, telephone books, vacuuphone, and wind wand. On examination, this list — or any number of possible playlists to be constructed from “Other” instruments — could inspire an amble that’s more rewarding than immediately navigating to a desired recording.

Clicking on a record label provides you with a paragraph-length introduction to the selected label, followed by a row of several releases (each represented by an image of its cover artwork) marked “Suggested Listening” and a separate row of “Recently Added Albums.” Selecting “Full results for [name of label]” summons a table that resembles a more informative and more orthographically accurate iTunes interface, in which each album entry contains a complete listing of performers and instruments.

Selecting an album gives you the option of streaming audio in the same window or in a pop-up player; tags allow you to read or download original liner notes in PDF form and to link to external sites (most commonly, iTunes) to purchase the album.

As with so many online musical encounters, even the most disciplined listeners can find it difficult to stay focused on a single album when DRAM contains thousands of cross-referenced albums that you have yet to hear. Upon linking to DRAM's page for the CD reissue of *Source* magazine's six ten-inch LPs that were released between 1968 and 1971, I come across composer and MEV member Alvin Curran's name and remember that I had been meaning to listen to his recent archival anthology *Solo Works: The '70s*.²⁵ I bookmark Curran's "Magic Carpet," from the *Source Records 1-6* compilation; I've listened to it before, and I'll come back to it later. Locating his *Solo Works: The '70s* on DRAM, the album's pop-up window soberly warns me that this three-CD collection has a running time of three hours and twelve minutes (slight twinge of terror, contemplation of backtracking, perhaps I should bookmark this one as well); retracing my steps, I notice that DRAM contains eleven full-length albums with Curran's music, much of which appears on the New World label, which is itself represented on DRAM by (short pause for emphasis) 435 albums.

I find myself pulled in multiple directions not only by multiple desires but also by multiple possibilities.

I consider tying my hands to the back of my chair. I need a strategy to keep from browsing, to be able to listen without interruption. This is one of the signal differences between streaming and downloading audio. When I stream audio, I'm often seated in front of a computer, facing a screen. I try to avoid letting the music become merely a soundtrack to searching, sounds accompanying an information drift. I'm listening while online, and while online there's no end to searching and linking, to associative, lateral exploration. When I download music, I'm able to come back to it when I'm not using the computer for any of a half dozen additional, simultaneously embarked-upon activities. (Note that in the preceding sentences I've stuck with my instinctive, instructive word choice: I stream *audio*, but I download *music*.) Somehow when I'm listening to music that I've downloaded, I don't notice the clock ticking in quite the same way—I don't sense the clock telling me that there are many lifetimes of recorded sound (im)balanced against the standard-issue one human lifetime of listening. Sure, if I

have an MP3 file of Alvin Curran's "Magic Carpet," I'm aware that it's precisely 15:03, which supersedes — overwrites — my quaintly naive, predigital sense of its length first and foremost measured in the extremely imprecise unit of one side of a ten-inch 33½ L.P. With the downloaded version, I can still avert my gaze from the time display. Where are the streaming-audio interfaces that purposefully omit not only a time display but also the ubiquitous timeline graphic? With downloaded music, there's an atavistic comfort that speaks to the experience of, in Jacques Attali's resonant term, stockpiling recordings, even as the physical medium morphs into the digital file.²⁶ Stockpiling gives the illusion of controlling time, of possessing time, of time as pleasure deferred, of choosing the best time, down the line, to listen.

In a significant shift, DRAM began offering subscriptions to individuals in 2012, available in increments of three, six, and twelve months, with a yearly subscription costing seventy-five dollars. In that same year, DRAM published its first issue of an online journal entitled *Sound American*. The other prominent change at DRAM has been its starting to host a number of archives of either unreleased or otherwise rare recordings. These collections include the Experimental Intermedia Archive (86 hours of concert recordings, radio programs, and interviews); Anthony Braxton's Tri-Centric Foundation (156 hours of music); the Ben Hall Gospel Archive (152 hours of obscure, out-of-print American gospel records); and the Dartmouth Archive of the music of composer Jon Appleton.

The Experimental Intermedia Archive is precisely the kind of project that DRAM is wise to undertake. This collection of audio recordings and documentary materials will likely attract new users to DRAM; at the same time, Experimental Intermedia (as well as the artists represented in its archive) benefits from DRAM's commitment to cataloging, preserving, digitizing, publicizing, and facilitating access to historic recordings that would otherwise likely languish — not only going unheard but risking the physical deterioration of its recorded media. The Experimental Intermedia Foundation was begun in 1968 by choreographers Elaine Summers and Trisha Brown and composers Phill Niblock and Philip Corner. The organization presented its first concerts in 1973 at Niblock's Manhattan loft (at 224 Centre Street in Chinatown), and a steady schedule of performances continues to this day. If you've attended a concert at Experimental Intermedia, you already know that this is the space where Niblock works and lives,

and you shouldn't be surprised to see his toothbrush in the loft's bathroom. In 2010, after nearly forty years of presenting first-rate concerts at an affordable price in an agreeably informal, low-key setting, Experimental Intermedia found itself facing a threat of eviction. This situation made it clear to Niblock that action needed to be taken to protect Experimental Intermedia's tape archive, which contains recordings of nearly every performance that has taken place since 1979 in the Centre Street loft.

The first batch of Experimental Intermedia's recordings made available through DRAM consists of two different series of radio programs produced by Niblock and Steve Cellum: "Concerts by Composers" (short interviews with concert recordings) and "Ultrasounds" (a more freeform, stylistically ad hoc series). These radio features contain previously unreleased music and interviews with, among others, Pauline Oliveros, Tom Johnson, George Lewis, Hamiet Bluiett, Eliane Radigue, Kazuo Uehara, Alvin Curran, and Julius Eastman. Each program contains its own "liner notes," consisting of a short, reliable, not cut-and-pasted biographical entry for the composer; thoughtfully selected links outside of DRAM's site to additional work online; and, where possible, comments from the composers themselves on their experience of presenting work at Experimental Intermedia. The scale of the initial posting of thirty-two radio programs, totaling approximately sixteen hours of audio, greatly exceeds what would have likely appeared on archival CD releases, had Phill Niblock elected to release these on CD when there was still greater demand for buying releases on physical media. For this material, the form of the radio program is in many ways an ideal one. Listeners to these programs can hear, for example, composer Arnold Dreyblatt introducing a concert of his Orchestra of Excited Strings by walking the interviewer through his battery of unique adapted instruments.

As consistently strong as its music programming has been, the overarching project of Experimental Intermedia — as the name suggests — has also been to present film, video, dance, and all variety of performance, often melding these in novel combinations. Founding member Elaine Summers described intermedia as "when you enter the image and get wrapped up in it. You become part of the image."²⁷ Images are conspicuous in their absence from DRAM's Experimental Intermedia Archive, although a number of the radio interviews explicitly meditate on what can be lost when

performances are represented exclusively as audio recordings. (The program dedicated to the composer and legendarily shamanic performer Jerry Hunt provides an example of this.) The links that appear in the radio programs' notes often lead to online videos (most commonly on YouTube) that help to supplement the lack of visual material in DRAM's presentation of Experimental Intermedia's performance documentation. Just as there is a notable difference between the 1960s and the 1970s in terms of the frequency (and the aural fidelity) with which performances of experimental music were recorded, there is a similar dividing line between a period in which performances were documented through audio recordings alone, and our current digital era in which photographic and video documentation have become vastly more common. The most significant consequence of this is that audiovisual documentation makes it easier to recognize hybrid, difficult-to-categorize, multi- or interdisciplinary work as such, and without skewing it decisively toward a single discipline (prominently, music) by virtue of representing it solely with audio. This is not to say that disciplinarity is particularly problematic with regard to materials posted by DRAM from the Experimental Intermedia Archive; indeed, the work presented in the "Concerts by Composers" and "Ultrasounds" radio series predominantly functions as music and is well worth encountering in the form of an audio recording.

One additional observation remains to be made about the various hypothetical heirs to Experimental Intermedia and its newly unveiled online archive. This particular sliver of the future has already arrived. By this I mean that various performance venues that, like Experimental Intermedia, feature experimental music as only one of a number of disciplines are likely to have their archives-in-the-making already available online. It's less and less the case that the archives of similar sorts of performance venues will sit inaccessible for years and decades. Rather, the next generation of venues operating within a presentational vernacular established by such entities as The Kitchen and Experimental Intermedia already regularly present their performance documentation in a multiplatform choreography that is part of their day-to-day operation.

Kenneth Goldsmith's UbuWeb presents a profoundly different model from DRAM. Launched in 1996, UbuWeb is a sprawling, free-of-charge online collection containing thousands of PDF, MP3, MP4, AVI, and Flash files representing works of concrete poetry, literary criticism, sound art, experimental music, artists' films, found objects, lectures, and more. At present it contains works by more than seventy-five hundred artists.

A manifesto-like essay by Goldsmith entitled "If It Doesn't Exist on the Internet, It Doesn't Exist" begins with a quotation from an e-mail message that he received in May 2000 from an UbuWeb user named Meredith: "i really enjoyed your site. it made me think about different cultures other than the ones i experience daily living in a small texas town."

Take the records out of . . .

Actually, a lot of these records may never have made it to Texas in the first place. As Goldsmith notes, "I can't imagine that much of UbuWeb's materials are available in Meredith's local library."²⁸

UbuWeb began with Goldsmith posting out-of-print, difficult-to-locate works of concrete poetry. His epiphany came in 1996, when he realized that the computer screen and the Netscape Navigator Internet browser — with what would now seem like a tortuously slow loading time — made it possible for him to experience concrete poetry anew. Visual compositions that had come to be regarded primarily as curious, eccentric, dead-end artifacts from an earlier era took on an altogether different character when encountered as a time-based, screen-mediated reading and viewing experience. The advent of streaming audio subsequently facilitated augmenting UbuWeb's collection of concrete poetry with historical recordings of sound poetry; sound poetry in turn led Goldsmith to post experimental music, sound art, and all variety of audio ephemera. The growth of UbuWeb to include multiple types of work seems to have been an organic progression outward from concrete poetry, and one spurred by an unending discovery online of obscure, mostly out-of-print materials. When it became possible to include MP3s and, shortly thereafter, video files on the site, UbuWeb expanded its range of works to the point where, as Goldsmith explains, "we seemed to be outgrowing our original taxonomies until we simply became a repository for the 'avant-garde' (whatever that means — our idea of what is 'avant-garde' seems to be changing all the time)."²⁹

Emphasizing UbuWeb's distinctiveness, archivist Margaret Smith writes, "UbuWeb was . . . founded in opposition to the limitations and norms of institutions. Consequently, similarities between it and digital collections (essentially mirroring the traditional classification of a library or museum collection) are almost superficial. Rather, they stem from each having been developed in similar technological landscapes and for similar purposes, rather than from any meaningful relationship."³⁰ Goldsmith describes UbuWeb as a "clearinghouse for the avant-garde." Yet the sound works that are available on UbuWeb are generally ones that initially circulated through official releases or publications (although frequently in very small editions) or were aired as radio broadcasts. If UbuWeb is a clearinghouse, then it is one by and large for completed works, and works for which this will not be their first interface with a public.

The most basic difference between UbuWeb and a project such as DRAM is that UbuWeb does not seek permissions to include material on its site. The consequences of this fundamental, determining fact of UbuWeb are that the site can be accessed free of charge; it does not require users to register; it does not require a log-in ID or password; it is not encumbered by advertising or pop-ups; and above all it makes it possible for UbuWeb to be stocked with an extraordinary collection of materials that would otherwise be difficult to locate. Unlike online sources that only stream content, Ubu allows its users to download its files. It's clear that Goldsmith and UbuWeb's contributors, without being too precious about it, regard UbuWeb's collection itself as a work of art—one that is functional, continues to change, and that is available for free in an unlimited edition. As Goldsmith writes in the introduction to his book *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*, "Democracy is fine for YouTube, but it's generally a recipe for disaster when it comes to art."³¹

UbuWeb runs on volunteer labor and through a number of strategic partnerships. Various partner organizations help to provide content (Anthology Film Archives, the artists-books publisher Primary Information, the new-music performance venue Roulette, Ireland's SoundEye Festival, etc.), although much of UbuWeb's material comes from the online trawlings of Goldsmith, UbuWeb's half dozen editors, and various anonymous contributors. In the last few years an increasing amount of material has come directly from artists themselves, as many come to recognize UbuWeb as an attractive way to make their work available. And yet there is

another element to this equation, beyond the basic calculation of an artist benefiting from certain works being made available free of charge. The artists who contribute work directly are themselves likely to be UbuWeb users; their contributions aid the continued growth of a site from which they have benefited, whether as readers, listeners, or viewers — and also as teachers, researchers, and students. They know that by contributing work directly to UbuWeb they have a hand in the selection of materials as well as in the quality of the work that is posted (e.g., they are able to provide a better-quality digital transfer of analog source material, a less-compressed digital file).

