

The Future of Music

Compiled by Larry Polansky

Abstract—Six musicians give brief artists' statements on the theme "The Future of Music".

LARRY POLANSKY

The following five processes are essential to and unavoidable in the future of our music and to our future as human beings:

1. leaving the planet: becoming fully communicative inhabitants of the galaxy
2. leaving the individual; the perception and creation of music becoming one in which individual 'creativity' is not the issue, but understanding of and involvement in all possible manifestations of natural processes and forms
3. leaving the mind: for technology to help develop and be a full evolutionary partner to the human consciousness
4. leaving the senses: again with technological co-evolution, for the human race to explore all the possibilities of a very broad-band stimulus-response environment, one which includes as a small and limited subset the mechanisms of hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting, touching, and smelling
5. leaving the distinctions; between emotion and intellect, between art and non-art, between intelligence and non-intelligence, between form and non-form, and between signal and noise.

With the possible exception of (1.), these processes have already begun. Art which contributes to these processes explores and enlarges the potentials of human perception and evolution; art which inhibits these processes limits those potentials.

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Frames for Future Music
(Six Composition Lessons)

Lesson I. Intuition

One view of art is that it could be likened to a science of intuitive thought and that progress as we know it is a systematic procedure for making possible the believing in more and more of it.

Intuition (Webster): "The immediate knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning; instantaneous apprehension."

Intuitionism (Webster): "The doctrine that the reality of perceived objects is known by intuition."

A common argument (musical intuitionism) involves the misapprehension (misintuition) that intuitive music is the opposite of systematic music.

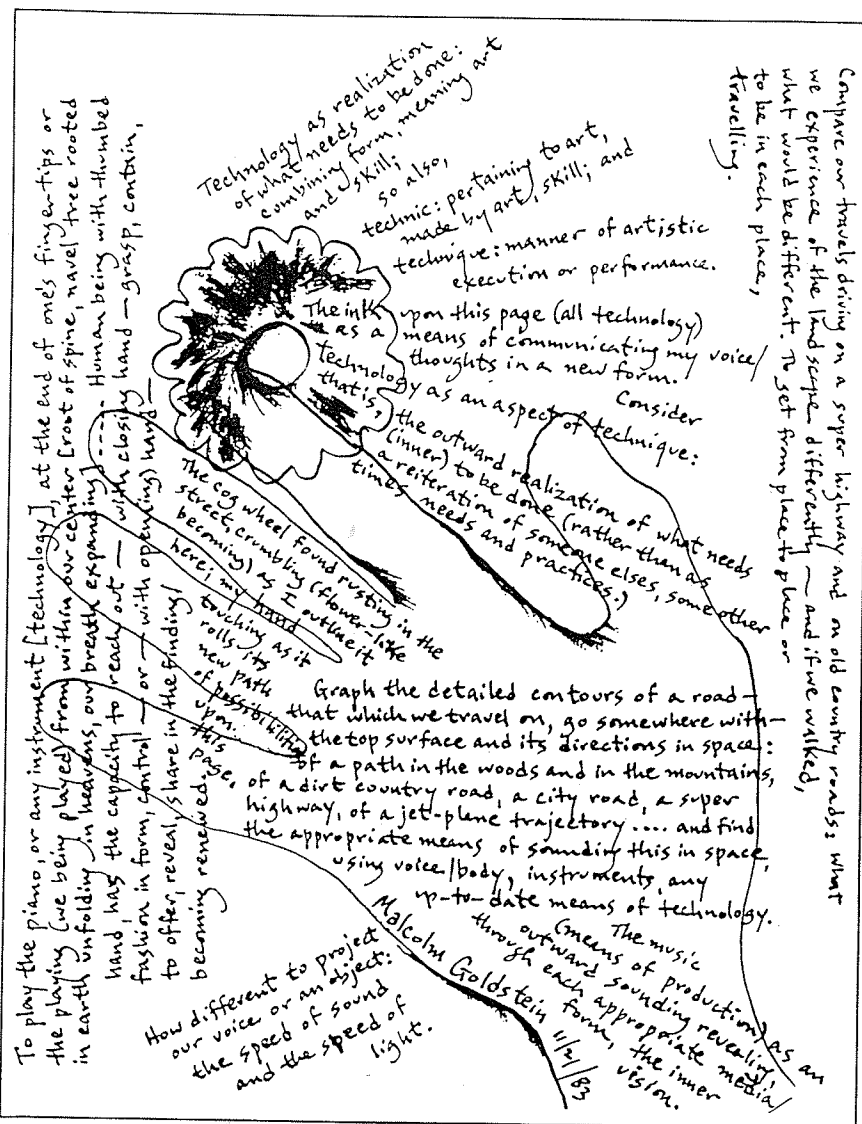


Fig. 1. Malcolm Goldstein, "releasing sounds/our voice through objects", 1983.

