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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

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Collaboration, Presence, and Community:

by

David Allen Chapman, Jr.

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
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requirements for the degree
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For Loren and Anthony
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the Philip Glass Ensemble as it took shape within downtown Manhattan’s emerging loft-and-gallery scene in the late sixties and early seventies. This group of musicians—including Glass, Jon Gibson, Joan La Barbara, Richard Landry, Kurt Munkacsi, and others—participated in the migration of artists and performers from all over the United States into the abandoned factory and warehouse lofts south of Greenwich Village. Together, these creative figures slowly converted raw, post-industrial buildings into the apartments, studios, theaters, cafés, and art galleries that became the “alternative spaces” of SoHo and its neighboring districts in the seventies. Many of these spaces served as performance venues for downtown performers, including those in the Philip Glass Ensemble, and as sites of contact between those musicians and the area’s burgeoning community. Instead of an institutional history of the ensemble, however, this dissertation employs the group as a frame for several richly detailed and interrelated stories about how its members composed, performed, and listened to minimalism and “new music” during this period. The ensemble functioned as a subset of the downtown community, nestled within a larger network that included their closest friends and most consistent audience members, which in turn comprised a part of the broader art and performance community of downtown Manhattan.

Relying on new archival and oral history research, this dissertation blends elements of biography, style history, performance practice, and reception history. It explores how the ensemble’s earliest and most dedicated audiences listened to and received its music. These were not theorists or musicologists, but the group’s closest friends and neighbors. They were painters,
sculptors, dancers, writers, and filmmakers, fellow artists with musical lives of their own, even if their specialties were quite distinct from music. This project shows how these composers and performers set out to appeal directly to the interests and expectations of these specific audiences. In this way, it considers a broad range of aesthetic features besides abstractly musical ones. Moreover, previous scholarship rarely places individual ensemble members, such as Gibson, Landry, and La Barbara, on an equal footing with Glass, nor treats their broader creative activities side by side as they appeared at the time. This dissertation reconsiders what it meant for composers and performers to work closely together, focusing attention on the dynamic fluidity of authorship, influence, and collaboration. In short, the present study traces the intense creative interactions within the Glass Ensemble, considers how these interactions affected both solo and ensemble works emanating from the group in the seventies, and explores how their work connected them to each other and to their most steadfast audiences.

Foundations: Previous Scholarship and New Methodologies

The principal text in contemporary minimalist music scholarship is Keith Potter’s monograph from 2000, *Four Musical Minimalists*. All historians addressing the creative output of Glass, Steve Reich, La Monte Young, Terry Riley, or their close associates, build upon this foundational text. At the time of its publication, Potter’s book offered the most extensive biographies of these four composers to date, improving considerably upon previous minimalist studies, including Edward Strickland’s *Minimalism: Origins* (1993), and K. Robert Schwarz’s

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Minimalists (1996). Potter’s musical descriptions still represent the only analyses of, or even access to, many individual compositions by these four men, since numerous works remain unpublished.

As the first major treatment in an emerging scholarly subfield, Four Musical Minimalists left much work to future scholars. What about the thirty-plus other minimalists, including Philip Glass Ensemble members Jon Gibson and Richard Landry, enumerated by Village Voice critic and composer Tom Johnson in the early 1980s? As a leading study in minimalist music research, Potter’s book lent its authority—if self-consciously and even apologetically so—in support of a tightly circumscribed pantheon of composers and masterworks. This canonization cannot be blamed on Potter alone: it appeared as early as 1972 in critic and composer Tom Johnson’s “Changing the Meaning of Static” (Village Voice, 7 September 1972, 47), in which the writer names Young, Riley, Reich, and Glass as the “New York Hypnotic School.” In the four decades since, countless scholarly monographs, dissertations, and textbooks have further reinforced this grouping. Regardless, Four Musical Minimalists has served as the cornerstone of all minimalist musicology in the twenty-first century.


As the first and most visible work in the field, however, Potter’s work has come under scrutiny for its limited scope and overly traditional methodologies. Art historian Branden Joseph, for example, in his work on La Monte Young’s associate Tony Conrad, has criticized Potter for contributing to the ongoing process of canonization in minimalist scholarship:

Despite increasingly detailed and sophisticated archival research and musicological analyses (particularly in Potter’s authoritative study), certain methodological assumptions about the writing of history remain largely unquestioned, narrating the development of musical minimalism according to the tropes of authorship, influence, expression, linear progression, and disciplinary specificity.6 He thus relegates Potter’s work to a category which he calls “major history,” with a nod to Michel Foucault’s “historian’s history” (which was itself a nod to Friedrich Nietzsche). Joseph describes such work as “a form of historical analysis that actually annihilates time and the contingencies of historical circumstance in favor of atemporal understanding of individual subjects (historical actors) and eternal truths.”7

Citing theories of “minority” developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Joseph advocates what he calls “minor history,” that is, an effort to challenge prevailing narratives not simply by arguing for new entries into lists of “great men and great works”—say, thirty-two minimalists rather than four—but by illuminating the unruly margins of familiar histories. Minor history takes a critical, even skeptical, posture toward autobiography, and “is more immanently related to the archive, so as to be extractable only incompletely and with difficulty.”8 Joseph’s challenge to minimalist historiography is more modest, even traditional, than it first appears:

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 50.
Dmitri Shostakovich ought to be the primary basis for their biographies today? Yet because archival resources continue to be limited, often strictly controlled by the living composers themselves, minimalist music historians have often had to trust a composer’s testimony about his (or, in too few cases, her) own history. Joseph’s “minor history,” far from simply dismissing fame or taste, encourages scholars of minimalist music to continue the difficult work of balancing first-person history with the documentary record.

Joseph further writes that the “history of minimal music is to a surprising degree a history of authorship disputes,” pointing to a string of tense disagreements between Conrad and Young, Riley and Reich, as well as Reich and Glass, whose friendships and collaborations collapsed over questions of who influenced whom and who deserved credit for what technical innovation. Scholars have typically followed suit, tracing a history of minimalism as a series of stylistic revolutions: from Young’s drones, through Riley’s repetitive modules, to Reich’s phasing, to Glass’ additive processes. Each of the “four minimalists” thus receives “proper” status as an author of specific creative techniques, and their stories collectively track the evolutionary development of minimalist musical style. Joseph’s deconstruction of authorship complements similar critiques of “techno-essentialist historiography,” first offered by Christopher Williams and taken up most visibly by musicologist Richard Taruskin. Citing Williams’ earlier work, Taruskin has referred to the “rush [or race] to the patent office” as the principal obsession of modernists, artists and historians alike. This concern—for composers, being “scooped” by their peers; for historians, determining who had which idea first—represents “modernism in its strongest ideological form.”

As Taruskin writes:

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[The] race-to-the-patent-office mentality is characteristic of techno-essentialist historiography and its values. All conventional music history, whatever the period, is now written in this way; that is precisely what makes it conventional. And in the wake of what is often termed the second wave of modernism—the scientific one that took shape during the cold war, and in response to it—techno-essentialist values have been a guiding stimulus on musical composition as well.\(^\text{10}\)

The problem with such scholarship, according to Taruskin, is that “such values are nothing if not asocial.”\(^\text{11}\) Although musicological scholarship as a whole has become less vulnerable to Williams’ and Taruskin’s criticism, minimalist scholarship has remained obsessed with the patent office, losing the social in the process.

Building upon Potter’s scholarship on minimalism thus requires addressing the social, cultural, and interpretive questions that have enlivened the discipline of musicology over the past few decades. Robert Fink took an initial step toward addressing this problem with his important 2005 book, *Repeating Ourselves*.\(^\text{12}\) His stated intent was to rescue minimalist music from its devotees, whose writings on the subject amounted to, in his words, “aging technical descriptions and restatements of compositional manifestos.”\(^\text{13}\) In his effort to break free from techno-essentialism and autobiography, Fink drew connections between minimalism’s prevalent repetitive aesthetic and the manifestations of repetition in the consumer and popular cultures of the post-war American middle class. Fink’s study established a wide new disciplinary frontier.

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\(^\text{13}\) Ibid., 18.
But much of the intervening cultural space remains open for further exploration. Expanding upon Fink’s more hermeneutic mission of “making minimalism signify,” the current project aims to make minimalism social again—or, rather, to show it as having always already been social: it was cultivated by a specific group at a specific time in a specific place.

Benjamin Piekut’s 2011 examination of New York experimentalism in the early sixties, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, offers a model for such an approach.\(^\text{14}\) Taking cues from the work of social scientist Bruno Latour, Piekut traces networks of associations between experimental musicians operating in downtown Manhattan in the early sixties, highlighting a broad range of social alliances—from friendship, to sponsorship, to moral support—that sustained experimental musical activity. This approach, inspired by Latour’s “actor-network-theory,” considers in detail the social connections that tend to be overlooked in traditional style histories, in which perceived similarities in compositional technique form the basis of a scholar’s assemblage of historical figures into relevant groups. In this approach, actors of all sorts—individuals, events, institutions, etc.—emerge as meaningful to music-making.

Latour has argued that groups are not static or concrete things. There are, he writes, “no groups, only group formation.”\(^\text{15}\) Groups exist only insofar as people assert their existence, and spokespersons and scholars alike participate in this process.\(^\text{16}\) Following Latour, Piekut writes that his subject, namely musical experimentalism in the early sixties, “is a grouping, not a group […] the result of the combined labor of scholars, composers, critics, journalists, patrons,


\(^{\text{16}}\) Ibid., 33.
performers, venues, and the durative effects of discourses of race, gender, nation, and class."¹⁷

The same can be said of minimalism roughly a decade later. As Latour has argued: “There is no social dimension of any sort, no ‘social context,’ no distinct domain of reality to which the label ‘social’ or society’ could be attributed; […] no ‘social force’ is available to ‘explain’ the residual features other domains cannot account for.”¹⁸ All individuals are inherently interconnected with others; their activities, including music, are inherently social.¹⁹

Art critic Nicolas Bourriaud has argued that art itself participates in social networks, providing opportunities for expressing and facilitating interaction in what he calls “relational aesthetics.”²⁰ Such relationality often links artists and performers whose apparent styles differ substantially from one another. Bourriaud writes, “every artist whose work stems from relational aesthetics has a world of forms, a set of problems and a trajectory which are all his own.”²¹ He continues:

They are not connected together by any style, theme or iconography. What they do share together is much more decisive, to wit, the fact of operating within one and the same practical and theoretical horizon: the sphere of inter-human relations. Their works involve methods of social exchanges, interactivity with the viewer within the aesthetic experience being offered to him/her, and the various communication processes, in their tangible dimension as tools serving to link individual and human groups together.²²

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¹⁷ Pickut, Experimentalism Otherwise, 6.

¹⁸ Latour, 4.


²⁰ Nicolas Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2002).

²¹ Ibid., 43.

²² Ibid.
This dissertation expands Bourriaud’s conclusions to encompass music. It assumes that the aesthetic incompatibility between invisible music and inaudible visual objects does not itself invalidate their connection within the logic of social behavior. It may be problematic to map the sound of organ music onto the images in stained glass windows, but few would deny that these belong in the same sacred space and thus are related to one another. This project therefore revisits the comparison of minimalist music and art less as a problem to defend or falsify—as has been attempted by Strickland, Jonathan Bernard and others—than as a historical reality to understand. Rather than discrediting claims of a relationship between minimalist art and minimalist music, their obvious incompatibility makes any claim regarding their relationship meaningful and noteworthy. Far from making a coherent argument about abstract relationships between aesthetic genres, musical performances in artistic spaces more clearly point to a community whose members included both musicians and artists.

This leads to something of a paradox. Latour, Piekut, and Bourriaud suggest we listen to what our informants have to say about their social world and avoid imposing our own agenda on our subjects. They encourage us to follow all available clues when retracing group formations. Yet Williams, Taruskin, and Joseph encourage us to remain skeptical about autobiography, sensitive toward its “asocial” effect. Composer autobiography, especially when motivated by modernism in its “strong ideological sense,” tends to obstruct the process of group formation, to cover its tracks. Musicologists may have begun resisting the canonizing process of celebrating great composers and their masterworks, but contemporary composers still actively work to

construct and bolster their images and legacies. To resolve this dilemma, we must both seek the evidence that reveals these networks and remain cautious of attempts to obscure them.

The notion of associating art and music—or, better, artists and musicians—within specific venues leads to a final line of inquiry, namely a consideration for the paired notions of space and place. This project frequently considers the embodied experience of space during musical performances, whether in emphasizing peculiar juxtapositions of aural and visual elements or in shaping specific conditions for listening. The musical performances described in the chapters to follow often took place beside sculptures and paintings, were projected through and around them, and on occasion involved manuscripts scores as sculptures or images as realization of musical ideas. Minimalist scholarship has been defined by a preoccupation with repetition and drones, and especially with the ways these elements restructure a listener’s experience with time. But in this obsession with time, we have overlooked space.

This is not true of American musicology as a whole, in which space has become an important area for musical research. As Fink has recently written:

*Time*, the original structuring principle of musicological inquiry, is making room for a new organizing framework based on the phenomenology of *space*. It may even be that this perspectival shift, bringing musicology more in line with other disciplines of cultural study, is related to the rise of American music as a central preoccupation of North American musicologists.24

This disciplinary move itself represents an effort to resist canonization, that is, it resists the conventional view that (as Fink articulates it) “great music is supposed to be not only timeless, but placeless.”25 This dissertation seeks to contribute to and further this new conversation about space and music.


25 Ibid., 709.
Philosopher Edward Casey has written that, “space and time come together in place,” that “we experience space and time together in place,” and that, “space and time are themselves coordinated and co-specified in the common matrix provided by place.”

Casey also argues that bodies, objects, movement, events, and all other manifestations of culture combine in the midst of place, and that such places “are named and nameable parts of the landscape of a region, its condensed and lived physiognomy.” Thus no project considering space can avoid naming specific places, those meaningful marriages of brick-and-mortar buildings and ephemeral institutions in which activities took place and were considered meaningful. In place—that is, in these places—communities came together to share the experience of music in time and space.

As a result of its focus on space, this dissertation contributes to a growing body of writings on New York’s loft-and-gallery, “alternative space” community in the sixties and seventies. Some of these resources are familiar to minimalist historians, regularly mined for their references to Glass, Reich and their colleagues. Yet rarely is any extensive note taken of the contexts in which these references occur. Rather than extracting Glass, Gibson, Landry, or Reich from the art histories in which they appear and appropriating them into a separate music history,

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27 Ibid. See also Casey, The Fate of Place (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1997).

I address them in their original locales. I interpret their embeddedness within a group of painters, sculptors, and performance artists as an inherent aspect of the milieu in which they were then understood to be most relevant.

Although this history took place during a particularly turbulent period of American history, it often appears rather detached from the politics of the Cold War and the civil rights movement. Standard categories of social identity—class, gender, sexuality, race, etc.—seem at the time to have been almost studiously avoided. Yet, as Susan McClary, George Lewis, and others have shown, the neutrality of the musical avant-garde was illusory and strongly correlated with social privilege.29 Indeed, with few exceptions, the Philip Glass Ensemble and its audiences consisted of well educated, socially mobile, middle-class white Americans. Men dominated the personnel of the ensemble itself, though its audience seems to have enjoyed roughly equivalent numbers of men and women. Although the current project does not structure itself around these broader political concerns, they nevertheless inform crucial parts of the story. Bookends may be taken as representative. The project begins with saxophonist Jon Gibson’s resistance to the national politics of the Vietnam War and the draft in the late sixties. It ends in the mid-seventies with the work of Joan La Barbara, one of the most prominent and outspoken women in New York experimental music of the late twentieth century.

At the core of my project lies an effort to get beyond the “drones and repetition” paradigm that has served as the primary critical obsession of historical and analytical scholarship.

on minimalism. Repetition served as a community value among downtown musicians and their earliest audiences, shared with such figures as the sculptor Donald Judd or the dancers Yvonne Rainer and Laura Dean. When repetitious sculptors and dancers listened to repetitious music, what did they hear? Repetition, it turns out, was the least remarkable feature of this music; that is, they remarked the least upon it. Instead, the aesthetics I consider below involve those aspects that art-world audiences and critics did comment upon the most. These features include, among others, the use of movement in musical performance, spatial arrangements of audiences and performers, psychoacoustics, the pleasure and pain of high volume projection and amplification techniques, and the use of notated scores as visual objects. In addition to forming an alternative approach to a familiar body of music, such aesthetic concerns elevate ordinary, real-world relationships between musicians and artists based on friendship, moral support, and collaboration, placing them above perceived similarities in compositional style. These concerns ground creative activity in the lived experiences of a clearly circumscribed community—or, perhaps, a subgroup within the larger downtown community.

My approach thus offers an alternative both to traditional style history and to single-subject biography, taking a group with its own internal dynamics as the starting place for an intricate social and cultural history. Rather than disruption or deconstruction for its own sake, I seek instead deliberation and balance in reevaluating standard histories and methods, offsetting discussions of composition with equal consideration of performance, listening, and criticism as avenues for creating musical meaning. All such activities, according to the late Christopher Small, qualify as forms of musicking, that is, “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical

---

30 See also musicologist John Gibson’s (not to be confused with the saxophonist composer discussed below) 2004 dissertation, which succeeds in overcoming the pressures of canonization, but continues to base style history on repetition: Gibson, “Listening to Repetitive Music: Reich, Feldman, Andriessen, Autechre” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton, 2004).
Whenever possible, I consider accounts of private, ordinary interactions alongside more carefully controlled public behaviors, maintaining healthy doses of curiosity and skepticism regarding formal concerts, program notes, and autobiographical writings.

Chapter Overview

This dissertation consists of five chapters, divided in two parts. Chapters one through three, which form the first part, retrace a familiar minimalist timeline of (roughly) 1966 to 1976, but do so in a new, more holistic manner. Chapter one addresses the prehistory of the Glass Ensemble up to 1970 as a series of formative alliances. It focuses on the musical activities of Jon Gibson, Steve Reich, Arthur Murphy, and Philip Glass in the late sixties, highlighting the communities of support surrounding their earliest compositional and performing efforts. Instead of reading individual compositions as products of isolated moments of creative genius, I show that Gibson’s tape pieces, Reich’s phase-shifting and conceptual works, and Glass’ early repetitive compositions resulted from and, in some ways, document their private musical interactions during these years. At Reich’s and Glass’ debut concerts at the Park Place Gallery in 1967, the Film-Makers’ Cinematheque in 1968, and the Whitney Museum in 1969, performers and audiences made public their more private associations with one another. In this way, minimalist music was fundamentally relational, in the sense first developed by Bourriaud. It simultaneously provided moments of assembly and interaction to specific audiences, but it also framed the music as an expression of community among the musicians and between them and their more visually oriented colleagues.

31 “To music [i.e., the infinitive of “musicking”] is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing, or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composition), or by dancing.” Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, N.H: Wesleyan UP, 1998), 9.
Chapter two reexamines Glass’ musical aesthetics in the early seventies, focusing on the frequent invocations of “presence” in the composer’s own notes and in the words of his earliest listeners and critics. A striking experience at the Walker Arts Center in 1970 first turned Glass’ attention toward “psychoacoustics”—overtones, sum and difference tones, and so on—those elements of the listening experience that, rather than being composed or notated into a composition, are the unpredictable results of presenting a work within a specific performing space. Most consequential in this regard was the entry of Kurt Munkacsi into the ensemble, which provided Glass with the means to pursue these new aesthetic ideas with the assistance of electronic amplification. Munkacsi’s high-volume, low-distortion mixing techniques became the dominant mode of presentation for the Glass Ensemble in the early seventies, a fact repeatedly referenced in early critical reviews but largely ignored in minimalist scholarship. I argue in this chapter that the aesthetics of high amplitude was one of Glass’ fundamental concerns during this time, particularly when performed in the closed and highly reflective loft spaces in downtown Manhattan. These acoustic principles form the basis of Glass’ aesthetic of “presence.” I consider Glass’ reference to “presence” as a flexible and multivalent term, encompassing a constellation of related ideas. These range from Munkacsi’s mixing techniques, which were designed to replicate the effect of extreme proximity, to a philosophical tradition that prioritizes the experience of interpretation.

Chapter three examines Glass’ loft-studio at 10 Bleecker Street as the Philip Glass Ensemble’s primary rehearsal space in the years 1972 through 1974. I show that 10 Bleecker Street in fact succeeded 10 Chatham Square, which served a similar function starting in 1970. At both facilities, the Philip Glass Ensemble lived and worked among a tight-knit community of artists and performers. After detailing the precedent at Chatham Square, I examine the
facilitating role of Alanna Heiss in making spaces such as 10 Bleecker Street suitable for artistic work and exhibition. The first of Heiss’ many contributions to the Ensemble’s history involved an unusual and rarely discussed performance under the Brooklyn Bridge in May 1971. 10 Bleecker Street also served as a performance venue for a number of small but important performances by Philip Glass Ensemble members in 1973–1974 that firmly associated the facility with the composer and his collaborators. A concert series throughout the month of January 1973 not only memorialized the recent passing of ensemble member Robert Prado, but also provided downtown audiences one of the only presentations of the group’s full spectrum of creative output. This history lends special meaning to John Cage’s assessment of Glass’ primary musical effect—“the pleasures of conviviality”—linking it to the “relational aesthetics” of Bourriaud.32

Chapters four and five comprise part two of this dissertation and take a more detailed look at the creative life of the Philip Glass Ensemble apart from its eponymous composer, focusing on two representative individuals: Gibson and La Barbara. Gibson’s music receives treatment here due to his status as a “minor” minimalist, whose work engages in the legacy of musical minimalism, and as one of this ensemble’s earliest and most consistent members. La Barbara, who was not a minimalist composer and who was not with the ensemble very long, offers a very different view, one that looks outward from the group to glimpse the downtown community as it worked to define itself. The contrasts between these two perspectives provide crucial depth and breadth to this study. Chapter four gives the first in-depth discussion and analysis of Jon Gibson’s compositional practices in the early seventies, focusing special attention on the dualities of composition and improvisation, freedom and control, and structure and

32 John Cage, Empty Words: Writings ‘73–’78 (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1979), 179.
openness that emerged in his music at mid-decade. With the aid of over ten hours of new interviews with the composer and generous access to his seventies manuscripts, the fourth chapter recounts Gibson’s choice to become a composer after 1970 and his earliest attempts to create fully notated compositions. Gibson’s March 1974 concert at Washington Square Church serves as a historical frame for this material, highlighting Gibson’s musical practices during a particularly dynamic moment in his early career. This historic concert provides a sample of his compositional activity, much of which has escaped scholarly attention. It also helps trace the evolution of Gibson’s developing personal style, which marked a significant departure from the styles of his more familiar minimalist counterparts.

The final chapter looks at the paired compositions and criticism of Joan La Barbara as further examples of participation within the artistic community of downtown Manhattan. I examine her decision to leave classical vocal training and join the downtown music scene, her conflicted loyalties with Reich and Glass after their contentious split in the early decade, and her decision to begin writing compositions of her own in the mid-seventies. Most consequential for this history, however, are her writings for the *SoHo Weekly News*, a local newspaper whose explicit goal was to “sell the community to itself.” La Barbara’s roles as musician and as critic were equivalent and complementary forms of participation in that community: in both cases, she helped define what it meant to be a SoHo avant-gardist, becoming one of the community’s champions.
When Steve Reich described his 5 January 1967 performance alongside saxophonist Jon Gibson and pianist Arthur Murphy as “our first concert anywhere,” he highlighted a foundational moment in the evolution of two future ensembles. The friendship and collaboration of these three men blossomed into both Steve Reich and Musicians and the Philip Glass Ensemble. These groups professionalized a set of casual relationships that had existed since the early sixties. This chapter reconsiders the very earliest years of the paired and often shared ensembles of Reich and Glass in the late sixties. Aspects of this history are already familiar. Following a handful of autobiographical writings, scholars such as K. Robert Schwarz, Edward Strickland, Keith Potter, and many others have told and retold the story of Reich and Glass in downtown Manhattan in the mid- to late sixties. Figures such as Murphy and Gibson lurk in the background, acknowledged but little investigated.

This chapter redresses this imbalance in several crucial ways. First, it blends several familiar late-sixties timelines, which scholars typically treat as separate autobiographies, especially of Steve Reich and Philip Glass. At the same time, interviews and newly available archival documents expand this blended timeline and offer a more complete view of the


complexities involved in creativity and authorship. New compositions and premiere performances appear less to reinforce the “patent office” claims of individual composers than to emphasize the intimacy and collaboration within a network of social actors. Reich and Glass, as well as Jon Gibson and Arthur Murphy, were themselves situated within the larger network of artists and performers in downtown Manhattan.

This chapter forms itself chronologically around a series of historical alliances. In the spirit of “minor history,” it begins not with Reich but with Gibson’s move to New York City in 1966 and his efforts to integrate himself into the scene through his friendships with Terry Riley and La Monte Young. As Reich and Murphy enter Gibson’s story, the lens widens to consider their creative collaboration during their early years together. The rest of the chapter focuses on the institutions where the art and performance world welcomed these musicians into their own community, namely the Park Place Gallery, Film-Makers’ Cinematheque, and the Whitney Museum. The legacy of these alliances persists within the term “minimalism” itself. Whereas many have wrestled over the term’s implied analogy between music and art, this chapter argues that it testifies more to these social networks between musicians and artists. In this sense, minimalism in art and music was “relational.”

*Gibson Arrives in New York*

After Riley and Reich left the West Coast in spring and summer 1965, their friend and colleague Jon Gibson remained in San Francisco, feeling increasingly restless and unhappy. Threats of military conscription loomed, and acid trips, though infrequent, had made him more and more paranoid. When presented the opportunity to travel with the James Brother Circus band late that year, he jumped at the opportunity to escape. Gibson spent the better part of the next year, from
autumn 1965 to spring 1966, touring with the circus in Mexico, just out of reach of the American Selective Service System. When the tour ended in Atlantic City, Gibson once again faced the draft, so he made his way north to New York: La Monte Young, so he had heard, could help him obtain the medical papers necessary to stay out of Vietnam.³

Upon arrival, Gibson attempted to reconnect with his friends from San Francisco. Out West, he had been especially close to Terry Riley. He had played Riley’s *Autumn Leaves* (1965; withdrawn) and *Tread on the Trail* (1965) in an informal jazz band that had met several times at Gibson’s own apartment.⁴ Gibson had given Riley lessons on the soprano saxophone, showing him the fingerings to play his *Is It A♭ or B♭* (1964).⁵ They had shared psychedelic experiences with each other. “We’d get blasted out of our minds and then go to empty lots and these old empty warehouses,” Gibson recalls, “We’d just go and look around, you know, just do stuff like that.”⁶ When Riley left San Francisco, Gibson moved into his apartment in Potrero Hill.⁷ Once they were both in New York, however, the two interacted just long enough for Gibson to help Riley select and purchase a soprano saxophone of his own. Although Riley initially welcomed him warmly to Manhattan, over time Gibson realized, “we didn’t really hit [it off]. It just didn’t seem to work out in terms of playing any more with him.”⁸

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³ Jon Gibson, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 2 June 2010.

⁴ Ibid.


⁶ Gibson, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 8 June 2010.

⁷ Gibson, interview by author, 2 June 2010.

⁸ Ibid.
The reasons for this drifting apart are not clear, especially when compared to the more obvious territorial issues that motivated the end of Reich and Riley’s friendship a few months before. Reich acknowledged some of his tension with Riley in a 1997 interview with Mark Alburger: “Earlier on my relationship was very tough for awhile with Terry [Riley], because he thought that I had stolen something from him. […] I’ve said in public and written several times, “I learned a lot from ‘In C.’ It’s a great piece.” If I hadn’t said that, we would not have smoothed it over. And justifiably so.”9 Whatever the reasons, once they had both begun settling in New York in summer 1966, Riley gradually diminished as a central figure in Gibson’s social landscape.

Before their relationship faded, however, Riley facilitated Gibson’s entry into a particularly vibrant subset of the lower Manhattan art and performance community, namely the quasi-religious, neo-Dada absurdist scene that had assembled around La Monte Young. Riley had raved about Young back in San Francisco, so Gibson already knew a great deal about Young’s work at Berkeley and in the nascent downtown scene in early sixties New York. By the time Gibson arrived, Young had become a central hub for social connections and resources downtown.10 Riley was at once eager for Gibson to meet him and cautious about exposing him to Young’s absorbing personality, as Gibson recalls:

Terry’s very funny. He said: “I want you to meet La Monte, but be careful, okay?” So I go to meet him, and I’m still totally naïve in a certain way, but I like him. La Monte’s great. La Monte’s a totally interesting person, and very charming. And then I leave with Terry. He said: “You’ve got to be very careful. He likes you.”11


11 Gibson, interview by Ingram Marshall, 22 March 2000, interview 258 a-e, transcript, Oral History of American Music, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.
As Gibson had hoped, Young helped him secure the papers he needed to avoid the draft board:

I was directly in the line of fire with being drafted. I finally got out with a couple of letters from psychiatrists. I shook them off. That was a big relief. […] La Monte helped me. He had a doctor friend who helped me write letters. So, thank you, La Monte! 12

Young also provided his associates with a steady stream of psychedelic substances.

During this time, according to Andy Warhol associate Billy Name, “La Monte Young was the best drug connection in New York. He had the best drugs—the best! Great big acid pills, and opium, and grass too.” 13 Young hired Gibson to work as an assistant in his loft-studio at 275 Church Street (the same loft in which Young still lives and works today):

I was working for La Monte at the beginning [of my time in New York]. I’d come to work and he’d hand me a hashpipe as I walked in the door. I was supposed to get high, you know, and do my work! [Laughs] It was an education [with] La Monte, working for him. He was a very meticulous guy. He had turtles! That was my first experience: feeding his turtles. He had these turtles that were like Chinese aristocracy. They were fed this mixture of yeast. I had to prepare and give it to the turtles and make sure they ate it. They were really quite big at that point. Those turtles were so pampered. 14

Young’s composition titles *Pre-Tortoise Dream Music* (1964) and *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys* (1967) refer to the pets that Gibson tended. 15

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12 Gibson, interview by author, 2 June 2010.


14 Gibson, interview by author, 2 June 2010.

15 Young found the evolutionary history of the turtle/tortoise to be a meaningful metaphor for his approach to musical stasis: “This music may play without stopping for thousands of years, just as the Tortoise has continued for millions of years past, and perhaps only after the Tortoise has again continued for as many million years as all the tortoises in the past will it be able to sleep and dream of the next order of tortoises to come.” La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, *Selected Writings* (Munich: Heiner Friedrich, 1969), [29].
Gibson also periodically sang and played saxophone with Young and his associates in private rehearsals through the end of the decade. He eventually joined them on a European tour of the reconstituted Theatre of Eternal Music in 1970.\textsuperscript{16} This tour, however, marked the end of Gibson’s association with Young, due in large part to the fanaticism and devotion Young seemed to require: “It’s very demanding to be with him for a long time. He’s like a black hole,” Gibson complained.\textsuperscript{17} Gibson expanded on this demanding element of Young’s personality and charisma:

I did discontinue working with La Monte after that particular tour [in 1970]. I found that in general the conditions were a little too extreme for me. Also, I found that singing and playing drones for long stretches of time was ok for a while, but it tended to make me extremely sleepy and I wasn’t getting much fulfillment out of the experience. For me it really was dream music. Also, I think I was feeling pressure to become a disciple of [Pandit] Pran Nath and as I said, I’ve never been able to do that with anybody. I’ve been around guru types in various fields but I could never turn myself over to a big commitment like that.\textsuperscript{18}

Gibson was eager to gain some independence for himself. His departure from Young’s entourage at the start of the 1970s coincided with the beginning of his own composition career, as described in more detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

In New York, Gibson also renewed his close friendship and collaboration with Steve Reich. Reich was no longer on good terms with Riley and he wanted no part whatsoever of Young’s scene.\textsuperscript{19} But Gibson’s friendship with Reich remained strong. When Reich spent the summer of 1966 in New Mexico with painters Dean Fleming and John Baldwin, Reich offered

\textsuperscript{16} Gibson, interview by author, 2 June 2010; Potter, \textit{Four Musical Minimalists}, 76.

\textsuperscript{17} Gibson, interview by author, 2 June 2010.

\textsuperscript{18} Gibson, interview by Ingram Marshall.

\textsuperscript{19} Potter, \textit{Four Musical Minimalists}, 195.
Gibson’s experiments in Reich’s apartment resulted in the first composition that remains on his works list today. Gibson’s new piece, entitled *Who Are You* (1966), featured ordered permutations of the three words in its title, as shown in Example 1, chanted by the composer on multiple tape tracks.

Who are you are who you are… [etc.]
You who are who you who… [etc.]
Are you who you are you who you… [etc.]


Gibson intended the three tracks to be played back on separate machines at different locations within a space. Gibson’s multiple tracks of *Who Are You* produced unplanned correspondences between the various texts, resulting in a three-dimensional counterpoint within the listening environment, not unlike the spatial effects Reich has described encountering in his first experience with phasing: “The sensation I had in my head was that the sound moved over to my left ear, down to my left shoulder, down my left arm, down my leg, out across the floor to the

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20 Reich’s precise street address, which rarely appears in print, is taken from a listing in “Membership Information,” *Journal of the Audio Engineering Society* 15, no. 2 (April 1967): 240.
left, and finally began to reverberate and shake and become the sound I was looking for.”

Despite the potent promise of these effects, the tapes for *Who Are You* ended up in a drawer and did not resurface for the next decade. *Who Are You* finally received its premiere in January 1977 as an audio installation at the gallery of Ghislain Mollet-Vieville in Paris, France.

Around the time that he created *Who Are You*, Gibson also befriended Reich’s former Juilliard classmate Arthur Murphy, a composer and pianist who shared their interests in music and tape technology. Murphy had a humorous personality and an astonishing talent for music, mathematics, and electronics. (Philip Glass light-heartedly referred to Arthur Murphy as “one of the guys who likes to horse around.”) Reich routinely describes Murphy as having had “the best ear at Juilliard,” and Gibson recalls Murphy’s reputation as “the most talented of the lot.”

While colleagues with Reich at Juilliard, Murphy won two BMI student composition prizes, in 1960 and 1962. In 1963, jazz composer and Juilliard professor Hall Overton recruited Murphy to help him produce big band arrangements for Thelonious Monk’s live album, *Big Band and...

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Quartet in Concert. That same year, Murphy began a long and productive friendship with jazz pianist Bill Evans, which resulted in several published volumes of transcribed improvisations. After Murphy graduated from Juilliard in 1966, he, Reich, and Gibson became an informal trio, socializing, rehearsing, and performing together through the end of the decade.

When Reich returned from his summer road trip in 1966, Gibson moved out of 183 Duane Street and into Murphy’s loft at Twenty-Fifth Street and Sixth Avenue in East Chelsea. “He had a grand piano [and] tape machines,” Gibson recalls, “and he was always experimenting with tape delays and such.” Murphy even facilitated the second composition on Gibson’s works list, an audio collage entitled Vocal/Tape Delay (1968), which features growls, moans, twitters, and other vocal effects passed through a series of tape delays. Program notes from this work’s 1972 premiere at The Kitchen describe its creation:

“Voice/Tape Delay” [sic] happened spontaneously one night after an extended period of exploring various vocal sounds and techniques. Art Murphy had set up a tape delay on his own accord and without warning handed me the microphone asking me to try it out. This [composition] was the result.

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26 Murphy, telephone interview by author, 12 November 2012. Arthur Murphy is not credited on the album’s jacket. See Thelonious Monk, Big Band and Quartet in Concert, Columbia CL 2164, 1963, stereo LP.

27 Arthur Murphy provided his account of his first meeting with Bill Evans in Peter Pettinger, Bill Evans: How My Hearts Sings (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 197. Pettinger states that Murphy provided the transcriptions for two published volumes: Bill Evans, Bill Evans Plays (New York: Ludlow Music, 1969); Evans, Bill Evans: The 70s (New York: Ludlow Music, 1984). Only the latter of these acknowledges Murphy in print. According to Pettinger, the publisher went on to produce several more volumes of Evans transcriptions, though the extent of Murphy’s participation in these later projects is not known.

28 Gibson, email communication with author, 7 November 2010.

29 An archival recording of Gibson’s Vocal/Tape Delay is available online: see “Vocal Tape Delay by Jon Gibson,” http://archive.org/details/P_GIB_JON_01 (accessed 19 September 2012).

The piece as much documented their shared history as it expressed Gibson’s abstract aesthetic concerns at the time. Gibson and Murphy remained roommates for several years, with Gibson treating their shared loft as his pied-à-terre between traveling performance gigs.

Reich acknowledges the significance of these relationships for the creation of his earliest phase pieces in 1966 and 1967. Reich explained in 1973 that this “group of three musicians” (i.e., Reich, Gibson, and Murphy) “was able to perform Piano Phase for two pianos; Improvisations on a Watermelon for two pianos (later discarded); Reed Phase for soprano saxophone and tape (later discarded), and several tape pieces.”31 In the notes published alongside Reed Phase in 1967, Reich wrote: “This piece was originally written for Jon Gibson,” and “it is necessary for the performer to be able to play continuously for at least five minutes.”32 As Gibson explained in the liner notes to his 1992 recording of Reed Phase, the tape-plus-live-performance piece had been “composed with me and my circular breathing skills in mind.”33 Gibson’s estimable technique on the saxophone—and especially his jazz-derived skills with circular breathing—define the performance practice for Reed Phase. Gibson thus helped Reich translate his phasing process, first discovered using tape alone, to live performance.

31 Gibson, liner notes to In Good Company, Point Music 434 873-2, 1992, compact disc.

32 Steve Reich, “Reed Phase for Any Reed Instrument and Two Channel Tape or Three Reeds,” Source 3 (1968): [69].

33 Gibson’s claim that Reed Phase “is probably the first formal western composition to require circular breathing […] as a performance practice” merits some skepticism, though the difference between composition and improvisation may be the operative distinction: circular breathing became a common feature of jazz improvisation in the hands of figures like Roland Kirk, Roscoe Mitchell, and especially Evan Parker. See David Borgo, Sync or Swarm: Improvising Music in a Complex Age (New York: Continuum, 2005), 39, 50–53; Stephen Cottrell, The Saxophone (New Haven: Yale, 2012), 273, 290.
With *Piano Phase*, Murphy played a similarly crucial role in bringing Reich’s phasing techniques to into a live-performance context. Reich has described the compositional history of *Piano Phase* in some detail. This story, told and retold over the years, has remained essentially unchanged since 1974. The following excerpts from Reich’s account form a rough timeline for the period from late May 1966 to January 1967:

Shortly after *Melodica* was completed [on 22 May 1966] I began to think about writing some live music. […] Late in 1966, I recorded a short repeating melodic pattern played on the piano, made a tape loop of that pattern, and then tried to play against the loop myself, exactly as if I were a second tape recorder. I found, to my surprise, that […] I could give a fair approximation of it. […] In the next few months Arthur Murphy, a musician and friend, and I, both working in our homes, experimented with the performance of this phase shifting process using piano and tape loop. Early in 1967 we finally had an opportunity to play together on two pianos and found, to our delight, that we could perform this process without mechanical aid of any kind.

The result of these experiments, Reich tells us, was *Piano Phase*, which he and Murphy premiered publicly in the concert at Fairleigh-Dickinson University mentioned at the opening of this chapter. The program for that performance, which took place at the invitation of sculptor Nancy Graves, appears in Figure 1. Reich occasionally describes his early years with Gibson and Murphy in rather formal terms, such as “by late 1966 I had formed a group of three musicians,” or as in program notes from the early 1970s that declare, “since 1966 he [Reich] has usually performed his music only with his own ensemble.” At other times, he has stressed the group’s

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early informality: the three were good friends whose common interests united them as creative collaborators:

At the time, I didn’t envision that this would eventually lead to a performing ensemble that would make it possible for me to survive by performing my own music. In 1966 I simply had musical ideas that I wanted to try and these were my friends who were interested in what I was working on.\(^{37}\)

As we have seen, such comments can be expanded even further: not only did these musicians congregate in various degrees of formality, but the service they provided was not to Reich alone, but also to each other. Each benefited from the collaboration—which resulted in new creative techniques and compositions. Reich’s accounts of this period gloss over these more complicated and significant realities.

\(^{37}\) Reich, *Writings on Music*, 143.
Fairleigh Dickinson University
Art Gallery

January 5, 1967
8:30 P.M.

An Evening of Music by Steve Reich

Music for Two Pianos and Tape (2/64)
Art Murphy and Steve Reich, Pianos

It's Gonna Rain - or meet Brother Walter in Union Square
after listening to Terry Riley (1/65)

intermission

Saxophone Phase (12/66)
Jon Gibson, Soprano Saxophone

Piano Phase (12/66)
Steve Reich and Art Murphy, Pianos

Come Out (4/66)

Composed as part of a benefit held at Town Hall in April
of 1966 for the re-trial - with lawyers of their own
choosing- of the six boys arrested for murder during the
Harlem 'Fruit Stand Riots' of 1964. The voice is that
of Daniel Hamm, 19, one of the six now serving a life
sentence. He is describing a beating he took in the
Harlem 28th precinct. The police were about to take the
boys to Harlem Hospital to get them cleaned up and were
only taking those that were visibly bleeding. Since Hamm
had no actual open bleeding he proceeded to squeeze open
a bruise on his leg so that he would be taken to the hos-
pital. - "I had to like open the bruise up and let some
of the bruise blood come out to show them."

intermission

Two Variations on a Watermelon (5 & 11/66)
Art Murphy and Steve Reich, Pianos

Melodica (5/66)

**Reich at Park Place Gallery**

Having mapped out Gibson’s fruitful relationships with Riley, Young, Reich, and Murphy, we may now to shift our attention to Reich’s other meaningful communities in New York, especially among a group of artists known collectively as the Park Place Group. Most of this group had also recently migrated from San Francisco, where they had attended art school together at the California School of Fine Arts (now San Francisco Art Institute). Several had also been associated with a gallery in the San Francisco neighborhood, Pacific Heights, known as The Six, made famous as the site where Allen Ginsberg first read aloud his epic Beat poem, “Howl,” in 1955. The Six specialized in Dadaist hybrids, in presentations that blended painting, sculpture, poetry, and film. Artists at the Six often contributed music to these artistic events themselves, performing in a free improvisational jazz band they called “Studio 13.” After moving to Manhattan, the mixed-media spirit of The Six carried over into their next big venture in 1962, when they opened a collective workspace that they named after its street address, 79 Park Place in south Manhattan.

The Park Place Group shared certain visual aesthetics, combining space-age physical media with bold color in angular geometric shapes, which critics and historians alike have included in the still-emerging category of “minimal art.” Yet these artists concerned themselves with more than the merely visual: collaborative performance also played a central role. Several

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of the Park Place artists participated in New York’s “happenings” and Fluxus scene around La Monte Young and the Lithuanian artist George Maciunas, which represented a natural extension of their mixed-media practices on the West Coast.\textsuperscript{40} The group assembled once again into a music band, an unnamed successor to “Studio 13,” which performed the same experimental jazz that they had first played in California. The artists eventually reformatted their loft workspace into a public gallery where, according to art historian Linda Dalrymple Henderson, “the friends’ art and music could come together in the same space.”\textsuperscript{41} In November 1965, the Park Place Group moved their art-and-music loft-gallery to Greenwich Village and established a storefront at 542 West Broadway (now La Guardia Place). Despite the new address, they kept their original name.\textsuperscript{42}

Of the entire group, Reich was closest to painter and saxophonist Dean Fleming: mutual friend Terry Riley had introduced them to each other back in San Francisco.\textsuperscript{43} Fleming, as mentioned before, had joined Reich on a road trip to New Mexico in 1966, leaving the loft open for Gibson that summer. Several months before, Fleming helped recruit Reich for the April 1966 Town Hall benefit performance of Truman Nelson’s \textit{The Torture of Mothers} for “Harlem’s Condemned 6.”\textsuperscript{44} Fleming and fellow Park Place artist Frosty Myers constructed sets for the

\textsuperscript{40} Henderson, \textit{Reimagining Space}, 5.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 126n235.

\textsuperscript{44} Poster dated 17 April 1966, “Programme 1966 Apr,” SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland. See Henderson, \textit{Reimagining Space}, 126n236. Henderson’s claim, that Reich “had been invited by Fleming to provide the sound for a benefit that Dick Gregory organized at Town Hall for ‘Harlem’s Condemned 6,’” contradicts statements made by Potter and Sumanth Gopinath, who argue that Reich received his invitation from author Truman Nelson himself. It might be speculated that Fleming recommended his friend Reich to Nelson. See Potter, \textit{Four Musical...}
event. Fleming invited Reich to serve as the benefit’s “sound engineer,” a job well suited to his experience as an audio technician. In this capacity, the composer produced his next major tape piece, *Come Out*. In late May 1966, a month after the Harlem Six benefit, the Park Place Gallery hosted Reich’s New York concert debut—that is, his first since coming back to New York. The concert featured Reich’s tape pieces, including *Melodica*, which the composer had written and recorded in a single day the week before.

The Harlem Six benefit and the Park Place Gallery concerts in April and May 1966, respectively, helped establish Reich’s reputation among the painters, sculptors, dancers, and other artists in the downtown community. Ronald Sukenick, a writer and acquaintance of Reich’s at the time, later attested to the significance of the Park Place Group for Reich’s early career: “Reich marks 1966 as the beginning of his professional life, largely [quoting Reich] ‘as the result of a concert that I gave at the Park Place Gallery.’” Come Out and Melodica appeared as direct outgrowths of his engagement with the Park Place community, just as *Piano Phase* and Reed Phase resulted from collaborations with Gibson and Murphy in late 1966.

In spring 1967, the Park Place Gallery hosted a month-long group show entitled “Fleming / Ross / Foyster / Reich.” The exhibit featured work in various media whose goals, according to

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46 Reich, *Writings About Music*, 51.


Henderson, reflected “a fundamental commitment to the role of space in painting and sculpture” among the Park Place artists.\(^{49}\) Reich’s friend Dean Fleming directed the exhibition and wrote in a press release that the new show was intended “to break space and change your mind.”\(^{50}\) Fleming’s own work in the show utilized color and shape to distort the perception of a wall’s two dimensions: Henderson has written that, in Fleming’s *Malibu II*, for example, “the wave-like pattern of the panels produced alternating effects of concavity and convexity, creating a simultaneously two- and three-dimensional wave.”\(^{51}\) As *Art News* critic Ralph Pomeroy observed, this distortion of perception “dislocate[ed] the walls’ ‘known’ plane.”\(^{52}\) The effect carried over into Charles Ross’s oil-filled prisms, lenses, and plexiglass panels, which Pomeroy described as “produc[ing] their own warping effects,” while Jerry Foyster’s mirrors, “fractured the space into reflective bands, which disrupted images behind them and reflected what was before them.”\(^{53}\) The Park Place artists’ unnamed band performed their free jazz improvisations at least once during the month-long exhibition; Fleming himself played saxophone.\(^{54}\)

The real musical attraction, however, was Steve Reich, as indicated by the exhibition’s title. His inclusion in the show was at once social and aesthetic: what began as an association of artists and musician ultimately suggested analogies between art and music. Reich’s *Melodica*, which had premiered at Park Place the previous year, played on a continuous loop throughout the

\(^49\) Ibid., 3.
\(^50\) Ibid., 30.
\(^51\) Ibid., 80.
\(^53\) Ibid.
\(^54\) See photographs from the events in Henderson, *Reimagining Space*, 30.
month-long show. New York Times critic Grace Glueck wrote that the “minimal” elements together formed “a sort of architectural environment set to sound effects (O.K., music) by Steve Reich”:

As your eyes are bedazzled by the visual goings-on, your ears are bemused by the taped concert. Mr. Reich’s (music), repetitive figures performed on the Melodica (a wind-blown reed instrument with a keyboard), appears to be just as modular as the art. And somehow everything hangs together very well.  

