

The Art Jarvinen Email Project

In Memory of Arthur Jarvinen (1956-2010)

In October of 2008, composer Arthur Jarvinen (notned@aol.com) sent me this email message:

One of the potential projects that I am starting to compile data for would be a compilation of one-sided correspondence. We have the Cage/Boulez stuff, which is pretty dreadful reading - unless you're overly enamored of both of them.

Apropos blogs and comments, I do sometimes post comments. But I am finding myself more interested in personal dialogues, conversations between two individuals. It has struck me that it might be worthwhile reading, and an interesting creative endeavor, to pull together a slim volume of e-mails, but only from me, without the letter that triggered the reply. Might work, might not, but it's an idea I'm toying with.

With that in mind, I am sometimes now saving certain e-mails I compose, and even using my reply as a situation in which to address things that are on my mind.

I discovered that passage after his death in October 2010. I don't know whether he pursued the idea himself – it was never mentioned again. Nor, of course, do I have any idea what subjects he himself would have chosen. What I do know is that we can honor departed friends by doing those things which they themselves would have done.

This archive of Art's email begins in late 1997 and covers nearly 13 years. The final message was written the day before he died. He writes about day-to-day issues, about his work and about holiday celebrations. You'll find musical essays, story-telling, simple poetry and mass concert announcements. He talks about his music, about his emotions and about his challenges. I have occasionally edited very slightly in an effort to keep all the words Art's own. The subject matter is sometimes perfectly obvious. Other times the context will be completely obscure.

The following people, besides myself, have contributed Art's writing to this document: Gloria Cheng, Jim Rohrig, Christopher Garcia, Robert Jacobson and Zona Hostetler. If others care to contribute messages they once received from Arthur, this document can be expanded in the future. Please select passages of interest and submit them to me. Include the date of each to preserve chronology.

Although this may be an attempt to fulfill Art's own idea, this document can never be what Arthur himself would have made of it. In fact, it serves a completely different purpose. It is now our memorial to him.

And maybe, as time passes, these messages will serve to introduce Art to people whom he never met. Reading this collection might be a little like looking through a shoebox of someone else's unlabeled snapshots. If these small glimpses into the life and thoughts of one particularly creative, complex individual make you curious about the personality behind it, I urge you to seek out those other works of his in which he tried his hardest to communicate ideas to others ... his music.

David Ocker
October 19, 2011

The Art Jarvinen Email Project

Version 2 – October 2011

Tuesday, November 25, 1997 9:42:43 PM

I published it last year. "Experimental Etudes". 20 pieces on performance problems in contemporary music, playable on ALL instruments, includes a 42 minute demo cassette played by Ear Units. It's set up to be easy to use for self-teaching by players from highschool to professional, or private and/or group teaching by teachers.

I'm very proud of it. I get great feedback on it all the time from those who know and use it. Cal Arts has bought a bunch of them. Other than that sales have been spotty. I hope the word starts getting around and it becomes a standard reference, but you know how people are. There's nothing else like it out there, so you'd think that teachers especially would want to at least check it out. But NOOO. I have taken out four display ads in the American Composers Forum newsletter, and not one nibble. Got it reviewed in the Percussive Arts Society journal, and not one nibble.

I enjoyed working on it, and have ideas for other books, but they're the kind that would attract even less attention, so it's not a priority. I have finished reconstructing all of the performance directions for my physical poetry pieces, which I want to put in a book. I just need to write the essay up front, scan some photos and stuff like that. My intention is to make a limited edition of 200, signed, with hand made cover art, and use it as a fundraiser for my next cd. I'm also working with Bob Fernandez on a book about Afro-Cuban drumming, and with Robin on a fiddling book, representing traditions from around the world.

I wish I had more time to work on this stuff. But first I have to finish my 24 hour piano solo Serious Immobilities - 840 variations on Vexations. I'm on variation 544, and it's scheduled for a premiere at the Kitchen in January. I'd better go write some more variations.

Thursday, May 14, 1998 1:29:47 AM

Greetings: It's now official. Serious Immobilities is being performed in Los Angeles from 5pm to 5pm (yes, that's 24 hours) June 4 and 5. I know it's short notice, which is why it's very important to get players lined up now.

In case you don't know...Serious Immobilities is a 24 hour piano solo my me, Arthur Jarvinen, consisting of 840 variations on Satie's Vexations. It is performed simultaneously with Randall Woolf's piece Spineless Dog, which is for a midi keyboard triggering samples based on Vexations. So that's 48 hours worth of playing time to account for.

We can pay an embarrassing honorarium of \$20 per hour, so you get something, but you have to want to do this for other reasons as well.

If you are reading this message it is because it is suspected by me that you can play the piano and might enjoy participating in this experience. Please let me know asap.

By the way, not everyone can play in the prime times. We need some people willing to play at 4 in the morning for the weirdos (or maybe no one, although in NY there were people there the whole time). If your piano chops aren't up (the piece isn't hard, but is real piano music) you can still play on the Woolf. I assume most players will want to play some of each.

Anyway, reply please whether you're available and interested, or not. Also, if you have suggestions for people who might not be obvious choices for me - good students for example, who could use some extra cash, please let me know.

Monday, June 1, 1998 7:04:27 PM

I am assuming you all recieved copies of the music for Serious Immobilities. Please reply to confirm. Notice that you are not playing the whole thing I gave you. It's just easier for me to deal with the piece in complete sections. I indicated which variations each of you will be playing. I suggest writing in the fifteen minute increments. There will be a clock there.

Do you have any questions about any aspect of the piece? I think everything is explained clearly in the notes, but some NYC players had questions about the form, and one in particular really went over the top with some of the vocal stuff. All sung parts can be spoken or "sprechstimme" if you're not comfortable hitting the real notes, but if you can do what's indicated I would of course prefer it. No reason to "act" or do anything flamboyant with the texts. Just be yourselves. There will be a vocal mic at

the piano. I will try to position it such that it is unobtrusive when you're not using it, and will sufficiently pick your voice up without you having to get on top of it. If you just do your texts or vocals normally, it will get on mic.

Punctuality is important. At the NY performance all players except one were right where they needed to be every fifteen minutes, so the change of shifts were a breeze. Just sit down next to the one playing a little before it's time, get a cue from them for where they are, and take over when the time comes. If you need a few moments to settle, adjust the bench or whatever, do what you need to.

I will be happy to provide you with water or wine or whatever is reasonable for your comfort, especially you who are putting in 2 or 3 hours in a row. Let me know what you like.

Tue Aug 04 12:45:17 1998

Obviously, as you can tell by the fact that you never get royalty checks from me, I'm stealing from you. Hah hah. Actually, nobody is buying or renting the music. As I have told most of you, some of our best resources have disappeared. European American, which generated most of our sales for several years, was swallowed up by their parent company and actually called to say "don't send us your shit anymore, unless it's band music or choral music".

Wed Aug 05 17:12:25 1998

Interesting. "Fake Waffling". I thought you were accusing me of feigning not being able to make up my mind. And the cd I'm about release is called "Erase the Fake".

By all means. I didn't dredge all that up for my own amusement only. Your interview made me realize that maybe there are still some things to talk about, gaps to fill in, info to share, etc, that are actually worth taking the time for. I value the little bits of Frank's time and energy that he gave me. I learned a hell of a lot from him - more than from anyone else I can think of. I realize that, even though I didn't play in the band, I saw things, heard things, know things, that contribute to a clearer understanding of who Frank the Composer was. I don't know the name of the guy who fetched his cigarettes - sorry - but he explained his ideas about how the "tuplets" in his pieces should be played

Tuesday, September 21, 1999 2:24:29 AM

"forever reaching that point of things not getting any better" Gloria, now you have to admit, that's kind of a beautiful image. You wrote that. You're brilliant!!

For Instance
False Incarnations
Foetid Inclinations
Farted Inspirations
Fallic (sic) Invitations
butt "f.i."?
Ohhhhhh! "Fuck it" I get it now.
It's a Glorious thought. Keep up the great work! You do it so well.

Thursday, September 23, 1999 2:12:14 AM

You have to perform in the studio too, but they are essentially very different experiences. Everybody's different. Personally, I hate recording, which is why I do it so well - I don't want to spend one second longer than necessary doing it. But the best experience of music, for me, is rehearsal. I could rehearse forever and hardly ever perform. I think I need something that happens in performance, but I need what happens in rehearsal a lot more. And I don't need recording at all - but I need recordings.

The scale is different for everyone. I was reading the liner notes today for the Ear Unit/Bridge recording of Feldman Crippled Symmetry. (I recorded Guston with you, this one with Vicki.) I have always had some issues with Feldman's time frame - it seems arbitrary (longer for the sake of being longer). Lucky's assessment of the liner notes by John Rockwell is that they're a complete waste, but in fact it's the first time I have heard a possibly convincing argument for the "scale" (duration) of Feldman's later works. I had to re-examine my opinion (always a good thing).

Your recording "scale" is the time it takes you to say what you have to say. But I think you are absolutely right on about how technology forces itself upon us. Because we CAN edit, we do. I rebel against that emphatically. The Ghatam cd has 12 edits

on it. Jaltarong was the only take we did. It could have been better if my arms weren't turning to jello from computer related injuries, but that was how I could play that day. The music was there, so I let my own self get out of the way. My most recent cd is a lot of one-pass stuff, much of which I didn't allow the group to do again. It is important that recordings document a musical experience, not just an imaginary ideal. If I ever get to record the six hour version of Serious Immobilities, I want it to be in real time, so we get to hear what happens to a player doing that thing for our benefit. Human "flaws" are always more interesting than any machine's "perfection".

Trying to give a few students anything worthwhile. Trying to make art, and convince myself that that is worthwhile. Burning inside, glowing outside, some see it as darkness, others seem to be inspired because, I hurt people easily without meaning to, I love everyone except the ones I don't, the meaning of music and making music is constantly changing and suspect and always subject to revision, I often think I know what I want but in the same instant realize the impossibility of everything that could possibly matter to me. so, business as usual.

Friday, September 24, 1999 2:04:35 PM

Everything you say about recording and editing and making musical objects that are as perfect as possible is true and valid, and I agree. There's no shame in the edit. But I still value the recording as document of a performance, the capturing of a single complete statement, or at least something close to that. But it depends on the piece too of course.

Vicki said an interesting thing about her own recordings, that after doing all the takes and making all the choices and finishing all the editing, and finally hearing the result, she feels like "I play that piece differently now, I should do it again. That's not how it should go."

So it can become a pretty vicious circle if you let it. With unlimited studio time some people would probably never finish anything. They'd always think it could be better (and maybe it always can be). But I don't believe in perfection as even a valid concept, so there has to come a point when you say "It's perfect enough. From here on it will only get different, not better."

What I was getting at about my own recent recordings were one or two instances in particular, with music that is only very loosely composed, no written notes, but rather guided improvisations that we had worked out in rehearsals. When we played them in the studio things happened. Somebody forgot exactly how we had agreed to cue something, or I left out a sound I meant to include, the unpredictable occurred, which was really the point. So I didn't necessarily get the results I had planned on, but instead of going back and trying to "fix" it, we all listened and agreed that what did happen was just as cool as what we meant to do, so we went with it. We accepted what the piece was on that particular evening, instead of trying to recapture what it had been a few nights before. It's great when music can be approached that way.

Thinking about life, oh yeah! It's kind of intense these days. Lots of emotion, frustrations, but new experiences and great stuff happening too. It's not dull, that's for sure. I go through periods every once in a while of realizing more fully the precariousness of my position on the food chain. Sometimes I can blissfully ignore it, but when the realization comes to the surface I get pretty terrified. I'm on the short list for the new comp job at CalArts, but I know that I won't get hired, so I've been thinking about what to do, and I don't have many viable options. So, lots of stuff like that on my mind. But creative juices are flowing, and new playing opportunities developing, which is great.

Sun, 21 Nov 1999 03:53:05 EST

Life is groovy. Lynn works way too hard. I don't. Guilt? What's that?