Assignment: Make a musical experience which for you mixes musical sense with musical nonsense. Present it to someone and ask her/him to make a selection of sense from nonsense. Observe and record the results. Repeat this as often as you like.

Lesson II. Context

Gregory Bateson describes the experience of presenting a class with a dead lobster, asking them to imagine that he (the teacher) is a being who has just arrived from another part of the universe, and assigning them (the class) the task of convincing him that the object in front of him was in fact once alive. [G. Bateson, *Mind and Nature*, 1979 (2nd printing) New York, Bantam Books.]

Assignment: Make a musical experience, the object of which is to convince the perceiver(s) that something is other than what it appears to be.

Lesson III. Purpose

Ask a group to sit quietly for a few minutes. After this, engage the group in a discussion of the small sounds that each person made while trying to sit quietly. Then ask the group to sit quietly again for a similar length of time. However, this time ask them to make three such sounds *on purpose*. Lastly, engage the group in a discussion of the differences between the two experiences. What do we need to know in order to describe the differences? How could we find that out?

Assignment: Compose a musical experience, the unfolding of which is only partially dependent on purposeful soundmaking. What is the universe, the sonic domain, of this experience? How are the sounds made on purpose delineated from others in the piece? What are the implications for the evolution of musical form?

Lesson IV. Unison

Ask members of a group to sit quietly with their eyes closed for 3 minutes or so and to clap their hands during that time on three separate occasions. Then ask if they believe it possible that, still with eyes closed, the members could achieve nearly perfect unison in their three separate claps. Ask them to repeat the exercise until unison is achieved but with no further instruction or discussion. Afterwards, engage the group in a discussion of how they managed to do this. Observe the strategies that emerge. [Note: I learned this exercise from Gerald Shapiro.]

Assignment: Compose a musical experience which tests the limits of what you believe can be achieved in undirected, unison performance.

Lesson V. Listening

Points of view to ponder: What is the significance of the following for composition? Can you make music from these points of view?

Composition *is* musical cognition.

- Musical cognition *is* the creation of a musical reality.
- There is a *multiplicity* of such musical realities.

Music listening *is* musical cognition.

- Musical cognition *is* the creation of a musical reality.
- There is a *multiplicity* of such musical realities.

Ergo: listening = composition = listening

Consensus Realities vs. Individual Realities
Note: *Consensus* is not a requirement for the existence of musical realities.

On Explanation

The more the brain is allowed to peruse/explore freely—without interruption or annoyance—its own organization,

the more, by reason of the force of natural processes, it will proceed to organize itself in a manner containing an 'explanation' (model) of the universe.

What is 'explanation'? An explanation is the provision of a construct of cognition which reduces the fear state (limbic interrupt arising out of uncertainty) associated with the perceived lack of a fear-reducing causal construct relating to local physical necessities.

In reality, there are no 'explanations'. There only 'is' the form of the universe.

Assignment: Create a compositional experience in which the idea 'listening as composition' is the focus.

Lesson VI. Intelligence

A definition of intelligence is spoken by the character The Double in the text which accompanies my composition *In the Beginning (The Story)*, for chamber orchestra, film and synthetic speech (1980-81).

The Double: "An entity exhibits intelligence if it is engaged in increasing comprehension of the process of its own evolution and that of the supra- and

On The Present(s) Of Music

BEFORE: Even in the western one-shot cosmos there is music in the following eternity.

An even more eternal Orient promises a universe sustained as tone-of-tones whose zillionyear duration is repeating yet again giving a rhythm to it all.

Though the stars run down here on Earth we can build culture up, for awhile more.