The exhibition featured three of Reich’s manuscript scores—Melodica and two versions of the recently completed Piano Phase—mounted on the wall alongside Foyster’s mirrors and Fleming’ paintings as visual objects.  

A nearby placard explained the scores and announced the main musical event of the show:

The tape you are listening to is Melodica, the score of which appears to your right in the middle. The two scores of Piano Phase represent two versions of the same musical process. A four piano [sic] version of this process will be presented here on the 17th, 18th, and 19th of March at 9pm. In addition other live and electronic music will be presented, including a version of Bi-Product by Max Neuhaus which will be distributed to the audience at the close of each evening.

It is not clear to which versions of Piano Phase this placard refers, perhaps the nine- and twelve-bar versions that in 1969 ended up in the Anti-Illusion exhibition catalogue and the Notations anthology, respectively. Whatever the case, both versions expressed the same formal process in which two keyboards begin together, then move out of and eventually back into synchrony,

55 See the references to Melodica in Glueck, “The Park Place Puts On a Stunner.”


57 Archived placard, “Programme 1966 Mai” [misfiled], SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.

enacting an extended departure-and-return scenario. The concert series the placard mentions, entitled “Four Pianos: Three Evenings of Music by Steve Reich,” featured a program roughly identical to the Fairleigh-Dickinson concert two months before, only without *Music for Two Pianos and Tape* and with a keyboard-quartet version of *Piano Phase* that gave the concerts their name: *Four Pianos.* Composer-performers James Tenney (another Juilliard graduate) and Phil Corner joined Reich and Murphy on the third and fourth keyboards. The program for the *Four Pianos* series appears in Figure 2. Reich recalls a low turnout on the Friday concert: “The first night not that many people came. But the word spread, and the crowds grew; it was just word of mouth.” However, Carman Moore, music critic for the *Village Voice,* reported being impressed by the first night’s attendance: “The Friday show was a well attended and glittering affair, with prism sculpture all around the white room.”

59 The title to *Piano Phase* appears to have been somewhat flexible at this time. Murphy and Reich performed *Piano Phase* on 31 January 1967, at New York University, under the title *Piece for Two Pianos.* In the archived program, the title *Piano Phase* is scrawled above alternative title in ink. Archived program dated 31 January 1967, “Programme 1967 Jan,” SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.


Four Pianos

Three Evenings of Music

by Steve Reich

Improvisations on a Watermelon (11/66)

Arthur Murphy and Steve Reich, Cembalos

Come Out (4/66 - tape)

Composed as part of a benefit, presented at Town Hall, for the re-trial, with lawyers of their own choosing, of the six boys arrested for murder during the Harlem riots of 1964. The voice is that of Daniel Hamm, then 19, describing a beating he took in the Harlem 28th precinct. The police were about to take the boys out to be 'cleaned up' and were only taking those that were visibly bleeding. Since Hamm had no actual open bleeding he proceeded to squeeze open a bruise on his leg so that he would be taken to the hospital—"I had to like open the bruise up and let some of the bruise blood come out to show them."

Saxophone Phase (12/66)

Jon Gibson, soprano saxophone and two channel tape

Intermission

Melodica (5/66 - tape)

Four Pianos (3/67)

Philip Corner, Arthur Murphy, Steve Reich and James Tenney, Cembalos

The music here is made of single repeated figures going out of phase with themselves. The use of repeated figures as such can be found in much popular music, in African music (see A.K. Jones, Studies in African Music, Oxford Press, 1958), and in the music of the American composer Terry Riley. The use of phase shift as a basic structure applied to a single figure against itself is, as far as I know, unique to the music on this program.

Come Out and Melodica use a single figure recorded on both channels. First the figure is in unison with itself and as it begins to go out of phase a slowly increasing reverberation is heard which gradually passes into what resembles a canon or round. Eventually the two voices divide into four and (at the end of Come Out) into eight.

In Saxophone Phase a performer moves gradually ahead and out of phase with a fixed tape loop.

In Four Pianos the performers move in gradually shifting phase relations with themselves. To facilitate playing in an ordered relationship to one another in this complex situation the use of earphones was introduced to allow all performers to hear one 'guide' performer with whom they could relate clearly.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to:

Hubby Robinson of Experiments in Art and Technology for amplification equipment, earphones, and much good advice.

H. Höfner Co. for four electric Cembalos.

Max Neuhaus

March 1967

One memory of the first night was not at all musical: at some point during the first performance of *Four Pianos*, someone in the audience had a seizure of some kind. Moore suggested in his review that it had been triggered by the repetitive music: “So strong was the effect of ‘Four Pianos’ that one of the listeners, who were all sprawled on the floor, fell into a howling kind of fit from which he emerged, shaken but otherwise (I think) undamaged after the piece concluded.” Moore suggested in his review that it had been triggered by the repetitive music: “So strong was the effect of ‘Four Pianos’ that one of the listeners, who were all sprawled on the floor, fell into a howling kind of fit from which he emerged, shaken but otherwise (I think) undamaged after the piece concluded.” Keith Potter describes this response as “psychedelic”; Gibson recalls it as “epileptic.” Whatever the case, the commotion is clearly audible in archived recordings, though the musicians continued to perform despite the interruption.

The “Four Pianos” concerts also featured a tape composition by Max Neuhaus entitled *Bi-Product*. This work was not so much heard as it was composed during each concert. Neuhaus covered the floor of the gallery with white paper and as audience members wandered the gallery and cast shadows on the papered floor, the fluctuating light activated photoreceptor cells mounted on the gallery’s ceiling. *Newsweek*’s Howard Junker described “a mess of wires, relays, and rectifiers” that converted electronic signals from these cells into sound, which was then recorded onto tape. At the end of the evening, audience members were given segments of tape, each with a short excerpt of the piece that they had collaboratively composed—that is, that had

63 Ibid.

64 Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists*, 196; Gibson, interview by author, 8 June 2010.

65 Reich, “Four Pianos,” 17 March 1967, CD 29, track 1, SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland. Many thanks to Kerry O’Brien of Indiana University for her aid in properly identifying and dating the archival recording.

66 Junker’s *Newsweek* review of Neuhaus’ *Bi-Product* setup at Park Place Gallery appeared two months after the “Four Pianos” concerts and makes no mention of Reich’s music. His review may in fact refer to later “performances” of *Bi-Product* using the same setup and not to Reich’s “Four Pianos” series. See Howard Junker, “Electronic Music—Wiggy,” *Newsweek*, 22 May 1967, 98.
been composed as a “bi-product” of their attendance. Junker quoted Neuhaus, who declared, “I’m interested in process”—a noteworthy parallel to Reich’s interests over the coming years—then he complained: “It is now possible for a musician to use incredibly complex technology and produce nothing audible at all.”67 The primary effects of Neuhaus’ Bi-Product in concert were thus visual and tactile, namely the experience of walking on the papered floor, seeing the complex and inscrutable machinery, and carrying home the loop of plastic audiotape.

Reich’s writer friend Ronald Sukenick attended the concert: he later wrote of the “white paper on the floor” and “Chuck Ross’s prisms,” stating that “John [sic] Gibson played in back of those prisms.”68 Gibson himself recalls, “I performed Reed Phase behind large prism sculptures by Charles Ross, so the visual of me playing was skewed in an interesting way.”69 Regardless, the concerts featured a compelling juxtaposition of aural and visual elements, an interweaving of artistic media that paired well with the aesthetics of Park Place. The photo accompanying Carman Moore’s Village Voice review prominently features Ross’s wall of prisms and declares in its caption: “Through Some Prisms, Musically.”70 The floor plan in Figure 3 shows the approximate arrangement of Ross’s prisms, the location from which Gibson played Reed Phase, and where the audience sat to hear the performance.

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67 Ibid.

68 Sukenick, Down and In, 141. In contrast to Sukenick’s account, Potter places all the musicians behind Ross’ prisms: “The musicians played behind Ross’ prisms; the audience accordingly saw not only the players, but also multiple reflections of each of them. This clearly contributed to the ‘psychedelic’ aspect of the occasion.” See Potter, Four Musical Minimalists, 196.

69 Gibson, email communication with author, 7 November 2010.

70 The caption and its photo appear alongside Moore, “Park Place Pianos.”
The event itself drew considerable attention from the local art and performance community. “Everybody downtown ended up coming,” Reich recalled in 1980: “[Robert] Rauschenberg, and all the dancers were there. […] It was an important series of concerts.”71 Moreover, in featuring the composer as performer alongside Gibson and Murphy, Reich affirmed in public the private collaborations that had led to the creation of Piano Phase and Reed Phase. Beyond any aesthetic resonance between the music and the art, such as the minimalist modularity noted by Glueck in her New York Times review, Reich’s March 1967 concert series represented a strong statement of the composer’s associations with the Park Place group and with their audience of fellow artists and performers. With their consistent support of Reich in these early years—from the Harlem Six benefit, to his debut concert in 1966, to his inclusion in the

71 Reich, interview by Duckworth, 299.
“Fleming / Ross / Foyster / Reich” exhibition in 1967—the Park Place Group effectively communicated to the composer and his audiences: *Steve Reich is one of us.*

*Enter Philip Glass*

At the recommendation of sculptor Richard Serra, Reich’s former Juilliard classmate Philip Glass attended one of Reich’s “Four Pianos” concerts in March 1967. Glass had recently returned from studies abroad in Paris, working with Nadia Boulanger and Ravi Shankar. The Park Place concerts made a considerable impression on him and afterward he reacquainted himself with Reich, who in turn introduced him to Gibson and Murphy. “I discovered,” Glass later explained, “that there was another group of musicians working in a way similar to the way I had begun working. For a number of years immediately after that, we spent a good deal of time together. We showed our music to each other. There was a very active dialogue going on.”

With the inclusion of Glass, the informal trio of Gibson, Murphy, and Reich became a quartet. The year after Reich’s “Four Pianos” concerts saw a flurry of productivity from the four musicians. All four stayed busy with day jobs, writing and rehearsing in the evenings and on weekends. Murphy began working in the financial district and continued preparing his Bill Evans transcriptions for publication. Gibson fed La Monte Young’s turtles and took odd jobs as they came along. Glass began assimilating himself and his family into the downtown community, starting work as sculptor Richard Serra’s only paid assistant and listing his library of early-sixties

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73 Murphy, telephone interview by author, 12 November 2012; Gibson, email communication with the author, 7 November 2010.

74 Gibson, interview by author, 2 June 2010.
compositions with the publisher Elkan-Vogel for income. Reich continued to work as a sound technician and tape editor for films and recording studios and pondered new ways to blend his tape expertise with traditional live performance. His next two compositions, *Buy Art! Buy Art!* and *My Name Is*, both dating from late spring 1967, return to the use of the spoken voice on tape. In *Buy Art! Buy Art!*, identical spoken-word tracks played back on separate machines in different locations within a space. Idiosyncrasies among the playback speeds caused the recordings to shift out of synchrony in an indeterminate and mechanical phasing process. Such effects resembled those in Gibson’s *Who Are You* from 1966, which in turn had been composed using equipment and techniques borrowed from Reich.

We have already observed Murphy’s contribution to Gibson’s *Vocal/Tape Delay* and in the role played by both these men in realizing Reich’s *Reed Phase* and *Piano Phase*. Another example of this reciprocity of influence and borrowing is Reich’s conceptual piece *Slow Motion Sound* from September 1967. Reich dates his earliest conception for the work to several years before:

The roots of this idea date from 1963 when I first became interested in experimental films, and began looking at film as analog to tape. Extreme slow motion seemed particularly interesting, since it allowed one to see minute details that were normally impossible to observe. The real moving image was left intact with only its tempo slowed down. Experiments with rotating head tape recorders, digital analysis, and synthesis of speech and vocoders all proved unable to produce the gradual yet enormous elongation, to factors of 64 or more times original length [sic], together with high-fidelity speech reproduction, which were both necessary for musical results.

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76 Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists*, 173.

While we have no reason to doubt this origin story, archived letters suggest that the poet-composer Jackson Mac Low may also have played a role in crystallizing the idea into a score in late summer 1967. In the weeks immediately following the “Four Pianos” concerts at Park Place Gallery, Reich and Mac Low exchanged a series of postcards and letters in which the latter pitched several ideas for new compositions. In a postcard, dated the same day as the last “Four Pianos” concert (19 March 1967), Mac Low penned a short text he called “Homage to Bessie”:

My mind boggles at the genius of Bessie Smith.  

An asterisk appeared next to the poem’s title, referencing the following footnote: “For Steve Reich to complete,” with instructions to record the text on tape loops and phase it against itself, in the style of *It’s Gonna Rain* and *Come Out*. The postcard closed with the following:

I hope the idiotic simplicity of this one doesn’t offend your super ego or something. Don’t tell our competitive fellow composers, but you are the greatest thing since La Monte Y[oung]. JML  

Ten days later, Reich wrote his response:

Jackson, Thanks for Bessie. It’s the most flattering thing to happen to me in 1967. Since hearing you read last year at the Fishbach [sic] Gallery my suspicions about you’re [sic] being the most important poet since Charles Olson have been confirmed.  

On 1 April, however, Mac Low wrote the following:

There is a device by which a taped sound can be speeded up [sic] without changing its pitch. […]

In re: *Homage to* Bessie: My idea is to make use of such a device to stretch the original sounds, ever so slightly, in duration without altering amplitudes or frequencies.  

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78 Jackson Mac Low, The Bronx, to Reich, Manhattan, 19 March 1967, SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.

79 Ibid.

80 Reich, Manhattan, to Mac Low, The Bronx, 29 March 1967, SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.
The following September, Reich produced the manuscript for *Slow Motion Sound*. The score consists only of the following text:

> Very gradually slow down a recorded sound to many times its original length without changing its frequency or spectrum at all.\(^82\)

The parallel between Mac Low’s last suggestion for *Homage to Bessie* and *Slow Motion Sound* are especially striking. This exchange between Reich and Mac Low poses no great challenge to the composer’s origin story for *Slow Motion Sound*. Perhaps Mac Low’s suggestion in April 1967 merely motivated Reich to write down ideas he had already fostered for some time, thus it warranted no additional acknowledgement in the composer’s notes on the work. No one disputes Reich’s ultimate responsibility for a work like *Piano Phase* or *Slow Motion Sound*, or Gibson’s ownership of *Who Are You* or *Vocal/Tape Delay*. Yet the Mac Low correspondence further highlights how complicated a thing authorship can be, especially in downtown New York in the late sixties. But this was no communal utopia of shared effort and property: Mac Low also highlights the spirit of competitiveness among certain unnamed “fellow composers” even in the highly collaborative downtown community.

Of the four musicians currently under consideration, Glass appears to have been the most productive in the year after the Park Place concert series, composing no fewer than seven new works which he actively shared with his new cohort for comment. Each of these received an evocative or clever riddle for its title, such as *Strung Out* for amplified violin (July 1967), *Two Down* for saxophone duet (undated, but likely late winter or early spring 1968), and *In Again Out*

\(^81\) Mac Low, The Bronx, to Reich, Manhattan, 1 April 1967, SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.

\(^82\) Reich, *Writings on Music*, 28.
Again for keyboard duet (March 1968). In How Now for solo piano (February 1968), Potter has written, the composer utilized “as many of the ingredients that were to prove fruitful to Glass in the ensuing few years as do any of his other early compositions.” These included “a scheme which is itself essentially additive,” an early indication of the strategies now more associated with Glass’ $1+1$ from November 1968.

Many years later, Reich assessed Glass’ new works in the late sixties as lacking a sufficiently independent voice or, worse, as a violation of Reich’s own creative patents. Parallels between the two composers may be seen in the instrumentation of Reich’s Violin Phase (October 1967) and Glass’ Strung Out; Reich’s Reed Phase and Glass’ / \ for Jon Gibson (February 1968); as well as Reich’s Piano Phase and Glass’ How Now and In Again Out Again, for one and two keyboards, respectively. The latter of these pairings appears to have troubled Reich the most. He later wrote that How Now “utilized modular material with a fixed order for playing the modules but no real addition to the techniques developed by Riley’s In C or my Phase pieces.”

Moreover, about Glass’ In Again Out Again from March 1968, Reich complained: “Each part had repeating patterns of different lengths so that they changed contrapuntal relationships so rapidly it didn’t make much sense when listening.” The title itself appears to refer to Glass’ own take on the departure and return scenario of Piano Phase. A further parallel may be drawn

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83 See Potter, Four Musical Minimalists, 277.
84 Ibid., 282.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., 234.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
between the interlocking, overlapping hand position of *Piano Phase* and the keyboard part in Glass’ *Head-On* (October 1967). Example 2 shows the first several modules of both works for comparison. Only with the composition *1+1*, based on formal patterns Glass had learned working with Ravi Shankar in Paris (and first explored in *How Now*, as suggested by Potter), did Reich finally affirm that his colleague had achieved sufficient legitimacy and independence.

Instead of taking Reich’s autobiographical statements as the final word on the matter, the present study seeks to transcend the “rush to the patent office” mentality of both musical modernism and conventional historiography. It documents and notes such squabbles rather than mediating, resolving, or newly litigating them. From his description of the collaborations with Gibson and Murphy, to his cursory program notes on *Slow Motion Sound*, to his criticism of Glass’ style during their years together, Reich consistently appears to have been among the more competitive of the “fellow composers” to whom Mac Low referred. Reich’s critiques of Glass, which focus on abstract musical concerns like repetition, modularity, and counterpoint, suggest an attempt to assert mastery over their shared history. They provide early evidence of the tensions that would split the two composers in the early 1970s.
Yet there were other salient features of Glass’ aesthetic during these years, beyond the ones that obsessed Reich. For example, whatever repetitive method Glass used to produce the musical content of *Strung Out*, its primary effects in performance were visual and spatial. Potter has noted the multi-layered pun of the title, referring to its instrumentation (i.e., the *strings* of the violin), to sixties psychedelia (that is, to being “strung out” on drugs), and to the score’s configuration in performance as a single continuous page.\(^{89}\) Similarly, Glass inscribed the physical arrangement of */\ for Jon Gibson* into its title: the non-lexical slashes represent the composition’s two parts, which each receive a “strung out” arrangement at right angles to one another.

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\(^{89}\) Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists*, 278.
another. Moreover, *Piece in the Shape of a Square* for two flutes (May 1968), calls for two scores to be mounted on a four-sided stand, with a performer inside the box and another on the outside. The two flutists begin at the same corner, each reading their own score to the right. In effect, *Piece in the Shape of a Square* translates the departure-and-return scenario from Reich’s phase pieces from musical abstraction to physical space: against the static score, the performers move around the square in opposite directions, pass each other at the far end, and meet again at the original corner.

Joan La Barbara, a later associate of Glass’, has described these works as an attempt to “alter the traditional staid concert situation,” by translating the music’s temporal processes into visual forms. However, although this was undoubtedly true, these pieces appealed to a set of artistic values more immediate to Glass’ situation in downtown Manhattan in the late sixties. In all three of these works, Glass transformed scores into structures and musicians into actors and dancers, moving their bodies and their sounding music through a stage-set. In Gibson’s performance of *Reed Phase* from behind Charles Ross’ prisms, the aural/spatial analog had been located not in the notated score but in the bounded space and time of performance and listening; in Glass’ new pieces, these effects were encoded directly into the compositions’ titles as performance directions. Reich would eventually criticize this spatial approach to musical performance, though he did not name Glass as the offending party: in a published lecture from 1987, Reich wrote that “physical space, while undoubtedly enhancing or detracting from a performance because of acoustics, seems peripheral to composition.”

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91 Reich, *Writings on Music*, 142.
Glass at Film-Makers’ Cinematheque

In contrast to Reich’s more dismissive critiques, downtown artists and performers expressed overwhelming support and appreciation for Glass’ music. Some of the most enthusiastic support came from filmmaker Jonas Mekas, whom Glass met in late 1967 or early 1968 at a dinner party at James Tenney’s loft apartment.92 Mekas was a Lithuanian émigré who had become a leading figure in New York’s underground cinema. He had established a series of institutions that provided screening space, archives, and a range of educational and distribution services to the experimental film community. The first of these institutions was the Film-Makers’ Cinematheque, a somewhat tenuous and short-lived organization that existed in several different locations over the course of several years in the mid-sixties.93 Mekas and his Cinematheque associates had developed a concept they called “Expanded Cinema,” which blended film with various other artforms, especially through the infusion of live performance into filmmaking and projection.94 Such hybridity reflected the contemporaneous culture of “events” and happenings, especially in the community surrounding Mekas’ close friend and fellow Lithuanian, George Maciunas.95 Even when presentations lacked this mixed-media synesthesia, the space of the

Cinematheque itself, and its openness to all forms of art and performance, embodied the intermedia sensibility.

Music played a prominent role in this Expanded Cinema ethos at Film-Makers’ Cinematheque. La Monte Young and his Theatre of Eternal Music performed for the 1965 Expanded Cinema Festival, during the Cinematheque’s residency at the Astor Place Playhouse on Lafayette Street in the East Village.\(^\text{96}\) New York policemen famously arrested Charlotte Moorman for indecency after her semi-nude performance of *Opera Sextronique* in February 1967; her performance had taken place at the Cinematheque’s temporary location at the 41st Street Theatre near Bryant Park.\(^\text{97}\) James Tenney held a concert of his “Concrete and Computer Music” at the Cinematheque’s new home at 80 Wooster Street in January 1968, an event that Reich appears to have attended.\(^\text{98}\) In April 1968, two of Reich’s San Francisco colleagues, Stan Katz and Tom Constanten, performed there with their new band, The Grateful Dead, alongside a screening of filmmaker Michael Snow’s *Wavelength*.\(^\text{99}\)

After hearing Glass explain his new musical ideas in Tenney’s loft, Mekas offered his enthusiastic support: “At that moment,” Glass later recalled, “I’m sure Jonas didn’t know a note

\(^{96}\) Foreman, “During the Second Half of the Sixties,” 143; Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists*, 72.


\(^{98}\) Thanks to Professor Eric Smigel of San Diego State University for confirming the date of James Tenney’s concert at Film-Makers’ Cinematheque. Reich’s entry for 21 January 1968, in his archived datebook reads “8pm Jim Tenney - Cinematheque.” Reich, “Agenden 1968,” SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.

\(^{99}\) Reich’s entry for 5 April 1968, in his archived datebook reads “Cinematheque - Wavelength & Grateful Dead 8pm.” Reich, “Agenden 1968.”
of my work, but when I described the music I was writing, he immediately invited me to give a concert at the Film-Makers Cinematheque.” Glass, Reich, Gibson, and violinist Dorothy Pixley assembled at the Cinematheque on Wooster Avenue on 19 May 1968, to present “New Music [by] Philip Glass.” Although several of the pieces had received performances in prior months, the composer would later describe his spring 1968 Cinematheque concert as “my personal debut.” The program for that concert appears in Figure 4.

Referencing photographs from Glass’ concert (published elsewhere), Figure 5 shows the arrangements of Glass’ scores and equipment on a floor plan of the Cinematheque’s Wooster Street location. The audience surrounded the performance space on three sides. The box-shaped structure of Piece in the Shape of a Square stood at stage right. Pixley performed Strung Out stage left; the Cinematheque wall did not have sufficient space to mount its score in a single straight line, so it jutted away from the wall at a right angle and wrapped back on itself. Between these two scores, / \ for Jon Gibson filled center stage, with the amplifier and sound equipment sitting in the gap between the composition’s two parts. Front and center sat two keyboards: on these, Glass performed the solo keyboard piece How Now and Reich joined him for In Again Out Again. As at Reich’s concerts the prior year, Glass recalled: “The audience was mostly

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100 Glass, Music by Philip Glass, 20.

101 Ibid. Performance records for the Philip Glass Ensemble indicate that In Again Out Again, / \ for Jon Gibson, and Strung Out were performed on 13 April 1968, at Queen’s College; Malcolm Goldstein, of the Tone Roads ensemble, performed Strung Out on 9 May 1968, at the New School. Once again, many thanks to Professor Smigel for sharing the program for this event.

102 Floor plan dimensions based on Bernstein and Shapiro, Illegal Living, 281. See the photo by Peter Moore in David E. James, To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas and the New York Underground (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 185. Music in the Shape of a Square stands in the foreground; part of Strung Out is visible in the background. / \ for Jon Gibson sits in the space between them. Glass and Reich are visible in the photograph, performing In Again Out Again. Moore’s photos of Dorothy Pixley performing Strung Out appear in Glass, Music by Philip Glass, [n.p.; third page of photos after 142].
artists.”  

A recent history of the facility at 80 Wooster Street indicates that the Cinematheque held 70 moveable seats; Glass recalls, “about 120 people [in attendance], which, in the little Film-Makers Cinematheque, made the place seemed packed.” Whereas Reich had displayed his scores at Park Place Gallery as wall art alongside Fleming’s paintings, Glass’ scores stood as floor sculptures, around which the audience could walk before and after the performance.

In his autobiography, Glass recorded his enduring impression of the Cinematheque concert, which received no notice in local newspapers: “It was considered very successful but, more important, these were 120 enthusiastic people. The music meant something to them in terms of their own aesthetics, something they were familiar with.” As with Reich’s concerts at Park Place Gallery, Glass’ Cinematheque debut marked the public fruition of his private collaborations. It initiated a long and productive participation in the art and performance community of downtown Manhattan. In effect, Glass declared to those involved in the world of happenings and intermedia, underground film, experimental dance, and minimalist, avant-garde visual arts: I am one of you.


104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.
NEW MUSIC - PHILIP GLASS

PROGRAM

--------- D U E T S ---------

1. PIECE IN THE SHAPE OF A SQUARE (5/68)
   Jon Gibson, Philip Glass ... Amplified Flutes

2. IN AGAIN OUT AGAIN (3/68)
   Philip Glass, Steve Reich ... Electric Pianos

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Intermission

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--------- S O L O S ---------

3. / FOR JON GIBSON (12/67)
   Jon Gibson ... Amplified Soprano Saxophone

4. STRUNG OUT (7/67)
   Dorothy Pixely ... Amplified Violin

5. HOW NOW (2/68)
   Philip Glass ... Electric Piano

FILM-MAKERS CINEMATHEQUE
80 Wooster Street,
New York, N.Y.

SUNDAY - 8:30

MAY 19, 1968

Figure 5. Floor plan of Film-Makers’ Cinematheque, 19 May 1968. Access to the street at 80 Wooster is to the left of the diagram. The small circles indicate the approximate location of support pillars. (Reconstructed by the author.)

Codetta: Landry and the Whitney Museum

Despite the sturdiness of their cast iron facades and brick-and-mortar walls on West Broadway and Wooster Streets, Park Place Gallery and Film-Makers’ Cinematheque were ephemeral institutions. Park Place Gallery saw only a handful of additional shows before it officially closed on 31 July 1967, four months after Reich’s “Four Pianos” concert series.\textsuperscript{106} The following year, Paula Cooper, who served as director of Park Place Gallery when it finally shuttered, opened her own gallery on a second floor loft at 96 Prince Street, thus becoming one of the cornerstone institutions of the emerging district known as SoHo.\textsuperscript{107} Film-Makers’ Cinematheque, moreover,

\textsuperscript{106} See Henderson, \textit{Reimagining Space}, 84.

\textsuperscript{107} Although most of the Park Place artists followed Cooper into her new venture, the group effectively dissolved when several of its members decided to leave Manhattan for good. In 1968, Reich’s friend Dean Fleming and their road-trip-mate, John Baldwin, made a permanent follow-
had actually closed the month prior to Glass’ concert there, but because Mekas owned the space, the ground floor at 80 Wooster continued to be available for performances of various types well into the 1970s. Mekas’s more stable venture, Anthology Film Archives, eventually subsumed and replaced the Film-Makers’ Cinematheque.\textsuperscript{108}

Glass’ debut at Film-Makers’ Cinematheque also represented an ending in another sense. After this concert he abandoned his sculptural conception: he performed few of these works ever again and he wrote no more of them.\textsuperscript{109} The reason for this change appears to have been a new desire to write for larger ensembles. While it had made sense to set soloists or a pair of flute players moving through a concert space, it no longer seemed appropriate for entire groups. Even at Film-Makers’ Cinematheque, the heavy keyboards were never in motion, and their departure-return narrative (in \textit{In Again Out Again} especially) existed only as an abstract musical impression. Glass needed to reevaluate his approach to space if it was going to remain an interest.

In late summer 1968, Louisiana saxophonist and artist Richard “Dickie” Landry arrived in New York City. Landry reconnected with his college friend, artist Keith Sonnier, with whom he had taken art classes in the late fifties.\textsuperscript{110} Sonnier introduced Landry to the stable of artists then associated with Leo Castelli’s uptown art gallery, including Richard Serra, Gordon Matta, and Lawrence Weiner. Most of these artists had attended Glass’ Film-Makers’ Cinematheque up to their 1966 trip to New Mexico, where Fleming founded an artists’ retreat later named Libre. See Henderson, \textit{Reimagining Space}, 35.

\textsuperscript{108} Bernstein and Shapiro, \textit{Illegal Living}, 105.

\textsuperscript{109} Ensemble performance records provided by Dan Dryden, email communication with author, 31 May 2011.

\textsuperscript{110} Richard Landry, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 1 March 2011.
concert the previous May. Landry recalls that Sonnier also insisted that he get in touch with Glass:

["Sonnier"] told me that he’d attended a concert of a composer by the name of Philip Glass that visually was interesting. Philip had built this labyrinth of walls with the sheet music attached. Paul Zukofsky played the violin [sic; Zukofsky did not play _Strung Out_ in concert until April 1969] and walked the labyrinth following the score. Keith suggested I should meet Philip and gave me his number.\(^\text{111}\)

Sonnier’s references to “labyrinths” as the basis for his recommendation affirmed, once again, the terms on which he and his fellow artists related to Glass’ music.

Landry met Glass at his loft at 23rd Street near Ninth Avenue in late October or early November 1968. Landry recalls being less impressed by Glass’ musical style than by the blind jazz musician, Moondog, then living in the Glass family loft. Moondog, with his signature long beard and horned Viking helmet, had moved into the apartment the previous summer at the urging of Glass’ then-wife, Joanna Akalaitis.\(^\text{112}\) Landry knew of Moondog from radio broadcasts that he had heard as a child and considered him a personal hero: as he recalls, “my thoughts were, ‘if he [Glass] has Moondog living here, I have to pay attention to this guy.’”\(^\text{113}\) Glass invited Landry to a dinner at Reich’s loft the following weekend, and told him: “Bring your saxophone.”\(^\text{114}\) At their first meeting in early November, both Reich and Glass played their own

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\(^{112}\) Robert M. Scotto, _Moondog: The Viking of 6th Avenue, the Authorized Biography_ (Los Angeles, Calif.: Process, 2007), 170; Glass, interview by Close, 90.

\(^{113}\) Landry, interview by Allen; Landry, interview by author, 1 March 2011; Landry, interview by author, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York City, New York, 31 October 2012.

\(^{114}\) Landry, interview by Allen.
At the end of what turned out to be an extraordinarily emotional listening experience, Landry declared: “My god, this is the best new music I’ve ever heard.” Glass mentioned that he wanted to start an ensemble and invited Landry to join them. Landry, thinking he was being offered a paid job, agreed. “Little did I realize,” Landry explains, “that he had only one concert lined up in 1969.” That concert took place on 20 May at the Whitney Museum, as part of the “Anti-Illusion” exhibition, in which many of Glass’ and Reich’s audience-member friends presented their own work. That exhibition is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

The quartet of Reich, Gibson, Murphy, and Glass became a quintet, as Landry quickly became an essential and active member of the group and its community. Landry hauled furniture with Glass’ short-lived moving-truck venture with his cousin, sculptor Jene Highstein, and worked for a time as a copyist for his old friend William Fischer, a jazz composer at Atlantic Records. He began taking photographs of performances, exhibitions, and everyday life around SoHo. Glass’ much-discussed occupation as a plumber began with Landry: Glass obtained licenses to do the work while Landry worked as his “assistant,” teaching him how to plumb as they went. This arrangement served both of them well for the next several years of loft conversions; Glass, Landry, and Highstein became the SoHo neighborhood plumbers, installing sinks, baths, and toilets for artists ranging from Chuck Close to Christo and Jean-Claude.

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115 Landry appears in Reich’s datebook from 1968 on 7 and 14 November. See Reich, “Agenden 1968.”

116 Landry, interview by Allen.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 Landry, interview by author, 1 March 2011.
Though they were clearly welcomed and even closely integrated into the programming and community at Park Place Gallery and Film-Makers’ Cinematheque, Reich, Gibson, Murphy, and Glass had no place to call their own through the end of the sixties. These art galleries and multi-media spaces were not just alternatives to concert halls; the performance of music in these spaces, which had been designed by and tailored to visual artists and theatrical performers, still remained a novelty. Although the art and performance community—including their audiences and critics—had begun to articulate their experience of the music, the musicians had yet to establish a space wherein they could define community on their own terms. The story of how they eventually managed to do this forms the subject of chapter three. But first we consider in chapter two Glass’ new aesthetic philosophy after Anti-Illusion, which came to be dominated by an interest in space and “presence.”
CHAPTER 2
PRESENCE IN THE EARLY-SEVENTIES AESTHETIC OF PHILIP GLASS

In May 1970, Philip Glass heard voices when no one was singing and it changed his creative life. Glass’ own account of the experience first appeared in *Avalanche* magazine in summer 1972.¹ In one of the composer’s first and most detailed interviews, Glass recalled:

We were playing in a theatre-in-the-round made of wood in Minneapolis. It was like playing inside a Stradivarius. It was the most beautiful sound I ever dreamed of. [...] We were rehearsing [*Music in Similar Motion*] in the hall and when we go into the end of the piece, I thought I heard someone singing, I *did* hear someone singing, in fact, and I stopped, thinking Arthur [Murphy], one of the guys who likes to horse around, was improvising and I said, come on, who’s singing, and we looked around because we thought someone was there. It was that real an experience. It wasn’t us playing. But there was no one in the room; as I said, it was a rehearsal. So we started playing again and the sound came back, and of course then we realized that the sound happened because of the acoustical properties of that room and because of the texture of the music.²

This experience, by Glass’ own account, inspired a new aesthetic orientation:

In the last two years [since May 1970], there’s been a real change of sensibility, in the content of the experience that we’re interested in. In my work, it’s taken the form of becoming interested in other aspects of music. Let’s put it this way, my earlier pieces *Two Pages, Music in Fifths* were very clear structures. I thought that I was making structures in sound and that’s what interested me most about those pieces. When that problem was no longer urgent, I began listening to the “sound” of the music and I found that had become more interesting than the structure. It didn’t mean that I had to abandon the structures. In fact I needed them. However, I had become less interested in purity of

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form than in the kind of almost psycho-acoustical experiences that happened while listening to the music.³

After his experiments with additive formal processes in his late-sixties compositions—the last was *Music in Similar Motion* (November 1969)—Glass turned his attention to the listening experience and the phenomenal aspects of sound itself. The previous February (1970), Richard Foreman published an essay in *Arts Magazine* entitled “Glass and Snow” in which he described the composer’s “growing vision of his music as primarily a kind of ‘performance piece’ rather than a disembodied sound phenomenon that stands by itself.”⁴ Foreman’s comment affirmed Glass’ changing conception. No longer did he focus on purely musical concerns—on autonomous “structures in sound.” Instead, he now emphasized the act of musical performance and prioritized unnotated aural effects like those experienced in Minneapolis. Foreman’s essay, informed by his affiliation and friendship with the composer, dates the early stages of Glass’ new orientation to the earliest months of 1970 or before.

As the Minneapolis concerts show, by the early seventies Glass became consumed with what it meant to hear music in both time and space. In a revealing preview of things to come, Glass’ June 1969 collaboration with sculptor Richard Serra, entitled “Long Beach Island, Word Location,” asked its viewers/listeners to engage with the marsh and coastline geography of Long Beach Island, New Jersey (about two hours south of Manhattan), and to register the relationship of their bodies to the sound sources, as well as to the space shared by sound and observer. Volume levels were set so that no more than a single speaker could be heard at any location, forcing spectators to move into close proximity to the other speakers dispersed over the thirty-

³ Ibid.
acre site (there were 32 in all). The project marked a return to the spatial concerns present at Glass’ New York “debut” at Filmmaker’s Cinematheque: now, however, rather than moving performers through a space as they produced sound, Glass and Serra set their audience in motion through the soundscape, making them aware of fluctuating relationships between sound, space, and spectator: in short, the experience of “presence” in listening.

Over the next several years, the term “presence” came to dominate discussions of Glass’ music, both by himself and by his insider audiences. Foreman closed his February 1970 essay by proclaiming that for the composer’s audiences (and for those of filmmaker Michael Snow), “naked presence is the mode and matter of the artistic experience.” In a 3 January 1973, New York Times article entitled “Sound of New Music is Likened to Art,” John Rockwell quoted Glass as saying, “my music is very accessible… it has a physical presence people can respond to.” In a 1973 essay entitled simply “Program Notes,” published in English in the German art magazine Interfunktionen, Glass noted:

Recent developments mark a move away from a primary interest in structure and musical shape to a music which exists more in “time-present.” […] Additive process as a compositional principle has remained as the form while the content of the musical experience is becoming increasingly involved with sound, texture, and “presence.”

The following year, at the Town Hall premiere of the complete Music in Twelve Parts, Glass hoped that the listener would

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be able to perceive the music almost as a “presence,” freed of dramatic structure, a pure medium of sound. […] In recent years, the music has moved from a primary interest in structure to preoccupation with the sound and “presence.” […] Now the character and quality of amplified sound seem to serve as a sub-text to the structure (as essence) of the music itself.⁹

In a summer 1974 essay published in Art-Rite magazine, art critic John Howell further wrote, “presence [in Glass’ music] derives from an activation of the entire performance area, including the audience as a resonant element of that sound.”¹⁰ For Glass and his critics alike, “presence” achieved special relevance as a term that captured the composer’s new musical aims and effects in the early decade. This chapter seeks to further explore these references to “presence” in Glass’ music, largely overlooked in minimalism scholarship, showing the implications of the concept for our understanding of Glass’ developing style and its reception.

There exists a rich phenomenological and deconstructionist tradition about “presence,” most familiarly from the writings of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, in the nineteen-twenties and sixties, respectively. Heidegger and Derrida both considered presence to be a temporal concept, and an especially elusive and illusory one. Both challenged the idea that meaningful forms of expression could be fully present or in the “now” because meaning always depended upon established and prior meaning. Writing did not simply follow speech, as had been claimed since Rousseau: written texts contain the accumulated practices of a language, thus texts

⁹ Archived program from the Town Hall Concert, box 46, folder 2360, Richard Foreman Collection, Fales Library, New York University, New York, N.Y. This passage appears uncited and somewhat mangled in Mertens’ American Minimal Music: “It is hoped that one would be able to perceive the music as a dramatic structure, pure medium ‘of sound.’” The reference to presence is missing and the notion of “dramatic structure” has been twisted into the aim rather than the foil. Jonathan Kramer carried the misquotation further in The Time of Music and cites Mertens as his source: “It is hoped that one would be able to perceive the music as a … pure medium ‘of sound.’” Mertens, American Minimal Music, 79; Jonathan Kramer, The Time of Music (New York: Schirmer, 1988), 376.

¹⁰ John Howell, “Listening to Glass,” Art-Rite (Summer 1974); reprinted in Kostelanetz, ed., Writings on Glass, 96.
written in the past necessarily precede all forms of expression in the present. The experience of the present—especially the attempt to articulate that experience using language—is always already compromised by the past.11

Although Heidegger’s and Derrida’s writing began to appear in English translation in the late sixties, there is little evidence that Glass or his immediate colleagues understood their own invocations of the term to have anything to do with these specific philosophical traditions.12 When Glass and others in the New York art world invoked presence, they appeared to be as concerned about space as they were about time. In this regard their concerns foreshadow Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s more recent treatment of presence. Rather than basing his interpretation on Heidegger’s and Derrida’s negation of presence, Gumbrecht expands upon French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy’s attempt to reclaim presence by isolating it from language. Nancy had argued in the nineties that the experience of presence emerges and recedes simultaneously in a fleeting moment prior to the intrusion of memory and thought, a metaphorical state of birth wherein attempts to rationalize, to define, or to quantify have not yet interrupted the sensuous experience.13 Gumbrecht, however, argues for a relationship between experience and rational


thought not as sequential, in which one displaces the other, but as simultaneous and dialectic: presence and “meaning,” as he terms it, persist alongside and in constant tension with one another. In some sense, Gumbrecht’s notion of presence resonates with the anti-hermeneutic position briefly espoused in the late sixties by Susan Sontag in her influential essay, “Against Interpretation”; Gumbrecht’s opposition between presence and meaning bears some resemblance to Sontag’s opposition between hermeneutics and “an erotics of art.” Yet where Sontag advocated eliminating hermeneutics, Gumbrecht proposes presence as complementary to meaning. Presence, in his formulation, had been underrepresented and unfairly maligned in the post-Cartesian prioritizing of the mind over the body. Furthermore, while Heidegger, Derrida, and Nancy emphasized the temporality of presence—as an illusory or ephemeral “now”—Gumbrecht firmly associates the term with space, with an articulation of “here”:

What is “present” to us (very much in the sense of the Latin form prae-esse) is in front of us, in reach of and tangible for our bodies. […] In other words, to speak of “production of presence” implies that the (spatial) tangibility effect coming from the communication media is subjected, in space, to movements of greater or lesser proximity, and of greater or lesser intensity. […] Any form of communication, through its material elements, will “touch” the bodies of the persons who are communicating in specific and varying ways.

In her much-debated essay, “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?,” musicologist Carolyn Abbate cites Gumbrecht in her call for a renewed consideration of presence in music scholarship. Her


16 Certain elements of Gumbrecht’s approach chafe against accepted scholarly wisdom. Most glaring, he maps meaning and presence onto familiar and discredited cultural dichotomies: Gumbrecht’s notion of meaning often inclines toward the occidental, the masculine, and the mind, while he implicitly treats presence as embodied, magical, feminine, and non-western.

titular opposition—drastic versus gnostic—roughly maps onto Gumbrecht’s presence and meaning, Sontag’s erotics and hermeneutics, and Nancy’s experience and thought. Abbate argues for a new prioritizing of the experience of live performance, of “real music, music-as-performed” as the subject of scholarly inquiry:

If immediate aural presence has gotten some votes of no confidence in contemporary musicological discourse, this may reflect unspoken uneasiness about performed music as an ephemeral object, subject to instantaneous loss, but equally important as something that acts upon us and changes us. When it is present, it can ban logos or move our bodies without our conscious will. […] General suspicions of aural presence need themselves to be resisted.

Abbate, Gumbrecht, and Emmerson, it must be said, were not responding to Glass’ music and their writings postdate invocations of presence by the composer and his contemporary commentators. Certainly the meaning of presence—pace Gumbrecht—shifts over time and in the formulations of different writers. Nonetheless, the presence invoked by Glass and his colleagues appears remarkably consistent with these latter-day concerns. Despite a lack of clear causality, there remain noteworthy correlations between these various descriptions of presence: tangibility, embodied experience, the fleeting and ineffable moment, space and location, performance, and perception.

18 These terms come from Vladimir Jankélévitch’s 1961 book, *La musique et l’ineffable*, which Abbate had recently translated and whose ideas motivated her subsequent essay: “Jankélévitch’s distinction between drastic and gnostic involves more than a conventional opposition between music in practice and music in theory because drastic connotes physicality, but also desperation and peril, involving a category of knowledge that flows from drastic actions or experiences and not from verbally mediated reasoning. Gnostic as its antithesis implies not just knowledge per se but making the opaque transparent, knowledge based on semiosis and disclosed secrets, reserved for the elite and hidden from others.” Carolyn Abbate, “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?,” *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 510. See also Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2003).

19 Abbate, “Drastic or Gnostic,” 532.
Glass’ music did, however, appear within a specific historical milieu of its own. By the mid-sixties, as art historian James Meyer has observed, the term “presence” had achieved particular currency among visual art critics. “Presence,” Meyer explains, “suggested the bodily impact of a powerful work. […] Presence was an impression of aesthetic quality so implacable that the spectator could sense it without even looking at the work. The work made its presence felt, demanding the viewer’s recognition.”

Presence, as interpreted by Meyer, described the viewer’s embodied experience of an artwork, the powerful impression of a work on its spectator, and the active articulation of the proximity between the viewer and the object being viewed. As we shall see, critics and audiences who defined their own visual art experience in these terms soon began to apply this vocabulary to Glass’ music. Eventually, Glass would do the same.

*Presence, from Anti-Minimalism to “Anti-Illusion”*

Polemical writings and artistic manifestos saturated the Manhattan art world of the middle and later sixties. Following the Beat writers of the fifties, and the Fluxus and happenings apologists of the early sixties, the artists associated with visual minimalism began to generate their own catalogue of writings detailing their aesthetics. Meyer describes the highly varied field of minimalist visual art as lacking a coherent overall style; it was instead unified around a common critical debate. Yet not all minimalists employed the same language, for as historian Carter Ratcliff has written:

> Each of the minimalists had a doctrine, and each rested his doctrine on a single term. Donald Judd’s was “object,” which he presented in 1965. Robert Morris countered a year later with “gestalt.” Soon Sol LeWitt had come up with “concept.” Neither “concept” nor “gestalt” entails an object. However, Judd’s “object” entails both of them, so his term

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took precedence in the discussion of minimalism, as Morris acknowledged by exchanging talk of “gestalts” for comments on “objects.” Carl Andre’s favored word was “place,” which removed him from direct competition with the other three. A box or lattice occupies a place. A work by Andre is a place, “an area within an environment which has been altered in such a way as to make the general environment more conspicuous”—or so he argued in 1968.\textsuperscript{22}

This passage only begins to hint at the rich (even convoluted) ideological and terminological lexicon surrounding minimalism in the visual arts, but it provides a useful list of the most prominent of its outspoken proponents. (Essays by Judd, Morris, LeWitt, and Andre, among others, still remain prominent in art history anthologies covering the postwar period, especially Lucy Lippard’s \textit{Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972}.\textsuperscript{23})

The discourse on presence received two of its earliest and most enduring formulations in a pair of anti-minimalist essays from 1967, one by Clement Greenberg the other by Michael Fried.\textsuperscript{24} Both mounted defenses of artistic modernism with pointed critiques of the sculptural and painted artworks then being described by a range of labels—”specific objects,” “primary structures,” “ABC art,” or simply, “minimalist [art].” Fried and Greenberg both accused such artists of being overly concerned with presence, which both men used in a distinctly pejorative sense. The first of the two essays, Greenberg’s “Recentness of Sculpture,” appeared in the catalogue to the exhibition “American Sculpture of the Sixties,” which included many former


members of the now-defunct Park Place Gallery. Greenberg criticized the degree to which these artists’ most recent works seemed to push definitions to their limit, threatening to obliterate all distinctions between art and non-art. Addressing the proto-minimalist art of Anne Truitt, Greenberg wrote, “Truitt’s art did flirt with the look of non-art, and her 1963 show [at the André Emmerich Gallery in New York City] was the first occasion on which I noticed how this look could confer an effect of presence.”

Greenberg interpreted this effect as an aesthetic excess, particularly in the imposing presentations of massive size, first in the work of Truitt and later also in the work of minimalist artists Judd, Morris, Andre, and LeWitt (all notable acquaintances of Glass). “What puzzles me,” Greenberg wrote, “is how sheer size can produce an effect so soft and ingratiating, and at the same time so superfluous. Here again the question of the phenomenal as opposed to the aesthetic or artistic comes in.” Presence, according to Greenberg, was an excessive, ersatz aesthetic, an illegitimate effect rendered upon a viewer’s perception that owed something to the Dadaist impulse to shock and disrupt. He saw presence as antithetical to art especially because it fundamentally oriented itself toward phenomenal experience rather than detached contemplation.