Saturday, December 25, 1999 2:27:21 PM

Just thought I'd drop a little holiday greeting, as I tend not to do the christmas card thing. Hope you're having a perfectly lovely day and that Santa showers you with good and fun things and that you eat well in good company. While you're at it (as opposed to while you're a tit) have a happy new 2000.

Sun Apr 16 18:48:00 2000

At the time you could either rent it by the hour (make horrendous wretching noise here) or buy it outright for \$5000 (laugh until you puke here).

I want to be able to make demo quality recordings, or record for release things that aren't the life blood of my artistic sensibility that define my work for all time if you know what I mean. For example, my fake christian pop duo a la Donnie and Marie "I Was On TV With Jesus" that Lynn and I sang at our soiree last month. I can record that here and put it on MP3.com. I

don't need to go to Capitol Records to do that.

Mon Apr 17 13:55:03 2000

I have never really been too discouraged that the music I make isn't interesting to more people. To the few people to whom it matters, new music is very much needed and I'm glad to be a part of it. But commercial interests have made it almost impossible for any alternatives. It's like mom and pop grocery stores and book stores run by one person with a personal point of view. Some of us value those things, but they just can't survive anymore. I think the internet has tremendous potential to play a hugely important cultural role and provide things outside of what the corporate mainstream wants us to want. I am optimistic about the possibilities, if we can keep it from getting regulated. As soon as we have to start paying for every little aspect of it, putting something up there will be just like making a record the old fashioned way. It will cost too much and I won't be able to do it anymore.

juin 14 2000 mercredi 9:31:40 AM

Actually, I would be willing to give up music altogether and just do it for fun. That's almost how it is anyway. But I can't even think of one other plausible career choice for myself. The other things I'm interested in are even harder to make a living at.

I often think I would be good at writing manuals for computer programs. I've only seen about one, ever, that is much help at all.

juin 17 2000 samedi 1:44:25 PM

Thanks for the vote of confidence! I am also pleased to hear that my discs get an audition once in a while. Funny thing, when I opened your email in reply to my apology, I had just that minute finished listening to your recording of The Heaven Ladder.

Sat Jun 17 17:15:24 2000

I just finished making a complete computer font based on Frank's handwriting. Pretty cool.

Fri Jun 30 13:48:57 2000

Bad idea. I talked to a lawyer about my idea to create famous dead people fonts as a business venture and he said I can't do it without permission or a licensing agreement from the estate. So even giving it away would put me at legal risk.

Fri Jun 30 14:04:50 2000

Try this one, based on calligraphy of Erik Satie. Some of the letters are real hard to get used to, and I had to make up some of them. It's all based on one specific document. Of course I can't sell it either, because I scanned the images out of a book, which is copyrighted. But I'm thinking about doing a set of Satie fonts, and the people who control access to the documents would probably work with me.

juillet 03 2000 lundi 6:08:32 PM

Sorry to hear about the tendinitis. Mine has been especially bad this past year due to a combination of factors, but recently things have improved dramatically, and I am feeling the best I have in over a year.

The main treatment that I have received since developing the problem has been electrical stimulation at my chiropractor's, who of course always adjusts me too. I have found that I respond well to that treatment. Pretty much that alone has kept my issues manageable. That and cold packs, and sometimes sports bandages around my forearms to take some of the workload. But since things got so bad this year, I began this summer having made up my mind to heal, and to attack the problem with as much ammo as I could muster. Marty highly recommended his acupuncturist, Patty Van Santen, so I decided to try her. I had no idea whether acupuncture works on tendinitis, but I was always curious about it anyway and figured it certainly couldn't hurt.

I went to her twice. I would keep going regularly, but I don't really have the money to do that. But I certainly plan to go again, and I think she has definitely helped me.

In addition to the two treatments from her I have been going back to my chiro for electro-stim and adjustments, and have gotten a couple of massages. They all seem to be working together, because as I said, I am feeling better than I have in over a year. The last time I went to my chiro it was just for a routine adjustment, to set me up for a massage the next day. I didn't feel I needed the electro.

Oh yes, there is one other thing I've been doing. A friend of mine who is a personal trainer gave me an exercise routine of various kinds of poses and stretches designed to realign my whacked-out spine. I think that has been helping too. Posture counts for a lot.

Anyway, I encourage you to try a variety of things if you can. Seems to have done wonders for me. There are also hand exercises, and you should be drinking vast quantities of water.

But as for your questions -

I do recommend Patricia Van Santen. She doesn't have a minimum # or any such thing. She'll treat you once or as many times as you want. With me she suggested two treatments a week apart, and then having them farther apart.

The first treatment generally takes about an hour and a half. Actually I was there almost 2 hours. It costs \$175. The following treatments are an hour, and cost about \$75. Sometimes a little more depending, but mine was \$75.

She will spend a while talking with you, asking questions, and getting you to open up. She believes that our physical problems and our emotional lives are intimately connected, so it is important for her to understand not just where the pain is, but also what sorts of stresses and emotional problems you may be grappling with. I am totally comfortable with that approach, and I had no hesitations about opening up to her. But just be aware that is her style, and is part of her technique.

Do go to her, at least a couple times. She will help you. Good luck.

As for the 4th celebration, we did in fact roast a pig yesterday.

août 10 2000 jeudi 4:50:29 PM

Mostly I'm just too damn lazy about self-promotion. I got busy making more product and doing stuff I like. But Jeff did mention his boss was having a baby or something.

Wow! I saw her not that long ago at all. Guess I won't be getting any more acupuncture. But it did help.

Played my last concert as an official member last Friday. It was a great way to end though. LACMA 4 was one of our better shows and went very well, and the Friday concert was almost all great rep and also went very well. Lynn and her mom were both there, and even my neice from Chicago who had never heard me play. It was pretty neat.

septembre 19 2000 mardi 3:20:06 PM

I'm so sorry, I really wanted to hear you play tonight, especially since I didn't get to Ojai. You must find me a truly unsupportive friend. Fortunately you are well-loved in this town and I know you will have a great and friendly turnout.

I just found out my nephew from Chicago is in town surfing for a couple days and had a wrong number for me. So I feel it's important to spend some time with him. I know you understand. Break their legs! and God bless your hands.

Date: Mon, 27 Nov 2000 15:39:26 EST

One thing I did was a chamber piece with several tempi going on simultaneously. With a little arithmetic I figured out how many beats in each part should be on a system, and justified each staff separately. The music looks exactly as it should sound. Maybe it's not rocket science, but I was kind of proud of that.

And of course multiple meters is a no-brainer. I got used to doing my manuscripts with a red pencil for the invisible barlines and rests that I would need to input.

Thu Dec 07 16:31:02 2000

Let's do it. I'm way flexible, and thoroughly enjoy not talking about notation software.

Tue Dec 19 13:00:37 2000

Getting around reasonably well in Sibelius. I'm not sure I'd be too thrilled about doing a score with it, but it's fun to play stuff back, which is a new capability for me. I'm using it mainly as an audio device which happens to have a visual document as a bi-

product. I think that's really the big difference between Score and Sibelius/Finale - the paradigm. Score is a graphics program, on its most fundamental level, whereas Sibelius is really an audio program pretending to be a graphics program. At least that's my take on it.

7/3/01 at 1:47AM

Pig is on. This her her name is Gloria Estefan. She will be done about 5, I expect. We'll be basting her all day, with a keg close at hand. Show up whenever you please. Dinner service around 5:30 (ish).

octobre 02 2001 mardi 5:34:40 PM

Just wanted to let you know that I will not be able to get to your PianoSpheres recital. I play bass in a Balkan "wedding" band that rehearses regularly on Tuesday evenings. At least I'll be having fun. Hope you do too.

octobre 03 2001 mercredi 6:52:44 AM

Yeah. Good and getting better all the time. Lots of things going on, personally, artistically, career-wise, etc. It's a good time. A little frenetic and weird at times, like having CalArts hire me 2 weeks into the semester after saying they wouldn't be needing my services - but I have some work, and that's a good thing.

I spent much of the day in the attic doing wiring for studio lights, so I'm pretty fried. I'll sign off for now, but do stay in touch.

octobre 04 2001 jeudi 5:38:18 AM

Gloria, we go back a-ways, but do not really know each other so well. I don't tend to make rhetorical statements as much as I look for real conversation. If I say "what to say?" I probably mean I don't know what to say. Where are the words that can adequately express our personal reactions and realities apropos that particular event, and how can we be inside the brains and skin of even a friend on such an occasion? I have many friends in the NYC area. I had no idea you were physically close to that event - I suppose I think of you as an "LA friend".

octobre 04 2001 jeudi 6:47:54 PM

I really needed to get off the computer, totally fried. Things have been chaotic and messy around here. We've been doing remodelling since early summer and things are still quite disorganized, and that is in its own way fatiguing. Tuesday

I spent much of the day crawling around in the attic installing wiring for the studio lights. I was still up there when the band showed up to rehearse.

CalArts first told me they wouldn't be needing my adjunct services this year, then two weeks into school they called and offered me a decent part-time contract. A good thing, but I'm still trying to schedule students and find a room to teach in. And I've been cramming on copying work. I really want to settle into a schedule, and have my house back again.

Well, I have had no reports of anyone I know there having been hurt, so I'm grateful for that, but I'm sure some of them have relatives and friends who have suffered personal losses. I'm told that Michael Gordon was walking his kid to school and saw the first plane flying very low, then heard the impact moments later. That has to leave a kind of residue that doesn't easily wash off.

That's interesting. One doesn't tend to think of New York as being a real friendly town, but it does seem to have a sense of community that is revealing itself to us in the light of these events.

Your comment though just brought up a lot of my old thoughts about the lack of a sense of community in L.A., specifically in the new music scene. I have often lamented the fact that there is so little overlap in the Venns as it were, with everyone into their own little scene and participating very little in the others. No one from the Ear Unit went to my ensemble green concert, and I doubt that any of the South West chamber folks go to Ear concerts. For example. I know there are legit reasons, but sometimes I get so frustrated that there isn't more mutual support from colleagues. How are we to develop a non-professional audience if even those of us who are making the art don't care enough to consume it? But enough of belly-aching!

That's cool. You know, when I got the news that my friend Randy Hostetler had died, the only thing I could think to do was sit down and right a piece to celebrate his life. That was the first time that I had used music and composing in a real direct way to deal with emotion. It started a process and opened up a whole other dimension in my musical experience. Not that it was all cold and academic before, but I had never used the composition process in that direct a way before to deal with feelings.

octobre 13 2001 samedi 4:51:48 AM

Daniel Rothman said your Strawinsky Tango was "to die for".

Would have loved to have been there.

11/1/01 at 10:30PM

hi im fido kim arf arf
hi im rover kim arf arf
hi im spot kim arf arf
hi im lassie kim arf arf

3/19/02 at 2:54PM

Funny how that FZ story keeps coming up. I had to go through it again just the other day with a student. Sure, if you think this guy is serious I'm happy to have him get in touch with me directly. I was going through old ear unit shit the other day - I sang Frank's "America Drinks and Goes Home" on their birthday concert last week - and I still have the Times review of WYWA, with Erika saying "We're cheating ourselves and our audience. We won't do it again". All because of Mort being pissed off. What a fucking fiasco.

3/19/02 at 6:15PM

alas, ya got me at the end of the day. time to make a good meal and forget about copying.

I really have been hankering for a walk at the gardens, so let's try to do that.

Tuesday, August 27, 2002 8:07:29 PM

I just read that you're doing 4 systems on your recital. I think that is really interesting (in the best sense of that word - not the 'after concert' sense) and totally cool. I look forward to hearing your take on it. I studied with Earle my last year of grad school, and, while I bitched loudly and frequently about my assessment of him as a teacher, I really liked him and thoroughly respected his artistry. I feel very fortunate to be able to say I knew Earle Brown.

I've been involved in so many - so many - careless performances and thoughtless realizations of that particular work. But I also know that Earle was perplexed by how fussy and anal Tudor's realization was. You will no doubt bring your own thoughtful perspective to it, and, as I said, that is a thing I will enjoy hearing.