Premature blow-up, caused by us-----bad for us! for sure-----would not be "out of nature" even so.

So another concert hall will be built surely. (Expect a new composition to be played there too.)

AFTER: At the moment it is even more difficult to make choices. And becomes ever more so. Minds opening to many musics

.....should this be a problem?

"What to do"

Styles change every year; on every street.

But for Music----and is not that there the limit of my faith? : let whatever changes change. (it yet matters every bit.)

Fig. 2. Philip Corner, "On the Present(s) of Music", 1987.

infra-organisms in relation to itself and if it demonstrates a facility to operate in contrapuntal symbiosis with and is engaged in synergetic facilitation of this process, as an integral part of it, with a degree of self-originated and willful motivation. This is by inalienable and universally evident design a necessarily self-referential definition."

Assignment: Devote your life to the creation of a body of work which develops its own unique and integral intelligence and which makes this intelligence evident in the context of its life in a manner supporting the most positive evolution possible of aesthetic experience in its own region of the universe.

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JIM HORTON

Off-the-shelf computer-based instruments with artificial intelligence implemented for popular music will become primary depositories of musical knowledge and values and will be more intrinsically musical and self-motivated than meadow-larks. Mainstream expert system value-added software will lead anyone to play like a star in three easy lessons. Deep,

somewhat acceptable feelings will be automatically and easily expressed, and so it will be a golden age for fans and the music industry alike.

Music that expresses non-mainstream values such as extreme environmental utopianism, idealistic Marxist communism or nihilism—or even just non-popular artistic values such as neo-baroque proceduralism, organized concrete sound composition or advanced listening experimentalism, etc.—will probably receive little direct corporate software support and that is too bad.

Instead, industry should stay in tune with musicians outside the mainstream, especially if the music first sounds like a valueless distraction or excessive a-musical noise. Otherwise they will begin to believe their own advertisements—always a mistake.

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TIM PERKIS

I think that musical technology will eventually lead to the disappearance of the composer. The idea of the composer and its corresponding definition of music is a very specific and peculiar European conception: a composer's solitary intelligence creates music, and music is an

image of the composer's thought. Integral to this conception of music is the flight from the conditioned, the specific, the provisional. The composer demands release from broken strings, flat oboes and drummers who always show up late or drunk. Musical technology today is largely dedicated to carrying out this project of flight, leading us ever more to believe the music lies in some abstract sound object, whose computer image we polish smooth with ever more fine tools.

As technology carries out with greater power and precision the project of crafting these dream-objects, its very success points up the absurdity of the project itself. The heart of music does not lie in this solipsistic quest for perfection. Music is in fact an imperfect and social process. It is not a dream-release from conditionality. What is interesting and powerful in music comes about from accommodation to limitation, the elegant response to the unavoidable, and the enrichment of the unexpected that inevitably arises in any real situation.

So by taking the composer-as-mind idea to its ultimate expression, technology will finally kill it off. Then high-tech musical instruments will reveal their true nature as tools—just as difficult, peculiar and limiting as any others.

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Call for Papers

Sound, Music, Science and Technology

The editors of *Leonardo* announce a forthcoming regular section of the journal focusing on important new ideas in music and sound, to be called "Sound, Music, Science and Technology". This section will be under the supervision of Editorial Advisor Larry Polansky.

We are interested in articles on, but not limited to, the following topics:

- the interaction and co-evolution of technology and music, and connections to the visual arts
- artificial intelligence and music
- experimental aesthetics
- psychoacoustics, perception and music cognition
- advanced notions of language and music
- electronic performance and compositional systems
- music theory, especially as it relates to formal methods in music and sound
- documentation and descriptions of artists' work
- soundworks, sound sculpture and other visual artforms involving sound
- new concepts in performance, composition and music in society.

In general, the section will present articles with a broad scope, rather than articles dealing primarily with technical explications of a given process. There are a number of excellent journals which deal with these topics in depth. Specifically, we are concerned with ideas of interest to artists and thinkers from a variety of disciplines. We will not be duplicating the scope of existing journals in computer music or music theory, but rather trying to deal with broad issues involved in sound and art.

Please direct inquiries, proposals and manuscript submittals in this topic area to Larry Polansky, c/o *Leonardo*, 2020 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704, U.S.A.