

**Deep Listening: The Strategic Practice of
Female Experimental Composers
post 1945**

by

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Volume II

Interview transcripts

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Interview 1

**Ellen
Fullman**

Date

17 May 2015

Venue

**Kulturværftet,
Elsinore, Denmark**

Keywords

EF = Ellen Fullman

KCAI = Kansas City Art Institute

LSI = Long String Instrument

TW = Theresa Wong

Names mentioned

Abramović, Marina, and Ulay (performance artists)	Anderson, Laurie (artist, musician)
Ashley, Robert (composer)	Bielecki, Bob (Robert) (sound engineer, producer, academic)
Buzzarté, Monique (musician)	Cage, John (composer)
Carr, Tim (curator, The Kitchen, New York)	Collins, Nicolas (musician, technician)
Deep Listening Band	Dempster, Stuart (musician)
Dresser, Mark (bass player)	Dreyblatt, Arnold (composer)
Dukes, Little Laura (entertainer)	Feldman, Morton (composer)
Ferguson, Ken (ceramicist, professor, KCAI)	Film Video Arts, New York (EF installing editing suites)
Franklin, C.O. (lawyer, maternal grandfather)	Fuller, Buckminster (architect, inventor)
Fullman, Peggy and Victor (EF's parents)	Fullman, Robert (Bob, EF's brother)
Gamper, David (musician)	Gene Perlowin Associates, New York (EF works as electronics technician)
Graney, Pat (choreographer)	Hawkins, Screamin' Jay (blues singer)
Hay, Deborah (choreographer)	Helms, Jesse (US conservative senator)
Hoffman, Hans (artist, EF influenced by his push and pull theory)	Ione (Carole Ione Lewis, poet, writer, partner to Pauline Oliveros)
Jackson, Mahalia (gospel singer)	Jong, Erica (author)
King, B.B. (blues guitarist)	Lewis, Stanley (painter, professor, KCAI)
Lockwood, Annea (composer)	Lucier, Alvin (composer)
McLuhan, Marshall (media theorist)	Mattson, Richard (artist, professor, KCAI)
Meyers, Michael (performance artist, professor, KCAI)	McMaster-Carr, hardware sellers (wires)
Massie, Danièle (LSI player)	Montano, Linda, and Tehching Hsieh, (performance artists)
Niblock, Phill (artist, composer)	Oliveros, Pauline (composer, writer, Deep Listening developer)

Oliveros, Peter (Pauline's stepbrother)	Panhuysen, Paul (sound artist/composer)
Partch, Harry (composer, instrument builder)	Reagan, Ronald (US president)
Riley, Terry (minimalist composer)	Rolling Stones (blues rock band)
Slawek, Anita (North Indian vocal coach, kyall tradition)	Sprenger, Konrad (aka Jörg Hiller, musician)
Uttal, Jai, and the Pagan Love Orchestra (band)	Wong, Theresa (composer, cellist, EF's partner)
Wood, Grant DeVolson (artist)	Young, La Monte (minimalist composer)
Zuckermann Harpsichords International, Connecticut	

Places, venues and organisations mentioned

Amsterdam	Austin, Texas (Candy Factory studio)
Bay Area, San Francisco (EF's home)	Berlin
Brooklyn	Catholic Club, Memphis, Tennessee
Cleveland Art Institute (EF's father attends for one year)	Eindhoven, The Netherlands
Exploratorium, the Museum of Science, Art and Human Perception, San Francisco (EF's residency)	Franklin Park, C.O., Memphis
Kansas City Art Institute (EF attends, BFA sculpture, 1979)	Memphis, Tennessee
Minneapolis College of Art and Design	Muldon, Mississippi
New York	New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting & Sculpture
Pittsburgh (father)	Seattle
Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis	Wattle & Daub Theater, Kansas (student project, KCAI)

Compositions, books, festivals, exhibitions and publications mentioned

<i>Artforum</i> (read as student)	<i>Body Music</i> (CD, EF)
<i>Change of Direction</i> (CD, EF)	<i>Departure</i> (composition, EF)
Click Festival, Elsinore, Denmark (2015)	<i>Duets on Ice</i> (composition, Laurie Anderson)
<i>Epigraphs in the Time of AIDS</i> (Oliveros)	<i>Fear of Flying</i> (novel, Jong)
<i>Fluctuations</i> (CD, EF and Monique Buzzarté)	<i>Harbors</i> (composition, EF and TW)

ELLEN FULLMAN

Long String Instrument (invention, technical difficulties, material, tuning, unusual set-ups)	<i>The Long String Instrument</i> (LP, EF)
<i>The Lovers – The Great Wall Walk</i> (performance, Abramović and Ulay)	<i>The Man Who Grew Common in Wisdom</i> (music for dance by Hay, EF)
<i>Metal Skirt Sound Sculpture</i> (sonic sculpture, EF)	<i>Music on a Long Thin Wire</i> (Lucier)
New Music America, Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis (1980)	<i>Ort</i> (CD, EF and Konrad Sprenger)
<i>Sonic Meditations</i> (Oliveros)	<i>Staggered Stasis</i> (CD, EF)
<i>Streetwalker</i> (performance, EF)	<i>Suspended Music</i> (CD, EF with the Deep Listening Band)
Terminal New York Show, Red Hook, Brooklyn (1983)	<i>TexasTravelTexture</i> (composition, EF)
<i>Work for 4 Players and 90 Strings</i> (composition, EF)	<i>The Unlearning</i> (CD, TW)
“Worksong” (song, EF with Konrad Sprenger)	

Social/art/political/miscellaneous

Acoustical beating	Accommodation (seeking, burglaries, cleaning, danger)
AIDS	Artist (EF thinking of self as an artist, feeling validated)
Building and breaking (student exercises, KCAI)	Building/making (EF, Victor Fullman)
Building materials (LSI)	Cello (EF’s research with Wong on harmonics)
Ceramics (study, love of Japanese ceramics, accumulation)	Coffee
Civil rights (grandfather’s role)	Civil war, US
DAAD (German scholarship programme)	Deep Listening and Deep Listening workshop
Dignity as an artist, validity (Europe)	Engineers and technicians (technical help)
Experimenting, building LSI	
GI Bill (educational opportunities)	Gliding tones
Income (need to earn money, EF, and father)	Jobs (kitchen; tape-machine maintenance; telephone systems; electronics technician)
Journey (music/performance as)	Legacy (students working with EF; notation system; using MIDI)

Listening	MIDI (use with LSI composition)
Music (Delta blues, blues, electronic, Indian, experimental, vocals)	Musical education
Parents (mother: home-maker/office work; father: advertising)	Process in art
Race, mixed heritage and racism in Deep South	Resonance (importance of)
Resonator (on LSI, warming up, building resonator box)	Scholarships and prizes (high school art scholarship; grants; DAAD)
School, public high school, Saturday classes	Sculpture (relationship with music)
Tape recorder (reel-to-reel, <i>musique concrète</i> techniques, physicality of tape, Feldman's Nagra unit)	Trance states
Tuning (just intonation; Bielecki; Partch)	Vatican II
Voice (tone, shamanistic states)	Water-drip drum
Weather (conditions inside Candy Factory; parents' dislike of Pittsburgh) Wires (shimmer of strings; sourcing for LSI's strings)	

File: Composer Ellen Fullman and researcher Louise Marshall
Duration: 02:13:05
Date: 17 May 2015, morning
Place: An office in the Kulturværftet, Elsinore, Denmark
Also present: Theresa Wong

Note: ellipses indicate pauses in the flow of speech. The only words that have been removed are some extraneous examples of phatic paralinguistic – “you know”, “like”, “kind of/kinda” – and not the removal of substantive material. Some of these phrases have been retained to indicate a flow of conversation.

00:00:00¹

Louise Marshall: Ellen (and Theresa), I am going to ask you some questions, but, really, they are broad discursive questions, so please go in any direction you so please. There might be bits that I return to over the course of our hour or so together, so if it seems like I am repeating myself, please don't think me rude – it's just that I am trying to get things.

Can you tell me first of all a bit about your early years, a bit about your family? How would you describe them?

Ellen Fullman: Yes. So I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, and my father was from Pittsburgh, my mother, Memphis, so I have this actually mixed cultural heritage.² My dad... was an artist. He was a very serious painter as a young man and, I think, a very interesting painter. His style was American regionalism, which is kinda, you know, Grant

¹ This transcript has been seen and approved by Ellen Fullman.

² Victor and Peggy Fullman. I ask Fullman for her parents' first names much later in the interview.

Wood style.³ And he went to art school at the Cleveland Art Institute for one year, but due to financial reasons and the [Second World] War picking up, he...

Louise Marshall: Was he a soldier during the war?

Ellen Fullman: He was drafted but he had a disability with one eye, so he wasn't able to go into combat. And he stayed. He worked in the headquarters in Washington [DC]. Actually, what he did was create graphics that, when they planned battles, they had graphics that they moved around on a big board, you know, so he made things like that.

Louise Marshall: Like a plotting board, they call them in the UK.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, yeah.

Louise Marshall: After the war, did he practise as an artist in Memphis?

Ellen Fullman: He did a bit. With the GI Bill, you could attend college after the war, but he was married, and my parents had my brother soon thereafter and it was just too much.⁴ He just stopped pursuing a degree. And then my parents didn't like the weather in Pittsburgh and, you know, my dad said that he would never have to shovel snow, rain, in Memphis so they went back to my mom's family roots and got support that way and my dad went into advertising. He did a bit of painting after that, but I would say that the work wasn't as serious, but I really

³ Grant DeVolson Wood (1891-1942). The regionalist style was a response to the 1930s' economic depression. Wood's *American Gothic* is a typical regionalist painting.

⁴ Fullman's brother, Robert (Bob), was born in 1947. Speaking before the interview began, Fullman mentioned how she always remembered artist Laurie Anderson's birth year because her brother shared it.

love his earlier work when he was about twenty years old. I have these paintings and I think they are very, very sensitive and [they] influenced me a lot. And I began knowing that I would be an artist when I was five. I just always... there was nothing else. I loved it so much. I loved... my dad built himself an outdoor room, studio; he built a place for the car and a room attached to it. And... he made, he kinda built, his own miniature, like, dream, his own personal dream, and made it all himself.⁵ He had northern light, which is good for painting, this great big casement window and I always loved that, the crank, with the window swinging out, and just the smell of oil paint and the excitement and fun of manifesting something, and I was hooked. The excitement of waking up in the morning and looking at what you made the day before.

00:05:00

And then he also did a lot of design work, which influenced me as well. Just whatever he wanted, he just made it. Because... my parents, you know, had a modest income and we lived in a small house. Now the neighbourhood is a neighbourhood of immigrants because it's the lower, you know, because the houses are smaller, older. That was interesting for my parents' retirement years. There was an Iraqi family that they got to know, and a Polish/German [family]? It was interesting for them.

Louise Marshall: That was in their later years. Was...

⁵ Fullman's account of her father's activities echoes her lyrics in "Worksong", a song she wrote while living in Brooklyn and which is featured on *Ort*, an album she made with Konrad Sprenger (aka Jörg Hiller): "*I found a chair on the street/ found some wood/ and built a table.*" (Fullman and Sprenger 2004) She will reference these lyrics explicitly later in this interview (Marshall 2015a 01:05:15)

Ellen Fullman: In the early years – actually my neighbourhood was an orthodox Jewish neighbourhood because there were two synagogues and so I grew up in a very much dominated orthodox Jewish culture.

Louise Marshall: Right. Although your family were not Jewish.

Ellen Fullman: No, no. I grew up Catholic.

Louise Marshall: Church and school?

Ellen Fullman: Mmm-hmm. I went to Catholic school. Yeah.

Louise Marshall: What about your mum?

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, my mom grew up in a big family, seven children, but her mom passed away when she was four years old, just after childbirth, from pneumonia. And, there's just, you know, a very sad childhood. You know, there was a stepmother and it wasn't happy at all she didn't really get a good parental attention, but a very charismatic grandfather. Her father was, you know, a very well-known lawyer in Memphis, and had a public park named after him, yeah. (Smiles)

Louise Marshall: What was his name?

Ellen Fullman: C. O. Franklin and there was just a lot of love there. My mom was the oldest child and he was very tender with her, and, um... but um...

Louise Marshall: Your brother was born in '47. And you [in 1957]. It was just the two of you?

Ellen Fullman: Yes. My grandfather was known for, well, my mom said at his funeral, there was in the receiving line – she wasn't aware of this, but he had done a lot of pro bono work for people without means, which means black people – and she said that in the receiving line she was so moved and surprised, there were hundreds of people coming up to tell her just in tears what he had done for them, so I felt very proud of him.

Louise Marshall: Yeah, a brave thing for someone to have done...

Ellen Fullman: ... in the South...

Louise Marshall: ... in the South in that period, I'd say, no?

Ellen Fullman: Yes, and what I suspect, in a way my feeling [is], I haven't done my research yet, I need to get my cousin to, my male cousin, to do a swab test, but to me they're evidence that point to the fact that he had Native [American] heritage and, actually, Pauline's partner, Ione, like, I told her this, and she came back with, "Well, hello, sister!"⁶ (Laughter) That means, if you have Native heritage, you also have African-American heritage because the Cherokee Indians freely mixed – and you can see it, when my mom was in the retirement home, the nursing home, all of the caregivers, and, just a lot of the personnel, I got to know a lot people, and then we were talking, and one would say, "Oh, I've always had soft hair," and you'd say, "Why is that? Your hair is more reddish," and they'd say, "Oh, my grandmother

⁶ Pauline Oliveros (US, 1932-2016), composer, accordionist and formulator of the Deep Listening practice; Ione (Carole Ione Lewis), American author and playwright.

was Indian.”⁷ And this and that. It came up with every single one. They were all mixed Native American. Yeah.

00:10:18

Louise Marshall: Gosh, that’s interesting. Wow.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah. Uh-huh. See, the thing is, he looked it. He had olive skin, hair like Theresa’s, you know.⁸

Louise Marshall: So, black, shiny, straight –

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, thick. Yeah.

Theresa Wong: Very handsome and impressive looking, very wide, broad features. Tall, with a beak nose.

Ellen Fullman: Like a very thin lip.

Louise Marshall: A really imposing-looking presence.

Ellen Fullman: But I mean, he was accepted into the Irish Club and everything and (laughs) they just looked past that or didn’t notice.

