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# Noch einmal mit Gefühl

Mia Sanchez, Februar, 2015

Hochschule der Künste Bern

Amerika I  
S.2

275 Church Street  
S. 3 - 44

Noch einmal mit Gefühl  
S. 45 - 46

Amerika II  
S. 47

Amerika I

Zuerst muss ich noch schnell den Atlantik überqueren.

Dann werde ich zum Ersten Mal in Amerika sein.

Ich zappe durchs Langstreckenflug-TV-Programm und versuche ein bisschen gelangweilt auszusehen – was mir angesichts des angebotenen Programms auch nicht sonderlich schwer fällt. Irgendwann schalte ich den Multimedia Player auf den Karten-Modus: Das animierte Flugzeug Modell befindet sich irgendwo über dem Atlantik und ruckelt Richtung Ostküste.

Ich stelle mir vor, wie ich mir vorstellen werde, überall schon mal gewesen zu sein. Ich (er)kenne die Strassen, die Häuser, die Leute – wie sie sprechen, was für Kleider sie tragen, wie sie sich bewegen. Ich (er)kenne das Essen, die Billboards, die Museen und Gallerien, die heimische Kunst.

*Been there, done that.*

Und es riecht genau so, wie ich es mir vorgestellt habe.

Und es klingt genau so, wie ich es mir vorgestellt habe.

*The very first sound that I recall hearing was the sound of the wind blowing through the chinks and all around the log cabin in Idaho where I was born [...] It was very awesome and beautiful and mysterious.*

La Monte Young, *Some Historical and Theoretical Background on My Work*, 1987

## 275 Church Street

Das Haus an der 275 Church Street ist auf den ersten Blick so unscheinbar, dass ich daran vorbeigehe. Es steht zwischen zwei angesagten Bars (*Burlesque* und *Souths*) inmitten von Tribeca.

Ich gehe bis zum Ende des Blocks und vergewissere mich auf Google Maps der Adresse: *Mela Foundation, 275 Church Street, es muss hier irgendwo sein*. Ich mache kehrt und konzentriere mich nun hauptsächlich auf die Hausnummern.

*297...295...293...291...289...287...285...283...281...279...277...275.*

*275*

Ich stehe vor dem Eingang der Pizzeria Da Mikele By Luzzo. Verunsichert schaue ich mich nach einem alternativen Eingang um. Rechts, gleich neben dem Illy Kaffee Aufkleber mit dem die Pizzeria für guten Kaffee wirbt, sehe ich eine schmale, schwarze Tür. Ausser einem A4 Blatt mit einer relativ schummrige schwarz-weiss Abbildung und den Öffnungszeiten verweist nichts auf das Dream House. Das Gebäude hat drei Stockwerke, für jedes Stockwerk eine Klingel. 1# La Monte Young & Marian Zazeela, 2# *Dream House*, daneben eine handgeschriebene Notiz *Ring Here*, 3# *Mela Foundation/ Archive*. Ich klinge also bei 2#. Der Buzzer summt, ich stosse die Tür auf. Im Treppenaufstieg wirkt das Haus viel schmaler als von aussen. Der Boden und die Treppen sind mit grau-blauem Teppich bezogen, die Wände sind weiss. Der Geruch von Räucherstäbchen ist nicht zu ignorieren. Vor der Wohnungstür im Ersten Stock stehen ein Paar Winterstiefel und ein Paar Sandalen. Der Geruch von Patschuli und Sandelholz wird immer intensiver. Von irgendwoher nehme ich ein leises Dröhnen wahr. Vor der Eingangstür im Zweiten Stock stehen drei paar Schuhe neben einem niedrigen Gestell. Darauf stehen ein paar Bücher, CDs und Schallplatten – zum Teil mit Preisschilder versehen. An den Wänden hängen Poster, kopierte Zeitungs-

ausschnitte, ein Portrait von einem Mann. Noch bevor mir irgendjemand eine Anweisung dazu gibt, fühle ich mich aufgefordert meine Schuhe auszuziehen. Ich stelle sie neben die anderen. In dem Moment öffnet mir ein Mann in meinem Alter die Tür und heisst mich herzlich willkommen. Er fragt mich ob ich schon mal hier gewesen bin. Ich verneine. Er schaut runter auf meine Füsse und sagt, dass er mir das mit den Schuhen ja nicht mehr zu sagen braucht. Ich lächle leicht irritiert und nicke. Er grinst. Der Typ sieht irgendwie total breit aus. In seiner Hand hält er eine Liste in der er die Besucher dokumentiert die das Dream House besuchen. Name und Wohnort. Er macht Smalltalk mit mir, will von mir wissen was ich hier so treibe und erzählt mir von der Europa Tour mit seiner Band. Er fragt mich wie die avantgardistische Musik Szene in der Schweiz so ist. Weil ich nicht wirklich eine Ahnung habe von der Schweizer Musik Avantgarde Szene, behaupte ich dass die Schweiz eher rückständig ist und Deutschland oder Belgien gerade viel interessanter wären. *Yes totally*, sagt er, *I love Berlin*. Mein Verdacht scheint sich zu bestätigen, der Typ hört nicht auf zu grinsen und mir fällt auf, dass seine untere Zahnreihe ziemlich schwarz ist. Was nicht auf seinen momentanen Zustand schliessen lässt aber, *Er sieht schon ziemlich ungesund aus* – denke ich. Mein Blick schweift zu dem Gestell. Relativ ziellos nehme ich ein Buch in die Hand und blättere ein wenig darin, der junge Mann macht mich darauf aufmerksam, dass das Buch vergriffen ist und auf Abe Books 400\$ kostet, aber dass ich auch ein PDF davon im Internet finden würde. *Thank you*, ich lege das Buch zurück. Er greift hinter das Gestell und nimmt einen kleinen Bündel Papier hervor – das Presskit – und drückt es mir in die Hand, *Thank you very much*. Unmittelbar neben der Türe steht ein Sockel, darauf eine transparente Plexi-Box mit einem Schlitz, gefüllt mit ein paar Dollar Noten. Er gibt mir noch einige Informationen zum Dream House und sagt dass ich *donaten* kann was auch immer ich will – empfohlen seien 9\$. Er öffnet mir die Tür zum Dream House. Ich trete ein und höre noch wie hinter mir die Tür ins Schloss fällt.

Es gibt zwei Räume die durch den Flur verbunden sind in dem ich gerade stehe. Die einzige Tür auf dem Stock führt zu den Toiletten. Der Teppichboden vom Treppenhaus zieht sich hier weiter. Die Farbe kann ich durch das diffuse Licht nicht erkennen. Alles schimmert in einer Mischung aus Rot und Blau. Ich versuche die Lichtquelle ausfindig zu machen und schaue nach oben:

Dream House 2510H 111111  
DREAM HOUSE 2510H 111111

symmetrisch gespiegelt, steht in blauer und roter Neonschrift über meinem Kopf an der Decke. Die Buchstaben sind geschwungen, ich stelle mir vor, dass das die Handschrift des Künstlers ist.

Mir kommt dieser Trailer in denn Sinn den ich gestern Nachmittag im Kino gesehen habe für *Inherent Vice*, da war quasi der Titel des Filmes in Neon Buchstaben und am Schluss des Trailers haben die dann auch noch geflimmert. Ich gehe den Flur entlang nach links, in Richtung des Dröhnens. Der Sound wird lauter. Der Raum in dem die Boxen aufgestellt sind ist etwa sieben mal neun Meter gross. Die Fenster die zur Strassenseite zeigen sind mit einer Folie beklebt die das Tageslicht dimmen. Dahinter kann ich die Skyline der Stadt erkennen, gefärbt in mildem Rosa. In Jeder Ecke des Raumes stehen menschengrosse Boxen aus denen das Dröhnen erklingt. Ich denke an Stanley Kubricks *Monolith* – Der Moment wo Kultur in unser Bewusstsein tritt. Der Ursprung der Bewusstseinsveränderung gewissermassen. Ausser mir scheint niemand hier zu sein. In dem mit Teppich ausgelegtem Raum sind Kissen verteilt, ich nehme mir eines und setze mich mit dem Rücken zur Wand.

Über der gegenüberliegenden Wand schweben zwei durchschnittene Kreise, kringelartige Mobiles aus einem leichten Material, sie werden mit jeweils einem roten und einem blauen Spot beleuchtet. Ihre Körper werfen einen oder zwei Schatten auf die Wand. Je nach dem wo man sich im Raum aufhält. Der Sound ist immer da. Es ist fast unmöglich dem Gehörten und dem Gesehenen gleichzeitig gleich viel Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken. Es wirkt als würden Beide meine Sinne gleichlaufend beanspruchen. An der rechten Rückwand steht ein Schrein mit einer Portrait-Aufnahme von einem Mann (ich erkenne den Mann vom Foto im Treppenhaus), einer kleinen länglichen Schale in der ein Räucherstäbchen langsam zu Asche zerfällt und ein weiteres, kleineres Foto welches La Monte Young gemeinsam mit dem Mann vom Portrait zeigt. Dieser Mann, werde ich später lesen, war Pandit Pran Nath ein nordindischer Musiker, bei dem Young seit den 70er Jahren regelmässig Unterricht in traditionellem Kirana Gesang nahm. Pandit Pran Nath war nicht nur sein musikalischer Gelehrter, vielmehr noch war er sein spiritueller Führer.

Ich höre wie die Tür aufgeht und der Mann mit den schwarzen Zähnen in den Raum kommt und schaue ihm zu wie er ein neues Räucherstäbchen anzündet, dann verschwindet er wieder im Flur. Ich lege mich auf den Rücken und schliesse die Augen.

Mit geschlossenen Augen fällt es mir verständlicherweise leichter mich auf den auditiven Part der Installation einzulassen. Ich kann die verschiedenen Töne wahrnehmen, die eine Art Teppich bilden. Ich drehe mich zur Seite und kann in der Bewegung eine Veränderung in der Frequenz wahrnehmen. Es ist wirklich sehr angenehm so in der Kunst rumzuliegen. Das Ende des Flanierens sozusagen.

Bei der *Documenta 5* in Kassel waren Young und Zazeela eingeladen im Dachstock des Friedericianums ihr Dream House aufzuführen. Sie performten und musizierten während der Dauer der Ausstellung gemeinsam mit Freunden und Mitgliedern des von ihnen gegründeten *Theater of Eternal Music*. Auf der Homepage des aktuellen Dream Houses gibt es auch eine Event-Rubrik. Das letzte Konzert fand im November 2014 in Memoriam zu Pandit Pran Naths 96. Geburtstag statt.

Für einen kurzen Moment denke ich darüber nach mich in die Mitte des Raumes zu setzen, dann ist mir aber doch nicht danach, ich stehe auf und setze mich an die gegenüberliegende Wand. Hier ist wieder das gleiche Spiel mit den Kringeln. Oberhalb der Wand an der ich zuvor gesessen habe: Schatten von durchbrochenen Kreisen. Das Dröhnen nicht vergessen. Es ist immer da. So präsent, dass ich es fast nicht mehr wahrnehme. Das Presskit, das mir der black-toothed Typ gegeben hat liegt auf meinem Schoss. Ich überfliege die Artikel und rechne mir aus, wie alt sie waren als sie geheiratet haben: La Monte Young war achtundzwanzig und Marian Zazeela dreiundzwanzig. *Different Times*, denke ich. Der Sound hat eine ziemlich beruhigende Wirkung auf mich, würde ich hier – in dieser Stadt – leben könnte ich mir durchaus vorstellen manchmal herzukommen um zu lesen oder nachzudenken. Obwohl, beruhigend ist das falsche Wort. Was ich meine, ist eher eine Schärfung der Sinne, ich bin sehr konzentriert und habe das Gefühl, ich könnte mich gerade sehr klar formulieren wenn ich müsste. Dass die Künstler beinahe in ihrer Arbeit leben, fand ich beim betrachten der Klingelschilder eher erstaunlich, gerade kann ich das aber relativ gut nachvollziehen. Jetzt erst bemerke ich, dass ich noch immer meinen Mantel trage, nicht weil mir kalt ist, ganz im Gegenteil hier drinnen ist es angenehm warm, mehr weil es mein Gemütlichkeitsgefühl steigert. Wie lange ich in diesem Raum gesessen habe, weiss ich nicht genau,

weil ich habe mir vorgenommen nicht auf die Uhr zu schauen. Ich stehe auf und – Tatsächlich verändern sich die Frequenzen oder die Intervalls-Abstände auf Grund meiner Bewegung. Mir ist schwindlig und ich taste mich der Wand entlang zu den Toiletten. Ein bisschen fühlt es sich so an als würde der Boden nachgeben. Am Ende des Flurs sitzt ein junges Pärchen, ich bin überrascht, hab ich mich doch alleine im Dream House vermutet. Sie knien voreinander auf dem Boden und küssen sich innig. Mir ist es ein wenig unangenehm und ich bin mir nicht sicher, ob ich jetzt neidisch bin, oder ob ich das eher ein bisschen *too much* finde. Was nicht am Kuss liegen würde, sondern am Setting, bzw. am Kontext. Hinter ihnen an der Wand ist eine weitere Lichtskulptur montiert: Drei verschieden grosse Rechtecke, übereinander gelegt, mit jeweils einem roten und blauen Spot beleuchtet. Die Schatten der Kanten erzeugen einen 3D- Effekt und lassen die Figur im Raum schweben. Ich denke an diesen Franco Battiato Song: *No Time No Space [...] the sea of the simulation, keep your feelings in memories [...]* Diese Räume haben tatsächlich eine zeitlose Wirkung auf mich. Der Zettel mit dem die Tür zu den Toiletten beschriftet ist, sieht aus als würde er schon seit mindestens dreissig Jahren hier hängen. Ich traue mich nicht den Lichtschalter zu betätigen, bevor ich die Tür nicht hinter mir zugezogen habe. Das Licht der Toiletten würde die ganze Stimmung kaputt machen. So taste ich im Dunkeln des Badezimmer, die Wände nach dem Lichtschalter ab – gefunden. Das Licht geht an, sogar hier sind die Fenster mit rosa Folie beklebt. Ich komme aus dem Badezimmer, das junge Pärchen küsst sich nicht mehr. Sie weint und er streichelt mit seiner tröstenden Hand ihr Gesicht. Obwohl mir nicht sonderlich danach ist, setze ich mich zu ihnen in den Raum. Der Raum ist einiges kleiner als der erste. Das Dröhnen ist hier nach wie vor wahrzunehmen, jedoch weniger laut, da es hier keine Boxen gibt. Ich konzentriere mich auf die Figur vor mir – obschon es mir nicht ganz leicht fällt, diese anderen Leute zu ignorieren. Dieses Etwas das da vor mir schwebt macht einen zeitlosen Eindruck. So wie das Dröhnen, das kontinuierlich vor sich weiter rauscht. Nach gefühlten zehn Minuten stehe ich auf. Ich habe zwar nicht wirklich Lust das Dream House zu verlassen und nach Draussen zu gehen, hier in diesem Raum möchte ich aber auch nicht bleiben. Ich gehe den Flur entlang und werfe noch ein Mal einen Blick in den ersten Raum. Dort auf dem Teppich liegen jetzt drei Leute. Grund genug zu gehen.