Friday, August 30, 2002 11:47:08 AM

Sounds like a good deal - seeing the world and getting paid for it and yet not having to work too hard. We worked pretty hard in the Ear unit, but that is the one part I miss, the travel. I'm a real homebody now, that's for sure. Lynn says it suits me, and that is true to a point, but I stil want to see more of the world. I've never even been to Paris, not to mention Italy, Thailand, Finland, Portugal, Antarctica...

Most of the Four Systems performances I've done were with the Ear Unit, and I always found it frustrating. We can forget the kids show performances. They don't really count because we were just using the score as an excuse for what we were trying to demonstrate. But we also did perform the piece for real a bunch of times, including a recording at WDR. Since we were doing it as an ensemble, I always felt we should have some sort of concensus, and agree on some parameters. But they would have none of it. Everyone had their own interpretation and ideas about what was possible or appropriate, and we just did them all simultaneously. I thought it was an incoherent mess, and not interesting at all.

My biggest gripe was with Amy. She invariably whipped out a hip drum set groove, or an African bell pattern, and for the life of me I can't reconcile the score and Earle's directions with such events. So I tried to counterbalance that approach by being as literal as I could. One of the problems is that the score isn't a good score to begin with, if you think about it. It's somewhat confusing or contradictory, as is most of Earle's graphic notation. Rectangles don't realy look like piano tones, at least to my mind. The score looks more like an organ piece, with "on/off" envelopes, steady states overlapping, etc. The piano envelope is unaccounted for. So it is vague at best, which is why I think some lattitude and personal interpretation is necessary and inevitable. But my approach was to take the vertical dimension for pitch/register, the horizontal for duration, and the thickness of line for dynamic. I used steady state sounds, such as an electric drill, blown PVC tubes, ratchets, etc. At least my realizations came out sounding like the picture looks.

The most interesting realization I've heard is by Max Neuhaus, on his Columbia album Electronics and Percussion - Five Realizations by Max Neuhaus. Here are his program notes verbatim:

"Brown's score consists completely of horizontal lines of various thicknesses and lengths. The constant thickness of each individual line stimulated me to search for and find an interesting percussion sound with a constant dynamic nature - not the usual percussion sound, with its initial burst of the attack and sudden decay. These horizontal lines exist on many different planes, overlapping each other to form (if one equates horizontal space to time) various patterns of entrance and duration. Rather than a strict interpretation of these patterns, during the performance I allow my eye to pick out various combinations that seem interesting or relevant to that particular moment in the piece. This produces an improvisation, but one that has a very definite relationship to the score."

He plays the piece on four suspended cymbals, amplified by putting contact mics on the leather straps. The sound is really intense and weird and mysterious, and he performed it at ear-splitting volume from what I'm told by those who heard his recitals in the 60s. The main point about Max's version is that he solved the problem of the envelope that the rectangles imply. But it must be emphasized that Earle himself had no problem with rectangles being piano tones. But then in my opinion, he didn't have a very good sense of graphic notation at all, even though he basically invented it. We played Hodograph a few times, and in it there are graphically notated events that are smooth elegant curves. Dorothy worked out these beautiful slow glisses on the flute, that sounded just like the pictures. Earle didn't like it at all. He said "no you don't understand. Those lines are trajectories, fast flourishes that follow that contour" and then he demonstrated vocally with these flighty little pointillistic gestures. I always wondered why he didn't make a spewage of little dots, instead of those smooth flowing lines. But that was Earle.

And there is, I think, one of the important points, maybe even the key. Earle knew what he wanted, and did have expectations. He liked the creative dialogue of score/performer, and wanted his pieces to be flexible, but at the same time he did give us parameters, and he knew the general character of his works. He was composing, not just encouraging us to explore our own muses in whatever manner.

I think Tudor actually missed the point too, in that he took very precise measurements and transcribed every line into a precisely defined event placed in a fixed score. Earle could have written a piece like that himself if that was what he wanted. Graphic notation is meant to be at least somewhat vague, and allows us to keep hearing the same general piece with the specifics constantly in flux from performance/performer to performance/performer.

That said, I am sure you will come up with a conscientious and enlightening realization of your own, embracing both the inherent vagueness and specific implications of Earle's score and instructions. I do not presume to suggest how you should realize it because that would be, well, presumptuous! But it did just occur to me that one fun possibility would be to realize it in four layers, three on tape, and place the speakers in interesting locations, such as off stage with the door left open, above the audience, etc. Some of the sections get pretty dense, and sharing the material between "players/layers" as it were would open up the sound of the piece very effectively, I think. Anyway, just an idea, not meant to be more than a stimulus to your own thought process.

I hope this is useful. It's been fun thinking about the piece again and remembering some of my Earle Brown encounters.

Have a great rest of the tour.

Wednesday, October 9, 2002 2:06:30 AM

Great recital. Lynn and I both really enjoyed it. Didn't get to finish saying so on the way out, as I was trying to stay out of the shot, and that woman seemed very determined to get a picture, so we just split. I don't like those post concert reception lines anyway - even at my own concerts. (umm, not that I ever do any, but you know...)

In particular I liked the Dude-Hey-You (damn if I'm going to try spell it in French). Really an engaging piece. And I was thoroughly convinced by the Brown. I liked the calm pacing and composure. Face it, there's only so much you can really do with it, if you take it seriously. It is what it is, giving many permissions, but also setting a lot of limits. Your version had some very tasteful and thoughtful nuances, and projected a very nice balance of an improvisational feel and a "composed" coherence. And my feeling was that it was a slow piece - I really liked that.

I liked the piano too. I'm in love with the Fazioli, but maybe that's more for my own music. I know you have decided that Steinways are all you want to play. It sounded very good.

AND, I thought the encore selection was beautiful. So, bravo!

Friday, October 11, 2002 5:57:54 PM

I was not aware that your father had passed away. I'm sorry to hear it, but glad to hear you are at peace with it, and were able to be there. That is so important for some, although it is a very specific situation, and different for everyone. I was thankful that my dad just got up one morning and died - no sickness or anything - and that I didn't have to be there.

The Schumann is beautiful, a real treat to hear for the first time (I haven't devoted much of my listening life to Schumann, I'm afraid).

Our thoughts are with you,

Wednesday, January 22, 2003 7:27:04 PM

I brought in Hunter Ochs to be my producer and Ton Meister. If I remember correctly, our Zipper fee included their engineer, which was obligatory if we wanted to use their equipment. Hunter checked out their gear and talked with their recording guy, and decided everything was cool, and the two men hit it off okay. So Hunter was definitely in charge, with their man acting as assistant engineer. It worked out very well for my project. The only way to bring in your own person and not use their engineer is to also bring in your equipment. You may as well use their gear, which is good, and also use their engineer. If you know someone you want to bring in to supervise, they are cool with that. I do not remember the name of the person who worked with us. If it's important, I can try to reconstruct that scenario.

It's beautiful. I'm not sure I could have gotten a better piano recording in Los Angeles, at any price.

I think it was around \$900. I told them which piano I wanted, and tuning was included in the basic price. They would not allow me to bring in my own technician. If I wanted a technician on hand I would have had to hire theirs on an hourly basis. Given that my piece wasn't like a Rzewski piece, the basic tuning sufficed. So, we got the hall, recording gear, engineer, and a tuned piano for a flat fee. Except for the catch - insurance. I had to pay \$150 for a million dollar insurance policy for the night. I'm dealing with that again now at a diner for a photo shoot. What a scam our friend Charles Ives was involved in. Insurance!!! But I think the \$900 was including the insurance. The room, gear and engineer for the night was about \$750.

In short, I can't really quote you their fees, since they might have changed. But if I were making another solo piano recording in Los Angeles I would do it the same way, at Zipper, with their gear. I do not think you can get a better deal or a better result. Maybe at some radio studio in Germany, but not in L.A. And I am partial to that Fazioli. If you like their Steinway, I think you should just go for it.

One caveat - I assume you want at least some semblance of a room sound. That room sounds pretty good, and can even sound intimate enough for my piece. I have witnessed solo piano recorded in what could never pass as a "room", with close miking, and you can get away with that. But why, if you can get a good room?

Balkanova played at club Fais Do Do last night. It was fun and went very well. But I didn't even get around to emailing people about it. I didn't set it up, so I let the promoters deal with it.

I finished my Hopper piece, Nighthawks, just before Christmas. I got the Gail Levin book you told me about, although I haven't actually read the text - I just like to look at the pictures!

3/15/2003 at 3:58PM

Not that you need or want to keep hearing me gripe, but just thought I'd share this little gem with you. (Who knows, the sharing may do me some good, if not you.)

Now, my hypothesis. I could be wrong, but it does occur to me that when you are dealing with all the same shit I am, you are working for someone else and getting paid for the time. You just figure out how to get the result, and cash the check at the end. I, on the other hand, spend most of my time dealing with this nonsense for my own music, for which I am not usually getting paid. So I think maybe my mindset and attitude are fundamentally different. That's the only way I can account for this

stuff (apparently) not bothering you very much.

For all that Sibelius actually does do well (give me a minute, I can think of something...) it is unconscionable that we should have to put up with this level of lameness (to coin a word just for the occasion).

3/18/2003 at 12:56PM

Yeah. I'm not real interested in chat rooms and user groups, and talking about music copying isn't my favorite way to spend time. But I always enjoy at least a bit of shop talk with you. I usually learn something and gain some insight or better appreciation. Thanks for the Tacet. It has already come in quite handy, and saved me some aggravation.

3/23/2003 at 10:59AM

Or does he perhaps feel the need to have autographs of his pieces? A few years ago Yale wanted the autograph of one of Jack Vees's pieces for their library's collection, and offered him \$1500. So he printed one out for them!

3/23/2003 at 10:24PM

Lynn and I enjoyed John's presentation today for the Composers Forum, and I thought I might drop him a line - but if I manage to pull him up, I will throw him back.

Art "catch and release" Jarvinen

6/29/2003 at 12:27AM

Not stressed so much. Having a very good time and getting a lot done. But tired, lots of irons in the fire, not enough time to put in on the things I want to spend the time on at the time etc.

I get a little cocky in email when I'm tired. I assume my friends know how to read between the lines. Maybe I shouldn't assume so much.

Speaking of being tired... I gotta start roasting a pig in a matter of hours. Looking forward to seeing you soon.

7/9/2003 at 12:09AM

I'm still not up to speed on the smileys, so I'll try to just be real straightforward and unambiguous - (wink wink). Oven failed tonight and after an hour of effort all I could do was shitcan the pizza, so I'm not at my emotional best - but will try not to take it out on you (grin!)

see, I can't even relate to that, because I don't grin or wink - I SCOWL (oh, sorry for yelling!).

July 13, 2003 11:16:29 PM

By the way, I was looking at some web site about music and musicians and checking out links for ideas, I think it was Dan Krimm's new thing. Anyway, I got to your interview from a few years ago and read the whole thing. I really enjoyed it. Really insightful and articulate, and no bullshit. Good work.

Also, thanks for coming to hear Nighthawks. I wish more people had. There were a lot of conspicuous absences, and not a word in the press. Good thing I only worked on it for a year, or I would have been bummed.

7/14/2003 at 11:39PM

That's a hard piece to make do what you were intending, with the dynamic shaping directing the listener's ear and perception of where the action "really" is at any given moment - it's the melody - no, it's a second voice - no it's the bass line - no it really is the melody! Ives gets to have that from a quartet that plays his stuff for 30 years. You get to have it in a recording - maybe, but certainly not in a concert with four rehearsals. Nice try though! I still like that piece almost the most of any of yours.

Thu, 20 May 2004 18:39:08 EDT

Good question. Sort of trying to figure out what I'm going to do next. I have to get down to business and record the Invisible Guy material, because there's so much of it now I just really need to get that released. I have some ideas for pieces that I want to write, but have had no luck securing any sort of commission/grant/fellowship to pay for it, and it has become increasingly difficult to apply for anything, in part because there's not much out there anyway, but also because my work of the last bunch of years has been either quite radical/fringe or in vernacular idioms. So I don't have good current work samples to support my

applications. So, I think I have to write some more chamber music or vocal music. I have some ideas for music for 5 male voices, and also for a big piece for Ensemble Green using the whole group.