Fried expanded Greenberg’s critique in an essay published in the June 1967 edition of ArtForum magazine, entitled “Art and Objecthood.” Addressing “the enterprise known variously as Minimal Art, ABC Art, Primary Structures, and Specific Objects,” he brought Greenberg’s notions of non-art and excessive size under a single concept that he alternately called “literalism” or “objecthood.” Citing previous writings by artists such as Donald Judd and Robert Morris,

27 Ibid.
Fried described how their “literalist” art over-emphasized individual works as things-in-themselves, highlighting their materiality and placement in a particular situation—in a word, their context. Worse, emphasis on the object was both coercive and confrontational, forcing viewers to contemplate their position as subjective viewers, to compare the art-object to their own bodies. It demanded that they be aware of their spatial and temporal contexts, including the real, physical situation of the object and its relationship to them, as well as the duration of their engagement with that object and their shared environment. Fried called this coercive confrontation “theatricality”:

The presence of literalist art, which Greenberg was the first to analyze, is basically a theatrical effect or quality—a kind of stage presence. It is a function, not just of the obtrusiveness and, often, the aggressiveness of literalist work, but of the special complicity which that work extorts from the beholder. Something is said to have presence when it demands that the beholder take it into account, that he take it seriously—and when the fulfillment of that demand consists simply of being aware of it and, so to speak, in acting accordingly.  

Fried saw the visual and the theatrical arts as fundamentally opposed to one another: “Theater and theatricality are at war today, not simply with modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such.” The future survival of the visual arts, Fried insisted, depended on its ability to resist, even to defeat, theater. The gravest threat to the arts, according to Fried, was the notion that the distinctions between the arts were breaking down, and he named John Cage as the primary exponent of this heresy. “Art degenerates,” Fried argued, “as it approaches the condition of theater.” According to Fried, presence was among the pernicious effects wrought by such a degenerate art.

28 Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 16.
29 Ibid., 21.
30 Ibid.
Fried’s invocation of “stage presence” and “theatricality” also pointed to a parallel discourse concerning presence in the dramatic arts, which had a much longer provenance. In the performing arts, “presence” has come to mean something like “charisma,” that quality of a gifted and well-trained actor’s presentation to seize and hold the audience’s attention. “Traditionally,” Cormac Power writes, “presence in theatre has been seen as that which lies outside representation; the presence of the actor, the ‘liveness’ of the event or the ‘energy’ that is sometimes said to connect actors and audience all lie beyond the province of signification.”31 The primary characteristic of theater, Power has argued, “is less about making fictions present than it is about making our experience of the present a subject of contemplation.”32 In other words, it is an experience of the phenomenal, in-the-moment realities of the theater, parallel to and beyond the virtual or fictional mode of the written play.

In the late sixties, downtown New York experimental theater attempted to expand upon and elevate presence as one of the principal objectives of the new dramatic arts. Daniel Chaikin, director of the downtown company Open Theatre, described the term in his 1972 collection of essays, The Presence of the Actor, as both the submergence in the fictional mode of the play and an attentiveness to the nonfictional reality the actor shares with the audience, the performing space, the other actors, and the visceral reality of one’s own body.33 Richard Schechner, of the Wooster Group, described presence as “immediate expressivity,” grounded in the “theatrical

32 Ibid., 16.
moment.” Richard Foreman borrowed from American poet Gertrude Stein’s early twentieth-century notion of the “continuous present” and Heidegger’s writings on phenomenology to create presentations that, as he explained in one of his early manifestos, “seized… the elusive, unexpected aliveness of the present moment.” The very name of Foreman’s group, Ontological-Hysteric Theater, hints at the twin impulses of a philosophy of being and the visceral realities of lived human experience.

Ratcliff’s précis on the diverse language used by minimalist writers singles out the artist Robert Morris as one of the leading polemical figures of the sixties art world. Fried bolstered this assessment in “Art and Objecthood” by citing and quoting Morris more than any other contemporary artist. Morris himself continued to set the terms of the ongoing debate about presence with his 1968 ArtForum essay, “Anti Form,” which signaled the entry of “process” into the discussion. Processes were antithetical to objects, and Morris understood them—and had himself embraced them—as the primary domain of minimalist art, thereby marking the emergence of what many art historians have come to call “post-minimalism.” The title and subject of Morris’s subsequent 1969 essay, “Beyond Objects,” further emphasizes this progression from minimalism to post-minimalism, from object to process. “Anti-Form” became a short-lived stylistic label of its own in late 1968, inspiring an exhibition at the John Gibson Gallery (no relation to the saxophonist Jon Gibson) in October of that year featuring works by


36 See especially Kate Davy’s introduction to Foreman, Plays and Manifestos: ix–xvi.

artists Eva Hesse, Robert Ryman, and Richard Serra, for whom Glass had already begun working as a paid assistant.

In late 1968, Morris organized another exhibition of work by several of these artists—nine of them, as it turned out—to present new work at Leo Castelli’s warehouse on 108th Street in upper Manhattan. The “9 at Castelli” show became a major statement of the newest trends in the visual arts, especially in the concept, process, and anti-object—i.e., post-minimalist—vein. Critic Max Kozloff reviewed the “9 at Castelli” show for *ArtForum* in February 1969, identifying its relevance to contemporary art: “The object becomes largely a reference to a state of matter, or, exceptionally, a symbol of an action-process, about to be commenced, or already completed.”

In his review in *Arts Magazine* Grégoire Müller observed:

> By eliminating or reducing to a minimum the internal compositional relations of a work (forms, colors, materials), the “properties” of a given element come across with much more clarity and strength; similarly, by choosing to relate the work directly to the “objective” environment, focusing attention on the relation between the work and the space around it, the artist endows it with a more “real” presence and establishes a close contact with the viewer.

Two attendees of the Castelli warehouse show, Marcia Tucker and James Monte, had just been hired as first-time curators by the Whitney Museum on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, as Tucker has recently written, “to strengthen the Whitney’s commitment to contemporary art, to present the work of a new generation of artists.” Tucker and Monte were so enthralled that they made their first project for the Whitney in late spring 1969 an expanded follow-up to “9 at

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Castelli.” (It should be noted that most of the artists were the curators’ close friends.) Taking their cues from Morris’s *ArtForum* essay and the exhibitions held in its aftermath, they initially intended to call their own production “Anti-Form.” But where some saw the term as an aesthetic or stylistic descriptor, others saw it as Morris’s personal brand: several artists initially refused to participate under Tucker and Monte’s proposed title for fear of being perceived as Morris acolytes.⁴¹ “Anti-Form” thus became “Anti-Illusion.” The Whitney exhibition quickly outgrew its Castelli origins and today “Anti-Illusion” represents one of the most important events in the history of post-minimalist art…and of minimalist music.

**Philip Glass at Anti-Illusion**

Nearly everyone involved with “Anti-Illusion,” including the curators, was variously linked to one another socially, as assistants, collaborators, fellow audience members, neighbors, friends, and lovers. Tucker was then dating artist Bob Fiore. Their circle of friends included the married sculptors, Richard Serra and Nancy Graves, as well as Jene Highstein and Alanna Heiss. Philip Glass and JoAnne Akalaitis, also married, were in the circle, as was Steve Reich. “We’d go to midnight movies in Times Square several nights a week,” Tucker recalls, “and sometimes I’d be included when his friends got together to have dinner.”⁴² When the opportunity to curate an exhibition for the Whitney arose in late 1968, Tucker felt she “could also contribute something new to the discussion [about contemporary art]—a fresh perspective on art being made by my contemporaries, because many of them were my friends. I sensed that this was something the

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⁴¹ Tucker does not specify which artists levied this complaint. Tucker, *A Short Life of Trouble*, 81–82.

⁴² Ibid., 75
Whitney was actively looking for.” Once again, the simplest seeming social dynamics of all—friendship—animates this important history. “The fact that almost all of my friends were artists, writers, musicians, theater people, filmmakers, and art historians,” Tucker further writes, “was what made me valuable to the museum. None of them were well known at the time, but I was part of a milieu that was changing the way people made, looked at, and thought about contemporary art.”

That Tucker and Monte included both Glass and Reich in the “Anti-Illusion” exhibition should have come as no surprise, then, and testifies to the inseparability of aesthetic issues from social ones. The two musicians and their nascent and overlapping ensembles, along with filmmaker Michael Snow and artist Bruce Nauman, offered presentations of their art as “time pieces,” a label that set the temporal aspect of their work against the ostensibly spatial orientation of the exhibition’s sculptures and paintings. For some observers, their work was not the clearest fit for the show. Tucker has recalled in hindsight: “Critics would question why we included the

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43 Ibid., 77.

44 Ibid., 80.

45 This reference to “time pieces” recurs several times in primary documents related to “Anti-Illusion.” For example, an undated press release by Whitney Museum includes the following: “The Whitney’s special evening events for the exhibition include two separate concerts by composers Philip Glass and Steve Reich, the first public projection of new films by Michael Snow, extended time pieces by Richard Serra and Bruce Nauman and a lecture by art critic Max Kozloff.” While this suggests that only Serra’s and Nauman’s presentation were described as “time pieces”—and only Nauman’s work is described as such in the exhibition’s catalogue—an “Anti-Illusion” poster announces “Four Evenings of Extended Time Pieces and a Lecture,” two evenings of which involve concerts by Glass and Reich. Donal Henahan’s reviewed Reich’s “Anti-Illusion” concert as “a program that was part of a series called ‘Extended Time Pieces.’” Press release and poster, “Programme 1969 Mai,” SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland; Tucker and James Monte, Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials (New York: Whitney Museum, 1969), 37; Donal Henahan, “Repition, Electronically Aided, Dominates Music of Steve Reich,” New York Times, 28 May 1969, 37.
rhythmic, repetitive music of Steve Reich and Philip Glass in an art exhibition. But who said art had to be visual?"  

The Whitney exhibition marked one of the earliest and strongest points of convergence between the music of Reich and Glass and the artistic ferment of their artistic community, who for the month of May 1969 exported its downtown sensibilities uptown to Madison and 75th. As Fried had bemoaned, after Cage artists increasingly disregarded traditional distinctions and the artists and curators of “Anti-Illusion” relished the infusion of performance and temporality into the plastic arts. This infusion is one of the predominant themes in Tucker’s descriptive essay in the exhibition catalogue. “By divorcing art from an established value system in which order is inherent,” she wrote, “new concerns with time, gesture, materials and attitudes take precedence.”

Scholars have long recognized “Anti-Illusion” as a major milestone for minimalist music history, most especially for providing the first publication of Reich’s oft-referenced and much-anthologized essay, “Music as a Gradual Process,” in the Anti-Illusion exhibition catalogue. Reich’s embrace of process over objects placed him in special sympathy with such figures as Morris, Serra, and LeWitt. Anti-Illusion also provided the inaugural public performance of Philip Glass’ as-yet unnamed ensemble, which had officially formed the previous November when Richard Landry joined the group as a regular member.

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46 Tucker, A Short Life of Trouble, 85.


48 Monte and Tucker, Anti-Illusion, 27.

49 Richard Landry, interview by author, digital audio recording, Lafayette, Louisiana, 1 March 2011.
Monte and Tucker’s catalogue essays summarized the diverse aesthetics and philosophies represented in the exhibition. Whereas Monte never mentioned music or performance, Tucker framed her discussion of Reich and Glass’ music around their “anti-illusory” bonafides. In contradistinction to the virtual or fictional time implied by traditional conceptions of musical practice, which enact compressions, suspensions, and even recursive temporal cycles, Tucker wrote:

For Philip Glass and Steve Reich, actual time is a crucial factor in their music; it offers no illusion of temporality other than that which exists in the performance of their pieces. They have no beginning, middle or end—only the sense of an isolated present. This constant present exists because of a deliberate and unrelenting use of repetition which destroys the illusion of musical time and focuses attention instead on the material of the sounds and on their performance. Both composers are personally involved in the temporal evolution of their work since they play their own music, accompanied by a limited number of other musicians.⁵⁰

Tucker’s treatment provides additional rationale for Reich and Glass’ inclusion in the exhibition: their music, Tucker argued, emphasized the real, lived time of the performance. The listener’s attention, freed from concerns about virtual or implicit musical time, turns to other matters, namely the tangible materiality of the musical sound and the bounded realities of the performance. Tucker’s “isolated” and non-illusory “present” thus looks forward to that sense of the “now” in Jean-Luc Nancy’s definition of “presence,” highlighting the music’s immediacy to its performers and listeners and emphasizing their shared experience of the sonic phenomenon.

In Rudy Wurlitzer’s “Anti-Illusion” catalog essay, “For Philip Glass,” the writer and close Glass colleague played more directly on the overlapping temporal, spatial, and material

⁵⁰Monte and Tucker, Anti-Illusion, 35–36.
dimensions of “presence.” His short essay, characterized by a fragmentary, stream-of-consciousness style, appears in full below:

A length of sound that is not involved in beginning or ending. This refusal to remember what has or has not happened before, holds the attention, becomes the continuity itself, a focus. It is possible to present the piece with one’s own random inventory of interpretations or events. But not the other way around. Our past, our future. The music doesn’t take notice or present explanations of itself. The piece goes on. We are not joined in strategies of going anywhere together. Duration becomes a function of attention, a focus, a physical act, a catalyst towards contemplating the present. The drama can be one of transcendence. Our drama. Our transcendence. The piece goes on. We participate in length, in the mechanics of change, in our own distractions which bring us toward or away from the line of notes. Emotions diminish or increase and the piece goes on. The objective content is never relinquished. The rhythm of endurance becomes a presence, a meditation, a location. We are free to come and go, within our own time. As we wish. There are no commands, no directions, no theatrical gestures. The journey is already over or it never happened. The notes refer only to themselves. The composer is not involved with pointing to himself or articulating his own emotions, his own psychology. The listener is free to deal with the experience directly. As he so chooses. While the piece goes on.

Wurlitzer’s assessment of Glass’ music capitalizes upon the definitional ambiguities of the term “presence”: the music is “presented”; the performance takes place in “the present”; the experience is that of encountering “presence.” Wurlitzer emphasizes the non-narrative time implied by the music, which engages neither memory nor anticipation, makes no attempt to go anywhere, and undermines both past and future, leaving only the present moment of hearing as the focus of attention. This temporal stance is in fact anti-temporal… or, rather, fundamentally spatial: “The rhythm of endurance becomes a presence, a meditation, a location.”

51 In 1969, Rudy Wurlitzer and Glass purchased the plot of land on the Nova Scotia coastline that served as the first rehearsal site for Mabou Mines. The group named itself for a nearby Canadian mining town. Similarly Glass’ Dunvagen publishing company derives from Dunvegan, Nova Scotia. This practice continued in the naming of the ensemble’s first recording label, Chatham Square, after the major cultural site they shared at the New York location by that name. See chapter three of this dissertation for more on this history.

The significance of “Anti-Illusion” for the nascent Glass Ensemble extended even to their performance mode. According to photographs taken at Glass’ concert during the exhibition, the group performed, not on a proscenium stage, but in the middle of a large exhibition space, in a circle facing one another, with the audience surrounding them. The speakers projecting the amplified instruments are not visible in the photographs but likely sat around the audience, projecting over them toward the center of the room. Although there has never been any comment upon this distribution of performers and audience at “Anti-Illusion,” this marks the first time the arrangement had been used by the group. This in-the-round configuration, shown in Figure 6, is thus as old as the Philip Glass Ensemble itself, already in place in its basic form at the Ensemble’s earliest public performance.

![Diagram of in-the-round configuration](image)

**Figure 6.** Philip Glass Ensemble’s in-the-round configuration after 1969.

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Presence in Foreman’s “Glass and Snow”

In February 1970, less than a year after “Anti-Illusion,” *Arts Magazine* published Foreman’s “Glass and Snow” essay, which we can now consider more fully. Whereas Tucker and Wurlitzer’s “Anti-Illusion” offered early, tentative explorations of presence in Glass’ music, “Glass and Snow” asserts presence more vigorously as Glass’ principal aesthetic aim. Although Foreman’s essay fascinates on many levels, several of its key points deserve special emphasis here. First, Foreman places Glass “in the vanguard of [that] small group of artists” whom Fried had critiqued in “Art and Objecthood” several years earlier. Foreman’s explanation of these artists’ work as “minimal, systemic, primary structure space objects” parallels Fried’s citation of “Minimal Art, ABC Art, Primary Structures, and Specific Objects.” In both Fried’s and Foreman’s writings, these artists were obsessed with “presence.”

Although Foreman never cites the art critic specifically, his essay appears to refute many of Fried’s principal arguments. Foreman described a “spectator” who is “no longer purely present” because he is “encrusted with a web of associational conditioning.” In the eyes of this spectator, Foreman writes, the art-object is unavoidably ‘object,’ ‘other,’ a realm of ‘elsewhere,’ no matter what strategies the artist resorts to in the attempt to create a work that exalts the fact of its presence in the here and now.”

The viewer’s basic task as a “consciousness” is to choose, to say “yes” or “no,” to make decisions as to whether or not the newly encountered object-of-presentness has created a unique and valuable experience in his consciousness. The music of Glass, the films of Snow, does not evoke this same degree of implied “ego-centeredness” as the fulcrum and pivot of the art-experience.54

Foreman’s “viewer” here is his encrusted spectator. The “basic task” of choosing “yes” or “no,” of accepting or rejecting—that is, the critic’s task—is not the ideal or preferred response to such

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art. This viewer or spectator is thus not only someone who misunderstands the point of such art—that it is about “presence,” not “object”—but also someone who elects to pass judgment upon it. Such a description seems especially suited to the writer of “Art and Objecthood.”

Foreman’s “small group of artists,” of whom Glass and Snow were “in the vanguard,” saw artworks as “primarily a structure articulating its ‘mode of being-present.’” Foreman returns to this phrase twice more in the course of the essay, both times describing the prioritizing of process over object as a “mode of ‘being-present.’” This phrase, highlighted by its self-conscious use of quotation marks, appears to refer to Heidegger’s famous quote: “Experience is a mode of being present, that is, of being.”55 The original phrase (“Das Erfahren ist eine Weise des Anwesens, d.h. des Seins”) appeared in Heidegger’s book on phenomenology, “Hegel’s Concept of Experience” (“Hegels Begriff der Erfahrung”).56 (Heidegger’s text received its first English translation in 1970, the same year as Foreman’s essay.57) As with Fried, Foreman never names Heidegger, though he does mention Hegel, or rather “a Hegelian ‘spirit’ behind all being.”

Foreman’s writing offered correctives to Fried’s and Heidegger’s views on presence. Against Heidegger’s illusory and elusive “being-present,” Foreman describes presence as the aim already being achieved by Glass, Snow, and their colleagues. Likewise, whereas Fried had equated presence with objecthood (thereby rejecting both), Foreman associated presence with the other side of Morris’ object/process opposition: for Glass and Snow, he argued, “their art makes it process rather than its resultant object into the mode of ‘being-present.’”58

55 Ibid.


“spectator” returns at key moments in “Glass and Snow,” and each time his view has evolved. After confronting the artwork as object and rejecting it at the beginning of the essay, the spectator reappears and simply “‘allows’ the piece [of art] to exist.” Later, “time rolls over the musical phrase […] over the spectator,” and “the spectator decides to hold his ‘yes-no’ decision in abeyance.” In the end, the spectator “simply notice[s] the work itself” and passes no judgment at all upon it.

Foreman’s notion of presence was both temporal, as it had been with Tucker and Wurlitzer, and abstract. For example, an unreferenced block-quotation follows Foreman’s opening sentence: “The painter or sculptor is making an object which is clearly ‘placed’ at each encounter—placed contextually within the going contents of the brain, the perceptual fringe, the memory overlay, the ideological overlay.” At first, the statement appears to invoke Fried, who (as we have seen) took presence to mean an emphasis on the placement of the art object and the viewer in an environment. While other artists and critics described a concern for the space of the art object and the viewer, Foreman repeatedly rendered the “place” of the art encounter as imaginary. Addressing Glass’ new artistic conception, Foreman writes,

[His] compositions are rather to be understood as performance situations in which musicians (and spectators) put themselves in a certain “place,” located through the coordinates of the specific phrase. Then this place—which is not an evocative composed “elsewhere” but rather the here-and-now of a chosen method of procedure—slowly opens, becomes slowly filled and informed with the shared “space” of consciousness which is founded at each moment as the spectator “allows” the piece to exist.

“Place” lies within a musical phrase; “here-and-now” is located in formal processes; “space” pertains to consciousness, subject to the will of the audience. The constant quotation marks

58 The block-quotation format is clearer in the reprint of the article in Writings on Glass, but the source of the quotation remains unidentified. See Kostelanetz, ed., Writings on Glass, 80.

indicate layers of hidden or implied meaning. For Foreman, the artwork and its audience share space only within the audience’s mind.

Moreover, instead of experiencing presence as actual shared space, Foreman understands presence as fundamentally temporal, an awareness of shared time. This is the key to understanding presence as process, unfolding in time (as opposed to the static object):

The reiteration of process is always in the now, and we do not confront its occurring in the same way that we confront an object. We rather test ourselves, our own consciousness continuing in time against the piece’s continuing in the same shared time.60

In these temporal and abstract formulations, Foreman eliminated the embodied spatiality described by Fried, especially in his critique of the (supposedly) coerced acknowledgement of the observer’s shared presence with the artwork in a space.

For all its complexities, Foreman’s essay nevertheless offered a robust argument on behalf of presence as a guiding aesthetic in Glass’ music. In their art, Foreman concludes, “naked presence is the mode and matter of the artistic experience.”61 As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Foreman’s February 1970 essay also documented Glass’ aesthetic transition several months before his profound acoustic experience in Minneapolis in May 1970. Foreman called attention to the composer’s “growing vision of his music as primarily a kind of ‘performance piece’ rather than a disembodied sound phenomenon that stands by itself.”62 Even as Glass continued to compose rigorously structured pieces through the end of 1969, the composer also began taking note of the ways his audience—Tucker, Wurlitzer, and Foreman among them—

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 22.
62 “The compositional exploration of addition and unison playing leads directly to a consciousness that the performers themselves are cellular units who maintain their identity, just as the musical phrase is added to but never manipulated and reshuffled.” Foreman, “Glass and Snow,” 20.
listened to his music. Glass explained several years later: “I think audiences may have been ahead of me in [this] respect—when I was still superconscious of structure and purity of form my audiences were already picking up on the sound.” Glass soon began to reorient his aesthetic aims around his audience’s interests. Their aims increasingly became his own.

**Glass’ Psychoacoustic Turn**

According to his own account, Glass first applied his new audience-informed approach in two semi-improvisational works: *Music with Changing Parts*, composed in August 1970 and regularly performed by the Glass Ensemble until the middle of the decade; and *Music for Voices*, composed in winter 1970–71 and performed by Mabou Mines a dozen times from June 1972 to June 1973. The composer has described his work with these two groups as “two parallel, seemingly separate, paths,” the Ensemble on the one hand and Mabou Mines on the other. Yet *Music with Changing Parts* and *Music for Voices* also illustrate the degree to which the two paths were truly parallel, and only “seemingly separate.” It was in the pursuit of psychoacoustics and the engagement with space in performance that each related most strongly to the other.

Both works were strikingly similar in their physical staging. In *Music with Changing Parts* the Glass Ensemble continued wherever possible to perform in the circular, audience-in-the-round configuration they had first use at the Anti-Illusion show. Whenever performances


64 The schedule of performances of *Music for Voices* from 1972 to 1974 has been deduced from archival programs, from the internal performance records provided by Dunvagen publishers, and from Iris Smith Fischer, *Mabou Mines: Making Avant-Garde Theater in the 1970s* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Press, 2011). See the appendix to this dissertation for a full accounting of this schedule.

took place on traditional proscenium stages, however, the ensemble often resorted to a U-shape arrangement. *Music for Voices*, directed by ensemble member Lee Breuer, called for a series of video monitors arranged in a circle facing outward (even when on a proscenium stage, in which case some wouldn’t be visible to the audience) with performers sitting on each monitor facing inward toward each other. Camera operators lay supine on the floor in the middle of the circle, sending closed-circuit video feeds of each performer’s face in extreme close-up to the monitors. The feeds rotated around the circle of monitors throughout the performance.\(^66\)

Both works involve sustained tones selected—that is, improvised—by the performers. *Music with Changing Parts* has a notated score performed by the keyboard instruments.\(^67\) This score, like its predecessors, contains a series of one-bar modules, each repeated multiple times until the composer signaled with his famously long and slow nod to proceed to the next. Long-held tones chosen independently by the woodwinds and voices supplement the more active keyboard parts. Per Glass’ instructions, performers selected these notes from whatever resonant frequencies could be discerned by the performers, highlighting and enhancing the psychoacoustic effects of the music.\(^68\) In this way, Glass explained in the 1972 *Avalanche* interview, *Music with Changing Parts* was a clear expression of his new, post-Minneapolis aesthetic, focused on “generating overtones, different [that is, difference] tones, [and] sustained tones.”\(^69\)

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\(^{68}\) Kurt Munkacsi, interview by author, 9 February 2011.

\(^{69}\) Glass, “Philip Glass: An Interview in Two Parts,” 34. “Difference” is assumed to have been the intended word here, apparently mistranscribed as “different.” Glass’ interest in psychoacoustics has not gone overlooked in previous histories. See Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, 74; Suzuki, “Minimal Music,” 567; Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists*, 306.
Music for Voices also explored acoustics. Mabou Mines historian Iris Smith Fischer has described the composition’s objectives as “examining the shaping of sound in a given space.” As with Music with Changing Parts, Music for Voices relies on choices made in concert: one performer chooses the initial note of the work and sings one long tone in a single dynamic rise and fall on an open vowel-sound (not solfège syllables). Another performer across the circle sings the same tone, timing the second entry with the dynamic peak of the first. The other performers in the circle gradually join, entering in the same manner and on the same pitch. The only commercial recording of the work—recorded at its premiere in June 1972, but not released until 2002—indicates that some performers also sang acoustic fifths above the initial pitch. After these opening sustained tones were sufficiently established (which was at the composer’s own discretion), the entire group chanted rhythmic patterns using vocables—“oh-wah,” “hey-ah-hey,” etc.—in repetitive, additive modules similar to Glass’ earlier compositional practices. Glass himself can be heard in the recording marking the progression from each module to the next, not with a nod, but with a clap.

In contrast to Glass’ psychoacoustic explorations with the electronically amplified Ensemble, Music for Voices required no amplification. Glass himself explained this choice in 1972:

[Glass:] In a way the vocal pieces [for Mabou Mines] sound different from the ensemble but they’re essentially very similar because they’re both pure sounds. […] There’s nothing in a sense more basic or purer than vocal music. […]

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70 Fischer, Mabou Mines, 68.

71 Potter himself makes this claim regarding solfège in Music for Voices, which has subsequently been recycled in liner notes. See Potter, Four Musical Minimalists, 301; Don Christensen, liner notes to Glass, Early Voice, Orange Mountain Music OMM-0004, 2002, compact disc.

72 Potter, Four Musical Minimalists, 301.
[Sharp:] So are you going back to some kind of archetype?

[Glass:] Almost anyone who deals with voices in that way is, because you’re dealing with the human body; that is the ultimate source of our music, even if we’re talking about rhythm. The thing about vocal music is that it’s pouring the sound right out of the body and because of the way I deal with it orchestrally, in the way I score, arrange the parts, I produce the kinds of sounds that are very close to the sounds I get out of amplified instruments. […] I’m writing for people who aren’t musicians by trade, so I’m using simply material that will project my ideas as clearly as possible.⁷³

Glass’ objectives for the unamplified singing in *Music for Voices* and for the amplified ensemble in *Music with Changing Parts* were thus identical. Both seem to have emerged from the other in this account: everything arises from the body, but the voices also produce sounds very close to the amplified instruments. Furthermore, both compositions engaged performance spaces with the purest possible sound in order to generate undetermined, but nevertheless anticipated, acoustic effects. As seen at the beginning of this chapter, Glass understood these works as evidence that he had become “less interested in purity of form than in the kind of almost psycho-acoustical experiences that happened while listening to the music.”⁷⁴

Ultimately, Glass deemed both *Music for Voices* and *Music with Changing Parts* unsatisfactory and soon discontinued performing them. *Music for Voices* received its last performance in June 1973 in Milwaukee. “That was as far as I could go with untrained singers,” Glass told Mabou Mines historian Laurie Lassiter Fiscella, “but we went very far.”⁷⁵ Likewise, the Glass Ensemble continued performing *Music with Changing Parts* until *Music in Twelve*
Parts and Einstein on the Beach superseded it mid-decade. By the mid-nineties, the composer would describe Music with Changing Parts as “a little too spacey for my taste.”

Music with Changing Parts also marked another departure from Glass’ aesthetic ideals of the late sixties. At the Ensemble’s first visit to Duren, Germany, on 26 February 1971, Dickie Landry recalls: “Phil gave a performance and a lecture, where he vowed he would never record his music.” Yet Glass also began to discover bootleg tape recordings of his music circulating in cities where he had not yet performed. He became interested in producing his own recordings in order to control quality and to garner financial benefit from the obvious interest. In May 1971, Glass recruited the young rock musician and audio technician Kurt Munkacsi to assist in the production of the ensemble’s first commercial recording. Glass had learned of him through Gibson, who had worked with Munkacsi during Gibson’s brief stints with La Monte Young (Munkacsi had worked with Young on his Dream House installations). Munkacsi was then loosely affiliated with John Lennon’s Butterfly Productions studios, through which Munkacsi had access to a mobile recording van. On 4 May 1971—a little over two months after Glass swore off recordings in Germany—the Ensemble met Munkacsi at the Public Theatre’s Martinson Hall. There they recorded their first album, titled Music with Changing Parts, which remained, until very recently, the only recording of the composition. They released the album by the end of the year on the newly formed Chatham Square label, run cooperatively by

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76 Tim Page, liner notes to Glass, Music with Changing Parts, Elektra/Nonesuch 7559-795325-2, 1994; quoted in Potter, Four Musical Minimalists, 311.


78 One can now hear the ensemble Icebreaker perform the composition on Glass, Music with Changing Parts, Orange Mountain Music OMM-0035, 2007, compact disc.
members of the ensemble and several members of the local art community. Glass had thus moved in a direction opposite to that of his post-minimalists peers, such as Robert Morris and Richard Foreman: having first rejected musical objects, Glass finally decided to embrace them.

Glass and Munkacsi treated recordings as distinct from the experience of live performances. There were trade-offs, however. Although it proved impossible to capture the in-the-moment effects of live performance that had become Glass’ principal aesthetic goal, they were able to record instruments using multiple tracks, thereby creating thicker and richer textures than could be attained in live performance. But the live performance effects remained a primary concern. As Glass explained in 1972: “When I look at a space now, I see it as a volume of air that’s going to be moved around and is going to produce sound.”

Glass’ acoustic effects resulted from a direct engagement with performance spaces, engaging with the specific characteristics of each venue and building upon his experience in Minneapolis in May 1970. The places and timeframes of individual performances necessarily delimited resulting experiences. Though Glass himself never describes them as such, these psychoacoustic concerns resonate with the “here-and-now” values of aesthetic presence.

Soon after the May 1971 recording of *Music with Changing Parts*, Munkacsi became a permanent part of the Ensemble as audio technician and sound engineer. His membership in the group became so central to its presentation in live performance that he regularly sat on-stage alongside—even to the front and center of—the rest of the musicians as a visible and active

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79 Potter describes hearing psychoacoustic elements at 4:40 into the A-side of the Ensemble’s 1971 recording of *Music with Changings Parts*: “It is increasingly hard to account for everything one hears in terms of the notated score, or to distinguish between the ‘acoustic’ and the ‘psycho-acoustic.’” A close hearing suggests that what Potter hears as a psychoacoustic effect may actually be a keyboard player improvising their own part, in a manner similar to Reich’s “resulting patterns” technique. See Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists*, 308.

participant. Although the Ensemble had from its start been electrified and amplified, Munkacsi brought a level of expertise that the band and its leader lacked; he came to play a crucial role in shaping the specific ways that space, psychoacoustics, and “presence” found expression in Glass’ music.

Amplification as Presence

Composer Simon Emmerson recently explored the concept of presence in amplified and electroacoustic music: in his opening chapter, entitled “Living Presence,” Emmerson begins with the familiar impression that, when we listen to music, something is there. This is presence in its simplest form, he argues. At its root, this something suggests someone, a performer who makes the sound. Yet amplification disrupts this perception. Emmerson focuses especially on the dislocation experienced by a listener, where speakers can position sound separately from the physical location—even in the complete absence—of performers. He and others describe this apparent decoupling of sound from its obvious source as “acousmatic detachment.” Glass and Munkacsi reveled in these acousmatic dislocations. At times they described presence and amplification as bringing audiences closer to the performers, creating virtual or aural proximity to someone; at other times they worked to create immersive sonic environments which they shared with their audience, forming musical objects that filled the space of listening, a something quite separate from the musicians themselves.

In 1972, Glass reported that his approach to amplification had developed in two directions, both heavily informed by Munkacsi’s special knowledge and skills. The first area of

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development related to sound *placement*, especially through the use of a four-channel, four-directional speaker configuration referred to as quadraphonics. We have already encountered the in-the-round arrangement at the ensemble’s inaugural performance during Anti-Illusion in May 1969, with certain parallels to the performance practice of *Music with Changing Parts* and *Music for Voices*. “What we’re trying to do with the whole electronic angle,” Glass explained, “is to put everyone in the center of the sound. We’re trying to take a space and fill it completely with sound, so that everyone is in the best place to hear all the time.”

“Everyone” here included performers and audience members alike, who all shared a similar experience of the sound. This performance arrangement eventually came to find its most ideal expression in the composer’s private loft-studio at 10 Bleecker Street. This space, and the numerous social and aesthetic ramifications of the ensemble’s in-the-round arrangement, will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

Munkacsi’s use of what he called “ultra present” mixing techniques heightened such placement effects. According to Munkacsi, this involved boosting the higher frequencies to compensate for their loss at a distance. As he explained to me in 2010, “you’re effectively putting the listener’s ears right at the instrument.” Audiophiles such as Munkacsi were especially aware of the ubiquitous “presence” controls, either button switches or knobs, on equipment ranging from amplifiers and mixing boards to tape playback decks, which control the

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84 Kurt Munkacsi, interview by author, 10 June 2010.
upper mid-range frequencies.\(^{85}\) We thus encounter yet another contemporary use of the term “presence,” rooted in audiophile practice. Rudolf Graf defines “presence” in his 1977 *Modern Dictionary of Electronics* as “the quality of naturalness in sound reproduction. When the presence of a system is good, the illusion is that the sounds are being produced intimately at the speaker.”\(^{86}\) This location of the sound at the speaker complicates the ideas that Munkacsi and Glass espouse, that the sound fills the performance space with audience and performers “at the center” and brings the instruments into virtual proximity with the audience’s ear. Nevertheless, presence in an audio-technical sense describes the attempt to manipulate the amplification of sound in order to achieve various placement effects, including those that Emmerson describes as “acousmatic.”

Quadraphonics refers less to the fact of a four-speaker arrangement than to the particular way each of the four corners receives a distinct mix via a four-channel audio system. In the early seventies, several manufacturers of audio equipment, including Columbia, RCA, and JVC, waged a standards war over what they believed to be the next big step in audio after stereo.\(^{87}\) The competition for market dominance drove rapid technological advances. At the height of its popularity Munkacsi eagerly used quadraphonic techniques and equipment in his work with the ensemble. Despite the idea that “everyone would share the same sound,” Munkacsi nevertheless

\(^{85}\) Many thanks to Chris Peck of the University of Virginia for pointing out this additional complexity with regard to the “presence” controls on amplification equipment.


exploited quadraphonics to produce individual mixes for each of the four projection channels.

In addition to sound placement, Glass and Munkacsi’s work with amplification also focused on sound quality in facilitating the listener’s heightened experience with psychoacoustics and the materiality of sound. As discussed above, Glass first referred to the notion of “the purest possible sound” in *Music for Voices*, which explored the sonic possibilities of amateur voices, without electronic amplification or the artifice of classical vocal training. This pursuit of “pure” sound underscored once again Glass’ impression that the amplified ensemble developed in tandem with his efforts in the Mabou Mines theater group. One of the principal means for reducing distortion in amplification, according to Glass and Munkacsi, was the use of high-capacity equipment. Equipment capable of higher volume necessarily produced clearer, distortion-free sound throughout the dynamic spectrum.

According to Glass and Munkacsi, better sound quality resulted in a less exhausting listening experience. Munkacsi himself spoke briefly in the 1972 *Avalanche* interview about his understanding of this phenomenon: “Some studies have been done showing that if you play one piece of music and it’s very distorted, you’ll get fatigued earlier listening to it than you would if it’s very clean sounding. That’s what the problem is in Phil’s music, to reproduce as loud as possible, but very cleanly, without distortion.” Neither man mentions the potentially exhausting effects of loudness itself, regardless of its quality. And loudness became one of the signature markers of the Ensemble’s sound, which Glass took care to subordinate to more respectable aesthetic motives: “As we get higher amplification it doesn’t mean necessarily that we’re louder,

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88 Glass, “Philip Glass: An Interview in Two Parts,” 35.

89 Ibid.
it means that the sound will be less distorted.” It was in this context of clear, high-volume amplification that Glass’ first documented reference to the term “presence” appears. Near the end of the 1972 *Avalanche* interview, Glass explained, “when we’re talking about presence and [the] quality of the room… that has to do with the acoustical situation of the room, the equipment on hand, whether we’ve just blown some speakers.” Glass thus directly linked the notion of presence to volume pushed to its very limits in the pursuit of specific acoustic effects.

Munkacsi made less of an attempt to rationalize or obscure his own relationship to high volumes. His primary musical experience was late sixties rock, which had accustomed him to extreme loudness. He explained to me in interviews for this project that he never paid much attention to the frequent complaints, from audiences and performers alike, regarding the Glass Ensemble’s high volume levels. From the perspective of rock, and subsequently rock music scholarship, high volume became a virtue rather than a vice. For example, in his 1996 book on the aesthetics of rock music, Theodore Gracyk writes,

For a receptive audience, volume bridges the sense of distance between the audience and the performers by erasing the gap between the self and the music. […] When not functioning as mere background, loud music can break us out of our sense of detached observation and replace it with a sense of immersion, for it is literally around us.

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90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 Munkacsi, interview by author, 9 February 2011. Landry and Gibson both recalled their discomfort with Munkacsi’s extreme volumes in interviews for this dissertation. Robert Fink has examined La Monte Young’s similar indifference toward complaints about his extreme volume levels. See Robert Fink, “(Un)Just Intonation: Microtones and Macropolitics in Minimalist Drone Music,” presented at the Third International Conference on Music and Minimalism, in Leuven, Belgium, 12 October 2011.

Heavy metal scholar Deena Weinstein has similarly written, “the kind of power that loudness gives us is a shot of youthful vitality, a power to withstand the onslaught of sound and to expand one’s energy to respond to it with a physical and emotional thrust of one’s own.”[^94] High volumes, according to these writers, simulate proximity and stimulate pleasure by registering their effects directly on the body. Such effects resonate strongly with the definitions of presence mentioned in the opening pages of this chapter, neatly summarized by Meyer as “the bodily impact of a powerful [visual] work.”[^95] A receptive and initiated audience might be willing to submit their bodies to the force of the music’s effect. Glass’ primary audience of downtown Manhattan artists appeared open to such experiences, understanding—even sharing—the composer’s aesthetic objectives, a sympathy further bolstered by their ongoing relationships outside the performing moment.

In his recent study of musical experimentalism in early-sixties New York, Benjamin Piekut refers to what he calls “the hidden story of loudness” throughout experimental music networks in the late sixties and early seventies: “Everywhere one turns,” Piekut observes, “high amplitude emerges as character and muse.”[^96] He describes listener accounts that testify to the extraordinary volumes in the late-sixties performances of rock groups such as the Velvet Underground and the Stooges, and of avant-gardists in the art music tradition such as Robert Ashley’s *The Wolfman* and La Monte Young’s Theatre of Eternal Music. Piekut notes that John Cage, famously dismissive of jazz, professed a fascination with the high volumes of rock music and its ability to override the regular metric pulse: “That regularity disappears if the

amplification is sufficient. [...] You are inside the object, and you realize that this object is a river. With rock, there is a change of scale: you are thrown into the current. Rock takes everything with it.” The metaphor of the river speaks once again to the sense of immersion—the experience of ultimate immediacy and proximity, of “here-and-now,” of “presence”—afforded by high-volume amplification, and facilitated by the ensemble’s in-the-round concertizing.

A Hostile Reception in St. Louis, May 1972

Cage’s endorsement testifies to a broader environment for high volume within the New York avant-garde. But while Glass’ immediate community may have accepted immersive loudness as legitimate and welcome, they were not his only audience. In his seminal investigation of noise, Jacques Attali describes any unwelcome sound, but especially one at high volumes, as a form of violence. Loud noise, he argues, is “a source of pain,” even “a weapon of death.”

The ear, which transforms sound signals into electric impulses addressed to the brain, can be damaged, and even destroyed, when the frequency of sound exceeds 20,000 hertz, or when its intensity exceeds 80 decibels. Diminished intellectual capacity, accelerated respiration and heartbeat, hypertension, slowed digestion, neurosis, altered diction: these are the consequences of excessive sound in the environment.

While some concertgoers may receive such effects as pleasure, others, hearing violence and feeling pain, take offense. When Glass’ high-volume music confronted an unprepared and uninitiated audience, the loudness that served as the central feature of the Ensemble’s intended aesthetic could overwhelm that audience’s experience of the music—effectively defeating his

97 John Cage and Daniel Charles, For the Birds (Boston: Marion Boyars, 1995), 173; quoted in Piekut, Experimentalism Otherwise, 194.

intentions.

And audiences outside the peculiar conditions of Manhattan’s lofts and galleries could indeed be overwhelmed by Glass’ music. One of the earliest real fiascos the Glass Ensemble encountered took place at the St. Louis Art Museum on 2 May 1972, on the final stop of its first ten-city tour of the American Pacific Coast and Midwest. The concert had been co-sponsored by the museum, by the nearby School of Fine Arts at Washington University, and by the city’s contemporary music society, the New Music Circle. Glass’ association with visual arts spaces had been firmly established ahead of time in the museum’s published bulletin: “He recently completed an extensive European tour performing in many museums and galleries. He has also performed at the Whitney and Guggenheim Museums in New York and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.”

The co-sponsorship by the New Music Circle primed the audience to expect a musical performance of a distinctly progressive nature. Although one St. Louis audience member recalled in interviews for this project, “we were young and very open-minded at the time,” Glass’ loud music was not well received: “The blasting sound was so overbearing that I do not recall much of the musical content at all. We were relieved to get out of there.”

Reviews in the city’s two major newspapers the next day described the audience’s hostile response. The Post-Dispatch headline read “Heckling, Walkouts At Art Museum Concert;” similarly, the Globe-Democrat ran a review under the headline, “Shrill, Monotonous Concert Tires Ears, Patience of Audience.”

Frank Peters’s review in the Post-Dispatch was the more...

100 Elizabeth Gentry Sayad, email communication with the author, 19 November 2011.
even-handed of the two, attempting to take the music seriously, to critique it dispassionately, and
to report the straightforward details of the audience’s response. His review began with a succinct
account of the event:

> There was an unforgettable concert in the St. Louis Art Museum auditorium last night,
> with heckling, counter-heckling, walkouts by more than half the audience and a patrol of
> uniformed guards to discipline rule-breakers. The musical accompaniment to all this was
> by Philip Glass, a gentle-looking New Yorker who conducts his works from the keyboard
> of an electric harmonium.\(^{102}\)

Peters went on to make several attempts to elevate Glass’ music with comparisons to Bach-like
textures and Brahmsian symphonism, contextualizing its repetition within an avant-garde history
that included notable avant-gardists Carl Orff and Harry Partch. He nevertheless specified the
aspect he believed had most offended the audience:

> The thing that spoiled this interesting phenomenon for most of the listeners, and drove
> more than 100 of them out of the hall, was the loudness. Glass must want it that way, but
> the amplification was near the threshold of pain, and only by stopping the ears could one
> hear the movement of the wind instruments under the jangling roar from the two
> harmoniums. To get his idea across at that sound level, Glass needed better loudspeakers
> and a deader acoustical environment.\(^{103}\)

Peters did not take volume to be one of the composer’s primary aesthetic concerns, much less an
effective exploration of “presence.” Instead the loudness presented him with an obstacle to
perceiving what he took to be Glass’ musical interests, namely the elements of “canon, harmony,
suspensions, [and] cadences,” that emerged from the neo-Baroque textures.\(^{104}\) Although volume
undermined his overall assessment, Peters nevertheless made an earnest attempt to take the
music seriously, as evidenced by his comparison Glass with Bach, Brahms, and Partch.

\(^{102}\) Ibid.

\(^{103}\) Ibid.

\(^{104}\) Peters’ assessment, that volume interrupted or overrode more salient musical concerns, calls
to mind Attali’s definition of noise: “A resonance that interferes with the audition of a message
Rather than adopt an objective observer’s perspective, as Peters had done, Mildred Coon in her *Globe-Democrat* identified herself as among those most aggrieved by the performance review. Her scathing critique appears in full below:

The concert of music by Philip Glass at the St. Louis Art Museum Tuesday night was one that quickly separated “the men from the boys”—either your ears could take it or they couldn’t. For a good many persons, the ears had had it by the end of the first six minutes. Shortly after the music began, people started moving to the rear of the hall, trying somehow to get away from it all, or people just gave up and left.

The deafening onslaught of unending and never relenting sounds came from Mr. Glass (on an electric organ) and the following players: Jon Gibson, electric piano; Rusty Gilder, amplified trumpet; Richard Landry, tenor saxophone; Richard Peck, tenor saxophone, Robert Prado, electric piano; and Kurt Munkacsi, electronics. All played at the highest possible decibel level, exactly the same notes or notes in all possible tonal ranges.

Adding to the monotony was a never varying rhythm which was based on an eight rate beat. The first effort was called Part Three from “Music in Twelve Parts” (1971). The piece began with an arpeggiated theme. Occasionally Glass would nod his head to indicate to the players that it was time to add another note to the theme, or to make some other slight change in the phrase. Then this new phrase would be repeated several times.

As we sat there in sheer anguish, with ears throbbing and aching, the cacophony of sounds suddenly came to an end with a silence so shattering that one person groaned. Still another called out: “Is that a put on Mr. Glass?” The program moved on to the second selection “Music with Changing Parts” (1970–71) with more of the same unremitting kind of monotonous beat and tonal bath.