Wieder draussen auf der Strasse werde ich von all den Eindrücken schier erschlagen. Zu viele verschiedene Lichter, zu viele verschiedene Laute, zu viele Leute. Ich stehe vor dem Haus und es fällt mir unglaublich schwer mich zu bewegen. Meine Orientierung ist weg. Dieses Gefühl hatte ich zuvor erst ein Mal im Leben. Dass ich nicht wusste wohin. So sehr nicht wusste wohin, dass ich zunächst einfach stehen geblieben – und dann ziel-und rastlos durch die Gegend fast gerannt bin. Das ist ein sehr unheimliches Gefühl finde ich. Wie um mich meiner Selbst zu vergewissern singe ich leise vor mich hin. *Controllori di volo pronti per il decollo. Telescopi giganti per seguire le stelle navigare navigare nello spazio nello spazio... di pi. No Time No Space another Race of Vibrations, the Sea of the Simulation keep your feelings in memories, I love you especially tonight.*

Kunst in auftretender Reihenfolge:

*The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry in Prime Time When Centered above and below The Lowest Term Primes in The Range 288 to 224 With The Addition of 279 and 261 in Which The Half of The Symmetric Division Mapped above and Including 288 Consists of The Powers of 2 Multiplied by The Primes within The Ranges of 144 to 128, 72 to 64 and 36 to 32 Which Are Symmetrical to Those Primes in Lowest Terms in The Half of The Symmetric Division Mapped below and Including 244 within The Ranges 126 to 112, 63 to 56 and 31.5 to 28 with the Addition of 119*  
Sinus Wellen, La Monte Young, 1991

*Dream House Variation I*, Neon, Marian Zazeela, 1993

*Inherent Vice*, Paul Thomas Anderson, 2014

*2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick, 1968

*Ruine Window* (aus der Serie *Still Light*), Marian Zazeela, 1992

*No Time No Space*, Franco Battiato (auf der Platte *Mondi Lontanissimi*), 1985

## 2014 - 2015 *Dream House* PRODUCTION

Robert Adler	Security & Audio Consultant
Jim Conti	Lighting Consultant
Tom Dale Keever	Lighting Consultant
Natalie LeBrecht	Production Assistant
Ben Manley	Audio Consultant
Jamie Mereness	Audio Consultant
Rob Ward	Production / Administration

*Dream House* Monitors: Pete Azen, Desmond Beirne, Alex Beth, Alex Carpenter, Stephen Chopek, Carlos Cordiero, Eddie Dias, Alannah Fehrenbach, Anna Fitzgerald, Randy Gibson, Katherine Graham, Rich Hazelton, James Kopf, David Lackner, Rob Mayson, Mat Nichols, Adam Robinson, Ben Seretan, Melissa Stanley, Will Swofford, Lynn Thu Tun, Greg Villepique  
Coordinator: Rob Ward

Produced by MELA Foundation, New York  
Under a commission from Heiner Friedrich and Fariha Friedrich

## 1993 INSTALLATION PRODUCTION

Robert Adler	Security & Audio Consultant
Marika Blossfeldt	Production
Jim Conroy	Space Renovation
Jim Conti	Lighting Consultant
John Erskine	Audio Consultant
Libby Flynt	Production
David Fulton	Security & Audio Consultant
Tom Dale Keever	Lighting Installation Director
Joseph Kubera	Administration
Let There Be Neon	Neon Fabrication
Seth Markel	Production
Jamie Mereness	Audio Consultant
David Meschter	Audio Consultant
David Rayna	Synthesizer Design

Special thanks to Fariha Friedrich, Heiner Friedrich, Heike Friedrich, Uli Schaeffer  
William M. Borchard, Robert W. Clarida, Jim Conti,  
David Farneth, Michael Govan, Kurt Munkacsi,  
Quentin Squires, Ted Striggles, Rudi Stern, Charles Wright

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La Monte Young Marian Zazeela

**Dream House**

**Sound and Light Environment**

a time installation

measured by a setting of continuous frequencies in sound and light

Marian Zazeela

**Neon, *Dream House Variation I* (1989)**

**Sculpture, *Ruine Window 1992* from *Still Light***

**Installation, *Imagic Light* (1993) from *Light***

**Environment, *Magenta Day / Magenta Night*  
*Realization Church Street 3rd Floor 1993***

La Monte Young

***The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry in Prime Time*  
*When Centered above and below***

***The Lowest Term Primes in The Range 288 to 224 with The Addition of 279 and 261*  
*in Which The Half of The Symmetric Division Mapped above and Including 288***

***Consists of The Powers of 2 Multiplied by***

***The Primes within The Ranges of 144 to 128, 72 to 64 and 36 to 32***

***Which Are Symmetrical to Those Primes in Lowest Terms***

***in The Half of The Symmetric Division Mapped below and Including 224***

***within The Ranges 126 to 112, 63 to 56 and 31.5 to 28***

***with The Addition of 119***

**(1991 - 1993)**

September 27, 2014 through June 7, 2015

Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays 2:00 PM – Midnight

Tel: 212-925-8270; 212-219-3019; Fax: 212-226-7802; [www.melafoundation.org](http://www.melafoundation.org)

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# THE VOICE

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## The Tingle of $p \times m^n - 1$

By Kyle Cairn  
La Monte Young and  
Marian Zazeela

Math phobes can get lost this week. God, I love numbers. My high school math teachers thought I should go into math. Come to think of it, so did my music teachers. And when La Monte Young sets up one of his vibrating sine-tone sculptures such as the one that's running Thursdays and Saturdays from two to 12 at the Meta Foundation, 275 Church Street, I get to use music as an excuse to bathe in the algebra I left behind. Let others get their ears massaged by the pulsating drones: I like to gaze at the tuning diagrams and let my mind slither naked through the mysterious clusters of luscious integers.

And what integers there are: large prime numbers, octaves of primes, whole classes of primes newly categorized for musical purposes. Having captured another octave of the overtone series, Young has strung his aural hammock between the 1792nd and 2304th overtones, where he's basking peacefully. The installation, whose 107-word title begins *The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry in Prime Time*... (I save more space by not completing it than I waste with this parenthesis), consists of 35 sine tones stretched across 10 octaves, 20 of them squeezed into a small band in the seventh octave, some separated by only 1/14th of a half step. Young likes the effect of large

prime-numbered ratios, including Merseenne Primes (primes that conform to the formula  $2^p - 1$ , such as 31) and what he calls twin primes (primes separated by only 2, such as 59 and 61). He's even invented a new type: Young's Primes, expressible by the formula  $p \times m^n - 1$ , where  $p$  is a prime,  $m$  is a positive integer that isn't a power of 2, and  $n$  is an integer greater than 1. Example: 71.

"This is over my head," you're saying, but listen. The point of all those "minus ones" is that Young uses tones that approximate the most consonant overtones, but are far more complex in their resulting combined wave forms. His math gives him a variety of sizes of seventh and ninth intervals, all closing in on the octaves over a fundamental B (actually a quarter-tone flat). In each octave, all the pitches are within the major third between A and C sharp. Imagine a ladder of 10 octaves of the same pitch. Now imagine the rungs bent and diffracted into lots of different tones, the lower rungs slightly lowered, the upper rungs raised. And because even these exotic overtones of a single low pitch are theoretically more harmonious than the scientifically irrational tuning of a modern piano, you're hearing a wild frontier of tonality that has never been explored, the outer edge of consonance.

Walk into *The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry* and you'll hear a whirlwind of pitches swirl around you. Stand still, and the tones suddenly freeze in place. Within the room, every pitch finds its own little niche where it resonates, and with all those close-but-no-cigar intervals competing in one space (not to mention their elegantly calculated sum- and difference-tones), you can alter the harmony you perceive simply by pulling on your earlobe. If you visited Young's installation *The Romantic Symmetry (over a 60 cycle base)* at Dia Art Foundation back in '89, you remember the effect. But while *Romantic Symmetry* was more "melodic" in a sense, since its overtones were more evenly spread through the range, *The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry* is more textural. Moving your head makes those tones leap from high to low and back, while that cluster in the seventh octave, with its wild prime ratios like 269:271, fizzes in and out.

Marian Zazeela's light sculptures in the same space are the perfect visual analogue. Her *Ruine Window 1992*, for example, is a simple geometric construction of white boards illuminated with magenta light from one side, blue from the other. Since she's working with colored shadows instead of colored surfaces, and light behaves differently from pigment, the colors combine oppositely to the way we expect. (You only learn light-color theory in art school, Zazeela says, if you go into television.) Stand in front of *Ruine Window 1992* for a while, and let your eyes move up and down the verticals: not only will the colors take on a deep intensity, creating an illusion of two-dimensional space, but the edges will flicker in your peripheral vision.



Young and Zazeela within their sound-and-light show

As the shimmering of Young's overtones resists being recorded, Zazeela's shadows fall flat when photographed, one reason she's never been sufficiently celebrated in the art world for the originality of her minimalist constructions.

Both the sound and light sculptures are static entities that move wildly within your eyes and ears, proving with pure wave forms how subjective perception is. Since we're more sophisticated visually than aurally, I figured out an exercise that, if you can hum, will help you hear more precisely what Young's sculpture is about. If you can isolate one of the lower drones (not easy), slowly hum a major scale up from that pitch. (The beginning of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" will do.) By the time you reach the third, fourth, and fifth steps, you'll be humming pitches that find no resonance among other drones—you'll be in the empty spaces. Hearing a gap within articulated pitch space, as some ropan works of the '50s and '60s like Xenakis's *Pithoprakta* ask us to do, is usually a task beyond mortal ears. But here, in the sustained sine waves, even earlings can make out the negating musical spaces between the rungs of Young's overtone ladder.

Why would you want to do this? Because it's there. Because music isn't always just background, something familiar. Because you never heard so complex a chord pure. Because music that refuses change subverts capitalism. Because you'll never get any closer to the music of the spheres this side of enlightenment. And because there are more numbers in the musical universe than I IV V I.

music eternal light art  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**La Monte Young Marian Zazeela**

**Sound and Light Environment**

**Extended Exhibition at MELA Foundation**

**275 Church Street, 3rd Floor**

**between Franklin and White Streets in Tribeca**

**Saturday, September 27, 2014 continuing through June 7, 2015**

**Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 2:00 PM to Midnight**

**Contribution \$9.00. Information 212-925-8270**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Dream House**, a collaborative **Sound and Light Environment** by composer La Monte Young and visual artist Marian Zazeela, is presented in an extended exhibition at MELA Foundation, 275 Church Street, 3rd Floor. The environment is open Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 2:00 PM to Midnight. Suggested contribution is \$9.00. The long-term exhibition opened in Fall 1993 and will continue through June 7, 2015, reopening again in September 2015.

Young and Zazeela characterize the **Sound and Light Environment** as "a time installation measured by a setting of continuous frequencies in sound and light." In the light environment Marian Zazeela presents four works, two environmental: **Imagic Light** and **Magenta Day / Magenta Night**, in installations specifically designed for the site; and two sculptural: the neon work, **Dream House Variation I**, and the wall sculpture, **Ruine Window 1992** from her series, **Still Light**. In the environment **Imagic Light**, Zazeela projects pairs of colored lights on mobile forms to create seemingly three-dimensional colored shadows in a luminous field.

In the concurrent sound environment, La Monte Young presents **The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry in Prime Time When Centered above and below The Lowest Term Primes in The Range 288 to 224 with The Addition of 279 and 261 in Which The Half of The Symmetric Division Mapped above and Including 288 Consists of The Powers of 2 Multiplied by The Primes within The Ranges of 144 to 128, 72 to 64 and 36 to 32 Which Are Symmetrical to Those Primes in Lowest Terms in The Half of The Symmetric Division Mapped below and Including 224 within The Ranges 126 to 112, 63 to 56 and 31.5 to 28 with The Addition of 119**, a periodic composite sound waveform environment created from sine wave components generated digitally in real time on a custom-designed Rayna interval synthesizer.

Both artists are presenting works utilizing concepts of structural symmetry. Zazeela's mobile forms are arrayed in symmetrical patterns with lights placed in precisely symmetrical positions creating symmetrical colored shadows; the wall-mounted light sculpture and the neon are both

(. . . . .more)

New School

Rayna Records

\*

symmetrical forms. Young's sound environment is composed of frequencies tuned to the harmonic series between 288 and 224, utilizing numbers with factors of only 9, or those primes or octave transpositions of smaller primes that fall within this range. The interval 288/256 reduces to a 9/8 interval as does the interval 252/224. Thirty-two frequencies satisfy the above definition, of which seventeen fall within the range of the upper, and fourteen fall within the range of the lower of these two symmetrical 9/8 intervals. Young has arranged these thirty-one frequencies in a unique constellation, symmetrical above and below the thirty-second frequency, the center harmonic 254 (the prime 127 x 2).

Young has stated that: "This is my newest and most radical sound environment; the Rayna synthesizer has made it possible to realize intervals that are derived from such high primes that, not only is it unlikely that anyone has ever worked with these intervals before, it is also highly unlikely that anyone has ever heard them or perhaps even imagined the feelings they create."

In 1966, Young and Zazeela pioneered the concept of the continuous sound and light environment, and have since presented large-scale sound and light productions in museums and galleries worldwide for continuous periods from one week to six years, including installations in the Metropolitan Museum, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; documenta 5, Kassel; Kunstverein, Cologne; Kunst im Regenbogenstadl, Polling. Under a long-term commission from the Dia Art Foundation (1979-85), Zazeela and Young collaborated in a six-year continuous *Dream House* presentation set in a six-story building on Harrison Street in New York City, featuring multiple interrelated sound and light environments, exhibitions, performances, research and listening facilities, and archives. Now in its twenty-first year, MELA Foundation's *Dream House* is Young and Zazeela's longest installation to date.

In *Minimalism:Origins* (Indiana University Press, 1993), Edward Strickland has written of their collaborative environments: "Intense light [is] aimed through [color] filters at quasicalligraphic aluminum shapes hung by ultrafine filaments. The effect is a unique and extraordinary transvaluation of perception: the mobiles seem to hover unanchored, while the shadows they cast in various hues attain an apparent solidity against the light-dissolved walls equal to their literally palpable but apparently disembodied sources. Like Young's music, to which it serves as an almost uncanny complement, Zazeela's work is predicated upon the extended duration necessary to experience the nuances which are its essence." Their one-year sound and light environment collaboration, *The Romantic Symmetry (over a 60 cycle base) in Prime Time from 112 to 144 with 119 / Time Light Symmetry* (Dia Art Foundation, NYC 1989) was described by *Village Voice* critic Kyle Gann as "some of the strangest and most forward-looking art New York has to offer."

A 1990 Donguy Gallery, Paris, *Dream House* environment now in the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) Lyon was featured in the 2004-05 *Sons et Lumieres* at Centre Pompidou, Lyon Biennial 2005 and *See This Sound*, Lentos Museum, Linz Austria, 2009-10. *Artforum* drew connections between the New York and Lyon installations: "For the majority of compelling pieces here were the older ones, among them a few whose very appearance dramatized that vertiginous sense arising when objects from different eras come into incongruously close contact. ("Time does not pass," Bourriaud writes of the effect, "it 'percolates'"). In this department first honors must be awarded to La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's *Dream House, 1993*—. At its location in the Tribeca section of New York City, this roomful of infinitely repeating cycles of sound and light frequencies is a veritable wormhole in the urban fabric. (Outside it is 2006; inside it seems perpetually 1985, the year Young and Zazeela's MELA Foundation opened its doors. It has since maintained an artist's-loft sensibility once indigenous to the area.) Relocated to the cavernous industrial space of La Sucrière, however, the piece created other wrinkles in time, seeming at once placed at the cultural roots of European rave and trance culture—indeed, Lyon artistic director Thierry Raspail told me that Young obtained the very latest subwoofers for the occasion (the deep pulses raising the roof and making the floor feel ready to cave in)—and also utterly futuristic. Indifferent to Young's deafening drones was the medieval architecture along the Saone River, visible through the installation's tinted windows."

