

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 concerts and commercial recordings) was my main focus between 1966 and 1971 and continues to this day (APOGEE, 2005; MEV40, 2008). In the early 70's 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, CANTI ILLUMINATI...) which were performed all over Europe and the U.S. and consolidated my commitment to a life in music; four of them are being rereleased by New World Records on a 3-CD set.

In seeking out new musical spaces in the late 1970's and early 80's I began to develop a series of concert events to be given on lakes and rivers, in parks and quarries (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, at the 2006 Donaueschingen Festival and BEAMS. In the 80'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, TRANSDADEXPRESS, and SHOFAR – an appropriate synthesis between the concert hall, acoustic instruments, keyboards, and the sounds of the whole world – and into radio works such as ERAT VERBUM, UN ALTRO FERRAGOSTO, I DREAMT JOHN CAGE YODELING AT THE ZURICH HAUPTBAHNHOF, ON THE ROADS, LIVING ROOM MUSIC, and the MARITIME RITES series created for NPR in 1984 using the sounds of the entire Eastern seaboard. I also created a series of striking sound installations in collaboration with visual artists (MAGIC CARPET, FLOOR PLAN...) which pointed the way to solo installation works including THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, TOTO DONAUESCHINGEN, EVERYBODY DREAMS THEIR OWN MUSIC, 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 INNER CITIES cycle, recorded by several pianists; the trios SCHTYX and MAY I NOW; the string quartet VSTO; the saxophone quartet ELECTRIC RAGS II; the percussion quartet THEME PARK; the chamber violin concerto PITTURA FRESCA; IN HORA MORTIS for chamber orchestra; MUSIC IS NOT MUSIC for chorus SATB on texts by John Cage; MALAPROMPTUS for cello and piano; BRUTE BEAT BRUT BRUIT, for flutes, clarinets, piano, violin, cello, percussion, and rapper.

Some major performers of my work: Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, Alter Ego, Arditti Quartet, Ars Ludi, Bang on a Can Allstars, Bruce Brubaker, EAR Unit, Eve Egoyan, Ensemble Modern, Fred Frith, Group 180, Frankie Hi NRG, Huddersfield Choral

Society, Joan Jeanrenaud, Kronos Quartet, Joan Labarbara, MAE Ensemble, Ivar Mikhashoff, Ursula Oppens, Paul Drescher Ensemble, Relâche Ensemble, Rova Sax Quartet, Frederic Rzewski, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Chamber Players, Soldier Quartet, Kathy Supove, Aki Takahashi, Daan Vandewalle, and William Winant. I have had fruitful collaborations with artists such as Vita Accardi, Umberto Bignardi, Trisha Brown, Rudy Burckhardt, Jacob Burckhardt, Yoshiko Chuma, Clark Coolidge, Willem de Ridder, Theo Eshetu, Pietro Fortuna, Achim Freyer, Wanda Golonka, Melissa Gould, Pierre-Alain Hubert, Margy Jenkins, Joan Jonas, Kristin Jones, Nancy Karp, Paul Klerr, Lucia Latour, The Living Theatre, Roberto Masotti, Annabella Miscuglio, Meme Perlini, Edith Schloss, Ira Schneider, Ulli Sigg, Claudia Von Alemann, June Watanabe.

Recent highlights: MARITIME RITES TATE, with the London Symphony Orchestra brass ensemble and improvising soloists (September 2007); BOLETUS EDULIS for 250 musicians and commuter train (Bologna, May 2008); WEIL ERDE IN MEINEM KÖRPER WAR in Frankfurt (April 2008); the installation SHIN FAR SHOFAR at the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco (2008-9); feature billing at the 2007 festival of The Hague's Royal Conservatory of Music and at the 2008 Americans Festival in Groningen; OH MAN, OH MANKIND, OH YEAH in Huddersfield (November 2009); and the TORZAM sound installation for the Mannheimer Mozartsommer 2010. Active projects in 2010-11 include commissions from pianist Daan Vandewalle, the ARD Radio Days / ZKM in Karlsruhe, the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Integra's Ars Nova Ensemble in Malmö (Warsaw Autumn Festival), and the Nö Festival in Krems; GRIDJAM with artist Jack Ox; and THE ALVIN CURRAN FAKEBOOK.

During the 1970's I taught at the National Academy of Theater Arts in Rome, and from 1991 through 2006 I was the Milhaud Professor of Composition at Mills College. I now teach privately in Rome and during invited residencies at institutions such as Oberlin College. I have published numerous articles on music, on my own music, and on other artists, several of them featured at the New York Times website in 2007 and 2009, and a book about my work, edited by Daniela Tortora, ALVIN CURRAN: LIVE IN ROMA, has recently been published by Die Schachtel (Milan).

Some prizes and awards: Bearn's Prize, BMI award (1963), National Endowment for the Arts (1977, 1983), NPR Satellite Distribution Project Award (1983-4), DAAD (1963-4, 1986-7), Ars Acoustica International Prize (Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 1989), Prix Italia (special award 1988), Premio Novecento (city of Pisa 1993), Leonardo Award for Excellence (1995), Hass Family Award (San Francisco 1997), Fromm Foundation (Harvard, 1998), Meet the Composer (assisting many concerts over the years), interviewed by the Yale Oral History American Music project (category: "Major Figures in American Music"), Guggenheim Foundation (2004), Ars Electronica (2004), Phonurgia Nova (2005), Experimental Music Studio (Freiburg residencies 2006, 2007), Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Gutenberg Fellowship (Mainz 2010-11).

August, 2010

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