But in the short term (i.e. this summer) it will be mostly recording surf music and building my HO scale model railroad. The train is done, but I need a layout to run it on. It's going on a shelf near the ceiling around the office, and into part of the living room.

6/21/2004 at 5:29PM

All our pigs are named for famous Cubans. Past Cubans roasted and eaten:

Fidel
Raoul (Fidel's brother)
Che
Elian
Andy Garcia
Gloria Estefan (a real pig)
Desi (O Lucy, I'm done!)

7/25/2004 at 12:23PM

Yes, I used to use the CalArts sauna regularly for a number of years even after graduating. I lived in Newhall, so almost every evening I went up there to swim and sauna.

10/6/2004 at 9:09PM

I think that knowing what we know, someone - I'm not saying I'm going to put in the time - could reverse engineer at least a lot of FZ's harmonic thinking, and the nuts and bolts that made the chord bible. But it has nothing to do with guitar playing - ummm...7 note chords on every note of a melody!!!???

But he did do a lot of that, i.e. putting a chord on every note of a melody. And I think it was "automated", which is to say he had a system or a process. No way he sat down at the piano and wrote Sinister Footwear like Igor probably did The Write-Off Spring.

Frank had a plug-in. But, he created it. I guess that's what interests me, really. What, and how, he came up with that gave him results he already knew he liked. You did that in your own way with your fractal algorithms. That stuff playing in your house sounded like your music - but you didn't have to write it out note for note.

I can make something sound like Frank wrote it. But I'm not interested in doing that. I would like to know how Frank made it sound like Frank wrote it. If you know what I mean...

2/23/2005 at 3:53PM

But my druther would be to use a Pasadena trip as an excuse to spend more money at my model railroad store not far from you, come by at any time that works for you for beverages, maybe food if that's happening although don't go out of your way, as I do very little sit-down dining of full meals, tending more towards grazing, and then getting myself to the concert by 8.

No, not playing myself. Although, I did take on some percussion work recently. The Jacaranda concert series in Santa Monica hired me to put together a Lou Harrison piece and Varese Ionisation. Couldn't resist. It was fun. Now it's back to surf music on the bass, which is more fun.

3/18/2005 at 7:17PM

First of all, let me say that I really enjoyed our long-overdue visit, FZ talk, and especially hearing your recent pieces. Thanks for sharing those with me. Sorry for using that phrase, but as a fan of yours who feels like he's been out of the loop for a while, or just didn't know you were doing new work, it was really fun to hear some of that and I like what I heard.

FYI, your name comes up quite a bit in my teaching, for various reasons. Just yesterday someone came in to their lesson and wanted to talk about this whole "conceptual basis" thing, which I guess is pretty rampant now at ClaArts. I took the liberty of sharing some of our dialogue on the subject. You know my point of view. This student was a little troubled, but I think he felt better after our talk. I'm glad I have recourse to your experience as a teaching tool, since I've never really had to grapple with

that particular issue myself.

3/18/2005 at 8:07PM

Ah, the Ontological thing... yes.

I think I do being about as well as I ever will BE able to.

It's Heidegger's "presenceing" that I have difficulty with.

I don't think I'll ever be able to "is" well.

Hope that all is wells with yous

3/18/2005 at 10:18PM

my philosophy studies stopped with Repo Man.

7/1/2005 at 12:53AM

That's sort of a problem, and I defer to Bob, who really seems to care about that. I suggested Amadeo Roldan, and he was concerned that no one would know who that is (was). But we ate Andy Garcia, and I had never heard of him before. And Bob could hardly believe that - but there ya go.

9/25/2005 at 2:29PM

I am hoping to list him as a reference in an application, but have not gotten any reply. But I haven't seen him in quite a while and before I start bugging him I thought I would ask around as to his well-being. We're old enough now that I keep hearing about people I've had vigorous conversations with only recently, and suddenly they're gravely ill. Maybe I'm just getting overly sensitive (yeah, not likely), but I thought you might be able to tell me if he is well and I wouldn't be intruding if I am a little more energetic in trying to contact him for a favor.

We have a new kitty - Molly (the fearless flying Molly). Great fun.

9/25/2005 at 6:20PM

make them into downloadable ring tones. people buy those

10/14/2005 at 4:08PM

I really like the short pieces, as music, and I like the idea of them, and the fact of their existence. I'm really pleased that you've identified a way to make the making of music fun and meaningful for yourself again, and that we who have always liked your work can share it again. I sort of thought you were only going to play those pieces for a few friends, and I'm glad they will be more generally available.

Not always, but sometimes he is really verbose. Yours is Brautigan poetry in comparison.

11/8/2005 at 5:11PM

i still think your music is (generally) fun. that one is less fun - but i still like it a lot for what it is whatever that is

12/17/2005 at 10:19AM

I think I'll stick with the Finnish Darts Organization

1/16/2006 at 9:25AM

I have often referred to football as "sublimated warfare".

1/17/2006 at 8:45AM

By the way, I spent much of yesterday at a Grandmothers rehearsal up at CalArts. Miroslav Tadic is their guitarist now, and there was no school. They sounded great, and it was really nice to meet Roy Estrada and Napoleon and hang out with them a bit. I know that when the Grandmothers first started out Frank dismissed them categorically, but this band plays very very well.

Napoleon hasn't lost a thing, sounds as good as he did in 1978, and Roy is all over some bass parts that are way beyond anything he actually played in Frank's band.

1/28/2006 at 3:35PM

I saw the TV stuff when it first aired. In fact, I am probably one of a very few people who saw the banned Lick My Decals off Baby commercial on TV. When I was in high school watching some Fellini movie or something, very late at night, a Youngstown station aired that. It was already banned, and a few years late, but I knew it by reputation. I had the album. The commercial just came on. I think it was some weird late night TV movie jockey just airing it for fun, and for the few who might appreciate it.

I always traded away records for other ones, so my record collection was sort of in rotation, as I explored different things. It was easier than trying to get money to buy more records.

2/7/2006 at 10:49AM

well, hopefully it will be rendered swoopingly, exuberantly, and with aplomb. that's how I prefer my music to be done

2/11/2006 at 11:05AM

German Coast Guard
great name for a band
way better than Chicago Transit Authority
but they were compelled to change it to Chicago
German would not be such a great name for a band
unless they were a tonband
but then they would be called Tape
could be a good name for a band

6/12/2006 at 1:04PM

I told Lynn not to spend any money on my music if I die first. I'd rather she go see the pyramids.

7/8/2006 at 5:33PM

I think pipa virtuoso Wu Man should do a cover version of I Am Woman.

8/10/2006 at 5:02PM

The new ones are too cute for their common good, I am sure.

Coincidentally, we adopted a new one yesterday. The neighbor's kid came over with her, had found her in their garage and were sure she must be ours. She wasn't, but is now. Claudia. Our first symmetrical cat. She is mostly black, with all four paws white. They usually seem to have one white, or two beige on the left. Not Claudia. She's very square. Also has a broken tail. Takes a sharp turn in the middle, I guess like that Zappa cat you said had his tail broken in three places. I don't think I met that member of the clan. Anyway, congratulations on the new companions. They charm.

2/22/2006 at 12:06PM

two songs later I was listening to Bjork. J.S., C.P.E, or P.D.Q.?

3/1/2006 at 8:12PM



The cactus picture for six drummers is especially nice. It cries out (to me anyway) to be an animated cartoon character or something... can it sing?

3/28/2006 at 9:13AM

I saw Mingus some time in the 70s at the Village Vanguard in NYC. He was not in a good mood apparently. All during the soundcheck he was on mic and every other word was "horseshit". The set was great though. Danny Richmond on drums was always amazing. But as was typical of those clubs, the set was short, and we had to pay again to hear the second one.

I also had the opportunity to hear Roland Kirk at the Jazz Workshop in Boston. That was a bright moment. He had had a stroke, and lost the use of one arm. So he mostly played tenor, with one hand. Amazing.

4/16/2006 at 7:15PM

you may take no for an answer
but I'll take no foreign answer

April 26, 2006 2:14:35 PM PDT

Thanks for the language lesson. That's one way I've never heard anyone pronounce I Ching, although my brother refers to it in passing in a little self-produced novelty book he just sent me, and he includes the pronunciation, same as yours. Might it be CHing or King in another dialect?

I am still only .25 fte at CalArts, although I truly hope that changes. With Lucky gone and Mort retired, there is currently a fulltime comp position open. I have applied...

The Invisible Guy will end soon, only three more installments. I'm way ready. Four years of working on it is enough. Next I have to finish up and tweak a few of the recordings so I can release it all on 3 CDs, get some merch together (mugs, ring tones, etc.), figure out how to get the word around outside the new music scene, and hopefully partner up with my nephew to connect with a video game developer.

New work and directions include serious interest in shortwave. I'm developing a piece for a new ensemble that will include three shortwave operators, two laptop players, and electric guitar. All form and structure, but no composed content. That comes out of the air.

Also a piece for 2 pianos, that I have been trying to figure out how to do for what may be decades by now. It's based on mapping, corresponding the 64 I Ching hexagrams to the squares of a chess board, assigning sonorities based on the hexachords of a row, and working out musical gestures derived from the logic of the movements of the various pieces. So, basically, when it's done two players could literally play chess with pianos. Or transcribe famous games into music, etc.

So, I'm pretty much done with surf music for now, having probably written more surf tunes than anyone else on earth, and developed the genre as far as I can. But I'm also pretty disinterested in conventional chamber music and note-writing. I do plan to finish an EAR Unit piece in memory of Lucky. That I need to do for myself. But I am really more interested right now in creative listening, the shortwave as a musical experience, mapping unrelated but similar structures onto each other to musical ends, etc.

In other words, I am doomed to never make any money or get a Guggenheim. I just hope I get a job, so I can retire. I tell everyone who asks what I do that I am on permanent creative leave. It's nice to have time, but I need at least some money to pay for my model railroad stuff.

November 20, 2006 1:30:05 PM PST

Sure, I've got some keyboard music. After doing mostly surf music for the last four years I'm now working on vocal music, and short stories combined with shortwave sounds, sort of an "audio book". So I don't have anything new to show you, but I think you might like my Four Rosicrucian Preludes, from my "Satie period" (ca. 1999). Marilyn Nonken played them last year.

The book, would love to sell you one, especially if we can get together to "save shipping". My cocooning strategy has worked so well that I rarely see any of my friends anymore. Trying to change that.

Lynn and I are going to Maryland for a week, leaving tonight, so I can't really get anything to you until after we get back.

So, I'll drop you a line then and we'll follow up.

1/3/2007 at 11:16AM

He's froot loops. He's been talking about doing it, so we knew it was coming. We caught him digging a trench and soaking the dirt, and he denied being in my yard even though I was standing right there looking at him. We checked during the night and the plant was still there at 4:30, but when I checked again at 6:30 he had done the deed. We caught him wheeling his green barrel into his house. Yesterday there were two Rooter Man trucks at his place, so maybe he tried to flush the evidence. We called the real police, and they couldn't do anything. They weren't even sure it was a misdemeanor and had to call in and ask if they could write it up as vandalism.

1/4/2007 at 12:55PM

He's been diagnosed and medicated for a long time. These days I think they call it "bi-polar". Does that mean he's actually been to both poles? That would be pretty cool (ouch, sorry!).

The cactus would be a menace to any child riding naked on a scooter, fucking up and driving into the middle of our yard, falling off, and landing on it.. They would get pricked. I did worse damage to myself on purpose playing Cage's "Child Of Tree", strumming a cactus just to prove that he was wrong when he told me that he allowed improvisation in that piece only because you can't have chops or express your ego on a cactus.

You once made a comment to me (you don't seem to recall most of the most important things you've said to me...) "Notation isn't composition". That's true, but notation is a hugely important factor in a lot of compositional practice.

For the last ten years I have been watching student composers become more conservative, artistically, because they only know how to use computers - poorly - and the ones that recognize that want to learn about hand copying, so they can more immediately and accurately notate their ideas.