Nick Stillman wrote in *The Brooklyn Rail* (June 2003): "The *Dream House* can inspire sincere self-reflection—of how people physically move, of how little time there is for stillness, of how we've become trained to seek and to reward movement and action. To embrace the *Dream House* is to become entranced and lost in time. And with no permanent closing date established for Young and Zazeela's collaborative installation, this could be the dream that never ends."

THE ADVENTURES OF THE WIRE IN MUSIC

# WIRE

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## global ear

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month

### New York

The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry In Prime Time When Centered Above And Below The Lowest Term Primes In The Range 288 to 224 With The Addition Of 279 And 261 In Which The Half Of The Symmetric Division Mapped Above And Including 288 Consists Of The Powers Of 2 Multiplied By The Primes Within The Ranges Of 144 To 128, 72 To 64 And 36 to 32 Which Are Symmetrical To Those Primes In Lowest Terms In The Half Of The Symmetric Division Mapped Below And Including 224 Within The Ranges 126 To 112, 63 To 56 And 31.5 to 28 With The Addition Of 119.

That is the title of the LaMonte Young piece which is the sound half of the Sound and Light Environment (referred to as "a time installation measured by a setting of continuous frequencies in sound and light") put together with his wife — visual artist Marian Zazeela, his collaborator of 35 years — at New York's tiny MELA (Music Eternal Light Art) Foundation. Anyone who cares passionately about the mathematical basis of Young's music thus has enough information to parse out the specifics of the overtones at play here. The programme helpfully notes that it is "a periodic composite sound waveform environment created from sine wave components generated digitally in real-time on a custom-designed Rayna interval synthesizer". But just as it is possible to enjoy a Webern serial composition without knowing the tone row, Young's music can offer a vast range of auditory experiences even to folks who can't manage the arithmetic required to balance their chequebooks.

As far back as the mid-60s, Young and Zazeela were

creating complex installations under the banner The Theatre Of Eternal Music, so it is reasonable to view this current work as part of an ongoing continuum rather than an isolated, one-off event.

Before entering the installation, visitors are asked to remove their shoes. Nearly everything inside is white, including the carpeting. Or rather, it would be white, but for the red and blue lights which are an integral part of Zazeela's pieces, which play with dimensionality via shadows and colour. In the larger front room two pairs of circular cut-outs, bands three inches thick and cut down the middle, hang from the ceiling. Facing each pair are a red spotlight and a blue spotlight. The shadows behind the cut-outs are the opposite colour of the light facing them. There is thick but transparent pink plastic over the windows, so outside light entering is also pink. In the smaller back room, where almost no natural light enters because it's blocked by neighbouring buildings, the plastic appears black and reflective. In that room there is a mostly red Oriental rug on the floor. On one wall is a relief sculpture entitled *Ruine Window 1992* which is like a two-dimensional drawing come to three-dimensional life. Again there are red and blue spotlights shining on it from different angles, casting different-coloured shadows which vary in size depending on the angle of viewing.

The effect of the music is based on a paradox. The tones generated are constant, but the listener's perception of them is not. The slightest movement of one's head, and thus one's ears, alters the dominance of particular overtones, of which there is a huge number. The frequencies are low and high, with seemingly a huge gap in the middle; the higher overtones are quite close together, yet because all of them are not heard equally at one time, the overall

effect is somewhat chord-like. The only way to hear a constant sound here is to be perfectly still. Listeners are thus engaged in a sort of interactivity; they can't choose what to hear, but they control when it changes, and how often. Everyone can experience the sounds differently. A couple enter and at first they jog around the room, then lie flat on the floor. Eventually they take turns standing on their heads. I slowly roll my head on my neck, adding a chiropractic element. Some people seem to meditate, but though the sound consists of drones, and meditation in one consistent position would keep the perceived sound constant, the sonic environment doesn't really seem conducive to meditation; as with many of Young's compositions, the upper frequencies are harshly dissonant and the lower frequencies mesh into a pounding rhythm.

I don't know if the sculpture is intended to be interactive, but my gentle pushes set the hanging circles swinging and seem to match the effect of the sound. The most stunning 'does she intend this?' effect comes at sunset, however. It has been a rainy day, and there are thick clouds in the sky. In the spaces between them, the light (its perception affected, of course, by the pink plastic on the west-facing windows) is pink/red/orange; the clouds are purple/blue. It is a magnificent, if temporary, corollary to Zazeela's work. Given Young's predilection for natural tuning, and claims that his music is inspired by the sounds of the wind and the sea, it seems unlikely that an effect of nature, as mirrored in miniature in the installation, is entirely unplanned. Art is as all-encompassing as we allow it to be. **STEVE HOLTJE** The installation can be viewed on Thursdays and Saturdays, 2pm-midnight, until the end of June at The MELA Foundation, 3rd Floor, 275 Church Street (near Franklin Street), New York, USA. Tel: 001 212 925 8270

Ed Howard



A

t 275 Church Street in TriBeCa, nestled amid a row of convenience stores and restaurants, invisible to nearly everyone who passes, is an inconspicuous black door, unmarked except for its number and a cryptic white announcement bearing the words "The Dream House." Behind this door, one of modern music's most creative, original, and idiosyncratic composers lives just upstairs.

He is La Monte Young, a pioneer of a new strain of minimalist composition in modern classical music, and the Dream House, which he established 11 years ago, is his brainchild, the culmination of more than four decades of work.

The exhibition is open Thursdays and Saturdays from 2 p.m. to midnight and features both Young's music, which is a lush flow of overlapping sound waves, and the light art of his wife and longtime collaborator Marian Zazeela. Young's composition, which has a 107-word title that begins "The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry in Prime Time...", is a drone work featuring 32 different frequencies of constant tones created on a Rayna synthesizer, while Zazeela provides light installations and sculptures. "Together, the sound and light can be experienced as a new form; or new media: the sound and light environment," she says. "The experience of the two mediums together as one requires a new, or at least different, mode of attention." Young and Zazeela are the cofounders of a foundation the composer established to promote and disseminate his music, called MELA, an acronym for Music Eternal Light Art. The organization's main office is also at the Church Street residence where the Dream House runs and the couple lives.

Inside the Dream House, a narrow hallway connects two rooms. A deep hum soars down the hallway, like pulsating currents in a wind tunnel. To the left is the main room, starkly empty. Everything in the House is white – white walls, white cushy carpet, white pillows – stained pink and purple by Zazeela's lights. On the far wall of the main room are three windows, all covered over by translucent magenta screens that filter the sunlight from outside, further adding to the reddish tint in the room.

In each corner is a tall white speaker that looks like a giant refrigerator, as intimidating in the bare space as Stanley Kubrick's monolith. These monoliths are vibrating with the 32 frequencies of Young's composition, and though the music itself stays constant no matter how long is spent inside the House, the sound's relationship to its listeners can change drastically with the slightest movements.

The only time the music remains stable is when the listener is completely still: the low drones culminate in a dense jackhammer cloud as they cross over each other, forming complex rhythms. However, just slight changes in posture completely alter the sound field. Different higher pitches appear as you move your head; by rocking slowly back and forth, you can create a hypnotic two-note melody as the high tones shift and spin dizzily. Towards the center of the main room, the drones are thickest and lowest, while around the perimeter of the room the sound tends to be airier, dominated by chattering high-end whine.

This disorienting effect is a key component of the Dream House. Young explains via e-mail that "each frequency has its own points of resonance and non-resonance in the room (points of loudness and softness). The lowest frequencies have long wavelengths and you need to take a walk to experience the differences in the loudness of that frequency. The highest frequencies have such short wavelengths that simply by moving the head a 'millinothing,' the difference in loudness can be observed."

Young studied music at Los Angeles City College – and later at Berkeley – beginning in the 1950s. He is now 68. By his own accounts, his earliest forays into composition were traditional 12-tone classical pieces that betrayed few hints of his future penchant for extended tones. He was also active in the L.A. jazz scene (his original instrument was alto

saxophone), playing with avant-jazz greats like Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman, and Don Cherry. It was only with an obscure and original trio of pieces – “for Brass” (1957), “for Guitar” (1958), and “Trio for Strings” (1958) – that the first hints of a developing minimalist aesthetic began to appear in his compositions. These pieces, seldom performed since then, contained Young’s first use of long static tones, virtually abandoning traditional melody.

In the years that followed, Young worked both on his own and with a loose group of likeminded musicians who he assembled in 1962 and dubbed the Theatre of Eternal Music. The moniker is one that could very easily be applied to all of the composer’s work ever since; he has increasingly aimed to make music with no end whatsoever. The Theatre consisted of, at various times, Marian Zazeela, Terry Riley, Velvet Underground co-founder John Cale, Tony Conrad, wildman percussionist Angus MacLise, and Dennis Johnson, and the group focused mainly on one multi-part piece, “The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys.”

Even at this early point, the idea of eternal music was fairly well-developed; in a recent essay about this period on his Web site, Young writes, “Each performance is woven out of an eternal fabric of silence and sound where the first note emerges from a long silence and after the last sound the performance does not end but merely evanesces back into silence.” According to this theory, the music never truly ends, and the concept led the composer to christen these pieces “Dream Music.”

Michelle Nagai, one of MELA’s three permanent staff members, says “I think [the Dream House] is very unique. It’s less unique now because more and more people are kind of imitating this environment, but I think the concept of something that never ends, that gets started 12-plus years ago and then goes just on and on and on, is really inspiring.”

Indeed, Young’s music has greatly inspired subsequent generations of composers; he has been a catalyst for such diverse careers as his former student Tony Conrad, the improvisational trio AMM, the Fluxus art movement (which he helped to establish in 1961 by curating a performance art series at Yoko Ono’s loft), and the Velvet Underground’s earliest experiments (thanks to the presence of John Cale). The *New York Times* critic John Rockwell is one of many who have recognized Young’s far-reaching impact, writing in 1974, “his role as father-figure for the younger avant-garde is surpassed only by John Cage.” This lasting influence has its roots in Young’s music with the Theatre of Eternal Music, which also provided the initial genesis for the Dream House.

In a 1964 program note for a Theatre performance, Young imagined “Dream Houses [that] will allow music which, after a year, ten years, a hundred years of constant sound, would not only be a real living organism with a life and tradition of its own, but one with a capacity to propel itself by its own momentum.” This vision was fulfilled much later, when over a period of six years starting in 1979, Young and Zazeela organized their first large-scale Dream House installation at a six-story building on Harrison Street in TriBeCa, not too far from the current location.

In a similar way, most of Young’s major projects have been fulfilled slowly over a matter of years. His work of the past few decades has consisted of a relatively small number of compositions that he is constantly developing and rewriting. A prominent example of this technique is “The Well-Tuned Piano,” started in 1964. The hallmark of the piece is its unique tuning, called Just Intonation, which Young adapted from pre-20th Century European and Asian forms, and which rejects the equally spaced pitches of modern music.

This distinction is not just technical: “The Well-Tuned Piano” has an unearthly, ethereal sound that is completely foreign to anyone accustomed to today’s Western music. Each note in the piece – which lasts for hours – rings with clarity and weight, and Young alternates passages of calm introspection with long runs of tumbling keys that take on a rhythmic, locomotive drive.

The piece has changed and expanded a great deal since 1964. A version from 1981 – released on a four-album set in 1987 by Gramavision, Young’s record label at that time – lasts around four hours, while a later version from 1987 (recently documented on a limited edition DVD) lasts nearly six and a half hours, with completely new sections and expansions to the original movements. This continuous development has also characterized one of Young’s other famous compositions, “Young’s Dorian Blues in G.”

Started in the early 1960s, this piece uses simple chord progressions derived from the blues tradition, but slowed down, with the musicians spending long periods of time on each chord before changing to the next one. Young first performed this music with a post-college quartet including Terry Jennings, Dennis Johnson, and Mike Lara, and more recently he recorded a 1993 live performance with his Forever Bad Blues Band – a temporary combo assembled for a few live appearances in the early 1990s – captured on a Gramavision double CD.

Like “The Well-Tuned Piano,” this dynamic music could not seem more different on its surface from the ultra-minimal Dream House music, but all three pieces are inextricably linked. There’s a spiritual, meditative aspect to the composer’s whole oeuvre that unifies his diverse ideas and draws many people to him. Ten of his followers volunteer at the Dream House, admitting visitors and keeping the incense lit at the shrine to Young’s deceased spiritual and musical guru, the Indian raga singer Pandit Pran Nath.

The intimate connection of Young's spirituality to his music is indicative in a larger sense of how the Dream House breaks down barriers between different media. The music half of the experience is interwoven with the visual component, designed by Zazeela. The environment throughout the House is created by her artistic lighting and the pink screens she uses to cover all the windows, changing even the light from outside. The three windows in the main room look out on the triangular patch of concrete that's bounded by Church Street, Sixth Avenue, and White Street. Out on this pink version of Sixth Avenue, the taillights on the cars stopped in traffic glow a bright demonic red and the taxis look oddly neon, while the clouds above are pink and fluffy, like the cover of La Monte Young's album "The Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Steardown Transformer."

For Zazeela, it is important that she is not merely reacting to the music when creating her light treatments. "My intention is to create an atmosphere conducive to the experiencing of both sound and light works over a long period of time," she said. "The light sculptures are not created as a response to the music, but emanate from a creative impulse in a different medium."

The combination of Zazeela's art with Young's music creates an environment totally distinct from the individual effects of sound and visuals. Mark Richardson, a music critic for *Sound Collector Audio Review* and *Pitchfork* who has written about the Dream House, describes this combination as a primary source of Young and Zazeela's appeal. He was drawn to the Dream House because of an interest in "totally immersive installation art, where the environment is the piece," he says. "Really it was just the idea of putting yourself in a place where all the sensory information is unusual and outside your normal frame of reference."

In the main room is Zazeela's four-piece mobile sculpture "Imagic Light" (1993), a pair of twisted calligraphic swirls dangling from the ceiling near the walls on each side of the room, while in the middle of the space one red light and one blue light shines on each pair, casting ghostly shadows on the walls. Another memorable piece is "Ruine Window 1992," which is tucked away in the smaller of the Dream House's two rooms. Mounted on the wall, with a floor pillow a few feet away, is a rectangular construction of painted wooden boards, with a red light shining on it from the left and a blue light from the right. The effect is an austere assembly of right-angled shadows in alternating colors, disrupting perceptions of depth and creating beautiful illusions from every viewpoint.

Zazeela's description of this particular piece provides an interesting commentary on how closely her work parallels that of her husband. "The relationship of light and shadow changes with the viewer's position in the room," she says, echoing the effect of Young's Dream House composition. Inside the Dream House, sound and light stand on equal footing, subtly seducing the senses to mold an experience unlike any other.