Louise Marshall: Did people talk about that sort of thing?

Ellen Fullman: No! (Emphatic) Absolutely not. Because... there would be discrimination, you know, and I mean, just a hundred years before, [there had been the] Trail of Tears, so... I think that’s part of why there was so much mixing,

⁷ It is likely that the speaker that Fullman is quoting here is African American. In raising race and intermixing, Fullman is picking up on a fundamental trope of racial heritage. See: Forbes (1983); and Watkins (2012).

⁸ Theresa Wong (US, b. 1976) is an American composer and instrumentalist of east Asian heritage. She is Fullman’s partner.

because then that way they couldn't be ordered to leave, or something, I don't know.⁹ Passing, trying to pass. Because they were natively in agriculture, and my grandfather's homestead in, uh, Muldon, Mississippi, goes back to 1840. The Franklins, the family, so that was before Civil War [1861-65], and so...

Louise Marshall: That's absolutely fascinating, it really is. And your mum: she met your dad in Pittsburgh?

Ellen Fullman: No. They met in Memphis, 'cause my dad was stationed in Memphis for a time. Yeah... Okay, the Catholic Club threw dance parties for the military and she was just out of high school and all the young women did all the serving and everything and entertained, so...

Louise Marshall: I see. I see. Did she have a... did she work? Did she have a profession?

Ellen Fullman: My mom had a job, a secretarial job, at Shell Oil, like a little office in Memphis. And then she stopped working after having children and then when I was in college, went back into banking. She was [a] loan-servicing officer for ten years... yeah.

Louise Marshall: Can you talk a little bit about your first interest in music or your first memories of sound, of your particular memories of sound and of music? I find it very

⁹ The domestic policy of the US government during the 19th century systematically eroded the rights of Native American nations to their ancestral lands. An easy summary is complicated by the fact that the Native American nations were not a unified whole, and some made cessation treaties. However, following the 1830 Indian Removal Act, the indigenous inhabitants of what is now known as the Deep South were subject to forced relocations to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). In 1838-9, the majority of the Cherokee Nation took what has come to be called the "Trail of Tears" to Indian Territory. Many thousands died from disease and hunger on these journeys. Fullman's sense of the possible existence of Native American heritage in her family sensitises her to this historical injustice and suffering.

interesting that you knew from a very early age that you were destined to become an artist, but I wonder whether you had a sense of what kind of artist you were going to be or whether you were thinking of visual work at that point.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, I always thought visual and I practised very diligently through high school, like really training myself beyond the curriculum or whatever, just personally...

Louise Marshall: Drawing and painting...

Ellen Fullman: Yes, yes. Studying. I was able to... There was no formal programme for this, but there was an art college in Memphis and they had high school classes after school, Saturday classes, which I took in ceramics because a friend of mine had done ceramics and it seemed so intriguing and so I started doing that when I was fourteen and then I... High school was a joke. I went to the best high school, public high school, in Memphis and the last two years, to fulfil the degree, you only had to attend classes for three hours a day...

00:15:00

Louise Marshall: What? (Shocked)

Ellen Fullman: Yes, and the rest of it was study hall. I could have taken a bunch of electives, but I ...

Louise Marshall: Was this typical of high school at that period?

Ellen Fullman: (Laughs) At that time, in that time. Seventies. In the South.

Louise Marshall: So it was the Southern thing.

Ellen Fullman: I'm just putting it down, you know. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: But you were at a girls' school, a girls' Catholic school...

Ellen Fullman: No, no. Public. Public high. I begged my parents. See, because, my mom later told me that you would be excommunicated if you didn't put your children into the Catholic schools and everyone just did it. But then things were starting to break up after Vatican II,¹⁰ like late Sixties, so I just literally begged my parents, please let me go to the public school...

Louise Marshall: You were how old?

Ellen Fullman: Well, I was thirteen, fourteen. Thirteen. I wanted to go to ninth grade in the public school. And they let me do it. And...

Louise Marshall: Were they excommunicated?

Ellen Fullman: No, no! (Laughs) So I was going to these Saturday classes and I got the idea, that can't I audit classes [i.e. take a class], I became so close to the college students, the art school students and the professors there at school, and I was just really a part of it and I just came up with the idea, couldn't I audit courses here? They didn't have a formal programme for that. I went to the director, he said, okay, you need to bring a parent in for a meeting,

¹⁰ The Second Vatican Council (also known as Vatican II) began in 1962 during the pontificate of Pope John XXIII. Its proposals constituted a modernization programme for the worldwide Roman Catholic Church. The council formally ended in 1965.

and so my dad came after work. They let me do it. And I think it was every day I would go to high school for three hours in the morning, get on a public bus and go into the centre of town and go to art school, and, I think, either drawing or ceramics every afternoon. Yeah. And then I received – they had a scholarship that they offered to – it was called a Saturday school programme, okay. I was no longer attending Saturday school, but they gave me that scholarship, they offered it to me, and I declined it because I really wanted to go to the Kansas City Art Institute. I was very interested in ceramics and the Kansas City Art Institute – the department chair there was Ken Ferguson, who was one of the, kind of, leaders in the American craft movement, which was highly influenced by Japanese ceramics.¹¹

So... I had a very difficult time convincing my parents to allow me to go there and I was trying to find all kinds of ways to finance it and they refused to si-.... I had a small scholarship that I'd gotten from a different high school art programme and had a difficult time even convincing my parents to accept that. (Laughs) I was following my parents around with the paper, you know, over and over again... (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: And then they signed.

Ellen Fullman: And, finally, my father signed it. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: What kind of music, up until the point you went to Kansas, what were you listening to?

¹¹ Studio potter Ken Ferguson (US, 1928-2004) headed the ceramics department at the Kansas City Art Institute between 1964-96. He is regarded as a hugely important ceramicist in terms of both his own work and as an educator.

Ellen Fullman: Okay, in high school I was interested in music.

Louise Marshall: What kind of music?

Ellen Fullman: Delta blues.

Louise Marshall: Delta blues. Yes.

Ellen Fullman: Yes. Well, so my parents had told me about this performer, Little Laura Duke – Little Laura *Dukes* –¹² that they had, that she had performed on the steamboats, the river boats, you know, that they would have had dancing parties out on the Mississippi. And my mom would talk about her, you know, like – she wore a diamond tiara, a beautiful formal dress... and tennis shoes. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: And she was black –

Ellen Fullman: Pearl necklace –

Louise Marshall: She was African American.

Ellen Fullman: Teeny-tiny, like under five feet. Okay, she was still performing when I was in high school –

00:20:00

Louise Marshall: How old would she have been?

Ellen Fullman: Oh, she was in her eighties when I was in high school.

¹² “Little” Laura Ella Dukes (US, 1907-92) was born in Memphis, Tennessee, and had a long career as a blues singer, dancer and instrumentalist. She was still recording in the 1980s, a fact that could be interpreted as an indication of her economic precariousness.

- Louise Marshall: And she was performing at eighty!
- Ellen Fullman: Yeah!
- Louise Marshall: How wonderful.
- Ellen Fullman: She was, okay... she wrote her own lyrics, but of course, the structure of the song was as standard, okay, and then she just applied... a lot of that was done. Her personal lyrics, they were so funny. I loved her lyrics. Something like, er: "*I've got rocks in my pillow and my head can't get no rest.*" (Sing-song voice, blues rhythm) "*I've got rocks in ma pillow, baby, and my head can't get no rest.* (Laughter) *I got spiders on ma walls, black cats crawlin' across ma floor.*" (Laughs) "*I got grounds in ma coffee...*" Just funny, you know?
- Louise Marshall: Yeah. And you saw her perform?
- Ellen Fullman: I was able to see her once, in high school. Yeah. I recorded it on a cassette and I worked very hard to really copy the intonation and the phrasing and the kind of the shape of, I would say, the envelope of the kind of sounds of how... the articulation, because, you know, as a high school student, in that time, that was when blues was coming back into rock, with the English, you know...
- Louise Marshall: The Rolling Stones –
- Ellen Fullman: The Stones, yeah, and so then these Delta people had a, were able to, have a re-, re-, what do you call it?

Louise Marshall: A revival. I remember the Rolling Stones used to have Screamin' Jay Hawkins open for them.¹³

Ellen Fullman: Okay, sure, mmm-hmm, yeah. I was just reading this morning how B.B. King in '68, he was just in tears because his career had gone down because blues was not in style and then it came back.¹⁴

He said his turning point was performing at the Fillmore in San Francisco with [an] you know, all-white youth audience... and so anyway, it was in that period, but I... there were all kinds of white people singing the blues, and it was just like... they couldn't do it. And why not? Why wasn't it as good? It wasn't as good. It's not as good. It's the detailed articulation. It's the tonality. You're not singing this E exactly here; you're singing it here, okay? And then that kind of way of kind of noticing that really is the same... thing that I experience with Indian music, for example. Why is it so beautiful? And why can this tone, [this] particular tone, move one to tears with no words? What is it? What is it about that tone? There's a mystery. I don't know what it is, but part of it has to do with the focus, like, a depth of focus, I think.

Theresa Wong: Or also the subtlety of fluctuation. You know, it's not steady: it's very fluid and [has a] very, very subtle pitch and timbre. Any great singer has that. And it's not just this note and then this [note]; it's the way they travel from one note to the next.

¹³ Screamin' Jay (Jalacy) Hawkins (US, 1929-2000), blues/rock singer and showman.

¹⁴ The influential blues guitarist B.B. King (US, 1925-2015) had died in Las Vegas on 14 May, three days before this interview took place. Discussion about King's death and legacy (including allegations that he had been poisoned) featured prominently in the newspapers of the weekend on which this interview took place.

Louise Marshall: It's not a matter of technique; it's something beyond that. That's where the artistry comes in.

Theresa Wong: It is technique, though. It is in a way. It's having the technique so transparent that the expression has that much more depth... I don't know.

Ellen Fullman: Mmm [in agreement].

Louise Marshall: It's very interesting to hear you talk about the articulation and the shape of a phrase or the shape of a note because what we're seeing is a sculpture –

Ellen Fullman: Sculpturing air... That's right.¹⁵

Louise Marshall: Sculpturing air. Exactly, and that's going to move us forwards, I think, to one of the aspects of the Long String Instrument. When you were at Kansas, you started making sound sculptures, so you encountered sound art.

Ellen Fullman: Yes.

Louise Marshall: Can you tell me a little bit about your early encounters, the kind of people...?

00:25:06

Ellen Fullman: Sure. Okay. So, my first year at the Kansas City Art Institute blew my mind because the foundation department was all about, kind of, you know, ah, destroying... um... of... I would say... maybe

¹⁵ Thinking of her music within a spatial dimension is something that Fullman began in at least the early 1990s. In sleeve-notes to *Body Music*, Fullman details how her studies in extended harmonies (themselves much influenced by James Tenney and John Cage) led her to the realisation that harmony is “dimensional”: “Ten years ago I began this project with the concept of ‘Sculpture as Music’. At this time I have come full circle in conceiving of ‘Music as Sculpture’.” (Fullman 1993)

traditional ideas about art... or, you know, like, mmm, really, kind of breaking things up. So we did all kinds of things that moved beyond being able to draw representationally.¹⁶

Louise Marshall: Can you give an example?

Ellen Fullman: Yeah. I had a great teacher, Richard Madson and he –

Louise Marshall: Richard –? Can you...?

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, M-A-D-S-O-N, oh, M-A-T, Mat–; the way he presented a project was... he didn't really tell us everything.¹⁷ He just started with – he got together with us, and said: “Okay, how do you take things apart? What are all the ways?” You can tear something, you can cut something; we just came up with more and more things and he wrote it up, all these different ways you could take things apart, and, okay, take things apart for a week; take things apart. (Laughs) So we had this room filled with stuff that was taken apart. (Laughs) We went crazy, because with that kind of energy, teenage energy. And we went around town, you know, pulled back a tree branch, broke it up. (Laughs)

Okay, okay. Now, the next week: how do you put things together? (Laughs) Huge long list: okay, you could melt wax on something and then those two things would be stuck together, you know, crazy ways to put things together. Okay, so, okay, put this stuff together. It's, like, mind-blowing, so beyond what I thought art could be.

¹⁶ Fullman studied at the institute in the mid- to late Seventies and graduated with a BFA in sculpture in 1979.

¹⁷ Richard Mattson (US, b. 1935) was a professor in the foundation department at the Kansas City Art Institute between 1965-2013.

And we had this party where someone made some punch that had mescal in it and mescal, okay, is like tequila –

Louise Marshall: Hallucinogenic? Mescaline?

Ellen Fullman: No, not mescaline, no, no, not that, so anyway, I hadn't really experienced much alcohol. I didn't really know at that age what the different effects would be or anything, so I drank a few. Then a group of us went back to the studio and a group of us were putting things together all night long (Laughs) and it was just, you know, [we] made some great stuff. Yeah, so it was like that. I also took a course with Michael Meyers, who was also influential, M-E-Y-E-R-S, in performance art.¹⁸ He had, or probably the art institute had rented, a storefront so we had some authenticity to our practice, a storefront in old Kansas City, where we did window performances and he, from the goodwill [shop], had bought a huge pile of men's black suits, so we put on these over-sized suits and button-down dress shirts and maybe big hats. We had things to play with, okay? And that was also great. And through that I came into working with a tape recorder as a musical instrument, and the *musique concrète* types of techniques.

Louise Marshall: When you say tape recorder, you're talking reel-to-reel?

Ellen Fullman: Reel-to-reel, yeah. So you have the physicality of the tape. You cut it up, you can turn it backwards, and then I just started making things just with pots and pans and then making recordings that could then be used as a soundtrack for performance.

¹⁸ Michael K. Meyers taught at the Kansas City Art Institute between 1971-82. The performance space Fullman refers to was called the Wattle & Daub Theater.

00:30:00

Louise Marshall: So that's how it started. Tell me one or two –

Ellen Fullman: And then ceramics, kind of, I don't know... (voice tails off)

Louise Marshall: Did ceramics just fade away?

Ellen Fullman: You know, I have just a love of ceramics, when it comes to the Japanese tea ceremony aesthetic, in particular, and... yeah, I'm totally hooked on it. But I started to feel that with ceramics and with sculpture that I was... as a young person already I had accumulated a huge weight-load of stuff, and music and performance are ephemeral. And I just... and also being kind of a gypsy, not really having the finances to settle someplace or... just hauling this stuff, around storing it, and everything, in a way, it was more pragmatic, and I just like the idea of the ephemeral nature of performance.