It should be said that the Glass sound is not only insufferably loud but is completely monotonous in its tonality. The program was not marred by a single atonal sound and consisted of only the most elementary pitch relationships. It went on for 90 minutes. The concert was sponsored by the New Music Circle and the Washington University School of Fine Arts. About 100 attended but not all stayed.\(^{105}\)

Coon’s review expresses resistance to the music’s repetition, its pervasive consonance, and especially its excessive volume. Both reviews, but particularly Coon’s, respond to the ensemble’s loudness as physical threat, even as violence to the body, especially the ears. Volume was in this way especially offensive, distinct from the musical abstraction of repetition. In her review Coon defended musical modernism against what she perceived to be a suspicious level of

\(^{105}\) Coon, “Shrill, Monotonous Concert.”
tonal consonance (“only the most elementary pitch relationships”). Yet the St. Louis concert also bore the hallmarks of a modernist succès de scandale, a Rite of Spring of Glass’ own, and a prelude to Steve Reich’s controversial performance of Four Organs on a Boston Symphony Orchestra program at Carnegie Hall eight months later.¹⁰⁶

Glass’ memories of the St. Louis Art Museum fiasco remained sharp in the mid-eighties, when Post-Dispatch music critic James Wierzbicki interviewed the composer in advance of return to the city in 1985. “Yeah, I remember... It was one of the first times that ever happened to us. Even back then most of the people who came to our concerts knew who we were, and they just expected it to be loud. We were surprised at what happened in St. Louis. I guess the St. Louis audience was surprised, too. Maybe they thought we were a string quartet or something.”¹⁰⁷ Glass attempted to explain his volume choices, which Post-Dispatch editors highlighted as the interview’s pull quote: “We play it loud because that’s the way we like to do it... That’s the main reason, but there are aesthetic reasons as well, and they’re a direct result of the kind of music I was writing prior to 1975.”¹⁰⁸

Epilogue: Glass’ Manhattan Audience

The Glass Ensemble’s minor scandal in St. Louis suggests that Glass’ aesthetics were an implicit social contract between himself, his ensemble, and his downtown audiences. Visual and


¹⁰⁷ James Wierzbicki, “Philip Glass: The One-Time Minimalist is Now a Superstar,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 13 October 1985, 5B.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
performing artists, as always, remained the most receptive. In New York and elsewhere, these sympathetic observers mounted their own defenses and explanations of Glass’ musical objectives. For example, in a 1974 *ArtForum* article filmmaker and critic Lizzie Borden examined the combined effect of loudness and space as the principal bases for understanding Glass’ music. In a broader examination of what she took to be the turn toward perception and phenomenology within contemporary arts, Borden began her assessment of Glass’ music by reiterating the composer’s self-periodization: “The organization of his most recent work, *Music in Twelve Parts*, is still very rigorous,” arguing for ongoing continuities with his late-sixties structuralism. But, she continued, “the [recent] emphasis on sound differs from the priorities of his earlier work, such as *Music in Contrary Motion*… and *Music in Fifths*. […] In the more recent work, sound also involves psychological consequences.” More to the point, Borden asserted, ‘Glass’ music involves the spatiality of sound—the unique space of hearing rather than architectonic structures. […] Even with silences, however, a musical totality is experienced as having the shape and space of the room or location in which it is performed. These containers determined the particular perceptual qualities of each piece.”

These effects were also essential to understanding the “presence” of Glass’ music, as art critic John Howell explained in a 1974 essay in *Art-Rite* magazine:

The placement of speakers around and outside the grouping of both musicians and audience puts everyone at the center of the sound. Released throughout the space rather than projected into it, the music fills the situation with a pervasive aural mix. Presence derives from an activation of the entire performance area, including the audience as a resonant element of that sound.

This location is developed by playing […] at a very high volume. The low distortion quality of the amplification system eliminates most unintended sounds. “Clean” volume enhances the sensual density of the music to allow psycho-acoustical

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110 Ibid.
effects […] to emerge. Such tones are clearly heard but remain tangible products of musical and auditory processes.

The resulting presence denotes a kind of relation that does not traditionally exist between performers and audience. As performed, the music draws its “reality” from an interaction with the physical space occupied by the listener, who is thus literally put in the music.\footnote{Howell, “Listening to Glass,” 96.}

Howell neatly brings together the threads we have been following throughout this chapter. In his essay, he relates presence directly to high volume, to quadraphonics, to the tangible effects of the musical sound, and to a redefined spatial relationship between performers and audience members, using language strikingly similar to Glass’ own program notes from the time. Howell owed the language of his report on Glass’ music to the discourse that had developed around Glass’ music, thanks to critics ranging from Tucker and Wurlitzer to Foreman and Glass himself. Their program notes, explanatory essays, and sympathetic reviews illuminate a deeply interconnected cultural network of artists, performers, audience members, collaborators, fellow composers, and close affiliates. As we will see in the next chapter, Glass’ loft studio on the top floor at 10 Bleecker Street in Manhattan, served as the ideal site for bringing these communities together in the years 1972 to 1974. The shared language of “presence” provides an essential background to that history because it helps us to understand how little can be accessed—that is, how much has been lost—of Glass’ musical conception in the early seventies. But it also helps us begin reassembling the experience of hearing the composer’s music as his first audiences did.
Between 1972 and 1974, a seventh-floor warehouse loft one block north of Houston Street and the Bowery served as the headquarters for the Philip Glass Ensemble. Glass and his band performed in the composer’s top-floor studio in at least six public concerts and in many open rehearsals in the years 1973–74. No other single site in downtown Manhattan saw more performances by the Glass Ensemble in the seventies, not even the better known alternative spaces such as 112 Greene Street, Paula Cooper Gallery, or the Kitchen. A month-long series in January 1973, which featured Glass’ music alongside that of his closest musical colleagues, inaugurated this extraordinary period of performance. After Glass outgrew his 10 Bleecker Street studio toward the middle of the decade, he repeatedly and wistfully referred to the facility and expressed regret at being unable to replicate that ideal “social situation of listening” that had

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characterized performances there.² Although brief mention of the Philip Glass Ensemble’s activity at 10 Bleecker Street has appeared in previous scholarship, no detailed discussion of the facility has ever been attempted. This chapter aims to remedy this oversight with an examination of the two-year period during which the studio at 10 Bleecker Street served as Glass’ preferred venue, a spatial and acoustic laboratory in which he and his collaborators experimented and explored “presence” before their most dedicated and sympathetic audience.

Before 10 Bleecker Street, however, Richard Landry’s Chinatown lofts had served as the Philip Glass Ensemble’s primary rehearsal space. Since late 1969, Landry and his then-partner, artist Tina Girouard, had renovated and lived in two floors of the decrepit building at 10 Chatham Square at the southern end of the Bowery. The upper five floors of this six-story building rented for $500 per month (the equivalent of about $2700 in 2013, when adjusted for inflation³); an old cigar store operated at street level.⁴ Landry’s Chinatown loft became a dormitory for visiting or recently arrived artists and musicians. Associates of Landry and Girouard from Louisiana—among them Steve Chambers, Robert Prado, Richard Peck, and Rusty Gilder—began to follow them to New York City and invariably took up residence at Chatham Square.⁵ By 1972, six of eight regular Philip Glass Ensemble members—minus only Jon Gibson

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and Glass himself—had recently moved from Louisiana and were living at 10 Chatham Square.⁶

A large room at the front of the loft, painted completely black with a few bare bulbs dangling from the ceiling, became the rehearsal space for the building’s residents. At times they assembled to play Glass’ music; at other times they played all-night free jazz jams until dawn and beyond, fueled by alcohol, amphetamines, and marijuana.⁷

Landry and Girouard’s second floor loft included a large kitchen and, for the first half of the seventies, a steady supply of gumbos, étouffées, and jambalayas regularly attracted sculptors, painters, dancers, musicians, and performance artists from all over downtown Manhattan. Many of these figures had been involved in the Whitney Museum “Anti-Illusion” show in May 1969; artist Susan Rothenberg later described “Anti-Illusion” as being half-comprised of the “Chatham Square gang.”⁸ A remarkable scene thus developed at 10 Chatham Square, something like an informal Max’s Kansas City, in which food, drinks, drugs, music, dancing, conversation, debate, work, and life came together to form a potent nexus of the downtown community. Rothenberg later described this scene in affectionate, if perhaps slightly exaggerated, terms, as “one of the richest periods of the avant-garde in music / sculpture / dance / performance / theater, separate and combined, that New York has ever known”:

#10 Chatham Square. We ate at Tina Girouard’s and Dickie Landry’s kitchen on the second floor, or Mary Heilmann’s on six. We were Sonnier, Smithson, Serra, Jonas, Hay, Saret, Glass, Reich, Graves, Matta, Lew, Trakas, Akalaitis, Winsor and many, many more.⁹ Gumbo usually. They talked, I listened.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Landry, interview by author, digital audio recording, 1 March 2011; Landry, interview by author, 30 October 2012.


⁹ Rothenberg’s list includes sculptors Keith Sonnier, Nancy Graves, Jeffrey Lew, Jackie Winsor, and Richard Serra; dancers Joan Jonas and Deborah Hay; installation artists George Trakas, Gordon Matta, Alan Saret, and Robert Smithson; composers Philip Glass and Steve Reich;
Mary made gauze slings with dust and sticks of clay in them, Richard rolled and cut lead and spattered it into corners. Deborah slowed time with breath, Steve sped time with percussion, I made camel toe bones for Nancy, and nothing was stranger than the above than a Joan Jonas performance.\(^{10}\)

From this roll call of names arose many of the public institutions that have come to define the notion of “alternative space” in downtown Manhattan of the seventies. Many of these artists were closely affiliated with the Leo Castelli Gallery, which in 1971 established itself at 420 West Broadway in SoHo, becoming one of the earliest and most influential galleries in SoHo. Gordon Matta (who later changed his name to Matta-Clark) represented a SoHo institution unto himself; in the early seventies, he dated artist Mary Heilmann and filmed his *Chinatown Voyeur* (1971) out of the Mansard-style window of Heilmann’s top-floor 10 Chatham Square loft.\(^{11}\) Jeffrey Lew, Matta, and several others from Rothenberg’s list formed the groundbreaking alternative space known as 112 Greene Street and its close companion, Food Restaurant. Chatham Square residents served as Food’s cooks and waiters and its frequent Cajun specials came from the unpublished “10 Chatham Square Cajun Cookbook.”\(^{12}\) Willoughby Sharp and Liza Bear, one of the many artist-couples in the group, founded *Avalanche* magazine in 1970 in order to focus attention on their friends’ art in the downtown sub-network anchored by 10 Chatham Square,

dramatist Joanne Akalaitis. At the time, romantic partners within this group included Glass and Akalaitis, Graves and Serra, Sonnier and Winsor, Matta and Heilmann; the rest were partnered with other artists closely associated to the group.


112 Greene Street, and the Leo Castelli Gallery. Food Restaurant’s only published advertisements appeared in *Avalanche* magazine, alongside Philip Glass’ earliest interviews. When Glass and his colleagues formed their first recording label with uptown gallery owner Klaus Kertess in 1972, they honored the special community at Landry’s loft by naming the new company Chatham Square Productions. After performing music in visual art spaces at Park Place Gallery, Film-Makers’ Cinematheque, and Whitney Museum, 10 Chatham Square became the first place where musicians in the Philip Glass Ensemble were able to define, on their own terms, community in downtown Manhattan.

Eventually Glass felt the need to separate his work from the noise and chaos of Chatham Square and so he arranged for his own studio at 10 Bleecker Street. But the spirit of community at Chatham Square—especially the meaningful blend of work and life—carried over to Glass’ new workspace. Bleecker Street became an equal co-member of the downtown network that included Food Restaurant, the Leo Castelli Gallery, 112 Greene Street, and *Avalanche* magazine. Eventually, 10 Bleecker Street proved particularly meaningful for Glass, and he frequently discusses the studio in interviews. In 1994 he recalled, “I had a loft here on [Bleecker] Street where in 1972 and 1973 we had a concert every Sunday at around three o’clock. We did it for years, for whatever people gave us. People are not so willing to do that now. […] I was willing to

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play in that loft for ever [sic].” In a 2005 documentary film, Glass gestures to the studio from the sidewalk on the north side of Bleecker Street:

“This building here—I had a loft on the top floor. In the early ‘70s I used to perform up there. I had a loft there and we played concerts there every week. Every Sunday we’d do the concerts there. That was in ‘Seventy-one, -two, -three, in that time. And you had to walk up all the stairs.”

Critical consideration of this facility has nevertheless been limited. When they mention it at all, historians associate 10 Bleecker Street with early performances of *Music in Twelve Parts*. In 1993, for example, Edward Strickland wrote that, before presenting the individual movements from *Music in Twelve Parts* on its North American and European tours, the Ensemble tested them with audiences “first in the composer’s studio at 10 Bleecker Street.” Former co-editor of the art magazine *Avalanche* Liza Bear wrote in 2005, “prior to answering machines, computers, voice-mail, faxes, beepers, word of the first performances of Philip Glass’ ‘Music in 12 Parts’ [sic] at 10 Bleecker Street would be passed along by running into someone at the hardware store or the Canal Street post office.” This close linkage of work and place has even resulted in a conflation of the active dates of the studio with the composition’s development. Despite these complications, the sentiment of the various accounts is unanimous: the loft-studio at 10 Bleecker


Street was a major site for performing and listening to Glass’ music in the early seventies. This assessment raises the very questions that animate this dissertation—namely the relationships of performers and audiences, their fellow membership in a mutually beneficial community, and the importance of space in constructing and reinforcing these social connections. This chapter thus seeks to detail more fully 10 Bleecker Street’s various functions: as workspace, as a surreptitious home, and as the Glass Ensemble’s early headquarters and performance venue. I focus particular attention on the special sense of community fostered by this space, to which Glass has repeatedly and wistfully referred.

_Alanna Heiss, the Brooklyn Bridge, and 10 Bleecker Street_

The studios and galleries at 10 Bleecker Street owed their existence to Alanna Heiss, a pioneer of the alternative space movement in New York City. Her name is now primarily associated with the visual arts institution, P.S. 1, a former public school building that her organization, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, turned into a massive alternative exhibition space in 1976. (P.S. 1 enjoyed a high-profile merger with MoMA in 2000.) Before P.S. 1, there were other similar efforts: The Clocktower Gallery, founded in 1973 and still in operation; the Coney Island Sculpture Factory, a short-lived outdoor exhibit; and the Idea Warehouse at 22 Reade Street. The first of these projects began in 1972 at 10 Bleecker Street.

In the late sixties, before Alanna Heiss and Philip Glass became fellow participants in New York’s downtown scene, the two became relatives through marriage. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1943, Heiss studied violin and piano at Lawrence University Conservatory in the

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mid-sixties, before her professors convinced her that she was unfit for a career in musical performance. She nevertheless finished a B.A. in music by focusing on piano accompaniment, which she later came to understand as an early choice to support artistic endeavor instead of pursuing it directly herself. In 1966 she began graduate studies in philosophy and aesthetics at Philip Glass’ alma mater, the University of Chicago, where she met the sculptor Jene Highstein, Glass’ cousin. Before finishing her first year of study, she withdrew from the university, married Highstein, and drove to New York City, where together the two newlyweds joined the downtown art scene. This was about the time that Glass returned from Paris.22 Cousins Highstein and Glass plumbed, moved furniture, and performed other odd jobs—often alongside Reich, Landry, and others—in order to make ends meet.

Heiss’s memories of this time focus on the logistical problems artists faced while living illegally in abandoned lofts. In a 2009 interview, Heiss recalled: “Heat was always the problem that illegal lofts had down here. There were many problems: one was garbage; one was heat, because heat proved that something was going on, and since you couldn’t be living here, you had to avoid smoke—you had to avoid all these signs—too much gas, etc.”23 These experiences appear to have influenced her later decision to engage with the city bureaucracy to help solve such problems, thereby allowing artists such as her then-husband and his composer cousin to focus on their work.

Before the sixties ended, however, Heiss and Highstein fled New York for Europe to avoid the Vietnam draft. This move provided Heiss with two additional experiences she came to


23 Ibid.
see as influential in her future role as facilitator for artists and performers. First, she involved herself with installation art projects in unusual urban spaces, once leading public tours of painting and sculpture exhibits in the badly damaged warehouses of St. Katharine’s Docks in London, which had remained in a near-ruined state since the Second World War. Second, she encountered a type of art venue known in German-speaking countries as a Kunsthalle, an exhibition space with neither the sales mission of an art gallery nor the permanent collection of a museum. These experiences had a considerable influence on her work following the couple’s move back to New York City in 1971.

Influenced both by her previous experience in Manhattan at the height of the sixties loft scene, and by her stay in Europe, Heiss looked for abandoned factory and warehouse spaces around the city and appealed to the city for permission to allow their use by artists. With the help of New Yorker art critic Brendan Gill, Heiss formed the Institute for Art and Urban Resources under the aegis of New York’s Municipal Art Society, an urban planning and preservation non-profit where Gill had been active for several years. She divided her new organization into two departments: Workspace, whereby artists would be provided studio space for their daily work at substantially reduced rent; and Exhibitions, which created raw gallery spaces for showing art. The inaugural activities of both divisions involved her cousin-by-marriage Glass and his ensemble.

The first official event sponsored by the Exhibitions division came in May 1971, on the eighty-eighth anniversary of the completion of the Brooklyn Bridge. The event was one of several marking the anniversary, the more official of which included rock, folk, jazz, and soul

\[\text{24} \text{ Ibid.}\]
performances at Brooklyn’s Borough Hall and along the Cadman Plaza. Heiss’s “Under the Brooklyn Bridge” festival, which planned to feature the work of downtown artists on the Brooklyn-side, East River piers under the bridge, received little official support, either from the Municipal Arts Society or from New York’s City Hall. When the City denied her request for a festival on the pier, she quickly repurposed the event and obtained permits for a four-day “film shoot” involving several dozen people who would be dressed as artists engaging in performances, building artworks using found objects among the refuse under the bridge, and picnicking. The “film shoot” ended on 24 May with a large multi-part ceremony: a public showing of the artworks that had been created; a performed barbecue entitled “Pig Roast” by Gordon Matta-Clark, which resulted in over 300 sandwiches for attendees; several film screenings; and closing performances by the Philip Glass Ensemble and Mabou Mines.

After the City failed to provide promised power generators, Heiss and Glass went to great lengths to power the fully electrified and amplified ensemble. Heiss recalls: “Phil and I and Kurt Munkacsi had this gigantic extension cord and a ladder and we ran up the ladder to one of the lampposts that was looking over the Brooklyn Bridge area, knocked out the light, re-plugged in the gigantic extension cord, and ran it all the way down, hundreds and hundreds of feet, down to the bottom of the Brooklyn Bridge, so that it could go out into a pier, and provide the energy to run the [instruments].” (In recent interviews, Kurt Munkacsi told me that he had only just begun his involvement with Philip Glass at the time of the Brooklyn Bridge event, and he had


28 Heiss, Hwang, and Skurvida, “A Slice of Pie with Alanna Heiss.”
not yet assumed the principal role he would soon come to play in spaces like 10 Bleecker Street.\footnote{Kurt Munkacsi, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 9 February 2011.} Despite these technical challenges, Jon Gibson remembered that, “it was a beautiful setting. It was a nice night, and you could see the Williamsburg and the Manhattan Bridge in the distance. … I just remember the [Manhattan Bridge] subways merging and separating. That was what I got out of that: the beauty of the bridges, the light, the river.”\footnote{Jon Gibson, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 19 January 2011. A photo from that event appears in the liner notes to Glass, Two Pages, Contrary Motion, Music in Fifths, Music in Similar Motion, Elektra Nonesuch 9 79326-2, compact disc.}

Yet the performance was not all romance and atmosphere. British music critic Robert Maycock’s account of the Brooklyn Bridge performance preserves several of the more practical challenges forced by the unusual location and its unconventional audience:

> It was a concert under Brooklyn Bridge. Literally under: the musicians set up on the Brooklyn side of the river near one of the main pillars. The ensemble was to play Music in Similar Motion and Music in Fifths. The concert was meant to start after dinner but was delayed by two hours because it was raining and there were problems with the outdoor electric current supply. This meant that most of the audience, and reportedly some of the performers, got thoroughly drunk while they were waiting. Glass recalled later that the sound was very good because the bridge worked like a natural resonating chamber.\footnote{Robert Maycock, Glass: A Portrait (London: Sanctuary, 2002), 182–83.}

Both performers and artists paid careful attention to the space’s specific attributes. Mabou Mines, the theater group in which Glass and his then-wife Joanne Akalaitis were involved, immediately followed the Glass Ensemble with their premiere production of Samuel Beckett’s Come and Go. Iris Smith Fischer described the performance in her recent book on Mabou Mines: “The actors were positioned on one pier with the audience seated on another and looking across the water. Although the actors’ miked voices seemed close, the distance rendered the sight of the
three women very small.” Like the Glass Ensemble, Mabou Mines engaged the Bridge, the East River, and its piers, locating their performance within the circumstances of its specific time and place—evoking the “here and now” of presence. Heiss recalled in a 2003 interview that the festival had also proved that one could successfully produce and exhibit art outside of the much-reviled museum system: “It lasted only three days and it was destroyed, but its success proved that the walls of a museum were unnecessary for exhibitions.” More than a collection of artworks and performances, the Brooklyn Bridge event embodied a set of values that were at once aesthetic and social, emphasizing site-specificity, ephemerality, aestheticized detritus, marginal urban spaces, and anti-institutional sentiment, among others. In short, the artists and performers were friends, energized by and responding to each other’s work.

The first project of Heiss’s “Workspace” division was the creation of studio spaces in the run-down factory building at 10 Bleecker Street. Heiss has recalled that the building’s Manhattan neighborhood was still very dangerous in those days, with gangs regularly competing for territory in the surrounding streets. A fire had left the first two floors without windows or electricity. The New York economy at this time was unstable and getting worse: renovations


34 Heiss, Hwang, and Skurvida, “A Slice of Pie with Alanna Heiss.”

were unlikely to return a significant profit. The building’s owner leased the top two and bottom
two floors to Heiss’s Institute for a token $1.00 per year; a yarn-making company and a knitwear
manufacturer occupied the middle three floors, suggesting that the other floors remained reliably
electrified and a bit more secure. Heiss, in turn, divided the upper two floors with removable
partitions into four 2,700-square-foot studios to be rented to artists for $150 per month (about
$830 today), with any profits channeled back into the art community through performance
sponsorships. The lower floors became gallery spaces. Artists understood that their projects
either had to be bolted in place or of such small value that theft was unlikely or of no
consequence. Elevator access was intermittent at best. Yet despite the dilapidated state of the
building, the raw-brick and wood-floor lofts at 10 Bleecker Street opened in early May 1972.
Richard Nonas presented his Enclosures on 13–27 May, as the gallery’s first public exhibition.

Though precise dates are unavailable, Glass likely began subletting the 10 Bleecker
Street studio at some point between early May 1972, when the building opened for use by artists,
and early June, when his ensemble’s second European trip commenced. The collection of
keyboards and equipment in the photograph that accompanies Glass’ 1972 Avalanche magazine
interview suggests that the studio may also have served as a storage site for his growing

36 See New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, “NoHo East Historic District
2011).

37 Heiss and Highstein, “Alanna Heiss and Jene Highstein;” Strickland, Minimalism: Origins, 236.

38 Jacki Apple and Mary Delahoyd, Alternatives in Retrospect: An Historical Overview, 1969-

39 The first part of Sharp and Bear’s 1972 Avalanche interview was conducted in Rome during
this June 1972 trip abroad. The second took place at 10 Bleecker Street on 18 August. See Glass,
“Philip Glass: An Interview in Two Parts,” interview by Sharp and Bear: 27.
collection of instruments and electronics. All of my informants refer to the agony of climbing and moving heavy equipment up and down the stairs. Singer Joan La Barbara recalls her first visit to the space a few weeks before joining the Ensemble herself: “Oh, it was really in a godawful place, this loft building. I think it was up on the tenth floor [sic—seventh floor]. You had to actually walk up this rickety metal staircase.” Despite these drawbacks, Glass enjoyed having a workspace to call his own, explaining in 1974 that he had “come to like having a separate living place from my studio. I have been living in apartments for about two years now. Of course I have kids, that makes a difference too.”

The studio thus became the launching point for the Ensemble’s American and European tours from 1972 until Glass was forced to find new space for work and equipment storage in winter 1974–75.

In recent years Glass has admitted to having lived for a time at the 10 Bleecker Street studio: “I kind of lived there and I worked there as well. I wasn’t supposed to live there, but we all lived in these places. No one was really paying very much attention to what we were doing, so it was easy to live there, but technically speaking, they were workplaces.”

The studio at 10 Bleecker Street does not appear in Potter’s account of the Glass family living arrangements at

40 Ibid.

41 “‘Tenth floor’ is obviously an exaggeration; 10 Bleecker Street was a seven-story building. Joan La Barbara, “St. Joan La Barbara: An Interview,” interview by Mark Alburger (Philadelphia, Penn., 8 June 1947), Twentieth-Century Music 3, no. 6 (June 1996): 2.


43 This date has been inferred from the opening of the 22 Reade Street facility in December 1974 and Glass’ Sunday concerts in February 1975 (discussed later), which provide earliest and latest possible dates for his move. See Apple and Delahoyd, Alternatives in Retrospect, 46.

this time.\textsuperscript{45} If Glass housed his family at 10 Bleecker Street, it was likely only for a short time, before moving them into separate quarters. The period of domestic residence at 10 Bleecker Street must have been so short and/or so surreptitious that some members of the ensemble continue to insist that Glass never lived there at all.\textsuperscript{46}

Two feature articles on 10 Bleecker Street appeared in summer 1972. Art critic Grace Glueck—who first appeared in this dissertation at the Park Place Gallery in 1966—reviewed the facility and its third art exhibit under the title, “Brightening Up the Bowery,” in the 23 July edition of the \textit{New York Times}: “The seedy, 80-year-old building at 10 Bleecker Street is not what you’d call a prime showcase for art. Fire has bared the ceiling beams of its huge first-floor interior and the floor itself has a sumptuous carpet of splinters.”\textsuperscript{47} Glueck described the extensive water damage that occurred during her visit, when neighborhood gang members turned sprayed hoses connected to fire hydrants onto the open windows, “creating a Niagara from floor to floor.”\textsuperscript{48} (Glueck reports that these were merely kids trying to beat the summer heat, but Heiss recalls the incident being related to the gangs, either as a prank or as a fight between rival crews.\textsuperscript{49}) “Nevertheless,” Glueck wrote, “10 Bleecker Street is serving as a gallery right now,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{45} Potter notes that Glass and Akalaitis lived on Sixth Avenue at 25th Street upon first returning to New York from Paris, on 23rd Street at Ninth Avenue soon thereafter, and “in late 1970 or early 1971, the family—about to add a son, Wolfe-Zachary, to a two-year-old daughter, Juliet—moved to Second Avenue on 4th Street, in the East Village, retaining the 23rd-Street apartment until 1997.” Potter, \textit{Four Musical Minimalists}, 261. This account does not square with Glass’ own explanation: why house his family at 10 Bleecker Street in secret if he retained the 23rd Street apartment for several more decades?

\textsuperscript{46} Michael Riesman, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 10 June 2010.


\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Heiss and Highstein, “Alanna Heiss and Jene Highstein.”

\end{flushright}
displaying on its first two floors paintings and sculpture by five young artists who have done their work with an eye to the raw space. What’s more, other artists—sculptors, painters, a composer and dance group—have studios on the top two floors, rented for much less than the going downtown rate (the three floors between are occupied by manufacturers)." The five artists to whom Glueck referred were Power Boothe, Peter Downsbrough, Nancy Holt, Clark Murray, and James Reineking. The unnamed composer is undoubtedly Philip Glass; Glueck would have had no special reason to name him as early as 1972, and no other composer is known to have rented space there at this time. "The artists are model tenants," Glueck quoted Heiss: “We stress that they can’t live, only work there.”

Barbara Rose’s 28 August New York Magazine article, “More on the Care and Feeding of Artists,” added little to Glueck’s account, but appealed more strongly for readers’ help in financing Heiss’s work. Rose noted the landlady’s enthusiasm: “[She] cooperated in this initial project in the hope that other landlords might follow her example.” And follow her example they did. When the New Museum staged the Alternatives in Retrospect exhibit in 1981, 10 Bleecker Street was selected as one of the more characteristic and influential spaces in the now mature scene. Dozens of similarly reclaimed lofts sprang up over the following decade.

50 Glueck, “Brightening Up the Bowery.”

51 See Apple and Delahoyd, Alternatives in Retrospect, 43.

52 Composer Charlemagne Palestine shared studio space with Glass several years later. See Apple and Delahoyd, Alternatives in Retrospect, 46.

53 Ibid.


55 See Apple and Delahoyd, Alternatives in Retrospect, 6. Research on the alternative space movement in the seventies is now a growing subdiscipline in art history, addressing dozens of
Bleecker Street thus helped inaugurate the seventies as the era of downtown New York’s alternative spaces.

10 Bleecker Street as Performance Space

The studio at 10 Bleecker Street served its most surprising and ultimately its most characteristic function as a public performance space, both for the series of Sunday afternoon concerts that Glass recalls and for a month-long music festival in January 1973 that featured Glass’ music alongside that of Landry, Gibson, and Munkacsi. Table 1 shows the schedule for that festival.56

Recent interviews with participants and an archival program allow for the first time some description of these events.57 Philip Glass Ensemble trumpet player Robert Prado died tragically in December 1972, from injuries sustained in an oilfield accident. He had been one of Richard Landry’s closest friends in Louisiana, a much-loved resident at 10 Chatham Square, and the lead cook at Food Restaurant. His death provided some impetus for the series. For example, in interviews for this project Landry called his participation in the festival as a “memorial concert” for Prado, and an interview with Tina Girouard in Avalanche refers to a “women’s wake” for


56 Gibson, interview by author, 19 January 2011.

Prado she performed that same month. Prado’s death was surely felt strongest by Landry and Girouard, his long-time friends from Louisiana. Many memories are now hazy on this point, but the series appears to have been put together as a downtown New York version of the Louisiana tradition of fêting the deceased with music, which reflected well the blended cultures of Prado, Landry, Peck, and their fellow Cajuns at 10 Chatham Square.

Table 1. “10 Bleecker Street Concerts,” January 1973.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Performers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 12 January</td>
<td>Philip Glass Ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, 13 January</td>
<td>Dickie Landry, with Rusty Gilder and Richard Peck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, 14 January</td>
<td>Jon Gibson with Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 19 January</td>
<td>Dickie Landry, with Rusty Gilder and Richard Peck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, 20 January</td>
<td>Philip Glass Ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, 21 January</td>
<td>Kurt Munkacsi and Tina Girouard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 26 January</td>
<td>Dickie Landry, with Rusty Gilder and Richard Peck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, 27 January</td>
<td>Jon Gibson with Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, 28 January</td>
<td>Philip Glass Ensemble</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


For the three concerts of Glass’ music in the memorial “mini-festival,” the Ensemble presented a retrospective survey of their preceding five years of their collaboration. The concert on 12 January featured *Music in Contrary Motion* (1969) and *Music with Changing Parts* (1970), with none of *Music in Twelve Parts* at all. On 20 January, they performed Part Five of *Music in Twelve Parts* alongside *\ for Jon Gibson* (1968) and *Music in Fifths* (1969). The 28 January

58 The Glass Ensemble’s next recording, *Music in Similar Motion; Music in Fifths* (Chatham Square LP 1002) was dedicated to Prado’s memory. Prado performed for the recording of *Similar Motion*, recorded in June of 1971 (immediately after *Music with Changing Parts*), but had passed away by the time *Music in Fifths* was recorded in June 1973.
performance included *Music for Voices* (likely performed by Mabou Mines, for whom the work was intended), *Music in Contrary Motion* (again), and Part Six of *Music in Twelve Parts*. But Glass’ music formed only a small fraction of the total festival. Other members also took on leading roles in separate performances, specifically Landry, Gibson, and Munkacsi. We consider each in turn.

Landry had begun experimenting with the use of tape delays on his two albums from 1972, *Solos* and *Four Cuts Placed in A First Quarter*, recorded with the help of his Chatham Square colleagues. These effects had been inspired by the tape loops of sixties composers such as Pauline Oliveros and Terry Riley, and even by similar effects featured on Miles Davis’ *Bitches Brew* (1970).\(^59\) Landry recalls:

> Kurt Munkacsi had done a stereo delay for the *Four Cuts* LP, and I asked how many delays could I have, and he said that we could have as many delays as we had tape recorders. I suggested that we use four delays. I’d never rehearsed or played with this set-up. It was awesome – a quartet of saxophones. I fell into it immediately, a complete turn on, and I wanted to keep doing it. It was then that I realized that I really never wanted to form a real working group of my own. I was writing it as it was happening, stream-of-consciousness improvisation.\(^60\)

At his first Bleecker Street concert in memory of Prado in January 1973, Landry debuted the quadraphonic apparatus in live performance. The tape equipment staggered the projection of Landry’s live performance sequentially through speakers in the four corners of the performance space so that, as Landry later described, “the sound circles the room thru the four channels, causing a vortex of sound. I can then play around the columns of sound.”\(^61\) The effect appealed

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\(^{59}\) Landry, interview by Allen.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

to the spatial perception of the audience, highlighting a shared concern among Landry and his fellow musicians regarding such effects.

Gibson’s concerts at the 10 Bleecker Street memorial concerts primarily featured tape works from his earliest years of composing in the late sixties. His concert on 14 January featured his compositions *Vocal/Tape Delay* (1968) and *Visitations* (1968), both of which had premiered at the Kitchen a year before.62 Gibson’s tape work *Radioland* premiered at his next Bleecker Street concert, on 27 January, after a second performance of *Visitations*.63 These works belied a major change then taking place in his musical career: his *Thirties* (1970), which also appeared on his 14 January concert, was far more representative of his new compositional directions (as we will see in chapter four). Glass, Landry, and perhaps others joined Gibson on *30’s*, constituting the unspecified “Friends” listed on the program.

The Prado festival also saw a rare performance by Munkacsi, who used the event as an opportunity to experiment with highly controlled feedback frequencies. The instrument, such as it was, involved several heavy steel pipes suspended from the ceiling. Each pipe was constructed from both straight and “T”-joints, producing what were in effect large flutes with various holes; individual pitches were produced by opening the holes, tuning feedback frequencies produced by means of speakers at one end and live microphones at the other. Girouard, Landry’s then-partner and fellow resident at Chatham Square in Chinatown, improvised a memorial dance as Munkacsi played his giant feedback flute.64

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62 Gibson, interview by author, 19 January 2011.
63 Ibid.
64 Munkacsi, interview by author, 9 February 2011.
This January 1973 memorial series at 10 Bleecker Street therefore provided a rare glimpse of Glass’ music in close proximity to that of the other members of his cohort. Generally speaking, Glass required them to keep their work separate from his.\textsuperscript{65} In these years, nevertheless, Glass readily acknowledged his sense that these individual members of his ensemble were also composers and creators in their own right. In 1974 Glass remarked:

I’ve always thought of my group as an association of very creative people who are adding to my work. I don’t think of them just as people I hire, though of course they are people I do hire—the interpersonal relationships are much more complex. Also we discuss my music and they make suggestions and so on.

[Sharp:] What basically do you think holds the group together?

[Glass:] You mean before we began to make enough money to make it worthwhile?

[Sharp:] Yeah.

[Glass:] I think an interest in the work and an interest in each other. And what we could do for each other.\textsuperscript{66}

The overlapping personnel at the 10 Bleecker Street festival in January 1973, as with the Landry’s ensemble recordings from the previous year, offered a rare demonstration of Glass’ sense of the Ensemble as a community of fellow music-makers, an expression of the group’s collaborative values. The Ensemble functioned not simply Glass’ eponymous band, but was a constantly changing social entity that often assumed new shapes and new names, depending on whose music was being performed. All its members were at once composers and performers.

\textsuperscript{65} Philip Glass, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 20 June 2011.

\textsuperscript{66} Glass, “The Phil Glass Ensemble,” interview by Sharp, 43.
The Sunday Concerts

While the January 1973 series reinforced the Ensemble’s internal solidarity as a cohesive group, other concerts at the 10 Bleecker Street studio more directly explored the relationships between the performers and their audience. By far the most common references to the space involve private, Sunday-afternoon performances of *Music in Twelve Parts*. The details for these events are sketchy and often contradictory. Most of the very few references generally agree that they occurred from 1972 to 1974. (The occasional claim that they began in 1971 is unlikely, since the building was not available for such use until May 1972.)

There is no clear consensus about how many Sunday concerts were held. Munkacsi told me he recalled around seven total concerts, and Landry’s CV (which meticulously lists all of his performances with the ensemble, in order but undated) agrees, showing only four additional 10 Bleecker Street concerts by the Glass ensemble after the January 1973 series, for a total of seven. Records held by Glass’ archives today document only six total performances. These included the three from January 1973 Prado memorial festival discussed previously. The remaining three, shown in Table 2, fit the consistent description of Sunday concerts more closely. Each featured premieres of individual movements *Music in Twelve Parts*.

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68 Landry, email communication with author, 22 February 2011.
Table 2. Three Sunday Concerts at 10 Bleecker Street, 1973–1974.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 May 1973</td>
<td><em>Music in Twelve Parts</em>, Parts 1, 2 (premiere), 3, and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 December 1973</td>
<td><em>Music in Twelve Parts</em>, Parts 6, 7, 8, and 9 (premiere)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 February 1974</td>
<td><em>Music in Twelve Parts</em>, Parts 2, 3, 8, and 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dates obtained from Ensemble records provided by Dan Dryden, archivist for Dunvagen Publishers.

As we have seen, audiences at 10 Bleecker Street typically learned about concerts by word-of-mouth.\(^{69}\) Audiences consisted of insiders from the downtown art and performance community, especially the residents of 10 Chatham Square. Only a small minority of the audience, which typically involved several dozen attendees, were trained musicians, such as La Barbara or Laurie Anderson.\(^{70}\) Audience members accessed the top floor by the dilapidated flight of stairs and brought mats or coats to pad the old wooden warehouse floor, on which some sat and others reclined.\(^{71}\) Concerts involved all or most of the 5,000-square-foot loft, taking up the combined space of Glass’ studio and that of Nancy Graves, the artist with whom he shared the floor.\(^{72}\) The performers used the familiar circle-in-the-round arrangement we witnessed in the previous chapter. They set up their equipment around a circular mat in the center of the loft, facing inward toward each other. The audience assembled on the floor around the circle.

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\(^{69}\) See Sharp and Bear, “The Early History of *Avalanche*.”


\(^{71}\) Munkacs, interview by author, 9 February 2011.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.
Munkacsi placed his speaker arrays in the four corners of the room, directing the sound into the center, just as Glass had first done at the Whitney Museum in spring 1969.

Performers and audience members mingled informally prior to the concert. At some point, the musicians would separate and move toward their instruments. With a slow, exaggerated nod from Glass, the music began, launching directly and abruptly into the churning eighth-note surface activity of Glass’ characteristic style. The quadraphonic speaker array filled the loft with a single, pervasive field of musical sound—cultivating the presence he and his listeners so prized. The high volumes engaged the small space and its highly reflective brick walls to produce a dense and imposing aural effect. Art critic Lizzie Borden observed the combined effect of amplification and 10 Bleecker Street’s small reflective space in a 1974 article in *ArtForum*: “Glass’ concerts at 10 Bleecker Street, for example, are denser and thicker than the concert in the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza [where Glass and his ensemble played on 22 May 1972], which seemed to fill up the space delineated by the surrounding buildings, while the outdoor concert in Spoleto [where they played on 26 June 1972] was very diffuse, and extended to the visual limits of the panorama.” Munkacsi’s high-amplitude mix was as much felt as much by whole body as it was heard by the ears.

Some who attended these concerts, including Laurie Anderson, described the events as open rehearsals resembling meditation exercises. LeWitt found these practice sessions to be opportunities to contemplate his own creative work: “I do my best work at Phil’s rehearsals.”

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75 Anderson, *Stories from the Nerve Bible*, 283.

76 Ibid.
Still others, including Glass himself, saw them as concerts in their own right. Those who recall regular Sunday concerts at Glass’ loft may indeed have been referring to weekly ensemble rehearsals, of which only three came to be listed in Ensemble records as proper “performances.” Events that operate on the margins of performance and rehearsal subvert familiar distinctions between the creative and the quotidian, as well as between public and private music-making. These collapsed categories, we recall, had been one of the characteristic features of the culture at the Ensemble’s previous rehearsal space, 10 Chatham Square. The elevation of rehearsal into concert parallels the trajectory of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s “aesthetic experience,” wherein a moment in everyday life intensifies into “epiphany,” at once profound and fleeting. Rehearsals became concerts when, in the midst of the tedium of musical practice, listeners and performers together experienced unexpected moments of aesthetic intensity.

Most references to 10 Bleecker Street link the unusual venue to the development of *Music in Twelve Parts*. Table 2 shows the concert repertoire for the Ensemble’s three documented concerts at 10 Bleecker Street in 1973 and 1974, each of which featured selections from that larger work. Audiences throughout the seventies, including those at 10 Bleecker Street, were far more likely to encounter *Music in Twelve Parts* piecemeal than in the complete form by which it has come to be analyzed in subsequent decades. Potter, for example, assesses the complete work holistically: “*Music in Twelve Parts* is constructed to make a complex but coherent tonal statement, in which the key of each individual part finds its place in a cumulative

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Yet only three complete performances (Town Hall New York, June 1974; Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, December 1974; and Theatre d’Orsay in Paris, June 1975) were ever held throughout the entire decade of the seventies. Another two full-length performances (Cologne, July 1974; 22 Reade Street, New York, February 1975) evenly divided the work into separate concerts of four parts each, separated by up to a full week. Descriptions of *Music in Twelve Parts* as a coherent whole refer to a listening experience quite different from that encountered by any audience at 10 Bleecker Street.

Indeed, the separability of its successive parts was so central to the work’s conception that one of Glass’ early titles for *Music in Twelve Parts* was *Music with Modulations*. Modulation, in this case, must be distinguished from its traditional meaning in music theory, referring not to smooth or otherwise prepared transitions between formal parts, but to a heightened sense of *modularity*, emphasized by maximal contrast. Moreover, this notion of modularity should be distinguished from minimalist musical analysis, which often describes to individual bars as “modules”: in this case, modularity refers to formal units on a different scale; not measures, but whole movements or “parts.” Glass referred to *Music in Twelve Parts* in early liner notes as a “modular work, one of the first such compositions, with twelve distinct parts.

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79 Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists*, 313.

80 These multi-night performances of the complete *Music in Twelve Parts* took place at “Projekt ‘74” in Cologne on 7–8 July 1974 and at 22 Reade Street in New York on 2, 9, and 16 February 1975. The ensemble performed a similarly divided *Music in Twelve Parts* on 17, 19, and 21 November 1974, though these performances took place not in a single location, but in Quebec, Montreal, and New York, respectively. See Appendix.

which can be performed separately in one long sequence, or in any combination or variation.”

The composer also described these formal seams using an architectural metaphor, “the way that two walls come together in a building.” Although many contrapuntal and textural techniques also change from part to part, Glass paid particular attention to the work’s angular harmonic contrasts: “I was always very careful to make that harmonic relationship [between individual parts] a very strong one.” Yet for the overwhelming majority of presentations of *Music in Twelve Parts* in the seventies—that is, in more than eighty of the ninety-one known performances—there was no “coherent tonal statement.” Instead harmonic “modularity” predominated.

A closer look at the music on the 10 Bleecker Street concert program from 20 May 1973, illustrates these starkly contrasted harmonic relationships. On this date, the Glass Ensemble performed the Parts One through Four of *Music in Twelve Parts*, likely with an intermission between Parts Two and Three. The first pair of movements contrast a trio of chords which share the pitches F# and C#—which might be analyzed as F#m7, Bmadd2, and DM7—with an ambiguous pentatonic complex that may be heard to suggest two different harmonies at once—

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82 Quoted in Bernard, 269–70n30. Bernard also noted certain obvious parallels to “moment form,” especially familiar from mid-century works like Earle Brown’s *Folio* (1952–53) and Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI* (1956). The fundamental difference, as Bernard discusses, is that Glass’ rearrangements are to be determined before performance, while in *Klavierstück XI* the exact order of the modules is decided spontaneously during performance. The “large-scale” distinction also distinguishes this use of the term modularity from its employment as an analytic term in minimalist music, referring to bar-length repetitions, noted as early as 1967 by art critic Grace Glueck, as referenced in chapter one of this dissertation.

83 Ibid.


85 These performances are included among the performance history in the Appendix.
one listener might hear $D\#_6$ where another hears $B_b\text{-m7}$. Harmonic reductions for these parts are shown in Examples 3 and 4.\textsuperscript{86}

Although the $F\#$ minor of Part One and the (alleged) $D_b$ major of Part Two may be interpreted enharmonically as a tonic and its dominant (as does Potter\textsuperscript{87}), no other information from these two harmonic zones supports such a close relationship: even if all five chords share the pitch $D_b/C\#$, the $B$ minor and $B_b$ minor harmonies directly clash at a semitone apart, as do the $D$ major and $D_b$ major chords.\textsuperscript{88} The intermission would have undermined any sense of harmonic juxtaposition at next formal seam, between Parts Two and Three. In any case, harmonic ambiguities within these two parts complicate Potter’s hearing of a tritone relationship between them.\textsuperscript{89}

Although the third and fourth parts both utilize “white-key” diatonic scales, they differ considerably in the patterns employed. Part Three features a harmonically ambiguous quartal chord, $A–D–G–C$. Such harmonies are typically ambiguous regarding their root and quality, as Glass’ former Juilliard composition professor, Vincent Persichetti, explained in his 1961 textbook on modern harmony: “Chords by perfect fourths are ambiguous in that, like all chords built by equidistant intervals (diminished seventh chords or augmented triads), any member can

\textsuperscript{86} Cf. Potter’s tonal description of Part One as “F-sharp minor (A major),” or his explanation of the relationship between Parts 1–2 as “tonic/dominant.” Potter, \textit{Four Musical Minimalists}, 313–14.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{88} The $C\#/D_b$ may be heard to form a common-tone relationship between all the harmonies in Parts One and Two: the root of $D_b6$, the third of $B_b\text{-m7}$, the fifth of $F\#m7$, the seventh of $D\text{-M7}$, and the ninth/second of $Bm\text{-add2}$. Still this relationship is not strictly tonal in the functional sense described by Potter, i.e. “tonic/dominant.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. Even Potter’s assertion that a tritone root relationship is “the most distant relationship possible” deserves some scrutiny, though this is beyond the scope of the present study.
function as the root.”

In the case of Part Three, the pitch-class G may be heard as the root, though the mode and quality of the chord itself remains far from certain—not so clearly G major. Harmonies in Part Four result from symmetrical patterns around a pair of axes: E3 in bass clef and B4–C5 in the treble. These axes, however, receive no particular emphasis and the resulting sound is a pandiatonic wash of white notes—not at all an unambiguous C major. (See Examples 5 and 6.) The major seconds of the third movement (even Potter notes the “unusually high level of secundal dissonance” here) especially contrast with the pervasive diatonic semitones in the fourth. These clashes between movements thus emphasized their separation from one another, not their fitness as matched pairs with tonal relationships.

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91 Potter, 313.
Example 3. Glass, *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 1; a, excerpt of modules 1–3; b, harmonic reductions, showing three related harmonies (a, b, and c) around a common F#/C# dyad. Score excerpts are taken from Lemieux, “Construction, Reconstruction and Deconstruction,” 96.
Example 5. *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 3; *a*, excerpt of modules 1–3; *b*, harmonic reduction with its implied quartal harmony. Score excerpts are taken from Lemieux, “Construction, Reconstruction and Deconstruction,” 120.
Yet these technical descriptions fail to capture what audiences reported hearing. Despite the purported power of these musical effects, not a single source from the seventies makes any reference to them. The notion of modularity might even have had some resonance with the artists in Glass’ audience, yet no such parallel was ever drawn. And repetition itself, so dominant in the writing of minimalist scholars, receives almost no comment by Glass’ first audiences. Instead, listeners at 10 Bleecker Street recognized in these rehearsal/concerts a reflection of the broader community attitude embodied in a well-known comment Rauschenberg made about the “gap between art and life.”92 In a 2001 interview, the late Spaulding Gray recalled:

We were all going to Philip Glass’ work-in-progress, we were understanding the whole thing of work-in-progress by coming into spaces downtown where stuff was never really finished, it was always evolving. I mean we witnessed the *Music in Twelve Parts* in the Bleecker Street loft, every Sunday he would play a different part—it was a community, we were immersed in it.93

Downtown artists and performers shared work with each other at all stages of development, well before pieces were declared “finished” (if they ever were). In 1983, Glass described this as an expression of shared values—related not only to aesthetics—and one of his community’s most common practices:

Yvonne Rainer, Sol LeWitt, and Richard Foreman and myself and Michael Snow, the film maker [sic]—we were actively sharing the stages of our work with each other. When you talk about the audiences, we were the audiences. The audiences were the other performers and the other visual artists in this downtown New York scene.94

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92 This, in any case, is the form the legendary quip typically takes. The original appears as follows: “Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in the gap between the two.)” Dorothy C. Miller, *Sixteen Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), 58.