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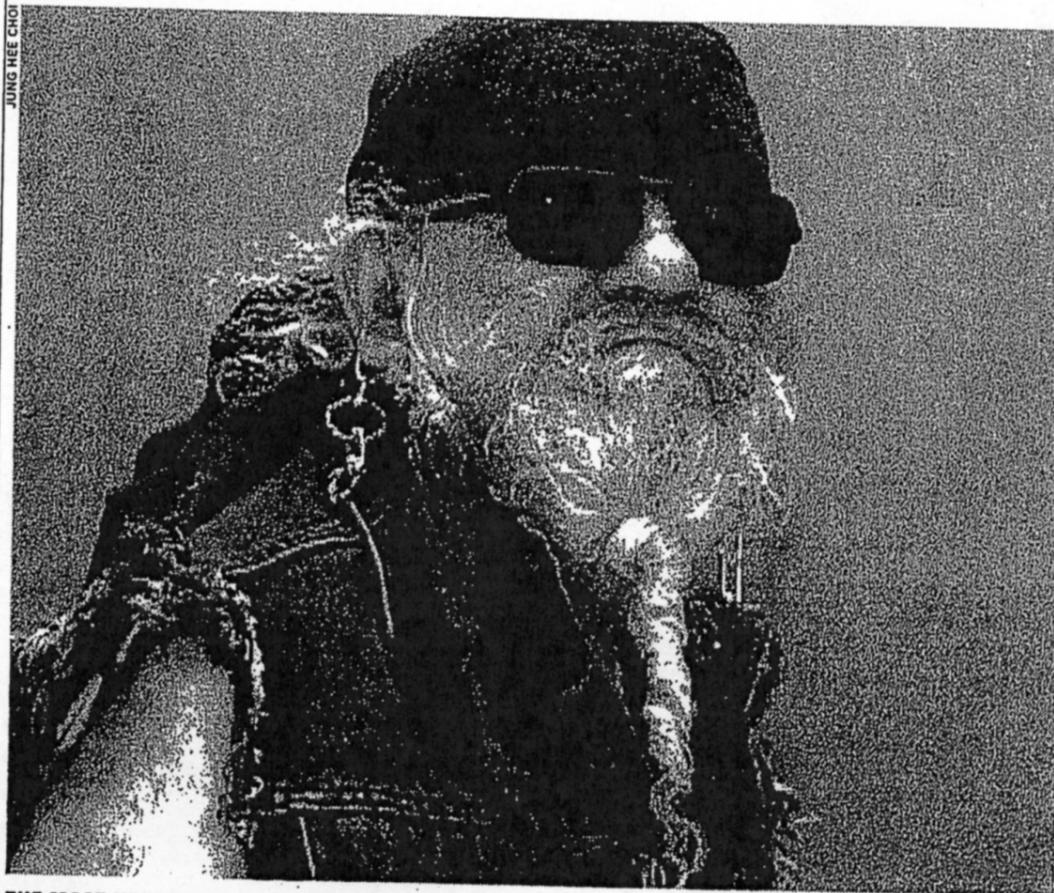
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MUSIC

La Monte Young's 'The Well-Tuned Piano' Hits DVD

## PINNED DOWN BY THE PIANO

BY KYLE GANN



THE MOST IMPORTANT PIANO WORK OF THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

La Monte Young's *The Well-Tuned Piano* is available again, and about damn time. Not on compact disc, though—the Gramavision recording of a 1981 performance that was released in 1987 has been out of print for years. But Young, or rather the MELA Foundation, has now put out a DVD of the last performance he gave in the 1987 New York run of the work (which is actually his most recent). On one continuous DVD we get to hear—and watch—Young play the longest version of the improvisatory work that he's ever done, clocking in at six hours and 25 minutes. In the first half-hour you think, I can't watch this guy plink a few piano notes for six hours. Two hours later, you're mesmerized. You've been buttonholed by the Ancient Mariner of tuning, and you ain't going to make it to that wedding, buddy.

For those who've somehow missed out on the most important piano work of the late 20th century—which wouldn't be difficult, given how hard it is to locate—*The Well-Tuned Piano* is a mammoth, continuous work for a piano tuned to a very peculiar tuning, with some adjacent steps as close together as 27 cents (a cent being one 1/100th of a half-step) and others as far apart as 204. I say the work is improvisatory, but it is based around a series of some 50-odd themes, cadences, and chords in four or five major harmonic areas. This means that although any two performances will be very different, you hear the same themes coming back from one performance to another like old friends. And if you're lucky enough to have the CD and the DVD, the comparison is tremendously revealing.

First of all, Young spends far more time on the "Opening Chord" (every entity in the *WTP* has a name) than he did in 1981. More than a half-hour passes on just those four pitches, and you're not going to hear the beginnings of a change until 41:37 by the counter (as opposed to 9:38 on the CD). By 1987 Young had developed some new themes that aren't on the earlier recording. The most striking of these comes in the final 13 minutes of the performance "The Theme of Orpheus and Eurydice": It descends in parallel intervals, sometimes even in dissonant sevenths,

through tiny, sliding pitch increments, letting the notes overlap for some deliciously complex sonorities. There are also some themes missing, though. In 1981 the harmonic area called "The Romantic Chord" was brand-new, and Young played around with it for an hour; on the DVD we get less than half an hour of it.

The DVD's main advantage over the CD is, of course, that it's continuous: no changing discs. In general I think I'd rather listen without the distraction of watching Young in his silk robe, but it is a fascinating historical document. There is something hypnotic about his flat-fingered keyboard drumming, his occasional elegant hand rebound from a good riff, the casual way he'll remove his hands from the piano altogether and just listen to a chord ring. Sometimes the camera creeps upward to focus on Marian Zazeela's magenta light installation, an interesting example of ambient television. European art spaces have been running the DVD as a huge-screen installation.

Still, I feel a little about the DVD the way I do about watching Wagner operas on video—my imagination could have done more with the disembodied sound than the camera could possibly capture. The dynamic range is wider on the DVD and the beginning quieter, without the immediate presence that makes the CD's first notes so arresting. The greatest pleasure is being familiar with the earlier performance and hearing the piece's proportions change so drastically, with some themes developed to far greater length and others merely alluded to. No true La Monte Young fan will accept either the CD or DVD as a substitute for the other, though some may balk at the stiff \$147 price tag for the latter, justified perhaps by the hefty amount of music and video. After all, *The Well-Tuned Piano* is a continent of a piano piece, and if you can't get your hands on the CD (which was selling on eBay for upward of \$200 last time I looked), this is the only way you're going to thoroughly explore it. ▣

*The DVD of The Well-Tuned Piano is available from the MELA Foundation, [www.melafoundation.org](http://www.melafoundation.org), or starting September 22 at the MELA store.*

# Dream Analysis

By Sandy McCroskey

Three decades after its composition, La Monte Young's *The Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer* remains as radical a statement and as uniquely revelatory an experience as ever. The Gramavision CD,<sup>1</sup> available (more or less) since 1991, features an eight-trumpet version performed by the Theater of Eternal Music Brass Ensemble, led by Ben Neill. Extracted from 1962's *The Four Dreams of China*, which the "father of minimalism" regards as the first composition wholly in his characteristic style, the piece embodies the essence of Young's archetypal singularity.

*The Second Dream* is woven entirely of four pitches (F, B<sup>b</sup>, B, C); in this rendition, it lasts for seventy-six minutes and six seconds—and there's never a dull moment. Long, steady tones and protracted silences gradually efface the clock, to open up an airier, unfenced domain. Facets of sound become apparent that are usually only peripheral to conscious perception. The tones diffract (via Harmon mutes) to form a brilliant corona of partials that soon flares to dazzling intensity. In a dream, events of little apparent significance may be evocative of fathomless resonances. As *The Second Dream* develops, the four pitches virtually turn inside out to reveal astonishing depths of sonic phantasmagoria.

The score stipulates only that the instruments used be tunable, sustaining, and deployed in multiples of four, but I am reminded that it was on the trumpet that overtones were discovered, somewhat belatedly, by Western science (in the person of a pal of Descartes, monk and mathematician Marin Mersenne). The harmonies of *The Second Dream* hark back to Young's early attraction (from about the age of four) to the humming of telephone lines and power plants, when he first sensed the inherent musicality of the frequency ratios present there—reflective of the universal laws of periodic motion that apply throughout the physical sciences, from electronics to the prediction of tides. When electrical engineers use the term "harmonics," they mean exactly the same thing as musical acousticians: whole-number multiples of a fundamental frequency (of an alternating current or a sound wave). Crackling with energy, thrummed by the wind, the four central tones stride in parallel lines across the wide sonic plains. This is a song of the open road, sketched on a napkin as the composer crossed America, west to east,

the wheels singing beneath his feet. In this whirring, ringing jubilation might be heard the metal-working lathes Young used to sing along with in high school, radio signals, a jet taking off..., and eerie strands of ethereal melody.

The "China" of Young's "Dreams" is a previously undiscovered continent, virgin terrain where exotic sonorities blossom in a charged atmosphere of suspended time. He had surveyed the territory in the middle section of 1957's *for Brass*—from which the four chords that are the basis for the respective "Dreams" were derived—and spent a lengthy sojourn there in the zoned-out *Trio for Strings* of 1958, a twelve-tone study, like Anton Webern on some extraterrestrial hashish (but also analyzable in terms of the Dream Chords). The fifty-two-minute *Trio*, which takes about ten minutes to introduce the series and includes silences as long as thirty seconds, was something of a scandal at Berkeley (with classmate Terry Riley one of a decided minority who were spellbound) and wowed Karlheinz Stockhausen, Young's hero at the time.

At Stockhausen's 1959 Darmstadt seminar, Young met David Tudor, frequent co-conspirator with John Cage, and adopted the form of composition in which parameters are set for a work's improvised realization. Young achieved the prototype of his approach to applying this method to pitch material in the *Dreams of China* (and thereafter did not write anything through-composed until 1990's *Chronos Kristalla*, for the Kronos Quartet). Possibly the most earnest demonstrations ever of the Cageian premise that absolutely anything can be music, the conceptual/performance pieces of Young's early '60s Theater of the Singular Event set the stage for what might be called the Event of the Singular Tone. In certain compositions of this period that actually involved sound, Young stripped his aesthetic down to the bare requirement of incessant repetition (*Arabic Numeral [Any Integer] for HF*) or sustenance (*Composition 1960 #7*). *Plus c'est la même, plus la chose change*. Cage at this time found that Young gave him "utterly different experiences of listening than I've had with any other music...after, say, five minutes, I discover that what I have all along been thinking was the same thing is...full of variety...almost in the same sense that the change in experience of seeing is when you look through a microscope"

Stockhausen may have had his former star pupil in mind when, writing for "the younger generation" in 1968, he stated that "those who want to be musicians, following their higher voice, must start with the simplest meditative exercises: play a sound with the certainty that you have all the time and space you want." But as the *Dreams of China* made clear, Young was increasingly concerned not so much with overcoming constraints on inspiration (it seems he's never lacked that) as with dissolving the limits imposed by the heedless forward (into darkness) momentum of the dominant idioms (and, ultimately, the tuning) of Western music on the space in which tones were allowed to flower and propagate. When had sufficient cognizance ever been taken of all that there is to hear within one tone or one chord?

"What is worth striving for is to discover everything that lies within the natural tone," which, "theoretically speaking, has no boundaries," Arnold Schoenberg declared in his 1911 *Theory of Harmony*. Up to a certain point, musicians had been on the right track, as, following the dictates of the material, they imitated the overtones. But then they tempered the system, and the system tempered the burning desire to search. They had concluded a truce. But they did not rest (*rasten*) in order to rearm and regroup (*rüsten*); they rested in order to rust (*rosten*). The tempered system was... an ingenious simplification, but it was a makeshift. No one, having wings, would rather fly in an airplane.... We ought never to forget that the tempered system was only a truce, which should not last any longer than the imperfection of our instruments requires. We ought not to forget that we must still account for all the tones actually sounding, again and again, and shall have no rest from them nor from ourselves... as long as we have not solved the problems that are contained in tones.

Schoenberg foretold a time when the music of our culture will seem to lack depth, as painting before the discovery of perspective. (This sounds like Harry Partch, opposing abstract European harmony with the corporeality of just tuning!) Someday, composers would have to return to the task of "the precise accommodation of all overtones, the relation to roots, eventually the formation of a new system...the invention of instruments that can bring that music into being." For Schoenberg, alas, this remained a futuristic fantasy, and in response to the perceived depletion of the resources of tonal music that he apparently *understood* to be attributable to the insufficiencies of temperament, he went on to create the

apotheosis, in a sense, (or crucifixion) of equal temperament, twelve-tone serial music.

Young, who studied under former Schoenberg assistant Leonard Stein at L.A. City College in the mid-'50s, remembers reading the above passages of the *Theory* but not his reaction. His first exposure to harmonics in a physics of sound class in the same period doesn't seem to have started any bells ringing. But by early 1963 his work with sustained tones had primed him for Tony Conrad's bit of news:

*...that with the integers you could analyze all of the ratios that were in the harmonic series...suddenly I just took off....I really felt that it was the most incredible revelation I had had in music. It became the key to my understanding of the relationship between sound and feeling, and to my theories about universal structure, and our perception of universal structure, and our perception of time.<sup>1</sup>*

Just Intonation gave Young the means to map and mine the secret riches of the aural depths he had discovered in sustained tones. It also led him to the intuition that the profound human response to musical intervals is a sort of sympathetic vibration to the manifestation of primordial structural laws of the cosmos. The substance of music is vibration itself, directly apprehensible as such. In Young's view, music therefore offers nearly unmediated access to universal truths.

Music is all a matter of time, of cycles, of rhythm, down to the sensation of a single pitch: a subjective synthesis of discrete vibrations spaced in time according to a certain rate of repetition, or periodicity. Through the tonal form of Just Intonation, in which all the tones are derived as harmonics of a single fundamental, Young has been able to create a sense of profound continuity, of an enduring, eternal, and expanding moment. Other contemporary minimalists were to strive for a condition of "timelessness"—an "eternal now"—through the hypnotic repetition of short phrases; even where this is an aspect of Young's method, as in *The Well-Tuned Piano*, each tone participates in an enveloping drone that is the result of repetition on an "atomic" level.

The firmness of the framework within which intervals are perceived determines the subtlety of the relations that can be distinguished. Young has done more than anyone "to expand the range of our aural and mental 'bypass filter,'" as he rather psychedelically puts it, "to include more distant regions of the harmonic series and their correlated feelings." As the sensation of consonance is

dependent on the periodicity of the composite waveform of combined tones, every tone in the harmonic series could be considered a more or less distant consonance—in the precise sense of Schoenberg, who asserted that “there are no nonharmonic tones.” Radiating from an incandescently intensified tonality, Young’s complex intervals induce the mind to breathe ever more deeply as their patterns crystallize and ripple out through dilating dimensions of harmonic hyperspace.

At the time of *The Second Dream*’s composition, Young’s discovery of the underlying mathematical structure of the harmonic series was imminent. Not coincidentally, he had also embarked on his pioneering exploration of the visionary space that paradoxically opens up as perception zooms in on smaller and smaller intervals and increasingly complex relations.

The 1984 *Melodic Version* permits each player to play all four notes, within the score’s harmonic strictures, allowing for interchange of melodic lines and chords between groups of four (the right and left channels), as well as longer sustains and unisons. In the recorded performance, Young’s musicians create an overarching symmetrical structure. Beginning with the lowest pitch, F, joined after five minutes by the B<sup>b</sup> above (12:16) and about eight minutes later by the C (18), the extremely distended periods move inward to the “half-step,” which enters after twenty-five minutes or so. As the intervals become smaller, the complexity of the waveform increases, amplifying certain spectral effects that have eluded standard notation (acoustic beats, combination tones...), unfolding a wondrously intricate tapestry.

Before it is sustained for the first time (and intermittently afterward), the B dividing the 9:8 “whole-step” is sounded as a sudden, solitary tone—a stylistic feature Young calls a “pulse”—which dates from *for Brass* and which was inspired by the owls in the woods around Utah Lake and the whistles of a Los Angeles train yard. Keep an ear out for the appearance, flashing on the edge of the unknown, of a mysterious tonal entity (“Who?”) (it’s the 1:17, right on time).

Here the B equals the prime number 17. Young worked intensively with the ensemble to find empirically the interval that would divide 9:8 satisfyingly in this context, as readers of 1/1 may remember, a quest complicated by inharmonicities of the instrument and the possibility of several other options (including higher primes). The more absorbed the listener is in the texture of the

“Dream” up to this point, the less will this interval seem to come out of nowhere. It emerges naturally, logically, from the timbral contour. As C was heard in F long before it was explicitly played, the B (17) is heralded in the summation tone produced by C (9) and B<sup>b</sup> (8). Eventually, the trumpets move out again to smoother consonance, but “resolution” takes its own sweet time. An ecstatic plateau is attained, a constant state of vibrant tension that does not anxiously strain toward climax—somewhat as in tantric sex (*tantra* is cognate with “tension” and “tone”)—permitting an ever-deeper immersion in the experience.