2/2/2007 at 3:19PM

As for the Real Life copyists nightmares, I'm not thinking as much in terms of the torn scraps of paper and road maps and secret codes that I had to assemble Steve Vai's scores from. I'm thinking specifically in terms of workarounds discovered as ways to get the required results in notation software. For example, in Lucky's score I had to make a meter of 36/64, input lots of 64th notes and the required rests, make all the notes grace note size, then hide the beams and replace them with a beam "line", add a slash, and hide all the rests and the time signature. It looks exactly as Lucky intended - a non-metered bar with a shit-load of grace notes occupying it within an approximate time frame. But it only looks that way because 1) half the information is hidden, and 2) the computer can play it back because I played by the sequencer's rules. If the computer couldn't play it, I couldn't get away with that particular work-around.

3/17/2007 at 3:10PM

As a composer, I have really valued my relationships with people like you, Marty Walker and others who chose to play the bass clarinet, and focus on it, and do it so well. God's gift to me was the ability to easily play the vibraphone, the most boring instrument on earth. I would have asked for bass clarinet chops, were that an option.

3/18/2007 at 11:44AM

We don't have to do lunch. I love Korean food, but I don't eat meals during the day, so maybe we can just hang at your place and visit, and I can tell you what I've worked up for this class and get some feedback and ideas.

3/20/2007 at 3:19PM

I can't say I'm at my rock steady best yet, but around half way home from your place I began feeling a whole lot calmer, so maybe the orange is having an effect. Maybe I'll eat a couple more. I probably need to start eating a breakfast, a thing I have only done on extremely rare occasions in the last couple decades.

3/21/2007 at 11:24AM

No, not yet. But I will try to make myself do that. Yesterday was pretty scary and disturbing.

Speaking of feathers, at 3 am a bird flew into my face. Molly brought it in and let it go in the bedroom.

3/23/2007 at 2:25PM

I called this morning, and have an appointment for Wednesday. I wish it was sooner. I'm actually looking forward to seeing someone. I have several issues in my life that I've been struggling with for a long time now, and I might finally be ready to ask for help, or find out what some alternatives are.

I've been struggling with depression for a long time, and "fighting" it mostly by drinking a lot, way more than you can expect to get away with. So, I resolved this morning to give up the booze, which will be difficult. I've become dependent on it. But maybe if I can get help with the depression, it will be easier to stay a healthier course. The shakes you witnessed really scared me. It's not usually that bad, although there was one time that it was even worse. But I have noticed I'm at least a little jittery most days now, until I get my Stoli. Then I'm steady as a rock. So, obviously, there's a problem. Maybe I also have blood sugar issues, but even so, I do have a problem with alcohol. I haven't seen a doctor in a long time, but the last time I had blood work done he said my liver numbers were quite high, and I shouldn't be drinking so much, and I drink a lot more now than I did then.

So, thanks for encouraging me and following up. It helped me make up my mind to see someone. It was no fun being seen shaking like that at your house. It was frightening and embarrassing. But it got me thinking, and closer to taking some long overdue measures.

I'd really like to enjoy my life again.

3/24/2007 at 3:02PM

I think alcohol is way powerful physically as well as psychologically. Last night I woke up about four times in a cold sweat, so maybe detox is already starting.

5/12/2007 at 7:07PM

well, I guess I should have stuck out the la new music scene a bit longer. obviously, that's where the money is..

5/12/2007 at 7:36PM

Maybe he patented the 12 tone row.

hell, it's gotta be at least as good as a pet rock!

5/30/2007 at 2:56PM

No mention of my liver. Actually, the worst number was my testosterone, abnormally low. I guess I'm not macho. They said they can give me a patch or something if I'm concerned about it.

We'll be having a 4th of July party again, but I've given up the pig roast for now. We did ten years. This year I'd like to enjoy more of the party, instead of being burnt toast by the time the guests start arriving. Last year I didn't even eat! Eight hours at the spit is a long shift.

Anyway, I'm feeling well and looking forward to a relaxing and productive summer.

6/20/2007 at 11:54PM

I am not sure what to say about Alan. He has hurt me, with purpose, in print and in public. What did I do? When he slammed me the second time, I went out to Dutton's and bought his book. I wanted to know if he knew enough about anything I care about to dismiss me categorically. His book on Ives and Cage and Cowell etc, is all right, if you don't already know anything about them.. If you do, it's useless. The man has zero insight, only a bit of information. Anyone can get that.

When you say that he says some one needs to speak for a community... you know what...you were on the ground floor of this "community", and I was welcomed into the ICA, etc. and I think I paid a wee bit of dues, and have tried to give back. When the composers Forum of Los Angeles sponsored an event to help us all to get to know our New York comrades, they asked me to play, for free. I don't know how well I played, but I gave my best, and I had Marty Walker and Robin Lorentz with me, so it could not have exactly sucked. Alan BOOED.

Alan Rich BOOED.

I don't consider that a badge of honor. I wonder where Alan's heart is. And why I have to be the one to take that. And I do not think he has earned any right to speak for anything like a Los Angeles new music community. There is no such thing.

6/21/2007 at 10:47AM

I thought I'd told everyone I know all my Alan Rich stories. He seems to have singled me out as the worst composer in Los Angeles. In general, what he does is assume that I want to be the next John Cage, then reviews any piece I do in terms of that assumption. For example, when my piece Serious Immobilities was done. It's a 24 hour piano solo consisting of 840 variations of Vexations. He called it a "misguided homage to the spirit of John Cage". Hmmmm.....why not SATIE?

When we played The Paces Of Yu, for berimbau and homemade percussion instruments, he called it a glib Cageian rip-off, and went on to say how when Cage does this sort of thing it's absolutely brilliant, but when I do it it's lame. Problem is, Cage never wrote music like that. I was consciously ripping off Kagel, whom I had recently worked with and was strongly influenced by even before that. I've never been influenced by Cage. I like his work, but I don't work like him. Alan just doesn't get it.

He makes up his mind before the concert. Another example from EAR Unit history. In one review (after slamming me) he said "and of course Erika Duke performed her usual miracles". She played a trivial cello part on one piece that night. No miracles, sorry. No virgin birth, Alan. Tuning up was the hardest thing she did that night.

Okay. So the boo thing. That was an event that Heidi Lesemann organized when she was heading the Composers Forum. It was a showcase of the "best of Los Angeles" for representatives of the American Music Center, who came out to get to know our scene a bit. It was really nice. We had Double Nought Spy Car, The Los Angeles Flute Choir, my group, quite a few others. A wide spectrum of Los Angeles music composers and performers.

We were all given ten minutes. So the flute choir talked for about that much time, then played for about twice that. Some tripe. It truly sucked. No booing though, just yawning and twitching by most of us. Spy Car was great. My set wasn't as good as the rehearsal, but nothing ever is. Still it was pretty good. As soon as we ended Alan Booed, really loud. It was an ugly sound, and did not, in my opinion, tell our New York guests anything very positive about our community.

Blog comments. I sometimes post comments to newmusicbox, because I don't know anyone there personally. I also very rarely post comments on Kyle's blog, but usually I send him an e-mail. I told him a long time ago that anything I send him can be posted or quoted if he wishes, unless I say otherwise in my message. The same would go for you. I haven't thought about it much or made it a matter of any sort of principle. I guess that some of my comments are directed specifically to an author that I know, and I don't care too much about the "mystery readers". It's personal dialogue. I let the person I'm talking with decide if it's something they choose to share with the others. Kyle "censors" his blog anyway, so it's not a sure thing that every comment gets posted. On newmusicbox I have to be careful, because once I click "send" it's up there for the world to see. I've deleted lots of comments after careful re-reading and deciding no one really needs to hear me say that, unless I know them and the context is clear. A good example would be my Alan Rich experiences. I don't need to post something like that for readers whom I don't know.

Every once in a while I have something to say that I think would make good blog material. But I don't see myself committing to coming up with something regularly, which I think is mandatory for blogging. Guest author? Perhaps. I will seriously consider that.

6/21/2007 at 1:05PM

It's time for Art's & Lynn's annual July party, which would usually be a pig roast via the generosity of Bob Fernandez. Bob is still just as generous, but Art doesn't feel like working quite that hard. Besides, we did it for ten years, and last year ran out of famous Cubans to name the swine after.

Kids, dates, ex-lovers, relations from out of town, everyone is welcome. But your kids can't play with my trains. Shee-it....okay, your kids can play with my trains. IF I can get them working!!

6/21/2007 at 1:43PM

First, you must know that I went to school with a lot of ART students. Second, you must know by now that the best music is made by ART students. Okay, now that I have that off my chest...

I was doing some pretty high-level work in the noise sound improv realm a while back. Me on gizmos used unconventionally,

Eric Barber on saxophones played as well as I think can be done.

6/28/2007 at 12:42AM

There really is a temptation to blog, I think. There is for me. Maybe it's your new drug. I still have my old one.

I truly appreciate, and enjoy, the opportunity to vicariously blog, mostly via you and Kyle, sometimes newmusicbox. I think ComposerHead will become a presence, though. I registered composerhead.com quite a while back, but with the idea of it being more like Source Magazine. I first conceived it as a subscription CD-Rom. One of my ideas was to feature composer self-interviews, in which they get to answer all the "right" questions - the ones they always wished they would be asked.

7/11/2007 at 1:59AM

I didn't know you were a Bonzo Dog Band fan. Not surprised, just didn't know. I sang The Strain on Jim Rohrig's recital.

7/12/2007 at 12:30PM

After a while I was really bored, especially since I've never been down under, so I went upstairs and put on a Bonzos album. Of course, the first song was I'm Bored. What I didn't realize was that it was also playing over the speakers in the dining room downstairs. Jack and Libby could barely contain themselves. To this day I can't convince Jack and Libby that I didn't do that on purpose..

7/23/2007 at 1:55AM

I really don't have the energy to maintain a full time blog, but this is becoming quite an enjoyable outlet for random thoughts, when I can connect enough dots to make some sort of little piece out of them. Thanks for playing host.

7/23/2007 at 11:07PM

I keep getting odd bits and pieces that may be Mr. CH installments. I like the character, and I think he has some things to say, even if they are not always said in the most kindly manner. I think they are said from an informed perspective, and that there is a kind of love there, an honesty that must count for something.

You know. We are online now; computers have taken over. That's where I want to live and work. But... I still like hard copy.

7/24/2007 at 2:27PM

Anyway, my nephew was hipping me to all the ways you can attract attention to your (my) web site, blog, or whatever online presence you may have. And giving me some sage advice (as yet un-taken, of course, because I'm really quite lazy that way) about snagging people who are searching, for what? I don't know. Truth. Porn.

So he said to name my images. Name the Image. What? Beelzebubba? Could work. Not a bad example. The idea is, if someone is searching for a certain kind of thing, one way they might find it is not through text, but searching on images. So if you name your images in a way that might show up on a relevant search, you can increase your chances of being hit on.

And we all want to be hit on - don't we?

You know how often I've been hit on?

I don't know either

7/26/2007 at 6:58PM

Maybe "Moving to Anonymity" should be my next song. I've been to Montana. I prefer Vermont.

7/31/2007 at 3:21PM

I am taking the writing and the content as seriously as I do anything. Otherwise I wouldn't bother. But I like the buffer zone, the anonymity of it. Mystery? Ahh, probably not that mysterious.

But if I'm going to bother to write, I would not mind being read.

7/31/2007 at 5:45PM

I have been heard a bit. I can't really complain about that too much - but don't get me started!!!

But I have been read much less. And I am, at the moment, writing more words than notes.

Notes are almost becoming strangers. I CAN write them, but... I need a reason. I used to require none. I would like to write a piece for Lucky. But that is such a heavy burden. It would have to be so good.

When I got the Koussevitsky, to write something for X-Tet, I remember telling Lucky how much of a burden that was. It was serious money (for me), and I wanted to do my best work, the best piece I'd ever composed. He said you just can't think that way. All you can do is the best work you do now.

So I used the opportunity to write a piece in which I broke all my habits, pushed things I knew beyond the breaking point, and try to grasp a bit of a new straw, something to take me somewhere new. Do you know how hard that is to do? It's hard, even when you're getting paid to do it. In fact, it's somewhat easier when you're not.