But I always loved making things, too. But with performance, you know, I could build props. I could do whatever I wanted. I could work with film, I could... and still... I feel free to... My instrument has really taken over, because it's been so demanding. I've never been satisfied with it, like the tone was really... until now I'm starting to feel that it is settling into something that, I don't know, that ... technically I can push it timbrally or..., yeah, I can develop technique and I can share it with other people, but I was really busy with stuff like resonator design and choosing the right kind of string right up until just a couple of years ago.

Louise Marshall: And the fact that it's settling down now, as you say, will open up new avenues.

Ellen Fullman: Uh-huh, I think so. One thing is to share it with others for, to create an ensemble of others who can play with you –

Theresa Wong: And avenues of composition –

Louise Marshall: New ways of collaboration.

Ellen Fullman: New ways of composing. I've created this keyboard version, so that helps with being able to compose, say, offsite at a desk and to give that sample to other people. For example, Theresa composed sections of what we did last night.¹⁹

Theresa Wong: Yeah, one section was really me –

Ellen Fullman: Playing a keyboard –

Theresa Wong: – Improvising on the keyboard using her sample and then I showed it to her, and she went, oh, this is interesting –

Ellen Fullman: Uh-huh. I notated it. I scored it out.

Theresa Wong: I figured out how she would play that –

Ellen Fullman: She did a timeline and then I did it in what I needed as far as steps on the floor. And it worked. It worked great.

¹⁹ Fullman and Wong performed their joint composition for Long String Instrument and cello with electronics called *Harbors* at the Click Festival, Elsinore, Denmark, on 16 May 2015, the evening before this interview. (At that point, the working title of the piece was *Foghorns*.)

She composed it. That's the first time that someone... when I worked with Pauline, she, Pauline, composed a structured improvisation for me to do, but this is the first time that someone actually scored out something and it was fine, it was fantastic.²⁰

Louise Marshall: And just to go back a sec[ond], you didn't have any formal musical training as a child?

Ellen Fullman: I studied in the school band. I played clarinet briefly in the fifth grade. I would say rudimentary. My ability to read is treble clef and it's very rudimentary. I can't sight-read, really, um. And that was... You know, what I felt was, as soon as I can do something that sounds like... you know, there's an excitement – hey, I can do it, too! – that it sounds right or it sounds like it's supposed to, but then soon thereafter my interest just wanes. Why do it if it sounds what like other people can do? I think that what's partly behind my fascination with my instrument is that I wanted to create something that I had not heard before, with a unique... yeah.

00:35:02

Louise Marshall: Do you have a sense that, um, a lack of formal musical training didn't so much hold you back, but it meant that you had nothing to unlearn, so you were going into a new territory?

Ellen Fullman: I think, I think so. I've witnessed with Theresa and needing to unlearn –

²⁰ The structured improvisation referred to is *TexasTravelTexture*, a commission from Pauline Oliveros's Deep Listening Institute in 1993. It appears with Oliveros's *Epigraphs in the Time of AIDS* on the Deep Listening Band & Long String Instrument's album, *Suspended Music* (1997).

Louise Marshall: Who is classically trained –

Ellen Fullman: Who is very classically trained.

Louise Marshall: – a cellist.

Ellen Fullman: But not only that, piano. She was playing concertos at aged eight, you know, she's, you know, wonderfully skilled –

Theresa Wong: My solo album is called *The Unlearning* (2011).²¹
(Laughter)

Louise Marshall: So there we are.

Theresa Wong: It has the theme of war and violence and unlearning in that sense, but a lot of it is about a personal unlearning, not just about classical technique, but about a lot of other stuff. (Laughter)

Ellen Fullman: A lot of social training.

Theresa Wong: Social training, yeah.

Louise Marshall: This is a complete *non sequitur*, but it makes me think of Annea Lockwood attacking her pianos, and –

Ellen Fullman: Right.

Louise Marshall: And, you know, making sound in a stunningly different way.

²¹ One might read Wong's title as a wry riposte to *The Great Learning* (1969-70) by Cornelius Cardew.

Ellen Fullman: But my training was in visual art and I had a very strong, like, drawing teacher as well, Stanley Lewis, who – I love his paintings – but I started to draw like Stanley Lewis and I just wondered, well, where’s my voice? So it’s like, I don’t know... it’s like, you can’t... have to get rid of what you’re good at, and I’m a beginner in music.²²

Theresa Wong: That is the challenge for any artist. And even if you are playing an instrument, you know, the people I look up to, they’ve all kind of just kept digging deeper to find that voice and that freedom because... I think that’s a question I always ask myself, you know, should I depart and go to something else, which I’ve done in different ways, or do you keep going into that one thing you know very well, even if it’s just a traditional instrument, because there are always ways to find freedom?

Ellen Fullman: Well, with how Theresa performed last night, I mean, it really didn’t sound so much like a cello. I mean, it was kinda like a horn, or... just kinda like a very pure sound.

Louise Marshall: Yes, it’s true. There were points where I was listening, and I thought, is this was coming from the cello or the LSI?

Ellen Fullman: Right.

Louise Marshall: And I couldn’t, I couldn’t tell, and it was interesting the way that the harmonics of both instruments were complementary –

²² Stanley Lewis (US, b. 1941) taught in the painting department at the Kansas City Art Institute between 1969-86.

Ellen Fullman: Yes. Well, they were. Yeah.

Louise Marshall: In that way. In these early years when you were first getting involved in your reel-to-reel compositions and so on, were you reading John Cage, listening to John Cage –

Ellen Fullman: No-o-o, I mean John Cage –

Louise Marshall: – Anybody like that? Were there any people you were in admiration of in the experimental world at that point?

Ellen Fullman: Okay, so. The only thing that... Okay, so I was in Kansas before the Internet and so I would page through *Artforum*. You know, John Cage's writing was around and there was John Cage, Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan. It's like I would kinda skim through things that... and I associated those names together but never... didn't... see, because... and I also saw Laurie Anderson... ah, an article about her performing with the ice block –

Louise Marshall: That would have been about early Seventies, the *Duets on Ice*.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah. And I really liked that, that... the idea of a process, um... art defining a process by something happening naturally like that, um...

00:40:00 But Kansas City was a really kind of do-it, just do-it, kind of school. Every school has its own kind of, you know, kind of mood, and even, like, the Minneapolis College of Art and Design was more of a conceptual

school, okay, and so I was actually invited to perform – they did, like, an exchange. We had a faculty member from, they called it MCAD – the Minneapolis College of Art and Design – and she, ah, Kathleen, I can't remember her last name, but she had an album, a boxed set of Harry Partch's instruments,²³ and when I saw the photo I was just thrilled by it but I had already done my *Metal Skirt Sound Sculpture*, I did that when I was in my senior year in sculpture and that idea didn't... I mean, I didn't know anything, you know, about music. I... I didn't think about any contemporary scene or anything. My thoughts with that piece was [sic] Bauhaus costumes, okay? Also, this will sound really dumb, but Hans Hoffman, push and pull theory, because Stanley Lewis... Well, I studied at the New York Studio School for one semester, okay, and that's very much the New York School of Painting, okay, and that all fits in with Cage and also [Morton] Feldman was the artistic director of that school – the New York Studio School of Painting and Sculpture, okay²⁴ –

Louise Marshall: This was in the mid-, late Seventies?

Ellen Fullman: He wasn't the director at the time I was there but in previous years he was very much associated with that school. As a matter of fact, when I was there, he came in as a visiting artist with a little Nagra tape recorder, put it

²³ Harry Partch (US, 1901-74), composer and instrument maker. Partch tuned his instruments in just intonation (as opposed to the Western convention of equal temperament, which uses fixed pitches), which yields more tones than the conventional twelve tones of the diatonic scale. In just intonation, the ratios between the notes are key. Fullman's early interest in the sonic relationship of tones is relevant to the subsequent developments and iterations of her Long String Instrument. The boxed set mentioned is probably Partch's *Delusion of the Fury: A Ritual of Dream and Delusion* (1971, CBS Records, 3LPs). The third LP in the set is titled *The Instruments of Harry Partch*. An eight-page illustrated booklet was included in the set.

²⁴ The New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting & Sculpture. Composer Morton Feldman (US, 1926-87) was a highly important experimental composer and an associate of John Cage. Feldman was at one point the dean of the school.

down with two remote speakers. We all sat in, like, a little classroom on the floor around him and he played one of his pieces and it was, like, I just had no idea where that was coming from; it was, like, I didn't know what to make of it whatsoever. I knew it was important, I knew it was special, but I didn't, I couldn't, relate. I didn't understand it at all.

And then when I went back after being in New York for that fall semester and then spring was when I built the *Metal Skirt Sound Sculpture* and... so the other idea was very steeped in, like, Hans Hoffman, push and pull, and just thinking of – what that has to do with is like the flat plane pushing into the space, you know, with, by how the mark-making, then the edges were also keeping that boundary in mind, like for example, Stanley Lewis would draw a square – not a square, but a shape – on the paper and he would, like, push against it with mark-making, and you know always, or erase part of the line so that then the work was coming out off the page, out, pushing the bound–, breaking the boundary, and then the boundary of the frame also flattened the work so you've got this weird kinda battle he would say between space and flatness that the artist is conducting between space and flatness and it was *so* exciting to me to be, like, working with that, the process like that.

Louise Marshall: It's also a process of consequence. You know, if I put force in this direction, then that will go backwards, and so –

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, yeah –

Louise Marshall: It can have lots of ramifications. You can talk about social ramifications, political ramifications, or –.

00:45:00

Ellen Fullman: So I thought it was so funny that I took that thinking literally, in a literal way, in my *Metal Skirt Sound Sculpture* because when I stepped forward, um, I was like, it was kind of like the mechanics of stepping forward and backward and walking, this, the... I stepped forward, the back string was stretched out and produces, produced, a rising gliss, the front string on that leg squeezed in and produced a falling pitch and each leg was happening in the opposite timing so it was a constant rising and falling and then the skirt itself was also twerking and also just my relationship with, um, clothing because I never felt comfortable in a dress and so I put myself in a dress, but it was like armour and then I, um, decided, to walk on the streets of Minneapolis –

Louise Marshall: This was for the festival?²⁵

Ellen Fullman: Well, it was before... I did it once before the festival and one of the co-presenters I was, like, at that time I first moved to Minneapolis and I had like this film, it was called a film, not young film-makers... but it was like, it was one of these film studios, film and video, that, where

²⁵ Fullman wore her *Metal Skirt Sound Sculpture* to perform *Streetwalker* at New Music America (NMA), the Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, during 7-15 June 1980. The NMA used a variety of conventional and off-site spaces for its performances: over seventy-five artists and composers were involved in it. Pauline Oliveros, who had a commission in the festival, saw Fullman's performance. Both women met for at the festival for first time. The NMA had its origins in the New Music, New York, a festival staged at The Kitchen in 1979. Oliveros, Laurie Spiegel and Laurie Anderson were among the artists performing at this New York event, as were Meredith Monk, Philip Glass, Robert Ashley, Charles Amirkhonian and Steve Reich. It was so successful that The Kitchen's curators decided to reconfigure the event as travelling festival to be staged in different cities each year; NMA ran between 1980 and 1990. When the 1984 festival visited Hartford, Fullman played the LSI on 5 July; in the 1986 festival in Houston, Texas, she played the LSI on 10 April (outdoor stage). Fullman has placed a two-minute clip of her *Streetwalker* performance online. See: <https://vimeo.com/45207205> (accessed 21:57, 15 June 2015).

one... could take classes and... rent time, you know, just public access kind of place, and... they co-presented the New Music America festival in Minneapolis and so I had already done this film shoot and things and then they invited me to take part in the New Music America festival and then I used that film in another performance, a later performance, for them, but anyway–

Louise Marshall: To take you back a sec[ond], when you first went out on the streets in your armoured skirt, it was a very interesting –

Ellen Fullman: Yes, I decided to walk on the street where the prostitutes worked –

Louise Marshall: Really?

Ellen Fullman: – and I called it *Streetwalker* [we both say this in unison] because it's, like, I brought attention to myself even though I felt very shy and very uncomfortable in a skirt, but in this kind of a skirt it kinda, like, took it to another level, or something, something personally that I had –

Louise Marshall: The little clip of you doing *Streetwalker* that's on Vimeo: is that the street in the red-light district?

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, yeah.

Louise Marshall: And on that little clip, you're filmed from behind so we can see –

Ellen Fullman: Well, I had a parade of friends that were, like, they were following behind and then, you know –

Louise Marshall: There's a point when a man comes up really close and –

Ellen Fullman: (Laughs) Yeah –

Louise Marshall: – Says something to you but we can't hear what he's saying.

Ellen Fullman: (Laughs) Oh, it's funny. It's really funny. He says, "What planet are you from?" (Laughs)

Theresa Wong: Are there subtitles on the Vimeo?

Ellen Fullman: There're a few subtitles. Yeah, one guy, one of the guys, said, he said: "There ain't nothing really wrong with you, is there?" (Laughs) That's really... I did look like I was in some kind of, like, halo or something. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: Were you interested in things, um, conscious-raising, things coming out of the women's movement?

Ellen Fullman: Oh, yeah.

Louise Marshall: Because it you can also read the metal skirt and *Streetwalker* in a very feminist context.

Ellen Fullman: Yes. I was. Sure.

Louise Marshall: How? Were you reading or involved, was it just something in the ether?

- Ellen Fullman: Yeah, maybe in the ether. Starting to read some books like, maybe, you know... some of those standards like *Fear of Flying*, yeah.²⁶
- Louise Marshall: And so around this period, you hear Alvin Lucier's *Music on a Long Thin Wire* –'79 or '80?²⁷
- Ellen Fullman: '80. Yeah, ok. I was... so they invited me to take part, it was a kind of a satellite performance, it was kinda a last-minute invitation, I wasn't formally part of the big festival, so... but... the producer, um, actually, um, rounded-up composers – you know, "Come on! You gotta see this!" – and was driving, like, the composer van and got people like Phill Niblock and Pauline Oliveros and rounded them up to come over, so that's how I met all those people.²⁸ (Laughs)

00:50:13 It was fun because I met my crowd and, in a way, Theresa and I have talked about this, you kind of do what you do because you like those kind of people to hang around, you know, uh, find your people. And I like... like she was, was talking, I don't really love hanging around uptight classical music people, you know, it's kind of, you know, so... but anyway... so I did not hear *Music on a Long Thin Wire*, no, I didn't at that time because it was installed, and I was... I mean... I might

²⁶ Erica Jong's (1973) novel *Fear of Flying* (New York City, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston) details its female protagonist's pursuit of sexual liberation; it was both lauded and condemned on its publication.