*The Second Dream* offers an invaluable educational experience by presenting in such a lucid format a higher prime ratio than would ordinarily be readily available for study. Each prime-numbered harmonic is a unique musical essence; the average Western ear has some acquaintance with only the first two or three. Young would in the future venture ever farther into hitherto unknown reaches of the periodic table of musical elements.

The rules for improvisation that make up the score of *The Second Dream* define a work that can never really be said to end and that is also “taken from the top” after every silence, whether of seconds or of years (which is to say that each microsection of the recorded version would be considered a complete performance). This formulation of “eternal” performance—reminiscent, aptly, of the ritual “dream-time” of the Australian aborigines, and theoretically incorporating the silences when the work exists only in latency—was the seed of the idea of a work that would endure in actualization for weeks, months or years and thus laid the foundation for *The Dream House*, Young and Marian Zazeela’s continuous sound/light environments where, since 1969, has dwelt a genre of music new to the planet.

Soon after his initiation into just tuning, Young began his nonstop drone works, attaching a mike to the motor of his turtle’s aquarium and tuning his Theater of Eternal Music performing ensemble to its hum: the 60-cycles-per-second (or Hertz) pitch that emanates from all electrical devices in North America. (After all, we’re all in the same aquarium.) You’d have to go back to before the Renaissance to find any significant use of a drone-like device in Western classical music, whereas Indian music would not exist without the drone. The scales of the Indian improviser were drawn from listening far into the fundamental tone. Since 1970, at least half of Young’s time has been spent studying Indian classical music as a

disciple of the incomparable Pandit Pran Nath. Even in light of Indian (or any other!) music, however, Young's tones fly in the face of all the received notions, in that he sustains dense microtonal clusters.

In his drone music, Young continued to evolve the unique form of group improvisation in long tones introduced in the *Dreams of China*, which requires of his players the greatest degree of attentiveness and a very high order of musicianship. (As Young has remarked, he has never written anything easy to play.) From John Cale to Jon Hassell to Ben Neill, those who have filled the ranks of the various incarnations of the Theater of Eternal Music have found the gig akin to a spiritual initiation.

Ever fascinated by the division of the 9:8 interval, Young superimposed Dream Chords in selected permutations in 1980's *Twelve Subsequent Dreams of China* (for instruments in multiples of eight, though fate decreed that the first performance of any of the *Subsequent Dreams* in 1993 would join eight strings, five muted trumpets and five bass flutes); the concept has been further elaborated in *Orchestral Dreams* (1985) and *The Subsequent Dreams of the Four Dreams of China in Simultaneity* (1993). As far back as 1967 (*J V 67 6:38 PM NYC*) the 9:8 leitmotif, if you will, was extended to the key of the seventh harmonic (63:56, a ratio first found in *The Well-Tuned Piano*) in Young's electronic drone music, where he has over the years developed a method of composition around selecting certain of the partial tones framed by each of these 9:8s (in ascending ranges of the series) and transposing particular ones into upper and lower octaves to arrange "symmetries." This vision became fully practical only in 1984 (*The Big Dream*, followed in 1988 by *The Big Dream Symmetries*), with Young's acquisition of the Rayna Syn-1 sine-wave synthesizer, designed to produce high-numbered ratios accurate to within one beat a year.

Young's work has been informed by an attention to "the material," i.e., the tone, unsurpassed in the history of music. The tone, however, is as much a product of the mind as an objective referent in physical nature. The ideal overtone series exists as it were on a more rarefied, astral plane, a divine emanation that in nature is reflected and refracted with varying degrees of clarity, proportionate to the purity of the medium. Young's customized Rayna functions as a sort of aural electron microscope to make available overtones whose analogs in nature are far above the range of the ear's discrimination. A precision of intonation is achieved that is hardly possible through any

natural medium.

For an installation that ran for over a year, Young composed in January 1989 *The Symmetries in Prime Time from 144 to 112 with 119*—the title refers to his use of prime-numbered harmonics—with seventeen distinct frequencies plus octave doublings to total twenty-two tones, some as close as a "sixteenth-tone," centered around the prime interval 127 from both left and right speakers. In four astounding concerts in March of 1990, the twenty-three-piece Theater of Eternal Music Big Band performed a section of this work, *The Lower Map of the Eleven's Division in the Romantic Symmetry (over a 60-cycle base) in Prime Time...*, within the sound environment. If such a dense microtonal "constellation," in Young's term, initially seemed a sonic wall, it soon began to breathe and shimmer and mushroomed in a slow-mo "big bang" into a galactic nebula, where wheels within wheels of microscalar systems coalesced, as each section of the orchestra contributed its vibrational vortex to the undulating, pulsing field of forces.

More recent presentations of Young's drone music have probed the target harmonic space a further three octaves and included intervals just a little over three cents wide. In the current series, involving certain of the intervals represented by twin primes separated by one number (such as 31 and 29), Young has experimented with omission of the "range limits," the outer 9:7s.

Placing harmony in every respect before melody, Young's drone music is antipodal to the world we'd known. It asks of us a new way of listening, alluded to in the title of Young's unpublished treatise, "Vertical Hearing or Hearing in Present Tense." Young says the drone music is the form in which he feels "freest." The "drone state of mind" of which he writes is the liberation into wider spheres of harmonic orbit that is only made viable by the anchoring of an unshakable center of tonal gravity. La Monte Young is the premier composer of the space age in a very specific sense, evident in this statement of his aim (from the notes to *The Young Prime Time Twins in The Ranges 1152 to 896; 576 to 448; 288 to 224; 144 to 112; 72 to 56; 36 to 28; With The Range Limits 1152, 448, 288, 224, 56 and 28, 1991*): "to express other-world realities that preview the structures for a universe of composition that may have been intuited since the beginnings of time, but has never been heard before."

A new Dream House has been open in recent months  
(text continued on page 19)

(*Dream*, continued from page 15)

above Young and Zazeela's loft at 275 Chuch Street, NYC. There is arguably an aspect of minimalism, of the "brushstroke-free" school, to the drone installations in that the sound remains utterly the same (believe it or not) hour after hour as it is emitted from the speakers. The precise and various effects of the configuration of the room on the standing waves is unplanned, as aleatory as the whirls and eddies formed by any motion, any disturbance of the air. But the multifaceted form of the 35-frequency construction of the current installation is the principal reason it changes hallucinogenically with every minute shift in perspective and why the tones freeze in place as long as one is perfectly still while the slightest gesture will startle forth unnameable, wildly plumed melodies from the luxuriant harmonic foliage.

Marian Zazeela's light sculptures have invariably, teasingly refused to surrender their entire secret to photographic reproduction, so much do they depend on the retinal impact of activated photons in real time and so

much do they exploit, in ways analogous to Young's techniques, the creation of visual combination tones and an accumulation of after-images.

Zazeela has, as usual, lavished her artistry on the packaging of the *Second Dream* CD. Her trademark calligraphy, here accompanied by improvised glyphs that suggest an esoteric tradition, is loosely based on the Chinese writing she studied some years ago (the label was originally executed on rice paper). The cover photograph, shot by Zazeela, is a view through magenta mists toward the Himalayas: the youngest mountains on the planet, where monks disperse evil spirits with implacable blasts on trumpets of human bone and tantric choirs reverently evoke overtones... behind which lies China.

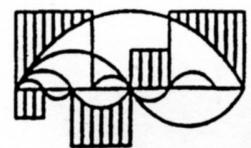
*Notes:*

1. Gramavision CD R279467 (available from the Just Intonation "Store")
2. Doty, David B. "The La Monte Young Interview" (part 1) 1/1 5:4 (Autumn 1989). 1/1

1/1

MAY 1994

Volume 8, Number 3



Metrobeat

MON. APR 22 classical &amp; new music

Mon  
April 22  
4:00pm

## Classical Diary

by David Farneth

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ARCHIVE

### La Monte Young - Marian Zazeela: Ultra Modernist Minimalists

As far back as ten years ago, the corner of Franklin and Church Streets at night could fill my stomach with pangs of urban alienation. This is where savvy taxi drivers began their zoom up nascent Sixth Avenue on an expressway fantasy to the heart of the Village, leaving insignificant, wind-blown pedestrians behind in the bowels of Tribeca, caught between the Trade towers to the south and the Empire jewel to the north. A darkened Farm & Garden Nursery created a black hole in the middle of the "Y" intersection, leaving all signs of life to the drunks staggering in and out of the Baby Doll Lounge and the Harmony Theatre Burlesque.

The stretch of Church Street between Canal and Franklin is lonely no longer--it's more of a city-style food court with Barocco, Arqua, Lupa, R-Bar, Laurita's Soul Cafe, and the Burrito Bar giving the Baby Doll and the Harmony a run for their money. Biblios, the trendy bookstore-reading cafe, is even attracting self-conscious cerebral types. But this kind of street theater is fundamentally commercial and transient; it can change as quickly as play titles on a Broadway marquee. The real traditions of a New York street are preserved by the jobs worked and the lives lived on the second floors and above.

Thirty-four years ago composer La Monte Young and visual artist Marian Zazeela pioneered the Tribeca loft movement when they moved into a work space at 275 Church Street between Franklin and White: tin ceiling, toilet in the corner, no central heat. Young, who thrives on the isolation he knew as a child growing up in rural Idaho and Utah, could play his electronically generated music at ear-splitting levels here all night long without bothering heaven or earth. Over the last three decades, musicians, composers, artists, poets, philosophers, mathematicians, computer scientists, art presenters, students, and spiritual leaders from the world over have passed through the loft's black door and trekked the steep staircase to play and hear music, to discuss art, or to calculate complex tuning systems.

There are only two months left this season when you, too, can pass through the black door and experience Young and Zazeela's sound and light environment, "Dream House: Seven Years of Sound and Light: 275 Church Street 3rd Floor." The installation is open to the public from 2 P.M. to midnight on Thursdays and Saturdays through June; the suggested donation is \$3.00. The site receives support from the Dia Center for the Arts.

The Dream House is a modernist construction, in that the artists have taken years to develop a controlled environment that aspires to the highest level of artistic expression. It also derives from a minimal aesthetic in that the sound component is comprised of continuous, unchanging sine-wave drones, and the light art component features slow and subtle changes of shape and color. Both sound and light seem simple on the surface, but they become devastatingly complex after careful analysis. The visitor must become engaged in the experience. The Dream House is not passive entertainment.

Young's sound scape uses 35 different sine tones tuned according to the composer's own system of just intonation. The 35 tones are spread over 10 octaves (the lowest tones rumble from huge, white speakers in each corner of the room), with 20 of the tones squeezed into a small portion of the 7th octave (some separated by only 1/14th of a half step) that create sound pulsations like you've never heard before. Each sine wave vibrates in different parts of the room, so that the chord you hear changes as you move through the space. (I like to sit on the floor in modified lotus position, tilting my head slowing back and forth, from side to side, to create my own melodies and sound textures.) The visitor with an acute ear can actually "play" the room like an instrument: explore the sound close to the wall, close to the floor, in the corners, or just standing still. Or lie on the floor and allow the sound to float you to heaven, slide you into hell, or transport you wherever you want to go. See if you agree with those who call Young's sound sculpture a precursor of ambient music.

Zazeela's light installation, "Imagic Light," offers an intriguing complement to the sound, even though it is equally effective when viewed in silence. Using pairs of colored lights and suspended aluminum mobiles cut in calligraphic shapes, Zazeela explores the relationship between object and shadow, making the tangible intangible, and vice versa. Enjoy the installation for its mesmerizing beauty, or try to analyze how the different colors are achieved, how the mobiles create the resulting shadows, or perceive the infinite number of

symmetrical patterns that can be created as the mobiles shift with the air patterns in the room.

Be sure to take time to savor the poetry in Young's 107-word title to the audio component and to read Kyle Gann's informative "Village Voice" review that gives hints on how to maximize the Dream House experience. Also, be sure to reserve some time for the three additional works by Zazeela that are on display.

The Dream House is a unique life experience that you will remember for years, and one that you will probably return to time and again. If you give it the concentration it deserves, you will discover new things about yourself and see the workaday world from a distant perspective. It's a great place to celebrate, reflect, create, rest, mourn, analyze, energize, focus, wander, and revitalize. From the rose-colored windows you can look out onto Manhattan's street theater anxious to take center stage again, this time all the wiser.

#### **Hints and random thoughts for your visit.**

Don't be put off by the informality of the entrance, and be patient (up to a couple of minutes) for the bell to be answered. Don't just plan to "stop by" 30 minutes before a dinner date or on the way to a concert at Roulette or the Knitting Factory. (Coming here after a concert, on the other hand, is a good idea.) A quick visit will not allow enough time for the environment to work its magic. You will be asked by one of the volunteers to remove your shoes before entering the environment. You have to be relaxed and uninhibited to explore the environment to its fullest. The creativity of the Dream House is infectious: don't be afraid to meditate, to let your mind run free. Return again to pick up where you left off.

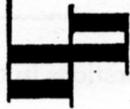
#### **More on Young and Zazeela**

La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela are currently developing a website. For now, surfers can get information, photos, biographies, and a few sound files from a temporary page at the [Dutch Radio](#) site.

Young's next live appearance in New York will be June 7 and 8, when he brings his Forever Bad Blues Band to the [Knitting Factory](#).

David Farneth

# Notes



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MARCH 1998 Volume 54, No. 3

NOTES, March 1998

Book Reviews

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**Sound and Light: La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela.** Edited by William Duckworth and Richard Fleming. (Bucknell Review.) Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1996. [231 p. ISBN 0-8387-5346-9. \$24.]

Over twenty years ago, John Rockwell, writing in the *New York Times* (2 May 1974), summarized, "[La Monte] Young's influence is unquestioned . . . his role as father-figure for the younger avant-garde is surpassed only by John Cage." Still, the editors of this first book-length collection of critical essays devoted to the individual and collaborative work of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela are compelled to examine the question "Who is La Monte Young?", and they are right to do so. Even though Young's influence is hailed by many, most of his music has never been heard—much less understood—by those who study or appreciate "new music."

Editors William Duckworth and Richard Fleming have published a reliable and compelling collection of essays written from highly diverse points of view—including historical, technical, aesthetic, musical, and personal—prefaced by their own insightful introduction. In an attempt to "explore the fundamentally recurring themes that influence and organize Young and Zazeela's ongoing engagement with sound and light" (p. 17), the book is more than a conventional collection of musicological and theoretical writings; it also includes contributions from composers, performers, and others. The resulting issue of the *Bucknell Review* will be of interest to generalists and specialists alike and an indispensable addition to any significant music-library collection.

John Schaefer, known to many as the host of the syndicated public radio show "New Sounds," provides a carefully prepared introduction to the composer's life and works. Schaefer investigates Young's musical influences and those he has influenced, the importance he places in perfect tuning, his place in the development of musical minimalism, the notoriety he gained from a set of controversial "conceptual" word pieces from the early 1960s, his formative work with the Theatre of Eternal Music, and his move from equal temperament to writing and performing works in just intonation.

Two other historical articles demonstrate the range of Young's musical expression. Mitchell Clark makes a convincing connection between Young's musical aesthetic and the work of Tang-dynasty poet Bai Juyi, drawing upon the aeolian (wind-activated) production of sounds and the imagery of the butterfly. Coming from the opposite end of the world and time line, Robert Palmer correlates the tuning and structure used in Young's music for his Forever Bad Blues Band with elements of the blues tradition that featured modal scales superimposed over a one-chord drone.