Mon, 13 Aug 2007 01:44:44 EDT

"whatever happened to your nice neighbor?"
WE ATE HIM

9/23/2007 at 7:29PM

I had a first appointment. Tomorrow, I begin something - not really sure what.

Jack and Chas both said "You can't do it by yourself". That's not something I like to hear. But I think I have to accept that as fact. Thank you for your support and friendship, and I will stay in touch. You know what I speak of, in your own way. My way might be a bit harder. But I can do it. And I will.

9/23/2007 at 8:33PM

I am alcohol dependant. I do any job I am given very well. But I am not doing much of anything else. I just don't have the motivation.

I am textbook. I am learning (I do that fairly well).

I do not know how this will play out. I am giving it a try. I won't write a "Goodbye Letter" to my drug of choice. Fuck that.

I will decide to be an addict, or decide to be someone who can't and doesn't drink any more. Stay tuned as Art decides, or doesn't.

I would like to get some decent work done. That's the main thing. I did a hell of a lot of good work drunk. Now I don't bother. I would like to bother.

9/28/2007 at 1:22PM

But I have a good list of motivations, and quite a few fine people in my own little support group (I am not planning to attend meetings), and with a good therapist, I think I'm going to do just fine. On my way home today, I drove past every liquor store in Sylmar, in a sort of personal ritual, my own way of saying "Fuck all of you, I don't need you anymore!".

10/2/2007 at 10:53AM

I am pleased to report that I remember every conversation I've had since I had my last drink. The week before that I remember having two long distance phone calls in a row that I couldn't recall anything about after I hung up, other than that they had happened. I think there's something to be said for this sobriety thing. I think I could get used to it.

Yesterday I was talking with Lynn and she said "I'm talking with the man I was missing". I think I was missing him too.

10/3/2007 at 11:33AM

But middle age composers who gradually got into the habit of over-drinking until it became a dependency, but who still love their work, have never fucked up on the job because they are smart enough to never drink at school, who have loving wives whom they love in return, and have a strong support base of genuine friends, some of whom are sober, some of whom are addicts, some of whom have kicked habits, and some of whom are trying, and who all care about each other deeply and

respect each others' boundaries and would never pressure an alcoholic back into drinking or offer a joint to someone they know has worked hard to give up weed, and who actually have an education instead of getting their high school equivalency certificate at age 35, well. Let's just say I think I eventually convinced them that just maybe there is a way for me to manage my recovery without the help of AA thank you very much.

Once close friend who was in a situation much like my own told me, whatever you do, just don't go to AA, ever. He had gone to 4 or 5 meetings, and said AA is for stupid people, not us. Maybe an ugly way to say it, but I know what he meant.

Besides the aforementioned, my game plan includes getting back into some activities that I had given up, that I really enjoy and find very therapeutic. Specifically, I will be getting back into scuba diving and pistol shooting. With the money I'm saving on vodka I can get myself a Taurus PT92 9mm semi-auto for my birthday, and go to the firing line and blow the heads off of pictures of Johnny Walker, Old Grandad, Jack Daniel, Jim Beam et al. I quit diving only because I had no buddy, but 2 guys in my band are certified open water, so now I have buddies.

Yesterday I made an instrument for a friend who asked me for a piece a long time ago, and I started the piece and made quite a bit of progress. It feels good to be interested again, and I am suspecting that - not jumping to conclusions though, keeping my guard up - that my depression issues were the direct result of alcohol. I plan to see a therapist until this matter is addressed independently and made clearer. I may still have issues to deal with outside of the dependency. I just don't know that yet. And in any case, I don't think a little talk therapy can hurt anyone, even if they don't "need" it. I have no qualms about getting to know myself better.

11/3/2007 at 5:47PM

You said that pot is not physically addictive, but certainly is psychologically. That makes sense to me.

Alcohol is absolutely physically addictive, no question. The only drug, I am told, actually dangerous to withdraw from (maybe that's just a scare tactic!).

But my process is in the realm of the psychological, as you seemed to have suggested.

I am thinking a lot on your comments about finding the motivation. The physical and the emotional/psychological parameters. etcetera

Your observations and comments and experience of life are of great value to me. I write this now mostly to keep you in the loop. I'm not in an active dialogue with very many people about this particular topic. Maybe a slightly leading blog post now and then... Anyway, thank you. you help.

11/17/2007 at 1:32PM

Do you know Glenn Gould's Solitude Trilogy? I listened to the first one this morning, and fell asleep. That has happened every time I've tried to listen to it. I kid you not.

11/18/2007 at 5:24AM

I thought I'd just write a bit since I'm not sure what else to do, except maybe cry. I still have not been able to give up my bottle. Doesn't that sound funny? Like I'm a child, and I think that's not a bad way to think about it. Jack Veas sent me an article addressing that issue, which I guess he has found very helpful in understanding himself. Why is it so hard to grow up?

There is a big part of me that sincerely wants to be free of this habit. But the part that doesn't is still stronger I guess. I guess what I don't understand is what compelled me - not quite right - why did I choose to start again. After I went in to detox, the first month was just so easy. I felt like I had just made up my mind and it was as easy as flipping a light switch. I was suddenly a non-drinker. Not "recovering".. Being sober was not something I had to work at. But then I woke up one morning and knew I was going to drink, like I made a decision about it and did it on purpose. And it's been hell ever since, because the emotional conflict is so extreme.

You were absolutely right when you said that even for a physical substance dependency, kicking the habit is purely a psychological matter.

Anyway, I got up this morning and decided to write to a few of the friends that I consider my "group". People I know who

have given up a drug. Because I need help doing it, and I suppose just letting people know, saying "help" might help. I take some inspiration from the fact that you said it took several tries. Because I have failed doesn't mean I can't still succeed. So I guess I'll just have to try again, and keep trying. Because this can't continue.

I hate thinking about it. I hate having the inner dialogue, talking to myself about the whole matter. I am sick and tired of it. I want to think about something else for a change.

Not sure what else to say, or what I expect you to say. I just felt that today I need to write to my group, my friends, and just openly say that I am a fucking addict. I don't like it. I don't like my drug anymore. It is not my friend, and I don't like what it has done and is doing to my brain and my mind and my heart. But I still want that bourbon so bad I can taste it. Why do I want it? I don't know.

I guess it's time to just grow up already.

How did you manage? How did you quit? Is it just a decision that you stick to, that you keep making? Did you have help? I guess you found enough motivation somewhere. I wish I could find it. I have a long and compelling list of reasons to not drink, and I can't think of one to put in the other column, the why to drink column. Any pleasure I used to get from it is gone. Now there is only the pain and conflict, not understanding the emotional dependency. Understanding. I could use some.

Thanks for listening. I hope you don't feel like you should be able to give me any advice or wisdom. It's okay if you have nothing to say. I just thought it might help me to say something. To just put some of it in words. For whatever reason.

As you say in closing, "Be well"

I don't know if I'm going to drink today or not. If I don't it will be really hard. And if I do it will be really hard. So either way, it's going to be a hard day.

This will be a hard day.

11/18/2007 at 11:06AM

That's an interesting question. I don't think it was ever exciting. But I am very interested in the possibilities of the web for art making, experience, marketing, and community. Blogging is certainly a significant development in all those regards.

I think though, that when I write, I still would like it to be a book or ... a book. I like hard copy. And mostly I'm interested in the writing as something finished that I deliver. I'm not looking for comments or dialogue in quite that way.

I prefer dialogue with my friends, or in one case, Gavin Bryers naked in my sauna after quite a lot of beer talking about working with Tom Waits, and how Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet came to be. You don't get that on a blog.

Kyle Gann remarked that mostly when I respond to his posts, I send him a personal email, and he wondered why those were not posted as "comments". Almost every comment I have ever posted anywhere has been skipped over and ignored, and the rest of the comments seemed to be by the same few people talking to each other. That's what emails and phones - or dinners (with or without drinks) are for.

So, my interest in blogging is apropos my interest in the very real potential, as I see it, of the web. But the blog experience itself...like I said, I would probably spew more if it were slightly less inconvenient. and so on...

11/18/2007 at 1:47PM

This is good. I can use this. Lynn thinks in such practical terms. she is a Unitarian, and just wants me to do the right thing.

i need some poetry in the equation

November 20, 2007 1:20:18 PM PST

What Art Wants: Cardboard, with four printable panels (wallet), with a sleeve for the disk (NOT) a tray. The clincher: I want a spine on the side for the title. Anyone got any experience with this? Know anyone to ask?

I did some nice artwork for the cover - a super posterized photo of Robert, erased, so he looks like the Invisible Surfer. The photo effect almost looks like a paint-by-number.

My brother is going to do a 3-D drawing for the cover of Volume 2 when we get that done. I'll include red/blue glasses with the CD.

Anyway, it's moving as fast as I can get over the roadblocks.

Any help along the packaging management would be a blessing. I always hate dealing with printers, and these CD companies always want you to use their award winning design team, which I don't plan to do. In which case it's probably easier to communicate with them if you're a professional designer, which I'm not.

I'm sure there's some secret terminology.

"Of course by finished size we mean the actual size it's going to be when finished, which is 5.25 inches. Which of course means 5 inches. Everybody knows that."

Just like the yarrow stalk oracle. The first draw will either be a 5 or a 9. If 9, that's really 8, which is 2 because 8 is a double unit. But if it's 5, that's really 4 (the first one never counts - the first time - but does later, of course, Everyone knows that. But since 4 is a single unit, it counts as 3.

And I guess 5.25 by 5.25 is really 5. But sometimes it's 5 x 5.5. %\$%) ^ %) ^ %*%\$%)

November 26, 2007 8:41:52 PM PST

Neil Young has been playing The Sultan on his current tour. I've been getting a lot of email about it because of my web page and selling my copy of that 45. etcetera.

The copy I sold to this guy named Carl got signed backstage by Neil last year. Carl's a blood relative of Neil's bus driver. I just heard, according to the bus driver (via Carl) Neil was amused by a web page he saw about the tune, and so he decided to add it to his set list. So....

Guys.... What say we scoop Neil and cover his tune before he covers it himself.

Learn your parts. We record at my house. Let's do both sides. They've already been released, so we don't need the Youngster's permission.

I've wanted to do these tunes anyway, a bit faster, little more surf.

12/4/2007 at 9:07AM

Wow. That is really some piece. I only listened once, but that's more music than I've listened to in probably the last six months, at least in terms of sitting down and attentively listening to anyone else's work.

You might have taken non-sense to a new level. I don't understand much about the piece, other than that it seems to work. There are passages that - if you were my student - I would say take more time with that, don't be in such a hurry to get to the next thing. That was a first, fleeting impression. But then, I'm a composer with an almost perversely long attention span. I can obsess on one sound for way longer than necessary.

The latest sound I'm into is the Geiger counter. The particular sound of those clicks, combined with the really ametrical - probably the closest thing to random we can get - rhythm/texture, I find really intriguing.

Just rambling now I guess, but wanted to say I have given a first listen and am genuinely impressed. I'm not a huge fan of the title, however. Lacks poetry as I define it.

12/4/2007 at 10:07PM

I just like poetry, and look for a chance to make titles that seem like it.

ha ha.....ha. An exact repeat. Just try that, white boy. It's different every time. That's WHY we have repeats. If it was the same, we'd only do it once. Didn't they teach you that in music school? Okay, sorry. They didn't teach me that either. Some things you have to figure out on your own.

I think some other composer also used an F#. SHIT MAN! And it's such a good pitch.

We become to a place and time where and when it's not so bad to share what we have been given. I will pay you out of respect. But I would not hesitate to ask you to do this for free, from a point of even greater respect.

There are very hungry students there. Minds. Real people. People you might enjoy talking to, or listening to. I think they would treasure and value what you might say. And some of them might understand what you choose to not say.