UbuWeb could not exist at anything like its current scale without partners that provide, free of charge, technical support such as media hosting, media archiving, audio streaming, programming, and mirroring. At present these partners include WFMU, the University of Pennsylvania's PennSound, SUNY Buffalo's Electronic Poetry Center, West Virginia University's Center for Literary Computing, Mexico City's CENTRO, and York University's Artmob. It's worth noting the diversity of these various institutional partners, from projects centered on literature and new media (PennSound, the EPC, the Center for Literary Computing); to a free-form radio station (WFMU); to a school for design, cinema, and television (CENTRO); and to "a multisectorial initiative designed to build large, accessible online archives of publically licensed Canadian art, and to foreground the issues that this process raises for Canadian copyright and intellectual property laws" (Artmob).

What do these institutions gain from helping to provide UbuWeb with server space, bandwidth, and other services without which the site would be financially unsustainable? Crucially, this intriguing range of entities sees UbuWeb as an allied project, and one deserving of their support. Each of these various institutions and institutional initiatives has a distinctive cast to their sense of a shared purpose with UbuWeb. The Electronic Poetry Center and PennSound find common ground with UbuWeb in their mission to support innovative poetics — especially at the intersections of poetry, new media, and digital culture — and particularly with regard to maintaining accessible archives of audio recordings of literary readings. The connections can be personal as well: Goldsmith is a senior editor at PennSound and teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, just as for many years he was a DJ at WFMU. When PennSound was launched in January

2005, an accompanying press release heralded the project with the tagline “PennSound: All the Free Poetry You Care to Download”: “The recording industry may not want anyone downloading music without paying for it, but a new project at the University of Pennsylvania encourages downloading right to MP3 players and hard drives all the poetry a listener might want. And it’s all free for the asking.”³² Even as UbuWeb’s commitment to poetry overlaps with PennSound, and its commitment to a freeform assemblage of *outré* musics—from the most demanding to the most purposely annoying—gibes with WFMU, UbuWeb’s partnerships are also premised on more than just the content of its collection. Artmob describes itself as anchored by the belief that “the successful creation of digital archives requires a foundation of trust between rights holders, the public, students, educators, funding agencies, cultural institutions and arts organizations.”³³ Indeed, Goldsmith, for all of his palpably fan-like enthusiasm for sharing as widely and indiscriminately as possible UbuWeb’s materials, recently wrote, “UbuWeb is as much about the legal and social ramifications of its self-created distribution and archiving system as it is about the content hosted on the site. In a sense, the content takes care of itself; but keeping it up there has proved to be a trickier proposition. . . . We’re lab rats under a microscope: in exchange for the big-ticket bandwidth, we’ve consented to be objects of university research in the ideology and practice of radical distribution.”³⁴

Goldsmith’s argument regarding the use of copyrighted materials has always been premised on the fact that no money changes hands with UbuWeb. The lack of remuneration for avant-garde poetry was a touchstone for UbuWeb in its earliest days, the obverse of a business model. As Goldsmith explains in his 2001 manifesto, “UbuWeb Wants to Be Free”: “Essentially a gift economy, poetry is the perfect space to practice utopian politics. Freed from profit-making constraints or cumbersome fabrication considerations, information can literally ‘be free’: on UbuWeb, we give it away. We publish in full color for pennies. We receive submissions Monday morning and publish them Monday afternoon.”³⁵ Goldsmith’s description of poetry as a “gift economy” invites a consideration of the transformation of the term “gift” in an era of file sharing. In UbuWeb’s FAQ, Goldsmith reiterates, regarding the fact that nothing is for sale on the site, “There’s no gift shop at the end of the museum.” There is, instead, merely the gift. It’s yours for the taking, which as Jacques Derrida has observed, is not the

same thing as giving. In Derrida's reading of the gift, nothing occurs outside of the circle of exchange; the gift is, properly speaking, impossible. But Derrida's examples, based on a reading of Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*, speak to one-on-one, reciprocal interactions; they speak to the incommensurability of "gift" and "exchange." UbuWeb's "giving" — that of online media in general — differs in kind from the purposeful, direct encounter.³⁶

As UbuWeb grew beyond the comparatively small world of experimental writing — both by expanding to include audio and video files and also by continuing to attract an ever-broader international cohort of users — the site faced an increasing number of artists, estates, art dealers, and publishers who asked that their work be removed. Visitors to UbuWeb's home page now find the declaration "All materials on UbuWeb are being made available for noncommercial and educational use only. All rights belong to the author(s)." Just below this is a link to UbuWeb's Digital Millennium Copyright Act notice, which gives information about notifying the site in case of allegations of copyright infringement while also including a warning of liability for damages for anyone who misrepresents being a victim of copyright infringement. When Goldsmith is asked to remove content on the basis of copyright, and when he verifies that the request is legitimate, the works in question quietly disappear from the site. But this was not always the case.

For some time UbuWeb posted a "Wall of Shame," a listing of the names of individuals who had asked for materials to be removed from the site. In 2007, thirteen artists appeared on the Wall of Shame; the list featured a disproportionate number of filmmakers, many of whom objected to the shoddy quality with which their work was represented on UbuWeb. Goldsmith has since taken down and apologized for the Wall of Shame, although it still sits badly with many individuals in the experimental-film community. Tony Conrad was among the first to ask UbuWeb to remove work. UbuWeb had posted an MP3 of Conrad's electronic-music soundtrack to his structural film *The Flicker* (1966), separating sound and image despite their integral functioning in the film. Not long after finding himself singled out on UbuWeb's Wall of Shame, Conrad contributed a post on the subject of UbuWeb to Frameworks, an online mailing list that describes itself as "an international forum on experimental film, avant-garde film, film as art, film as film, or film as visual poetry": "I personally have a great deal of sympathy for and interest in the free dissemination of video

and film works. . . . But there needs to be a certain gentlepersonly code of conduct that can circulate within such efforts, to replace the failing system of intellectual property law. UBU, in this respect, is a disgrace to the field, and not least so in its (not really) laughable ‘hall of shame.’ Of course, ‘ubu’ is as ‘ubu’ does; Jarry may have spewed crap, but he did not attempt character assassination, even tho he carried a rifle around with him.”³⁷

In the fall of 2010, UbuWeb was briefly put out of business by a hacker. In the aftermath of this event, a lengthy and occasionally contentious thread appeared on the Frameworks listserv. Many of the postings were sympathetic to UbuWeb, but certainly not all of them. (One of the first of these postings begins, “Ah, this is such good news.”) Goldsmith responded with “An Open Letter to the Frameworks Community,” in which he reiterated, “Ubu doesn’t touch money. We don’t make a cent. We don’t accept grants or donations. Nor do we—or shall we ever—sell anything on the site. No one makes a salary here and the work is all done voluntarily (more love hours than can ever be repaid).”³⁸ The fact that UbuWeb operates outside of a cash economy has always been Goldsmith’s primary argument vis-à-vis the fact that UbuWeb doesn’t seek clearances with copyright holders. What is new in this open letter, however, is his emphasis on the project’s amateurism: “We know that UbuWeb is not very good. In terms of films, the selection is random and the quality is often poor. The accompanying text to the films can be crummy, mostly poached from whatever is available around the net. . . . Ubu is a provocation to your community to go ahead and do it right, do it better, to render Ubu obsolete.”³⁹

Goldsmith has a point. Much of UbuWeb’s contents come from whatever he or one of UbuWeb’s contributors—the term is relatively informal—has been able to get his hands on. It’s entirely understandable that filmmakers and experimental-cinema enthusiasts have sounded the loudest cry against UbuWeb, and Goldsmith is right to acknowledge the often-lousy quality of the MP4 and AVI video files on UbuWeb. Even prior to drafting “An Open Letter to the Frameworks Community,” when asked to put together a program of film and video from UbuWeb at Lincoln Center’s Walter Reade Theater, Goldsmith came up with the remarkable gesture of projecting, in a first-rate screening facility, the low-resolution digital files directly from his website. In his own account of the event, the films looked and sounded abysmal—thus illustrating his point that UbuWeb cannot be imagined to be an acceptable substitute for viewing the

work in its intended medium, and that UbuWeb should not be seen as a threat to the continued existence of the various committed distributors and cinemas specializing in avant-garde film. UbuWeb's Film and Video page has since been updated to include web contact information for a number of experimental-cinema distributors (Canyon Cinema, Electronic Arts Intermix, the Video Data Bank, etc.) and venues (Anthology Film Archives, Pacific Film Archive, Chicago Filmmakers, etc.).

UbuWeb's recent inclusion of various caveats, disclaimers, good-neighbor links, and the odd legal document is perhaps surprising for a site whose sleek, unencumbered design can be understood as a correlative of its sleek, unencumbered relationship to copyright. There are similarities between UbuWeb's caption-free use of black-and-white images of icons of the avant-garde (Samuel Beckett, Yoko Ono, Morton Feldman, Yves Klein, Dalí and Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*) and Apple's "Think Different" advertising campaign that began in 1997 (and was most likely a slap at IBM's slogan "Think"). "Think Different" uses the faces of Albert Einstein, Amelia Earhart, Jim Henson, and Miles Davis and — in the one overlap with UbuWeb's design scheme — Yoko Ono, although in the Apple ad it's John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and on Ubu it's Yoko Ono flying solo.

UbuWeb's design is crystallized in the elegant, iconic simplicity of its home page, where as of the present writing Samuel Beckett fixes visitors with a mostly expressionless stare in a black-and-white photograph placed at the far left of a screen-spanning horizontal black band. Variations on this header design visually unify UbuWeb's various pages. Beneath Beckett's visage, the home page consists of four columns of black text on a white background, with orange text for hyperlinks. The first, third, and fourth columns are of a uniform narrow width; the second, which contains more detailed descriptions of recommended recent additions to the site, jumps to the fore by occupying twice the width of the other columns. The column at the far left contains a search box and an alphabetically arranged listing of UbuWeb's fourteen separate sections, from the 365 Days Project ("Some words to describe the material featured would be . . . Celebrity, Children, Demonstration, Indigenous, Industrial, Outsider, Song-Poem, Spoken, Ventriloquism, and on and on and on") to /ubu Editions (dozens of downloadable books — primarily poetry and conceptual writing — in the form of PDF files in a series edited by Goldsmith, Danny Snelson, and Brian Kim Stefans), not to mention Ethnopoetics, Film & Video, Out-

sider (formerly known as “Found + Insane”), and Sound. The links to FAQ pages catch the eye, as they appear in English, German, Dutch, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Turkish. The column at the far right on UbuWeb’s home page is reserved for a monthly “Top Ten” feature in which invited artists, writers, and curators select ten items of special importance from the site’s collection. The Top Ten helps point users toward potentially overlooked resources. This is one of the challenges in maintaining a vast collection of digital materials: How do you curate/exhibit/highlight (the term “exhibit” seems awkward when visiting a website, when scanning a web page) a digital collection in such a way as to make it more functional, more intriguingly arranged, and less bluntly overwhelming? The list of contributors to the Top Ten feature also serves, much like the publicizing of UbuWeb’s institutional partners, to lend a unique kind of improvised, evolving legitimacy to a project that at one and the same time describes itself as “radical distribution.”

In short, much about the experience of navigating one’s way around UbuWeb underscores the site’s professionalism. Goldsmith’s claims regarding the project’s amateurism (not forgetting that evocations of the “amateur” with regard to UbuWeb also signify its functioning with non-monetary resources) register as a response to fears that UbuWeb will neutralize artists’ abilities to sell their work as well as an unexpected episode of modesty from one of the present moment’s preeminent inheritors of the tradition of the avant-garde manifesto.

Just as Goldsmith emphasizes UbuWeb’s amateurism—perhaps we should describe it in terms of a compellingly complex relation to amateurism—one should also consider the question of UbuWeb’s ephemerality. For a site such as this to be at it for more than fifteen years is highly unusual. But UbuWeb’s longevity can be misleading. When William S. Burroughs however improbably survived into old age, it occurred to more than a few observers that he might in fact never die. A similar situation will someday obtain with UbuWeb; the logic will be that if it has made it this far—if it has survived angry copyright holders, if it has survived the technological hurdles of keeping the site up and running as well as the logistical challenges of partnering with multiple institutions (or, rather, with a host of forward-looking initiatives within multiple institutions)—then it might never cease operations. It’s not as if a lack of subscribers will ever cause UbuWeb to shut down. And yet, Goldsmith betrays not a little sur-



FIGURE 5.3. UbuWeb home page, fall 2001. Courtesy Kenneth Goldsmith.

prise at the fact that the site is still on its feet: “Never meant to be a permanent archive, Ubu could vanish for any number of reasons: our ISP pulls the plug, our university support dries up, or we simply grow tired of it.”⁴⁰ Excepting the extraordinary demands on one’s time (once again, those “love hours”) of producing a site for which no money changes hands and no one draws a salary, Goldsmith is less likely to tire of UbuWeb as long as there is no other site reduplicating its efforts—and there is not. His challenge to the Frameworks community (“do it right, do it better . . . render Ubu obsolete”) is one that is unlikely to be met, or at least not in the form of a site that approaches the scale of UbuWeb. Goldsmith contends that UbuWeb’s uniqueness—why aren’t there a dozen sites like UbuWeb?—has to do with the absence of money (alienating it from the art world) and professional reticence to acknowledge the value of work produced for the web (alienating it from academia). The fact that nearly everything on UbuWeb can be downloaded is evidence of Goldsmith’s sense of the project’s ephemerality. The implicit message is that if users are interested in certain materials, they should not presume that these materials will always be available through UbuWeb.