The most idiosyncratic, often enlightening, and, at times, frustrating contributions come from Henry Flynt, whose achievements include the making of concept art. The editors understood that much of the meaning in Flynt's writing is communicated by his style, and clearly they deferred to his wishes. "La Monte in New York, 1960-62" is part memoir, part observation, and part analysis of the aesthetic and social movements that converged in New York at that time, placing into context Young's neo-Dada experiments recounted in his "Lecture 1960" and the series of concerts in which Young presented the works of new composers at Yoko Ono's loft in 1961, the programs for which proclaimed "the purpose of this series is not entertainment." Flynt appends to the article a very useful "sample correlative chronology" and a bibliography.

Flynt also wrote one of two articles devoted to Marian Zazeela's light art. In "The Lightworks of Marian Zazeela," he attempts to describe the various sensory effects experienced by observers of a Young-Zazeela sound-and-light environment and the confusion of reality created by Zazeela's shadow pieces. Flynt concludes that "there is no vocabulary for thematically modulated emotion; for 'states of consciousness'; for the everyday recognition of linguistic meanings" (p. 113). Catherine Christer Hennix draws correlations between language and the ever-changing calligraphic forms expressed by Zazeela's illuminated mobiles.

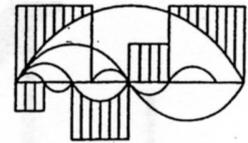
A personal-musical viewpoint is contributed by Terry Riley, a friend and colleague of Young and Zazeela for over thirty-five years—and an acquaintance dating back even further to when he and Young were fellow graduate students at Berkeley in the

late 1950s. Riley describes, in an article originally written in 1967, Young's groundbreaking work in long durations and tuning ("suspensions of intervals that carry us along static planes where our gravity-bound and worldly ideals of Western culture do not normally allow us to travel" [p. 21]). In a second essay—a personal reminiscence written for this book—Riley explores Young's and Zazeela's guru-disciple relationship with their mentor in North Indian vocal music, Pandit Pran Nath. Composer and trumpeter Ben Neill extends Riley's comments by relating the feelings that performers have in playing Young's work to the writings of the psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna.

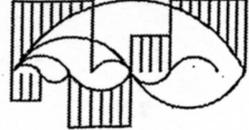
Kyle Gann demystifies Young's sound universe with an extended analysis of the various tuning systems Young used from his early notated works (such as *Trio for Strings*), through the improvisational works with the Theatre of Eternal Music and specific works such as *The Four Dreams of China*, *The Well-Tuned Piano* (1964-present), and *Chronos Kristalla* (1990). For the first time, Gann publishes the tuning for Young's sine-wave installations from a two-tone work in 1967 through the complex thirty-five-tone cluster of *The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry in Prime Time* (1991). Often he presents his pitch analyses using both the ratio system of representing justly tuned intervals as well as the precise, more conventionally notated system developed by Ben Johnston. Gann presents here the most comprehensive analysis of Young's tuning systems published to date and in the process makes the connection between theoretical understanding and affective reactions to the music.

This book allows the artists themselves the last word, including at the end program notes written by Young and Zazeela and a poem, "words not words," by Zazeela. As a collection, its special mixture of authors and points of view is its strongest asset, and one completely consistent with aesthetics and reception of these two unconventional artists. In a way, the book conveys a message not unlike one expressed by Young in his "Lecture 1960": "Once I tried lots of mustard on a raw turnip. I liked it better than any Beethoven I had ever heard."

DAVID FARNETH  
Kurt Weill Foundation for Music



## REVIEWS



***Sound and Light: La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela*** (Bucknell Review, Volume XL, no. 1) ed. William Duckworth and Richard Fleming. Associated University Presses, Inc., Cranbury, NJ 08512 ISBN 0-8387-5346-9, 1996

In a field where lack of easily accessible information about major figures is the norm, La Monte Young's case is even more severe. Unless one lives in the New York metropolitan area, regular access to his work or information about it is almost nonexistent. My case may be atypical: on my rare visits to New York, I've managed to see two of the "Dream House" installations (in 1990 and 1994) and I also own the five-CD set of the *The Well-Tuned Piano*, as well as a cassette dub of the long out-of-print Shandar L.P. I also have a copy of "An Anthology," the pre-Fluxus collection of scores he edited with Jackson MacLow, and, of course, his articles published many years ago in 1/1. Unfortunately, this small pile of artifacts actually comprises a good percentage of the publicly available information on his work. Not before time, then, is this issue of Bucknell Review (published as a hardback book), a collection of articles on the work of Young and his visual artist partner, Marian Zazeela, edited by William Duckworth and Richard Fleming.

The book, which I will immediately say is essential for anyone even vaguely interested in Young and Zazeela's work, consists of two parts: writings by others on their work and writings by Young and Zazeela on their own work. Of the writings by others, those of most immediate interest to 1/1 readers will be Kyle Gann's article on the evolution of Young's sound installations. Tunings for many of the installations, as well as for *The Well-Tuned Piano*, are given here, and Young's use of prime numbers in tuning is discussed. This will obviously stimulate many others interested in tuning to further explorations and to comparison of their own practice with Young's. Of Young's own articles, that on "The Romantic Symmetry" again gives tuning details for one of the installations, and, like Gann's article, will undoubt-

edly stimulate many others to explorations in this part of the harmonic series.

Young and Zazeela's interests are far wider than just tunings, however, and this book does a good job covering many of the areas of their interests. Henry Flynt's articles, one on Young's activities in New York from 1960-62 (the "pre-Fluxus" period) and one on Zazeela's lightworks, are both admirable in their care and concision. At first, Flynt's almost pedantic tone was a bit off-putting for me, but then I realized that both of these topics have been so romanticized and mythologized by art historians that his careful writing, by someone who was a participant in the events, was actually very necessary. Other writings by participants—articles by fellow performers Terry Riley and Ben Neill and mathematician Catherine Christer Hennix—are friendly and informative. Robert Palmer's article on the Forever Bad Blues Band makes me want to search for the CDs of the band and hear them again, and Mitchell Clark's article, which encompasses butterflies, Chinese poetry and philosophy, pieces by Young and Cage, and the Chinese *qin*, is an intellectual tour-de-force. Young and Zazeela's articles are more than simply interesting primary source material—they are well-written expositions of the ideas in their work. My only two very minor complaints with the book are that first, I wanted a lot more Young and Zazeela material at the end, and that secondly, John Schaeffer's overview article, "Who is La Monte Young?", was frequently marred by historically inaccurate hype. For example, his statement that in looking at Just Intonation at the start of the 60s, Young "was exploring terra incognita" ignores the many other workers in the field, some of whom Young knew and corresponded with—see his correspondence with Harry Partch in *Enclosure 3* (Innova, 1997) as an example of this. In a book distinguished by the careful writing of Hennix, Flynt, and Gann, this sort of hype seems strangely out of place. However, even Schaeffer's article has much valuable information about Young's work, so (as a fellow new-music-on-radio promoter), I shouldn't be too hard on him if he makes an occasional lapse into radioesque simplification.

In short, this is a fine book. If you're at all interested in Young and Zazeela and their work, you need this book. 1/1

—Warren Burt

# WIRE

ISSUE 168 • FEBRUARY 98 • £2.50 / US \$5.50

## Sound And Light: La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela

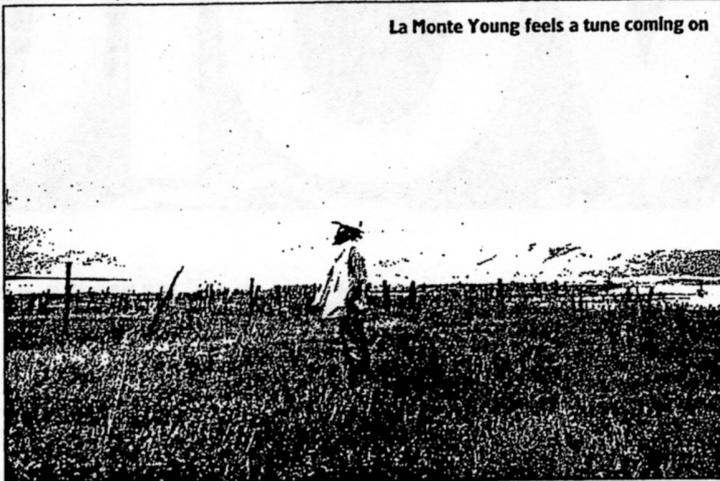
Edited by William Duckworth & Richard Fleming

BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS \$24 HBK

La Monte Young is the "father of Minimalism". Furthermore, according to Brian Eno, he's "the granddaddy of us all". By "us" he implies not just the obvious Minimalists, but also the likes of The Velvet Underground, Glenn Branca, Sonic Youth and any number of Ambient, jazz, rock and New Age musicians. La Monte himself has worked on the edge of all these fields, and also as a conceptual artist in association with his partner Marian Zazeela. (Does the partnership make her the "mother of Minimalism"? Strange how big concepts seem to come from mostly male, single parent families.) His diverse influences reflect simple essentials — saturation and duration — achieved through tuning systems of just intonation that turn out to be very complicated indeed.

An enduring flavour of the 60s lingers with Young — hippydom, gurus, The Velvets and Transcendental Meditation — and he and Zazeela continue to live a 28 hour day. But his purposes have always been very serious, as Henry Flynt explains in his contribution to this intriguing collection of essays. This first book on Young also covers the "lightworks" of Zazeela. Flynt was an early collaborator, and writes about their exploits from 1960-62. Dadaism served as a distraction, he argues. In the famous "Piano Piece For David Tudor #1" (1960), the performer is instructed to "bring a bale of hay and a bucket of water onto the stage for the piano to eat and drink. The performer may then feed the piano or leave it to eat by itself. The piece is over after the piano has been fed, or after the piano eats or decides not to". But Young was unjustly "PoMowed", Flynt implies; much of his work was simply "standard art music, avant garde vintage". Flynt may not like PoMo, but he can certainly be po-faced. In explaining his own "concept art" he describes a concert held in his own head: "I documented the concert by writing a report of my mental session (destroyed in 1962 when I renounced art)."

If Dadaism was a sideline, Minimalism was La Monte's great invention. His formative influences were the whistling of the wind through the cracks in the Idaho log cabin where he was born, and the hum of high-tension line stepdown transformers heard by standing near telephone poles. As a musical movement, Minimalism is premised on the response to small changes in slowly varying sounds. A Minimalist work, Flynt writes, "saturates the field with uniformity or monotony. The audience has



La Monte Young feels a tune coming on

to supply the psychological modulations". The aim was "the production of an altered state through narrowed attention and perceptual fatigue or saturation". But this isn't quite right — because there are changes that the audience gradually recognises. As Cage put it in an interview: "After, say, five minutes, I discover that what I have all along been thinking was the same thing is not the same thing after all, but full of variety."

If Reich, Riley and Glass repeat their material, Young sustains his in long-distance performances. But the more manageable 77 minutes of the Gramavision recording — in its "melodic version" for eight trumpets — of *The Second Dream Of The High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer From The Four Dreams Of China* bears out Cage's statement. Change is also perceived through the installations that Young created with Marian Zazeela, where a continuous tone will alter within the listener's perspective as they walk through the soundfield. *Village Voice* critic Kyle Gann, in "The Outer Edge Of Consonance", is eloquent about the "shimmering, melodious effect": "It is as though Young has composed the eternal harmonious scale and each listener composes his or her own private chant simply by moving around." In fact, Young uses many different tuning systems other than just intonation — but most readers will skip over Gann's mathematical analysis of them.

Just intonation is the key to Young's work (pun unintended). The term refers to the variety of unequal tuning systems that accord with natural acoustics — the natural harmonic series. The artificial system of equal temperament, crucial to Western music since the time of Bach, allows modulation between keys by dividing the octave into 12 equal semitones. Just intonation, in contrast, uses unequal intervals. It was Tony Conrad in the early 60s who first put Young onto simpler

ways of manipulating the harmonic series. (The tapes of their subsequent work with John Cale have never been released owing to a legal dispute between them.)

Young delights in theorising about just intonation. It is needed "to access a music-induced psychological state, or 'drone-state-of-mind'. ... one must have the capacity for returning to the precisely same interval or harmony," Gann writes. He makes interesting contrasts with Cage. For Cage, "individual musical works are metaphorically excerpts from the cacophonous roar of all sounds heard or imagined". In contrast, Young "attempts to make audible the opposite pole: the basic tone from which all sounds emanate as overtones". But I reckon he's wrong to say Young stands for "being" and Cage for "becoming". It's relative; neither has much time for Beethoven, that master of becoming. Henry Flynt reports Young as saying: "Once I tried lots of mustard on a raw turnip. I liked it better than any Beethoven I had ever heard." (He was pretty rude about Cage, too.)

Flynt describes Young's surprising affiliations with jazz — he was a devotee of Coltrane's "sheets of sound", and he's been a jazz pianist, saxophonist and composer. Elsewhere, Terry Riley contributes reminiscences, and the late Robert Palmer writes about La Monte's Forever Bad Blues Band, described by David Toop in *The Wire* 120 as a "turbulent soundgrinder of a quartet" whose 1993 *Just Stonykin* CD sounded like "John Coltrane's *Om* as played by microtonally obsessed white people".

Young's works remain unpublished and mostly un-notated — he and his close collaborators are its only performers — and his recordings are mostly unavailable. So *Sound And Light* is an important document about a strange and compelling, yet hardly documented figure in modern music

ANDY HAMILTON

PHOTO MARIAN ZAZEELA • LA MONTE YOUNG & MARIAN ZAZEELA 1987

# the village VOICE

## THE BEST OF NEW YORK

### MUSIC

#### best place to bliss out on a carpet

Of course you could repose in the splendor of your own home, but you ain't gonna come anywhere near nirvana unless you have four wall-sized speakers blasting full-volume sine tones at you. Now going on its eighth year in Tribeca, **LA MONTE YOUNG AND MARIAN ZAZEELA'S DREAM HOUSE** is the place to be for the spiritually wayward and weary. After discarding your shoes, you're free to roam around to explore the neon ceiling signs and magenta-lighted mobiles. You "play" the space, with every movement of your body slightly transforming the sounds you hear. Once you situate yourself, sprawl out in the lush, pillow-strewn, upholstered atmosphere for a half-day. I dare you to find a chill-out room at any club to match this sound environment from the daddy of minimalism and his wife. 275 Church Street, 925-8270, open September 22-June 22 each year, Thursdays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. to midnight JG

# Weekend

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2003

## REVERBERATIONS

John Rockwell

# Rock With Dazzling Light Designs: Shades of the 60's

Bulletin from the front: the 60's never died! But to judge from SonicVision, the 38-minute sound-and-light extravaganza on view every Friday and Saturday night in the planetarium (excuse me: the Rose Center for Earth and Space) at the American Museum of Natural History, it may have faded away just a bit.

The eager crowd of parents and children, young adults and the aging curious who flocked through the center, on a recent Friday evening looked to be a long way from the scraggly hippies who used to crowd into the Fillmore and the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco nearly 40 years ago. (I was one, once, too, or at least my parents thought I was.)

Back then, we had psychedelic light shows. Now we have MTV computer-generated digital weirdness to accompany a collage of rock songs stitched together by Moby, the art D.J. Then and now have their points of contact, but are very different, too — quite apart from the fact that modern technology, or at least what's on view at the museum, hasn't yet quite mastered the problem of front-projecting anything on the inner dome of the planetarium that doesn't look a little washed out, or faded away.