Workspaces as performance halls, rehearsal as concerts, neighbors as collaborators and audience members—this was the culture of seventies SoHo. To be present at a 10 Bleecker Street concert was to be located within the geography of downtown Manhattan, to be a member of an exclusive community of like-minded avant-garde artists, and to be a participant in one of that community’s defining rituals. Intimacy reinforced their informality and familiarity. Performers and audience alike were related as friends, neighbors, collaborators, and lovers. “The musicians were sitting with their friends and at a certain point we got up and did the concert,” Glass explained. “It’s a way of eliminating that distance between the audience and the performer.”

They were an established community with constantly shifting roles: on one day they were the “Philip Glass Ensemble” and its audience; on the next day, and at some other nearby venue, performers and audience traded places.

The case of 10 Bleecker Street thus adds a crucial component to the previous chapter’s largely aesthetic arguments regarding space and “presence.” Munkacsi’s quadraphonic setup and high-volume, low-distortion mix located both performers and their audience in the center of a single, highly “present,” sound field. This acoustic arrangement not only affected the audience, but also altered the way the performers experienced their own performed sound. Having the musicians share the aural experience with the audience brought audiences and performers together. Munkacsi has returned to this point repeatedly: “We performed in this kind of huge sound field that enveloped both us and the audience. Everybody was part of the same sonic experience. That’s why, I think, the experiences were so intense.”


consequence of the arrangement meant that performers heard themselves less than they would normally prefer with a conventional monitor setup. In another sense, though, the physical way that Munkacsi’s highly “present” amplification strategies resonated upon the bodies of the audience registered the close proximity, and almost physical contact, between performers and audience.

This physical contact calls to mind Walter Benjamin’s “celebra[tion of] the immediate physical ‘touch’ of cultural objects,” as recalled by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in *The Production of Presence*. Gumbrecht’s broader arguments about the tension between presence and meaning may usefully frame the competing agendas represented by the musical analysis above and the kind of listening associated with 10 Bleecker Street. Harmonic juxtaposition, tonal trajectory and/or stasis, and even additive rhythmic structures represent a type of “meaning,” forming a more objective basis for intellectual inquiry, analysis, and critique. But such intellectual “objective” tools remain in perpetual tension, according to Gumbrecht’s formulation, with “presence,” which in this case captures the sonorous object of *Music in Twelve Parts* at high amplitude, its engagement with the space of 10 Bleecker Street, and the total combined effect on the listening bodies. Hearing *Music in Twelve Parts* at 10 Bleecker Street, listening to it anew with the benefit of this history, means taking account of that oscillation between presence and meaning—between the music’s engagement with space and bodies on the one hand, and the intellect and critical ear on the other—that defines Gumbrecht’s notion of the aesthetic experience.

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97 Munkacsi, interview by author, 9 February 2011.


99 Ibid., 51–90.
A final story testifies to the special and ephemeral sense of community that characterized the act of listening to *Music in Twelve Parts* at 10 Bleecker Street. John Cage himself attended at least one of Glass’ Bleecker Street concerts. Soon afterward he noted in his 1974 article “The Future of Music”:

> Though the doors will always remain open for the musical expression of personal feelings, what will more and more come through is the expression of the pleasures of conviviality (as in the music of Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass).\(^{100}\)

Kenneth Silverman has recently suggested that Cage’s assessment was a derisive dismissal: “The leading Minimalist composers and Cage cared little for each other’s work. […] [Cage] faulted both composers [Reich and Glass] for arousing in their listeners a convivial feeling that turned them into a group, like a pop music audience.”\(^{101}\) However, there is little evidence that Cage or the minimalists held any animosity toward one another. Even Cage’s original reference to conviviality in Glass’ music implies no clear tensions between them.

When Glass was asked about Cage’s observation, he initially brushed it off—“I think it has more to do with his music than mine or anything”—before making the following connection to 10 Bleecker Street:

> I think I know what this is about, where this comes from. During every year I [hold] a series of concerts downtown, usually in a large studio… My work with the ensemble that I formed [is] in a part of New York where people lived in loft buildings, you know, and did rehearsals there. And that in a way was the origin of my audience… I’ve always kept an attachment to that. Every year I do a series of concerts in the place that I rehearse and work in…

> I think that actually what John is talking about there is a very particular situation. He came to a Sunday afternoon concert at my loft where it’s almost really an audience that has been my audience from the beginning.

[Zimmermann:] This is one side of what is called the “pleasure of conviviality.”

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\(^{100}\) John Cage, *Empty Words: Writings ’73–’78* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1979), 179.

[Glass:] Sure, these are people who always know each other.¹⁰²

The invocation of conviviality by Cage and Zimmermann calls to mind once again the “relational aesthetics” of Nicolas Bourriaud, described in the introduction to this dissertation. “The constitution of convivial relations [in art],” Bourriaud argues, “has been a historical constant since the 1960s.”¹⁰³ Citing the example of Food Restaurant and others, Bourriaud writes:

> Contemporary art is often marked by non-availability, by being viewable only at a specific time. The example of performance is the most classic case of all. Once the performance is over, all that remains is documentation that should not be confused with the work itself. […] The artwork is thus no longer to be consumed within a “monumental” time frame and open for a universal public; rather, it elapses within a factual time, for an audience summoned by the artist. In a nutshell, the work prompts meetings and invites appointments, managing its own temporal structure.¹⁰⁴

According to Bourriaud, then, conviviality describes art in its most fleeting and ephemeral sense. Such values are not forever available as permanent features of the artwork. Instead they leave only traces of themselves in the documentary record. Cage’s comment, and Glass’ response to it, reveals how central the experience of community was to the reception of Glass’ music in its earliest years. The concerts at 10 Bleecker Street represented the embodiment of that special convergence of art and life, the common experience of sharing artistic work in its early stages, and the physical and social impact of Glass’ new aesthetics of “presence.” In this way, 10 Bleecker Street was the model for all of Glass’ loft-and-gallery life in the early seventies.

¹⁰² Glass, interview by Walter Zimmermann.


¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 29.
Conclusion: Achievement and Loss at Town Hall

On 1 June 1974, the Philip Glass Ensemble premiered the complete *Music in Twelve Parts* at New York’s Town Hall. The concert marked the culmination of three years of composition, rehearsals, and workshop performances downtown and throughout the United States and Europe. The event had received an extensive preview the previous week by John Rockwell in the *New York Times*, who marked the occasion as Glass’ “first major midtown concert in one of the city’s traditional concert halls.” Rockwell’s article warned potential audience members, “Glass plays his music loud,” but that “if some find this music infuriating in its volume, repetitiveness and seeming monotony, others are drawn to its trance-like ritual qualities.”

The bulk of the preview consisted of a biographical summary of Glass’ career to date.

The 1 June performance featured Ensemble regulars Gibson, Landry, Peck, Munkacsi, and Glass, as well as newcomers Bob Telson and Joan La Barbara. Telson had joined the group after attending a concert at 10 Bleecker Street on 20 January 1973. La Barbara, too, first heard Glass’ music at 10 Bleecker Street on 20 May 1973, and made the decision to quit performing with Steve Reich in order to join Glass in early 1974 (as we will see in chapter five). Acknowledgements in the program included the following gesture to Alanna Heiss and the Bleecker Street studios: “The Philip Glass Ensemble rehearses in a studio space made possible by the Workspace Program of the Institute for Art and Urban Resources.”

Nearly 700 people attended the six-hour performance at Town Hall. Many were downtown regulars who had joined the Ensemble in its trek up to 43rd Street for the event.

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106 Program dated 1 June 1974, Box 46, Folder 2360, Richard Foreman Collection, Fales Library Downtown Collection, New York University, New York.
*in Twelve Parts* premiered in four groups of three movements, with two fifteen-minute intermissions and one hour-and-a-half dinner break in the middle. Some audience members intentionally arrived late to catch only the newest bits: the entire final hour of the performance, 11:00PM–midnight, featured the premiere performances of Parts 10–12.  

Rockwell was effusive in his post-concert review in the *Times*, “Saturday’s performance provided an enormous amount of immediate pleasure. The audience of some 700 was large for music of this innovative sort, and it stood and cheered at the end.”

In the week following the Town Hall premiere, *Avalanche* editor Willoughby Sharp, interviewed each Ensemble member, as he documented reactions to the concert and the evolution of the group. Although all agreed that the performance had been a success, the composer himself expressed some ambivalence. The larger audience and more established venue had certainly benefited the ensemble financially: “The four or five hundred regular people downtown, with all the good will in the world, can’t support the group. We have to get a larger audience—in fact it’s already happening—and without changing the music.”  

Yet when pressed further about how the larger contexts might change his music, Glass remarked:

> I don’t think it does change the music. It does change the social situation of listening. The concerts at Bleecker Street which really were my favorite concerts were a coming together of us and the audience in a very informal way, […] It’s a way of eliminating that distance between the audience and the performer, and of course as we get into larger audiences it’s going to be more difficult to do that, isn’t it? […] That’s definitely a loss. See, on the one hand I’m pleased that more people come and like the music, but on the other hand…

> [Sharp:] It changes the situation to the point where that might be detrimental to the experience?

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[Glass:] Maybe so. I think we win something and we lose something.\textsuperscript{110} Despite the success of the Town Hall concert, Glass recognized the small, unrenovated studio at Bleecker Street as ideal in its particular way. The music had not changed; the notes themselves had not embodied that prized spirit of community. It had been an aspect peculiar to the performance experience at 10 Bleecker Street, cultivated by that space and irreproducible in the large, proscenium-style auditorium at Town Hall—even if the music, the performing personnel, and much of the audience was exactly the same.

Alanna Heiss’s role in Glass’ career continued even after the top floors of 10 Bleecker Street were closed in December 1974.\textsuperscript{111} Glass and fellow minimalist composer Charlemagne Palestine, who was by then sharing the upper floor with him, moved into another of Heiss’s loft projects at 22 Reade Street, which soon became known as The Idea Warehouse. Perhaps in an attempt to regain the lost “social situation of listening,” Glass once again presented a Sunday afternoon concert series for the entire month of February 1975, this time playing the complete \textit{Music in Twelve Parts} in three installments (four parts at a time), with \textit{Music with Changing Parts} on the last Sunday. These events were no longer workshop performances, no longer rehearsals for trying out new music. Unlike the private events at 10 Bleecker Street, this series received a review in the \textit{New York Times}: Rockwell wrote, “yesterday afternoon Mr. Glass got around to the last of the four parts—the newest and most complex music in the score,” noting that the ensemble “performed superbly, after a little roughness at the start of part 9.” As at Town Hall, noted Rockwell, “the large crowd stood and cheered at the end.”\textsuperscript{112} With larger audiences,

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} See note by Charlemagne Palestine in Apple and Delahoyd, \textit{Alternatives in Retrospect}, 46.

standing ovations, and reviews in the Times, the Philip Glass Ensemble’s residency at 10 Bleecker Street had truly come to an end.
On 5 March 1974, Jon Gibson presented the most pivotal concert of his early career as a composer at the Washington Square Methodist Church in Greenwich Village. This was not the first event to feature the composer exclusively: Gibson had treated audiences at The Kitchen, 10 Bleecker Street, the Free Music Store, and a small handful of other venues to his late-sixties tape collages—the extra-terrestrially inspired *Visitations* was heard most often—and to spontaneously performed jazz-inspired free improvisations on solo saxophone and flute.\(^1\) In a flurry of creative effort before and after New Year’s Day 1974, Gibson composed five new pieces to premiere at the church. *Cycles* came first, in the last months of 1973; Gibson wrote it specifically for the church and its “quirky old pipe organ,” with its distinct aural palette of idiosyncratic tunings and tone colors.\(^2\) Two small-ensemble pieces, *Song I* and *Song II*, followed soon thereafter, in the weeks before and after 1 January. *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*, incorporating the solo performer’s whole body, was completed in the early weeks of the New Year. Manuscripts indicate that this writing period ended at some point in February, just in time for the concert, when Gibson completed his score for *Solo for Saxophone*.\(^3\) Although his particular skill with

\(^1\) Before Washington Square Church, Gibson presented tape and improvisation concerts at The Kitchen on 6–7 January 1972 and 9 January 1973; at 10 Bleecker Street on 14 and 27 January 1973 (as discussed in Chapter 3); at WBAI Free Music Store on 24 February 1973; and at Phill Niblock’s Church Street loft on 11 December 1973. Jon Gibson, curriculum vitae, “Gibson, Jon,” Artist Files, Museum of Modern Art (Queens), New York, N.Y.

\(^2\) Gibson, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 7 June 2011.

\(^3\) Gibson, *32/11*, score, 1976, composer’s private archives, New York, N.Y.
motivic jazz improvisation directly informed his emerging compositional style in these works, forming some continuity with his earlier musical practices, never before had Gibson expended so much effort to notate his music with ink and paper.

The composer himself performed the program’s three solo pieces, *Cycles, Solo for Saxophone* (Solo was performed twice, both before and after the intermission) and *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*. For *Song I* and *Song II*, Gibson recruited several colleagues to form the concert’s ad-hoc ensemble: experimental cellist and downtown composer Arthur Russell; Martha Siegel, a cello-performance master’s student at Brooklyn College; and violinist and erstwhile Glass Ensemble member Barbara Benary.4 Teenage percussionist David Van Tieghem, later a downtown composer-performer himself, joined the group on *Song II*. Kurt Munkacsi (predictably) managed the event’s sound equipment. Recent Glass Ensemble recruit Joan La Barbara covered the event in her first review for the *SoHo Weekly News*.5 A photograph of Gibson and friends rehearsing *Song I*—taken by Richard Landry—appears on page 58 of Tim Lawrence’s book on Arthur Russell, *Hold On To Your Dreams*.6 The first two pages of the concert’s handwritten program appear in Figure 7.7

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4 Barbara Binary performed *Music with Changing Parts* and the earliest manifestations of *Music in Twelve Parts* with the Glass Ensemble in winter and spring 1971; she appears to have left the group soon after they recorded *Music with Changing Parts* on 4 May of that year. Her name is not included among the ensemble personnel involved with the Brooklyn Bridge concert on 24 May. See Philip Glass, *Music with Changing Parts*, Chatham Square 1002, 1971, stereo LP.


7 La Barbara’s review suggests that the original program also included notes on the compositions.
As Gibson recalls, Washington Square Church “had a lot of stuff going on. The people there were very open. I don’t remember if I even paid!”\textsuperscript{8} With its above-average acoustics, large seating area, and openness toward art and performance of all kinds, Washington Square Methodist Church had developed a favorable reputation within the downtown scene for a social and artistic mission that rivaled its near neighbor, Judson Church. Located on Fourth Street between MacDougal and Sixth, one half-block west of its namesake town square, the Greenwich Village church became known in the late sixties for its progressive politics, gaining the nickname

\textsuperscript{8} Gibson, interview by author, 7 June 2011.
“the Peace Church” for sheltering young men trying to dodge the Vietnam draft board. Drone minimalist and filmmaker Phill Niblock presented two concerts there in 1971 and 1973, both in collaboration with dancer Barbara Lloyd; Nancy Topf, Gibson’s frequent collaborator and soon-to-be spouse, also danced in Niblock’s 1973 performance. The church hosted a performance of Terry Riley’s *In C* in April of 1973; the specially assembled ensemble included downtown luminaries such as Phil Corner, Garrett List, and Meredith Monk, among others, and garnered a review in both the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice*. The same year, Reverend Paul Abels, a freelance performing arts manager with seminary credentials, became the church’s pastor, affirming and extending the church’s commitment to the arts. Although the Washington Square Church continued to serve its primary duty as a consecrated house of worship north of Houston Street, it also functioned as one of downtown Manhattan’s alternative spaces—helmed by a pastor who saw himself as shepherd to the neighborhood’s artists and to his church’s congregants alike.


12 Abels would later receive press for administering wedding vows between gay and lesbian couples. In 1977, Abels came out as homosexual himself and became one of the more visible figures in the debates within the United Methodist denomination over its acceptance of LGBT membership and leadership. He resigned his post as pastor of Washington Square in 1984, shortly after the national denomination voted to deny fellowship to LGBT believers. See Bruce Kayton and Pete Seeger, *Radical Walking Tours of New York City* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 65; Jimmy Creech, *Adam’s Gift: A Memoir of a Pastor’s Calling to Defy the Church’s Persecution of Lesbians and Gays* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 2011), 42.
As with so many of the events in this dissertation, the significance of Gibson’s March 1974 Washington Square Church concert cannot be accurately measured only by its presence in the historical record. La Barbara’s *SoHo Weekly News* review was its only critical notice and remains the only documentation of the concert’s reception.\(^{13}\) Dance historian Tim Lawrence dedicates a single sentence to the concert in his 2009 book on cellist Arthur Russell: “Gibson, who was urbane, curious, and mellow, asked Arthur to play in a concert of his own ‘reduced’ music […] and was pleased enough with Arthur’s effort, even if he [in Gibson’s words] ‘wasn’t a stellar-ace, nail-it-on-the-first-read kind of guy.’ ”\(^{14}\) Popular music historian Will Hermes refers to the event obliquely, looking back from April 1975 when Gibson returned to Washington Square Church to record *Cycles*, which was eventually released on his 1977 Chatham Square LP, *Two Solo Pieces*: “Sitting before the organ, with the huge chords of *Cycles* filling the church, just as they had a year earlier for the work’s debut, he felt beatific,” Hermes writes, with more than a little poetic license.\(^{15}\) Despite the scant attention, the concert represented a major milestone for Gibson. With the five new works on the March 1974 concert, Gibson established himself as a composer of serious stature.

This chapter touches on several of the themes that resound throughout this dissertation. The examination below of Gibson’s earliest notated compositions addresses resemblances

\(^{13}\) La Barbara, “New Music by Jon Gibson.”

\(^{14}\) Lawrence, *Hold On to Your Dreams*, 57.

\(^{15}\) Hermes’ “beatific” reference is surely a literary flourish, an invented history: his source is a now-defunct music blog that, one suspects, he discovered by searching online for New York musical events by date. It is especially odd that Hermes should discuss the recording session as an event in his chapter on 1975 instead of the premiere performance in his chapter on 1974, and subsequently reference the Chatham Square LP not at all. See Will Hermes, *Love Goes to Buildings on Fire: Five Years in New York that Changed Music Forever* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2011), 114.
between his music and that of his peer composers Glass, Rzewski, and others. These stylistic resonances testify once again to the inherent complexity of authorship, to the social entanglement of all creative work: Gibson’s borrowed ideas from his friends because they were his friends and because they shared similar affiliations and networks of associations. But eventually these borrowings transformed into an individual sense of expression. In the latter half of the chapter, we arrive at a set of compositional techniques that might be understood as Gibson’s own creative signature.

Yet, in an ongoing effort to avoid “patent office” obsessions, this observation serves to highlight a critical debate about Gibson’s reception at the time (and subsequently). Gibson’s program and liner notes since the mid-seventies often describe two parallel compositional strategies: on one side, multi-layered complexity characterized by an obsession with sequences, ratios, and arithmetical number games; on the other, a desire to temper these obsessions with the whimsy and intuition of a practiced improviser. Neither of these approaches is necessarily perceptible to audiences or critics, who tend to comment on his skillful instrumentality, consonant modalism, and limited pitch content. This dichotomy—between the act of composing and the experience of listening—informs the following metaphor first suggested by music critic Tim Page in his liner notes to Gibson’s 1996 CD re-release of Two Solo Pieces:

There is nothing didactic about Gibson’s work. However rigorous he may be in the exploration of his chosen materials, his music always sounds. He is not purely cerebral, nor does he confuse a “good idea” (which can provide only a blueprint for a composition) with the successful execution of that idea. To put it another way, Gibson always cared about the flower as well as the seed—something that cannot be said for all of the early minimalists (let alone the hard-core conceptualists!).

16 Tim Page, liner notes to Gibson, Two Solo Pieces plus Melody IV, part I; Melody III; Song I, New Tone, 1996, compact disc.
In Page’s formulation, Gibson’s creative ‘seed’ refers to the first of the two strategies described above—i.e., the mathematics that inform composition—while the ‘flower’ addresses his music’s aesthetic affect, and its effect on the listening experience, typically characterized by a sense of restraint and sensuality. This chapter thus distinguishes seed from flower in the composer’s music and shows how listeners in his downtown Manhattan audience wrestled with its competing and complementary agendas, just as they were also doing with Glass’ *Music in Twelve Parts* at this same time (as seen in the previous chapter). However, we cannot appreciate Gibson’s rigorous and systematic approach to composition without first understanding his background as an improvising saxophonist. Thus we return to Gibson where we left him in the first chapter, performing alongside fellow composer-performers Arthur Murphy, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass in the late sixties.

“He occasionally composes”

Jon Gibson studied composition at San Francisco State University in the early sixties with Wayne Peterson and Henry Underdone and wrote a small handful of indeterminate chart pieces while a performer in UC-Davis’ improvisation group, the New Music Ensemble.\(^\text{17}\) The director of the New Music Ensemble, Larry Austin, had always considered Gibson a composer: “We were all composers who also played. That was how you got in. In the Davis group, there were people who never declared themselves composers (Jon Gibson, for instance) but who were, actually.”\(^\text{18}\) After moving to the East Coast in the late-sixties, Gibson produced several tape

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pieces while tinkering with the audio equipment in Steve Reich’s and Arthur Murphy’s lofts (as mentioned in the first chapter to this dissertation) while continuing to view himself primarily as an improvising performer. As late as Reich’s “Anti-Illusion,” Whitney Museum concert in May 1969, Gibson’s program-note biography—in a practical sense, an autobiography—touts only his performing experience and expertise, as had all such biographies before.\textsuperscript{19} Archived programs from the late sixties focus on his educational history and ensemble affiliations.\textsuperscript{20} None mentions composing or specific compositions.

Besides performance, however, Gibson’s program-note autobiographies also consistently refer to his pursuit of East Asian philosophy, an interest he had shared with Terry Riley and Steve Reich since their San Francisco days in the early sixties. At Reich’s January 1968 Phillips Exeter Academy concert, Reich and Murphy both poked fun at Gibson’s biography, in which he described himself as “more than a little familiar with Yoga and Macrobiotics.” Murphy took a swipe at macrobiotics by espousing a dietary philosophy of his own—“he [Murphy] is a meat-eater”—while Reich’s note declares, “he eats meat like Murphy and stands on his head like Gibson.”\textsuperscript{21} Despite the occasional wisecracks, yoga and macrobiotics continued to be a part of Gibson’s performer biographies for another half-decade or more.

\textsuperscript{19} Program dated 27 May 1969, “Programme 1969 Mai,” SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.

\textsuperscript{20} See, for example, Gibson’s biography for Reich’s May 1969 “Anti-Illusion” concert: “Jon Gibson was born 11 March 1940 in Los Angeles. He received his B.A. in music from San Francisco State College in 1963. He was active as a performing member of the University of California at Davis’ New Music Ensemble from 1962 to 1965 and appeared frequently as a performer at the San Francisco Tape Music Center during the same period. Since 1966 he has been located in New York playing a wide variety of new music.” Program dated 27 May 1969, “Programme 1969 Mai,” SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.

\textsuperscript{21} Program dated 14 January 1968, “Programme 1968 Jan,” SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.
Yoga was also important for Reich, as his quip about “standing on his head” indicates. Richard Taruskin has recently observed all of the composers most associated with minimalist music found great personal meaning from religious belief, and that each of them regarded his musical and spiritual endeavors as “dual manifestations of a single impulse.” Yogic meditation, Tibetan Buddhism, and other related branches of Asian religion inform many of the core values of La Monte Young, Terry Riley, and Philip Glass.  

Reich was no exception, though he has become increasingly reticent about his sixties philosophies in more recent decades. Only a single noteworthy reference remains in his *Writings on Music* from 2001: “I believe there are human activities that might be called ‘imitating machines,’ but that are, in reality simply controlling your mind and body very carefully as in yoga breathing exercises. This kind of activity turns out to be very useful physically and psychologically, as it focuses the mind to a fine point.”

Reich had been enthusiastic for psychedelics and yoga when he first moved to Manhattan in the mid-sixties, even actively turning others on to their purported benefits. As late as October 1971, Reich repeated his joke about yogic headstands in a *New York Times* profile written by Donal Henahan: “[Reich] laughs about his yoga studies, but not at them. ‘I’m an

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23 Reich’s effort to distance himself from his earlier political and philosophical radicalism has been treated at length by other scholars. See, for example, Sumanth Gopinath, “Reich in Blackface: *Oh Dem Watermelons* and Radical Minstrelsy in the 1960s,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 5, no. 2 (May 2011): 139–193; Ross Cole, “‘Fun, Yes, but Music?’ Steve Reich and the San Francisco Bay Area’s Cultural Nexus, 1962–65,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 6, no. 3 (August 2012): 315–348.


advanced beginner, I guess you’d say. Oh, I can stand on my head, all right.”26 Yet for Reich
yoga was more than a premise for a good joke. As Henahan’s 1971 profile makes clear, yoga
offered a paradigm of creative self-control and discipline, as well as a basis on which to defend
his control over his music and performers. This control, as it happened, came to be expressed
primarily in his effort to eliminate all traces of improvisation from his music. Reich even spent a
significant portion of his 1974 *Writings About Music* defending his antagonism toward
improvisation from accusations of tyrannical control:

> There’s a certain idea that’s been in the air, particularly since the 1960’s, and it’s been
> used by choreographers as well as composers and I think it is an extremely misleading
> idea. It is that the only pleasure a performer (be it musician or dancer) could get was to
> improvise, or in some way be free to express his or her momentary state of mind. If
> anybody gave them a fixed musical score or specific instructions to work with this was
> equated with political control and it meant the performer was going to be unhappy about
> it. […] But if you know and work with musicians you will see that what gives them joy is
> playing music they love, or at least find musically interesting, and whether that music is
> improvised or completely worked out is really not the main issue. The main issue is
> what’s happening musically; is this beautiful, is this sending chills up and down my
> spine, or isn’t it?27

While Reich’s views cannot be taken to represent anyone’s but his own, they do provide a useful
foil for Gibson’s own interests and choices. Gibson corroborates Taruskin’s observation about
the central role of East Asian philosophy in minimalist music-making. His balancing of
composition with improvisation encapsulated the very questions of freedom and control that so
obsessed Reich in the early seventies. In contrast to Reich, Gibson’s embrace of East-Asian-
inspired meditation and self-control in no way threatened his pursuit of improvisation as a
primary mode of expression. In this respect, Gibson’s philosophical and musical life more

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D13.

27 Reich, *Writings About Music* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design,
1974), 46.
closely resembled that of La Monte Young and Terry Riley—with whom, paradoxically, he associated himself less and less during these years, as we have seen.

In the half-decade before 1970, Gibson had remained unsettled in New York City, taking frequent leaves of absence to pursue performance opportunities farther afield. One of the most familiar of these opportunities Glass’ Film-Makers’ Cinematheque concert in May 1968, when Gibson returned to his hometown of Los Angeles to perform with Brazilian composer and band-leader Moacir Santos; in February 1969, Glass sent Gibson a score entitled Come Back in an attempt to convince him to return to New York.\(^{28}\) The downtown scene in Manhattan had neither the level of activity to sustain his livelihood nor the formality to demand that he stay there permanently. (Recall, from Chapter 1, Landry’s disappointment that Glass had only one concert lined up in 1969.) Gibson explains, “during this time, I was involved with everything down here [in downtown Manhattan] but there really wasn’t that much going on.”\(^{29}\) Gibson left yet again in summer 1969 to live in Brookline, Massachusetts, where he studied with one of the leading proponents of macrobiotics, Michio Kushi. During this period, Gibson lived in a communal house with other macrobiotics students and worked a day-job as a landscaper at a local cemetery. Throughout this residency, he commuted to and from Manhattan for occasional rehearsals with Glass and Reich, especially in the period leading up to their respective concerts at the Guggenheim Museum in January and May of 1970.

Gibson recalls his studies at Brookline as especially fruitful, a time of generating and “incubating” ideas.\(^{30}\) His attention turned to the features of his new soundscape. He noticed with

\(^{28}\) See Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000), 284.

\(^{29}\) Gibson, interview by author, 7 June 2011.

\(^{30}\) Ibid.
considerable interest the sounds of his cemetery groundskeeping job: “They had these blowers, blowing leaves this way and that, and there were four or five of them, blowing. They would create these great drones everywhere and I really loved the sound of that.” Drones had been a prominent feature of his Manhattan world as well: since moving East from California in 1966, Gibson had worked as an assistant to La Monte Young, feeding the elder musician’s collection of turtles and finding himself caught up in the elder musician’s potent mix of drugs, spirituality, and experimental music. This proximity culminated in summer 1970, when Gibson joined Young’s reconstituted Theatre of Eternal Music for a European tour following his Brookline residency. Gibson left Young’s orbit soon thereafter, finding drone-based minimal music insufficient to sustain his own interests. The most enduring legacy of the Brookline cemetery leaf-blowers, in fact, was not their drones at all, but a particular melodic motive that he began to improvise over them: “This little melody came out of that experience actually: [Gibson vocalizes the tune in Example 7]. I don’t know why, but it did.”


Over the next few years, Gibson used this motive as the basis for numerous concert improvisations and as the primary musical feature of Song I, the penultimate piece on his Washington Square Church concert.

31 Ibid.

32 Gibson, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 2 June 2010.

33 Gibson, interview by author, 7 June 2011.
A second musical inspiration arose from amateur music-making in the macrobiotics commune. On the floor below Gibson’s room, several young residents would practice their electric guitars at high volume, repeatedly playing a short, rock-and-roll progression: I – V – bVII – IV, I – V – bVII – IV, etc. “That’s all they knew, you know? I listened to that over and over again and decided I just had to use it.”

And use it he did. The harmonies of *Song II*, which closed the Washington Square Church concert, prominently feature the young rockers’ riff. (A more expanded treatment of *Song I* and *Song II* appear later in this chapter.)

Gibson emerged from his macrobiotics studies in mid-1970 a changed man. He finally decided to turn his attention toward making a life and career in Manhattan:

I felt like I had finally arrived somewhere and that it was time for me to start doing my work more than performing other people’s pieces for the most part and traveling around to these various situations or living in Boston or L.A. […] I immediately started working more consciously and setting up performance dates and having deadlines [for] actual compositions that I would be responsible for.35

The choice to focus on composing reflected a broader desire to establish himself as a serious and grounded New York City musician. At Reich’s May 1970 Guggenheim Museum concert, Gibson’s biographical program note declares for the first time: “He [Gibson] occasionally composes and performs works of his own and is presently deeply involved with the ancient yin/yang philosophy of the extreme orient and its practical application to daily living (Macrobiotics).”36

Gibson’s first notated composition appeared in the weeks after the Guggenheim concert, while he was in Europe for Young’s Theatre of Eternal Music tour:

34 Ibid.

35 Gibson, interview by Ingram Marshall, 22 March 2000, interview 258 a-e, transcript, Oral History of American Music, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

Before I joined up [with] La Monte at St. Paul [France], I went to a little macrobiotic commune in another small village near St. Paul called Entreveau. I had been involved with these macrobiotic people in Boston, and I had met this French woman there who ran this commune, and I wanted to check in with them a few days before I went over to perform with LaMonte.

I went up there and just, I don’t know, getting acclimatized and being in the French thing, I was just walking around in the river beds that were near this village, and I remember working this *Thirties* structure out. Somehow it just came—this idea started to formulate itself. I don’t remember what exactly triggered it, but I do remember this kind of thing, taking the initial notes on it, just there.\(^{37}\)


\(^{37}\) Gibson, interview by Marshall.
30’s—or Thirties as it is sometimes written—testifies to Gibson’s obsessions with charts, numbers, and arithmetical games. Thirties takes the eight factors of 30—1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 15, and 30—as its rhythmic and organizational basis. Gibson constructed eight modules, one for each factor, which feature gradually expanding rhythmic oscillations between two pitches or chords, depending on an instrument’s capabilities. The oscillations effectively decelerate over the course of the composition as the number of repetitions in each pitch or chord increase. Example 8 reproduces Thirties as it appeared in print in 1973.

Riley’s In C is evident here in the liberties Gibson granted performers as they proceeded through the composition:

One performer can still be on [module] (1) while other performers are on (2), (3), (5), (6), and even (30). However, it is necessary to stay together in the sense that everyone must always play the last two beats (the sixteenth-note figure) at the same time at all times. As the piece progresses it is possible to skip sections or go back to previous sections and replay them.³⁸

As an analogue to In C, this flexibility calls to mind the social implications of Riley’s seminal work, especially in comparison to Reich’s defense of control. Robert Carl, for instance, describes recent iterations of Riley’s performance instructions, refined over the work’s many decades of performances, in his 2009 book on In C:

The composer’s voice here [in the instructions to In C] is not that of an authoritative master, or dictator of practice. Rather, it is that of a mentor, advising the performer on the basis of experience and a certain wisdom won over a long time. Riley is careful to allow the performer leeway in the choices made and to preserve his or her autonomy as an individual within the collective. It is very much in the spirit of its time, celebrating both radical individuality and communitarian values.³⁹

Similarly, in his 2005 book on repetitive minimalism Robert Fink describes In C as “at root, an exercise in human relations”:


³⁹ Robert Carl, Terry Riley’s In C (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 60.
Riley’s performance instructions don’t have much in common with the autocratic musical traditions of north Indian (or Young’s SoHo loft, for that matter); what they do resemble are the results of the reigning 1960s liberal assumptions about people management […]. It assumes that employees respond to peer pressure more than authority; that work is as natural a human behavior as play; that most groups are capable of taking responsibility for their own performance; and that well-managed, committed employees will motivate themselves to work together and achieve corporate goals.  

Likewise, Keith Potter notes in his *Four Musical Minimalists* that the impact of Riley’s *In C* depends upon “the extent to which an essentially improvisational ethos governs even a composition in which all the notes are written down.” These comments cast the tensions of freedom and control in political terms and highlight the meaningful opposition between musical improvisation and composition—that is, in the element of choice granted to performers.

*Thirties* was Gibson’s only notated composition for his first two years as an avowed “composer,” and he continued to improvise regularly in various performances. *Thirties* finally received its premiere in summer 1972 at the International Carnival of Experimental Sound, or ICES, in London. This premiere was captured in an audio recording that Gibson eventually included in the 1996 CD re-release of his *Visitations* LP; that recording remains the only publicly available audio trace of the piece. Gibson’s first notated work became better known in its notated form; it was published several times over the following decade, starting with Experimental Music Catalogue’s *Rhythmic Anthology* and the German art magazine

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Interfunktionen, both in 1973. Thirties was later included in the Scores: Anthology of New Music, published in 1981. Gibson displayed the composition as a visual art piece in numerous art exhibitions, both in the notated form shown in Example 8 and in the graphic realization of its factor-based process shown in Figure 8. A copy of Thirties ended up in the famed art collection of Herb and Dorothy Vogel and was eventually donated to the Indianapolis Museum of Art, where it now resides as part of that institution’s permanent collection.


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In the two years between composing and premiering *Thirties*, 1970 and 1972, respectively, Gibson made good on his resolution to perform his own music around New York City. The most visible of these creative outlets included a number of concerts around Manhattan in which Gibson presented his tape pieces from the late sixties. These compositions, we recall, had been created prior to 1970, which is to say, at the time of their creation they did not convince Gibson that he was a legitimate composer. Gibson was one of the first composers featured in Rhys Chatham’s newly formed music program at The Kitchen on 6–7 January 1972, on a pair of concerts that included the premiere presentations of his tape collages, *Visitations* (1968–72) and *Vocal/Tape Delay*; Gibson returned to the Kitchen exactly one year later, reprising *Visitations* alongside *Thirties* and several recently composed pieces.\(^{47}\) Gibson’s two Bleecker Street concerts soon followed, and featured *Thirties, Visitations* (twice), *Vocal/Tape Delay*, and the premiere (and only presentation) of *Radioland*.\(^{48}\) Downtown audiences again heard *Visitations* in late February 1973 at WBAI’s Free Music Store and in mid-December at Phill Niblock’s 224 Centre Street loft.\(^{49}\) These were all highly individualized and solitary pieces that would eventually stand out as wholly uncharacteristic of his general output. This odd and transitional period in Gibson’s

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\(^{48}\) See the brief discussion of this concert in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

career defines the fledgling composer’s lingering presence in Tom Johnson’s collection of reviews, *The Voice of New Music* from 1989.\(^{50}\)

Gibson’s most consequential creative outlets in these years were actually his least visible. They stemmed from his summer 1971 encounter with the dancer Nancy Topf, the woman who would become the Merce Cunningham to his John Cage. Topf was a skilled dancer, trained in classical and modern styles at the Martha Graham School in Manhattan and at the esteemed undergraduate dance program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. As a small child in New York City, she had learned a style of movement study called “eurhythmics” (invented in the early twentieth century by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze) alongside classmate and future downtown performer, Meredith Monk.\(^{51}\) After receiving her Bachelor of Science degree at UW-Madison in 1964, Topf returned to New York to study contemporary dance with pedagogues José Limón and Merce Cunningham.\(^{52}\) Topf especially adored Cunningham’s work, Gibson recalls, and this brought her to the downtown scene in the early seventies, and ultimately into the circle of musicians surrounding Reich. Topf and he met, Gibson recalls, at a Reich ensemble rehearsal:

> I was rehearsing with Steve [Reich], in ’70 or ’71, and she was at one of the rehearsals. She was looking for someone to work with, with music and dance. One of our mutual friends recommended me. So I guess that’s initially how we started out, as a business kind of thing. She was, you know, on the scene as a dancer, a VERY good dancer. […] She was really a very good, [very well] trained dancer. Basically, she was into improvisation. So we started working, you know, seeing if things would work out.\(^{53}\)

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\(^{50}\) Johnson, *The Voice of New Music*.


\(^{52}\) See Melinda Buckwalter, *Composing While Dancing: An Improviser’s Companion* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 185.

\(^{53}\) Gibson, interview by author, 7 June 2011.
Their first public collaboration came in August 1971, at the American Theater Laboratory; Reich himself was likely in attendance, having marked the time and place in his calendar. The program included two named pieces that they had developed together, *Dance/Flute* and *Dance/Logdrum/Flute*. The concert received critical notice from Don McDonagh of the *New York Times* and Doris Hering of *Dance Magazine*. Both reviews capture a profound sense of intimacy fostered by the performance space, by the demure tone of the performance, and by the two performers’ obvious chemistry. While McDonagh admitted being less than impressed by the absence of a clear, strong creative intent behind their experimental improvisations, Hering saw the performance as an expression of collaboration and interaction. McDonagh criticized Topf for her apparent aimlessness and passivity; Hering noted, conversely, Topf and Gibson’s quiet but potent sense of engagement with each other. She also confessed to a sense of alienation, feeling as if she were a voyeur eavesdropping on a romantic, even softly erotic, encounter:

If the wiry complexities of the American Theater Laboratory’s lighting and sound equipment had not been evident and if the metal chairs hadn’t been so hard, one could have imagined the studio to be some faraway field—the kind in which young people love to play on a languid summer’s day. […] The effect was pleasing, somewhat intimate, as though both artists were really playing and dancing for each other. The viewer could stay or leave as he wished. […] When did dancer and accompanist stop? When they were finished. When were they finished? When they stopped. Then they bowed—awkwardly, politely—almost as though they were surprised that people had been there to watch them.”

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54 Reich, Agenda 1971, Steve Reich Sammlung, Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel, Switzerland.

55 Program dated November 1971, composer’s private archives, New York, N.Y.


57 Hering, “Nancy Topf and Jon Gibson.”
In November 1971, six months after the Philip Glass Ensemble performed their first outdoor concert underneath the Brooklyn Bridge, Gibson and Topf held a series of performances in various parks and outdoor spaces around Manhattan. The program for that series appears in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Program, “A Series of Dance and Music Concerts by Nancy Topf and Jon Gibson,” 6–10 November 1971 (courtesy of the composer).
In contrast to the quiet romance of their previous outing, Gibson recalls these performances as “completely ridiculous, too cold, but we did it.”\textsuperscript{58} Don McDonagh was on hand once again for the last concert, which he reviewed for the 12 November \textit{New York Times}. His assessment of Topf and Gibson’s collaboration was now considerably more favorable: “The dancer was willing but attendance was weakened by the cool air, although those who observed Miss Topf and her accompanist Jon Gibson, [sic] were treated to the experience of a real collaboration between artists and their location. […] The pieces of necessity are not transferable and valid only in the places in which they are performed but the process of seeing an alert dancer in rapport with her surroundings has a special pleasure of its own.”\textsuperscript{59} McDonagh’s comments capture the ephemerality of these improvised performances, the spatial and temporal boundedness of the presentations. Since Topf and Gibson’s collaborations were reviewed primarily as dance performances, little or nothing was said about Gibson’s music. McDonagh was right: very little from these concerts survives, presenting certain practical challenges for any consideration of the music heard by their audiences.

Gibson has described in some detail his approach to improvising in these situations. In interviews for this dissertation, for instance, Gibson recalled:

> What I do with improvisation usually is I figure out a few little motifs to work off of, so that it isn’t just blind. Especially when I’m doing something solo. That’s how we [Nancy Topf and I] would work. We would rehearse a lot and I would figure out little tunes that would create directions to play.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Gibson, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 19 January 2011.


\textsuperscript{60} Gibson, interview by author, 7 June 2011.
In program notes from October 1973, Gibson described his approach to *Flute/Dance Improvisation* (a later iteration of the pieces performed at the 1971 parks concerts) in the following manner:

“Flute/Dance Improvisation” is basically a free improvisation between the dancer and the flutist. There are no structures other than the ones each performer arbitrarily sets up for him/herself. The basic procedure is to play off of one another’s actions. In this setting, Nancy and I usually work well together. Generally, I try to restrict my improvisations to two or three pre-determined musical elements which I then expand upon spontaneously while watching Nancy. However, my self-imposed structures are very loose and I like to keep the moment also open for the completely irrational. Improvisations are an unpredictable muse at best.  

Two months later, Gibson expanded upon these comments:

When improvising I attempt to play spontaneous sounds which have a sense of beauty, clarity, unity and logic to them. I begin an improvisation with one or two musical ideas which are then expanded upon in the course of watching and re-acting to Nancy, to myself, and to the environment. It often happens that the ideas I set out to use in an improvisation change dramatically at the immediate impact of the live performing situation.

Here Gibson outlines an approach to improvisation that consists of several defined steps. First, Gibson determined in advance a number of short musical ideas, “motifs,” or “little tunes”—at least one of these originated at the Brookline cemetery, as shown in Example 7. These would not necessarily be written down, but remembered and recalled. Next, Gibson “expanded upon” these ideas in performance, either spontaneously in concert or after having worked out an idea in rehearsal. Gibson refers to these expanding elaborations as “self-imposed structures,” loosely followed and open to spontaneous diversions. The improvisations are at the same time “free” and “structured,” both arbitrary and limited, open to but also restricted by performers’ choices. Gibson would work with and develop the idea, varying its rhythms, disassembling and

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61 Program dated 16 October 1973, composer’s private archives, New York, N.Y.

62 Program dated 7–8 December 1973, composer’s private archives, New York, N.Y.
recombining its elements to produce extended performances. Gibson’s description may be compared to standard definitions of “motivic improvisation” in jazz studies, typically referring to practices from the late fifties and early sixties, or to the “modular improvisations” of early seventies figures such as Roscoe Mitchell, Steve Lacy, and Anthony Braxton. As we shall see, Gibson’s minimalist style owes much to these late jazz saxophonists as to the “four minimalists.”

**Motives, Elaborated**

Gibson’s motivic-jazz-inspired, multi-step approach to improvisation would eventually also define his compositional process. New pieces began as fragments and motives, as with the Brookline cemetery motive in Example 7: “I still use some of those tunes. (I should probably write those down!) They’re just kind of in me and sometimes they come out in other compositions.” To these Gibson would apply various processes of elaboration, fitted to each new composition, which would expand these short tunes would expand to concert length. Some features would be strictly predetermined, especially with regard to pitch and to their sequence as melodies and harmonies; others were left to the performer’s choice, especially rhythms, phrasing, and all expressive indications.

Gibson appears to have stumbled onto these similar multi-step approaches to composition and improvisation at around the same time. They were both solutions to a creative crisis that

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64 Gibson, interview by author, 7 June 2011.
Gibson reached in 1971 to 1972: free improvisation had increasingly become a creative cul-de-sac, a limiting rather than liberating experience. “I wasn’t having a successful time coming up with melodies in the traditional way,” he explained. “I needed some way to generate stuff without inspiration every minute.”\textsuperscript{65} Gibson recalls turning to several key musicians as he sought a way forward in his music. Specifically, Gibson looked to the work of fellow saxophonists Steve Lacy and Anthony Braxton: they too had found free improvisation to be something of a dead-end. All three musicians turned to composition as a means to rejuvenate their performance practices.

Steve Lacy had made a name for himself in the late fifties and early sixties as a saxophonist in bands anchored by figures such as Cecil Taylor, Gil Evans, and Ornette Coleman. By the mid-sixties, however, he had grown weary of the purest (that is, purist) forms of free improvisation, finding that “the music started to sound the same every night. And then it was no longer free.”\textsuperscript{66} In 1965, a new conception began to form for Lacy in 1965; composition, he decided, could provide his performances “the appropriate structures to contain the type of improvisational material we had discovered.”\textsuperscript{67}

The C major scale came right back. I thought I’d never see it again. But when it came back it was wide open with possibilities. We started adding melodies, written things, modes, rhythms. Sometimes it was free, and sometimes it was free not to be free. Limits are very important. Once you know you’re only going to do something for one minute, there’s a certain freedom in that. […] The jazz I like is a mixture of prepared and unprepared. […] The unprepared is also prepared, and the prepared is also unprepared. There are four edges. Improvisation is a tool, not an end in itself. It’s a way of finding music that can’t be found by composing. And composing is a way of finding music that you can’t improvise. Maybe certain geniuses can improvise perfect structures, but in general to really make a language structure you need time to work on it, time to think

\textsuperscript{65} Gibson, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 13 June 2011.


\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 136.
about it and prepare it. And then you can play it in a minute! It’s prepared. And you can play it in an unprepared manner. You can play it different each time, in an improvised manner. This is what [Thelonious] Monk is about: a prepared structure that can be played in an improvised manner and can be elaborated upon improvisation ally. It promulgates improvisation; the tune is not complete without improvisation.\(^{68}\)

For Lacy and Gibson both, the ultimate expression of this new compositional approach to improvisation came in their works for unaccompanied saxophone solos, as Gibson explained to me in interviews:

I liked the idea of the solo saxophone. I was a friend of Steve Lacy, was very taken by him, and his approach to solo sax, so that was inspiration for me to play solo. I made music that would continue him—melodic variations—sort of a language where I could phrase it any way I wanted to, but there was a cohesiveness at the same time.\(^{69}\)

Here Gibson returns to question of control, especially in the face of improvisation’s often paralyzing openness.