It is difficult to assess UbuWeb’s impact. Goldsmith avers that it does not collect quantitative information about numbers of search hits or numbers of visitors to the site. Still, if you have set foot in an academic class recently that touches on the experimental and avant-garde traditions represented by UbuWeb’s collection, the chances are increasingly likely that

you will have encountered a lecture or student presentation that makes use of UbuWeb's holdings. UbuWeb appears to be tremendously successful in disseminating work to a global community of users, and more so than most sites that seek to clear permissions and/or that require subscriptions. Its impact is felt in its effect on canon formation, however underground these alternative canons may seem, making accessible to artists, historians, critics, and the merely curious or bored thousands of obscure, often miles-from-the-beaten-path works. UbuWeb is yet another factor in the displacement of the metaphor "underground." It can be accessed in more or less the same number of keystrokes or clicks as any of the most commonplace of destinations on the web. It costs nothing to access. How is the metaphor "underground" supposed to weather such a shift?

We really don't know the future of our ability to access particular digital files. As Margaret Smith notes, "Physical storage media (servers, disks, and drives) have limited lifespans. Consequently, they require either parallel care for or ongoing development of machines/applications capable of reading them or periodic migration to new formats. . . . The ongoing effort required to preserve digital content seems unknown at best and prohibitive at worst."⁴¹ Thus when we speak of an online resource such as UbuWeb — or nearly any online resource — as an "archive," the changing valence of the term registers hope against hope. Many of these online collections may turn out to be as ephemeral as performances themselves, and we will once again savor at least some of this music — as well as the experience of the online resources that made much of it available — through the medium of memory.

The issues raised by online resources for experimental music show how far we have traveled from a period in which experimental music was notable primarily for its insistence on the experience of duration and physical space as activated by live performance, and on the unrepeatability of its gestures and sounds. Given emerging media and related shifts in listening practices and access to documentation, the ongoing conversation about experimental music will continue to focus on the mediation of recorded sound and its distribution, whether in material or digital culture. These histories will remain, like landscape, successions of perspectives — and, in all likelihood, perspectives mediated through forms unfamiliar to contemporary practice.

PREFACE

1. Quoted in Watson, *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*, 424.
2. See Sun Ra, *Nothing Is* (ESP-Disk 1045 LP) and Sun Ra and His Intergalactic Research Arkestra, *It's After the End of the World* (MPS 2120748 LP).
3. Not only did Morton Feldman's work benefit from the introduction of the compact disc, but it was also some of the first music that made use of the extended duration afforded by the DVD. In 2002, Mode Records released a DVD containing a recording, without interruptions, of the FLUX Quartet's six-hour and seven-minute performance of Feldman's *String Quartet No. 2*. The piece was written in 1983, but it wasn't given a full performance until 1999, when the youthful—athletic—FLUX Quartet became the first to cross the finish line of this musical marathon. The Kronos Quartet had rehearsed it, but eventually came to regard its physical barriers to live performance as insurmountable and never performed the work in its entirety. See Morton Feldman / FLUX Quartet, *String Quartet No. 2* (Mode 112 DVD). When DVD audio technology appeared, it brought to music what the gargantuan art exhibition spaces that appeared in the same decade—the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, the Bilbao Guggenheim—brought to visual art. Both represent immense containers that dwarf older efforts and encourage younger musicians and artists to create works on a larger, altogether different scale.
4. The note regarding the appropriate playback volume appears on Morton Feldman, *Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello* (hat ART 6158 CD).
5. In a seminar on John Cage's music and aesthetics, I once invited a number of students to perform several iterations of 4'33". With each subsequent performance, owing to the quietness of the sounds, I found my aural attention less focused on happenstance occurrences and more focused on the distance that these small sounds had to travel to reach my ears. Relying on my ears alone, a small classroom briefly assumed unfamiliar—surprisingly expanded—dimensions.
6. See John Cage, *Works for Piano and Prepared Piano, Volume I (1943–1952)* (Wergo WER 60151-50 CD).

7. An example of the power of an album to evoke the historical valence of a single day can be found in Douglas Wolk's book-length study of James Brown's *Live at the Apollo*. Wolk explains to contemporary readers that on October 24, 1962, the members of the ecstatic audience that plays such a crucial role on this live album (James Brown: "I wanna hear you scream!" Audience: "AAAAAAHHH!!") were also confronting their own mortality while the Cuban missile crisis played out. See Wolk, *Live at the Apollo*.
8. Quoted in Bailey, *Improvisation*, 115.
9. See Howlin' Wolf, *The Howlin' Wolf Album* (Cadet Concept LPS-319 LP). This notoriously divisive album—with Howlin' Wolf himself evidently among its detractors—found the blues legend in the company of a number of younger Chicago musicians, including the wild, Hendrix-inspired guitarist Pete Cosey, an early AACM member who would go on to play in Miles Davis's mid-1970s electric groups. This counts as one of the more extreme examples of an artist's dissatisfaction with a recording—and a record label's stunning condescension—being played out in public.

INTRODUCTION

1. Regarding the term "avant-garde," I value Peter Bürger's distinctions between the historical avant-garde and modernism in terms of the former's assaults on the institutions of art, but in using the term "avant-garde music" to describe work from the 1960s, I do so in recognition of the familiar usage of the term in this period. See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Amy C. Beal identifies a tradition of American experimental music that is characterized by two major phases. The first of these includes stylistically diverse composers such as Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, Henry Cowell, Edgard Varèse, Ruth Crawford, and John Cage, who forged a tradition in large part through the creation of "self-organized networks of patronage, performance, and publishing" (Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 2). On this first phase of American experimentalism, see Nicholls, *American Experimental Music, 1890–1940*. The second phase of experimental composition dates from the latter half of the twentieth century and is notable within new music for the pursuit of compositional techniques that derive neither from Stravinsky's neoclassicism nor from the serialism of the Second Viennese School; for works that resist accepted forms of musical analysis; and for a tradition of composers performing their own music. See Beal, "Introduction: West Germany and the American Experimental Tradition," *New Music, New Allies*, 1–7. Like Beal, Benjamin Piekut describes experimentalism as a "network," one that is "arranged and fabricated through the hard work of composers, critics, scholars, performers, audiences, students, and a host of other elements including texts, scores, articles, curricula, pa-

- tronage systems, and discourses of race, gender, class, and nation" (Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 19). Piekut's performative ontology of the term "experimental" traces its uses in the 1960s and extends beyond the boundaries of new music. See Piekut, "Introduction: What Was Experimentalism?," *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 1–19. For analyses of race and identity formation with regard to the terms "experimental" and "free improvisation," see Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself* and "Gittin' to Know Y'all."
2. Cage, "Experimental Music: Doctrine," *Silence*, 13.
 3. Cage, "Experimental Music," *Silence*, 7. A quarter of a century after the publication of *Silence*, composer Robert Ashley observed that, in music, the term "experimental" had reverted to signifying the "untried, untested, and perhaps untrustworthy": "The term 'experimental,' which has become so commonplace that we are willing to overlook what it does to our morale, came from *Silence*, but Cage coined the word there with a meaning, the purpose of which was entirely different from the one used now" (Ashley, *Music with Roots in the Aether*, 16).
 4. See *Extended Voices: New Pieces for Chorus and Voices Altered Electronically by Sound Synthesizers and Vocoder* (Odyssey 32 16 0156 LP) and *New Sounds in Electronic Music* (Odyssey 32 16 0160 LP).
 5. See Pauline Oliveros, *Reverberations: Tape & Electronic Music, 1961–1970* (Important Records IMPREC352, 12 CDs).
 6. See Max Neuhaus, *Electronics and Percussion: Five Realizations* (Columbia ML 7139 LP).
 7. These releases are Max Neuhaus, *Fontana Mix—Feed* (Alga Marghen ALGA 044CD), *Zyklus* (Alga Marghen ALGA 054CD), and *The New York School* (Alga Marghen ALGA 052CD). *The New York School* contains multiple realizations of Earle Brown's *Four Systems—For Four Amplified Cymbals*, Morton Feldman's *The King of Denmark*, and Cage's 27'10.554.
 8. See Max Neuhaus and John Cage, *Fontana Mix—Feed* (Mass Art Inc. M-133 LP).
 9. Neuhaus, liner notes to *Fontana Mix—Feed* CD.
 10. In the 1960s, Behrman himself had only one piece appear on record: *Wave Train* was included on a *Source* compilation in 1966. His *Runthrough* (1968) appears on the Sonic Arts Union's album *Electric Sound* (1972; Mainstream MS-5010 LP). The first full album dedicated to Behrman's music was *On the Other Ocean* (Lovely Music LP 1041), released in 1977. Since then, there have been three full-length releases of new work, plus an anthology of archival recordings, *Wave Train* (Alga Marghen ALGA 020CD). When asked about John Cage's dismissive attitude toward records, Behrman remarked, "Like a lot of Cage, he's absolutely right, but it doesn't mean that the opposite isn't also absolutely right. That's what I've taken away from Cage with that realiza-

- tion. Cage didn't like dualistic thinking." Behrman cites David Tudor as someone who most likely shared Cage's attitudes about recording, and yet who approached the task of recording with the utmost thoroughness and attention to detail (David Behrman, interview with the author, March 10, 2004).
11. Cited in Kenneth Goldsmith, "David Behrman: Composer as Record Executive," *New Music Box*, 2000, <http://www.wfmu.org/~kennyg/popular/articles/behрман.html>, accessed July 30, 2012.
 12. Behrman, interview with the author.
 13. Theresa Stern, "Interview with David Behrman," *Perfect Sound Forever*, August 1997, <http://www.furious.com/perfect/behрман.html>, accessed July 30, 2012.
 14. See Hoek, "Documenting the International Avant Garde," 351.
 15. See Corbett, "Contemporary Sound Series," 18.
 16. The Contemporary Sound Series ultimately represented forty-eight composers and sixteen countries. See Hoek, "Documenting the International Avant Garde," 353.
 17. See MEV/AMM, *Live Electronic Music Improvised* (Mainstream MS-5002 LP).
 18. Tony Conrad, interview with the author, March 13, 2009. An edited version of this interview appeared as Grubbs, "Always at the End." In the same interview, Conrad noted, "In 1965, I can't even tell you who would have been making a record. I don't know. At that time I wouldn't have even had the money to buy them."
 19. See *Source*, ed. Austin and Kahn. *The Wolfman* has been reissued on *Source Records 1-6: Music of the Avant Garde, 1968-1971* (Pogus Productions 21050-2, 3 CDs) and Robert Ashley, *The Wolfman* (Alga Marghen ALGA 048 CD).
 20. Conrad, interview with the author.
 21. Keith Rowe, interview with the author, February 8, 2003.
 22. Quoted from Peter Greenaway's film *4 American Composers: John Cage* (1985), in Swed, "The Cage Record," 8A. I first encountered these quotations in Tone, "John Cage and Recording," 11.
 23. Nattiez, *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence*, 50-51.
 24. Cage, "45' for a Speaker," *Silence*, 185. Cage's first piece to use records is *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (1939), for two variable-speed turntables, frequency recordings, muted piano, and cymbal. His first work for magnetic tape is *Williams Mix* (1952), for eight single-track or four double-track tapes.
 25. For a reading of Cage's 4'33" as "overdetermined by its relation to then-new technologies of sound recording and sound production," see Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, 14.
 26. Quoted in Watson, *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*, 413.
 27. Cage, *A Year from Monday*.
 28. Grimailla's letter of March 1, 1967, to Cage and Cage's March 3 response are located in the archival collection John Cage Correspondence, Northwestern

- University Library Music Library, Evanston, Illinois, Box 7, Folder 1, Sleeves 2 and 5. Permission to quote from Cage's letter granted by the John Cage Trust.
29. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," *Treatise Handbook*.
 30. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation."
 31. Goldsmith, "Henry Flynt Interviewed by Kenneth Goldsmith on WFMU, February 26, 2004."
 32. For more on Henry Flynt's dissident relations to the avant-garde music scenes of New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the early 1960s, see Joseph, "Concept Art," *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 153–212; Piekut, "Taking Henry Flynt Seriously" and "Demolish Serious Culture! Henry Flynt Meets the New York Avant-Garde," *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 65–101; and Flynt, "La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62."
 33. Quoted in a brochure included in the boxed set AMM, *The Crypt—12th June 1968* (Matchless MR5, 2 LPs).