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nation as much as they enliven it, telling their own stories and thus limiting the listener's freedom to imagine his or her own stories. Both SonicVision and the light shows of the 60's avoided that problem by keeping their imagery largely abstract. And it must be said that the rather predictable smeared watery wiggles of the hippie imagination, combined with projection technology back then, can't match the computerized wonders we have today, washed-out projection aside. (SonicVision's imagery would look awesome on a huge television monitor or a wrap-around film screen.)

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more thrilling. The composer La Monte Young's Dream House, which is open Thursdays and Saturdays at 275 Church Street in TriBeCa, is a humbly presented experience, even if it is supported by the Dia Foundation. And Marian Zazeela's ultra-abstract visuals — crescent-shaped mobiles casting colored shadows on the walls, plus a wall sculpture and a neon work — modestly support the music rather than dominating it.

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But the real difference is authenticity. Moby and his cohorts look and sound like nostalgists, creating a clean, uptown version of an experience that was once optimistic and loving but also scruffy and down and dirty. Mr. Young, called "the granddaddy of us all" by no less than Brian Eno, is an original hippie, actually a pre- or proto-hippie.

His music doesn't cut off at 38 minutes to make room for the next crowd; it's "eternal," meaning it's steady-state and open to however long you wish to give to it. At 68, he still sports biker gear and clings to his jazz and blues roots, along with all the other influences — 12-tone music, chance procedures, happenings, Indian singing — that have flowed through him.

So if you want a real post-psychedelic experience, try Mr. Young's potent dreams. He may be slightly mad, like not a few 60's icons. But he is a great composer and a great man.

**THE BEST RECORDS**

SEARCH archives: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z seek comp

# RESONANT FREQUENCY

by Mark Richard-San  
All at Once Forever

God bless Thomas Edison. Not only did he give us the technology to hear music recordings in the privacy of our homes, he invented light bulbs so we could read the informative liner notes packaged with the recordings. What a guy. But while Edison's invention complements the shut-in side of my personality, certain kinds of music require an environment more specialized than your average living room, and a playback system with more power than your average stereo. This music calls for what's known in the art world as an "installation."

Installations are all about control and immersion. Sound artists like Phil Niblock and Maryanne Amacher typically don't bother issuing their music on CD, where some cheap bastard might sully the goods by sticking it in a \$25 boombox. A controlled environment, where sound is delivered to the listener according to strict parameters delineated by the designer, is the best way to experience these demanding works of abstract music. The technology and is obvious, but there's also the setting to consider. Our homes are just too chaotic and unpredictable to lose yourself in completely. Phones ring, neighbors pound on the door and scream, police respond to noise complaints. And even when none of these things happen, the possibility is always looming in the back of the mind, serving as a barrier to complete absorption. As I'm always eager for the new music experience, I promised myself

<http://www.pitchforkmedia.com/columns/resonant-frequency/01-29-02.shtml>

## TODAY'S REVIEWS

>>>Fri/February 22nd, 2002  
 :: Boards of Can  
 :: Greg  
 :: Art Ensemble of Chic  
 :: Jackson in Your H  
 :: James Hurst  
 :: Straight from the Fr  
 :: The Witch Hazel Sa  
 :: The World, Then the Fren

## DIPITICH

**DAILY NEWS**



>>>Fri/February 22nd, 2002  
 :: Emin to release new album  
 :: Jay Farrar scores new indie R  
 :: 300k previews new video on  
 :: Bill Daut back with Sleeping I

2/24/02

that I would take in a sound installation whenever the opportunity was offered. Unfortunately, in Guilford County, North Carolina, where I lived in 2000, the opportunities were few. But that winter we were going to New York.

I don't remember where I first heard about La Monte Young's Dream House. It could have been the DroneOn list, or maybe in *The Wire*, or perhaps in an interview somewhere with the man himself. But when Julie and I planned our trip to Manhattan that February, the Dream House was our itinerary's immovable object. I had to go. Not only was it a rare chance to actually hear some of Young's music (his few records are among the most rare and collectible in the world), and this was before the *Days of Niagara* bootleg was released, I could also lose myself in a sound installation.

We got a hotel room deep in the financial district, where weekend rates drop as business travelers return to their families. Visits to the Dream House are by appointment only, as I discovered by visiting the website of the MELA Foundation, the Young-founded non-profit organization that oversees the operation of the Dream House. When we had some free time on a Saturday, we spoke to a woman at MELA who told us to come by around 2:00 in the afternoon. Tribeca, where Young's loft was located, wasn't far, so we walked.

When we made it up to 275 Church Street, a young woman buzzed us in and led us up some stairs. The suggested donation was \$4.00. We could already hear a deep rumble pouring through the cracks of a heavy door across the hall from the donation bowl. We took off our shoes at her request, and walked through the door. Young's wife Marian Zazezela designed the visual environment. The space, which was about the size of two large living rooms, was bathed in a magenta light projected in various angles against some slow moving mobiles. A plastic film, also magenta, covered the windows along the far wall, giving the street scene below a surreal quality, like when a movie director changes film stock to signal to the audience a shift in time. Large pillows for sitting were spread around the floor. Throughout the room, in the corners and mounted on walls, were loudspeakers of various shapes and sizes. Some were the size of a refrigerator, while others were bookshelf studio monitors. And these loudspeakers were humming.

When people talk about minimalism, they usually refer to music of extreme repetition, where minute changes shoulder great emotional weight. Young's Dream House takes the idea a step further, with a constant drone that never objectively changes at all (more on the "objectively" part in a moment). All the sound inside the Dream House consists of sine waves, 35 separate tones tuned

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**RATING KEY**

1.0-1: Independent, classic  
 2.0-2.4: Spectacular  
 3.0-3.4: Excellent  
 3.5-3.8: Excellent; will likely rank among writer's top ten albums of the year  
 4.0-4.4: Very good  
 4.5-4.8: Above average; enjoy enough  
 5.0-5.4: Not brilliant, but nice enough  
 6.0-6.9: Has its moments, but strong  
 7.0-7.9: Mediocre; not good, but outweighs good by just a little  
 8.0-8.9: Definitely below average but a few redeeming qualities  
 9.0-9.9: Heard worse, but still pretty bad  
 1.0-1.9: Awful; not a single pleasant track  
 0.0-0.9: Breaks new ground to terrible

## OTHER RECENT REVIEWS

- Acid Mother Temple
- Aesop Rock
- Ryan Adams
- All Tomorrow's Parties v.1
- Anti-Pop Consortium
- Apex Twin
- At the Drive In
- Autumn (Luvjag)
- Avantchick
- Avantchick
- BigX
- Boards of Canada
- Boards of Canada
- Chemical Brothers
- Circulatory System
- Cornelius
- The Coup
- Death Cab for Cutie
- Dismemberment Plan
- DJ Shadow + Cat Chems
- Dmitri
- Elbow
- Explosions in the Sky
- Fresh Air Fellowship
- Fugazi
- Funk! 16 Corners
- Gandhi
- Gentleaz
- Hayden
- Hey Mercedes
- Hood
- I Am Sam w/ak
- Jackie O'Keefe/rickier
- Jay-Z

2/24/02

# Time Out

## New York

The obsessive guide to impulsive entertainment  
November 23-30, 2000 Issue No. 270 \$2.75

## Home is where the art is

Some people make installation art; La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela live in it

By Jason Gross

Next to an innocuous black door on a quiet Tribeca street, a small sign instructs you to ring the bell. A voice at the other end of the intercom bids you to enter. After ascending two long flights of stairs, you traverse a plushly carpeted, narrow hall with a neon ceiling sculpture before turning left into a room with large speakers in each corner. Complex and intricate humming sounds—a range of sine tone frequencies organized with prime-number intervals—shift with your slightest movement. Hot magenta and blue spotlights shine upon curved, symmetrical mobiles; the windows at the end of the room are covered with layers of colored gel, making the street below look like a Martian landscape. There are pillows on the floor, where you can lie down and bliss out for hours.

If this sounds like another world, that's the idea: This is not just a home for composer La Monte Young and light

a long-term sound-and-light installation, the (first) *Dream House*. Following shorter pieces in Europe and the U.S., the project opened in 1979 as a six-year environment created on Harrison Street, followed by a one-year installation on 22nd Street in 1989. Then, in 1993, they introduced *Dream House: Seven Years of Sound and Light* at its present location. The house is open each year from fall through early summer (the lights inside are too hot for Manhattan's midsummer heat). According to Zazeela, "The experience of the totality of the environment, the interaction between the sound and light, and the combined aesthetic result is a new art form." Originally scheduled to end this year, the interactive exhibit has been extended for another eight years.

Spectators and participants are not the only ones attracted to the *Dream House*—there are also volunteer monitors who watch the exhibit, many



TRIBECA LOFT, EIK, JUST RENOVATED La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela let you visit their digs.

artist Marian Zazeela, but a multifaceted art installation they call the *Dream House*, which has inspired and soothed visitors since it opened in 1993.

Reflecting on the installation's function, Young muses, "Through the process of a drone state of mind, people can experience a physical manifestation—a model—of an aspect of universal vibrational structure." For him, the house is really more of a multisensory composition. Known as one of minimalist music's fathers, the composer created his first major stir in 1958 with his *Trio for Strings*, an early stop on his lifelong journey of studying the essence of tones in time. He soon embarked upon epic, multidecade compositions, such as *The Well-Tuned Piano* and *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys*, working with groups varying from the Theatre of Eternal Music to brass ensembles and a blues band. Not only did his work have a profound influence upon composers such as Terry Riley and Steve Reich, it also inspired rock bands ranging from the Velvet Underground (whose John Cale performed under Young) to Sonic Youth.

Young and Zazeela moved into their loft on Church Street in 1963. Shortly thereafter, they came up with the idea of

of whom have done so for years, moved by Young and Zazeela's discipline and commitment. Monitor coordinator Michelle Dorviller says, "There's something about being in that space, that environment, which is special for people, giving them a meditative space here in the city."

Other than the sound-and-light environment, the *Dream House* is also the site for a concert series featuring protégés such as Jon Catler, Michael J. Schumacher and Charles Curtis. For those interested in extending their experience beyond the walls of the house, rare CDs and literature by Young, Zazeela and related artists are for sale. Although they are planning new and archival releases on their Just Dreams label, Young and Zazeela's works are not readily available elsewhere. The *Dream House* is an opportunity to learn more about these important artists and take an intimate glimpse into their world.

The *Dream House* is located at 275 Church St between Franklin and White Sts. Hours: Thursday and Saturday, 2pm-midnight through June 23. Suggested contribution is \$4.00. For more information or to volunteer, call 212-925-8270, or go to [www.lamontyoung.com](http://www.lamontyoung.com).

# Weekend

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Music

Harmonic Convergence

La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's Dream House: Seven+Eight Years of Sound and Light

by Nick Stillman



Sometime between 2 p.m. and midnight on a Thursday or Saturday, push buzzer #3 at 275 Church Street in Tribeca and wait. You'll be admitted, and the door will swing shut behind you. You are entering the *Dream House*, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's sound and light environment at the MELA Foundation. *Dream House: Seven+Eight Years of Sound and Light* will officially shut down for the summer on June 21, and reopen in the fall for its eleventh season. Practically speaking, this is easily the least expensive means of hearing Young's music. Few of his recordings are in print, and they're all super rare, making MELA's \$4 suggested donation feel like a bargain.

Young's early reputation was made as a performance artist. In the early 1960s, as a newcomer to New York, he fell in with Fluxus, the radical visual- and performance-art collective. His pieces from those years were Cageian affairs, like *Composition 1965 Dollars 50*, a "performance" in which he met Fluxus ringleader George Maciunas in the center of a stage to receive an envelope from him containing \$50, his pay for the concert. Musically, his breakthrough was in 1962: *The Four Dreams of China* and *The Second Dream of the High Tension Line Stepdown Transformer* are major points of separation between Young and the American minimalism that followed in his wake. While minimalists like Philip Glass and Steve Reich rely on repetition and phase patterns, Young's work since 1962 uses sustained, droning notes played on either acoustic instruments or frequency generators. His music is technical and precise, combining Greek mathematical theory and the teachings of the Indian singer Pandit Pran Nath, whose vocal work is based on precision tuning and intonation. While Western tuning systems use an eight-note octave, Young's system (derived from Nath's teaching) explores the harmonies that exist in every note, potentially revealing hidden, magical frequencies.

Maybe it's these magical frequencies that explain the suspiciously quaking ground a whole flight below the *Dream House's* entrance. An eerie industrial hum is the next clue of its presence, and if you slide your hand along the wall on the way up the steps, you'll feel it wobbling ever so slightly. Once up the stairs, lose the shoes and be welcomed to dreamland.

[ . . .more]

The moment of entrance is a dramatic one. *Dream House Variation I*, Zazeela's psychedelic neon sculpture mounted on the ceiling, vies for your attention with Young's tonal assault. Hang a left and you're in the centerpiece, a Dionysian ballroom exploding with the moodiness of Zazeela's enigmatic light installation and Young's blasting music. Not that the actual space is quite so dramatic; it's actually pretty modest. This is the larger of two rooms connected by a short hallway— each is lushly carpeted and almost totally empty, save a couple comfy pillows, a few refrigerators, and a shrine to Nath. The design concept seems to embrace an anti-design aesthetic. Unnecessary decoration would divert attention from this incredibly affecting music and art, both of which require a good deal of concentration to really enjoy. Initially, the sounds cranking from the speakers seem like full-on monotone drone, like some sort of psychological torture. Not surprisingly, then, it can make you feel anxious and edgy, strange for an installation called the *Dream House*. But this initial confrontation is the challenge Young presents. To dismiss it as pure monotone is to fundamentally misunderstand it. Not only does this music take time to really hear, it also requires a little motion on your part.

This piece, "The Base 9:7:4 Symmetry in Prime Time," (the full title is much, much longer) is essentially an environment of waveforms constructed by digitally generated sine waves on a Rayna synthesizer. All audible frequencies are tuned to the harmonic series between the numbers 288 and 224, but only use integers divisible by nine or the prime numbers or octave transpositions of smaller primes that fall in this range. This results in 32 different frequencies— 17 in the upper range, 14 in the lower, one in the middle. Young has arranged the frequencies symmetrically around the center harmonic, 254. So there's a whole lot more happening here than monotone drone. The more time you spend in the environment, the more the individual frequencies become distinct from each other. Every turn of the head, bend of the knees, and scrunch of the nose results in a new grouping of sounds. Generally speaking, slow head-motion reveals higher pitches, holding still brings out the lower pitches, and fast motions sound the cry of an apocalyptic alarm clock. After 20 minutes or so, the *Dream House* begins to dominate you if you let it. The gently rumbling floor massages you while the high pitches become chirping crickets and the pulsating lower frequencies energize your resting body. Which raises the point that the *Dream House* isn't especially geared toward the self-conscious. Sure, you can have an "interesting" experience walking around and moving your head back and forth to let all those frequencies do their magic. But to make it a transcendent occasion, it's necessary to incorporate yourself into the *Dream House*, breathe in the incense, and let it take you over. What this means for most people is to sprawl out on the carpet and chill out for a while. Part of the reward of close listening is the amazing malleability of Young's composition. You hear what you want to hear, and some savvy head-moving can even result in your own "song" of sorts.

Zazeela's pieces, especially the elegant *Dream House Variation I*, serve as an appropriate visual analogue to Young's intensely sculptural composition. In the same way that the music reveals its hidden existence through persistent attention, Zazeela's curlicued sculptures dangle from the ceiling like clouds overhead, spinning so slightly you almost can't detect the movement unless you look away and come back to it seconds later. Drenched in the soft florescent lighting, calligraphic shadows appear and disappear on the wall, more shadows than shapes, more shapes than shadows.