12/8/2007 at 8:50AM

I never think about Pearl Harbor
except when I watch Hawaii Five-O, which is fairly often
because I have the first two seasons
but never mind that now
this week was a time to think though
I don't know who your heroes were
but the first week of December got
Frank, John Lennon, Lucky, and Karlheinz.
The latter two (no pun) on the same date. 12/5
In Europe it's 5/12
It's the same thing no matter how you say it

repetition
variation
closure

2/1/2008 at 11:15AM

you have your camera
I have my words,
but none of them
in Finnish
did I never learn
or was I never taught?
we both compose

from poems while dying
© arthur jarvinen
2000000....whenever

Fri, 1 Feb 2008 19:32:05 EST

Okay, so I'm in the local taco place, getting...some tacos!
While waiting, I'm looking at the menu
hamburguesa - what the hell is that?
All I could figure, from the picture, is that it comes with fries
but it got me thinking, since a lot of Zappa guys are or have been Mexican,
and FZ is big in Germany "Wo ist mein Hamburg weesa?"

2/12/2008 at 9:30PM

You are one of a few people on earth I would say I have learned from. You go in there and be you. Tell them something you think you know. Tell them what you don't know. Frighten them.

Academic????!!! We share what we have, what we have been given. You have a great deal to share.

February 23, 2008 9:13:47 AM PST

Starting my work day now, doing things I had planned for yesterday, but still enjoying that I didn't get a damn thing done yesterday. Putting catchup on a good friend is more important than "productivity", at this point. Does mean I "should" work today, but what does "should" mean, anyway?

I thought that banjo was a bit cheaper. But I think you "should" just get one, at the best price you can find without trying too hard. You have a natural feel for it. It was quite a bit of fun to hear you groping around the tuning, then finding material, and expression.

It was also fun to let myself play a bit. I stayed up most of the night playing. Carl Perkins "Sure to Fall". I love that song. When I played it in New York I thought about Lynn and cried on stage. How weird is that? Is that too weird?

That's probably too weird. But great songs are great songs, eh? Great songs can make us weird.

February 23, 2008 4:24:59 PM PST

If music ever gets better than this, I want to be there. As a matter of fact, if it ever gets this good again, I want to be there. I would like to be able to write a song this good, not to mention singing and playing it.

I played this on a sruti box and sang harmony with my friend Ryan. A composer said later "It must be nice to be able to put yourself on such a pedestal, make fun of other people's music, when so many of us are trying to find our own voices". That cut me to the quick. She had NO idea.

Another person at the same show said "It was so great to hear you sing that country song. You obviously really love it, it means a lot to you and it put all the other weirder stuff in context." Go figure. Some get it and some don't.

Anyway, this is my favorite song. Lynn and I sing it in harmony sometimes, but I can't seem to get her to do that very often.

February 23, 2008 4:54:40 PM PST

Lucky studied ancient languages, really old English, Norse, and Icelandic. He talked to me several times about the word weird, specifically. He was fascinated by that word. I don't remember exactly, but he kept saying that it came from a root that meant "to be", so basically, what I gathered, was that to be weird was, to be.

The "weird sisters" in Shakespeare. That meant something to that audience that now has completely lost any context or real meaning. And nobody knows it. They were being weirder I guess.

I was walking down the street in New York on a tour day. Rand Steiger took quite a few minutes to demonstrate, explain, and coach me and the girls (EARS) on just exactly how a New Yorker says "weird". It's two syllables. Wee-ahd. But the inflection is different depending. Bronx. Queens. Brooklyn. But it's always Wee-Ahd. Isn't that weird?

3/21/2008 at 8:47PM

Had a great experience in SF, but of course there is no audience. Although it was almost impossible to get out of the parking structure because the SYMPHONY and OPERA had both just let out.

Did I ever mention that I hate symphonies and operas? That's a fundamental point of difference between you and I, I suspect.

But enough on that. I shall make Buffalo wings now...

3/27/2008 at 2:25PM

She said (so I am told) "Does everyone in California have a name like "bunny" or "lucky"? No, We don't all have "names like that". What we have is the choice we made - to never live in New York.

4/16/2008 at 9:53AM

So I'm not sure if they got the jokes. I said something once about getting a job in Butt-Fuck Arkansas, and one of the girls

laughed pretty hard. I'm not sure if I could get fired for saying Butt-Fuck in class, but at least someone thought it was humorous, and I'm still going in to work today.

5/2/2008 at 6:55PM

Okay, so I park my car at school today, and as I'm walking by the other cars there's one that has a vanity plate that reads ARTZ LUVR and then I notice on the back window a sticker that sez "I'd rather be fucking" so, reading the car, it seems to say

I'd rather be fucking Art's lover

7/22/2008 at 3:07PM

The ABBA, as a unit of musical interest. I like it. The blog post earned at least one Aptyp, the basic unit of measurement for a thing's amusement value for me. I just invented it, inspired by your idea. Aptyp is Arthur spelled in Cyrillic, which amused me the first time I saw it, on a poster in Kiev.

But Lynn says I am easily amused.

Alas, I am used.

September 18, 2008 9:37:45 AM PDT

I see you're playing the Alcotts. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't mind hearing that, might have to cancel my policy of not going to concerts. I suppose I've never had opportunity to tell you that that is among my most favorite pieces of all times. In fact, I'm using it in class today to demonstrate just how powerful a motif can be, because Ives isn't just quoting. In fact, he's not quoting at all. He's getting material from Beethoven's motif that Ludwig himself didn't bother to use, for whatever reason. And that maybe only Ives would hear

Although I'm sure he (L.) heard it all, before...
as it were

Indulge me while I relate my first experience of the Concord. Michael McCandless, the first pianist in the E.A.R. Unit - before Vicki, before you, before Gaylord, before Lorna, and some other filler, there was Michael. Long dead now, I am unpleased to say. He played the Concord on his B.F.A recital at CalArts, along with some other stuff - but isn't that quite enough for a B.F.A recital?! So, he asked me if I would listen to this piece he's going to play in a few days, maybe I could give him some feedback. And Michael took me into a practice room, and on this shitty piano, played the Concord from memory - then he expected me to have something to say!

Jeezus. I had never heard the piece before, but it changed my life. I couldn't say a damn thing, and to this day I'm sure I have nothing to say about the Concord, and the Alcotts in particular.

I only have the Kalish recording, I suppose because I can still hear Michael playing it, so I don't listen to it all that much. But I think I would like to hear you play that one. You won't be so heavy-handed as Kalish. It needs some balls, but not that many. The motif speaks very loudly on its own, you only need to work so hard...

September 26, 2008 2:57:30 PM PDT

That's flattering, but I do know what you mean. The right context for what I do and what you do is not an obvious fit. My work gets progressively farther (which does not mean I am "progressing"!) from what you do. I sometimes wonder, why would you program my work? What have you heard or seen in it that would make you want to play a piece? Any composer would love to have you play his or her piano music - that is a foregone conclusion. But what connects you to a composer or a piece? I suppose I already know some of that, because I know you, and I have followed your career through recordings and read your interviews. You are very articulate about what interests and motivates you to play, especially the music of your contemporaries. I'm still not sure though, just how I might play into that.

I tend to follow my muse almost blindly, blissfully - to the detriment of my career. But, I would hope, in the best interest of the music.

Right now I'm more concerned with field recording and shortwave radio signals, the sounds of Geiger counters, and, as a player, the fretless banjo. The grand piano is not uppermost in my mind - but still won't go away! I am always thinking about piano pieces. Why is that?

Do you have my Four Rosy Preludes? They are too easy for you. Marilyn Nonken played them a couple years ago on a program with the Concord and Boulez. She used them as sorbet for the audience, and for a rest for her own mind and body. I think you look for the hard pieces, the big dishes. I am tending to write more sorbet, when I write for instruments.

But we should perhaps talk about this, if you really want a piece of mine on a program, one that makes sense for both of us at this time.

October 1, 2008 10:53:03 AM PDT

Thanks again for the ticket. Wonderful concert. The line of people wanting to greet you was pretty long, and I was visiting with Milen Kirov, so I didn't get a chance to say hello. But I was there and really enjoyed it. I think that's only the second time I've heard the Alcotts played live, so that was a treat. And the Lutoslawski. I don't know his stuff all that well, but it's always pretty amazing, and especially nice to hear something other than orchestra stuff, since I'm not much of an orchestra fan. I also got to meet Eva Soltes. It's not likely I'll get the house tour on this trip, since she'll be in L.A. for a Harrison concert, but I go to Joshua Tree often enough, so that will happen another time.

I don't attend many concerts any more, but when I come home with ideas for new pieces, that tells me I must have been at a good one.

October 8, 2008 9:19:48 PM PDT

Ehhh, that happens to everyone. You managed it quite gracefully. I think the main thing is that we're there, on stage, for the music. It's not about how great we are. You chose to share great music, and your audience always appreciates the work you have done for them, to let them (us) hear that. I say again, Bravo!

I don't think I ever told you about the editing and post production of The Queen Of Spain. Since we used MIDI keyboards and recorded it all digitally, Mark Waldrep could go into the files and fix any notes. You didn't play ANY wrong notes. It was sick, I almost threw up. We changed a bunch of pitches because you assumed that the accidentals carried through the bar, which was not my intention, so I screwed up. But you didn't. So we tweaked some accidentals. But as for what I wrote and intended, you did that fucking piece in one pass, no misses. I guess that's why you have work.

But it's got to be more than that. You choose your music, and say what you have to say as an artist, with pieces that speak to you, and that you can use to speak to your audience.

Actually, I respect that you haven't yet programmed a piece of mine. Sure, we're friends, and that might be an obvious reason to play something. But you will possibly find a specific context in which it makes lots of artistic sense to program me. That would be great, and I think that time will come, that program will transpire.

I think you enjoy music that grooves, that can be danced to, and I like to write tangos. You have a sharp mind, and don't mind concentrating on what might be intellectual games, but that pay off musically. YOU have awesome technique. But technical facility has always been, to me, the single least interesting aspect of any musical experience. Maybe that's why I tend to write simpler things. I can certainly play lots of hard shit, but it's more fun when the music just speaks more freely, with less work, and less of the noticing of "Us".

So, these days anyway, I would probably write something with a bit more introspection, or more of a vernacular surface quality. Probably not a virtuoso show piece.

But you never know!

10/21/2008 at 11:39AM

One of the potential projects that I am starting to compile data for would be a compilation of one-sided correspondence. We have the Cage/Boulez stuff, which is pretty dreadful reading - unless you're overly enamored of both of them.

Apropos blogs and comments, I do sometimes post comments. But I am finding myself more interested in personal dialogues, conversations between two individuals. It has struck me that it might be worthwhile reading, and an interesting creative endeavor, to pull together a slim volume of e-mails, but only from me, without the letter that triggered the reply. Might work, might not, but it's an idea I'm toying with.

With that in mind, I am sometimes now saving certain e-mails I compose, and even using my reply as a situation in which to

address things that are on my mind. My experience with my comments on blogs is, as I think I said, pretty ungratifying. They are simply ignored or dismissed, and the conversation continues without me, like I wasn't even at the party.

November 13, 2008 3:48:46 AM PST

That's great. It will be fun to revisit that piece. It's pretty whacky. When John Harbison listened to it, he recognized the Scarlatti sonatas I used. Are you just doing the first piece, or all three? I'm assuming just Part One, since you said Vicki is playing bass drum. That's a tricky part, by the way. Brave girl.

Fri, 14 Nov 2008 19:48:57 EST

Hey Indio Give me a call. I just heard that the Indian in the group died, and so did Mitch Mitchell.

11/16/2008 at 11:20AM

Oh, and my neighbor who tried to kill me didn't succeed. That's always a blessing.

November 22, 2008 10:22:34 AM PST

I've been making SO MUCH NOISE lately. Sorry, really, I'll try to keep it down. The neighbors are complaining, and the police even came by. "What's all this about some Queen Of Spain?"

I'll be quiet, I promise.

January 6, 2009 10:08:54 AM PST

Thanks for the tips. Yeah, I know there are lots of options. Basically, my thinking is that a modest Steinway would be something that no artist would be frustrated having to play on, and could possibly be obtained for 35 - 45 grand. Sound about right, or am I completely mishugena?

The Hardwick Town House is, I am told, a superb venue, although we could not get in to check it out for ourselves when we were there to close on the house, which is directly across the street. The Craftsbury Chamber Players do their summer series there, but they move in the personal piano of one of the people involved with the group, and it is strictly hands-off for anyone else. So that's not very helpful.