ONE. HENRY FLYNT ON THE AIR

1. In February 2008, Flynt returned to live music performance after nearly a quarter of a century.
2. See, among others, the following releases: Henry Flynt, *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues, Volume 1* (Locust Music 16 CD) and *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues, Volume 2* (Locust Music 14 CD); Henry Flynt and the Insurrections, *I Don't Wanna* (Locust Music 39 CD); and Henry Flynt, *Raga Electric: Experimental Music, 1963–1971* (Locust Music 6 CD), *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music* (Ampersand ampere08 CD), *C Tune* (Locust Music 3 CD), and *Purified by the Fire* (Locust Music 67 CD).
3. In September 1966, Flynt joined the Velvet Underground on four nights at the East Village club the Dom, filling in on violin for the absent violist John Cale. See "About Henry Flynt," http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/henryflynt_new.htm, accessed January 14, 2012.
4. Benjamin Piekut considers *I Don't Wanna* in terms of a musical follow-through to Flynt's pamphlet *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture* (1965), describing these recordings as "a collection of material that Flynt hoped would show Workers World Party exactly how the movement's music should sound" (Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 97). In 1966, Flynt approached Folkways and ESP-Disk about releasing *I Don't Wanna*. Bernard Stollman, the ESP-Disk label director, later recounted that he sent Flynt a sample contract, but that Flynt did not agree to its terms. See Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 223.
5. See "About Henry Flynt." At the time of the compact-disc release of "You Are My Everlovin" and "Celestial Power" (now collectively entitled *New Ameri-*

can *Ethnic Music, Volume One* [Recorded NAEMO1, 2 CDs]), label director John Berndt helped to produce the website www.henryflynt.org, which collects dozens of Flynt's unpublished and out-of-print essays. In introducing Flynt's work, it is important to maintain the contradiction between his roles as exhibiting artist and "anti-art activist."

6. See Henry Flynt, "Essay: Concept Art (Provisional Version)," in *An Anthology of Chance Operations, Indeterminacy, Concept Art, Anti-art, Meaningless Work, Natural Disasters, Stories, Poetry, Essays, Diagrams, Music, Dance Constructions, Plans of Action, Mathematics, Compositions*, ed. Young. For an account of Flynt's complex course of philosophical development in the 1960s — of which music was but a single facet — that quickly took him outside of the sphere of art production, see Joseph, "Concept Art," *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 153–212, and Piekut, "Demolish Serious Culture!"
7. See Flynt, "La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62."
8. Flynt, "La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62," 53.
9. Flynt, "La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62," 47. In one of the few contemporary reviews of *An Anthology* (actually, more like a series of put-downs and one-liners), LeRoi Jones was certain to have struck a nerve with his conclusion "Cage is not responsible for any of this, unless you can say Fletcher Henderson was responsible for The Ipana Troubadors" (Jones, "Review: *An Anthology of Chance Operations*," 93). The Ipana Troubadors was the name used by Sam Lanin's orchestra when appearing on a popular radio program in the 1920s and 1930s that was sponsored by Bristol Meyers's Ipana toothpaste.
10. See Smith, "Following a Straight Line." Branden W. Joseph notes, "Although potentially realizable with any integer — the choice of which becomes the work's title on that occasion, i.e. 62 (*to Henry Flynt*) — in practice and by Young's preference, it was to be realized through the choice of a larger integer that would take half an hour or more to perform" (Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 143).
11. See Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 123–25. Beal recounts that Tudor received a letter from organist Gerd Zacher a decade after the concert requesting more information about the piece: "For my next series of concerts I have planned a program containing Bach's *Passacaglia* in confrontation with La Monte Young's composition "For Henry Flint" [*sic*] in a realization for organ. . . . [W]ho is Henry Flint [*sic*]?" (quoted in Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 125).
12. These artists took part in a 1964 concert of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originale* in New York and were subsequently expelled from Fluxus. See Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 73–80. Benjamin Piekut offers a nuanced corrective to conventional readings of this event: "Higgins' interpretation exemplifies the kind of misunderstanding that marked the reception of Flynt's demonstrations. . . . Instead of understanding the protests as part of a larger interven-

tion into the public discourse of avant-gardism, European imperialism, and the structures of power and knowledge supporting these systems, the views of Higgins and others are fixed on the level of intertribal feuding" (Pickut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 68).

13. See Flynt, *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization*.
14. Diane Wakoski, letter to Henry Flynt, quoted in Flynt, *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization*, 73.
15. Flynt, "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music."
16. Flynt, "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music."
17. Stuckenschmidt, *Twentieth Century Music*, 172.
18. Flynt, "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music."
19. See Tony Conrad, *Early Minimalism: Volume One* (Table of the Elements TOE-CD-33, 4 CDs).
20. See Tony Conrad and Faust, *Outside the Dream Syndicate* (Caroline Records C 1501 LP), issued on compact disc in 1993 as Table of the Elements TOE-CD-3.
21. In his biography of British composer Cornelius Cardew—a friend of La Monte Young's and an early supporter of his music—John Tilbury recounts a similar experience: "Young was constantly visited by an anxiety that his works were being relayed to the public in a perfunctory and inappropriate fashion. Moreover, his extreme attitude towards his own compositions and tapes is reflected in the conditions which he laid down, in the form of a contract, and which he imposed even on those friends, like Cardew, who were unstinting in their admiration and propagation of his work" (Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 336).
22. Conrad, "Tony Conrad's Response to 'An Open Letter to La Monte Young and Tony Conrad.'" See also Dreyblatt, "An Open Letter to La Monte Young and Tony Conrad." It should be noted that when Conrad invokes Young's "marketing" with regard to this music, the reference is to Young's claim to be the composer of the work, rather than to marketing—e.g., preparing for commercial release and selling—the actual audio recordings. Instead, it was Table of the Elements, the record label that reissued *Outside the Dream Syndicate* and released *Early Minimalism: Volume One*, that ultimately released an archival recording of this group—a release that was not authorized by Young.
23. Tony Conrad, "an EARful: Four Violins and Early Minimalism" (essay in accompanying booklet), *Early Minimalism: Volume One*, 15. Regarding La Monte Young's *Lecture 1960*, Henry Flynt wrote, "Despite the lecture's formal debt to [John Cage's 1958 lecture] *Indeterminacy*, Young and his friends were forging an aesthetic radicalism which was meant to go beyond Cage, to annul Cage" (Flynt, "La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62," 52).
24. Conrad, "MINor premise" (essay in accompanying booklet), *Early Mini-*

- malism: Volume One*, 44–45. Interestingly, Conrad demonstrates no qualms about these performances having been recorded: “In keeping with the technology of the early 1960s, the score was replaced by the tape recorder” (Conrad, “an EARful,” 19).
25. See John Cale / Tony Conrad / Angus MacLise / La Monte Young / Marian Zazeela, *Inside the Dream Syndicate, Vol. I: Day of Niagara* (Table of the Elements TOE-CD-74).
 26. La Monte Young, “Notes on the Theatre of Eternal Music and *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys*.”
 27. Branden W. Joseph contextualizes *Early Minimalism* with regard to practices of appropriation in visual art: “Somewhat like Cindy Sherman’s *Untitled Film Stills*, *Early Minimalism* founded authorship on the appropriation of an authorless ‘source’ — although in Conrad’s case, a source that was more actively suppressed than the diffuse and ubiquitous cinematic tropes that Sherman distilled from the cultural imaginary” (Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 45).
 28. Prior to the release of Flynt’s archival recordings, musician and critic Alan Licht had fanned interest by describing the *You Are My Everlovin / Celestial Power* cassette as “absolutely stunning, absolutely obscure, most deserving of CD reissue” (Licht, “Alan Licht’s Minimal Top Ten,” 47).
 29. See *Anthology of American Folk Music* (Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40090, 6 CDs).
 30. See Chanan, *Repeated Takes*, 65–66.
 31. Marcus, *Invisible Republic*, 102. *Invisible Republic* has since been republished as *The Old, Weird America: The World of Bob Dylan’s Basement Tapes* (New York: Picador, 2001). Marcus’s memorable phrase “the old, weird America” is intended as a riposte to Kenneth Rexroth’s evocation of “the old free America” as represented in the work of Carl Sandburg. “The old, weird America” in turn gave rise to “the new weird America,” an expression used in the first decade of the twenty-first century to describe underground music that contains unpredictable, organic hybrids of, among other styles, folk, psychedelia, free improvisation, and noise, and that emerged in the wake of the reissue of the *American Anthology of Folk Music*.
 32. John Fahey, untitled note in “A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the *Anthology of American Folk Music*,” 8, contained in the Smithsonian Folkways reissue of the *Anthology of American Folk Music*.
 33. Dock Boggs and many of the artists on *American Primitive, Volume 1* also appear on Harry Smith’s *Anthology*. See Dock Boggs, *Country Blues* (Revenant 205 CD), and *American Primitive, Volume 1: Raw Pre-war Gospel (1926–1936)* (Revenant 206 CD).
 34. See *Harry Smith’s Anthology of American Folk Music, Volume Four* (Revenant 211, 2 CDs).

35. O'Brien, *Sonata for Jukebox*, 108.
36. See Kot, *Ripped*, 25–28.
37. WFMU identifies itself as being in a lineage of “freeform” — originally called “free forum” — stations that includes KPFA-FM (Berkeley), KRAB (Seattle), and WBAI (New York). See “A Brief History of Freeform Radio,” *LCD*, no. 21 (1998), <http://www.wfmup.org/LCD/index.html>, accessed August 1, 2013.
38. Goldsmith, “If It Doesn’t Exist on the Internet, It Doesn’t Exist.”
39. Benjamin Pickut, “56 Ludlow St., Apt. of Tony Conrad,” *Henry Flynt in New York* (documentary video), 2008, <http://vimeo.com/1484759>, accessed September 29, 2011. Consider how much more material is available concerning Flynt’s work than there had been even a decade earlier; not only have there been more than a dozen full-length releases of his music, but a nearly three-hour series of interviews conducted by Benjamin Pickut and arranged into twenty-nine episodes is available online. Viewers can watch Flynt discuss Yoko Ono’s 112 Chambers Street loft series while framed by an awning for Popeyes Fried Chicken. For the full *Henry Flynt in New York* video portrait, see <http://vimeo.com/benjaminpickut>.
40. See La Monte Young, *The Melodic Version of the Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer from “The Four Dreams of China”* (Gramavision R279467 CD).
41. Pickut, “119 Bank St., La Monte Young Apt., 2 of 3,” *Henry Flynt in New York*, <http://vimeo.com/1484819>, accessed September 29, 2011. This statement echoes Flynt’s description of composer Richard Maxfield holding forth in conversation in 1961: “It was posturing, and totally insincere, of course, but it evinced the tone of the discourse: a tone of competitive formal experimentation in the context of aesthetic quests which were personal and quixotic” (Flynt, “La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62,” 59).
42. Flynt unexpectedly and hilariously interrupts “I Am a Rock” before Paul Simon reaches the reversal in the lyric that undercuts the song’s “I am an island” sentiment; he stands the song’s meaning on its head by stripping it of its predictable irony.
43. Flynt, “La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62,” 50.
44. See Charters, *The Country Blues*.
45. For a counterargument to the idea that Robert Johnson’s music unambiguously represents the popular music of its time and place, or even that it was acknowledged in its own day as broadly representative of life in the Mississippi Delta, see Wald, *Escaping the Delta*. One of Wald’s most interesting claims is that the repertoire on Robert Johnson’s recordings differs significantly from that of his live performances as a working musician. Wald’s study begins with the concern that documentation in the form of commercially released sound recordings “is limited and potentially misleading”: “We are making a serious mistake if we

- assume that the recordings made during the first great blues era give us a good idea of what was played by Robert Johnson and his contemporaries" (14).
46. This anecdote recalls Lester Bangs's description of the 1970s New York No Wave bands in his article "The White Noise Supremacists": "The Contortions' James Brown / Albert Ayler spasms aside, most of the SoHo bands are as white as John Cage" (Bangs, "The White Noise Supremacists," *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, 278).
 47. This, and the quotations that follow are from Goldsmith, "Henry Flynt Interviewed by Kenneth Goldsmith on WFMU, February 26, 2004."
 48. Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950," 141.
 49. Quoted in Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950," 139. See also Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself*.
 50. Flynt, "La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62," 48.
 51. Home, "Towards an Acognitive Culture."
 52. *Die Reihe* was the music periodical focusing on serial music edited by Karlheinz Stockhausen and Herbert Eimert and published by Vienna's Universal Edition. Eight German-language issues appeared between 1955 and 1962, and these issues were published in English-language translations between 1957 and 1968. See Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 83.
 53. To give an example of another artist for whom a recently uncovered body of recordings has provoked a reconsideration of accepted histories of musical activity in a given period, Arthur Russell's anomalous, ahead-of-their-time disco records of the late 1970s and early 1980s are described as avant-garde and experimental not because of their refinement but rather because they bravely and unpredictably combine dance music with loose-limbed minimalism, labyrinthine melodies, occasional dabs of interplanetary jazz, and appealingly non-sequiturish breakdowns. See Lawrence, *Hold On to Your Dreams*.

TWO. LANDSCAPE WITH CAGE

The Lucier epigraph is quoted in Ashley, "Landscape with Alvin Lucier," *Music with Roots in the Aether*, 83. *Music with Roots in the Aether* is Robert Ashley's 1975 series of video portraits of seven composers (David Behrman, Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Gordon Mumma, Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley, and Ashley himself) that presents each of its subjects in a one-hour interview and a one-hour performance. The title of the present chapter echoes those of the interviews in Ashley's documentary: "Landscape with David Behrman," "Landscape with Pauline Oliveros," "Landscape with Philip Glass," and so on.