²⁷ Alvin Lucier (US, b. 1931) is an important experimental composer whose work often focuses on the listener's auditory processes and the diminishment and decay of the sounds that he generates. *Music on a Long Thin Wire* (1977) is a work for amplified wire, sine-wave oscillator and magnet.

²⁸ Phill Niblock (US, b. 1933) is a composer, filmmaker and artist. He founded the Experimental Intermedia Foundation in 1985, an organization that supports multimedia artists. Its record label, XI, has released recordings by artists that include Fullman, Paul Panhuysen and Annea Lockwood. I identify him as a hub person who networks artists, technicians and other allied people together.

have managed to get over there, it was in St Paul, but I also had a part-time job and just getting my own show together, you know, I didn't ever hear it but it just, the thought of a long thin wire – what could you do with it, you know? It kind of triggered that, you know.

But, coincidentally, in the years since, there was, I was in a festival in Brussels where *Music on a Long Thin Wire* was installed in parallel to my instrument... (Laughs) It was great! ... [Does she, does she need, oh? {brief interruption as Theresa Wong re-enters room after a short break}]. But speaking of Alvin Lucier, were you aware that he titled a chapter “The Long String Instrument” and wrote about me? In his book, *Music...*, ah, *Music...* [to Theresa Wong], what was it?²⁹

Theresa Wong: The name of his class.

Ellen Fullman: The classroom. *Music 105* or something.³⁰

Louise Marshall: I didn't know about this, but I'll –

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, because he invited me to Wesleyan [University, Connecticut] in 19...88 and... um, ...

Louise Marshall: To lecture or perform?

Ellen Fullman: Well, to perform.

Louise Marshall: What did you perform?

²⁹ Lucier 2012: 144-149.

³⁰ *Music 109: Notes on Experimental Music*. (Lucier 2012)

Ellen Fullman: The Long String Instrument. Yeah, I performed a duet, actually there was two of us playing on it. I played with Danièle... Massie.³¹ We played in the basketball court, tied two ends to the poles.

Louise Marshall: I love these details. (Laughs) So after you graduated from Kansas, you moved directly to New York?

Ellen Fullman: No, I went to Minneapolis.

Louise Marshall: Okay, you were in Minneapolis with your crowd?

Ellen Fullman: Well... my crowd, no. Yeah, they were a great crowd, but... Okay, it wasn't exactly like that... I was invited to... Okay, I was talking about MCAD and I was invited, there was an exchange between artists to do performing and so this Kathleen [op. cit.] organised this thing and so we, a group of us, went up, drove up from Kansas City straight up to Minneapolis and performed at MCAD and, you know, I was talking about the milieu of Kansas City Art Institute as opposed to the Minneapolis College of Art & Design? [It] was like, a conceptual school, very intellectual, and there wasn't much work around, and it was, like to me, it felt kind of deadening. I loved the atmosphere of the Kansas City Art Institute even though it was kind of like anti-intellectual, but there was just wonderful energy with, stuff being done... [Thumps table softly in emphasis]

00:55:05 So anyway... the reason why I moved up to Minneapolis was that I knew some friends who had started to get loft spaces in Minneapolis and, you know, I had been in New

³¹ Danièle Massie (Canada, b. 1962) appears on a number of Fullman's recordings.

York for a semester, but I felt... I felt... New York would be overwhelming to me with my fragile, um, I would say, my identity with my work was fragile and I didn't want to have to stress on the economic level, you know, just for existence, and I thought it would be detrimental and more of a distraction to have to work so hard there to pay my bills. And so I... it was like an easy fit just to go to Minneapolis. There was this huge building that had loft spaces opening up, and they were low cost and I got a little job, and it was... it worked out. I was there for two and half years. There was a group of artists... a fantastic community, a supportive community, and I was, like I said, able to attend that media centre. They actually really supported me a lot. They just gave me a key and I would just go in and work all night. That was... I got a lot of support there. And then once I felt I had created some kind of identity for myself, well, I had actually performed at the Walker Arts Center, and there was a curator there, ah, Tim Carr, who also curated at The Kitchen [in New York] and he invited me to perform at The Kitchen, um, and I, okay, so... do you want to hear the nitty-gritty?³² (Laughs)

I was a prep cook in a restaurant, okay, working down in the basement. I got myself fired through putting eggshell, um, in the cheesecake. (Laughs) They fired me!

Louise Marshall: This was in New York?

Ellen Fullman: No, Minneapolis. They fired me! I don't want to make this public information. They fired me and, because I didn't get two weeks' notice, I filed for unemployment!

³² Tim Carr later curated the first two No Wave festivals at the Brooklyn Academy of Music before going into the music industry as an A&R scout. He died in 2013.

Louise Marshall: And you got it?

Ellen Fullman: I got it. I had to apply in New York City. But it was, like, okay, I had this job at the kitchen and I got fired and I had this little fee from The Kitchen and I flew with my suitcase, landed on a friend's couch in the East Village, filed for unemployment, started looking for a job in New York and I got a job a few months' later.

Louise Marshall: Tell me about the first LSI... and where it came from in your head.

Ellen Fullman: Actually, I just want to say that I was just getting kinda of negative about the job and I didn't actually throw eggshells in the... I didn't intentionally ruin it, I was just, like, *grrr*, maybe that little eggshell wouldn't show up, but it did.

Recorder switched off for short break.

Recorder restarted

Louise Marshall: The first LSI: where did it come from?³³

Ellen Fullman: Sure, sure... Okay. It was, you know, Lucier's *Music on a Long Thin Wire*. I just got some piano wire and, I had, like I said, this wonderful large loft in St Paul and I just kind of strung it up, like a, originally, like a child's walkie-talkie telephone idea.

Louise Marshall: With one wire?

³³ In an article on the relationship between compositional approach and material, Fullman (2012) writes of the genesis of the Long String Instrument, its early designs and challenges. She gives technical details of the build, tuning and – for the performer – playing positions of the instrument. It is an important article in terms of the teaching and transmission of Fullman's techniques.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah.

Louise Marshall: What could you do with one wire?

Ellen Fullman: Okay, so I used like a door spring, like those long, strong springs, and I suspended a coffee can and then punched a hole through it and put the wire to that and then a contact microphone on the coffee can and maybe also a microphone pointed at the coffee can and then I bowed the wire close to the coffee can with a bow and that does produce a sound, okay? A kind of growling sound.

Louise Marshall: You weren't working longitudinally?

Ellen Fullman: No. It didn't occur to me. A kind of growling... You know, playing around with that. I lived in this space as well, you know, and so I was walking past this thing all the time and then accidentally I hit it the other way and I was, like, wow, this tone! Cool!

Louise Marshall: How long was the wire, approx.?

01:00:00

Ellen Fullman: At that time, I would say, fifty feet long. Yeah.

Louise Marshall: Okay. So you were thinking big, even then.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, yeah. Because that was the thing, the magic of way beyond the musical instrument scale with the *Music on a Long Thin Wire*, that idea of, you know, what would happen if...? What would it sound like? And then I was (laughs) struggling to tune it...

Louise Marshall: With the doorknob at one end and the coffee can at the other?

Ellen Fullman: Well, no. The coffee can went into the wall with springs and stuff, but then I was building little things out of wood and, like, with tuning gears and guitar-tuning gears and I would tension it, and it was, like, it's at the same pitch! What's going on? Um, and then... what else? Um. I would tension it, or I would try different gauges of wire. Always the same pitch. I was mystified by this thing. Frustrated, too. And seeing a lot of stuff at the Walker Art Center, pieces, [Robert] Ashley, *Perfect Lives*, Laurie Anderson, you know, just art and technology pieces, and you know, and I thought, I got to go to New York. I am ready now to meet and find information.³⁴ I know that there's... these artists are able to do technical things; there's to be some sort of scene with engineers, you know. Well, actually, one engineer. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: Was that Bob?³⁵

Ellen Fullman: Yes! I was able to meet him pretty soon after arriving and it was through Arnold Dreyblatt.³⁶ In Phill Niblock's loft. Yeah. Because I met Phill early on in New York. Let's see, how did I know about that series [of events in Niblock's loft]? I don't know. I happened upon it, his

³⁴ Robert Ashley (US, 1930-2014), composer and pioneer of a music theatre incorporating technology. *Perfect Lives*, an opera for television, developed out of live performances dating from 1978.

³⁵ Bob Bielecki is a sound and studio engineer whose technical expertise and ingenuity helped many artists, including Fullman, Pauline Oliveros, Arnold Dreyblatt, Laurie Anderson, La Monte Young and others. Fullman described him to me in conversation as "a genius" who did not seek out the limelight. At time of writing, Bielecki is the visiting associate professor of music at Bard, New York.

³⁶ Arnold Dreyblatt (US, b. 1953), composer interested in tuning systems. He is a former student of Oliveros, Lucier and La Monte Young and therefore a nodal point for Fullman in linking people and works together.

loft series. He's just a great connector and Arnold was at the loft. I think... Phill gave me a gig with my untuned version, the early version with the tin can and stuff, now, let's see...yeah, by that time I was using large metal bowls with water and modulating the sound by mo-, tilting the bowl with the water because I was always fascinated with washing dishes and that kind of watery, you know, sound of pots and pans.

Louise Marshall: And so you had a fifty-foot self-supporting LSI on the roof in Brooklyn?

Ellen Fullman: Okay, so that was not like permanent. That was up there for the day... So I lived in that building, that was when I moved to New York, again, it was like a new building opening up and getting converted, I mean, *by* the artists themselves, you know. It was actually a Hassidic property probably and it was in Williamsburg [Brooklyn] and –

Louise Marshall: Which must have been pretty rough [then].

Ellen Fullman: It was rough. It was very rough. There was a gun battle out on the corner that I saw – the smoke rising up and heard it and I just got down on the floor. The space was Einstein's Dental Lab and Einstein didn't like to take the garbage out.

Louise Marshall: Einstein! That was his name?

Ellen Fullman: Yes, it was floor-to-ceiling garbage bags with, like, dentures and stuff, like, moulds and stuff for dentures. Yeah. We had a dumpster and it was... we had to haul

all that out. All these loft renovations things – I did it in St Paul, industrial kind of conversion thing, do it yourself –

01:05:07

Louise Marshall: You build your space.

Ellen Fullman: Always! But I learned from my father because he built his own house, so I felt comfortable with that. And so this... yeah... it wasn't very comfortable, just a little office space and so there was no room to build much stuff. And that's where that song came from: "*I found a chair on the street/ I found some wood/ and built a table*".³⁷ It was just, like, pretty rough days. So we put the LSI on the roof and then I was given notice that the landlord said, "Get all that stuff off the roof!" It was only up there for a few days. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: Oh, okay. Was it important that the LSI was built from the kind of equipment that you could get very... very locally – you know, the wood, the screws, the piano wires. Even the LSI that was here in Elsinore, which is several iterations on, you've got a beautiful crafted resonator and lovely brass clamps –

Ellen Fullman: I know where you're leading! (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: But, as –

Ellen Fullman: Well, what are you going do? I mean, it's practical to use wood framing and –

³⁷ Fullman is quoting from her 1982 song, "Worksong" (Fullman and Sprenger 2004).

Louise Marshall: No, no, it's okay – but some people get incredibly precious –

Ellen Fullman: But it would cost so much, you know? And this way I can just travel in a suitcase.³⁸ I know as far as putting it in a museum it might look kinda funny, like it's just framing...

Louise Marshall: It's beautiful.

Ellen Fullman: Okay. Yeah, I know. I've talked about that. I've got a friend, Sean [Meehan], who thinks that's funny.³⁹

Louise Marshall: I'm interested because one the hand it manifests its early, pragmatic origins when you were a young artist, starting out, fiddling around with material, not quite sure where it was going to go, but... and, you know, it was built on a shoe string, or built on a piano string... you might say... I should have asked you earlier on... when you were at school and at college, did you ever have said to you, no, you can't do that because you're a girl, no, you can't do that, because you're a woman?

Ellen Fullman: No. No. The sculpture department – they were women in the sculpture department – and it was, ah, let's see, we did have that, no, uh-uh. No.

Louise Marshall: And can you remember, anecdotally, anything about your first meeting with Pauline, Pauline Oliveros?

³⁸ The LSI is very portable. I was able to assist Fullman and Wong in deconstructing the instrument in Elsinore. Its resonator box, brass clamps, tuning blocks and various other items (including Fullman's black sneakers) fit into two ordinary suitcases. The wood and the wire of the instrument are discarded and recycled locally.

³⁹ A percussionist experimenting with long tones. Meehan and Fullman have collaborated on occasion.

Ellen Fullman: Sure, so it was in Minneapolis –

Louise Marshall: At the festival –

Ellen Fullman: It was before the festival. The museum is the Walker Arts Center and they had a series called Meetings with the Masters and Nigel Redden⁴⁰ was the director and he sat on stage with Pauline and she did some of her, let's see, medi–

Louise Marshall: *Sonic Meditations*.

Ellen Fullman: A couple of them. Instead of just talking with him, she, you know, engaged the audience with an active piece. And that was, that was great. And she was just very impressive as a person and I kind of needed at that time a figure to, you know, to help show me the way. I was, you know, as a young artist, like, well, how do you do this? How you do a life in this field? And she was always very generous.

01:10:16

Louise Marshall: So you had good conversations together. She could advise you. She was a mentor?

Ellen Fullman: She was over the years, yeah. I mean, not that first time, no. Yeah. Just, yeah.

⁴⁰ Nigel Redden was the director of the performing arts department at the Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, between 1976-88.

Louise Marshall: Okay. And then when you were in New York – that was when Dreyblatt led you to Paul Panhuysen, is that right?⁴¹

Ellen Fullman: No... I would say Phill.

Louise Marshall: Phill, okay. I was thinking of *The Long String Instrument* LP on the Dutch Het Apollohuis – *house?* – label.⁴²

Ellen Fullman: *House*. We say it the same.

Louise Marshall: Do you?