In some ways, the apotheosis, the Dionysian climax of the *Dream House*, is Zazeela's unassuming *Magenta Day, Magenta Night*. She has placed a filmy, magenta curtain over each of the two windows overlooking the intersection of Church Street and Sixth Avenue. Whereas one window is already covered by a dark curtain, negating the magenta, the other offers a view to the street, seen through the radiant filter. With Young's soundtrack swirling throughout the room and bouncing off the walls, the cabs whizzing through intersections and the yuppies teetering out of the bars feel like a senseless otherworld. The *Dream House* can inspire sincere self-reflection— of how people physically move, of how little time there is for stillness, of how we've become trained to seek and to reward movement and action. To embrace the *Dream House* is to become entranced and lost in time. And with no permanent closing date established for Young and Zazeela's collaborative installation, this could be the dream that never ends.

Nick Stillman writes about art and music and lives in New York.

**KIRANA CENTER FOR INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC**  
**275 Church Street, New York, NY 10013 212-925-8270**



*Khan Sahib La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela with Disciple Jung Hee Choi*

**Study with La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela**

In 1970, Pandit Pran Nath (1918-1996) established his first school, the Kirana Center for Indian Classical Music in New York City. Under the direction of his disciples, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, the Kirana Center continues to provide a unique opportunity for musicians and students of both Eastern and Western music to study singing and the art of *raga* according to the method of Pandit Pran Nath. Pandit Pran Nath was the foremost disciple of Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan Sahib, acknowledged master of the Kirana *gharana*, which descends from the legendary Gopal Nayak (c. 1300) of the Dhrupad Govarhari *gharana*, also known as the style of Krishna.

Vocal music training differs from instrumental training in that the singer's own body becomes his or her instrument. For this reason, all instruction takes place on an individual basis; each student is taught according to the structure of his own body and its capabilities. The nature of the teaching is entirely practical—the student learns by imitating phrases sung by the teacher. From the first lessons, the student sings with the accompaniment of the *tambura*. This ancient instrument, literally worshipped in our tradition, provides the harmonically rich drone tones which are the basis for intonation development. In this method, all elements of the work—voice production, breath control, ear training, pitch recognition, intonation, rhythm, and special vocal techniques such as ornaments (*gamaks*)—are woven together and taught concomitantly with the knowledge and differentiation of *raga*. When the student begins to learn compositions, Marian Zazeela provides *tabla* accompaniment. In addition to voice and *raga*, Marian Zazeela teaches *khayal* style *tabla*, which she learned directly from Pandit Pran Nath and his first *tabliya* in the U.S., K. Paramjyoti, specializing in the serene *vilampits* and *madhyalayas*.

For instrumentalists, one of the best ways to study *raga* is first to learn the intricate *sargam* patterns of the *alap* of each *raga* with the voice, and then to apply this knowledge to their instrument. After the student becomes familiar with the basic *alap* patterns, the lessons can continue on the instrument, if the student's instrumental technique is sufficiently advanced.

The teaching is open to students at all levels, beginners through advanced, amateurs and professionals. This approach, with its emphasis on perfect intonation, profound musical feeling, and the historically spiritual orientation of the Kirana style, can be of great benefit to those who want to improve their musicianship, as well as those who want to pursue this particular branch of musical knowledge.

As the first western disciples of Pandit Pran Nath, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela have performed and taught the Kirana style of Indian classical music since 1970. They accompanied Pandit Pran Nath in hundreds of concerts throughout the world. In June 2002, La Monte Young was conferred the title of *Khan Sahib* by Ustad Hafizullah Khan Sahib, the *Khalifa* of the Kirana Gharana and son of Pandit Pran Nath's teacher, Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan Sahib. In 1999 Jung Hee Choi became a disciple of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela in the study of music and art, with the classical Kirana tradition *gandha bandh* red-thread ceremony in 2003. Since 2007 she has been a teaching assistant at the Kirana Center.

**Individual Lessons with La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela**  
**Fees: \$150 per hour, with a two-hour minimum**

If you are interested in studying, you may fill out the form below and return or mail to:  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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City, State & Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to give a brief description of your background and musical experience, please use the back of this form, or send a resume by mail or by email to [mail@melafoundation.org](mailto:mail@melafoundation.org)



## La Monte Young

### Some Historical and Theoretical Background on My Work

The very first sound that I recall hearing was the sound of the wind blowing through the chinks and all around the log cabin in Idaho where I was born. I've always considered this among my most important early experiences. It was very awesome and beautiful and mysterious. Since I couldn't see it and didn't know what it was, I questioned my mother about it for long hours.

During my childhood there were certain sound experiences of constant frequency that have influenced my musical ideas and development: the sounds of insects; the sounds of telephone poles and motors; sounds produced by steam escaping, such as my mother's tea-kettle and the sounds of whistles and signals from trains; and resonations set off by the natural characteristics of particular geographic areas such as canyons, valleys, lakes, and plains. Actually, the first sustained single tone at a constant pitch, without a beginning or end, that I heard as a child was the sound of telephone poles<sup>3/4</sup>the hum of the wires. This was a very important auditory influence upon the sparse sustained style of work of the genre of the *Trio for Strings* (1958), *Composition 1960 #7* (B and F# "To be held for a long time") and *The Four Dreams of China* (1962).

I was perhaps predisposed to twelve-tone technique because my high school harmony teacher, Clyde Sorenson, had studied at UCLA with Arnold Schoenberg. I entered LA City College in 1953 and there I took classes under Leonard Stein, the noted pianist and former assistant to Schoenberg. I was very impressed with Stein's musical stature and began to study composition and counterpoint with him privately. Stein introduced me to a broader spectrum of modern music and I gradually became totally absorbed in the work of Anton Webern. Beginning in 1956, I enjoyed writing with serial technique in such works as *Five Small Pieces for String Quartet* and *Variations for Alto Flute, Harp, Bassoon and String Trio* (1957), but by 1957-58 I was considering reasons for moving outside the twelve-tone system. I felt that the system had enormous potential but that there was perhaps an infinity of forms that structure could take. In my octet *for Brass* (1957), I began to introduce, within the serial style, very long tones. In the middle section, there were tones sustained for comparatively long durations. Nothing else would happen except other occasional long tones overlapping in time. There were also silences, and then another long tone would enter. This technique became more refined and perfected in the *Trio for Strings* which, while constructed as a serial piece, has pitches of longer duration and greater emphasis on harmony to the exclusion of almost any semblance of what had been generally known as melody. The permutations of serial technique primarily imply possibilities of ordinal organization. Ordinal organization applies to line or melody, whereas the increasing emphasis on concurrent frequencies or harmony in my work implied the possibility of the organization of the cardinal values both in regard to how many frequencies are concurrent and the relationship of the frequencies to each other.

The use of sustenance became one of the basic principles of my work. When there are long sustained tones, it is possible to better isolate and listen to the harmonics. The harmonics can assume a greater relevance to the fundamental musical material, allowing greater opportunity to work with them and to produce other tones which are related to them. The harmonic series

is a clearly audible model for understanding the structure of "just intonation." Just intonation is that system of tuning based on the natural principles of overtones and resonances as our ears hear them and our voices produce them, that is, as they are found in nature. The tunings for *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys* (1964-present) and *The Well-Tuned Piano* (1964-present) were set in the system of just intonation. Additionally, sustained tones help make it possible to achieve finer degrees of precision in tuning. In my book *Selected Writings* (Munich, 1969) I point out that tuning is a function of time. If scientists want to make a comparative measurement of two or more periodic events in time, the longer the period of measurement, the more information they can extract about the relationships between the events in time. This is exactly what happens in tuning; whether the frequency is measured with a frequency counter, an oscilloscope or by ear, the degree of precision possible will always be proportional to the duration of the analysis, i.e., to the duration of the tuning. For instance, the drone is like a frequency constant, and if a drone is sustained throughout the composition, there can be very fine tuning relationships because there is a constant, a point of reference to which one can always return, as with the drone in Indian classical music. The Indian system of scales is the most all-inclusive set of scales in the world today. The parent scales of perhaps all the scales and modes that have been used in Western and Eastern music can be found in Indian music. It is probable that such a large number of scales evolved through the context of working with the drone.

Similarly, my subsequent work with continuous frequency environments led to my concept of the *drone-state-of-mind*. The frequency environment sets up a drone state in the nervous system, establishing periodic patterns which are the internal representations of the external air molecule patterns vibrating the eardrums and sending pulses throughout the nervous system. Once this so-called *drone-state-of-mind* is established, the mind should be able to go on very special explorations and in new directions, because it will always have a point of reference to come back to, to relate to; it could perhaps go further into more complex types of refined relationships than it can in the ordinary state.

If, however, the tones are always little tiny short points, it is almost impossible to compare them. In fact, why did pointillism develop at the time that it did in equal temperament, when the democracy of twelve tones was established? Composers such as Webern, Boulez, and Stockhausen wrote little points distributed in time. The tonal aspects of the system were being underplayed and the democratic aspects of the system were being brought out and emphasized probably because of the fact that within the system of equal temperament it was so unharmonious to sustain the tones for a long time. In contrast, sustenance provided the foundation for the development of my musical expression and, ultimately, became the light that illuminated the path which led to my later work in tuning and just intonation, inspiring a new vision of composition evolving from the universal truths of harmonic structure.

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## Noch einmal mit Gefühl

Als Kind hatte ich die Vorstellung ich könnte meine Augen aus meinem Kopf nehmen und diese in die Augenhöhlen einer anderen Person legen um von dort aus zu sehen und zu sein.

Den grössten Eindruck hat das *Dream House* bei mir durch seine Unmittelbarkeit hinterlassen, in dem was tatsächlich mit mir geschehen ist, in seiner physischen Auswirkung und dieses Gefühl<sup>1</sup> einen Moment in einen anderen Zustand gekommen zu sein. Natürlich kann man behaupten, diese sensitiven Erfahrungen und dieses Zurück-auf-sich-geworfen-werden sei ein relativ einfacher Effekt. Eine einfach zu konstruierende Situation. Es gibt immer Verdachtsmomente und Skepsis gegenüber direkten Erlebnissen und es scheint geradezu unmöglich diese Ereignisse wiederzugeben. In meiner eigenen Arbeit spielt die Sprache eine wichtige Rolle und mit ihr auch immer die Unmöglichkeit der Wiedergabe.

Jaques Derrida spricht in seinem Vortrag *Eine gewisse unmögliche Möglichkeit, vom Ereignis zu sprechen* nicht nur die zeitliche Verfehlung im Sinne, einer Verspätung an, sondern spricht dem Ereignis auch die «Unvorhersehbarkeit und damit die Tatsache, dass es den gewöhnlichen Gang der Geschichte unterbricht, also absolute Singularität»<sup>2</sup> zu. Und im Gegensatz zur Sprache, die als wiederholbar, an ein System gebunden schon deswegen die «Singularität des Ereignis verfehle»<sup>3</sup>

Einigen meiner Freunde habe ich versucht dieses Erlebnis zu erzählen, die Erfahrung zu teilen um schlussendlich wieder bei dem Satz zu landen: «Wenn du die Möglichkeit hast, solltest du dir das unbedingt mal selber anschauen.» Und trotzdem bleibt das Verlangen bestehen zu kommunizieren, seine Erfahrungen und Empfindungen zu teilen und ein nächst-mögliches Ereignis darzustellen.

Es ist diese Grenze die mich interessiert, zwischen dem was Gefühlt wird und dem wie sich das wiedergeben lässt. Die grösste Nähe die ich zu einem Menschen herstellen könnte, wäre vielleicht wenn ich die Welt durch seine Augen sähe. Die totale Empathie sozusagen. Dann bräuchte es diese Übersetzung nicht mehr. Instrumente wie Face-Time oder Google Brillen könnten so etwas wie scheinbare Übersetzer sein, bleiben aber weiterhin nur simulierende Instrumente. Die Verbindung zu einem anderen Gehirn kann auch somit nicht hergestellt werden. In der Gegenwärtigen Philosophie gibt es etliche solcher *Mind-Games*: Stell dir vor du erwachst eines Morgens, fühlst dich prima, stehst vor dem Badezimmerspiegel

und entdeckst ein kleines Dreieck auf deiner Stirn. Bei genauerer Betrachtung erkennst du, dass du durch dieses Dreieck *in* deinen Kopf schauen kannst. In diesem Moment klingelt dein Handy, eine SMS, Absender: Your Missing Brain: *Hab keine Angst, du brauchst nicht zu wissen wer wir sind, aber du solltest wissen, dass wir dein Hirn entführt haben. Wenn du unseren Anweisungen folgst und tust was wir dir sagen, wird deinem Hirn nichts passieren. In Kürze wird dich eine E-Mail mit weiteren Unterrichtungen erreichen.* Du schaust in den Spiegel und versuchst etwas hinter dem Dreieck zu erkennen. Nichts. Du stürzt ins Wohnzimmer wo dein Laptop auf dem Esstisch liegt und startest ihn auf. Während du wartest, dass dein Computer hochfährt, *denkst* du, dass kann ja gar nicht sein, weil ich *bin* ja hier. Dein Computer ist nun startklar und du öffnest deinen Posteingang, bling, tatsächlich, eine neue E-Mail, Absender: Your Missing Brain. Du klickst auf den angehängten Link, ein Video öffnet sich und du siehst eine Art Aquarium in dem in blubbernder Flüssigkeit ein Gehirn schwimmt. Das Hirn ist via vieler Kabel mit einem Computer verbunden. Du bist verwirrt. Immerhin liegt doch dort dein ganzes Denken. Wenn das tatsächlich dein Gehirn sein sollte, warum bist du nicht dort in dem Aquarium?<sup>4</sup>

So romantisch und unaufgeklärt das jetzt womöglich auch klingen mag, so dringlich und ehrlich scheint es mir meinen Gefühlen einen Platz in meiner künstlerischen Arbeit zu geben.

1 Gefühl als Gemütsbewegung im Sinne eines Affektes. *Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 22. Auf. Kröner, Stuttgart 1991, Georgi Schischkoff (Hrsg.)

2 *Eine gewisse unmögliche Möglichkeit, vom Ereignis zu sprechen*, Berlin, 2003, S. 15 Nach einem Vortrag von Jaques Derrida den er am 1. April 1997 im Rahmen eines Seminars an der Universität in Montréal gehalten hat. Originaltitel: *Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement*

3 Ebenda S. 15

4 Siehe *Self, Philosophy in Transit*, Barry Dainton, London 2014, Prologue S. 1-13 nach Daniel C. Dennett *Brainstorms* Cambridge, 1981, S. 310-323

## Amerika II

Wieder über dem Atlantik, diesmal von West nach Ost. Es ist Nacht.

Die Sterne sind noch immer über mir und sehen auch von hier oben noch genau gleich aus. Das habe ich mir irgendwie anders vorgestellt. Was aber schon ziemlich beeindruckend ist, dass ich die Wölbung der Sterndecke sehen kann. Anouk hat mir mal erzählt, dass sie auf den Malediven den Sternenhimmel wirklich als Kuppel wahrnehmen können – genauso muss das gewesen sein denke ich. Das fühlt sich fast übermässig körperlich an. So als würde ich für den Bruchteil eines Moments begreifen können wie das alles funktioniert.

Das Licht im Flugzeug haben sie nach dem Abendessen ausgemacht. Die meisten Leute schlafen. Ich frage mich, wann wohl wo die Sonne aufgehen wird und versuche das anhand der Karte und des Flugzeugmodells vor mir auf dem Bildschirm, unter Berücksichtigung der Zeitverschiebung, auszurechnen.

Merci Andreas, Anouk, Dominic, Hannah, Hans Rudolf, Meret,  
Nicolas, Tim