1. Tone, "John Cage and Recording," 11.
2. Quoted in Patterson, "Cage and Beyond," 82.
3. Ashley, "The Influence of John Cage." In the same article, Ashley recounts,

"A few years ago I was asked by Alvin Lucier to speak about Lucier's music at Wesleyan University. Lucier was receiving some sort of special recognition. Alvin said to me, 'Do you think you could give this speech without mentioning John Cage?'"

4. W. J. T. Mitchell notes that the representation of landscape can take many forms: "Landscape may be represented by painting, drawing, or engraving; by photography, film, and theatrical scenery; by writing, speech, and presumably even music and other 'sound images.'" Mitchell describes landscape as a medium, i.e., "a material 'means' (to borrow Aristotle's terminology) like language or paint, embedded in a tradition of cultural signification, a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meanings and values" (W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. Mitchell, 14).
5. The six "problems" that Nauman presented were, as they appear in his notation, "1. walk/ 2. balls/ 3. violin/ 4. violin w. walk/ 5. violin w. balls/ 6. balls w. walk." These were simple, repetitive gestures that Nauman had recorded himself making in the gallery space. On the first day of the exhibition, the piece contained a chair, table, tape recorder, and short tape loop of the sound of the artist walking around the gallery. On subsequent days, Nauman substituted progressively longer loops of tape, one per day, representing the "sound problems" in the work's title. See Coosje van Bruggen, "Sounddance," in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Morgan, 43–69.
6. These and other pieces from the *Composition 1960* series appear in Young, ed., *An Anthology*.
7. La Monte Young, "Lecture 1960," in *Happenings and Other Acts*, ed. Sanford, 74.
8. Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the 'Event' Score," 80.
9. See Young, "Notes on the Theatre of Eternal Music and *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys*."
10. Behrman, interview with the author, March 10, 2004. The other project that Columbia rejected at the end of Behrman's tenure was one featuring the music of Philip Glass. Years after Behrman's departure, Columbia would sign Glass, who went on to become one of their best-selling contemporary-music recording artists.
11. See John Cale, *Vintage Violence* (Columbia CS 1037 LP), and John Cale and Terry Riley, *The Church of Anthrax* (Columbia CS 94983 LP).
12. See the United States of America, *The United States of America* (Columbia CS 9614 LP).
13. Robert Ashley, Larry Austin, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, "Conversation," in *Source*, ed. Austin and Kahn, 46. AMM guitarist Keith Rowe similarly distinguishes improvisers' attitudes toward the recording studio from those of pop

musicians: “We came to the point where jazz musicians made recordings and pop musicians made records. I think that’s about as sophisticated as it got. Which clearly meant that we wouldn’t fiddle around with it — this is a recording, this is a document of an event. . . . We would imagine that what we did was record a concert. I suppose it was very classical in that sense, whereas pop musicians were not, and would use the studio as a piece of technology” (Rowe, interview with the author, February 8, 2003).

14. See John Cage and David Tudor, *Indeterminacy: New Aspect of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music* (Folkways FT 3704, 2 LPs).
15. Cage’s work came to be written about by poetry critics with greater frequency in the 1980s and the early 1990s. This arguably had less to do with Cage’s later mesostic poetry than with a reconsideration of certain of his earlier lectures and performance texts as literary works—especially the “Lecture on Nothing.” Marjorie Perloff’s writings about Cage’s poetry have been decisive in exploring his work in its multifold contexts. See Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*. When two hefty, fin-de-millennium anthologies of postwar American poetry were published almost simultaneously in the mid-1990s, it was not surprising to see Cage looming large in both collections. See Messerli, ed., *From the Other Side of the Century*, and Rothenberg and Joris, eds., *Poems for a New Millennium*.
16. Jerome Rothenberg, “Preface,” in Mac Low, *Representative Works*, v.
17. Quoted in Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 115.
18. See Branden W. Joseph’s explanatory footnote in Morris, “Letters to John Cage,” 78, n. 19. See also Joseph, “Robert Morris and John Cage.”
19. Quoted in Lippard, *Ad Reinhardt*, 195.
20. Ad Reinhardt, letter to John Cage, winter 1965 (John Cage Correspondence, Northwestern University Library Music Library, Evanston, Illinois, Box 5, Folder 10, Sleeve 15); quoted by permission of Anna Reinhardt and the Ad Reinhardt Foundation.
21. Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Battcock, 141.
22. Cavell, “Music Discomposed,” *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 180–212. To the charge that Cage’s music would be better described as theater, Morton Feldman offers the following spirited dissent: “The question is, and it is because of John we must ask this question: Is music an art form to begin with? Was it always show biz? And by show biz I mean Monteverdi. . . . Did you ever hear those Chopin preludes? The thing is going on and it can go on forever and it’s got this fake cadence at the end. Every piece has a fake cadence, one after the other. The piece could go on for hours. What I mean by show biz is *fantastic* show biz” (“H.C.E. [Here Comes Everybody]: Morton Feldman in Conversation with Peter Gena,” in *A John Cage Reader*, ed. Gena and Brent, 62).

23. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 178–79. See also Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, 271–72, n. 41; 274–75, n. 73.
24. Lydia Goehr's *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* historicizes the role of the work-concept in music. When Goehr's chronological survey of definitions of musical compositions reaches the 1960s, Cage's chance-derived and indeterminate compositions are almost invariably offered as examples of challenges to the concept of a musical work.
25. See Cott, "John Cage Interviewed by Jonathan Cott."
26. The quotation appears in Steinberg, "Tradition and Responsibility," 158. It is strange to hear Cott *reading* Steinberg's characterization of Cage's preparation of vague answers in advance of an audience's questions in "Lecture on Nothing," and then to hear Cage's spontaneous, manifestly uncynical explanation of this performative gesture.
27. The quotation is from Norman Mailer's "Ten Thousand Words a Minute," 119.
28. Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 205.
29. Quoted in Warburton, "Luc Ferrari."
30. In "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound," film-sound theorist Rick Altman makes the case for hearing as a fundamental method of narrative analysis. Among the examples that he offers in which the perception of sound space functions as an interpretive tool are the recognition that some sounds are personally addressed to a particular listener, the ability to judge distance from a sound source, the practice of interpreting narrative constructions in films through pinpointing the origin of particular sounds (Altman's example is the ability to identify a character by hearing speech alone), and the ability to be aware of the layout of one's surroundings through lateral sound localization. See Rick Altman, "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound," in *Sound Theory / Sound Practice*, ed. Altman, 15–34.
31. Barry Truax, "Electroacoustic Music and the Soundscape: The Inner and Outer World," in *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, ed. Paynter et al., 1:374. Truax collaborated with R. Murray Schafer, among others, between 1973 and 1978 on the World Soundscape Project and edited its *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (1978).
32. R. Murray Schafer, "Music, Non-music, and the Soundscape," in *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, 1:36. See also Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*.
33. Cage, "Notes," *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage* (Avakian K08P 1493–1498/K08y 1499–1504, 3 LPs), later reissued on compact disc by Wergo (WER 6247–2, 3 CDs), 14.
34. For an introduction to Schaeffer's own *musique concrète*, see Schaeffer, *L'oeuvre musicale* (INA-GRM 1006–9, 4 CDs).
35. Chion, *Guide des objets sonores*, 18. See also Pierre Schaeffer, *Traité des objets musicaux*, and Chion and Reibel, *Les musiques électroacoustiques*.

36. Schaeffer, *Traité des objets musicaux*, 95.
37. Quoted in Warburton, "Luc Ferrari."
38. Cage and Charles, *For the Birds*, 76–77.
39. Cage and Charles, *For the Birds*, 77. The sentence in brackets is Cage's addition to the text upon reading the transcript of the interview.
40. Quoted in Hodgkinson, "Pierre Schaeffer."
41. Quoted in Hodgkinson, "Pierre Schaeffer."
42. Quoted in Hodgkinson, "Pierre Schaeffer."
43. Quoted in Warburton, "Luc Ferrari."
44. Quoted in Warburton, "Luc Ferrari." See Luc Ferrari, *Und so weiter / Music Promenade* (Wergo 60046 LP).
45. Quoted in Warburton, "Luc Ferrari." Steve Reich offers the following critique of Schaefferian musique concrète that echoes Ferrari's observations regarding *Music Promenade*: "The bone I had to pick with Schaeffer and that bunch was that if they were using the sound of a car crash, they had to lower it by an octave or speed it up by an octave, run it through a ring modulator or play it backwards. Why not hear that it's a car crash?" (quoted in Jason Gross, "Steve Reich: Early Tape Music" [2000], *Perfect Sound Forever*, <http://www.furious.com/perfect/ohm/reich2.html>, accessed July 18, 2012).
46. See Luc Ferrari, *Presque Rien No. 1 / Société II* (Deutsche Grammophon 2543 004 LP).
47. Quoted in Warburton, "Luc Ferrari."
48. See John Cage, *Roaratorio: An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake* (Mode 28/9, 2 CDs).
49. Eric Drott, "The Politics of *Presque rien*," in *Sound Commitments: Avant-Garde Music and the Sixties*, ed. Adlington, 146. Drott's essay explores *Presque rien no. 1* in the context of unfolding debates in France in the late 1960s regarding the democratization of culture. He describes *Presque rien no. 1* as a work in which one finds "the optimism of a historical moment when the fusion of the avant-garde and the popular seemed tantalizingly near, but one that no less reflected the aporias that constrained the French artistic and intellectual Left's conception of the 'popular' during the late 1960s and early 1970s" (Drott, "The Politics of *Presque rien*," 146). See also Drott, *Music and the Elusive Revolution*.
50. Quoted in Drott, "The Politics of *Presque rien*," 154. The quotation comes from Ferrari's liner notes to his album *Hétérozygote / J'ai été coupé* (Philips 836 885 DSY LP).
51. Quoted in Ashley, "Landscape with Pauline Oliveros," *Music with Roots in the Aether*, 127.
52. Quoted in Ashley, "Landscape with Pauline Oliveros," 130–31.
53. Quoted in Warburton, "Luc Ferrari."

THREE. JOHN CAGE, RECORDING ARTIST

The Cage epigraph is quoted in Kostelanetz, "A Conversation about Early Works for Radio and Tape," *John Cage (ex)plain(ed)*, 77.

1. Quoted in Frank Scheffer, *19 Questions*, on *From Zero: Four Films on John Cage* by Frank Scheffer and Andrew Culver (Mode 130 DVD).
2. Cage and Charles, *For the Birds*, 50.
3. James Pritchett refers to the publication of *Silence* as "perhaps the most important event in Cage's career as a composer" (Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 142). He also notes that the 1960s marked a decrease in Cage's compositional output. Between 1952 and 1959, Cage completed approximately forty compositions; between 1962 and 1969, he completed approximately fifteen compositions, some of which do not involve a score. See Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 43–45.
4. See Swed, "The Cage Record," 7A–21A.
5. See Cage, *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage*.
6. Xenia Cage, married to Cage from 1935 to 1945, was involved in the fabrication of Duchamp's valises as a bookbinder. Responding to a question in 1974 about his newfound interest in lithography, Cage had the following to say about the creation of aesthetic objects: "Oh, it's very exciting and it made me understand why so many artists become alcoholics, because when you put a blank sheet of paper into the press and something actually happens to the paper when it comes out, it's so exciting that you just have to have a drink" (quoted in Cummings, "Interview with John Cage").
7. See John Cage and Christian Wolff, *John Cage / Christian Wolff* (Time 8009 LP), and John Cage / Henri Pousseur / Milton Babbitt, *New Electronic Music* (Columbia MS 7051 LP).
8. George Avakian, "About the Concert," in the booklet accompanying the Wergo reissue of *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage*, 18. *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert* was initially released as a boxed set with essays, notes, and facsimiles of scores. It could be ordered for the then-significant price of twenty-five dollars directly from Avakian. The Wergo reissue includes reprints of writings and scores that appeared in the original LP version.
9. Cummings, "Interview with John Cage." The Stable Gallery is where Rauschenberg exhibited his monochrome paintings in 1953. See Cage, "On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work," *Silence*, 98–108, and Joseph, "White on White."
10. See John Cage, *Empty Words (Parte III)* (Cramps CRSCD 037–038, 2 CDs).
11. Avakian, "About the Concert," *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage*, 19.