Ellen Fullman: We do. Yes, so what happened, was, you see, Phill's series was highly international, you know, and Paul had concert in his series and that coincided with my installation. I was in the – what do they call it? – the Terminal New York Show in 1983 in Brooklyn.⁴³ It was this Brooklyn army terminal in Red Hook, Brooklyn, it was like, a train could drive in, and it was like an enormous building. It was built for World War II to supply ships, and then the post office took it over. It was like a feeling of being outdoors, it was so big, kind of like being in a train station. Ah, and 600 Williamsburg artists were invited –

Louise Marshall: Six hundred!

⁴¹ Composer and sound artist Paul Panhuysen (Netherlands, 1934-2015) founded the Het Apollohuis art space in Eindhoven. Panhuysen used long strings in his sound sculptures.

⁴² Fullman's five-track LP, *The Long String Instrument* (1985), was produced in the Netherlands by Panhuysen for Het Apollohuis. Fullman credits Dreyblatt and Bielecki as among four people offering technical support and development. The LP was re-released in 2015 by the US label Superior Viaduct.

⁴³ Arts correspondent Grace Glueck (1983) praised Terminal New York, held at the disused Brooklyn Army Terminal, for its ability to express "the tremendous energy of today's art scene". The 600 artists that Fullman mentions were, in fact, the ones who applied to be in the show. The staged show featured a selected number.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, there was a Williamsburg collective of artists that organised this exhibit for 600 artists – 600 artists! – and you were pretty free to stake out an area in this building. This was a big hit. It was, like, thousands of people every day were coming to see this show and the limos would pull up. It was, like, hot, this show, and –

Louise Marshall: I guess it was like the time that the downtown arts scene was just exploding in New York as well.

Ellen Fullman: Yes, East Village and then... yeah. So I used it as a studio because I didn't have any space. And I just ordered some wood or picked up some wood from a lumberyard and built my own plywood version and box and stuff. This was after my meeting with Bob Bielecki. Actually, Phill was travelling in the summer and let me stay in his loft over the summer and build up a version of my more noisy instrument. Arnold, I met Arnold at Phill's loft, and Arnold introduced me to Bob Bielecki and Bob came over to the loft and explained to me about how to tune the instrument.

Louise Marshall: So Bob Bielecki comes in at an early stage for you.

Ellen Fullman: Yes, so it's like the noisy thing and he came with brass wire, he came with his book of the fundamentals of physics. He had a Vise-Grip [clamp tool] and he said, he showed me the table that said: "the longitudinal wave moves through the material at blah, blah, blah speed." And then he said, the only way to tune this is to change the length. [He] put the Vise-Grip on the wire: the pitch was higher. We strung up the brass wire on it: produced

a lower tone. So that set me off. That was all I needed.
And that's all I got from him. That was it...

01:14:44 Also with Arnold's sensibility was, like, you know, the thing that was so wonderful about his music, besides the crazy tuning sound, was his acoustic ensemble, because everyone else was like, electric guitars or whatever, and to hear this acoustic sound was so exciting to me and I wanted to do that, too, you know, but I needed to... what we decided was my next step was to design a resonator box, so ... But my approach was just to build a plywood box. I didn't know anything about it, so... and it worked!

Louise Marshall: It worked and then the resonator developed over the years, didn't it, and you're more or less settled on—?

Ellen Fullman: Yeah. So Panhuysen came to perform at Phill's loft when I was in the Terminal New York show, so I had already had it tuned – there's a video of me online with that one.⁴⁴

Louise Marshall: Were you managing to support yourself with a bit of income from gigs here and there or did you have a—?

Ellen Fullman: No, not at all.

Louise Marshall: Where did the money come from?

Ellen Fullman: My job. Yeah. I worked in a restaurant.

Louise Marshall: Okay. Short order?

⁴⁴ See Fullman's (1983) video from Terminal New York, *Long String Instrument Terminal NY*, which shows the first LSI with a resonator.

01:15:00

Ellen Fullman: No, I worked in a Middle Eastern, it was like a storefront, Syrian restaurant in the West Village and I waited tables.

Louise Marshall: Okay... So you then went to Eindhoven...

Ellen Fullman: So Paul saw my installation and invited me to his festival in Eindhoven, the Echo Festival.⁴⁵

Louise Marshall: The Echo... and that's where you had the water-drip drum.

Ellen Fullman: I had a... yeah... the water-drip drum, yeah.

Louise Marshall: And after that, you moved to Texas.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah...

Louise Marshall: What –? So from Eindhoven to Austin.

Ellen Fullman: From Eindhoven back to Brooklyn. Brooklyn was really harsh at that moment because the economy tanked in the mid-Eighties... I don't know what it's like in the UK, but it's really boom and bust sometimes in the US and, um, so... There was a Savings and Loan crisis, where... and there was some, you know, hanky-panky going on with that and things collapsed, and so banking collapsed, so... I couldn't find any of my... well, by that time I had had a job at Film Video Arts that... see, I worked in the restaurant and I was always looking for another job and –

⁴⁵ November 1984. Fullman composed her first work for the Long String Instrument, "Brushing Out the Tracks", for the festival. For two performers, Fullman was joined by Dreyblatt on this occasion.

an older friend who was Arnold's colleague was directing the renovation of this, another public access video space, film and video arts for young filmmakers, and they were moving and they, also – let's see, I had a job, this was through Arnold, his people from SUNY Buffalo, a lot of the artists, the technical people, Nick Collins⁴⁶ was one of them, so through those several people I was able to get a job at Gene Perlowin Associates where I was doing, working as an electronics technician and then got a job at Film Video Arts where I was working on installing the editing suites, with all, the, doing all the networking, connecting them everything together, and all of the gear, so – what was I saying?

Louise Marshall: The basic question was why did you then move to Austin?

Ellen Fullman: So after being in Europe, it was such a... It was my first experience of having some kind of dignity at all as an artist.

Louise Marshall: Europe was?

Ellen Fullman: Oh yeah. I just felt like it's valid. There was no validity before that. It was just like scraping it together, working, you know, you know, low-paying jobs and, um, then, you know, in Europe it was... I just had a sense that, wow, there is some respect here. It was amazing, such a good feeling.

⁴⁶ Nicolas Collins is a US composer, performer and experimenter whose technical ingenuity is reflected in sound sourcing activities such as hacking electronic circuits. He studied with Alvin Lucier. Collins links the craft of traditional, artisanal instrument-making with the contemporary skills of technicians. He also redeploys the designation of "luthier" for this task. (Collins 2006: 192)

01:20:11

And heading back to Brooklyn and again just scraping to get by and I was searching for a job and I could not find any cool jobs. Like, these friends, you know... everything had dried up with the economy, so I started to look in the commercial sound world and found a job in Midtown at a recording studio that specialised in jingles. I was hired to learn tape-machine maintenance, which is really technical. I didn't want to do this but I needed a job and I was faking it with these people because they were hiring me, kind of like an apprentice, to take over with this, you know... I was really pleased when they needed their telephone systems rewired and I had experience of that – you work with a punch and you're punching the wires into this big grid [gently thumps table] and I had like a map, a flow-chart of how to do it – and so I could actually provide them with a service.

I knew that I wanted to leave soon and then I was invited by the choreographer Deborah Hay – I had met her through Pauline Oliveros – to collaborate with her on a new piece and she was able to give me a commission in Texas.⁴⁷

So, um, my apartment was broken into and it was broken into in a very savage way. The door was smashed, splintered to pieces.

Louise Marshall: This was the Williamsburg one.

⁴⁷ Deborah Hay (US, b. 1941) is an experimental choreographer who trained with Merce Cunningham and Mia Slavenska. She was a member of the radical Judson Dance Theater in the 1960s. Hay's subsequent work focused on challenging the distinctions between the trained and untrained dancing body. Moving to Austin, Texas, in 1976, she devised over the next decade or so, a set of practices called "playing awake". She is one of the most influential postwar choreographers.

Ellen Fullman: It was a different place in north Williamsburg, so a different place from that one. And, you know, I invested in some money, got a friend to help me reinforce the door, and we put what's called a police lock, you have what's like an iron bar that goes down to the floor and all this stuff, you know, and I was in Midtown every day, nine to five, came home, it happened again. I had this invitation from Deborah; I was just really happy to get out of there, sublet the place to another friend and, you know, it was sweet in Texas, and I so missed New York, and there was space in Texas, actually, they were in the middle of a recession. They had overbuilt. There was an empathetic realtor who had an entire building, unfinished building, that he let artists work in. Theatre companies rehearsed in it. It's called, at that time I heard the term for that kind of thing was a see-through. A see-through, a building like those cast-concrete interiors that had not been finished out and I was able to install my instrument there, I think, it was for four years.⁴⁸

Louise Marshall: I have a quote from you saying that you stayed in the city for eleven years.

Ellen Fullman: Austin for eleven, yeah, but then they had to... they were able to rent it out and so then I had to leave... uh, you know.

Louise Marshall: What made you interested in working with Deborah Hay, I mean in terms of her artistic practice?

⁴⁸ "In December 1985, I went to Austin Texas, where I began the first of many collaborative projects with choreographer Deborah Hay. Deborah's assistant, Sherri Goodman, soon found a rehearsal space for me in Republic Plaza (the Hobby Building), an unfinished tower block in Austin. At that time, Texas was in a recession, and there were many empty, new, unfinished tower offices, known as 'see-throughs'. I was able to work here rent-free from 1986 until 1989." (Fullman 2004)

Ellen Fullman: Okay, well, I saw her... she was interested in me. I didn't know her work at all and I just trusted that she would be interesting because she was friends with Pauline.⁴⁹ She asked me to do something and was able to pay me, so I agreed and then after, I mean, before I went down to Texas, she had a piece scheduled in New York and I was able to see it and I did really love it, so...

But then later I came to love her work more and more the more I knew and finally when I, just before, during a time when I knew I was going to move away from Austin, I took her workshop, which was like a three-month commitment, a daily commitment for the mornings, so I could go to that and then work in the afternoons at my job and then I received, she didn't give me a scholarship, but I was working for an acupuncturist that, he had done an exchange with her because her daughter needed some treatment, and so he had donated treatment to Deborah's daughter and in exchange she gave him a scholarship to this dance workshop and then he gave it to me. (Laughs)

01:25:35

Louise Marshall: So you had some physical training?

Ellen Fullman: What?

Louise Marshall: You were doing a dance workshop.

Ellen Fullman: You don't know Deborah's work! You don't have to really dance... Okay, she doesn't do modern dance or

⁴⁹ Deborah Hay's commission for Fullman developed into *The Man Who Grew Common in Wisdom*, a solo dance trilogy that started in 1986. Fullman's music, *Staggered Stasis* (composed in 1987), was used in the first part of Hay's trilogy, *The Navigator*.

ballet-influenced work at all. It's untrained, not that it wasn't physical, but... yeah, it's... Anyway, so I took that and it was great to put myself through that. It was like that kind of process art where you decide to put yourself through an endurance and then just do it. There were all kinds of disheartening things that happened during that with the group, 'cause there were a lot of people abandoned ship, you know, but the ones that stayed through, it was really moving and I learned a lot and she's been highly influential to me as far as my process goes. When I get stuck, I think about things that she has said and it helps me.

Louise Marshall: And you're still in contact?

Ellen Fullman: Yes, we are.

Louise Marshall: I am interested in her idea of staying awake and I wonder how one might link it up to deep listening because I think that around this period you were getting more involved with Pauline's ideas about Deep Listening.⁵⁰

Ellen Fullman: Yes, okay, I mean, and then that also plays into my interest in Indian music at that time... yeah... .. okay. You know, there again, it's like these two figures... I never really participated in Pauline's Deep Listening workshops or classes so... I didn't really have a first-hand experience of it until I was on the DAAD in Berlin.⁵¹ You know, it's like deciding, well, I'd better put myself through this and really experience it and she led a workshop for women in 2000 and, there again, a

⁵⁰ My parapraxis. I should have said "playing awake".

⁵¹ Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (the German Academic Exchange Service or DAAD), international scholarship organization. Fullman was part of an artist-in-residence programme in Berlin in 2000.

transformative experience, to actually put myself through it and experience her work.

Louise Marshall: Can you speak a bit of why it was transformative for you?

Ellen Fullman: Yeah. Well, part of it is just when you are sounding with your own body. The vibration is like an internal massage, from the inside out and there's always a resistance, you know, to starting, and then a process of opening up the resonance and the resonance building through the body and then... it's really like any musical practice, but, oh, what I really liked was... her idea of, like... She would say, okay, now, she would take us through stages and say: "Listen to everyone in this room, okay? Now extend your hearing, can you hear anything outside of the room? And then keep going out" – and just holding that and putting sound into it from yourself and... that kind of way of... that kind of state that places you in as a performer is like what we, it's just a really productive place to be in for making something interesting. Yeah. And then there was another piece, then we went into a resonant chamber and one of her directions was when you hear a sound, imitate that sound. Okay, you could imitate the sound that you hear and join with it or put a sound into the space that you don't hear, so you really have to listen to what you do hear in order to put something that's not there...

And these simple things – it's almost like going back to that Richard Mattson workshop of, okay, take things apart – you know, these fundamentals.

Louise Marshall: Exactly, exactly. And –

Ellen Fullman: – Fundamentals that blow your mind when you really do it.

Louise Marshall: And she blew your mind, it blew your mind, in Berlin.

Ellen Fullman: Of course! Yeah. It was great. I mean, I had known her for years and loved her music but, you know, to actually, I'd never really... yeah.

01:30:00

Louise Marshall: When you came back from your DAAD in Berlin and you were at the Candy Factory in –

Ellen Fullman: No, the Candy Factory was Austin.⁵²

Louise Marshall: Oh, oh, okay, Austin, I'm sorry.

Ellen Fullman: Then there was Seattle.

Louise Marshall: So... Maybe I've got a bit confused. I'm sorry, everybody. So it goes: Eindhoven, back to Berlin, Brooklyn, very shortly, then you go to Austin.

Ellen Fullman: Eleven years.

Louise Marshall: Eleven years, and then it's Seattle –

Ellen Fullman: Seven years.

⁵² Fullman lived in Austin, Texas, between December 1985-97. The Candy Factory, at 1531 Manor Road on Austin's eastside, was her studio there for some years after 1985. "In Austin I was able to work rent-free from 1986 to 1989. I stayed in the city for eleven years in semi-isolation, as there was no new music community. I found stimulation and support in the strong dance and performance community that had formed around Deborah Hay." (Fullman 2003: 23) She will describe the building later in this interview.