I got to the point where I wanted a little more control, plus I liked the idea of just playing solo, which was a real kind of resonance for me, through Steve Lacy and listening to those guys—[Anthony] Braxton—but Lacy was my guy who gave me the courage to do it I think. Plus, that’s what I am: I’m a saxophonist, [playing] a single-line instrument. It’s a particular thing. But I didn’t want to just leave everything to the whim of the moment, and that’s how I came up with this [compositional approach]. I think my real original contribution was these solo pieces that are very structured, they have a real context and structure, but there’s also this open phrasing quality. You create a language and everybody speaks it in a different way. It’s kind of one of my metaphors for that, or calligraphy, or something that’s personal but it’s got a language. There’s a basis.\(^{70}\)

Gibson’s reference to Anthony Braxton is especially telling. In 1969, Braxton made waves in post-bop American jazz with his *For Alto* LP, an album comprised only of unaccompanied solos on the alto saxophone.\(^{71}\) Braxton had developed a rigorously compositional approach to

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 189.

\(^{69}\) Gibson, interview by author, 2 June 2010.

\(^{70}\) Gibson, interview by author, 7 June 2011.

\(^{71}\) Anthony Braxton, *For Alto*, Delmark DS-420 and DS-421, 1968, stereo LP.
improvisation after his own creative crisis. Braxton’s biographer Ronald Radano has written that, at his first solo concert under the auspices of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians in 1967, Braxton had attempted to improvise freely without any guiding reference to harmony, motive, or musical theme. But, Radano summarizes, “he quickly ran out of ideas. Braxton had fallen into the same trap that had encumbered many players before him and that had motivated the AACM’s search for new approaches to improvisation.”\(^72\) In the aftermath of this crisis about free improvisation, Braxton turned in precisely the same direction as Lacy had a few years earlier (although Lacy’s own practice thus far had remained confined to ensemble performance). According to Radano, Braxton realized “if he were to perform successfully without even a rhythm section, he would need to create a new way of organizing his ideas. He set out to devise a method of selecting different materials for each performance that could produce a varied repertoire of compositions.”\(^73\) Although Lacy turned away from unstructured free jazz in the mid-sixties, it was not until he heard Braxton perform his unaccompanied solo compositions in 1970 that he decided to pursue a similar approach. Gibson met Lacy some time in the late sixties, while the latter lived in Paris and performed with the experimental improvisation group Musica Elettronica Viva. He befriended Braxton in 1970 when the improviser-turned-composer spent several months exploring the downtown Manhattan music scene, even sitting in on rehearsals with the Philip Glass Ensemble.\(^74\)


\(^{73}\) Ibid.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 25, 160–61.
Song I and Song II

Gibson reached his own solution to the problem of free improvisation in 1971 or ’72, while on tour with Steve Reich:

I came across the system when I was touring with Steve, one of those early tours I did with him. We were holed up in a hotel in London. I had a couple of days or so. I got a bunch of paper. I was trying to figure some things out, to figure out how to generate some music. […] This was the inspiration that developed: these ways of proceeding, these processes. I always had to start with the melody that I just came up with intuitively. The melodies always seem to [start] with some sort of intuitive idea, or consciously composed thing in a traditional way. Then [I] tr[ied] to figure out a way to spin it out that was interesting and pleasing, or engaging somehow. This was sort of a breakthrough for me that way.75

Gibson also described in program notes how this new approach also informed the formal development of his notated work Song I, composed in 1973 and performed as the penultimate piece on his 1974 Washington Square Church program (the repertoire for that concert guides all of the detailed musical discussion to follow):

Song I is composed around a melodic fragment that I have often used in improvisation with the dancer Nancy Topf, and, in a way, is an attempt to clarify this material and put it in a more stabilized form. It so happens that Song I became a completely set piece with no improvisation involved, placed in an ABA form, with an additive technique used for the expansion of some of its elements.76

The A-sections of Song I feature the “Brookline cemetery” motive shown in Example 7. Song I first introduces this “melodic fragment” as a two-bar phrase consisting of the motive itself, indicated by square brackets, over semi-static drones in the lower parts. The motive alternates with a brief neighboring motion in the lower droning lines (see Example 9).

75 Gibson reference to a London trip with Reich dates the story either to March 1971 or to February 1972; no Gibson composition dates from 1971, so the 1972 date is most likely.

76 Song I was performed as an ensemble work only once in the seventies, at Washington Square Church. These notes were attached to the organ solo version of Song I, which Gibson performed at least seven times from 1974–1976, according to his archived CV. Program notes, undated [given the repertoire, likely associated with Projekt ’74, July 1974], composer’s private archives, New York, N.Y.; Gibson, curriculum vitae.
Once this fragment has been sufficiently repeated, the saxophone and violin engage in a series of “additive expansions,” as shown in Example 10 below. The procedure affects the motive’s rhythmic profile only, constantly shifting its metric accents and sixteenth-note compressions within a consistent ascending-and-descending melodic contour. These displacements render the additive process itself essentially inaudible. (Each line in Example 10 is followed by a return to the material at Rehearsal 1, in Example 9.)
These additive expansions continue at Rehearsal 12, 14, 16, and 18, though for issues of space these are not included here. The return of Section A after a contrasting B-section marks the Song I, according to Gibson, as an “accumulation piece.”  

(Gibson recalls having conceived this central B-section without any reference to formal process: “I just heard it [in my head]. It seemed like a nice thing to do.”  

See Example 12.) All the additive expansions—previously marked by even-numbered rehearsal numbers—return in order without the odd-numbered returns to the opening paired gestures. The selection in Example 11 shows the accumulated expansions and indicates their corresponding sections in the first A-section.

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77 Ibid.

78 Gibson, interview by author, 7 June 2011. The B-section itself subdivides into two parts, when the upper three parts shift from quartal dyads (with one part doubled at the octave), to more dissonant (and inverted) quartal triads (see Example 5b).


The additive processes at work in the A-sections thus appear to document some of Gibson’s improvisational strategies, to “stabilize” and “clarify” musical ideas that he had explored in
improvisation. These processes resemble Philip Glass’ signature additive techniques beginning with his \( I+I \) in 1967. Glass’ *Music in Fifths* (1969), for example, follows a similar ascending-descending melodic contour in a diatonic modality, expanding (and contracting) its primary melodic motive by adding (and subtracting) small rhythmic units, as shown in Example 13.

Gibson’s program notes to *Song II* refer to a second process, with very different formal implications, as “additive.” This process found its first expression in Gibson’s *Melody I* (1973), which takes an original 36-note melodic sequence (shown in Example 14a) that is slowly revealed, cumulatively and note-by-note, in repeated modules until the full sequence appears at its end. The first six modules of *Melody I* as they appear in manuscript are shown in Example 14b.

a:


Rarely content to let a process proceed without interruption or tangent, Gibson inserts several occasional modules that effectively retrace the additive processes up to that point before continuing with further expansion. Such a digression appears at Module (9), as shown in Example 15.

b:

Gibson premiered *Melody I* in a series of dance collaborations with Nancy Topf in June 1973, as an accompaniment to her *Circle Solo*. Peter Levitan reviewed the performance for *Dance Magazine*: yet again, no mention was made of Gibson’s music.\(^{79}\)

*Song II*, the final piece on the Washington Square Church program, applies this gradually additive process to a 33-chord harmonic sequence derived from Gibson’s guitar-playing housemates in Brookline. The full sequence as it appears in the composition’s final additive expansion appears in Example 16: the first line of sublinear lettering indicates the harmonies, with lower-case representing minor; the second line of sublinear lettering, in all capital letters and parentheses, indicates the manner in which the composer divided the overall progression into separate modules. The rock-harmony sequence appear as Modules (A) and (B). Each additional component receives its own modular designation, shown below the chord labels.

![Example 16: Gibson, *Song II* (1974), full chord sequence.](image)

Each successive expansion replays all prior modules, then adds another, resulting in the process shown in Table 3. Column 17 deserves special note: as we saw in module 9 of *Melody I*, one of Gibson’s favorite strategies for offsetting the rigor and predictability of his processes involves

\(^{79}\) Peter Levitan, “Nancy Topf and Tina Croll and Company, American Theater Laboratory, NYC, June 8-10, 1973,” *Dance Magazine* (September 1973): [73].
inserting a variable element at consistent points. In the case of Song II, this element, which simply oscillates between B-minor and A-minor, results in two disruptions to the expanding additive process: at (H), which presents its accumulated but incomplete sequence twice, first with B-minor and then with A-minor at the seventeenth harmonic position; and in (U) and (V), which offers the full harmonic sequence twice, first with A-minor then with B-minor.

Table 3: Gibson, Song II, harmonic sequence, additive strategy.

|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| (A) | G |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (B) | " | D | F | C | G | D | F | C |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (C) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | e | b |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (D) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | D |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (E) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | G | D | F |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (F) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | e |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (G) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | C |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (Ha)| " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | b |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (Hb)| " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | a |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (I) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | C |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (J) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | b | D |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (K) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | a | F |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (L) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | b | G | b |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (M) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | a | C |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (N) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | b | a |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (O) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | a | F |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (P) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | b | G | e |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (Q) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | a | C |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (R) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | b | D |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (S) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | a | b |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (T) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | b | G |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (U) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | a | A | G |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| (V) | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | " | b |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Whereas Song I’s formal procedures could be compared to Glass’ signature techniques, Gibson’s “additive” process in Song II bears a stronger resemblance to a form that Frederic Rzewski was using at this time, which he called “the squaring method,” in his well-known early
works, *Les Moutons da Panurge* (1968) and *Coming Together* (1971). Bernard Gendron explains Rzewski’s squaring method in the following manner:

Using an algorithm which he calls the “squaring method,” an additive and then subtractive procedure, [Rzewski’s] *Les Moutons* directs the musicians to build up the melodic sequence of 65 notes which constitutes the score by initially playing the first note alone followed by the first two notes [etc.] till they complete the sequence and then proceeding backwards by subtracting one note at a time from the sequence.

The first 25 pitches of Rzewski’s melody appear in Example 17.


According to Gendron, Rzewski used his squaring method again in his *Jefferson* (1970), for solo soprano and piano, and in the two-part work *Coming Together* (1971–72), for indeterminate instrumentation. These pieces appeared during Rzewski’s brief residency in New York City, recently discussed in some detail by Gendron, during which one of his many collaborations

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80 Gendron calls this process “additive-subtractive.” See Bernard Gendron, “Rzewski in New York (1971–1977),” *Contemporary Music Review* 29, no. 6 (December 2010): 557–574. Gibson’s description of the work as an “accumulation piece” may also obliquely refer to Trisha Brown’s dance piece, *Accumulation*, from 1971, which follows the same gradually additive, accumulative process that characterize Gibson’s *Song II*. Though Brown was certainly in the same community as Gibson, it is not clear whether Gibson knew of this work or took any inspiration from it.

included performing keyboards alongside Gibson in the Philip Glass Ensemble. Gibbons recorded *Coming Together* for Rzewski in April 1973, just two months before premiering his own *Melody I* at American Theater Laboratory in New York. Gibson’s *Song II*, which resembles the opening expanding half of Rzewski’s method without the closing contraction, followed soon thereafter. Just as Gibson’s decision to pursue composition found inspiration in his friendships with Braxton and Lacy, the correlations between his additive techniques in *Song I* and *Song II* and those of Glass and Rzewski highlight the web of affiliation and association between musicians.

*Cycles* and *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*

*Song I* and *Song II*, which closed the composer’s Washington Square Church concert, are ultimately atypical of Gibson’s compositional style in the seventies. They are carefully worked out in every detail, with little to no room left for improvisation or other performance choices, except the number of repetitions in each piece’s modular bars. These are perceptible processes: the devices that inform the act of composition are also clearly part of their aesthetic effect. By contrast, the concert’s opening piece, *Cycles*, consists of a simple seven-note melody transposed to four SATB-like parts that proceed independently and at different paces, according to the choice and preference of the performer. In this way, *Cycles* looks back once again to the musical and social values of Riley’s *In C*, with its blend of improvisational freedom and compositional control.

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Although it is unclear which of the four voices is the original and which are the transpositions, the title to the work appears to refer to the sequential nature of the original melody: he described it as a “melodic cycle,” and its multiple performance in several registers as “rotations.”\textsuperscript{83} The apparent homophony of the score, shown in Example 18, is deceptive: the seven vertical pitch collections cannot be analyzed as a series of triads with added seconds. Because the performer plays through the four lines independently, tones from each chord mix and combine, resulting in dense and subtly changing constellations of “white-note” tones in unplanned, pandiatonic harmonies.

The title may also appear to refer to a special feature of the listening experience within the particular musical space of Washington Square Church. Gibson has written that \textit{Cycles} “does not deal directly with rhythm, but different rhythms and other undetermined sounds do occur in the incidental collisions and beatings of tones and harmonics which are the result of dissonant intervals, imperfect tuning, and the idiosyncrasies of any particular organ upon which the piece is performed.”\textsuperscript{84} This highly acoustical concept of the work, and its emphasis on the listening experience in the moment of performance, recalls similar projects among Gibson’s affiliates in New York, including Glass’ interests in “presence” (discussed in Chapter 2), Alvin Lucier’s \textit{I Am Sitting in a Room} (1969), and Young’s \textit{Dream House} installations.

Parallels may also be drawn between Gibson’s \textit{Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet}, written in the early months of 1974, and Reich’s \textit{Clapping Music} from two years before, written during Gibson’s final tour with Reich’s ensemble. The similarities are obvious but ultimately superficial. \textit{Clapping Music} offered Reich a new formal process to replace his well-worn phase-

\textsuperscript{83} Program notes, undated [likely July 1974], composer’s private archive, New York, N.Y.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
shifting methods, and it provided his ensemble with a piece that could be performed without any gear. In contrast, Gibson’s piece explores the central tensions of his musical life in the seventies, namely how “intuitive improvisation acts within a structured numerical system.”\textsuperscript{85} *Rhythm Study* presents a series of polyrhythmic textures featuring a performer’s three sounding parts: the voice, speaking the vocable, “doot” (one might also compare this to Reich’s *Drumming*); the hands, clapping; and the feet, stamping.\textsuperscript{86} *Rhythm Study* is performed not from a traditionally notated score, but from a nonstandard chart written on graph paper, as seen in Example 19.

\textsuperscript{85} David Park Curry, performing notes to 30’s, in Rainer Crone and Carl Andre, et al., *Numerals, 1924–1977* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1978), [29].

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
Like *Thirties, Rhythm Study* is based on mathematical ratios and factors: here, the four factors of 6 form the basis for even rhythmic patterns, with zero as a full-bar rest. The first seven modules (reading down the left-hand column) feature the successive entry of the voice and feet over a steady pulse in the hands, both accelerating from 0 to 3 attacks per bar. The final three modules mirror this opening acceleration with a homorhythmic deceleration, from 3 to 1, in all the parts. The middle sixteen modules appear to randomly combine rhythms in all parts, though certain patterns do emerge under close scrutiny, as shown in Table 4: 6-based patterns remain constant in one part or another throughout, passing from hands to voice in one overlapping module, number 10; from voice to feet in two overlapping modules 15 and 16; and from feet back to all the parts in three overlapping modules, starting at 22 and reaching the greatest rhythmic saturation in 24. During each period with sustained sixes in a single part, all combinations of 3 and 2 are pursued in the other parts, with a cross-exchange of values occurring around the midpoint. Table 4 illustrates these relationships in some detail.

Table 4. Gibson, *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*, numerical relationships between parts.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Modules:</th>
<th>(1)</th>
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<th>(13)</th>
<th>(17)</th>
<th>(21)</th>
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</table>

Table 2 emphasizes the non-randomness, even orderliness, involved in *Rhythm Study*; this observation rebuts certain points made in notes accompanying its 1977 publication, written by art historian David Park Curry, who refers to Gibson’s “random choice and distribution of numerical
combinations.\textsuperscript{87} Far from random, \textit{Rhythm Study} (almost) systematically explores all combinations of 2’s and 3’s against constant 6’s in each of the three parts.

Yet for all its apparent rigor and predictability, \textit{Rhythm Study} remains an improvisational piece. Curry’s notes to \textit{Rhythm Study} describe the composer’s balanced values of compositional structure and improvisational openness: “For Gibson, an additive system is not a formal check to spontaneity. Rather, the system provides boundaries within which musical improvisation can transpire.”\textsuperscript{88} The notes explain in detail the freedoms permitted to the performer:

The performer’s opportunity to improvise lies in Gibson’s instructions that each measure in the system can be repeated as many times as the performer desires before he goes on to the next. After measure [or module] 27 has been played, the performer is free to skip at random from measure to measure: 15 to 22 to 3 etc. This lasts from “six to seven minutes,” not a set period. It is rapidly performed (eighth note = 252) without breaks between measures. The audience perceives only that a rhythmic system is being employed. Even with the score in hand it would be difficult to read along, let alone detect a mistake. Differences in performers’ voices (no particular pitch is indicated for the “doots”) and random repetition mean that the piece sounds different at each performance, investing the music with a quality of freshness and giving it infinite possible variations.\textsuperscript{89}

One again, as in \textit{Thirties}, the performer works his or her way through the score at will, fragmenting and reassembling Gibson’s score, so disrupting the composer’s creative processes that the listener—even one following the score closely—might find it impossible to perceive them. In contrast to \textit{Song I} and \textit{Song II}, the listening experience in \textit{Rhythm Study} is defined less by the processes that formed the work than by performer’s randomizing choices in concert.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
Solo for Saxophone

Solo for Saxophone, the last work to be composed, acted as the functional centerpiece of the Washington Square Church concert. For Gibson himself, this was the most consequential work of the evening, with long-term implications for his work through the end of the decade. He based the work on a precompositional melody, which he elaborated through various processes into a full-length composition. Such an approach relied less on motivic development than on its thematic counterpart, working with a basic musical unit many times larger than that which had governed previous works. Solo for Saxophone takes a major turn toward complexity, concealing its formal structures under multiple layers of systematic procedure. Little is left to spontaneous choice.

The precompositional material is an original 32-note melody, derived from the whole-tone scale, as shown in Example 20 (transposed down an octave for legibility).


Gibson’s elaboration strategy in Solo for Saxophone involves arpeggiating each note in the precompositional melody using six tertian chords of various size, as his program notes explain:

The chordal patterns are built on alternative major and minor thirds and range from one note to six notes. The pattern always begins at the sixth degree of the chord and a two note chord always gives a minor third, a three note chord always gives a major triad, a four note chord gives a minor seventh, a five note chord gives a minor ninth, and a six note chord gives a minor eleventh chord. Example:
Gibson’s statement, “always begins at the sixth degree of the chord,” is confusing in at least two ways: first, “degree” usually refers to individual pitches in a scale not a chord; second, a “sixth degree” would seem to occur only in the harmony that contains six members. His explanation can best be understood, however, by working backwards through his notated example. Taking the six-note chord furthest to the right as the model, the “sixth degree” refers to the uppermost element of the chord—in this case, the pitch G5. In each previous chord, the topmost chord member is the same—once again, G5—thus they all begin “at the sixth degree” and proceed downward. Although focusing attention on the “sixth degree” of each chord is misleading, it is nevertheless crucial to understanding Gibson’s elaboration strategy: each chord is transposed so that the “sixth degree,” or highest chord member, corresponds to a note in the original melody.

We require an additional step between the precompositional melody and its arpeggiation, one that Gibson neglects to describe in his program notes. Each note in the original melody is followed by its parallel a perfect fourth below, expanding thirty-two notes to sixty-four, as seen in Example 21 (transposed an octave lower, once again).

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90 Program notes, undated [but likely July 1974], composer’s private archives, New York, N.Y.
The opening passage of *Solo for Saxophone* appears in Example 22. Asterisks mark the first six members of the expanded melody from Example 21—B, F#, A, E, B, F#—and the sublinear numbers refer to the size of the arpeggiated chord. The rhythms applied to these arpeggiations are arbitrary. Gibson’s slurs correspond to the governing chord-sizes.


The sublinear harmonic values in Example 22 comprise the following numerical sequence:

{ 1, 3, 2, 5, 4, 6 }

This six-member sequence forms the kernel from which all other harmonies derive. Moving forward in the composition past Example 22, this “kernel” reverses itself, doubling the sixes (the second six is marked by an asterisk):

*  

{ 1, 3, 2, 5, 4, 6, 6, 4, 5, 2, 3, 1 ... }
Then the “kernel” repeats, eliding the ones:

\{ 1, 3, 2, 5, 4, 6, 6, 4, 5, 2, 3, 1, 3, 2, 5, 4, 6 \ldots \}

When the “kernel” reverses itself again, instead of doubling the sixes, the would-be second six (indicated again by an asterisk) decreases by one:

\*\{ 1, 3, 2, 5, 4, 6, 6, 4, 5, 2, 3, 1, 3, 2, 5, 4, 6, 5, 4, 5, 2, 3, [1] \ldots \}

This decrease (as we shall see in Table 5) marks one of the composition’s variables, similar to the harmonic changes in Song II, shown in Column 17 of Table 1. The final 1 in the 23-member sequence above elides once again with the return of the “kernel,” and the process continues.

These 22 values (minus the final elided 1) elaborate each note in the expanded original melody to form Section (A) of *Solo for Saxophone*, the first of the composition’s sixteen lettered sections, shown in Example 23.

Additional complexities lurk. The twenty-two harmonies of every lettered section can be divided to form two 11-member subsequences, producing the chart in Table 5. This table shows not only the numerical continuities throughout the entire work, but also a series of regular changes at the seventh position of every sequence. Once again, such caprices are never fully explained in program notes, which focus, often cursorily, on describing strictly ordered processes.

Gibson’s program notes also fail to reference an additional caprice—contextually speaking, a particularly ecstatic one: at regular intervals throughout the work, a large gestural flourish appears that fits into none of Gibson’s precompositional schemes. They are the only ascending arpeggiations in the whole piece. The first of these may be seen in Example 23, indicated by the bracketed figure, “[+ 7 = 13].” The flourish returns every three lettered sections; the pattern is broken at Section (M), but returns at Section (P).

Gibson’s program notes thus hide as much as they reveal, even if this obfuscation is not intentional. The complexity of his compositional processes in the latter half of the seventies, which follows and even exceeds that of Solo for Saxophone, effectively obscured the strict and orderly processes he described in his notes. Compounding this confusion, the composer tended to depart from his musical scripts whenever his mood dictated. This was especially true in his “change-ringing” pieces, such as Equal Distribution I and II (1977 and 1978, respectively) Call (1978), and the five entries in his Criss Cross series (1979). In each of these works, Gibson subjected precompositional melodic sequences to orderly processes of rearrangement in a manner similar to the “plain hunt” of the British change-ringing tradition. The precise manner in which these processes are developed is beyond the scope of the present chapter, but suffice it to say, these works continue trends begun with Solo for Saxophone in their combination of almost
inscrutable complexity tempered by elements of variability and impromptu alteration within
works for unaccompanied solo saxophone.

Table 5. Gibson, *Solo for Saxophone*, sequence of harmonies by chord-size.

<table>
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Note: italics indicate deviations from the sequence.
Conclusion: Seeds and Flowers, Misread and Unheard

Joan La Barbara’s review of the Washington Square Church concert offers an audience member’s perspective on the event. “‘New Music by Jon Gibson’ was a one-man show for 1/2 of the concert,” she wrote, “which proved to be successful for the composer and enjoyable for the audience.”91 She assessed Cycles as “an interesting half-hour exploration of the possibilities of the pipe organ,” which produced an effect of “waves of sound weaving around each other, sound in space with ample time to experience it.” Rhythm Study, she wrote, was “joyful body music that delighted the audience.” La Barbara closed by declaring that the evening “had a lovely, soft effect and sent the audience away high and smiling.”92

More intriguing was her attempt to grapple with Solo for Saxophone, reconciling her listening experience with the graphic on the program’s cover, as seen in Figure 7. Reading from left to right, top to bottom, this visual realization of the formal conception underlying Solo for Saxophone depicts 11-unit lines delimited by a 32-unit width, corresponding to the composition’s operative ratios:

Gibson’s soprano sound was clear, clean and earthy on “Solo for Saxophone,” played on both sides of intermission, creating a lovely sound continuity. The piece consisted of rippling descending arpeggi with occasional ascending ones. I misread the program note and thought the diagram (diagonal columns of horizontal lines of varying lengths and on various levels) was a graphic score. I read the “score” from top to bottom, following the arpeggi down the columns, hearing the shift from one column to the next in the different starting pitch for the next arpeggio, with the lengths of the lines determining the lengths of the notes. The diagram also works well as a wonderful picture of the sound.93

La Barbara’s misreading indicates the degree to which Gibson’s compositional processes, despite his effort to describe them, remained imperceptible. While she admitted misinterpreting the

91 La Barbara, “New Music by Jon Gibson.”

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.
diagram, the final line of the passage quoted above provides no indication that La Barbara had been able to improve her understanding. The relationship likely would have been clearer the following year, after Gibson changed the composition’s title to 32/11.

To conclude, then, it is worth considering John Rockwell’s first *New York Times* review of Gibson’s music in May 1975. This followed a concert at The Kitchen that featured the newly renamed 32/11 as an ensemble work. Rockwell, writing from the highest journalistic pedestal in the city was not enthusiastic about the structuralist piece:

Mr. Gibson was at one time much involved with indeterminacy, but his latest pieces are highly structured (the one exception was an overlong, mostly improvised duet for flute and trombone [*Untitled* (1974–75)] that made one wish that it, too, had been more strictly shaped).

Overt structuralism—the kind you can actually hear, as opposed to just read about—has been a part of SoHo avant-gardism for more than a decade now. At Mr. Gibson’s best, as in the more complex parts of “Melody,” [*Melody IV* (1975)] there was a real fascination in hearing the players work through a process and the music gradually shift.

But systems in music have generally been codifications of established practice rather than rules to compose by, and the best of the recent structuralists have allowed their systems to give their music integrity without becoming trapped in mechanics. Too much of Mr. Gibson’s music, for all the prettiness of the instrumentation, the skill of the execution and even the cleverness of the systems themselves, sounded dull and automatic as he put it through its plodding paces.94

Rockwell’s review broadly criticized Gibson’s surface aesthetics as “overlong,” “dull,” and “plodding.” Yet his more pointed critique struck at the composer’s status as a legitimate downtown composer, especially in his oblique reference to “overt structuralism—the kind you can actually hear, as opposed to just read about.” Whereas La Barbara appears to have been untroubled by her misreading of the program notes, Rockwell interpreted his inability to connect Gibson’s notes to his listening experience as a indication that the composer stood outside the mainstream of the SoHo avant-garde. Though Rockwell does not name the composition, it would

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seem that the object of his less-than-favorable evaluation was $32/11$. It was the only work on the program that matches his critique. (Besides *Untitled* and *Melody IV*, both of which he addressed directly, the concert included the perceptibly additive processes of *Song II*.)

Rockwell’s critique thus defined legitimacy in terms very similar to those laid out by Gibson’s former collaborator, Steve Reich, in his late-sixties manifesto, “Music as a Gradual Process.” “I am interested in perceptible processes,” Reich memorably wrote, “I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music. [...] I don’t know any secrets of structure that you can’t hear.” Reich later came to see “Music as a Gradual Process” as the product of the sixties, distancing himself in hindsight (as he tended to do) from the radicalism of his earlier claims: “that certainly doesn’t describe my music the way it did in 1968,” Reich explained in 1986. Another twenty years later, Reich described the essay as “accurately reflecting all the music that I had written before 1968.” Yet as late as 1975, and despite what he described as “prettiness,” “skill,” and “cleverness,” Rockwell still felt compelled to indict Gibson’s compositional structures for being suspiciously clever and occult. This, he declared, had no place in the SoHo avant-garde.

Tom Johnson mounted a defense of Gibson’s approach in his review of the same concert in the *Village Voice*. Nowhere does he address Rockwell’s criticism directly, yet as paired reviews, they embody the two opposing sides of a single debate, with a lingering anxiety over serial music’s Gnosticism and Gibson’s musical processes sitting squarely at its center. Johnson

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98 Reich, interview by Joshua Klein, *Pitchfork.com*
opened his column by establishing that the concerns of a composer differ from those of the general audience member: “Most listeners probably don’t worry much about whether a piece of music is logical, but for composers this is one of the most basic problems.” Composers, Johnson suggests, concern themselves with other questions: “Does one believe fully in one’s intuitive processes? Or is it preferable to rely on some higher logic outside oneself? Isn’t it awfully egocentric to feel that one is totally self-reliant and that one’s personal intuitions can produce something profound? But isn’t it a kind of cop out to resort to number systems, dice, or logical formulas?” Johnson’s review casts such questions against the foil of serialism—a foil that Rockwell leaves unstated, though it is certainly implied—and argues for the continued value of such creative structures.

For a long time, most new concert music was written with the help of systems. Most of the composers were caught up in post-Webern serial systems along with Stravinsky, Boulez, and Stockhausen, while many others leaned toward random selection systems with Cage, or statistical systems with Xenias. Gradually the pendulum began swinging the other way. Stockhausen systematically denounced all his systems, while Carter and Crumb, who never cared for any systems, now seem to have emerged as the most generally venerated composers in this country, at least for the moment.

It is quite apparent that the 12-tone system will never become anybody’s lingua franca, and it is doubtful that statistical or random selection processes will ever become very popular among composers. But it would be foolhardy to think that music will not eventually drift back to some sort of logical systems. The beauty of numbers and logical truths is just too tempting, and the human mind is far too ingenious not to be able to find new ways of making music out of them.

Among younger composers who have returned to tonal styles, one can already see new kinds of systems emerging, and in most cases the logic of their music is far easier to hear than any 12-tone row ever was.

Jon Gibson, Johnson declared, was among these young composers who approached composition methodically and rigorously, yet whose music proved highly accessible in performance. The

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100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.
egregious aspect of serialism, he implies, was not its reliance on systems or structures, but how unpleasant the music sounded in performance. Johnson defended Gibson on precisely the grounds on which Rockwell attacks him. Even if rigorous structures and processes exist only at the level of the composing process and cannot be heard to guide the listening experience, they may yet hold some value. Johnson attempts to defend and restore Gibson’s structuralism within the experimental tradition, “SoHo avant-gardism” included. Johnson even enlists Reich and Glass as fellow members of this new complexity.

This appears to be the debate to which Tim Page addressed his 1996 defense of Gibson’s music against accusations of didacticism, rigor, and cerebralism. For all the complexity of Gibson’s compositional processes on display at Washington Square Church in May 1974, his music’s sound remained consonant and diatonic. It had not always been so: as recently as December 1973, his tape pieces had been characterized by extremes of complexity and dissonance, prompting Tom Johnson, a critic well familiar with extremes of the musical avant-garde, to describe his *Visitations* in the *Village Voice* as “some of the densest music I have ever heard.” By contrast, as we have seen, *Solo I* and *Cycles* explored diatonic, “white-note” pitch spaces, while tertian chords dominated the harmonic palette of both *Solo II* and *Solo for Saxophone*. Even *Rhythm Study* eschewed syncopation in favor of evenly divided units of six pulses. Neither Gibson’s rigorous processes nor his randomizing and unpredictable flights of whimsy had the effect of obscuring the basic accessibility of these raw musical materials. This is the flower of Tim Page’s botanical metaphor: Gibson’s compositional concern, beginning in 1974, focused not only on balancing rigor and whimsy in the structuring of content, but also in keeping that content sensuous and accessible.

102 Johnson, “Getting Fogbound in Sound.”
Rockwell’s review of Gibson in the *New York Times* and Johnson’s rebuttal in the *Village Voice* provide examples of critics participating in the formation of community. Far from disinterested observers, both writers represented the downtown scene, both working both to define what it was and to specify who could be included in it. Such activities correspond to Bruno Latour’s notion of a spokesperson: one who speaks for a group, who defines its boundaries, and who articulates what it is not.103 Moreover, it was no accident that Joan La Barbara’s first review for the *SoHo Weekly News* covered Gibson’s Washington Square Church concert. She and Gibson were fellow performers, and friends. Her approach to reviewing the concert was enthusiastic and non-judgmental, a critical disposition that characterized her approach over the two years of her tenure with the *SoHo Weekly News*. In chapter five we will further explore how downtown community defined itself in the pages of New York newspapers.

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Like so many of her colleagues, vocalist Joan La Barbara occupied numerous roles as a downtown musician. Most relevant for the current discussion, La Barbara became one of the last performers to defect from Steve Reich and Musicians to the Philip Glass Ensemble. Her entry into the latter group also marked a conspicuous change in Glass’ style at mid-decade, namely the inclusion of an amplified voice as a permanent part of the ensemble. Her amplified voice, equal to the group’s saxophones and keyboards, embodied a creative principle she had begun exploring in her own work as a composer and performer since the late sixties—namely, the treatment of “the voice as instrument.” This project continued to develop during her participation in the Philip Glass Ensemble from 1974 to 1976, reaching its fullest fruition in autumn 1976—when La Barbara felt compelled to leave Glass’ group in order to focus on her own work. This period culminated in a series of concerts and a recording on Wizard Records in 1977, all of which carried the manifesto-like title, *Voice is the Original Instrument.*¹ Much of La Barbara’s most original creative work postdates her time working with the Philip Glass Ensemble, and thus lies outside the scope of the current project. Yet, simultaneous to her composing and performing in the mid-decade, La Barbara also began writing about music in the downtown scene as a concert reviewer for the community paper *SoHo Weekly News.* In this role she spoke both for herself and for her peer musicians, giving voice to the community’s developing sense of itself.

¹ Joan La Barbara, *Voice is the Original Instrument*, Wizard RVW2266, 1976, stereo LP.
The notion of a composer as a music critic is nothing new. Notable precedents include many of the most familiar names in 19th-century European music—Berlioz, Schumann, Weber, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky—and extend to such early 20th-century figures as Debussy. On the other side of the Atlantic, one of the earliest American art-music composers, William Henry Fry, wrote for several large city newspapers, including the *New York Tribune* in the 1840s and ‘50s, even as orchestras and conductors regularly presented his symphonies and operas.\(^2\) The dean of American composer-critics was Virgil Thomson, who served as chief music critic at the *New York Herald-Tribune* beginning in the late 1930s. Thomson, along with his editor Geoffrey Parsons, hired many composers as assistant critics in the interwar and post-war years, and their successors continued the practice until the *Herald-Tribune* folded in the late sixties.\(^3\) In more recent years, however, journalistic ethical standards have mandated increasing distance between critics and the musical communities that comprise their beat.

The following discussion of La Barbara’s career in the mid-seventies thus focuses on the two roles embedded in the term “composer-critic”: on the one hand, a musical experimentalist, performing for Reich and Glass and others while improvising and composing music of her own; and on the other, a music critic covering Reich and Glass and their peers in the downtown scene, for a newspaper whose distribution covered very scene. In these competing yet complementary roles, La Barbara offers an alternative perspective on the criticism surrounding the downtown world, outside of the Johnson-Rockwell paradigm that has dominated previous historical treatments of this music at this time and in this place. It begins with La Barbara’s work as a

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\(^3\) Ibid., 191.
musician, including her path into and out of the Philip Glass Ensemble, establishing her as a composer and performer well connected within the downtown world.

La Barbara as Downtown Musician

According to her autobiographical writings, La Barbara’s earliest vocal experiments began during her studies at New York University starting in 1968. She had just abandoned her classical vocal studies at Syracuse, much to her parents’ dismay, and she began a music education major at NYU as a gesture of appeasement. Her passion, however, was for jazz and non-Western music. She actively pursued opportunities to experiment with musicians outside of the Western classical tradition—a path familiar to many avant-gardists of the sixties:

I began to work with jazz musicians, working with one instrument at a time, asking individual instrumentalists to play long tones on single pitches as I tried to imitate that sound. It was a slow process: listening to the sound, analyzing the timbre, and then sounding with the voice, analyzing again to judge how close I came to that timbre, listening again and sounding again, gradually retraining my thinking as well as my voice. I also became fascinated with the ways instrumentalists were extending their sounds, stretching the boundaries of what was the established technique. I didn’t hear other singers doing that, and I wondered why. I had heard recordings of Cathy Berberian, of course, and also listened to jazz scat singing. But I wanted to discover for myself what my voice could do, so I started improvising, alone and with other musicians.

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4 La Barbara, “Voice is the Original Instrument,” Contemporary Music Review 21, no. 1 (2002): 36. La Barbara went by her maiden name Lotz during her NYU studies and for a time was engaged to marry the violinist Paul Zukofsky. Richard Kostelanetz mentions her in a 23 March 1969, New York Times profile of Zukofsky: she is “his pretty strawberry blonde fiancée Joan Lotz,” who testifies to the violinist’s curmudgeonly and ungenerous attitude toward other musicians’ performances. Their engagement dissolved soon after. See Richard Kostelanetz, “Fiddler (and Drumbeater) of the New, New Music,” New York Times Magazine, 23 March 1969, 124, 126. Joan Lotz later married jazz vibraphonist Peter La Barbera in the early seventies and adopted his last name. Although the marriage lasted only 10 months before being annulled, Joan continued to perform under her married name and chose to keep it, changing the spelling slightly. La Barbara, email correspondence with author, 27 July 2011.

5 La Barbara, “Voice is the Original Instrument,” 36.
In these sessions, La Barbara developed her own techniques for imitating instruments, which would form the foundation of her experimental practice for decades to come.

La Barbara found one of her most fruitful outlets at the Free Music Store concerts—not a brick-and-mortar building, but an ongoing experimental music festival—jointly sponsored by radio station WBAI (the New York affiliate of a national network of arts-friendly stations known as Pacifica Radio) and The Public Theater’s New York Shakespeare Festival. The Free Music Store blended experimental music, jazz and free improvisation with classical chamber music standards of the Western tradition in a hip, anarchic, non-hierarchical setting. La Barbara’s participation in the series put her in touch with its directors, composers Eric Salzman and Michael Sahl, as well as other influential downtown music figures: “On Thursday nights, jazz and New Music musicians would gather for improve sessions. Anthony Braxton, Frederic Rzewski, Garrett List, Steve Lacy, I, and various others would play for hours.”6 In the period that La Barbara was most active there, from 1968 to 1971, WBAI and The Public held their Free Music Store concerts alternately in the radio station’s studios (a deconsecrated Swedish Lutheran church on East 62nd Street) and in Public Theater’s Martinson Hall at 425 Lafayette Street in the East Village, a seatless, “black box” performance space four blocks west of Washington Square Park and a regular site for nontraditional performances of all types.

Little has been said about the Free Music Store, despite its importance to the downtown scene. The Philip Glass Ensemble performed there on 10 November 1972, in a concert broadcast live on WBAI; Jon Gibson performed and presented his tape pieces there on 10 and 24 February 1973.7 The most informative discussion of the institution—often referred to as an ongoing

6 Ibid., 36–37.

7 Dan Dryden, email communication with author, 31 May 2011.
“music festival”—came in a 28 February 1971, *New York Times* profile by music critic Donal Henahan describing the unhappy end of the partnership between WBAI and the Public Theater.\(^8\) Henahan, who had championed experimental programs like the Electric Circus’s late-sixties “Electric Ear” series, showed particular affection for the Free Music Store.\(^9\) He opened his article by declaring it “an advance unit of Utopia” and “a miraculous spigot whose location has changed a few times but whose flow manages to be unstanchable [sic].”\(^10\) Henahan quoted Salzman, the Free Music Store’s director, who described the institution as “a giant salon, really, […] more like the pop music situation in some ways. We’ve had people climbing in the windows for Renaissance music. We’ve had to lock the doors to keep the overflow out.”\(^11\) Salzman saw this breezy anarchy as crucial for reforming serious music in New York: “It’s closer to a healthy cultural situation than what goes on at the [New York] Philharmonic. You’ve just gotta see a bunch of hippies standing up and cheering a Brahms horn trio.”\(^12\) Such comments provide a glimpse of the alternative environment that La Barbara preferred to her more formal, conventional programs of study at Syracuse and New York University: fearless experimentation, collaboration, and rich spirit of community, suffused with unruly creativity.

Michael Sahl, one of the more prominent figures at the Free Music Store, was a composer with a distinguished pedigree: a Princeton graduate (MFA, 1957) who had studied with Roger

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\(^10\) Henahan, “They’ve Gotta Be Free.”

\(^11\) Ibid.

\(^12\) Ibid.
Sessions, Milton Babbitt, and Aaron Copland; a Creative Associate at the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1965; and pianist and music director for singer-songwriter Judy Collins in 1968–69.  
13 Sahl had been a featured composer on the “Electric Ear” series in July 1968, which included a performance of his campy live-plus-tape collage piece, *Mitzvah for the Dead*, performed by violinist Paul Zukofsky.  
14 Such a curriculum vitae barely hints at the controlled chaos of Sahl’s Free Music Store concert, which Henahan described as “Mike Sahls’ Freak-Out Free Band, playing Mike’s ‘Special Trash’ and other rock-jazz-avant-garde numbers that steam and cook.”  
15 Such contrasts were typical of the downtown scene—on the one hand, achievement in the post-war music programs of American universities; on the other, a backlash against those institutions and their cultural trappings.

Sahl had become acquainted with Steve Reich in spring 1968 and in the following five years they met and worked together frequently.  
16 Like many of his peers, Sahl wrote music for radio and television advertisements for additional income and, in this capacity, while recording a track, he would sometimes hire La Barbara and others to lend their talents. In 1971, Sahl called upon La Barbara to use her skills for a radio commercial selling Japanese perfume: “I imitated everything from a koto (actually, a harp imitating a koto, since the ad executives thought the koto was too ethnic-sounding for American listeners) to eventually sounding something like a

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15 Henahan, “They’ve Gotta Be Free.”

16 This may be inferred from his presence in Reich’s datebooks from 1968 to 1973. See Steve Reich, *Agenden 1968–1973*, SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland.
Japanese Astrud Gilberto.”¹⁷ The task, as she recalls it, especially suited her interests and skills at the time.

In late 1969 or early 1970, Reich began to envision a work that would require the very techniques La Barbara had developed at the Free Music Store. On 29 January 1970, Reich scribbled the phrase “a drumming of voices” in the lower margin of his sketchbook.¹⁸ The phrase “monkey chant” appears several lines above, likely referring to the kecak, a percussive Balinese vocal chant whose name derives from the vocables used by its all-male choirs: “chak-a-chak-a-chak.”¹⁹ A few months later, after his summer studies in Ghana, Reich scrawled “drumming with voices” again amid a dozen or more pages of detailed notes about Hindustani and Ghanaian drumming syllables.²⁰ According to Reich’s autobiography, by early 1971 he had begun his first sketches for Drumming and realized his need for singers capable of imitating instruments, especially percussion. A 16 March 1971, entry in Reich’s datebook reads “Call Joan La Barbera (Peter La Barbera).”²¹ Michael Sahl had recommended her.

¹⁷ La Barbara, “Voice is the Original Instrument,” 37.

¹⁸ Reich, Skizzenbuch 2, SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland, [78].

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Reich, Skizzenbuch 3, SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland, [34]. Another note within these pages reads, “no money for drums” (page [28]). Perhaps the idea of vocal drumming suggested a way to get around the financial difficulties associated with a large percussion piece. This obstacle, such as it was, did not dissuade Reich long, for drums soon became one of his principal ensemble instruments.

²¹ Reich, Agenden 1971, SSR, PSS, Basel, Switzerland. It is surprising that La Barbara and Reich had not met earlier: on 18 April, La Barbara’s violinist fiancée Zukofsky performed both Reich’s Violin Phase and Philip Glass’ Strung Out in a recital at the New School, yet La Barbara recalls meeting neither composer then.
La Barbara, along with fellow vocalist Judy Sherman, began rehearsing with Reich soon thereafter, working with his group sporadically depending upon the needs of individual concerts. She later recalled her introduction and early work with the composer:

first, [Reich] thought he wanted me to imitate the sound of bongo drums, but then he decided that a male voice sounded better with the drums and that the female voice worked better with marimba. It was just what I had been working on; his needs and my technique were a perfect match. Steve would put tape loops on the decks, and, as the patterns shifted out of phase and into new interlocking relationships, we (at first with singer, now producer, Judy Sherman, later with jazz singer Jay Clayton) would improvise, singing the resulting patterns that we heard. Steve chose certain patterns and then locked them into the final score.\textsuperscript{22}

Much like Reich’s other collaborations in the late sixties, \textit{Drumming} benefited from La Barbara’s creative input. Reich readily admits as much: “Joan LaBarbara [sic], Jay Clayton, Judy Sherman, and I all contributed various patterns.”\textsuperscript{23} La Barbara thus became a formal, contracted member of the newly named Steve Reich and Musicians, serving in that capacity from 1971 to 1973. Despite the formality of the arrangement, the work was far from regular and depended upon the repertoire programmed at individual concerts.

Although Reich and Glass parted ways during this period, performing in Reich’s ensemble placed La Barbara within the sub-network of downtown artists and performers that included Glass and his associates. She performed in Steve Reich and Musicians alongside both Jon Gibson and Steve Chambers, who worked for both Reich and Glass until summer 1972. La Barbara did not meet Glass until May 1973, at a series of performances at the John Weber Gallery at 420 West Broadway.\textsuperscript{24} At these concerts, Reich premiered his \textit{Music for Mallet

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} La Barbara, “Voice is the Original Instrument,” 37.
\item \textsuperscript{24} La Barbara has stated that her introduction to Glass took place at the John Gibson Gallery, yet there is no evidence that Reich performed there in 1973. It is more likely, on the other hand, that the meeting took place at the John Weber Gallery, where Reich is known to have performed a
\end{itemize}
Instruments, Voices, and Organ, the composer’s second work to feature La Barbara’s voice imitating instruments—and thus also an additional opportunity to appear with the group. After one performance she introduced herself to Glass and asked if he had considered using voices in his music. Glass explained to La Barbara that dancer Yvonne Rainer had recently sat in with the ensemble, lending her loud and earnest voice to several rehearsals, but “it wasn’t exactly singing.” Because La Barbara was still unfamiliar with his music, Glass invited her to the Ensemble’s concert at his loft-studio at 10 Bleecker Street the following week. We have already sampled her account of this concert in chapter three: though the space itself, with its creaky metal stairs and snarling guard dogs, was primitive and raw, La Barbara left the performance impressed with Glass’ music and the ensemble’s performance.

When La Barbara told Glass of her favorable impression of the music, he invited her to come sing the recently deceased Robert Prado’s trumpet parts at the group’s next rehearsal. Finding himself equally impressed by La Barbara’s vocal work, Glass used her in three of the Ensemble’s five New York borough parks concerts over the next month, as well as the 19 June four-concert series in May that year. Glass performed the following week at 10 Bleecker, fitting the La Barbara’s remembered timeline. See Willoughby Sharp, “The Phil Glass Ensemble: Music in Twelve Parts,” Avalanche (December 1974): 42; Dan Dryden, email correspondence with author, 9 June 2011.

Reich, Writings on Music, 76–78.


I have inferred the date of La Barbara’s visit to 10 Bleecker—that is, 20 May 1973—from the date of Reich’s performance at the John Weber Gallery: Steve Reich and Musicians performed at the Weber Gallery on 12, 13, 16, and 17 May 1973; the next Philip Glass Ensemble performance at 10 Bleecker Street occurred on 20 May, the following week.