12. Cage devised the technique of submerging a gong in a tub of water when composing music for an underwater ballet for students from UCLA. See Cummings, "Interview with John Cage."
13. Quoted in Watson, *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*, 79.
14. Cage, "Notes," *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage*, 14.
15. Quoted in Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 91. The quotation originally appeared in an undated letter to Pierre Boulez, most likely from July 1952.
16. Quoted in Kahn, "James Tenney at Bell Labs."
17. Quoted in Kostelanetz, "A Conversation about Early Works for Radio and Tape," *John Cage (ex)plain(ed)*, 77.
18. James Pritchett identifies Cage's *Winter Music* (1957) as his first indeterminate composition, and one "perhaps inspired" by earlier works such as Morton Feldman's *Piece for Four Pianos*, Earle Brown's *December 1952*, and Christian Wolff's *Duo for Pianists II*. See Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 107–9.
19. Quoted in Kostelanetz, "A Conversation about Early Works for Radio and Tape," 77.
20. Cage, "45' for a Speaker," *Silence*, 179.
21. Quoted in Cage, "Erik Satie," *Silence*, 76.
22. Cage, "Lecture on Nothing," *Silence*, 120.
23. Cage, "Erik Satie," 77.
24. Cage, "Erik Satie," 80. It has become customary for contemporary listeners to draw a line from Satie's furniture music to the Ambient Music of Brian Eno. Eno conceived of Ambient Music as a *détournement* of Muzak, a making manifest of the visual and acoustic character of a given environment. Ambient Music is intended to invert Muzak's function of masking the characteristic sounds of a space of commerce. However, Eno's Ambient Music comes to us predominantly in the form of recordings, and one wonders about the extent to which Cage would have acknowledged this differentiation between Ambient Music and Muzak.
25. John Dinwiddie, "MEWANTEMOOSEICDAY: John Cage in Davis, 1969," in *Source*, ed. Austin and Kahn, 237.
26. Gould, "The Prospects of Recording," *The Glenn Gould Reader*, ed. Page, 331. In a 1981 interview, Gould parried a question about the persistence of classical-music concerts—and the recording industry's woes (although the industry's temporary savior, the compact disc, was just around the corner)—by pointing out, "I did give myself the hedge of saying that concerts would die out by the year 2000, didn't I?" ("Coda: Glenn Gould in Conversation with Tim Page," *The Glenn Gould Reader*, 451). In the same interview, Gould proudly shares the fact that the last concert he attended was in 1967—and only, as he is at pains to point out, as a favor to a friend.
27. Gould's attitude toward Cage in his writings and in his CBC radio broad-

casts tends toward the gently mocking. In his liner notes to an anthology of piano music from Canada, he writes, "And, of course, in Canada, as elsewhere, convinced Cage-ites hold forth with pregnant silence at all the better coffeehouses" (Gould, "Canadian Piano Music in the Twentieth Century," *The Glenn Gould Reader*, 205).

28. Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 53.
29. Quoted in Joseph, "Interview with Paolo Virno," 33.
30. Gould, "The Prospects of Recording," 347–48.
31. Gould, "The Prospects of Recording," 353.
32. Cage, "Composition as Process: III. Communication," *Silence*, 46.
33. See John Cage and Lejaren Hiller, *HPSCHD* (Nonesuch N-71224 LP).
34. Eric Salzman, "In and Out the Piano with Cage," *New York Times*, February 14, 1960, X12.
35. Salzman, "In and Out the Piano with Cage," X12.
36. Robert Palmer, "John Cage's Night of Uproar," *New York Times*, October 25, 1981, D25.
37. Salzman, "In and Out the Piano with Cage," X12.
38. *Fontana Mix* appeared on the Turnabout Records LP *Electronic Music* (1966) in its original Milan tape realization and, with Cathy Berberian, as part of "Aria with *Fontana Mix*" on a 1962 Time Records LP. See *Electronic Music* (Turnabout TV 34046 S LP) and Luciano Berio and E. E. Cummings, *Circles*; Sylvano Bussotti, *Frammento*; and John Cage, *Aria with Fontana Mix* (Time 8003 LP).
39. Cage, "Composition as Process: II. Indeterminacy," *Silence*, 39.
40. Quoted in Kahn, "James Tenney at Bell Labs."
41. See John Cage and David Tudor, *Rainforest II and Mureau: A Simultaneous Performance* (New World 80540, 2 CDs).
42. Quoted in Hultberg, "I smile when the sound is singing through the space."
43. Cage, notes to *Indeterminacy* LP.
44. See Cage, "Lecture on Nothing," 109–26.
45. Cage, "Lecture on Nothing," 109.
46. Cage, "Lecture on Nothing," 122.
47. Cage, "Composition as Process: II. Indeterminacy," 35.
48. Cage, "Indeterminacy," *Silence*, 261.
49. Palmer, "John Cage's Night of Uproar," D25.
50. See Cage and Wolff, *John Cage / Christian Wolff*.
51. In the 1990s, composers Bernhard Günter and Francisco López became known for their recordings of compositions that hover at the threshold of audibility or that contain long stretches of silence. See Bernhard Günter, *Un peu de neige salie* (Selektion SCD 012), and Francisco López, *Untitled 74* (Table of the Elements TOE-CD-43).

52. See Christian Wolff, *Stones* (Edition Wandelweiser EWR9604 CD). In 1992, Antoine Beuger and Burkhard Schlothauer started the publisher Edition Wandelweiser, which is known for bringing together composers who privilege silence in their work; Radu Malfatti, Jürg Frey, and Michael Pisaro are among the composers whose works are published by Edition Wandelweiser. Silence or near silence has also loomed large in the work of a number of Japanese musicians who moved between improvisation and composition around the turn of the twenty-first century, most notably Taku Sugimoto, Sachiko M, and Taku Unami.
53. Cage, notes to *John Cage / Christian Wolff* LP. Cage's use — some would call it misuse — of phonograph cartridges finds an echo in Yasunao Tone's later works for "wounded" compact-disc player (*Solo for Wounded*) and corrupted MP3 files (*MP3 Deviations*). In the former work, Tone prepared compact discs with Scotch tape and tiny punctures made in the disc's coating. Rather than producing the sound of a skipping CD, what results are the highly arbitrary sounds of a CD player attempting to make sense of incomplete data. The original contents of the "wounded" CD are rendered entirely unrecognizable. What *Cartridge Music*, *Solo for Wounded*, and *MP3 Deviations* share is the fact that even though these pieces employ the technology of consumer playback devices, none of the works results in the reproduction of recorded-music sources. See Yasunao Tone, *Solo for Wounded* (Tzadik 7212 CD) and *MP3 Deviations #6+7* (Editions Mego eMego 125 CD).
54. Cage, notes to *John Cage / Christian Wolff* LP.
55. Cage, notes to *John Cage / Christian Wolff* LP.
56. Dai Vaughan, "Let There Be Lumière," in *Early Cinema*, ed. Elsaesser and Barker, 64.
57. Vaughan, "Let There Be Lumière," 64.
58. Vaughan, "Let There Be Lumière," 65. The implicit analogy between spectatorial pleasure in early cinema and in experimental music in the 1960s finds its inspiration in Tom Gunning's writings about early cinema's relation to avant-garde film. See Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant Garde" and "'Primitive' Cinema: A Frame-up? Or the Trick's on Us," in *Early Cinema*, 95–103.
59. Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 126.
60. Cage and Charles, *For the Birds*, 45, 94.
61. See Joan Retallack, "Poethics of a Complex Realism," in *John Cage*, ed. Perloff and Junkerman, 242–73.
62. Duchamp described his *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913–14) as "canned chance": "Pure chance interested me as a way of going against logical reality: to put something on canvas, on a bit of paper, to associate the idea of a perpendicular thread a meter long falling from the height of one meter onto a

horizontal plane, making its own deformation. . . . It's a 'canned meter,' so to speak, canned chance; it's amusing to can chance" (quoted in Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, 46–47).

63. Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema*, 5.
64. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 22.
65. Cage, "45' for a Speaker," 161.
66. Branden W. Joseph, "Chance, Indeterminacy, Multiplicity," in *The Anarchy of Silence*, ed. Robinson, 219.
67. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 45.
68. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 44.
69. John Cage, "Writing for the Second Time through *Finnegans Wake*," *Empty Words*, 133.
70. Glenn Gould's recording of J. S. Bach's *Two- and Three-Part Inventions*, made for Columbia at eight recording sessions between September 1963 and March 1964, features one of the stranger pianistic phenomena to appear on a high-profile commercial release of classical music. Gould brought a Steinway piano from Toronto to New York that exhibited a "hiccup." Technicians were never able to fully resolve the issue. Gould describes the sound as "a slight nervous tic in the middle register which in the slower passages can be heard emitting a sort of hiccup. . . . I must confess that, having grown somewhat accustomed to it, I now find this charming idiosyncrasy entirely worthy of the remarkable instrument which produced it" (quoted in notes to Glenn Gould, *J. S. Bach: Two- and Three-Part Inventions, BWV 772–801* [Sony SMK 52 595 CD], 12).
71. More extreme than the hiccup in Gould's Steinway, this recording features Marilyn Crispell navigating a piano with a broken middle C. As John Corbett explains in the album's notes, "Flaws are an essential part of live music, and this recording captures a particularly striking one. Sharon Freeman, whose trio played earlier that night, had broken the piano's middle-C. It tells you a lot about what matters to Marilyn as a pianist that she was enthusiastic about the music despite this minor defect (though she is concerned that listeners not be distracted by it)." See Fred Anderson / Marilyn Crispell / Hamid Drake, *Destiny* (OkkaDisc OD12003 CD).
72. See, for example, David Tudor's realization of *Variations II* on the Columbia Music of Our Time LP *New Electronic Music*, or the two volumes of *Variations IV* that were released on Everest Records: *Variations IV: Volume I* (Everest SDBR 3132 LP), and *Variations IV: Volume II* (Everest SDBR 3230 LP).
73. Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema*, 136.
74. Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 6.
75. Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 7.
76. Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 17.
77. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 27.

78. Sontag, *On Photography*, 9.
79. Sontag, *On Photography*, 111.
80. See Eric Drott's comments on Luc Ferrari's provocative analogy between field recordings and amateur photography: Drott, "The Politics of *Presque rien*," in *Sound Commitments*, 145–66.
81. Cage, "Experimental Music," *Silence*, 10–11. "Experimental Music" was first delivered in Chicago in 1957 at the convention of the Music Teachers National Association. It was included in the booklet accompanying *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage* and later collected in *Silence*.
82. Noting that David Tudor carefully worked out his own parts from Cage's indeterminate compositions, Benjamin Piekut quips that if an indeterminate composition is like a camera, "Tudor's performances took the same photograph every time" (Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 57).
83. Cage's famous camera-maker analogy may have informed Susan Sontag's conclusion that photography "is the prototype of the characteristic direction taken in our time by both the modernist high arts and the commercial arts: the transformation of arts into meta-arts or media. (Such developments as film, TV, video, the tape-based music of Cage, Stockhausen, and Steve Reich are logical extensions of the model established by photography.)" (Sontag, *On Photography*, 149).
84. Boehmer, "Chance as Ideology," 72.
85. Boehmer, "Chance as Ideology," 70.
86. Boehmer, "Chance as Ideology," 75. One final quotation from Boehmer should suffice to punctuate his critique of Cage. Regarding Cage's assertion that "it will not be easy, however, for Europe to give up being Europe. It will, nevertheless, and must: for the world is one world now" (Cage, "History of Experimental Music in the United States," *Silence*, 75), Boehmer responds: "This last sentence would be well-suited to a campaign speech by Goldwater" (Boehmer, "Chance as Ideology," 75).
87. Quoted in Boehmer, "Chance as Ideology," 72. The quotation is from Karl Marx's "Die Differenz der demokritischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie."
88. Cage and Charles, *For the Birds*, 161–62.
89. Adorno, "Vers une musique informelle," *Quasi Un Fantasia*, 270.
90. Adorno, "Vers une musique informelle," 314.
91. Adorno, "Vers une musique informelle," 317.
92. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 5. Susan Sontag expresses skepticism toward the many variants of this formulation, which she refers to as the "mythic pact" by which photography frees painting to pursue abstraction: "Painting did not so much turn to abstraction as adopt the camera's eye, be-

coming (to borrow Mario Praz's words) telescopic, microscopic, and photoscopic in structure" (Sontag, *On Photography*, 145–46).

93. Just as this disapproving attitude toward records and indexical media wasn't limited to Cage, neither was it limited to the field of music. As Liz Kotz notes, "An almost moralistic aversion to the photographic reduction of experience was widespread around Minimal art as well, as evident in Carl Andre's comment that 'art is a direct experience with something in the world, and photography is just a rumor, a kind of pornography of art'" (Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, 181). The quotation appears in Carl Andre, "Carl Andre," *Avalanche* 1 (Fall 1970): 24.

FOUR. THE ANTIQUES TRADE

The Bailey epigraph is quoted in Watson, *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*, 116. The O'Rourke epigraph is quoted in Cox and Warner, eds., *Audio Culture*; it originally appeared in Christoph Cox, "Jim O'Rourke: Studies in Frustration," *The Wire*, no. 165 (November 1997): 39.