Louise Marshall: Seattle. What was the reason for going to Seattle?

Ellen Fullman: Another choreographer! (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: Okay! Who was?

Ellen Fullman: Okay. Pat Graney.⁵³ Yeah, that's another album of mine, called *Change of Direction*.⁵⁴

Louise Marshall: *Change of Direction*. Which was your change of direction?

Ellen Fullman: Well, it was really just taking a section of music that I had composed and flipping it backwards. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: That's what actually happened, but in a more extended term, what was the change of direction in terms of practice? ... Because I have read a few interviews in which you talk about how immensely significant the change of direction thing is for you.

Ellen Fullman: Well, I don't know. How was it significant?

Louise Marshall: I don't know. That's why I'm asking you. You don't go into detail.

⁵³ Pat Graney, US choreographer. Fullman composed music for several Graney works, including the *Movement Meditation Project* (1996), an open-air project that involved 130 female martial arts practitioners aged from eight to sixty years old, and *Tattoo* (2000), on which she revisited her early skirt sculpture by making wired skirts that amplified the sounds of the dancers' movements.

⁵⁴ Fullman, Elise Gould and Nigel Jacobs play the Long String Instrument on *Change of Direction* (1998), an eleven-track album. The CD's text notes that the LSI is, at this stage, ninety feet long with 100 strings.

- Ellen Fullman: Okay. I walk forward. I walk back. I mean, that's something. I mean, that's part of it. Honestly, I do remember that.
- Louise Marshall: After Seattle for seven years, you then go back to Austin.
- Ellen Fullman: No.
- Louise Marshall: You don't go back to Austin.
- Ellen Fullman: No. Then I go into the Bay Area.
- Louise Marshall: Into the Bay Area. Okay. Maybe I have got my times mixed up.
- Ellen Fullman: I'll give you dates.
- Louise Marshall: I'll show you this chart in a sec. I was thinking about when you did *Suspended... Suspended Music*.⁵⁵
- Ellen Fullman: '93 in Austin. '96, I did *Change of Direction* in Seattle and moved there in '97.
- Louise Marshall: Was *Suspended Music* your first... your first experience of getting involved in a big collaboration?
- Ellen Fullman: Yes, and it was my first large grant. I was funded by a commission that allowed me to live on it for a year. Yeah. And then, super-thrilling, I mean, Pauline sent me a postcard – “Let's collaborate!” – it was just amazing.
- Louise Marshall: That's how it happened?

⁵⁵ Deep Listening Band & the Long String Instrument, 1997.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah. She sent a postcard: “Let’s play together!” And then I think she had something to do with... I mean, she helped me write the grant for the commission and then she also wrote a grant for a different commission. So we were both commissioned and, yeah...

01:35:12

Louise Marshall: And during this period –

Ellen Fullman: I had felt like I was... I loved the sound of her accordion and I working on improving the timbre of my instrument and I thought of myself as trying to improve my musicality and everything with the goal in mind of playing with her, and I thought, wow, I can do it now. Yeah.

Louise Marshall: Were you taking your North Indian –

Ellen Fullman: Yeah.

Louise Marshall: – vocal classes with Anita –?

Ellen Fullman: Anita Slawek, yeah.⁵⁶

Louise Marshall: And what made you start?

Ellen Fullman: Okay. That was a funny, dead-end thing. So, I got involved in a collaboration that didn’t go anywhere. It was a music theatre piece and it just failed. I mean, we didn’t really realise it. And my collaborator showed me, um, ... ok, this kind of pop band, kind of yoga studio music now, really, it was Jai Uttal, J-A-I U-T-T-A-L,

⁵⁶ These were Austin-based classes in the Kyall tradition, Fullman studied these techniques between autumn 1993 and August 1997. See Fullman 2003.

and the Pagan Love Orchestra was his band name at the time.⁵⁷ And I really love the sound of his voice and the whole kind of, what would you call it these days? Kind of cross-cultural... and so... I wanted to learn more about Indian music and it was actually through him and not Terry Riley. (Laughs) Later, Terry Riley, learning more!

I kind of didn't go that route of La Monte Young and Terry Riley, kind of through, by proxy, Arnold, but I heard some funny stories that I won't repeat, through Arnold, that kind of steered me away from that, yeah.⁵⁸ Yeah.

Louise Marshall: The vocal training: was it another way of putting yourself within the performance –

Ellen Fullman: See, I always, from high school, wanted to sing, but I didn't know how to incorporate that into my music, really. I didn't want to just imitate blues singers or imitate Indian vocalists, either... but Anita helped me to open up and develop my voice. She taught me the practice.

Louise Marshall: And then I know that the album with your singing [*Ort*] comes in due course. Just situating the *Suspended Music* recording and the release of *Body Music* in a social situation because they were both '93. Is that –

⁵⁷ Jai (Douglas) Uttal (US musician, b. 1951) is an American cross-genre singer and sarod instrumentalist whose work combines influences from Indian music, particularly the practice of kirtan (chanting), with sounds drawn from wider sources, including rock and electronica. He is involved in organizing yoga practice camps.

⁵⁸ Terry Riley and La Monte Young (both US, b. 1935) are hugely influential experimental composers, often referred to as the founders of minimalism. Both composers have been highly engaged with Indian musical systems and thought in their work.

- Ellen Fullman: Hmm. I thought *Body Music* was '91.
- Louise Marshall: We can check that.⁵⁹
- Ellen Fullman: Wait, wait, See, I could have released it. I could have it in '93 but it was recorded in '91/'92, and then we performed this stuff and recorded it in '94. We were working through '93.
- Louise Marshall: The social situation I was thinking about was the American cultural politics at that period and the whole Jesse Helms business. There is [Oliveros's] *Epigraphs in the Time of AIDS* on *Suspended Music* but also I'm aware that –
- Ellen Fullman: Pauline lost her brother.⁶⁰
- Louise Marshall: And also *Body Music* is dedicated to a number of people. There are about six male names as the people it's dedicated to –
- Ellen Fullman: We lost some friends, yeah. Also, the arts funding just started going down, down. It was just so depressing... [US president Ronald] Reagan and everything. Yeah.
- Louise Marshall: Yes. But you weren't ever a site for the right-wing conservatives to come after.
- Ellen Fullman: No, my music was never dangerous. It didn't have the radical content.

⁵⁹ Fullman 1993.

⁶⁰ Peter Oliveros was Pauline's half-brother. Her *Epigraphs in the Time of AIDS*, with a text by Ione, is dedicated to his memory.

01:40:07 (Sound of rustling paper, as I consult my notes)

Ellen Fullman: But I could talk about this space because the Candy Factory was a shack. It was extremely hot in the summertime. Couldn't work past eleven o'clock in the morning and then it was just very steamy and hot, even at eight o'clock at night. That was in the summer. In the winter, it was extremely cold because there was no insulation and I had a gas-blower heater that was very loud, so it was a very hard place to work. And I don't know if you can really see it from these photos [We are looking at sleeve pictures that accompany the *Suspended Music* CD], but I spray-painted... This was a shack that was all patched together, even with just cloth stuck in the wall to patch a hole. I just took a paint-sprayer. I had this real heavy-duty compressor and I just painted it [the studio] all over black. And then I built a stage for Pauline and Stuart [Dempster] and David [Gamper] that was a bridge over my instrument.⁶¹ It was like a platform up on legs that they got up on and then my instrument continued through under it. I really loved it visually. They were sitting up high and we were down on the floor.

Louise Marshall: You can see it here, just about.

Theresa Wong: Was it tall enough that you could walk under it, the platform?

⁶¹ Oliveros, Stuart Dempster (US, b. 1936, California) and David Gamper (US, 1945-2011) formed the Deep Listening Band. Oliveros founded the band in 1988. Here, Fullman is speaking about the recording of *Suspended Music*.

- Ellen Fullman: No, no, you couldn't, you couldn't, no. The strings went through. You could crawl through there, I mean, when I needed to fix a broken string, but...
- Louise Marshall: And because it's all black, the strings really do shimmer.
- Ellen Fullman: I liked that.
- Louise Marshall: It was so nice yesterday downstairs [during Fullman and Wong's performance in the old shipyard space]. The strings almost became invisible in that area, you get a little shimmer here and there which is so lovely, but here, with the black background.
- Ellen Fullman: The floor is black, everything is black. That's why I wear black, so that they show up against... yeah.
- Louise Marshall: So you see the sculpture again and the involvement with the sculpture. Would you tell me a little bit about the strings that you use on the LSI?
- Ellen Fullman: Yes. I started out with a company that everyone knew, Zuckermann Harpsichords in upstate New York.⁶² That's the source that people knew in New York City. I would get brass wire and bronze wire from them, that's how it started, but there was a time when I was kind of struggling to find a source, because I couldn't find any manufacturers that would even talk to me on the phone... as an individual, because I was too small, yeah, my orders.... Zuckermann would sell smaller quantities... I'm talking five pounds of wire, physical weight. And it really wasn't until the past ten years that I

⁶² The Zuckermann Harpsichords International company is in Stonington, Connecticut.

have been able to work with a manufacturer, like in upstate New York. I discovered them through the Exploratorium. I was in residence in the area in 2002, and one of the technicians there...⁶³

There was a company called McMaster-Carr where you could buy all these different kinds of hardware, specialised hardware, and they also have samples of all different kinds of wire to try. So we bought a bunch of different wires to try. That's where I became acquainted with stainless-steel wire and then looked on the fine print to find this other company that had actually manufactured the wire and tried to contact them directly and, fortunately, they were small enough to talk to me and sell me things.

Louise Marshall: Fine. I think we are drawing towards our end, but let me —

Ellen Fullman: I think that we should talk about our piece, our performance.

Louise Marshall: Oh, yes! We'll do that, but first I want to ask you something first before we talk about the piece that is tentatively titled *Foghorns* at the moment.⁶⁴

Ellen Fullman: That's a working title.

Louise Marshall: Yes, your working title. I understand that.

01:44:55

⁶³ Exploratorium: the Museum of Science, Art and Human Perception, San Francisco. Fullman had a residency there in March 2002. (Fullman 2003)

⁶⁴ Subsequently renamed *Harbors*.

- Louise Marshall: What do you mean by listening? What does it personally mean for you?
- Ellen Fullman: I really feel I can get... it's like, I have this sense when I am performing, playing, rehearsing, that I'm either there or not there. And I work to get a level of concentration and it has to do with a motor, a fine-motor sensitivity and everything, and I really feel like I did learn something from Pauline about listening out there and in here and something happens (snaps fingers) that trips a different state of consciousness. And I am working to cultivate it, of course, and trying to figure what are, how are, the things that can get me there faster. Because I feel that I can get there faster than I could a few years ago... I know some tricks. Now, I have been looking for tricks and I have been thinking of physical things to do that trick myself into getting into this altered state, which I say is – what would you call it? – like a trance... and I have feelings, although I wouldn't want to be... it's like I come and go with it, like... it's somewhat embarrassing... but I do have feelings of a spiritual sense of this, of like going to an altered state where I can hear and produce sounds that are much more interesting to listen to and more fluid or more complex or more intuitive and more in tune with what other people are doing, where I'm able to fit my part into the whole.
- Louise Marshall: Can you get to this state, this acute state of consciousness, at every performance?
- Ellen Fullman: No, I haven't.
- Louise Marshall: You have it? Sorry. (Misheard)

Ellen Fullman: No, I haven't. But I was able to do it last night. It was a very satisfying performance for both of us. And, you know, the goal is to create a transportive experience for all that are there, to like... It's something that happens, it's the ritual of performance. This comes from Deborah's [Hay] work. When people are gathered, they want something from it... I think it's what we want. Theresa and I... actually, there's a video of Mahalia Jackson in the Newport Folk Festival's tribute to Louis Armstrong where she sings, I think it's just "A Closer Walk with Thee", and she goes into a... she becomes like [in] a shamanistic state, you know?⁶⁵ Her wig actually turns crooked. She's so kind of overwrought and it's incredibly moving and, to me, that's the epitome of what I want to create.

01:50:25

Louise Marshall: That's incredibly lucid and thank you for sharing that with me. Just one thing: the LSI and the performance in terms of the social instrument: I know that you have had ensembles in the past, and yesterday, it was you and Theresa playing it, but you did mention afterwards that you were thinking of bringing other musicians into it. Is that – is the sociability of it and the ramifications of sociability part of that, you know, the artistic community, that listening community, the trance community?

Ellen Fullman: Well, I think... okay. I spent... I did get some funding to develop a group piece two years ago. I was able to pay an honorarium to two young composers. They came to

⁶⁵ The Newport Jazz Festival, 7 October 1970. Mahalia Jackson, singing the hymn that Fullman names, is joined on stage by Louis Armstrong midway through a song version that comes in at nearly thirteen minutes. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wX-YWOr8RQ> (accessed 15 July 2015).

the house once a week. We had sessions. I'm very particular about the timbre, okay? From my experience, after an hour, forty minutes or so of playing, the last five minutes, something good started to happen, it's like they could relax, in a sense, or find something where the timbre smoothed and opened out. It's all so sensitive, you know, to exactly like the state of the body to get yourself in the correct, kind of state in order to produce good tone. It's like a frustrating experience to me because it takes so much work and I am so particular, I don't want to make rough sound, a timbre I'm not satisfied with.

So in the early days I realised that when I did group pieces the music that I wrote was harmonically very simple intervals and we reinforced each other, created a lot of sympathetic resonances. This instrument needs sympathetic resonance in order to... for the timbre to smooth. And so... I know more about that now and I can create some sympathetic resonance, myself between the two hands with the sounds Theresa's putting out into the room. The resonator really needs to be driven and then, you know, for resonance to build up.

Louise Marshall: It warms up, in a way.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, yeah, right. So, yeah, I really feel that I don't just want to keep it to myself. I want to share it with the world and I also love the visual effect. I don't know if you watched *Work with 4 Players*, but the people moving forward, other people moving back, and just choreographing this kind of, ah, proscenium view, where people are just – *eehhh!* (gliding tone) – you know, like

that, I'm very interested in it, visually, and then also, just, kind of, the orchestral power that can happen.⁶⁶

Ellen Fullman: Yes. I think you said the phrase, the beating frequencies, when they happen –

Ellen Fullman: It's, like, physical!