La Barbara, “Voice is the Original Instrument,” 37.
1973 performance at Max’s Kansas City, the famed gathering place for Manhattan’s downtown, avant-garde scene.\textsuperscript{30} La Barbara went unnoticed by Tom Johnson in his \textit{Village Voice} review: “There was nothing unusual about the music Philip Glass presented on June 19. It was the same wonderful blend of amplified winds and electric organs which he has been working with for several years. The unexpected thing was that the concert took place at Max’s Kansas City!”\textsuperscript{31}

La Barbara also worked with musicians other than those in Steve Reich and Musicians and the Philip Glass Ensemble during these early years. In late 1972, she successfully auditioned to understudy all the female roles in \textit{Dr. Selavy’s Magic Theater}, a quirky Off-Broadway show that merged songs from a failed Stanley Silverman musical with an impressionistic and wordless scenario by Richard Foreman.\textsuperscript{32} The poorly received show ran at the O’Casey Theater at Mercer Arts Center in the basement of the Broadway Central Hotel, next door to the original Kitchen. It opened in November 1972 and closed in March 1973—ending just five months before the hotel collapsed, forcing the Kitchen to reconstitute itself elsewhere.\textsuperscript{33} By the end of the production, La Barbara regularly performed one of the leads.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{30} Sharp, “The Phil Glass Ensemble,” 42.


\textsuperscript{34} La Barbara, email correspondence with author, 27 July 2011.
In June 1973, La Barbara also began collaborating with Charlie Morrow, another avant-garde composer who, like Sahl, made a living by writing music for radio advertisements.\(^{35}\) Morrow had assembled an informal group of musicians with which he worked on his commercial projects: jazz drummer and percussionist Bruce Ditmas, jazz bass player and pianist Harvie Swartz, folk woodwind player Carole Weber, and La Barbara.\(^{36}\) Even when not working on radio spots, this loose band of improvisers would also get together informally to play at Morrow’s Upper West Side studio, sometimes joined by a poet or two providing spoken-word recitations of various sorts.\(^{37}\) The mood of these get-togethers resembled that of the early Free Music Store in its unruly openness and wild experimentation. La Barbara recalls that during one of these open-ended, improvisational, music-and-poetry sessions, she discovered a multiphonic vocal tone reminiscent of Tibetan or Tuvan throat singing.\(^{38}\) The group eventually called itself the New Wilderness Preservation Band and staged a series of performances at the Washington Square Church from December 1973 to May 1974. (Jon Gibson performed his own major concert at the church in the middle of this series, in March 1974, as described in the previous chapter.)

Reich appears to have known little about La Barbara’s other creative work during her tenure in his ensemble. He certainly acknowledged that his musicians were involved in other collaborative work in his “Notes on the Ensemble” essay written in 1973, the same year La

\(^{35}\) Morrow continues to be a major composer of commercial jingles: one of his best-known contributions to advertisement history is the “Hefty hefty hefty” chant for Hefty trash bags. The date of La Barbara’s involvement comes from Sharp, “The Phil Glass Ensemble,” 42.

\(^{36}\) Sharp, “The Phil Glass Ensemble,” 42.

\(^{37}\) La Barbara, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 16 June 2011.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.
Barbara left Reich’s group. However, if her contract was anything like Gibson’s, she would have been obligated to give Reich’s ensemble priority in any scheduling conflict, relieving Reich of any need to keep track of his employees’ various side-projects. La Barbara recalls an exchange of letters with Reich in midsummer 1973, during his season-long sabbatical in Nova Scotia. He asked about her recent activities, and she responded with details about her collaborations with Charlie Morrow and Philip Glass. She recounted Reich’s response in 1996:

He got the letter, and he picked up the phone. He said, “I can’t have you do that.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “I just can’t. The critics don’t know the difference between my music and Phil’s music.” I said, “Well, wait a minute, Steve, you’ve got musicians that go back and forth between the two ensembles.” He said, “Yes, but you’re too visible.” He said, “If they see you in my group and see you in Phil’s group, they’ll just say, ‘Oh, well it’s the same music—it’s no different.’” And I said, “Look, Steve, I am a working musician. This [is] my life. This is what I want to do. I like you very much. I’ve enjoyed working with you. But I also need to work with other people. I can’t do it. You’re not supporting me. And, besides, even if you were, I want to share musical experiences. I’m learning as a musician and as a composer by working with a number of different composers.” And he said, “Well, I understand. But I can’t have you do it.” And I said all right.

As a result of this ultimatum, La Barbara struck a deal with Reich: she would continue exclusively with him until the planned recording for Deutsche Grammophon in January 1974, then she would leave to join Glass’ group. Tellingly, Reich appears to have been unconcerned about her work with Morrow.

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40 Jon Gibson, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 14 June 2011.


On 16 February 1974, La Barbara performed her final concert with Reich’s ensemble in Brighton, England. La Barbara’s first public performance as a regular member of the Glass Ensemble came on 29 March 1974, at an anniversary gala for the Institute for Contemporary Arts in Philadelphia. New York Times art critic Grace Glueck (a familiar name in this dissertation) reviewed the festivities and described the Glass Ensemble’s performing forces as “voice, electric keyboards, simplified soprano saxophones, viola and cello.” Unlike Reich’s merely periodic need for La Barbara’s services, Glass committed to writing every new composition for his entire ensemble, employing La Barbara for every performance of his music over the course of more than two years.

La Barbara quickly assumed an integral, collaborative role in the group. She claims to have had some influence on the formation of the final four movements of Music in Twelve Parts after joining the Ensemble. Her most specific recollection concerns advising Glass on how to help the vocalist (herself) avoid fatigue during performances involving so few notes, sung so many times:

I said, ok, yes, I can sing those two notes for twenty minutes, but in the next part you have to take me to a different area of my range, because the vocal chords are a muscular apparatus and you can’t hold them in a particular position constantly. You have to let them do something different. I think that was information he took to heart. As you look at Music in Twelve Parts you can see there is a kind of progress from piece to piece.

The voice part in Lemieux’s Music in Twelve Parts transcription seems not to contain many strict changes in tessitura, although less conspicuous changes of a third or fourth might have

43 Dryden, email correspondence with author, 7 June 2011.
45 La Barbara, interview by author, 16 June 2011.
46 Ibid.
been enough relief for a hard-worked voice.\textsuperscript{47} It is thus difficult to corroborate La Barbara’s claims regarding her influence on \textit{Music in Twelve Parts}. They are, in any case, are minimal and do not substantially alter our understanding of the composition’s authorship. La Barbara has insisted that the contribution made by performers like her was one of \textit{realization}, even when improvising or completing some underdetermined performance plan: “I think there’s a difference between the musician who contributes and realizes an idea for the composer, [and] the composer’s idea that put that whole mechanism in play.”\textsuperscript{48}

Because of Glass’ especially generous support, La Barbara felt free to continue, even to expand, her own creative pursuits. She performed with Alvin Lucier, David Behrman, and John Cage for the Festival d’Automne in Paris, France, in the summer of 1974, and improvised with other experimental singers in a November 1974 concert at the Open Mind, a short-lived alternative space at 66 Greene Street.\textsuperscript{49} She performed the first concert featuring one of her own compositions, \textit{Voice Piece: One-Note Internal Resonance Investigation}, in December 1974 at St. Mark’s Church in the East Village on the Bowery.\textsuperscript{50} This work had been completed earlier that year; in June 1974, she briefly described her new approach in the composition:

\begin{quote}
One of the pieces I wrote this year has to do with choosing one pitch and placing it in as many different resonance areas as possible. It’s amazing how radically different sound placed in the mouth cavity is from sound focussed [sic] near the third eye [that is, the lower center of the forehead].\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{48} La Barbara, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 17 June 2010.


\textsuperscript{50} These dates come from La Barbara’s personal resumé, maintained on her website at http://www.joanlabarbara.com/resume.html (accessed 7 July 2011).

\textsuperscript{51} Sharp, “The Phil Glass Ensemble,” 42.
A better explanation of *Voice Piece*, and her work in general, appears in a second and more
detailed conversation with German experimental composer Walter Zimmermann in mid-1975:

I’ll choose one pitch that’s comfortable, that I can move most easily. And by thinking
different resonance areas within my head and neck and chest, I can make the tones sound
very different. And eventually I get to this split procedure. And I start with the octave,
and the longer I use that it becomes an octave and a fifth. It breaks up into a three-note
chord instead of just a two-note [chord].

The score to *La Barbara’s Voice Piece* consists of a series of human-head silhouettes in profile
with various indications for how to “place” the resonant tone, a principal familiar to students in
classical voice studios. Placements include the center and the front of the mouth, the bridge of
the nose, the cheek bones, and the upper and lower throat, producing a range of timbres, from
“throaty” and “nasal,” to the more traditional vocal tessituras such as “head voice” and “chest
voice.” *La Barbara’s* piece attempts to explore the broadest possible range of these qualities.

*Voice Piece* effectively organized her vocal experimentations from the previous half-decade into
a consistent performance scenario, codified in a graphic score.

*La Barbara’s* conversation with Zimmermann also documents one of her earliest uses of a
creative motto that would guide her work for many decades to come: “The voice as the original
instrument.” The phrase itself (or a variant) appeared as early as 1974, when Tom Johnson
reviewed a 30 November 1974, concert by Jay Clayton and *La Barbara*—both had recently quit

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52 Amy Beal has described Zimmermann’s *Desert Plants* (1975) as “the first published collection
of interviews with exclusively American experimental composers,” including La Barbara herself.
Because it was self-published, only five hundred copies were made. See Amy C. Beal, *New
Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from the Zero Hour to
reissued the book as digital files on his website. See Zimmermann, “Joan La Barbara,” in *Desert

53 The score to the work appears alongside Zimmermann’s interview with La Barbara, in the text
*Desert Plants*. 
the Reich ensemble—under the title “Exploring the Oldest Instrument.” It is currently unclear whether the title of Johnson’s review was his own invention, or that of his editors, or if it refers to statements made by the musicians themselves. Whatever the case, Johnson returned to the same theme in his review following La Barbara’s 15 January 1975, concert at Washington Square Church. She performed Voice Piece again at this concert and premiered two other works, Hear What I Feel (1974) and Vocal Extensions (1975). The first of these calls for a blindfolded singer, in this case La Barbara herself, to invent new vocal sounds according to the tactile feel of assorted objects selected by an assistant. She collaborated with percussionist Bruce Ditmas and technician Kurt Munkacsi on Vocal Extensions (1975), employing percussion and electronics to expand the effects she could produce with her voice. In his review, Johnson wrote: “La Barbara is not just making music. She is questioning the essence of human expression by exploring our oldest instrument of expression.”

In mid-1975, La Barbara explained to Zimmermann that she had titled her recent concert at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, “Voice, The Original Instrument.”

Before we had language we had the opportunity to have hand signals, I suppose, sign language and picture signs and some sort of vocalizing in order to communicate with each other. So what I’m trying to do with a number of the pieces that I do is to get back to that original use of the voice, that use of the voice without words to express feelings, emotions, to work to get very interior things out. You know, there are some things that you can’t express in words, or you have the feeling that you can’t express them in words.

This theme, “Voice, the Original Instrument,” not only captured her interests in using the voice to imitate instruments, but also reversed their mimetic priority: by celebrating the voice as the

54 Johnson, “Exploring the Oldest Instrument.”
56 Zimmermann, “Joan La Barbara.” This concert at Wesleyan University was held on 10 April 1975. See La Barbara, “[Notes to] Hear What I Feel,” Soundings 10 (1976): [88].
archetypal instrument, she embraced the notion that the voice preceded instruments. This
description of the voice as “original instrument” bears some likeness to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s
late 18th-century hypothesis that singing precedes human speech, or Jacques Derrida’s mid-20th-
expansion, that writing precedes speech.57 More to the point, however, it resembles Ralph
Vaughan Williams’ oft-quoted assertion from 1934: “The human voice is the oldest musical
instrument and through the ages it remains what it was, unchanged; the most primitive and at the
same time the most modern, because it is the most intimate form of human expression.”58 Such a
statement is less historical than it is mythological, a statement reflective of its own time more
than any other. This is not to dismiss the idea: as myth—even as plausible hypothesis—it
provided musicians such as La Barbara or Vaughan Williams with powerful motivation for their
creative work.

La Barbara recorded her first solo album, titled, of course, Voice is the Original
Instrument, in February 1976 and released it later that year, just as Glass’ Einstein on the Beach
neared its completion.59 La Barbara helped workshop and premiere the new opera, but her own
creative activity had begun to assume new priority in her musical life. After the premiere
performances of Einstein on the Beach at Avignon, France, in July 1976, La Barbara left the
group. Her tenure with the Glass Ensemble lasted only two years, a year less than had her

57 See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music,
Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978);
Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997). See also Gary Tomlinson, The
Singing of the New World: Indigenous Voice in the Era of European Contact (Cambridge:

58 Ralph Vaughan Williams, “National Music,” in National Music and Other Essays (New York:

59 La Barbara, Voice is the Original Instrument.
periodic involvement with Reich. Iris Hiskey replaced her for the American debut of Einstein at the Metropolitan Opera.\textsuperscript{60}

During these years in the mid-seventies, La Barbara thus established herself as an active and well-connected downtown musician. At the same time, she also began to assert herself as an insightful and perceptive commentator on music, publishing numerous articles and concert reviews that addressed the scene she herself was helping to create. When considered unsympathetically, these paired activities appear fraught with troubling questions of objectivity, critical detachment, and conflicts of interest. In the discussion to follow, however, they express different ways that La Barbara (and others) participated in New York’s new music community. Criticism, so it would appear, was simply another form of “musicking.”

Reassessing Music Criticism

The notion of conflict of interest itself deserves historical and critical scrutiny. In contrast to the composer-critic tradition described at the opening of this chapter, the New York Times adopted a strict rule in the sixties regarding divided loyalties (and hence a lack of objectivity). Harold Schonberg, who assumed the post of chief music critic in 1960, forbade his subordinates from a range of normal musical activities—even friendships with musicians—that might hint at journalistic impropriety. Schonberg reflected on his conflict-of-interest policies at length in an article published in 1981—after Donal Henahan succeeded him as chief music critic:

Nobody will ever believe that a Times critic can give an impartial review to a friend. Hence, as a matter of policy, Times critics are not supposed to be close to musicians they may be in a position of reviewing. If they are close—and sometimes that is unavoidable—the critic is supposed to disqualify himself. By the same token, no Times critic can himself be a performer or composer… nor is a Times critic allowed to write for

\textsuperscript{60} Program dated 21 and 28 November 1976, “Einstein on the Beach (Wilson) [programs],” Performing Arts Research Collections (Dance), New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.
any publication that would even remotely suggest a conflict of interest. That, of course, includes writing program or liner notes.61

The last composer-critic to be hired by the Times was Eric Salzman (coincidentally, as we have seen, a future founder of the Free Music Store), who, after being hired in 1958, found himself displaced in the Times’ shifting paradigms under Schonberg.62 Other Times editors, eager to retain Salzman, offered him an alternative position within the paper as a cultural news reporter. Salzman refused the demotion and Schonberg effectively forced him out.63 He was promptly hired to write reviews for the more composer-friendly, but rapidly declining Herald Tribune.64

In the New York Times obituary for Schonberg in July 2003, fellow critic Allan Kozinn credited his predecessor as being personally responsible for these new professional standards:

One of his immediate and lasting innovations was establishing a code of conduct in which friendships with performers and composers were prohibited. “I saw too much of that at the Herald-Tribune,” he wrote, “where most of the critics were composers and some of them jockeyed shamelessly to get their music played.”65

Schonberg’s invocation of the New York Herald-Tribune all but names Virgil Thomson—dean of American composer-critics—as the primary motivation for treating music criticism as journalism: Schonberg created such policies in reaction to Thomson. Moreover, such strictures were an innovation in music criticism, a new synthesis of the traditional concert review and journalistic ethics on objectivity.

62 Grant, Maestros of the Pen, 192.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
*New York Times* music critic Anthony Tommasini wrote in his biography of Thomson:

“Most editors at that time [during Thomson’s tenure at the Herald-Tribune] would have rejected Thomson as a candidate for the chief critic’s post because of his active professional involvement in music. How could a composer, conductor, and contemporary music activist who had maintained a prominent creative presence in America despite living on and off in Paris, and who fully intended to revive his New York career, issue disinterested assessments of musical compositions, performances, and institutions?” Tommasini’s criticism—that Thomson should have known better—must itself be reevaluated, since Tommasini himself worked as a *New York Times* critic well after the establishment of Schonberg’s code and thus may be treating his historical subject with an anachronistic set of values. Thomson did not simply flout the expectations of journalistic music criticism, as Tommasini suggests: he appears to have predated them.

We may thus resituate the debate over Thomson and Schonberg as expressing two distinct paradigms, which overlapped (and competed) only temporally. On the one hand, under Schonberg’s approach, the *New York Times* expected its music critics to treat reviewing as reporting, to balance informed discernment with objective reportage. On the other hand, Thomson and the many composer-critics like him, engaged in a species of advocacy journalism, a subgenre of editorial writing, which aims to provide a voice for populations underrepresented in the broader media and makes less of a claim to objectivity. The *Village Voice*, for example, persisted under the Thomson model, consistently hiring figures like jazz composer Carman

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Moore or experimentalist Tom Johnson to cover the growing music scene in Greenwich Village and its companion districts south of Houston Street. In his recent autobiography, Moore reflected on his writing with the *Village Voice*, recalling: “As critic I always tried to think and feel with the composer and at the same time with the performer.”\(^{68}\) Johnson, in his final article as *Village Voice* critic in the early eighties, summarized his own critical ethos: “Write honestly in the first person. But emphasize the description of what happened. Keep the interpretations secondary. And try to leave the evaluations up to the reader.”\(^{69}\) These comments bear more than a trace of Thomson’s critical values, as he expressed in his 1966 autobiography: “To describe what one has heard is the whole art of reviewing.”\(^{70}\) Description, for Thomson, was the highest virtue in music criticism.

John Rockwell is the most significant—and yet curious—case in the critical environment surrounding the downtown new music scene. Rockwell assumed his post as new and popular music critic at the *Times* in late 1972, eleven years into Schonberg’s 20-year tenure. He had been a classical music and dance critic at the *Oakland Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times* from 1970 to 1972 and had read news of Manhattan’s downtown music scene from Alan Rich’s reviews in the *New Yorker* and Tom Johnson’s in the *Village Voice*.\(^ {71}\) Rockwell moved to New York City in


\(^{71}\) John Rockwell, interview with Lauren Amazeen, 1989, archival reference #5695, audio recording, The Kitchen Archives, New York, N.Y.
November 1972 with a job offer from Schonberg to be a stringer covering classical music. Rockwell lived in lofts in Little Italy and SoHo during his tenure as New York Times critic, choosing to reside downtown within the art and performance scene that had so fascinated him while in California. Despite being under Schonberg’s watchful eye, Rockwell had clear affiliations and an objective of his own. Decades later, he explained: “I came to New York with the specific intention of becoming closely involved with and a champion of this kind of music that I perceived to be a real kind of scene evolving in New York… the peak of all that was [Steve] Reich, [Philip] Glass, etc., in the mid, late ‘70s.”

Philip Glass has claimed that Schonberg banned Rockwell from reviewing concerts held south of 14th Street, a prohibition that would also have excluded all of Greenwich Village, much less SoHo and its neighboring districts, but Rockwell himself has called this claim exaggerated. One of Rockwell’s primary innovations in the world of music criticism, according to musicologist Mark Grant, was to be the “first classical music critic employed by the New York Times to use that paper’s stature as a culture pulpit to filibuster and evangelize in Sunday articles for the cause of postmodern crossover. Coming from the good gray Times, rather than the underground press, this was a sea change.” From the standpoint of downtown alone, however, Rockwell elevated the status of the new music scene by regularly featuring performances in the Times.

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72 Rockwell, interview with Jessica Wiederhorn, 4 August 2009, The Kitchen Archives, New York, N.Y.

73 Ibid.

74 Philip Glass, interview by author, digital audio recording, New York, N.Y., 20 June 2011; Rockwell, interview with Jessica Wiederhorn.

75 Grant, Maestros of the Pen, 307.
Edward Strickland dedicated a single paragraph to the critical environment in which Moore and Johnson operated—and to the tremendous impact of John Rockwell’s arrival at the *New York Times* in 1972:

Moore was the most open-minded and sympathetic newspaper critic the music had in New York, until Tom Johnson took over as new-music critic in November 1971. Both Moore and Johnson were composers, as were the *Voice*’s later new-music critics. Johnson’s rave review of Reich’s *Drumming* [in December 1971] was only his second column (after a review of the English free-form quartet AMM Music two weeks earlier). It was not until John Rockwell, who had been writing favorably on the music for the *Los Angeles Times*, joined the *New York Times* almost exactly a year after Johnson joined the *Voice* that that paper began regular coverage of downtown music. Without the support of these two critics, the acceptance of this type of music would undoubtedly have been delayed considerably, despite the earlier and important support provided by Moore and [the *New Yorker*’s Alan] Rich. By noting, first of all, the existence of the music [that is, so-called “minimalism”], and secondly the warmth of the small audiences it attracted, these critics helped to augment those audiences with the curious, who in many cases became the converted.76

Strickland’s comment about the growing audience deserves special note. The debate over advocacy and objectivity becomes serious when—or perhaps because—critics function as “gatekeepers,” determining which artist’s work receives attention and who remains invisible.77

We have already seen in chapter four the potential effect of John Rockwell’s unfavorable reviews in the *Times*. In an era of expanding government resources for the arts, this gatekeeping effect could affect not only the size of one’s public audience (as Strickland’s statement reprinted

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77 See Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, eds., “Journalists as Gatekeepers,” in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, 73–87. Composer-critic Kyle Gann recently pilloried the “gatekeeping” function of music criticism on his blog: “There are certain critics, especially at the more prestigious newspapers and magazines, who consider themselves gatekeepers, defenders of the culture. Their job, as they see it, is to damn everything that can be damned, to keep any composer or composition from entering the Canon of Great Composers and Works that can possibly be kept out, so that only those of the very highest quality will eventually get in.” See Kyle Gann, “Criticism, Composers, and Objectivity,” *PostClassic*, 28 March 2005, http://www.kylegann.com/PC050328-Composers-Objectivity.html (accessed 21 September 2011).
above suggests), but who would receive the grant funding to sustain one’s work. In a 1989 Telluride Institute panel discussion on “The Problems Facing Music Criticism,” a round-table of composers and critics, including John Cage, Laurie Spiegel, and Tom Johnson, discussed these very issues. Composer Charles Amirkhanian moderated the panel and opened it with a reference to Virgil Thomson:

There is also the famous dictum of Virgil Thomson which is that criticism should first and foremost describe the performance so that somebody who wasn’t there could understand basically what went on.78

When the Telluride panel turned to discuss the power of the music critic, Walter Zimmermann (interviewer and publisher of *Desert Plants*) explained, “a critic is in a small room with new music that has thirty people in it. He writes the next morning for 30,000 people. I mean, this is power.”79 This gatekeeping function had even affected one of Zimmerman’s own productions, as he further explained:

The opera I did, *Static Drama*, which was actually a non-opera, was criticized by opera critics. They were completely confused and they banned the piece. Other opera houses read this critic, because they didn’t go there, and they say, “No, we don’t want this.” […] It had the effect of turning the piece off.80

Composer Morton Subotnick, another panelist, concurred:

We had a very similar experience when I did a piece with Lee Breuer, which was extremely well received by the audience and we had one performance and the reviews were, for the production, very bad. And we have not been able to reproduce it again because it’s very expensive and there’s nothing.81


79 Ibid., [12].

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid., [13].
Cage also expressed to the panel his preference for a critic intent upon “bringing about a bridge between the music or the composer and the listener […] so that the feelings are very good and you have said something about the work in such a way that it could be used in any way by any person who happens to read it. […] It’s almost a kind of social act, characterized by love.”  

Cage claimed he no longer read newspaper reviews, but that he had in previous decades:

[Amirkhanian:] I’ve heard stories that you would run out to the corner stand and buy the newspapers.

[Cage:] To get Virgil [Thomson]’s. I used to go and buy the New York Herald Tribune not knowing what Virgil had written just to see what he had to say because he was interesting to read. 

For many on the panel, the late Thomson had been the ideal music critic. Subotnick explained that Thomson’s writing “assumes that someone really cares about a performance when they go to it. He’s giving them a very deep insight into how to listen.” These statements cast the critic as something other than an objective journalist, more like an educator, a liaison between the composer, the performers, and the audience.

Joan La Barbara also participated in the 1989 Telluride panel, lending her own experience as a new music critic in the seventies and eighties to the discussion. Responding to Cage’s emphasis on building bridges between composers and audiences, La Barbara notably declared, “I never considered myself a critic.” Instead, she explained, “I always considered myself a kind of translator”:

When I started writing, I wrote for a paper called the SoHo Weekly News, which was given out on the doorsteps in the neighborhood for free. I did that because, one, the criticism was so bad, and two, because my friends wrote such terrible program notes that

82 Ibid., [4].
83 Ibid., [2–3].
84 Ibid., [32].
were either incomplete or so difficult that they put the audience off and confused people. So I would interview the composers ahead of time and do preview articles to sort of introduce the audience to the area that they were going to be entering when they came into the concert space. But I never considered it criticism. And I think music critics do the same thing—they don’t consider what I write or people who write the way I did as music criticism. They consider it something else.  

La Barbara amplified this motivation to me:

[La Barbara:] I started writing because a number of my friends were terribly misunderstood by critics. [They] couldn’t write their own program notes. I started doing preview articles. I would go and talk to different composers and, in a way, write their program notes for them, produce it as a preview article that came out in advance of the concert, almost as a way of advertising but also letting people know what they could expect because a lot of these things were so unusual that you go someplace and you have no idea what you’re going to hear. Actually, John Rockwell started quoting in some of his reviews some of the material from my previews. A lot of time critics, when they don’t know what to write, will rewrite the program notes, and in this case, John would—I think he quoted most of the time—from my previews in trying to describe what was going on. So it grew out of this sense of community, of wanting to be understood and wanting the music to be understood. I felt as if I had a certain kind of insight into the material from having worked with people. Usually the way that I would work with people as a musician: we would get together and talk about the nature of the piece and what the composer wanted to accomplish and how I could contribute to that. It was another way of using my brain, not only as a musician, but also as an interpreter and then a kind of translator. I hesitated for a long time to refer to what I was doing as criticism because I felt I was writing about music. It was more descriptive. If you look at a lot of those articles, I think it’s much more a way of describing what went on. […]

[Chapman:] Is advocacy too strong a word for what you were doing?

[La Barbara:] No, definitely, it was definitely advocacy. I was proselytizing, not so much advertising because it wasn’t about money, but it was about wanting to inform people about what this music was about, what experimental music at that point in time was about.  

La Barbara thus retrospectively claims a fairly consistent set of values, which reflected a consensus among her experimentalist peers and aligned with the tradition of Virgil Thomson: she considered herself an avowed advocate for new music, an insider developing an audience, an

85 Ibid., [4].
86 La Barbara, interview by author, 16 June 2011.
interpreter, a mouthpiece for composers and performers, writing descriptions and not critiques. How these values played out in practice requires a closer examination of La Barbara’s writings.

La Barbara as Critic on the Downtown Beat

After she left the Philip Glass Ensemble in mid-1976, La Barbara continued to expand her performing and composing career and is today known as much for her own vocal-experimental work as for her collaborative work with Reich, Morrow, and Glass (and many others). Whole chapters could be written about her work with Lucier, Cage, Morton Feldman, Robert Ashley, and her long-time spouse and collaborator, Morton Subotnick. From March 1974 to October 1975, the downtown newspaper SoHo Weekly News published 29 new music reviews under La Barbara’s name. Her simultaneous roles as concert reviewer and as composer/performer raise intriguing questions about the critic’s role in the loft-and-gallery community. In short, La Barbara saw all her musical outlets—composing, performing, and reviewing concerts—as equivalent and complementary forms of participation in the downtown scene.

La Barbara’s primary publishing venue, the SoHo Weekly News, sometimes called simply SoHo News, ran its first issue on 11 October 1973. According to one of its early contributors, the newspaper’s editors had envisioned a paper “confined to selling a neighborhood to itself.”87 “We hope it will become a cohesive influence within the community,” editor Michael Goldstein proclaimed in the second week’s editorial, “and a forum for the new and the unusual.”88 From the start, its editors announced plans to have an events calendar, as well as regular features from music and art critics. The visual arts were well represented in the earliest issues, with theater and

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dance reviews coming along within the first few months. In those initial weeks, the paper’s staff begged for new articles and on 29 November, roughly two months after the paper’s founding, Goldstein wrote: “We hope to be able to expand our coverage in the music field, soon.” By that date, the paper had published only a single music piece, a review of a Three Dog Night concert at Avery Fisher Hall by David Finkle (later a major New York drama critic).

There may have been reluctance by some in the neighborhood to participate in the fledgling paper. Richard Kostelanetz recently recalled an editorial culture somewhat at odds with the paper’s stated goals, as an expression of the community:

The SoHo News, by contrast [with the Village Voice] was founded in 1973 by an outsider, a sometime rock concert promoter, in part to exploit the success of the Voice, with a similar size and similar weekly publication schedule. Though the offices of the SoHo News were on Broadway below Houston Street, nearly all of its editors lived outside SoHo; most of its writers probably did as well. Having contributed a few pieces to its pages, I can recall my editor’s skepticism toward the fact that I actually resided in SoHo.

Here we see objective detachment as virtue and as vice: whereas SoHo News editors thought it strange that Kostelanetz wrote about SoHo while he also lived there, downtown artists and musicians initially resisted the newspaper and its staff because they didn’t live there. Nevertheless, the downtown community quickly embraced the new paper, and the paper warmed up to its SoHo insiders.

The SoHo News published its first “serious” music review in late December 1973, covering a Steve Reich concert at New York University, one of La Barbara’s last U.S. concerts

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91 Kostelanetz, SoHo: The Rise and Fall of an Artists’ Colony (New York: Routledge, 2003), 175.

92 [Goldstein], SoHo Weekly News, 29 November 1973, 2.
with that ensemble.\textsuperscript{93} The review—written by Josef Bush, an experimental theater expert—ran without mention in the paper’s index or list of contributors. Bush quoted entire paragraphs from Reich’s program notes, at time effusively praising the performance:

We were able to see and hear all of the pieces but the second and third listed above, and the power, originality and intensity of the music experienced, has made that unfortunate omission nearly intolerable… It was music of such space, scope and effect, that it would be completely conceivable to hope it would be performed out of doors, on mountain tops, in jungles, beside vast bodies of water and in our National Forests.\textsuperscript{94}

At other times, Bush recorded a conflicted set of impressions:

And so, one thinks of Terry Reiley [sic]. However, to compare the two musicians would be a mistake. Reiley and Reich are no closer to each other than are Manet and Monet. […] Searching for recognizable comparisons, and stretching these points, one want to suggest the beginning measures of Pink Floyd’s Meddle, and a certain section of their Time. Even the first few measures of L’Heur Espagnol of Ravel. However, the reader is advised that Reich’s music is not like any of these. But, there is that in his music which inclines one to believe that people who enjoy the other music mentioned, may for reasons of their own, decide to collect recordings of Reich’s pieces. Good music can not [sic] ever be adequately described, after all. Witness the contortions of this writer attempting to deal with musical experience of transcendental quality and beauty.\textsuperscript{95}

Bush’s equivocations express tensions between his own listening experience on the one hand, as in his comparisons with Riley, Pink Floyd, or Ravel, and his deference to Reich’s carefully managed self-conception on the other. Given the paper’s distribution downtown, it seems possible if not likely that La Barbara read the review. It corresponds well with her memory of critics copying composers’ program notes—though as we have seen repeatedly throughout this dissertation, such a practice was not at all uncommon when critics were called upon to cover unfamiliar experimental music.


\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
It was Charlie Morrow, La Barbara’s New Wilderness bandmate, who first addressed the upstart paper’s need for a properly informed concert reviewer. At the suggestion of Tom Johnson, music critic at the *Village Voice*, Morrow began writing a weekly column under the title, “Living Music,” which first appeared in the 24 January 1974, issue of the *SoHo News*. His reviews tended to cover close friends and collaborators, the musicians with whom he was most familiar. Morrow’s mission as a music writer, he explained in recent interviews for this project, was to provide exposure for under-recognized artists, especially those who most inspired him.

[Morrow:] My whole idea at that point was that everything I did was more or less R-and-D, you know, to open the door for various things, to open the door for this type of performance, to open the door for an artist writing criticism. I didn’t write criticism that was like a baseball critic describing a game, where someone screwed up and struck out. I didn’t look at art as a game. I wrote essays about people’s work, many of which had never been written about. That was the whole purpose in doing it. […]

[Chapman:] It sounds very much like an advocacy role.

[Morrow:] Advocacy role, totally. The people I wrote about were the people who were inspiring to me: Jackson Mac Low, Allison Knowles, Philip Corner…

[Chapman:] All the happenings, Fluxus people from the ‘60s.

[Morrow:] Well, they were the people I was playing with and it just made a lot of sense.

Morrow intended no deceit in this practice. He disclosed his relationship with his subject, Phillip Corner, in the opening paragraph of his very first article, reviewing his friend’s “Sounds Out of Silent Spaces” concert at Experimental Intermedia:

This evening is part of the on-going work of composer Phillip Corner. I have been performing with him and am reviewing from the inside. I have seen very little written

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96 Morrow’s first review may have come on 17 January, but this issue is missing on both known archival microfilms of the *SoHo News*. Morrow’s memory and personal records on the question remain unclear.

about his work and rather than just talking of this evening I prefer to talk about him and the body of his work going back over 15 years.\footnote{Morrow, “Living Music,” \textit{SoHo Weekly News}, 24 January 1974, 22.}


Although he later claimed to have avoided criticism, Morrow was not above harsh polemics, especially when aimed at the mainstream music establishment—a noteworthy parallel to the countercultural impulses of the Free Music Store. In a late February 1974 review, Morrow railed against the established American composers Roger Sessions and—notably—Virgil Thomson, after a performance of their string quartets: “Their work at best is a weak reflection of the European master culture syndrome we should all spend our lives dispelling.”\footnote{Morrow, “Living Music: A Meditation on the Musics of the World,” \textit{SoHo Weekly News}, 14 March 1974, 18.} Morrow’s passionate and strongly worded essay, “A Meditation on the Musics of the World,” dated 14 March 1974, expands this critique:

\begin{quote}
I say throw away the monumentally stupid position that music is only great in that one form [that is, the Western classical tradition]. We ourselves and our environments, our children and on and on and on, all are sources of wonderful music. That there must be great music is in itself a counterproductive concept. That there must be a living music is
where the emphasis must be placed. As [poet] Jerome Rothenberg said of the great masters of the past: “Them folks is dead... they live only through us.”

Morrow’s foil, as for so many figures in downtown music, was the highbrow music of the West and its elitist academies: “There is no longer ‘high’ music and low music, just many musics with different functions and meanings and degrees of excellence within their boundaries.” His harshest attacks cast the Western classical tradition as moribund, even malignant, to be replaced by all conceivable alternative musical practices.

Morrow soon found the role of music reviewer at odds with his schedule as a practicing composer and musician. Though he invited several colleagues to relieve him periodically, Joan La Barbara was his first and only taker. Her first column ran 21 March 1974, with a three-part review of Paul Bley and the band Scorpio, featuring New Wilderness bandmate, Bruce Ditmas; the Philip Glass Ensemble, with whom she was undoubtedly already rehearsing full-time; and fellow Glass Ensemble member Jon Gibson’s concert at Washington Square Church (discussed in chapter four, above). Her review begins with a mission statement, highlighting what she took to be her contexts for listening in downtown Manhattan in the mid-seventies:

There are times when many of us wonder what we are doing in this crazy city with its muggings, rapes, gas lines and spiraling food costs... and then in the space of one week I manage to see and hear... experience the wonderful and varied musics of Paul Bley, Phil Glass and Jon Gibson and the answer is clear—it's all here... the music, the talented, competent and brilliant performers and composers, setting high standards for each other... an artistic community providing limitless variety to an audience of eight million. I’d like to direct my space in this column to this variety in the hope that if you heard the concerts we can compare impressions and if you missed them that you may be intrigued enough by my notes to get out of the house and into the clubs and concert halls to experience live art in your own time.

102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
Like Morrow’s, La Barbara’s objectives were to support alternative musical culture, to foster discussions about that experience, and to expand the audience for new music. What began as an occasional assignment to relieve Morrow became a permanent and regular post for La Barbara. The last of Morrow’s reviews ran on 23 May 1974, although he continued to be listed in the masthead as a contributor through August of that year. La Barbara thus became the principal new music critic at *SoHo News*.

Whereas Morrow had reserved his harshest criticism for the representatives and institutions of highbrow European art music, La Barbara routinely critiqued her new music peers, adopting a critical posture that somewhat complicates her claims to mere advocacy. On a performance of a Hall Overton string quartet by The Ensemble (directed by Dennis Russell Davies), she complained: “There’s a certain kind of sound to mid-20th century American string quartets and this one had that sound. It had a lovely mellow beginning with the viola and 1st violin along but then lapsed into ‘that sound.’”¹⁰⁶ In her review of the venerable Indian vocalist, Pandit Pran Nath, she complained: “Pran Nath is not a young man and the voice lacks the kind of clarity I would like to hear.” Yet, she concluded, “the knowledge comes through in spite of the fuzzy vocal quality and it is, after all, the teacher in this person which is the most important element.”¹⁰⁷ In a review of La Monte Young performing his signature piano work of the seventies, she was pithier: “The Well-Tuned Piano is a lovely creation; Young’s playing does not do it justice.”¹⁰⁸

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Her most biting comments appeared in the first issue of 1975, in a review of a performance by the Quog Music Theater group at Washington Square Church:

It was difficult to hear the words due to the loud talking of audience members. Found myself wondering if a particularly loud one was a QUOG member and if I was supposed to mix her sound in as a third “speaker” and finally decided that it didn’t matter if she was a QUOG or not because I was forced to mix her in with the other voices. That initial experience was the most interesting part of an otherwise uninspired and amateurish production. I had to keep reminding myself that I really was in New York and not in some small town somewhere watching the local talent night.¹⁰⁹

These are strong words, especially when directed toward downtown performance, where absurdity and crudity were often both aesthetic means and end. More remarkably, her critique was directed towards Quog Music Theater, whose senior members were none other than Eric Salzman and Michael Sahl. “Eric Salzman consistently overacts,” she wrote, “and although Sabrina does have nice tits I’m tired of seeing tits bared for no real plot-enhancing reason. Overall [Quog’s presentation] seemed more like theatre than music… simple layman’s theatre, reasonable in the context of a workshop situation but certainly not a polished production.”¹¹⁰

Although La Barbara recalls having preferred uncritical advocacy, this brusque and sharply worded review suggests that she remained open to writing a negative critique when she felt the situation warranted it.

La Barbara has repeatedly referred to her predilection for writing previews of concert rather than reviews, yet only five of her twenty-nine SoHo News articles were previews of the sort she has described; fully nineteen were standard concert reviews, peppered with critical


commentary. There appear to have been other, more salient reasons for her to write previews. La Barbara’s first preview ran 30 January 1975, and addressed the upcoming Idea Warehouse series presented by the Philip Glass Ensemble—concerts in which she herself was performing as ensemble member. La Barbara wrote another preview on 20 February for a performance of Alvin Lucier’s *Still and Moving Lines in Families of Hyperbolas* to be held at The Kitchen: she was, once again, one of the concert’s performers. On 8 May 1975, she submitted a preview discussing an upcoming concert by David Behrman; the photo accompanying the published review shows La Barbara rehearsing with Behrman and Peter Zummo for concerts to be held that summer. In each of these previews, she provided an insider’s detailed description of the works to be performed, occasionally referring to herself, strangely enough, in the third person. Previews were thus reserved for those times when conflicts of interests would have been most glaring: necessity prompted invention, and over time La Barbara decided that she preferred them.

La Barbara has also noted that John Rockwell had a habit of quoting her previews in his *Times* reviews and, indeed, Rockwell’s *Times* review of the abovementioned Lucier concert confirms, albeit in a single case, La Barbara’s recollections. After four paragraphs of basic description (that is, with little critical commentary of his own), Rockwell closed with the following:

> None of Mr. Lucier’s conceptual ideas were explained in the notes [that is, in Lucier’s own program notes]. I found out what he was up to by reading an article that Miss La Barbara had written and talking with her. In the article she said that Mr. Lucier meant the piece as a “riddle” for the audience.\(^{112}\)

There is a noteworthy parallel between Rockwell’s review of Lucier and his critique of Jon Gibson, as described in chapter four, namely the inadequacy of program notes to fully describe the works:


explain composers’ creative objectives to their audiences. Critics, who operate as expert listeners and as writers simultaneously, often fill such voids: they frequently provide program notes, liner notes for recordings, and even book-length treatments on musical subjects, in a writing style especially suited to non-specialist audiences.\textsuperscript{113} In his book, \textit{Classical Music Criticism}, Robert Schick addressed the issue of interest conflicts for critics who maintain careers as active musicians and offered a way out of the moralism of contemporary journalistic ethics and into a greater understanding of the historical aims and contexts for music criticism: “One critic who didn’t maintain his distance was Tom Johnson, a writer for the \textit{New York Village Voice} and a composer and performer of experimental music, the very scene he covered as a critic. Such proximity makes it harder to evaluate works objectively but gives an understanding that is valuable for descriptive reviews.”\textsuperscript{114} Initiates within a cultural milieu have less to overcome, a faster learning curve to perception and description. Such accounts offer speedy access to much of the motivating intent, the immediate contexts and references, and the rules of a work or performance. In the hands of a figure like La Barbara, music criticism served the needs of many different populations at once: to composers, she provided an articulate voice for explaining and disseminating their ideas; to audiences, she provided access to the ideas that governed music-making.

\textsuperscript{113} Schonberg forbade this common practice too, as he explained in his 1981 post-hoc manifesto: “Nor is a Times critic allowed to write for any publication that would even remotely suggest a conflict of interest. That, of course, includes writing program or liner notes.” See Schonberg, “A Lifetime of Listening.”

Conclusion: Writing About Her Own Music

For almost any given review, La Barbara’s beat was her own musical life. Bandmates from Morrow’s New Wilderness project, Bruce Ditmas and Carol Weber, performed in several of her earliest reviewed concerts. Fellow Glass ensemble members, Dickie Landry and Jon Gibson, receive glowing praise.\(^\text{115}\) Glass, Gibson, and Lucier all receive two positive reviews.\(^\text{116}\) After performing alongside Jon Gibson for David Tudor’s *Rainforest* in Paris in late 1974, she then reviewed the live-performed sound installation when it was presented without her in April 1975.\(^\text{117}\)

In his book on the history of American music criticism, composer Mark Grant commented that “any gallery of American composer-critics is a gallery of self-promoters” and that “composer-critics are fundamentally not disinterested persons.” They are, he writes, “working on their creations and thinking about and acting out ways to enable the performance of their works.”\(^\text{118}\) Examining her writing for the *SoHo News*, we find that La Barbara too wrote about her own music, if obliquely. In her review of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela’s 3 May 1974, “Dream House” performance at The Kitchen, she noted the various vowel sounds and breathing techniques employed by Young and Zazeela before remarking: “I’ve been working on increased focus on individual resonance areas and was fascinated by La Monte’s hand


\(^{118}\) Grant, *Maestros of the Pen*, 161–162.
movements, reminding himself of his chosen placement and direction of the tones.” The comment refers to her own recently composed *Voice Piece*, which, as we have seen, she first conceived in March 1974, within weeks of quitting Reich’s ensemble, beginning work with Glass, and publishing her first review in the *SoHo News.*

Other La Barbara pieces worked their way into—or resulted from—her articles, none more so than her preview of Robert Ashley’s February 1975 collaboration with Merce Cunningham. Her *Performance Piece* (1974) calls for two nearly simultaneous mental efforts by a single performer: the singer thinks of and performs a vocal gesture, while also verbalizing her thoughts about the process of thinking and performing the gesture. La Barbara considers this work an exercise not only in the pursuit of new vocal sounds, but also in coordinating and exhibiting right brain (i.e., creative) and left brain (i.e., analytical) activity during a performance. In 2002, La Barbara recounted:

> The trigger or inspiration for this work [i.e., *Performance Piece*] came from a discussion I had with Robert Ashley during an interview for one of my *SoHo Weekly News* preview articles, regarding what he referred to as the “internal dialogue” that one has with oneself (self-monitoring or censoring one’s own thoughts before speaking them aloud). I subtitled *Performance Piece* “Ashley gave me an idea,” because our conversation got me thinking about how one makes conscious decisions during improvisation but the audience only hears the musical result, not the process of considering that one goes through in making musical decisions.

Her *Performance Piece* was based, at a fundamental level, on the relationship that these two musicians had already established. La Barbara’s creativity and her criticism formed a cultural feedback loop: her privileged knowledge as an insider informed her commentary; her

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119 La Barbara, “Living Music: Avant.”

120 La Barbara, *Voice is the Original Instrument*, liner notes.

121 La Barbara, “Voice is the Original Instrument,” 40.

122 Ibid.
commentary prompted her own new musical work; her work facilitated her participation in the scene as an insider.

La Barbara’s twenty-ninth and final review for the SoHo News ran 30 October 1975. There is no hint of a farewell in the piece and she may not have known it would be her last: she remained on the “Contributors” listing in the masthead until 12 February 1976. The week her name was finally dropped, she held her second Kitchen concert, premiering her most recent compositions, Thunder (1975) and Ides of March (1975), on 15 February. Her fellow composer and occasional collaborator, Peter Zummo, wrote the review of this concert for the SoHo News and succeeded her as the paper’s new music critic. Four months later she performed her final concert with the Philip Glass Ensemble in Avignon, France.

The SoHo News was not the end of La Barbara’s writing career. Her resume includes a 1974 feature on Glass and Reich for Data Arte (later anthologized by Kostelanetz in Writings on Glass), as well as many articles and reviews for the Los Angeles Times (1978) and the Schwann/Opus magazine (1996–98). She served most prominently as contributing editor for Musical America/High Fidelity from 1977 to 1987. New music remained her primary beat throughout and she has left a body of writing that rivals Tom Johnson or John Rockwell in its coverage of late-century experimentalism. Throughout, she attempted to avoid passing critical judgments of her fellow composers and performers, though she often found this posture difficult to maintain. Her work with Musical America became more critical in its later years when she took to reviewing opera performances. In one of her last reviews for the magazine, she covered

124 La Barbara, resumé.
John Eaton’s microtonal opera, *The Tempest* (1985), and found herself put off by his approach to the work’s musical resources:

I just felt that the microtonality was not used for any musical reason and came off sounding just like out-of-tune instruments. Microtonality was something that was very important to me and I felt really offended by his use of it. I also was offended by his farming out of the electronic parts to another composer and that went into the review. It was the only time that Shirley [Fleming, her editor at *Musical American*] ever sent an article back. She said, “you’re dancing around it. If you want to say it, say it.” I said, “okay, Shirley, but this is it. This is the last one.” […] It just got too difficult. To be writing about a composer and then also going out and being a composer just got to be too much.125

This anecdote provides powerful insight into La Barbara’s later ethics as a writer: far from shirking the responsibilities of journalism, La Barbara came to regard it as antithetical to the spirit that sustained her own work. Music criticism, for her, was not reportage, but advocacy.

At the end of her time with the Philip Glass Ensemble and the *SoHo News*, La Barbara contributed an essay to the 1976 “SoHo in Berlin” exhibition catalogue, under the lengthy, but thorough title: “SoHo, a Community of Cooperating Artists a Compendium of Art: Music, Dance, Video, Theatre and Assorted Combinations, Discussing Work Performed in and/or by Members of the Community.”126 Her survey documents and summarizes the extraordinary scene in downtown Manhattan and captures the spirit of the community at its most ideal—and, arguably, at its zenith. In it, she provided a glimpse of the many roles that individuals played, the many ways peoples’ work and lives blended and interacted. Above all, she cited the cooperation and collaboration that pervaded the SoHo community: “SoHo grew with a spirit of cooperative

125 La Barbara, interview by author, 16 June 2011.
venture, in housing, gallery and performance spaces, with artists working together, supporting each other’s work, attending shows and performances, participating in each other’s productions.”