1. Quoted in Watson, *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*, 424.
2. Quoted in Watson, *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*, 413.
3. Quoted in Watson, *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*, 416.
4. AMM currently consists of the duo of percussionist (and original member) Eddie Prévoist and pianist John Tilbury. Derek Bailey passed away in December 2005.
5. Rowe, interview with the author, February 8, 2003.
6. Corbett, "Ephemera Underscored," 218–19. See Barthes, *S/Z*.
7. Corbett, "Ephemera Underscored."
8. In the 1960s, new music was marked by numerous experiments in group improvisation. The album *Leonard Bernstein Conducts Music of Our Time* (1965; Columbia MS 6733 LP) contains, in addition to compositions by Morton Feldman and György Ligeti, *Four Improvisations by the Orchestra*, whose composition is credited as being in the public domain. These improvisations are described in the LP's notes as "the most radical of the four pieces on this disc." The album also includes Larry Austin's *Improvisations for Orchestra and Jazz Soloists* (1961), featuring the jazz trio of Don Ellis, Barre Phillips, and Joe Cocuzzo. In a related endeavor, the composer and conductor Lukas Foss directed the Improvisation Chamber Ensemble from 1957 to 1962. Pauline Oliveros, for whom improvisation has always been an important part of her musical practice, tellingly describes her encounter with Foss's improvising group: "We were very excited to hear another group doing improvisation. So we went to the concert. But we were all kind of looking at each other and wondering,

because they all had music stands. [Laughs] They were doing ‘guided’ improvisation. And afterwards we asked the question, ‘What would happen if you didn’t use music stands?’ And Lukas Foss said, ‘It would be utter chaos.’ So what we understood was improvisation was not what he understood was improvisation” (quoted in “Pauline Oliveros Interviewed by David W. Bernstein and Maggi Payne,” in *The San Francisco Tape Music Center*, ed. Bernstein, 98).

9. Bailey, *Improvisation*, xi–xii.
10. Bailey, *Improvisation*, 142.
11. George Lewis and Derek Bailey performed together on numerous occasions, including the Bailey-curated improvisation round-robin known as Company Week. See Company, *Fables* (Incus Records 36 LP), as well as Derek Bailey, George Lewis, and John Zorn, *Yankees* (Celluloid CELL5006 LP). Lewis was not interviewed for Bailey’s *Improvisation*, but Bailey does have the following to say about him: “The most interesting soloists to my ears often turn out to be trombonists. Paul Rutherford and George Lewis, in their different ways, both seem to make improvisation the basis of their solo playing and also take advantage of the ‘singleness’ of the solo situation; happy for the music to sound like one person, playing alone” (Bailey, *Improvisation*, 109).
12. Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950,” 147. See also Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself* and “Gittin’ to Know Y’all.”
13. Quoted in Prévost, *No Sound Is Innocent*, 12. Prévost responds to Schonfeld’s characterization by noting, “AMM opted for the freedom to work collaboratively that is absent from the Cage agenda.” In spite of his own background in jazz, Prévost maintains that relatively early in the group’s practice, they had decisively moved into a different sphere of activity: “In addition to more remarks of the ‘not music’ variety, we learnt that what we were playing wasn’t even jazz. Though not offered helpfully, this was a more reasonable claim” (Prévost, *No Sound Is Innocent*, 1).
14. Benjamin Piekut observes, at the conclusion of his study of the Jazz Composers Guild, “At the level of aesthetics and personal relationships, the jazz underground overlapped significantly with Cagean experimentalism, yet durative and institutionalized patterns of race, commerce, and education severely restricted the ability of musicians to solidify and build on these overlaps in a lasting way” (Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, 139).
15. Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950,” 150.
16. Of relevance here is Michael Chanan’s argument that the two most important qualities in bringing the technology of sound recording into the sphere of art are the possibility of montage and the ability to represent improvisation. Chanan summarizes the differing vocations of music and sound recording when he describes “the vocation of the recording for overt mimesis” as “a

- capacity for copying which phonography shares with photography but hardly at all with music" (Chanan, *Repeated Takes*, 139).
17. Derek Bailey, interview with the author, May 6, 2003. See also Rasula, "The Media of Memory."
 18. Born, "On Musical Mediation," 27. This passage contrasts jazz's ontology with that of the concept of the work in Western classical music. See Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*. In addition to her interdisciplinary academic work, Born has also been a practicing musician; her background in improvisation includes performances with Derek Bailey's Company and as part of the London Musicians' Collective.
 19. Born, "On Musical Mediation," 30–31.
 20. The epigraph is from an unpublished cassette audio letter to Noël Akchoté, 1991.
 21. Prévost, *No Sound Is Innocent*, 13–14. For a duo recording from later in their careers, see Derek Bailey and Eddie Prévost, *Ore* (Arrival ARCD001 CD).
 22. Bailey, interview with the author.
 23. See Tony Oxley Group, *Four Compositions for Sextet* (CBS [UK] 64071 LP), and Tony Oxley Quintet, *The Baptised Traveller* (CBS [UK] 52664 LP). See also Spontaneous Music Ensemble, *Karyobin* (Island [UK] ILPS 9079 LP). Bailey appears on all three of these releases.
 24. See *Free Improvisation* (Deutsche Grammophon 2563 298–2563 300, 3 LPs).
 25. Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, 249. Lewis notes the excruciating irony of the German critic Joachim-Ernst Berendt's use of the term "emancipation" — with its unmistakable reference to the end of slavery in the United States — to evoke the "emancipation" of European free improvisation from the influence of jazz. See Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, 250.
 26. Bailey, interview with the author.
 27. The epigraph is quoted in John Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*. It comes from Cardew's July 21, 1970, BBC talk, in which he introduced a performance of "Paragraph 1" from his composition *The Great Learning*.
 28. *AMMMusic* was recorded on June 8 and June 27, 1966, and first released in 1967 in the United Kingdom as Elektra (UK) EUK-256 LP. In 1989, it was reissued with additional material as the CD *AMMMusic 1966* (Matchless ReR AMMCD).
 29. See MEV/AMM, *Live Electronic Music Improvised*, and AMM, *The Crypt—12th June 1968*.
 30. Peter Stubley's "European Free Improvisation Pages" is a particularly comprehensive online resource: <http://www.efi.group.shef.ac.uk/>, accessed February 10, 2012.
 31. The "AMM factsheet to Oct 70" is reproduced and included in the Matchless

- Recordings boxed set of AMM, *The Crypt—12th June 1968*. Keith Rowe identified its diaristic precision as the handiwork of Cornelius Cardew.
32. “AMM factsheet to Oct 70.”
 33. Rowe, interview with the author. Contemplating their surprising and unanticipated appeal to rock audiences — particularly given the absence of a backbeat or even a steady pulse — Rowe notes, “We had a drummer in the group. Maybe the visual aspect fooled them.”
 34. Boyd, *White Bicycles*, 155. Playwright David Zane Mairowitz’s *The Flight of the Aerogenius* was presented over two nights at the UFO Club in early 1967.
 35. See Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 301.
 36. Rowe, interview with the author.
 37. See Cornelius Cardew / The Scratch Orchestra, *The Great Learning* (Deutsche Grammophon 2538 216 LP).
 38. Rowe, interview with the author.
 39. Rowe, interview with the author. Rowe observed that when these recordings were issued on CD in remastered form and not submerged in reverb, saxophonist Lol Coxhill — who had been perfectly fond of the original — discovered that he preferred the reverb-saturated, psychedelized version.
 40. Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 469.
 41. Prévost, *No Sound Is Innocent*, 18.
 42. In addition to his use of the radio in AMM, in the earliest days of the group Rowe used prepared audiotapes. “What the radio was good at doing was random,” he explains, “what the tape recorder was good at doing was that you’d know exactly what was coming. Plus it would endlessly repeat something, which the radio would not do” (interview with the author). Rowe’s tapes relied primarily on loop-like repetitions of isolated fragments from pop hits such as the Beach Boys’ “Barbara Ann” and Lou Christie’s “Lightnin’ Strikes.”
 43. For an introduction to MEV’s work, see Amy C. Beal, “‘Music Is a Universal Human Right’: Musica Elettronica Viva,” in *Sound Commitments*, 99–120. Mainstream would never achieve the same level of success as Elektra Records; it was primarily a jazz label, but it occasionally ventured into rock music and does have the odd distinction — especially when considering AMM’s practice of improvisation — of having released early recordings featuring Janis Joplin and Ted Nugent.
 44. Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 296.
 45. See Childs and Hobbs, eds., “Forum: Improvisation,” 26–111. Of note is the fact that the interview appears to have been conducted by Christopher Hobbs, who performs as a member of AMM on the *Crypt* LP, yet in the interview presumes no authority in the matter.
 46. Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 298.

47. Cornelius Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," *Treatise Handbook*, x–xi.
48. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," xix. Eddie Prévoist relates that "Christian Wolff has observed that most improvisations would be impossible to notate: he thought this especially true of AMM's" (Prévoist, *No Sound Is Innocent*, 17). Wolff played regularly with AMM during the academic sabbatical that he spent in the United Kingdom in 1968.
49. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," xviii.
50. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," xviii.
51. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," xx.
52. Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 297.
53. Quoted in Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 469.
54. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," xix.
55. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," xix.
56. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," iii.
57. Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 316.
58. Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981)*, 608.
59. Cardew, *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, 79.
60. Cardew, *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, 80.
61. Cardew, *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, 80.
62. The idea of a pedagogical model for improvisation received titular approbation from AMM with the release of *Generative Themes*, an LP recorded twenty years after *AMM Music* and five years after Cardew's death by a hit-and-run accident in London. *Generative Themes* takes its title from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), the radical Brazilian educator's methodological overview of his work with educating groups of illiterate poor in his native country. In Freire's terminology, a theme is a dialectically active group of ideas whose horizons are defined by their particular status of acting as both containers of and units contained by "limit-situations." The qualifying term "generative" denotes the possibility whereby these groups of ideas have the potential to multiply out of themselves. See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and AMM, *Generative Themes* (Matchless MR6 LP).
63. Cardew, "Towards an Ethic of Improvisation," xx.

FIVE. REMOVE THE RECORDS FROM TEXAS

1. Cage, "Lecture on Nothing," *Silence*, 126. "Lecture on Nothing" was delivered in 1949, but its first publication was not until 1959, and it did not circulate widely until the publication of *Silence* in 1961.
2. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the declining fortunes of

the compact disc have been offset, albeit slightly, with a resurgent interest in music on vinyl and, to an even more idiosyncratic community of listeners, on cassette. There are an increasing number of examples of recordings that were first released on LP, subsequently repackaged and remastered on CD, and that are now being repackaged, remastered, and sold yet again on LP. The reissue label, which found relative success in the 1990s and the beginning of the next decade given the low overhead of producing CD releases, has had to reinvent itself as a producer of ever-more-spectacular and desirable objects, at the core of which often nestles music pressed on vinyl.

3. Attali, *Noise*, 126.
4. Attali, *Noise*, 126. Music critic Simon Reynolds similarly confesses to wrestling with having more time represented in his record collection than remains in his life. He writes that his collection “started to exert a subliminal, oppressive pressure on my mind, possibly related to reaching that ominous point in your earthly span when you start to grasp that you don’t have enough life ahead of you to listen again to all the records you own” (Simon Reynolds, “Lost in Music: Obsessive Record Collecting,” in *This Is Pop*, ed. Weisbard, 290).
5. In point of fact, people are still keeping track of discographical information, and generally with greater precision. Discographies have proliferated online, and information that is available free of charge has made discographies published in book form a thing of the past. A certain irony registers in the boom in online discographies at the same time that conventional discographical entries — albums, singles, tracks on compilation albums — are less strictly the means by which people encounter music in recorded form.
6. *Continuous Project Altered Daily* was first exhibited at the Castelli Warehouse in March 1969. Morris also used this title for the publication of his collected writings.
7. See “John Cage and David Tudor Concert at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (January 16, 1965)” (audio file), Other Minds Audio Archive, <http://archive.org/details/CageTudorConcert>, accessed April 2, 2012.
8. See “An Interview with John Cage and David Tudor (May 29, 1972)” (audio file), Other Minds Audio Archive, http://archive.org/details/AM_1972_05_29, accessed April 2, 2012.
9. The recent popularity of the clip from *I’ve Got a Secret* has to do with Cage’s deadpan humor, the same quality that endeared him to the Italian television audience for *Lascia O Raddoppia* (Double or Nothing), for which he not coincidentally composed and first performed *Water Walk* in January 1959. See “John Cage — Water Walk,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSulycqZH-U>, accessed June 6, 2012. The clip from *I’ve Got a Secret* was initially posted on WFMU’s Beware of the Blog in April 2007.

10. See Robert Ashley, *Music with Roots in the Aether* (video and audio files), UbuWeb, <http://www.ubu.com/film/aether.html>, accessed May 11, 2012.
11. To give an example of the now-lapsed conventions of what once constituted an album, consider the film *Outlaw Blues* (1977; dir. Richard T. Heffron). In this period document, the fictional fugitive country singer Bobby Ogden (played by Peter Fonda) repeatedly risks capture whenever he comes out of hiding for yet another hastily arranged, top-secret recording session because it's just not a full-length album if you don't have ten songs. The unyielding demands of the medium prove to be Bobby Ogden's undoing at the end of the film. It's unclear what form a remake of *Outlaw Blues* would take in an era of digital music.
12. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 130.
13. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 8.
14. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 36.
15. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 2.
16. Ernst, "Dis/continuities," 110.
17. Born, "On Musical Mediation," 26.
18. See Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography."
19. Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*, 72.
20. See *Music for Merce* (New World 80712-2, 10 CDs) and *Music from the ONCE Festival 1961-1966* (New World 80567-2, 5 CDs).
21. Lisa Kahlden, interview with the author, August 10, 2010.
22. "Mission Statement and History," DRAM, <http://www.dramonline.org/page/mission-statement>, accessed February 23, 2011.
23. Kahlden, "The Database of Recorded American Music."
24. Kahlden, interview with the author.
25. See Alvin Curran, "Magic Carpet," on *Source Records 1-6*; see also Curran, *Solo Works: The '70s* (New World 80713-2, 3 CDs).
26. See Attali, *Noise*, 126.
27. Quoted in "Experimental Intermedia Archive in DRAM," DRAM, <http://www.dramonline.org/labels/experimental-intermedia-archive>, accessed June 15, 2012.
28. Goldsmith, "If It Doesn't Exist on the Internet, It Doesn't Exist."
29. Kenneth Goldsmith, "UbuWeb at 15 Years: An Overview" (2011), Harriet, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/ubuweb-at-15-years-an-overview>, accessed June 20, 2012.
30. Margaret Smith, "Archiving Ubu."
31. Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*, 10.
32. PennSound press release (2005), PennSound, <http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/news/press-release-launch.php>, accessed June 22, 2012.
33. See Artmob, <http://www.artmob.ca/about>, accessed June 20, 2012.