Louise Marshall: It's incredible. It goes through the room. It goes in through your feet and up, it's very exciting.

Let's talk a little bit about yesterday. What would you like to say, both of you?

01:55:02

Ellen Fullman: We've been in this process of... did I show you any of our research? (She and Theresa Wong bring out drawings and documents of research relating to acoustics and harmonics. They have been drafted with great care and attention to the detail.)

So, researching the extended harmonics of the cello. This is a map of the four strings of the cello, harmonics to 13⁶⁷ –

Louise Marshall: So you've got the four strings of the cello here, C-G-D-A.

Ellen Fullman: Like, this represents the string length, here's the halfway point, see, and those are the ratio descriptions of the

⁶⁶ Fullman's *Work for 4 Players and 90 Strings* is a two-sided cassette that was self-released in 1987. The performers were Fullman, Danièle Massie, Jane Botkin and Metis Policano. Fullman videoed the performance and there is a three-minute clip of the work, in Austin, Texas, in 1987: <https://vimeo.com/45209121> (accessed 15 July 2015).

⁶⁷ Fullman is indicating harmonic positions on a string.

tones that are produced and this side is the harmonics and then the pressed result note in relationship to A is 1:1 [root note], the A is the reference point, and so then this ratio becomes more complex because it's further away from A and then all these numbers are bigger, but in relationship to themselves, they're still that simple one through 13.

Yeah, so you see those are the harmonics in relationship to each string as a one but then in relationship to the A, I put the ratios, and these are taking it to other octaves, the correct octave that it's sounding at.

Anyway, so I mapped this out and Theresa has been in the process of extending her technique to learn the positions of some of these, you know—

Theresa Wong: Well, I've just been being to try to grasp the concept because, you know, in traditional training, too, I also don't have much training in cello, I have to say. I told you that I took a ten-year break and I feel that I feel like never took it to the degree of, you know, of the professional —

Louise Marshall: But does a professional cellist learn this kind of stuff?

Theresa Wong: I think maybe now, maybe a cellist who's training to be a contemporary classical performer would —

Ellen Fullman: Right, learn more about this. Mark Dresser at UCSD, he's a bass player, and he trains people in this direction,

but it's easier to do on bass, because the string-length is longer.⁶⁸ You have more room.

Theresa Wong: And you can hear them. They sound more, so... But I never learned... what I learned, you would learn, like, 2:1 [octave], you would learn the 4:3 [octave: fifth]; you would learn maybe the 5:3 [major third: fifth] and then maybe the 7, but not even the –

Ellen Fullman: You don't learn the 7 [dominant seventh chord], the 7 is the blues 7... You learn the seven in classical training?

Theresa Wong: Yeah. Just in order to understand what was happening, you know, I drew this map so that I could see, okay...

Ellen Fullman: Explain, so...

Theresa Wong: So this is the same picture this way so that the nut is the top of the cello and the bottom down here, is this bridge, so you see this 2:1 is halfway so that's here. I really want to make this as large as this. To me, this is helpful to see what's happening is that your string is vibrating like this, right? It's going *djnk, djnk, djnk*. When you put your finger at that nodal point, it splits the wave –

Ellen Fullman: Yeah.

Theresa Wong: – Therefore doubling the frequency. If you put your finger here, you get a fifth, which is that relationship with the 3:2. And, you know, what's interesting is that, by drawing this and seeing it this way, it's like, oh, it happens here and it happens here. Whereas in classical training, you would just like learn this, or you might

⁶⁸ Mark Dresser is a bassist and composer based at the University of California, San Diego.

learn both of these but I never understood why it happened over and over, right? And again here, we've got this, a repeat.

Ellen Fullman: You don't learn the why of it.

Theresa Wong: This is just up until the 13. I didn't map all of them. This is still incomplete.

Louise Marshall: So this has incredible implications for the overtones of the instrument and how the tones will decay.

Ellen Fullman: Absolutely.

Theresa Wong: Right. So what I'm doing now is understanding – this five, it repeats... which is the five here? Here are the green, so one, two, three, four five, and what I've done here, is that I've written the harmonic frequency, which it sounds, is going to be the same –

Ellen Fullman: At each point.

Theresa Wong: – but the fingered frequency is different –

Ellen Fullman: If you push down –

Theresa Wong: Right, so it's going to go higher, obviously. So that was just for me to what's going on here? Why, how do they relate, basically?

Ellen Fullman: So Theresa helped me set up a notation that works for her. To show... So this is the A string, which is the 13th harmonic, which is that one, right here. If you play the

harmonic, it's sounding this note, you're fingering, placing your finger at that point and then if you push down till at his point, then it plays this note.

Theresa Wong: And it's going to be out of tune with equal temperament, you see, so here what I've tried to ... it's going to be B-flat plus 39 cents, so again, just to orient myself, in classical or equal temperament terms, how do you understand that pitch and where it is?⁶⁹

Louise Marshall: So you're converting in your mind from equal [temperament], I suppose, to just [intonation].

02:00:00

Theresa Wong: Now I am starting to understand it so it's less about converting it than just understanding this way of mapping, you know, the string.

Ellen Fullman: There was one of the segments that I composed in this format that Theresa performed in –

Louise Marshall: Was this matrix one of the things you did yesterday?

Theresa Wong: Yes, it was embedded in the piece.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, embedded. And here's that, this is that score that Theresa... see, timeline... I was able to map off this timeline my own notation –

Theresa Wong: (Indistinct) With MIDI –

⁶⁹ Fullman is using scientific pitch notation, in which a semitone under equal temperament is divided into 100 centiles.

Ellen Fullman: MIDI, yeah... but the style of the whole piece in her playing, like, I decided to make everything like an *étude*. Because what I'm writing is like harmonic, then pressed, harmonic, then pressed, and that's how everything should –

Theresa Wong: This whole thing is really an *étude* for both of us because I am also just trying to start composing with these pitches that I am not familiar with and understanding – do you have the matrix? The diagram, here's one – how the tuning is even established.

Louise Marshall: (Looking at diagram) Oh, this is beautiful!

Theresa Wong: So this is the 1/1 and then these pitches go in fifths, so here's a fifth above and a pitch above, and a fifth above –

Ellen Fullman: In a sense, the cycle of fifths, but, in reality, it's a line.

Theresa Wong: – and then a seventh. And so these are, I guess, these are all related by proportions, numerical proportions. So this has been foreign to me, but now it's been great because one thing... it's one thing to understand, okay, that that's a fifth and its relationship to the frequencies, but it's another thing to just to start messing around with it, so her MIDI sample –

Ellen Fullman: But it just looks like a string of numbers!

Theresa Wong: Her MIDI sample –

Ellen Fullman: It's, like, overwhelming if you don't know your way into it, you know.

Theresa Wong: So what started happening, I could start playing these pitches without totally understanding what they were. I could just say, oh, this sounds good! This sounds good! So there are two processes.

Louise Marshall: So there's intuition.

Theresa Wong: There's the intuition of just using your ears, and then I could... with the beauty of MIDI, say, oh! That's exactly what I played and that's exactly the pitch, and vice-versa of understanding what those pitches are and then using them. What do stacked fifths sound like? What do stacked fifth and their stacked sevenths sound like? So working both ways, rationally and then intuitively.

Ellen Fullman: Yes.

Theresa Wong: And that's been so much fun and really mind opening. I think that has been a huge breakthrough for both of us. And she also can do the same with the cello.

Ellen Fullman: I made a sample of the harmonics of the pressed notes, so I could compose.

Louise Marshall: Tell me a bit about the performativity of the piece [*Harbors*] last night when you were both on the LSI – and you [indicating Wong] were at one end and you [indicating Fullman] were at another and you were coming towards each other.

02:05:00 At that moment, I found myself thinking of performance pieces like, say, with Linda Montano, or, actually,

Marina Abramović and Ulay when they did the Great Wall of China –⁷⁰

Ellen Fullman: Okay!

Louise Marshall: – I found myself wondering whether it was going to stop when you met in the middle –

Theresa Wong: That was her initial idea.

Ellen Fullman: Stop?

Louise Marshall: I was curious whether you were going to stop there or whether you were going to go to the opposite ends from which you started.

Ellen Fullman: (Laughs) We crossed over and played a modulation.
(Laughs)

Louise Marshall: Was that a modulation? You intended to meet in the middle?

Ellen Fullman: I composed that using the MIDI because I couldn't hear that low of a bass at home. My installation is small, okay? And so with the MIDI, it allows me to imagine lower-range stuff and so I just worked it out. I knew how long this building [the shipyard hall] was and what I could get. I composed that modulation at home!
(Laughs)

⁷⁰ In *The Lovers – The Great Wall Walk* (1988), performance artists Marina Abramović and Ulay walked towards each other from opposite ends of the Great Wall of China. They met in the middle and at this point, their relationship came to a figurative and literal end. I was also thinking of Linda Montano and Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performance 4 July 1985-4 July 1986 (Rope Piece)*, in which the two artists linked themselves together with an eight-foot-long rope for the duration of a year, during which they were not allowed to touch. Pauline Oliveros notarized the work.

Theresa Wong: It was funny because she thought initially we'd meet in the middle and then we'd finish the piece and I thought that would be fun but I also kind of thought, well... I don't know... there was something, and maybe this is interpreting it too much, so it might not be something that we want to share publically, but in a way, it's like almost too much of a happy ending or something, you know –

Louise Marshall: It's too obvious.

Theresa Wong: – We come together and – *djnk!* – we're done and we take a bow because, I guess, we're both like really independent people and so, to me, the gesture that felt more natural would be to pass each other (laughs) but change, we've changed in our passing we've both switched strings and harmonies and it shifts then and then end separately. And I thought that it was beautiful because it frames the length of her instrument and it shows how massive it is.

Louise Marshall: And you've both completed a totality of a journey.

Theresa Wong: Right.

Louise Marshall: I thought it was a lovely ending... I wasn't sure whether it was going to end there, or end there, or end there.

Theresa Wong: And to me, there was something... I was very moved. The section where we had to walk together to bow, I thought that was very moving because we had created something beautiful together and then it wasn't, yay!

You just get up and then you bow. It was, like, then you have to walk towards each other, in that moment that you've just finished something beautiful or moving. I think that was a kind of unique feeling, and you're walking, and you're walking, and you're walking –

Ellen Fullman: It's a great distance.

Theresa Wong: – It was really quite long. And then, we bowed, so there was something –

Ellen Fullman: (Laughs) The tension of waiting for us to come together.

Louise Marshall: It felt very complete. The performance felt very complete. Like a circle.

Theresa Wong: What do you have to say?

Ellen Fullman: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Theresa Wong: Because we were just trying stuff, too. We thought, oh, we might as well take advantage of the length and having both of us play it, so... we were testing it out.

Louise Marshall: Thank you. Thank you both very much indeed. Is there anything either you would like to say before I turn the tape off?

Ellen Fullman: Let's see. Mmmm... Well, okay, so we live by a harbour, so we have these sounds all around us, with the foghorns and the boats, it's like we wanted to bring that here, because it's the same environment. That kind of... I feel the piece really created this kind of... loneliness of the fog at night and the harbour, and the kind of beauty

of, like, an environment and... not so much, like... not very natural... It's like listening to animals.

Theresa Wong: We also live near a train track, so there's constantly really beautiful train sounding...

Ellen Fullman: In America –

Theresa Wong: This is also in one of Ellen's earlier early works, this feeling that if only we could sound that good, because there's something that we don't –

02:10:00

Louise Marshall: Is this the *TexasTexture* [*TexasTravelTexture*] you're thinking of?

Ellen Fullman: Well, there's, like, in a piece on *Body Music* called *Departure*, an actual train whistle sounds, and it blends really beautifully with what we're playing and it gave me the idea to expand my palate with tonality to get more into complex intervals. The expressivity of dissonance and complexity that the train whistle produced, that was a turning point for me and I've been ever since trying different things and I don't know, I don't know.

Louise Marshall: Can I ask you a few factual things, just to check? I was aware that when we were talking about your parents, Ellen, you didn't give them names. They are unnamed. I just have them as Mr and Mrs Fullman.

Ellen Fullman: Victor and Peggy.

Louise Marshall: Victor and Peggy.

Ellen Fullman: Victor and Peggy. And my brother Bob. Mmm.

Louise Marshall: And Bob. And how many strings did the LSI have yesterday?

Ellen Fullman: It had about forty-three, but I don't know. Seventeen, twenty-three... it's thirty-seven or so. Forty. It's forty.

Louise Marshall: When you were talking about the trance, you were talking about techniques of getting there. Is there any way?

02:10:30

Ellen Fullman: Oh, I've tried all kinds of mechanical things, like, I've thought of it as building resonance and if the resonance is there, then it works, if it's not there... Having resonance is like improvising with the universe because something comes back to you. It's like another musician. And then, so... I've tried things like using a feedback system on the... because I've worked with some musicians who have played into my resonator and it gives my instrument a different timbre or when sometimes Theresa just putting a sound out into the room, or Monique Buzzarté with the trombonist, sound out into the room, it just changes my timbre so I am kind of looking for that.⁷¹ And I put a transducer microphone and transducer speaker to create a feedback loop and that also gave me some timbral change, but it was kind of mechanical and electronic and unsatisfying.

I've really come to the conclusion that part of it is a state of mind and I can create it myself naturally and another part of my thinking, is that when the audience comes in,

⁷¹ Monique Buzzarté (US, b. 1960, California) is a composer and trombonist. She and Fullman collaborated on *Fluctuations* (2007).

sometimes I have completely lost the resonance and so, um, I have decided to always ask for a good sound system, like a sound reinforcement system, not just a sound monitor. At times, I would try to have just a little monitor pointed back at my resonators to try to create this feedback loop, and then, finally, it needs to be a nice sound system to... because when the audience comes in, they absorb the resonance and so I need something to give it back to me. And so that helps me.

Louise Marshall: I was wondering whether there were personal meditative systems or practices.

Ellen Fullman: Well, I've tried stuff like that, too. You know, I feel like I need to be inward on the day of the performance. Like, I wouldn't have wanted to conduct this interview day of... Just kind of... we were just on our own, taking care of business, just kind of mulling about, getting things prepped, you know, we just have to stay in it, stay in the work, day of.

Theresa Wong: Coffee. (Laughs)

Ellen Fullman: Coffee is inspiration.