Her essay closes: “The sense of cooperation has been the drawing point for SoHo as it has grown as an area and a symbol, a gathering place for established artists, young artists with fresh ideas and energy and an audience of peers as well as critical observers. [emphasis added]”

La Barbara’s profile of the downtown community includes the artists, the audiences, and the critics; all these activities represented forms of participation and belonging.

La Barbara’s history as a collaborator with downtown musicians, including the Philip Glass Ensemble, and as a critic with the SoHo News offers a glimpse into the cultural conditions in which all of these individuals operated. Her writing provides an opportunity to step outside the familiar Rockwell-Johnson narrative that has dominated downtown discussions until now. Her preference for descriptive advocacy and sympathetic bridge-building highlights only a few of the many roles and values adopted by music critics, even in very recent history, some of whom also resist Schonberg’s mantle of journalistic objectivity. Instead, La Barbara saw her advocacy for and occasional criticism of new music as parallel to those roles she shared with other members of the Philip Glass Ensemble, namely those of composer, performer, and audience member. All of these were essential to the community of cooperation and support in downtown Manhattan.

127 Ibid., 252.

128 Ibid., 273.
This project originally developed from a genuine curiosity about two parallel topics: first, the many other creative individuals who participated alongside Glass in his ensemble, and second, the unusual venues in which they performed in New York City. Even before this study began, it was already clear that, in its earliest years, the ensemble was much more than an association of performers hired to transmit the musical intentions of its resident composer. Now the present study has confirmed my initial suspicions: this was an assembly of creative musicians who shared creative impulses and sensibilities, who also were willing to help each other accomplish their artistic objectives. Participation in the ensemble expressed a community spirit among them, meeting at times under the name “Philip Glass Ensemble,” at other times as “Jon Gibson and Friends” or “Richard Landry and Musicians” or sometimes under no group name at all. It is a mere twist of history that the title of this dissertation should refer to the “Philip Glass Ensemble” and not to one of these other names.

By broadening the scope beyond individual composers, the preceding chapters have explored the complexities bound up in creativity itself. This is the basis for the first term in this dissertation’s title, for “collaboration” captures a sense of many creators working together. Inspiration, influence, and ideas came to these individuals from all directions, often from unexpected places.¹ Fellow artists, musicians, and performers seemed always on hand to help

¹ I take this view of creative individuals as the targets of ideas from all directions, from one of Latour’s key definitions: “An ‘actor’ in the hyphenated expression actor-network is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming towards it.” See Bruno Latour, Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (New York: Oxford UP, 2005): 73.
bring ideas to fruition. In chapter one we saw that Arthur Murphy played a key role in the creation of Gibson’s *Vocal/Tape Delay*: it was Murphy who set up his own audio equipment, then handed the microphone to Gibson (his roommate at the time), who in turn growled and shrieked into the system and produced the recording preserved today. In chapter two, Kurt Munkacsi’s rock-oriented audio techniques facilitated Glass’s immersive, high-amplitude sound, while in chapter three Munkacsi’s experience with tape equipment and echo effects produced the quadraphonic delay system that characterized Landry’s solo improvisations for several decades thereafter.

In chapter four, we saw that, although improvisation had been his primary musical technique since the late fifties, Gibson found his most enduring creative voice during extemporaneous performances with dancer Nancy Topf in the early seventies. From these collaborations arose both Gibson’s mature compositional style, first displayed in concert at Washington Square Church in March 1974, and—in a familiar overlap of personal, social, and artistic agendas within the downtown scene—a long and fruitful marriage between musician and dancer. Their collaborations might have continued today, if not for the horrific crash of Swissair 111 on 2 September 1998, off the coast of Nova Scotia. Topf was onboard the ill-fated flight, on her way to Switzerland to lead a workshop on her signature dance and movement techniques. Her *New York Times* obituary highlighted Gibson not only as her surviving husband, but also as her lifelong collaborator.²

The second term in this dissertation’s title, “presence,” highlights the central role of audiences and listening experiences in the current project. In the first chapter, we observed Reich’s and Glass’ efforts to foster new relationships between performers and audiences in the

spaces of the Park Place Gallery, the Film-Makers Cinematheque, and the Whitney Museum in the late sixties. In the writings discussed in chapter two, Glass’ friends and audience members Rudy Wurlitzer, Marcia Tucker, and Richard Foreman each referred to Glass’ aesthetics as an expression of “presence.” Soon thereafter, the composer took up the theme himself, further developing it through the mid-seventies. Munkacsi’s high-volume, low-distortion sound mixes, mentioned above in the context of “collaboration,” combined with Glass’ in-the-round ensemble arrangement, served as the chief means for achieving their objectives in sound and space, as shown in chapter three. Thus the notion of “presence” originated with Glass’ audience and sonically circled back to them. Furthermore, such concern for the peculiar acoustic features of individual performing spaces—another key feature of musical “presence”—links Glass’ *Music for Voices* and *Music with Changing Parts* to Gibson’s *Cycles* and to Landry’s improvised and quadraphonic “vort[ices] of sound.”

Finally, by considering a broader range of musical roles—that is, various types of *musicking*—this project attempts to relocate a few episodes in minimalist and late-century American music history within specific communities. Reich found sympathetic musical partners in Gibson and Murphy, and then discovered interested audiences at the Park Place Gallery. Glass joined them and their network expanded to include the Film-Makers Cinematheque and the Anti-Illusion exhibitors. Glass’s experiments with high volumes may have strained his reception in St. Louis in May 1972, but he nevertheless continued to find sympathetic listeners among audiences elsewhere, especially among the artists and performers who attended the open rehearsals / workshop performances he held in his 10 Bleecker Street studio in Manhattan. His mounting reputation, first with the premiere of *Music in Twelve Parts* at Town Hall in 1974 and later with the introduction of *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976, stood out as an anomaly within the downtown
scene. In the late seventies, figures like Gibson and Landry continued to operate on a more modest scale similar to their status in the early years of the decade. This is not to romanticize obscurity, for the lingering effects of this period may still be seen in the stark disparity of economic conditions enjoyed—and endured—by these musicians today.

Finally, Joan La Barbara’s tenure with the Philip Glass Ensemble may have been one of the shortest in the organization’s history, but her story appears here because of the incomparable window it provides onto the downtown scene. La Barbara played nearly every possible role available within her community: she was simultaneously composer, performer, audience member, and critic—the complete musicking package. Chapter five recovers her crucial participation, alongside that of the more ubiquitous John Rockwell and Tom Johnson, as a writer helping the downtown community define itself. Her work as a critic, in addition to her performing and composing, effectively binds together the categories implicit in the final term of this dissertation’s title, “community.”

_Einstein and After_

The success of _Einstein on the Beach_ represented a high-water mark not only for its composer and his ensemble, but also for the entire downtown art and performance community. Not only did the opera reflect an increasing acceptance of the artistic and theatrical avant-garde broadly speaking, but it was also seen as the community’s pinnacle achievement. Mary Heilmann, a painter living at 10 Chatham Square (discussed in chapter three), recalls:

> Now this was 1976, and things were really starting to heat up. We were all starting to work. The biggest thing was Philip Glass and Robert Wilson collaborating on _Einstein on the Beach_. There was so much energy and excitement around that.³

³ Mary Heilmann, _The All Night Movie_ (Zurich: Offizin, 1999), 46.
After the opera’s premiere in Avignon, France, in July, the *SoHo Weekly News* published an ecstatic review that ran longer than a full printed page, which declared the opera to be “more than brilliant, more than a masterpiece, more than mere total-theater.” It was, according to the reviewer, “the first complete art-statement […] of our times, of our schizophrenic split between mind and soul, between science and magic, between material reality and desired transcendence.” The community paper dedicated no fewer than five separate reviews—three full printed pages—to the American debut of the opera at Lincoln Center that November. Each reviewer described the collaborative work of Glass, Wilson, Childs, and Andy DeGroat as the embodiment of creative impulses born downtown. The dozens of articles that appears in major international papers and magazines that year vastly overshadow these *SoHo Weekly News* reviews, yet—once again—they provide a special glimpse of the downtown community working to define and understand itself, as its ideas were beginning to undergo a process of broader cultural accreditation.

*Einstein on the Beach* also facilitated the rise of Michael Riesman within the Philip Glass Ensemble. Riesman had established a modest presence as an experimental composer within the downtown scene in the early decade. Audiences heard Riesman’s *Phases for Electronically Modulated Piano* alongside Frederick Rzewski’s *Requiem* and Steve Reich’s *Phase Patterns* at

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Martinson Hall in Greenwich Village in late October 1971. In December 1972, Riesman held a concert of his own music at 112 Greene Street, one of the most characteristically raw alternative spaces in SoHo. He joined the Philip Glass Ensemble as a keyboardist in 1974. During the difficult early rehearsals for Einstein on the Beach in 1975, Riesman offered Glass his services as a conductor to help lead the singers’ rehearsals. Over the opera’s long rehearsal period, Riesman’s leadership role evolved and increased to the point that, by the end of 1976, Glass had made Riesman his musical director, a role in which he continues to serve today. Under his leadership, the Philip Glass Ensemble developed an increasing level of professionalism and musical discipline that it had not previously known in its salad days in the early 1970s downtown art world.

At every point this dissertation has avoided the most visible subjects of history, preferring instead minor composers and compositions, overlooked aesthetic ideas, private rehearsals and small-scale concerts, and lesser-known critics writing in community newspapers. In documenting the less visible and unruly margins of a familiar period of music history, I have sought ever more representative cross-sections of the communities (even the communities within communities) in which the music first appeared. From building upon prior scholarship with “minor history,” to

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6 Riesman’s performance of his own work appears to have been one of the least controversial works on the program, as may be judged from the titles of the concert’s reviews. Both reviewers saved their harshest critiques for Steve Reich. See Allen Hughes, “Philharmonic Experiment Poses Questions in Downtown Concert,” New York Times, 31 October 1973, 81; Leighton Turner, “Leave the Tantrums to the Audience,” Village Voice, 11 November 1971, 35.


moving beyond repetition with the experience of space and high volume, this project offers a richer understanding of the music of the Philip Glass Ensemble in 1970s New York, and thus also of one of the most crucial periods in late twentieth-century American music-making.
APPENDIX

SELECTED PERFORMANCES BY MUSICIANS
REPRESENTED IN THIS DISSERTATION

The concerts listed below include dates, venues, repertoire and personnel, wherever they could be reliably determined. These come from the performance records and curriculum vitae of Philip Glass, Richard Landry, Jon Gibson, and Joan La Barbara, as well as concert calendars printed in periodicals such as the New York Times, New Yorker magazine, SoHo Weekly News, and archived programs. Concerts featuring the music of Michael Riesman and Richard Peck are also included here, because of their affiliation with the Philip Glass Ensemble, though the project does not give their work the consideration they deserve. It is hoped that this information will prove useful to future scholarly consideration of the ensemble and its members.

1966


  Reich: Come Out (1966)—premiere

27–29 MAY 1966: Park Place Gallery, 542 West Broadway, New York

  Reich: Music for Piano and Tape (1964)
  Reich: It’s Gonna Rain (1965)
  Reich: Come Out
  Reich: Melodica (1966)—premiere

1967

5 JANUARY 1967: “An Evening of Music by Steve Reich,” Fairleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey

  Reich: Music for Two Pianos and Tape
  Reich: It’s Gonna Rain
  Reich: Saxophone Phase (1966)—premiere
  Reich: Piano Phase (1966)—premiere
  Reich: Come Out
  Reich: Two Variations on a Watermelon (1966)—premiere

Performers: Steve Reich, Jon Gibson, Arthur Murphy
31 JANUARY 1967: “Angry Arts—New Music,” Loeb Student Center, New York University

Reich: *Piece for Two Pianos* [Piano Phase]

Performers: Reich, Murphy


Reich: *Improvisations on a Watermelon*
Reich: *Come Out*
Reich: *Saxophone Phase*
Reich: *Melodica*
Reich: *Four Pianos* [Piano Phase]

Performers: Reich, Murphy, Gibson, Philip Corner, James Tenney

1968


Reich: *Improvisations on a Watermelon*
Reich: *It’s Gonna Rain*
Reich: *Reed Phase*
Reich: *Come Out*
Reich: *Melodica*
Reich: *Piano Phase*

Performers: Murphy, Reich, Gibson


Glass: *Strung Out* (1967)—premiere
Glass: /* for Jon Gibson* (1968)—premiere
Glass: *In Again Out Again* (1968)—premiere

Note: Reich repertoire uncertain.


Glass: *Strung Out*

Performer: Malcolm Goldstein

Glass: *Piece in the Shape of a Square* (1968)—premiere
Glass: *In Again Out Again*
Glass: */ for Jon Gibson*
Glass: *Strung Out*
Glass: *How Now* (1968)—premiere

Performers: Gibson, Glass, Reich, Dorothy Pixley

15 [or 16] JUNE 1968: Spencer Church, New York

Reich: *Improvisations on a Watermelon*

Performers: Murphy, Reich

12 JULY 1968: “An Afternoon of Live Electronic Music,” Fine Arts Center Recital Hall, University of New Mexico

Glass: *Strung Out*
Glass: *How Now*
Reich: *It’s Gonna Rain*
Reich: *Piano Phase*

Performers: Gilberto Orellana (violin), Reich

1969

24 JANUARY 1969: Los Angeles Municipal Junior Arts Center

Gibson: *Single Stroke Roll* (1968)—premiere

5 FEBRUARY 1969: North Shore Country Day School, Chicago

Reich: *Improvisations on a Watermelon*
Reich: *It’s Gonna Rain*
Reich: *Melodica*
Reich: *Come Out*
Reich: *Piano Phase*

Performers: Murphy, Reich
10 MARCH 1969: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Glass: *Two Pages* (1969)—premiere

Performer: Glass

14 MARCH 1969: Galerie Ricke, Cologne, West Germany

Glass: *Two Pages* (1969)

Performer: Glass

22 MARCH 1969: Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland

Glass: *Two Pages* (1969)

Performer: Glass


Reich: *Pulse Music* (1969)—premiere
Glass: *Strung Out*
Glass: *Two Pages*
Reich: *Violin Phase* (1967)—premiere

Performer: Reich, Glass, Gibson, Richard Landry, Murphy, Tenney, Paul Zukofsky (violin)


Glass: *How Now*
Glass: *Two Pages*

Performers: Gibson, Glass, Landry, Murphy, Reich, Tenney


Reich: *Four Log Drums* (1969)—premiere
Reich: *Pulse Music*
Reich: *Pendulum Music* (1968)
Reich: *Violin Phase*

Performers: Gibson, Glass, Landry, Murphy, Reich, Zukofsky
1970


Glass: *Music in Fifths* (1969)—premiere
Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion* (1969)
Glass: *Music in Similar Motion* (1969)

Performers: Glass, Gibson, Reich, Landry, David Behrman, Beverly Lauridsen, Tenney, Murphy


Reich: *Phase Patterns* (1970)—premiere
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *Four Organs* (1970)—premiere

Performers: Steve Chambers, Gibson, Glass, Murphy, Reich


11-12 MAY 1970: “Two Evenings of Music by Steve Reich,” Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Reich: *Reed Phase* (11 May only)
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Come Out* (11 May only)
Reich: *Pendulum Music*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Pulse Music* (12 May only)
Reich: *Melodica* (12 May only)

Performers: Gibson, Murphy, Reich, Chambers, Glass
13–14 MAY 1970: “Two Evenings of Music by Philip Glass,” Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Glass: *Music in Fifths*
Glass: *Music in Eight Parts* (1969)—premiere (both evenings)
Glass: *Music in Similar Motion* (both evenings)
Glass: *How Now*

Note: Glass’ and Reich’s concerts were two of three series presented in the “Two Evenings of Music” series at Walker Arts Center. A third featured the Sonic Arts Group on 1–3 May 1970.


Reich: *Melodica*
Reich: *Improvisations on a Watermelon*
Reich: *Reed Phase*
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *My Name Is*
Reich: *Pendulum Music*
Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Hatsyiatsya* patterns for *Azida* and *Gahu* dances

Performers: Chambers, Gibson, Murphy, Reich, Warner Jepson, James Melchert, Pat Gleeson, Robert Nelson, William T. Wiley


Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts* (1970)—premiere

Performers: Reich, Landry, Gibson, Chambers, Barbara Benary

1971

30 JANUARY 1971: Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Reich: *Piano Phase*

Performers: Reich, Murphy
1 FEBRUARY 1971: Loeb Student Center, New York University

Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Landry, Gibson, Glass, Benary, Robert Prado

26 FEBRUARY 1971: “Musik der Amerikanischen Avantgarde: Phil Glass und sein Ensemble,”
Evanglischer Gemeindesaal, Düren, Kuhgasse, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Fifths*
Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion*
Glass: *Music in Eight Parts*
Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Chambers, Benary, Gibson, Glass, Landry, Murphy

27 FEBRUARY 1971: “Musik der Amerikanischen Avantgarde: Phil Glass und sein Ensemble,”
Neue Galerie, Alten Kurhaus, Aachen, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Fifths*
Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion*
Glass: *Music in Eight Parts*
Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Chambers, Benary, Gibson, Glass, Landry, Murphy

3 MARCH 1971: Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf, West Germany

Performers: “Phil Glass und sein Ensemble”

7 MARCH 1971: “Concert: The Steve Reich Ensemble,” Institute of Contemporary Arts,
London

Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *Pendulum Music*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Drumming* (1970)—premiere (in progress)

Performers: Chambers, Glass, Murphy, Reich, Gibson, Hugh Davies, Michael Nyman, Howard Rees
8 MARCH 1971: Wimbledon College of Art, London

Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*


Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Gibson, Benary, Murphy, Landry, Chambers

13 MARCH 1971: “Live Electric Music,” Semaines musicales d’Orleans, France

Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *Pendulum Music*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Gibson, Chambers, Glass, Murphy

16 MARCH 1971: Théâtre de la Musique, Paris, France

Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *Pendulum Music*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Chambers, Murphy, Gibson, Glass, Reich

16 APRIL 1971: Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts, Part 1 (1971)—premiere*

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 1
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Mabou Mines (Joanne Akalaitis, Ruth Maleczech, David Warrilow), Murphy, Prado, Landry, Gibson, Glass, Benary, Chambers, Frederic Rzewski, Richard Teitelbaum

12 MAY 1971: Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut

Reich: *Piano Phase*

Performers: Murphy, Reich


Glass: *Music in Fifths*
Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*

Performers: Chambers, Gibson, Landry, Murphy, Prado

12 AUGUST 1971: “Nancy Topf and Jon Gibson,” American Theater Laboratory, New York

Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Flute*
Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Logdrum/Flute*

24 AUGUST 1971: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Canada


8 OCTOBER 1971: Symphony Hall, Boston, Massachusetts

Reich: *Four Organs*

Performers: Reich, Michael Tilson Thomas, Ayerton Pinto, Newton Wayland


Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–6
29 OCTOBER 1971: New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theatre, New York

Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Four Organs*
Riesman: *Phases for Electronically Modulated Piano*

Performers: Murphy, Chambers, Reich, James Preiss, Russell Hartenberger


Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Saxophone/Softgreen* (The Cloisters, November 6)
Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Flute/Circles* (Riverside Park, November 6)
Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Flute/”Waterfall”* (Central Park, November 7)
Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Saxophone/Hardedges* (Lincoln Center, November 7)
Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Saxophone/Hardgreen* (Battery Park, November 9)
Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Flute/Trees* (Battery Park, November 10)

14 NOVEMBER 1971: Loeb Student Center, New York University

Reich: *Drumming* (1971)—premiere

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

3 DECEMBER 1971: Museum of Modern Art, New York

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Preiss, Reich, Chambers, Murphy, Gibson, Hartenberger, Jay Clayton, Ben Harms, Michael Kelley, Joan La Barbara, Frank Maefsky, James Ogden, Judy Sherman

11 DECEMBER 1971: Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians (Gary Burke, Chambers, Clayton, Gibson, Harms, Hartenberger, La Barbara, Murphy, Ogden, Preiss, Sherman, Frank Maefsky)

16 DECEMBER 1971: Town Hall, New York

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians (Burke, Chambers, Clayton, Gibson, Harms, Hartenberger, La Barbara, Maefsky, Murphy, Ogden, Preiss, Sherman)
1972


   Gibson: Voice/Tape Delay (1968)—premiere
   Gibson:Untitled Piece [Visitations] (1968/1972)—premiere

   Performers: Gibson, Rhys Chatham, John Fullerman, Duncan Lawson, Kurt Munkacsi, Douglas Simon

17 JANUARY 1972: Theatre des Amandiers, Nanterre, Paris, France

   Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

18 JANUARY 1972: Théâtre de la Musique, Paris, France

   Reich: Four Organs
   Reich: Phase Patterns
   Reich: Pendulum Music
   Reich: Drumming

   Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians (Chambers, Hartenberger, Murphy, Reich, Gibson, La Barbara, Sherman, Clayton)

21 JANUARY 1972: Philharmonic Society, Brussels, Belgium

   Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

25 JANUARY 1972: Kunsthalle, Hamburg, West Germany

   Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

28 JANUARY 1972: Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, West Germany

   Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

29 JANUARY 1972: Kuhgasse, Düren, West Germany

   Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

30 JANUARY 1972: Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, West Germany

   Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians
4 FEBRUARY 1972: Hayward Gallery, London

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians (Reich, Gibson, Chambers, Murphy, Preiss, Hartenberger, La Barbara, Clayton, Sherman, Cornelius Cardew, Gavin Bryars, Christopher Hobbs, Michael Nyman)

10 FEBRUARY 1972: Bristol, United Kingdom

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

11 FEBRUARY 1972: Oxford, United Kingdom

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

19 FEBRUARY 1972: “Solos,” Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

Performers: David Lee, Robert Prado, Rusty Gilder, Peck, Allen Braufman

20 FEBRUARY 1972: “Sunday Afternoon Concert,” La MaMa Experimental Theater, New York

Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 5

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble


Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Pendulum Music*
Reich: *Drumming*, Parts 1 and 3

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians (Chambers, Hartenberger, Preiss, Reich, Gibson, Burke)
29 FEBRUARY 1972: Emily Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University, Long Island, New York

Reich: *Music with Changing Parts*
Reich: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–6

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians (Glass, Gibson, Landry, Prado, Peck, Gilder)


Free improvisation

Performers: Landry, Lee, Prado, Gilder, Peck, Braufman

26 MARCH 1972: Spencer Concert, Village Presbyterian Church, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

28 MARCH 1972: 112 Greene Street, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 3

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Chambers, Gibson, Gilder, Glass, Landry, Peck)

13 APRIL 1972: University of California at Irvine

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

14 APRIL 1972: Pasadena Art Museum, California

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 3
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

17 APRIL 1972: California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, California

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
21 APRIL 1972: Portland State University, Oregon
  Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4
  Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

  Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

23 APRIL 1972: Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia, Canada
  Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–6

  Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

24 APRIL 1972: Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington
  Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 3
  Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

  Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

  Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4
  Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

  Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

26 APRIL 1972: Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington
  Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–6

  Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

29–30 APRIL 1972: Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota
  Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–6

  Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

2 MAY 1972: St. Louis Arts Museum, Missouri
  Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 3
  Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

  Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
6 MAY 1972: Rhode Island University, Kingston, Rhode Island

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 3–6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

7 MAY 1972: “Pro Musica Nova,” West Berlin, West Germany

Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians (Murphy, Chambers, Hartenberger, Reich, Clayton)

13 MAY 1972: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 3–6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

22 MAY 1972: Hammarskjold Plaza Sculpture Garden, New York

Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

25 MAY 1972: Museum de la Culture, Rennes, France

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

26 MAY 1972: Hans Meyer–Denise Reue, Düsseldorf, West Germany

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

12–13 JUNE 1972: L’Attico, Rome, Italy

Reich: *Four Organs* (both evenings)
Reich: *Pendulum Music*
Reich: *Drumming*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Piano Phase*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians
16 JUNE 1972: Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 5
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

17 JUNE 1972: Kammerspiele, Cologne, West Germany

Landry: solo improvisations

20 JUNE 1972: Duren, Kuhgasse, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 3–6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

20 JUNE 1972: Globe Zaal, Eindhoven, Holland

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

22–23 JUNE 1972: “Festival of Music and Dance,” L’Attico, Rome, Italy

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 3–6
Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

26 JUNE 1972: “Festival of Two Worlds,” San Nicolò, Spoleto, Italy

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 3
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

1 JULY 1972: Pamplona, Spain

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

3 JULY 1972: Documenta 5, Kassel, West Germany

Landry: solo improvisations
13 JULY 1972: Akademie der Künste, West Berlin, West Germany

Reich: Drumming
Reich: Four Organs
Reich: Phase Patterns
Reich: Piano Phase

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

19 AUGUST 1972: International Carnival of Experimental Sound Festival, London

Gibson: Thirties (1970)—premiere

Performers: Gibson, Bryars, Michael Parsons, Christopher Hobbs, David Rosenboom, Stanley Lunetta, Arthur Woodbury, Kurt Bischoff, Ken Horton, Jeff Karl, Peter Sutherland, Eva Scalia

8 SEPTEMBER 1972: Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, Canada

Glass: Music in Similar Motion
Glass: Music with Changing Parts

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

30 SEPTEMBER 1972: Seagram Building Event, New York

Gibson: Duet

10 OCTOBER 1972: Tapestry Gallery, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts

Reich: Four Organs
Reich: Phase Patterns
Reich: Drumming, Parts 1 and 3

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

12 OCTOBER 1972: Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians
10 NOVEMBER 1972: Free Music Store, New York

Glass: *Music for Voices*  
Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*  
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 5

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Glass, Gibson, Landry, Peck, Gilder, Murphy, Munkacsi)

10–11 NOVEMBER 1972: University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island

Reich: *Four Organs*  
Reich: *Piano Phase*  
Reich: *Phase Patterns*  
Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

15 NOVEMBER 1972: Loeb Student Center, New York University

Glass: *Music for Voices*  
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 5–7

Performers: Mabou Mines, Philip Glass Ensemble

30 NOVEMBER 1972: Mickery Theater, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Glass: *Music for Voices*

Performers: Mabou Mines

9 DECEMBER 1972: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Glass: *Music for Voices*

Performers: Mabou Mines

14 DECEMBER 1972: 112 Greene Street, New York

Riesman: solo improvisations
1973


Gibson: *Visitations*
Gibson: *Duet*
Gibson: *Thirties*
Gibson: *Multiples* (1972)—premiere
Gibson: *Variations* (1972)—premiere

Performers: Gibson, Munkacsi, Fullerman, Peck, Tina Girouard, Sergio Cervetti, Alvin Curran, Jim Fulkerson, Dan Goode, Joan Kalisch, Garrett List, Joel Press, Gregory Reeve, Gwen Watson, Richard Youngstein


Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Gibson, Landry, Murphy, Munkacsi, Peck)


Landry: quadraphonic solo improvisations


Gibson: *Thirties*
Gibson: *Vocal/Tape Delay*
Gibson: *Visitations*
Gibson: *Single Stroke Roll*

Performers: Gibson, Glass, Peck


Landry: quadraphonic solo improvisations


Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

Glass: / \ for Jon Gibson
Glass: Music in Fifths
Glass: Music in Twelve Parts, Part 5

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Gibson, Landry, Murphy, Munkacsi, Peck)


Munkacsi: tuned feedback pipes


Landry: quadraphonic solo improvisations


Gibson: Radioland (1972)—premiere
Gibson: Visitations


Glass: Music for Voices
Glass: Music in Contrary Motion
Glass: Music in Twelve Parts, Part 6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Gibson, Landry, Murphy, Munkacsi, Peck)


Glass: Music for Voices
Landry: quadraphonic solo improvisations

Performers: Mabou Mines


Gibson: Visitations

4 MARCH 1973: private residence of Donald Judd, New York

Glass: Music with Similar Motion
Glass: Music in Twelve Parts, Parts 1, 6, 7

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
11 MARCH 1973: Oberlin College, Ohio

Glass: *Music with Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1, 6, 7

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble


Gibson: *Alto/Improv*


Gibson: *Alto/Improv*

2 APRIL 1973: Dance Gallery, New York

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

27–28 APRIL 1973: Loeb Student Center, New York University

Glass: *Music in Fifths*
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1, 5, 6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

1 MAY 1973: Dance Gallery, New York

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

12, 13, 16, 17 MAY 1973: John Weber Gallery, New York

Reich: *Work in Progress for Six Pianos* (1973)—premiere
Reich: *Piano Phase* (for marimbas)
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Work in Progress for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* (1973)—premiere

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians (Reich, Preiss, Chambers, Hartenberger, La Barbara, Clayton, Robert Becker, Tim Ferchen, Janice Jarrett, Benjamin Herman, Joe Rasmussen, Glen Valez)

20 MAY 1973: 10 Bleecker Street, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1–4

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
29 MAY 1973: Dance Gallery, New York

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

[SUMMER] 1973: Cincinnati, Ohio

Gibson: *Duet*
Gibson: *Trio/Improv*
Gibson: *Cincinnati Foundation Music*

8–10 JUNE 1973: American Theater Laboratory, New York

Gibson: *Melody I (1973)*—premiere
Gibson: *Melody II (1973)*—premiere

9 JUNE 1973: Van Cortland Park, Parade Ground, Bronx, New York

*Glass: Music in Twelve Parts, 2–5*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Landry, Munkacsi, Gibson, Peck, Glass, Bob Telson)

10 JUNE 1973: Clove Lake Park, Staten Island, New York

*Glass: Music in Twelve Parts, Part 2*
*Glass: Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Landry, Munkacsi, Gibson, Peck, Telson, Glass)

17 JUNE 1973: Cunningham Park, Queens, New York

*Glass: Music in Twelve Parts, Part 2–5*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Landry, Munkacsi, Gibson, Peck, Telson, Glass)

19 JUNE 1973: Max’s Kansas City, New York

*Glass: Music with Changing Parts*
*Glass: Music in Twelve Parts, Parts 2–3*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Landry, Munkacsi, Gibson, Peck, Telson, Glass)

25–26 JUNE 1973: Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

*Glass: Music for Voices*

Performers: Mabou Mines
26 JUNE 1973: Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 2–5

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Landry, Munkacsi, Gibson, Peck, Telson, Glass)
28 JUNE 1973: Central Park Bandshell, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 5
Glass: *Music in Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Landry, Munkacsi, Gibson, Peck, Telson, Glass)

29–30 JUNE 1973: University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

Glass: *Music for Voices*

Performers: Mabou Mines

10 SEPTEMBER 1973: Battery Park, New York

Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 7–8

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

14–20 SEPTEMBER 1973: Festival d’Automne, Musee Galleria, Paris, France

Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*
Glass: *Music in Fifths*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

20 SEPTEMBER 1973: Contemporary Museum of Art, Houston, Texas

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

10 OCTOBER 1973: State University of New York at Buffalo

Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Drumming*, Part 2

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Chambers, Ferchen, Preiss, Reich, Velez, La Barbara, Jarrett)

12 OCTOBER 1973: University of South Western Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations
14 OCTOBER 1973: Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1, 2, 7, 8

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

16 OCTOBER 1973: Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas

Gibson/Topf: *Dance/Flute*
Gibson: *Melody I*
Gibson: *Visitations*

17 OCTOBER 1973: Rice University, Houston, Texas

Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

19 OCTOBER 1973: University of South Western Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 3–6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

4 NOVEMBER 1973: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California

Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*
Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *Clapping Music*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

5 NOVEMBER 1973: “Monday Evening Concerts,” Los Angeles, California

Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Six Pianos*
Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians
8 NOVEMBER 1973: De Young Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, California

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

9 NOVEMBER 1973: St. John’s Presbyterian, Berkeley, California

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

11 NOVEMBER 1973: Rothko Chapel, Houston, Texas

Reich: *Drumming*

Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

12 NOVEMBER 1973: Rice University, Houston, Texas

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

13 NOVEMBER 1973: Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

13 NOVEMBER 1973: Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.

Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 2, 5, 6

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

15 NOVEMBER 1973: Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

17 NOVEMBER 1973: Oberlin College, Ohio

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians
29 NOVEMBER 1973: private residence of Lita Hornick

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

4 DECEMBER 1973: School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 2
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

7–8 DECEMBER 1973: Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

Gibson: *Dance/Flute*
Gibson: *Single Stroke Roll*
Gibson: *Visitations*

11 DECEMBER 1973: Washington Square Church, New York

Performers: New Wilderness Preservation Band (La Barbara, Charlie Morrow, Bruce Ditmas, Harvie Swartz, Carol Weber)

11 DECEMBER 1973: Experimental Intermedia, New York

Gibson: *Single Stroke Roll*
Gibson: *Visitations*

12 DECEMBER 1973: Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

15 DECEMBER 1973: Loeb Student Center, New York University

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

16 DECEMBER 1973: New York Cultural Center

Reich: *Drumming*
Reich: *Music for Pieces of Wood*
Reich: *Six Pianos*
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians
16 DECEMBER 1973: 10 Bleecker Street, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 6–9

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

29 DECEMBER 1973: Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

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1974

15 JANUARY 1974: Washington Square Church, New York

Performers: New Wilderness Preservation Band (Morrow, Ditmas, Swartz, Weber, La Barbara)

16 JANUARY 1974: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion*
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 2

Performers: Glass, Telson

19–20 JANUARY 1974: Funkstudio Berg, Stuttgart, West Germany

Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Piano Phase*
Reich: *Six Pianos*
Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians


Landry: solo quadrophonic improvisations
26 JANUARY 1974: Tage der Neuen Musik, Hannover, West Germany

Reich: *Music for Pieces of Wood*
Reich: *Six Pianos*
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

29 JANUARY 1974: Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf, West Germany

Reich: *Music for Pieces of Wood*
Reich: *Six Pianos*
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

31 JANUARY 1974: Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland

3 FEBRUARY 1974: Henie-Onstad Foundation, Oslo, Norway

Reich: *Music for Pieces of Wood*
Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Drumming*
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

3 FEBRUARY 1974: 10 Bleecker Street, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts, 2, 3, 8, 9

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

5–6 FEBRUARY 1974: Fylkingen, Stockholm, Sweden

Reich: *Four Organs*
Reich: *Phase Patterns*
Reich: *Music for Pieces of Wood*
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians
11 FEBRUARY 1974: Queen Elizabeth Hall, London

Reich: *Music for Pieces of Wood*
Reich: *Six Pianos*
Reich: *Clapping Music*
Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

12 FEBRUARY 1974: Aberdeen, United Kingdom

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

13 FEBRUARY 1974: St. Andrews, United Kingdom

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

14 FEBRUARY 1974: Durham, United Kingdom

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

15 FEBRUARY 1974: Manchester, United Kingdom

Reich: *Drumming*

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

15–17 FEBRUARY 1974: Contemporanea Festival, Rome, Italy

Glass: *Music in Fifths*
Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts, Parts 1–9*
Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion*
Glass: *Music in Similar Motion*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

16 FEBRUARY 1974: Brighton, United Kingdom

Performers: Steve Reich and Musicians

19 FEBRUARY 1974: Art Tapes, Florence, Italy

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations
22 FEBRUARY 1974: Galleria Forma, Genoa, Italy

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

1–2 MARCH 1974: The Kitchen, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

5 MARCH 1974: Washington Square Church, New York

Gibson: *Song I* (1973)—premiere
Gibson: *Song II* (1974)—premiere
Gibson: *Cycles* (1974)—premiere
Gibson: *Solo for Saxophone* (1974)—premiere

Performers: Benary, Gibson, Russell, Munkacsi, Martha Siegel, David Van Tieghem

24–25 MARCH 1974: 112 Greene Street, New York

Peck: solo improvisations

29 MARCH 1974: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 2, 3, 8, 9

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

21 MAY 1974: Washington Square Church, New York

Performers: New Wilderness Preservation Band (Morrow, La Barbara, Swartz, Weber)

1 JUNE 1974: Town Hall, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts* (complete)—premiere

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble (Gibson, Landry, Peck, Munkacsi, Telson, La Barbara)

6 JUNE 1974: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 2, 3, 7–12

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

[JULY] 1974: “Projekt ’74,” Cologne, West Germany

Gibson: *Single Stroke Roll*
Gibson: *Visitations*
Gibson: *Song I*
Gibson: *Melody I*
Gibson: *Cycles*
Gibson: *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*

2–3 JULY 1974: “Projekt ’74,” Cologne, West Germany

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

5, 7–9 JULY 1974: “Projekt ’74,” Cologne, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts* (complete)

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

6 JULY 1974: Galerie M, Bochum, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 9–12

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

12 JULY 1974: Kuhgasse, Duren, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 9–12

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

29 AUGUST 1974: private residence of Frederika Hunter, Houston Texas

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

[AUTUMN] 1974: l’Espace Cardin, Paris, France

Tudor: *Rainforest*

Performers: Gibson, La Barbara, others
16–17 OCTOBER 1974: Berlin Music Festival, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1–8

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

23 OCTOBER 1974: Galerie Schmela, Dusseldorf, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 2, 3, 7, 8

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

24–25 OCTOBER 1974: Kulturamt, Bonn, West Germany

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1–8

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

28–29 OCTOBER 1974: Salvatore Ala Gallery, Milan, Italy

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1–8

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

30 OCTOBER 1974: Salvatore Ala Gallery, Milan, Italy

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

31 OCTOBER 1974: Salvatore Ala Gallery, Milan, Italy

Gibson: *Solo I*
Gibson: *32/11*
Gibson: *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*
Gibson: *Visitations*

11–12 NOVEMBER 1974: The Kitchen, New York

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

17 NOVEMBER 1974: Laval University, Quebec City, Canada

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1–4

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
19 NOVEMBER 1974: Musee d’Art Contemporain, Montreal, Canada

    Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 9–12

    Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

21 NOVEMBER 1974: Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

    Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 9–12

    Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble


    Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations


    Gibson: *Tune*
    Glass: *1+1*

30 NOVEMBER 1974: The Open Mind, New York

    La Barbara: vocal improvisations

7 DECEMBER 1974: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas

    Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts* (complete)

    Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

9 DECEMBER 1974: Rice University, Houston, Texas

    Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

9 DECEMBER 1974: St. Mark’s Church, New York

    La Barbara: *Voice Piece: One-Note Internal Resonance Investigation* (1974)–premiere

10 DECEMBER 1974: private residence of Fredericka Hunter, Houston, Texas

    Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion*
    Glass: *Two Pages*
    Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Part 6

    Performer: Glass
[WINTER?] 1974: University of South Western Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana
   Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

[WINTER?] 1974: Contemporary Arts Center, Houston, Texas
   Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

[WINTER?] 1974: Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas
   Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

15 DECEMBER 1974: Experimental Intermedia, New York
   Note: performing personnel and repertoire uncertain.

1975

1 JANUARY 1975: St. Mark’s Church, New York
   Glass: Einstein on the Beach, “Building”
   Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

15 JANUARY 1975: Washington Square Church, New York
   La Barbara: Vocal Extensions—premiere
   La Barbara: Hear What I Feel—premiere

[JANUARY?] 1975: Mills College, Oakland, California
   Gibson: Cycles
   Gibson: Single Stroke Roll
   Gibson: Visitations

[JANUARY?] 1975: University of California at Santa Cruz
   Gibson: Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet
[JANUARY?] 1975: Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, California

Gibson: *Song I*
Gibson: *Untitled*—premiere
Gibson: *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*
Gibson: *Single Stroke Roll*
Gibson: *Visitations*

2, 9, 16, 23 FEBRUARY 1975: Idea Warehouse, New York

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts* (complete)
Glass: *Music with Changing Parts*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

21 FEBRUARY 1975: Vehicule Art Gallery, Montreal, Canada

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

[WINTER] 1975: Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas

Gibson: *Song I*
Gibson: *32/11*
Gibson: *Untitled*
Gibson: *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*
Gibson: *Dance/Flute*

18 MARCH 1975: Experimental Intermedia, New York

Gibson: *Cycles*
Gibson: *Song I*
Gibson: *Untitled*
Gibson: *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*
Gibson: *32/11*


Glass: *Two Pages*
Glass: *Music in Contrary Motion*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

10 APRIL 1975: Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut

La Barbara: *Hear What I Feel*
La Barbara: *Vocal Extensions* (1975)—premiere
6 MAY 1975: Town Hall, New York

Glass: Another Look at Harmony, Parts 1, 2—premiere

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble


Gibson: Melody IV—premiere
Gibson: Song II
Gibson: Untitled
Gibson: 32/11

15 JUNE 1975: Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Glass: Another Look at Harmony

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

16 JUNE 1975: De Doelen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Glass: Music in Twelve Parts (excerpts)

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

17 JUNE 1975: Stadsschousburg, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

Glass: Another Look at Harmony

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

18 JUNE 1975: Theatre Carre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Glass: Music in Twelve Parts (excerpts)

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

19 JUNE 1975: Kurzaal, Scheveningen, The Netherlands

Glass: Another Look at Harmony

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
23 JUNE 1975: Theatre d’Orsay, Paris, France
   Glass: *Music in Twelve Part* (complete)
   Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

16 OCTOBER 1975: Free Music Store, New York
   Gibson: *Melody III*
   Gibson: *Untitled*

16 OCTOBER 1975: Kresge Town Hall, University of California at Santa Cruz
   Performer: Joan La Barbara

17 OCTOBER 1975: University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley
   Performer: Joan La Barbara

18 OCTOBER 1975: Mills College, Oakland, California
   Performer: Joan La Barbara

26 OCTOBER 1975: The Kitchen, New York
   Performer: Peck, Nancy Lewis

15 NOVEMBER 1975: Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, United Kingdom
   Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1, 2, 3, 7, 8
   Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

16 NOVEMBER 1975: Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, United Kingdom
   Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 9–12
   Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

17 NOVEMBER 1975: Carlisle Cathedral, Carlisle, United Kingdom
   Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1, 2, 3, 7, 8
   Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
18 NOVEMBER 1975: St. John’s Church, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, United Kingdom

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–7

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

19 NOVEMBER 1975: Arts Center, York, United Kingdom

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 9–12

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

20 NOVEMBER 1975: Merseyside Arts Association, Liverpool, United Kingdom

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4–7

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

21 NOVEMBER 1975: Birmingham Arts Laboratory, United Kingdom

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1, 2, 3, 11, 12

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

22 NOVEMBER 1975: University of Keele, Staffordshire, United Kingdom

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 4, 5, 7, 8

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

23 NOVEMBER 1975: The Roundhouse, Camden, United Kingdom

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

26 NOVEMBER 1975: Maison de l’ORTF, Paris, France

Glass: *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1, 2, 3, 11, 12

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

9 DECEMBER 1975: St. Louis, Missouri

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

20 DECEMBER 1975: Environ, New York

La Barbara: *Circular Song: An Exploration in Vocal Sound and Movement*—premiere

[WINTER] 1975: St. Mark’s Church, New York

Gibson: *Sax/Flute*


Gibson: *Untitled*
Gibson: *Thirties*
Gibson: *Visitations*
Gibson: *Melody II*

8–10 JANUARY 1976: “3 Evenings on a Revolving Stage,” Judson Memorial Church, New York

Glass: solo organ
Gibson: *Pan Pipe Overlay*
Peck: solo piano improvisation

29 JANUARY 1976: University Art Museum, Berkeley, California

Gibson: *Song I*
Gibson: *Untitled*
Gibson: *Rhythm Study for Voice, Hands, Feet*
Gibson: *Melody III*—premiere
Gibson/Topf: *The Great Outdoors*

[JANUARY] 1976: Women’s Building, Los Angeles, California

Gibson/Topf: *The Great Outdoors*

[JANUARY] 1976: California Institute for the Arts, Valencia, California

Performer: Gibson

[WINTER] 1976: Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.

Performer: Gibson
15 FEBRUARY 1976: The Kitchen, New York

La Barbara: *Thunder*—premiere
La Barbara: *Ides of March*—premiere

4–5 MARCH 1976: Video Exchange Theater, New York

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach* (excerpts)
Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble


Glass: *Einstein on the Beach* (excerpts)
Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble


Glass: *Einstein on the Beach* (knee plays)
Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

6 APRIL 1976: Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach* (excerpts)
Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

9 APRIL 1976: Princeton University, New Jersey

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach* (excerpts)
Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble


La Barbara: *Ides of March* no. 2—premiere
La Barbara: *An Exaltation of Larks*—premiere
La Barbara: *Chords*—premiere

14 MAY 1976: The Brook, New York

Performers: La Barbara (repertoire unknown)
19 MAY 1976: Experimental Intermedia, New York

La Barbara: *Hear What I Feel*

20–22 MAY 1976: Experimental Intermedia, New York

Gibson: *Song III*—premiere
Gibson/Topf: *The Great Outdoors*

[SUMMER] 1976: University of Colorado, Colorado Spring, Colorado

Gibson/Topf: *The Great Outdoors*


Performer: La Barbara

25–29 JULY 1976: Festival d’Avignon, France

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*—premiere

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

13–17 SEPTEMBER 1976: Teatro La Fenice di Venezia, Italy

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

[SEPTEMBER] 1976: “SoHo in Berlin,” West Berlin, West Germany

Performer: Gibson

19 SEPTEMBER 1976: “SoHo in Berlin,” West Berlin, West Germany

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

22–23 SEPTEMBER 1976: “BITEF Festival,” Belgrade, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
29–30 SEPTEMBER 1976: La Monnaie, Brussels, Belgium

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

1 OCTOBER 1976: Centre d’Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

2 OCTOBER 1976: Salle Simon Patino, Geneva, Switzerland

Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations


Gibson: *Untitled*

Gibson/Topf (repertoire unknown)


Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

17–18 OCTOBER 1976: Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg, West Germany

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

22–23 OCTOBER 1976: Rotterdamse Schouwberg, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

26 OCTOBER 1976: Theater Carré, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Glass: *Einstein on the Beach*

Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble
[OCTOBER] 1976: Centre Culturel du Marais, Paris, France
   Gibson/Topf (repertoire unknown)

   Gibson: Song III

21, 28 NOVEMBER 1976: Metropolitan Opera, New York
   Glass: Einstein on the Beach
   Performers: Philip Glass Ensemble

   Landry: solo quadraphonic improvisations

17–19 DECEMBER 1976: 112 Greene Street, New York
   Peck: solo improvisations
Primary Sources: Archives

Carnegie Hall, New York, N.Y.
   Event Archives

Electronic Arts Intermix, New York, N.Y.
   Video Archives

Jon Gibson (private archives), New York, N.Y.

The Kitchen Archives, New York, N.Y.
   Artist and Event Files
   Oral History Interviews
   Audio/Video Recordings

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   Artist and Subject Files
   Artists’ Books

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   New York Institute for the Humanities Archives
   Richard Foreman Papers
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   Tim Dlugos Papers
   Tony Martin Papers

Paul Sacher Foundation (PSS), Basel, Switzerland.
   Steve Reich Collection (SSR)

Richard Landry (private archives), Lafayette, La.
Primary Sources: Original Interviews

Gibson, Jon. Interview by author, 2 June 2010, New York, N.Y. Digital audio recording.
_______ . Interview by author, 8 June 2010, New York, N.Y. Digital audio recording.
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La Barbara, Joan. Interview by author, 17 June 2010, New York, N.Y. Digital audio recording.


Murphy, Myra. Interview by author, 12 November 2012, telephone. Digital audio recording.


Riesman, Michael. Interview by author, 10 June 2010, New York, N.Y. Digital audio recording.
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Hear What I Feel. Soundings 10 (1976), [88].


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Two Solo Pieces. Chatham Square LP 24, 1977. Stereo LP.


Music in Similar Motion; Music in Fifths. Chatham Square LP 1002, 1973. Stereo LP.


La Barbara, Joan. Voice is the Original Instrument. Wizard RVW2266, 1976. Stereo LP.


Documentary and Feature Films


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