

Brief Resumé Alvin Curran

Since 1965 I have had an active self-made career as a composer/performer in the American experimental music tradition. This was not easy. It began with a fortuitous bang when I co-founded the group MUSICA ELETTRONICA VIVA with Frederic Rzewski and Richard Teitelbaum in Rome, in 1965. The MEV experience (over 200 hundred concerts and commercial recordings) was my main focus between 1966 and 1971 and continues to this day (APOGEE, 2005). In the early 70s I began creating a poetic series of solo-performance works for synthesizer, voice, taped environmental sounds and found objects (SONGS AND VIEWS FROM THE MAGNETIC GARDEN, LIGHT FLOWERS DARK FLOWERS etc.) which were performed all over Europe and the U.S. and consolidated my commitment to a life in music.

In seeking out new musical spaces in the late 70's and early 80's I began to develop a series of concert events to be given on lakes, in ports, parks, buildings, quarries and caves (RITI MARITTIMI, TUFO MUTO), which have evolved into large scale musical choreographic works such as OH BRASS ON THE GRASS ALAS for 300 amateur brass-band musicians, the opening concert of the 2006 Donaueschingen Festival. In the 1980's I extended this concept to include whole countries (musical geographies) by creating simultaneous radio concerts with live musicians in multiple countries (A PIECE FOR PEACE, CRYSTAL PSALMS). These directions were further distilled through the use of digital samplers, midi-grand pianos, and computers into performance pieces such as ELECTRIC RAGS, ENDANGERED SPECIES and SHOFAR – an appropriate synthesis between the concert hall, acoustic instruments, keyboards, and the sounds of the whole world – and into “musique concrète” radio works such as UN ALTRO FERRAGOSTO, I DREAMT JOHN CAGE YODELING AT THE ZURICH HAUPTBANHOF, and the MARITIME RITES series created for NPR in 1984 using the sounds of the entire eastern seaboard and recently re-released by New World Records. In 1990 I began a visually striking series of sound installations in collaboration with artist Melissa Gould (FLOOR PLAN, Ars Electronica Linz; KABOOM, Mass Moca) which pointed the way to solo installation works such as THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, TOTO DONAUESCHINGEN, and GARDENING WITH JOHN.

Throughout these electric-years Elliott Carter's lessons, along with Cage's Feldman's and Scelsi's, continued to exert their influence; I have steadfastly remained a composer of "notes on paper." Among my chamber works: FOR CORNELIUS and the 13-part INNER CITIES series for piano, recorded by several pianists; the piano-violin-percussion trio SCHTYX dedicated to the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio; the string quartet VSTO; the saxophone quartet ELECTRIC RAGS II performed widely by the Rova Sax Quartet; THEME PARK for percussion quartet and solo percussion; PITTURA FRESCA, a violin concerto for David Abel and the Paul Drescher Ensemble; IN HORA MORTIS for chamber orchestra; MUSIC IS NOT MUSIC for chorus SATB based on texts by John Cage; MAY I NOW for cello, electric guitar, and percussion; and BRUTE BEAT BRUT BRUIT, for flutes, clarinets, piano, violin, cello, percussion, and rapper.

Other major performers of my work include: Aki Takahashi, Ursula Oppens, Ivar Mikhashoff, Fredric Rzewski, Kathy Supove, Eve Egoyan, Daan Vandewalle, Bruce Brubaker, William Winant, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Bang on a Can Allstars, the Kronos Quartet, the Cassat Quartet, the Soldier Quartet, San Francisco Chamber Players; The Relache Ensemble (Philadelphia), The EAR Unit; Group 180 (Budapest), Alter Ego, and Ars Ludi. I have had fruitful collaborations with choreographers/artists such as Trisha Brown, Margie Jenkins, Yoshiko Chuma, Joan Jonas, Achim Freyer, June Watanabe, Kristin Jones, and The Living Theater.

Major producers and venues include de Ijsbreker, Amsterdam; New Music America; The Kitchen; John Zorn; The Venice Biennale; the Museum of Modern Art, NYC; the Klangturm, St. Poelten, Austria; The Hessecher Rundfunk, Frankfurt; Audio Box, RAI, Rome; The Listening Room, ABC, Sydney Australia; VPRO, Hilversum; the Studio Akustische Kunst, WDR, Cologne; Zeitkratzer Ensemble (Berlin); Tonspur, MuseumsQuartier, Vienna; the Maarten Altena Ensemble; the Angelica Festival; and the Taktlos Festival.

Among special current projects, my chamber music was featured at the 2007 spring festival of the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague, and pending commissions include from the the Moyland Castle Museum / Beuys Collection (June 2007), the Tate Modern (Maritime Rites, September 2007), Deutschland Radio Berlin (late 2007), and the Wanda Golonka Dance Company with the Ensemble Modern (April 2008).

During the 1970s I taught at the National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Rome, and from 1992 through 2006 I was the Milhaud Professor of Composition at Mills College (I now teach privately in Rome). I have published 15 or so articles on music, on my own music, and on other artists, several of which were featured at the New York Times website in March 2007.

Among the prizes and awards I have received are: the Bearns Prize, BMI award (1963), National Endowment for the Arts, (1977 and 1983), National Public Radio Satellite Distribution Project Award (1983-4), DAAD (Berlin residencies 1963-64 and 1986-87), Ars Acoustica International Prize (Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne, 1989), Prix Italia (special award 1988), Premio Novecento (city of Pisa 1993), Fromm Foundation (Harvard University 1998), Hass Family Award (San Francisco 1997), Meet the Composer (assisting many concerts over the years), Leonardo Award for Excellence (1995), interviewed by the Yale Oral History American Music project (category: "Major Figures in American Music"), Guggenheim Foundation (2004), Ars Electronica (2004), Phonurgia Nova (2005), and the Experimental Music Studio in Freiburg (residencies 2006 and 2007).

May, 2007
Alvin Curran
Via Giovanni Pascoli 1, 00184 Rome, Italy
Tel/fax: +3906 4880389
alvincurran@compuserve.com
www.alvincurran.com