34. Goldsmith, "UbuWeb at 15 Years."
35. Goldsmith, "UbuWeb Wants to Be Free." Charles Bernstein makes a similar point in PennSound's manifesto when he wryly notes, "One of the advantages of working with poetry sound files is that we don't anticipate a problem with rights. At present and in the conceivable future, there is no profit to be gained by the sale of recorded poetry" (Charles Bernstein, "PennSound: Manifesto" [2003], <http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/manifesto.php>, accessed June 20, 2012).
36. "An exchanged gift is only a tit for tat, that is, an annulment of the gift. By underscoring this, we do not mean to say that *there is no* exchanged gift. One cannot deny the *phenomenon*, nor that which presents this precisely phenomenal aspect of exchanged gifts. But the apparent, visible contradiction of these two values—gift and exchange—must be problematized" (Derrida, *Given Time*, 37).
37. Tony Conrad, June 7, 2008, post to Frameworks mailing list, <http://www.hi-beam.net/fw/fw37/index.html>, accessed June 24, 2012.
38. Kenneth Goldsmith, "An Open Letter to the Frameworks Community" (2010), UbuWeb, <http://www.ubu.com/resources/frameworks.html>, accessed June 25, 2012. This final, exasperated, hilariously passive-aggressive parenthetical note—"more love hours than can ever be repaid"—is a reference to the title of a 1987 stuffed-creature artwork by Mike Kelley.
39. Goldsmith, "An Open Letter to the Frameworks Community."
40. Goldsmith, "UbuWeb at 15 Years."
41. Smith, "Archiving Ubu."

Selected Discography

SINGLE-ARTIST RELEASES

- AMM. *AMMMusic*. Elektra (UK) EUK-256 LP.
- AMM. *AMMMusic 1966*. Matchless ReR AMMCD.
- AMM. *The Crypt—12th June 1968*. Matchless MR5, 2 LPS.
- AMM. *Laminal*. Matchless MRCD31, 3 CDs.
- Ashley, Robert. *The Wolfman*. Alga Marghen ALGA 048 CD.
- Bailey, Derek. *Solo Guitar Volume 1*. Incus LP2.
- Bailey, Derek, and Han Bennink. *Instant Composers Pool*. ICP 004 LP.
- Behrman, David. *Wave Train*. Alga Marghen ALGA 020CD.
- Cage, John. *Music for Keyboard, 1935–48*. Columbia MS 819, 2 LPS.
- Cage, John. *The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of John Cage*. Avakian K08P 1493–1498/K08Y 1499–1504, 3 LPS. Reissued as Wergo WER 6247–2, 3 CDs.
- Cage, John. *Variations IV: Volume I*. Everest SDBR 3132 LP.
- Cage, John. *Variations IV: Volume II*. Everest SDBR 3230 LP.
- Cage, John, and David Tudor. *Indeterminacy: New Aspect of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music*. Folkways FT 3704, 2 LPS.
- Cale, John. *Dream Interpretation: Inside the Dream Syndicate, Vol. II*. Audio Art-Kive / Table of the Elements SWC-CD-79.
- Cale, John. *Stainless Gamelan: Inside the Dream Syndicate, Vol. III*. Audio Art-Kive / Table of the Elements SWC-CD-80.
- Cale, John. *Sun Blindness Music*. Audio ArtKive / Table of the Elements SWC-CD-75.
- Cale, John. *Vintage Violence*. Columbia CS 1037 LP.
- Cale, John / Tony Conrad / Angus MacLise / La Monte Young / Marian Zazeela. *Inside the Dream Syndicate, Vol. I: Day of Niagara*. Table of the Elements TOE-CD-74.
- Cale, John, and Terry Riley. *The Church of Anthrax*. Columbia CS 94983 LP.
- Cardew, Cornelius / The Scratch Orchestra. *The Great Learning*. Deutsche Grammophon 2538 216 LP.
- Conrad, Tony. *Early Minimalism: Volume One*. Table of the Elements TOE-CD-33, 4 CDs.

Conrad, Tony. *Four Violins* (1964). Table of the Elements TOE-LP-17.

Conrad, Tony, and Faust. *Outside the Dream Syndicate*. Caroline Records C 1501 LP. Reissued as Table of the Elements TOE-CD-3.

Feldman, Morton. *New Directions in Music 2*. Columbia ML 5403 LP. Reissued as *The Early Years*. Odyssey 32 16 0302 LP.

Ferrari, Luc. *Hétérozygote / J'ai été coupé*. Philips 836 885 DSY LP.

Ferrari, Luc. *L'œuvre électronique*. INA-GRM 6017-26, 10 CDs.

Ferrari, Luc. *Presque Rien No. 1 / Société II*. Deutsche Grammophon 2543 004 LP.

Ferrari, Luc. *Und so weiter / Music Promenade*. Wergo 60046 LP.

Flynt, Henry. *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues, Volume 1*. Locust Music 16 CD.

Flynt, Henry. *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues, Volume 2*. Locust Music 14 CD.

Flynt, Henry. *Raga Electric: Experimental Music, 1963-1971*. Locust Music 6 CD.

Flynt, Henry. *You Are My Everlovin / Celestial Power*. Edition Hundertmark cassette. Reissued as *New American Ethnic Music, Volume One*. Recorded NAEM01, 2 CDs.

Flynt, Henry, and the Insurrections. *I Don't Wanna*. Locust Music 39 CD. Iskra 1903. *Iskra 1903*. Incus 3/4, 2 LPs.

Lucier, Alvin. *Vespers and Other Early Works*. New World NW80604 CD.

Maxfield, Richard. *Electronic Music*. Advance FGR-8S LP.

Music Improvisation Company. *1968-1971*. Incus LP17.

Nauman, Bruce. *Record* LP. Tanglewood Press.

Neuhaus, Max. *Electronics and Percussion: Five Realizations*. Columbia ML 7139 LP.

Neuhaus, Max. *Fontana Mix—Feed*. Alga Marghen ALGA 044CD.

Neuhaus, Max. *The New York School*. Alga Marghen ALGA 052CD.

Neuhaus, Max. *Zyklus*. Alga Marghen ALGA 054CD.

Neuhaus, Max, and John Cage. *Fontana Mix—Feed*. Mass Art Inc. M-133 LP.

Oliveros, Pauline. *Alien Bog / Beautiful Soop*. Pogus 21012 CD.

Oliveros, Pauline. *Electronic Works 1965-1966*. Paradigm PDO4 CD.

Oliveros, Pauline. *Reverberations: Tape & Electronic Music, 1961-1970*. Important Records IMPREC352, 12 CDs.

Oxley, Tony, Group. *Four Compositions for Sextet*. CBS (UK) 64071 LP.

Oxley, Tony, Quintet. *The Baptised Traveller*. CBS (UK) 52664 LP.

Parker, Evan / Derek Bailey / Han Bennink. *The Topography of the Lungs*. Incus LP1.

Ra, Sun. *Nothing Is*. ESP-Disk 1045 LP.

Ra, Sun, and His Intergalactic Research Arkestra. *It's After the End of the World*. MPS 2120748 LP.

Riley, Terry. *In C*. Columbia MS 7178 LP.

Riley, Terry. *A Rainbow in Curved Air*. Columbia MS 7315 LP.

Schaeffer, Pierre. *L'œuvre musicale*. INA-GRM 1006-9, 4 CDs.

- Spontaneous Music Ensemble. *Karyobin*. Island (UK) 1LPS 9079 LP.
- Tenney, James. *Selected Works, 1961–1969*. New World 80570 CD.
- Tudor, David. *A Second Wind for Organ*. Odyssey 32 16 0158 LP.
- United States of America, The. *The United States of America*. Columbia CS 9614 LP.
- Young, La Monte. “Excerpt from *Drift Study 31 / 69 12:17:22–12:49:58 PM*.” On *Aspen Magazine* 8 compilation LP.
- Young, La Monte, and Marian Zazeela. *31 VII 69 10:26–10:49 PM Munich from Map of 49’s Dream The Two Systems of Eleven Sets of Galactic Intervals Ornamental Lightyears Tracery; 23 VIII 64 2:50:45–3:11 AM the Volga Delta from Studies in the Bowed Disc*. Edition X LP.

MULTIPLE-ARTIST RELEASES

Contemporary Sound Series

- Berio, Luciano, and E. E. Cummings, *Circles*; Sylvano Bussotti, *Frammento*; and John Cage, *Aria with Fontana Mix*. Time 8003 LP.
- Cage, John, and Christian Wolff. *John Cage / Christian Wolff*. Time 8009 LP. (Contents: Cage, *Cartridge Music*; Wolff, *Duo for Violinist and Pianist, Duet II for Horn and Piano, Summer for String Quartet*.)
- Feldman, Morton, and Earle Brown. *Morton Feldman / Earle Brown*. Time 8007 LP. (Contents: Feldman, *Durations I–IV*; Brown, *Music for Violin, Cello and Piano; Music for Cello and Piano; Hodograph I*.)
- MEV/AMM. *Live Electronic Music Improvised*. Mainstream MS-5002 LP. (Contents: MEV, *Spacecraft*; AMM, *Untitled*.)
- Sonic Arts Union. *Electric Sound*. Mainstream MS-5010 LP. (Contents: Alvin Lucier, *Vespers*; Robert Ashley, *Purposeful Lady Slow Afternoon*; David Behrman, *Runthorough*; Gordon Mumma, *Hornpipe*.)
- Stockhausen, Karlheinz, and Mauricio Kagel. *Karlheinz Stockhausen / Mauricio Kagel*. Time 8001 LP. (Contents: Stockhausen, *Zyklus, Refrain*; Kagel, *Transición II*.)

Music of Our Time

- Extended Voices: New Pieces for Chorus and Voices Altered Electronically by Sound Synthesizers and Vocoder*. Odyssey 32 16 0156 LP. (Contents: Pauline Oliveros, *Sound Patterns*; Alvin Lucier, *North American Time Capsule*; John Cage, *Solos for Voice*; Robert Ashley, *She Was a Visitor*; Toshi Ichianagi, *Extended Voices*; Morton Feldman, *Chorus and Instruments II, Christian Wolff in Cambridge*.)
- Leonard Bernstein Conducts *Music of Our Time*. Columbia MS 6733 LP. (Con-

- tents: György Ligeti, *Atmosphères*; Morton Feldman, *Out of "Last Pieces," Four Improvisations by the Orchestra*; Larry Austin, *Improvisations for Orchestra and Jazz Soloists*.)
- New Electronic Music*. Columbia MS 7051 LP. (Contents: John Cage, *Variations II*; Milton Babbitt, *Ensembles for Synthesizer*; Henri Pousseur, *Trois visages de Liège*.)
- New Sounds in Electronic Music*. Odyssey 32 16 0160 LP. (Contents: Steve Reich, *Come Out*; Richard Maxfield, *Night Music*; Pauline Oliveros, *I of IV*.)

Additional Multiple-Artist Releases

- Cage, John, *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Orchestra*; and Lukas Foss, *Baroque Variations*. Nonesuch N-71202 LP.
- Cage, John, and Lejaren Hiller, *HPSCHD*; and Ben Johnston, *String Quartet No. 2*. Nonesuch N-71224 LP.
- Various Artists. *Electronic Music*. Turnabout TV 34046 S LP. (Contents: İlhan Mimaroglu, *Agony [Visual Study No. 4, after Arshile Gorky]*; John Cage, *Fontana Mix*; Luciano Berio, *Visage*.)
- Various Artists. *Fluxus Anthology*. Anthology ANT18.11 CD.
- Various Artists. *Free Improvisation*. Deutsche Grammophon 2563 298-2563 300, 3 LPs.
- Various Artists. *Music for Merce*. New World 80712-2, 10 CDs.
- Various Artists. *Music from the ONCE Festival*. Advance FGR-5 LP.
- Various Artists. *Music from the ONCE Festival 1961-1966*. New World 80567-2, 5 CDs.
- Various Artists. *Musik in Deutschland 1950-2000: Fluxus-Happening-Performance*. BMG 74321-73652-2 CD.
- Various Artists. *Rumori alla Rotonda*. Alga Marghen ALGA 031CD.
- Various Artists. *Source Records 1-6: Music of the Avant Garde, 1968-1971*. Pogus Productions 21050-2, 3 CDs.

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