Our pad in Hardwick will be a summer home for the time being, and I can spend easily three solid months there in the summer, but the long range trajectory is to retire there, in about ten years. What can I say? We fell in love with Vermont, and the house was there, and we kind of couldn't NOT buy it. It was a ridiculous deal. you can see some pics here <http://www.arthurjarvinen.com/vermonthouse.html>

Congratulations on the Grammy Nomination. Even if you never get one, the nomination alone seems to be a pretty glamorous calling card. I'd vote for you, but I'm not a voting member of that particular organization.

Odd thing yesterday. I was talking to someone about Lucky's archive, and Yale wants 40 grand to take it. So I said, we need to be talking to Betty Freeman. Then I came home and read her obit. Oh well. Still, I think we can find a Steinway for less than Yale wants for us to GIVE them Lucky's legacy.

What's the most interesting thing you've listened to or played lately? Anything I should go out of my way to hear?

February 8, 2009 5:55:44 PM PST

I guess I should be thrilled for you that you won! YAY! Consider though, that the Rolling Stones have never "won" a grammy. For me, that tells me most of what I need to know about what that's worth.

I hope it boosts you in some meaningful way. You do beautiful work, and will continue to. I wish I could believe that "awards" like this mean anything at all. You know what I speak of. You'll do the work anyway. I hope the grammy sells records, or whatever it's supposed to do. You rock!

November 5, 2009 9:36:59 AM PST

Jarvinen's Eskimo Piece premieres this Saturday — Greetings, Friends: This is to let you know about an upcoming premiere.

Eskimo Piece, composed in 1976, when I was about nineteen years old, is finally coming to life. It will be premiered this coming Saturday, November 7, by ThingNY, as part of the festival Around the World In 24 Hours, sponsored by the Internationalists. ThingNY is a critically-acclaimed experimental music ensemble based in New York. They will be performing at the Laguardia Performing Arts Center in Long Island City, New York, beginning at 11 pm EST (8pm in California).

The entire program will be webcast live, so you can fire up a TV dinner and watch it from home.

http://www.theinternationalists.org/int_prog_aroundtheworld.html

Frankly, I never thought Eskimo Piece would ever be performed. It dates from my "Dada Period", when I was composing absurdist theater pieces. Eskimo Piece is for 30 Eskimos colliding on an amplified stage. ThingNY are not really Eskimos, nor do they have access to thirty of them for this show. So, I guess they're going to dress up like Eskimos, whatever that means. In any case, it should be fun, and this is probably the only chance you'll ever have to experience the piece. Please tune in at the above url. Arthur Jarvinen

December 1, 2009 2:51:02 PM PST

Thanks again for putting QOS on the Piano Spheres program. I'm glad you like the piece so much, and it was a thrill to hear it played live again after so long. Kind of weird to get in the way-back machine - I had not thought about it since the recording, and had to think "would I write that again?" - but I stand by every note. It's a good piece, and it came across with all the energy and flair that it needed. I hope it wasn't the most stressfull work on the program.

I really enjoyed the whole concert. I can always live - many lifetimes - without the work of Mel Powell. I just don't get it. I liked Mel, but his work has never moved me. The Cowell, on the other hand, made me want to leave and go home to write a piano piece right then!

The whole concert was beautifully and thoughtfully structured, like a composition itself. Some of the best programming I've run into. The Cage was beautiful.

Lentz - what was that about?! Took me by surprise. Nothing like I expected - and that's a good thing. And Kraft's choice of Rhodes (the piece was too long) was very nice. Good use of the special characteristics of that instrument. I owned one for a while, and I know what it's about.

Great concert. I was proud to be part of it.

So...at intermission Rick Marcus (commissioned the Lentz) introduced himself to me. He seemed to like the Queen of Spain. He asked me if I have written much piano music, and said blatantly that he has commissioned a lot of it. You don't say that unless it's leading somewhere.

So....maybe, if you're interested, we should consider how to approach him for a piece. I have an idea on the desk as we speak, for a piano solo, or it could be expanded to include more pianos. I don't know what he's interested in, or what is most of interest to Piano Spheres. He said several times that his friend has a collection of pianos, and maybe that's why Daniel wrote for four. I would only need one to say what I have to say.

You have been inquiring after a piece from me for some time, but nothing I have seems to quite fit your programming agendi. Maybe a commissioned work could creat a new agenda?

Just an idea....well, more than an idea. A suggestion.

Bravo on a really fine concert, all of you. I'll have to come to another one (I hate concerts!).

6/29/2009 at 7:57AM

I've been obsessed with rain recording for a while now, so it's nice to be someplace where it actually happens. But I'm still waiting for thunder. My cello piece can't happen without it.

Wed, Dec 23, 2009 8:08 pm

I guess we haven't actually worked out the game plan for this Christmas. Lynn has tons of work and rehearsals right now, and I'm embroiled in some projects. So we would like to do gifts and a meal on the same day. We would love to have you over here for dinner on Christmas day, the 25th, as long as we do the gifts then as well.

If you prefer to do the gifts at your house, that's fine too, but I suggest we do that on Saturday, breakfast/lunch/dinner - whatever you want, and then Lynn and I will just have our Christmas dinner here together.

Of course, if you're in town for more of the holidays we would enjoy another get-together as well. We haven't seen much of each other lately. We could have you over for a rib roast or something. Maybe you and Dee would enjoy a sauna.

Sorry this year is a little hectic, and we've left planning to the last minute. Just let us know your preference.

Dec 27, 2009 6:09 pm

The Hitler DVD is hilarious, and nicely done. Of course, you have to have the context for it. My brother cracked up at the football team one, but would have no clue why this is funny.

Funny thing though, after watching it, I went to bed and dreamed the whole thing again, but with my own subtitles. But when I woke up I couldn't remember anything about it.

Dec. 28, 2009 11:38 am

Actually, Endless Bummer works really well there. I didn't even know you had that recording. I'm really bad about that. Eric Barber was here last weekend and I played him parts of my string quartet, the one I wrote in memory of Lucky, and it didn't even occur to me to give him a copy of the CD. Have you heard that piece, 100 Cadences? We recorded it last year at Lou Harrison's straw bale house in Joshua Tree. I'll give you a copy.

Even though I don't write much film music, I have often been told that my music sounds "cinematic". When Lynn and I lived on Aztec, our film-maker room-mate heard Egyptian Two-Step and said "That would make great film music". Only a couple weeks ago I did an undergrad comp forum and a student said that a lot of my music sounds cinematic and wondered if I write a lot of film music. Taking those comments to heart I now listen to a lot of my music and think about whether it sounds like film music. My conclusion is that a lot of it would make great closing credit music, just like you used Endless Bummer. Maybe I could have a whole new career as a closing credits composer.

Reminds me, next time you're over I should show you the two film scores I have actually done. I was commissioned a few years ago to score a Max Fleischer cartoon for Relache, to play live. It only took a few days to complete. I just went through my notebook and found a few themes and little ditties, and voila - instant film score. I didn't even have to compose anything new. I also scored a short noir detective spoof for Laurence Walsh (one of Hunter's old girlfriends), and did the same thing, just found things in my notebook that were lying around. Again, no new music, just stuff I had lying around. Turned out great. It will be fun to play those for you and see what you think.

I agree, Christmas was most pleasant this year. See you again soon.

Mon, Dec 28, 2009 6:45 pm

Gloria did a residency at Lou Harrison's straw bale house and told me the place has great chamber music acoustics. So when I was at the Integratron last January I made an appointment to check it out. I asked Eva how much for the day to record, and she offered it to me for 300 bucks, so I jumped on it.

It's really quiet in there as far as trucks and airplanes and such. No low rumbles. Nice view. Just the right amount of reverb so you don't have to add any digitally. It worked out perfectly.

Tue, Mar 9, 2010 8:51 am

I left you a phone message, and this morning I accidentally deleted some messages, so if you called back I didn't get it.

Anyway, I'm wondering about tire chains. I'm driving to Boulder this weekend and Lynn pointed out that I might not be able to drive up the mountains without chains. Might not be a problem at all, but if the weather is bad they don't let you through without them. Do you happen to have tire chains, or know anything about them, where to get them, etc. I've never used them.

March 29, 2010 5:12:53 PM PDT

You want to get to Sport Chalet or wherever and get yourself a folding camp chair. Should not cost more than 12 or 15 bucks. I only have one. If you don't have one, you will be sitting on a rock or in the dirt. That's a bottom-line piece o' gear you want to have.

April 3, 2010 4:56:02 PM PDT

This is the link, but for some reason I had to crank the volume all the way and it was still really quiet. Not sure if it's my system, or maybe I had listened to a different posting on YouTube. La La means I Love you. Some of the best Frisell I've ever heard.

April 5, 2010 9:37:29 PM PDT

that's gratifying to hear. i am fighting with depression like you would not believe, so an email like that - your lovely menu - lifts my sprit. I am glad you got some cooking ideas from me.

May 13, 2010 8:19:18 AM PDT

I'm sure we can link up in Chicago. My brother has a nice place on the Lake. No idea if my nephew Justin will be there. He'll probably be in L.A. having dinner with Kiefer Sutherland, or something like that, or in London closing a 70 million dollar deal with Burger King. He likes to do things like that. Or, he may come over and hang out.

But we should be able to do something pleasant. I have passed many, many hours just looking at the lake from my brother's window.

The Art Institute has a wonderful collection, if you're downtown and have some time. The science museum is pretty much kid oriented, bt they have a WWII German U-Boat that is worth the trip.

May 15, 2010 11:06 am

The other day, in a lesson, I was compelled to sing The Strain for my student. I realized that the only time I've ever performed that song was on your recital, in ROD. Viv Stanshall, who wrote that song, died, consumed by fire, in his house boat, a few years ago. The Vikings used to send dead poeple out on their boats, aflame. It was an honorable way to "bury" them. Maybe Viv was a Viking in a past life, eh?

I leave for Vermont on Thursday, so I won't see you and Dee again until September.

I got a rubber boat, for fishing on Buck Lake. I hope rubber boats don't burn well, because I'm not planning to die quite yet. Just got a lot of shit in me, gotta get it out. OooooohhhhhhhhAuuhhhhhh!

May 17, 2010 9:11:33 AM PDT

Have a great summer. I leave on Thursday for Vermont, back in September.

May 19, 2010 2:52:56 PM PDT

I'm closer to a coast here than I am there. But I coast better in Vermont.

10/1/2010 4:38:17 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time

Sorry to take so long to reply. A lot on my mind. It's been a pretty good summer. I would have liked to have spent more of it in Vermont, but it was better to return here.

The most exciting thing, career-wise and artistically, is that I am debuting a new electronic music quartet, TempWerks, at the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento in November. Several pieces I wrote my first summer in Hardwick, so that was a productive time, I guess. That's when I first started thinking about this group, and now it's a reality. I will also be the Keynote Speaker for the festival.

Other than working on that, I have been pretty immersed in my study of Zen Buddhism, and will be going to Hakubai Temple in Boulder, in January, for my jukai, which is a formal ceremony, like confirmation, to be ordained as a lay Buddhist. Never really saw this coming - well, no I can't say that. It's been coming for decades. What brought it all together I suppose was my getting to know Lucky's brother Martin after Lucky died. Lucky's brother Martin, aka Hakaubai-Zenji, is a Zen Roshi. It's

inconvenient having a teacher so far away, but the karmic connection is there, and he is the right teacher for me. So all of that is quite interesting.

I did in fact leave that silent windchime. I wasn't sure if you would remove it for the winter, since Lynn said you do that with your own chimes. I'm sure it will survive the cold. On my zen altar here at home I have one, as well as some yarrow stalks in honor of Lucky. It's kind of nice - great actually - to have a spiritual practice again, without the burdens of my dad's religion and his wonderful relationship with God. If that relationship had included me a bit more, I might have been more convinced.

I'm not good at fly fishing yet, but I am finding some good places to go, even here in California, and actually putting to use that rod and reel Jim gave me, via Larry. That's been fun.

Love,

Art

PS - Lynn and I will both be spending more time in Hardwick next summer, I hope.