Theresa Wong: That's the secret.

Ellen Fullman: Yeah.

Louise Marshall: Thank you both very, very much. I'm going to switch off now.

02:13:05 **End of recording**

Interview 2

**Éliane
Radigue**

Date

4 November 2015

Venue

**Éliane Radigue's apartment,
Paris 75014**

Keywords

ER = Éliane Radigue

Names mentioned

Akama, Ryoko (sound artist/composer)	Anderson, Laurie (artist, musician)
Anderson, Ruth (composer and Annea Lockwood's partner)	Arthuys, Philippe (composer)
Arman (Armand Fernandez, artist and ER's former husband)	Ashley, Robert (composer, director of Mills College Center for Contemporary Music)
Bayle, François (composer, colleague at Schaeffer's studio)	Boulanger, Lili (composer)
Boulanger, Nadia (composer, teacher sister to Lili)	Cage, John (composer)
Chatham, Rhys (composer and, in 1970s, technician at NYU)	Chandon, Isabelle (co-founder of the Studio APSOME with Pierre Henry and Jean Baronnet)
Corner, Philip (composer)	Democritus (Greek philosopher)
Eckhardt, Julia (musician)	Facerias, Catherine (translator)
Ferrari, Luc (composer, colleague at Schaeffer's studio)	Ferreyra, Beatriz (composer, pupil of Nadia Boulanger, colleague at Schaeffer's studio)
Fullman, Ellen (composer)	Gayou, Évelyne (academic and head of research at GRM/INA, Paris)
Gibson, Jon (composer, flautist, member of the Philip Glass Ensemble)	Glass, Philip (composer)
Goldstein, Malcolm (composer)	Gurdjieff, Georges (mystic, philosopher)
Henry, Pierre (electro-acoustic composer)	Lockwood, Annea (composer)
Mâche, François-Bernard (composer)	Moles, Abraham (engineer)
Neuhaus, Max (sound artist/musician)	Niblock, Phill (composer)
Oliveros, Pauline (composer, writer, Deep Listening developer)	Radigue, Mme (ER's mother)
Reich, Steve (composer)	Riley, Terry (composer)
Riley, Marta (wife of Terry Riley)	Robinson, Carol (musician)
Roger, Mme (ER's childhood piano teacher)	Roger, Renée (soprano, daughter of Mme Roger)

Schaeffer, Pierre (composer)	Spiegel, Laurie (composer, musician and software designer)
Sri Aurobindo (yogi and mystic)	Subotnick, Morton (composer, installer of Buchla synthesizer at NYU)
Tchaikovsky, Michael (composer)	Tenney, James (composer)
Thibaud, Jacques (violinist)	Tudor, David (composer)
Vasto, Lanza del (mystic, philosopher)	Zinovieff, Peter (engineer and co-founder of EMS)

Tibetan Buddhism: names, places mentioned

Dalai Lama	Gampopa (student of Milarepa)
Kagyü-Dzong, Buddhist centre, Paris	Kalu Rinpoche
Karma Kagyü lineage	The Sixteenth Gyalwya Karmapa (Rangjung Rigpe Dorje)
Jetsun Milarepa (eleventh/twelfth-century yogi, teacher, saint)	The Tenth Nenang Pawo Rinpoche (Tsuglag Mawey Wangchuck, ER's guru/master)
The Eleventh Nenang Pawo Rinpoche (Tsuglag Tendzin Künzang Chökyi Nyima)	The Second Dudjon Rinpoche (Jigdral Yeshe Dorje)
Nyingmapa tradition	

Places, venues and organisations mentioned

Bhutan	Dordogne (Buddhist centres)
La Gaité Lyrique, Paris (theatre)	Het Apollohuis, The Netherlands
Iowa (teaching at university)	Lhasa, Tibet
New York	New York Cultural Center
NYU (New York University)	Nice, France
Paris districts: Châtelet area, Lycée Fénelon (Latin Quarter), Pont au Change, Pont Saint-Michel, Pont Neuf, Sainte-Chapelle, Square du Vert-Galant	San Diego
Sidney Janis Gallery, New York	Sigma, Bordeaux (venue)
Studio APSOME (Applications de procédés sonores en musique électroacoustique), rue Cardinet, Paris (Pierre Henry and Jean Baronnet)	Studio d'Essai, rue de l'université, Paris
Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris (Concerts Colonne)	Tibet

Compositions, festivals and publications mentioned

<i>Adnos I</i> (ER)	<i>L'apocalypse de Jean</i> (Pierre Henry)
<i>Chry-ptus</i> (ER)	<i>Le crabe qui jouait avec la mer</i> (Philippe Arthuys)
<i>Étude aux chemin de fer</i> (Pierre Schaeffer)	<i>Jouet électronique</i> (1967, for feedback on magnetic tape)
<i>La noire à soixante</i> (Pierre Henry)	<i>Propositions sonores</i> (ER's tentative early works)
ψ 847 (<i>Psi 847</i>) (ER)	<i>Trilogie de la mort</i> (ER)

Social/art/political/miscellaneous

Aeroplanes, sound of	Bach, JS (composer)
Berg, Alban (composer)	Children (Marion, Anne and Yves)
Contraception	GRM (Groupe de Recherches Musicales)
Hinduism	Instruments (accordion, harp, piano, synthesizers, Tibetan instruments: gyaling; rag-dung; voice)
Liberation of Paris, 1944	Marriage and divorce (ER and Arman)
May 1968 (<i>les événements</i>)	Mozart, WA (composer)
Music theory	<i>Musique concrète</i>
Radigue family (mother, father, cousins)	Religion/spirituality (Tibetan Buddhism, Catholicism, Gurdjieffism, Hinduism, del Vasto)
Schoenberg, Arnold (composer)	Serialism, twelve-tone "puzzles"
Sexism and machismo	Sound, community of
Studio work: splicing, phonogène (Tolana), tape recorders, technical work	Synthesizers (ARP 2500 analogue modular, Buchla, ElectroComp, EMS, Moog)
Webern, Anton (serialist composer)	Women's Liberation
Work: <i>benevole</i> (volunteer), <i>stagiaire</i> (intern); secretarial duties (Schaeffer threatens ER)	Working-class family

File: Composer Éliane Radigue and researcher Louise Marshall
Duration: 02:07:29
Date: Wednesday, 4 November 2015, 4pm onwards
Place: Éliane Radigue's apartment, Paris 75014, France
Also present: Catherine Facerias (translator)

Note: ellipses indicate pauses in speech and not the removal of material. In this transcript, I keep Éliane Radigue's English as it is spoken. In the body of the thesis, some of her speech may be edited into a more conventional English for the sake of clarity alone.

00:00:00 ¹

Louise Marshall: So Éliane, you were saying that the first thing that struck you about this project just now...

Éliane Radigue: So, the first thing for me, which is interesting for me in this project, is that all these women, who I know, who are friends and we are respecting quite a lot I think, one each other, and... is that we are the first generation of women, at least for the eldest, like Pauline [Oliveros] and me, who had without fighting too much about women libs. I have always said that if I would have to be a women libber, I would have just do so, I would have been completely revolutionary.² (Laughter). I remember in the... on the West Coast, a women libber, liberation, just asked me, told me, and I said, you know, I am of one point of mind, if I could do so, I would have been a revolutionary, I would not have done music. I choose music. And one of them said, so, by itself, it is also to do

¹ This transcript has been seen and approved by Éliane Radigue. I owe many thanks to Catherine Facerias for her attention to the details of translation and transcription.

² Pauline Oliveros (US, 1932-2016, composer and developer of the practice of Deep Listening) was a close friend of Radigue and long-term supporter of her work. Later, as we speak off record, Radigue will ask me to convey her love to Oliveros.

something for the woman, because you know this French composer, Lili Boulanger, who was quite nice, and very interesting?³

Louise Marshall: Ah, *oui*.

Éliane Radigue: She's not as known as her sister, who was a teacher, no?

Louise Marshall: That's right.

Éliane Radigue: And... so to be a teacher, that was completely okay, but to apply to be a composer! And I remember when I start to work [in 1957] at the studio [rue de l'] Université⁴ [near the Sorbonne], all these men were completely mature and if I would have pretend to do my own music I would surely never have stayed there, but as long as I was just a *stagiaire* [trainee or intern], cutting, splicing tape, making... that was quite alright. I don't know if this has to do with kind of the spirit that we have in common, because that's right. And in a big difference, also, because I remember Laurie Spiegel, having a talk once with her after a session, because when we were at NYU,⁵ we didn't meet that often, you know, just saying

³ French composer Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) was the younger sister of the noted Parisian composition teacher Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979), whose many pupils included Aaron Copland, Philip Glass, Virgil Thompson and Beatriz Ferreyra. Lili won the major composition prize, the Prix de Rome in 1913, on her second entry to the competition. She was the first woman to do so; one of her competition works was later commended for its "sturdy masculinity" (Beer 2016: 255). Lilli suffered from ill-health throughout her life: she collapsed during her performance at her first Prix de Rome in 1912.

⁴ The Studio d'Essai (Trial Studio) was at 37, rue de l'Université in Paris and not far from Radigue's parents home on the Right Bank of the Seine. Radigue will talk about the "Studio d'Essai", but, in point of fact, this was a term used for the studio between 1942-46. Between 1946-60, it was called the Club d'Essai. She is following a common practice in using this former term. This studio was created by Pierre Schaeffer under the auspices of the Radiodiffusion Nationale (after 1944, the Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française or RTF) in 1942. It was the site of his researches into *musique concrète*.

⁵ Radigue was a composer in residence at New York University between 1970-71. The Buchla Modular Electronic Music System – a synthesizer – was installed at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Radigue, Spiegel (US, b. 1947; musician and software designer) and Rhys Chatham (US, b. 1952) are among the composers who worked on the Buchla synthesizer

hello when one arrived and the other... and she is very, very fond of, er, *technique* [technology/technical skills] and I am absolutely – like that! (holds up hands to express difficulty) – I hate *technique*! I just had to go through *technique* to do some music by myself. Because forty-[three?] years ago, no one musician would have accept to play for me and the few one who came to ask me after just a while when I asked them what I ask now to these wonderful musicians who work for me, they never came back, you know. So we have quite different, quite different... Pauline also, we are different personalities within our music... I don't think, you know, I would feel, er, let's say, Pauline, we are very close, you know, very close friend, but she has an absolutely another story that is start with her... accordion, *comment*?

Louise Marshall and Catherine Facerias: Yes. Accordion.

Éliane Radigue: And it is extraordinary. I met her for the first time in San Diego when she was teaching in the, oh, it was somewhere in the end of the Sixties or beginning of the Seventies, I think. So when I saw the term “Deep Listening” [in my proposal], I said, okay, this is her signature and I agree with that.⁶ So, Annea Lockwood, I

during this period. The synthesizer was installed by composer Morton Subotnick (US, b. 1933).

⁶ Radigue is referring to my introductory letter to her (written in French, with an English copy attached), which was sent by post in early 2015. It was a request for an interview and it set out my research proposal. She responded favourably, inviting me to call her and set up an interview in Paris. In the next few lines, Radigue is addressing herself to the composers that I was initially focussing on. During my research period, Laurie Anderson and Laurie Spiegel were removed from my original research plan for reasons of access and their work commitments more than that of co-operation, and Joan La Barbara was added. Spiegel will form part of my post-doctoral research, with a concentration on her work as a composer rather than a musical software developer.

am, and Ruth Anderson, I feel very close of them, they are, I mean, of maybe my best friends⁷ –

Louise Marshall: Annea Lockwood? Yes, yes.

Éliane Radigue: Yes, Annea Lockwood, even though we don't meet as often, but she... am very close of them. Um, you said about Ellen Fullman, which is, we were together at Het Apollohuis [in The Netherlands], that was, oh, thirty years ago about, something like that, not completely, because I remember for some other reason... What did you say? Which other...? I never met Laurie Anderson [sic], but...

Louise Marshall: Laurie Anderson. Annea Lockwood, we've spoken about. Pauline Oliveros, we've spoken about. Laurie Spiegel, we've spoken about. Um, Ellen Fullman... and you! Number six!

00:05:30

Éliane Radigue: Yeah, yeah! That's it! Okay! I didn't forget! So... and I feel very close by spirit even sort [despite] of our different, though we are quite different. We understand each other not only through our personal music, but also with something in the mind, you know, something in the mind which works like here [gesturing to head], there is something which is there. We don't know how it works, we don't why, we don't know... but it is there. This it is obvious in this group of women that you choose, for which reason, I don't know.

⁷ Annea Lockwood (New Zealand/US, b. 1939) and Ruth Anderson (US, b. 1928) are American composers and partners. Lockwood moved to the US from London in the early 1970s: it was during this period that Radigue would have first met her.

Louise Marshall: Yes. I think that there are strong lines of sympathy that can be drawn between you all. But can I take you back now to talk a bit about your personal history and your family? Um. How would you describe your family and your childhood?

00:06:40

Éliane Radigue: Oh, ah, oh. This is the question... which is always difficult for me to answer because there are two aspect in my family. There is first of all, I am the only girl.⁸ There is my mother and father, and all this part is rather grey. By chance [meaning “luckily”], I have – I had, I should say now – a lot, several uncles, cousins, in the country, in la Sarthe, in the west part of France [south-west of Paris], where I spent every holiday. So I had a double personality. At home, I was completely under the... my mother[’]s pressure, which was very dominant. And, you know, that was once she says so, she says something, whatsoever I was thinking, when she say, “*Hein* [Isn’t it], Éliane?” [00:07:38] I just have one thing to answer: “Yes, mama.” No discussion – and that was a real pressure. And when I was with my cousins, with my uncles, I was well, just – *copains* [playmates] – it was completely another life, by chance [luckily].⁹

Louise Marshall: You could run wild in the country!

Éliane Radigue: I think that was a big chance, because that was a freedom. On the one hand. I had this freedom, by chance,

⁸ Radigue means that she is *une fille unique*, that is, a single child. Because she says, in English, the only girl” (“*la seule fille*”), I assumed some male siblings.

⁹ Radigue’s voice changes here to express the harshness of her mother’s “*Hein, Éliane?*” This is in dramatic contrast to the way in which she speaks, a moment later, of the expansive freedom of her holidays in the countryside with her cousins.

on the other one, I was completely – *tchh!* [constricted noise]

Louise Marshall: Did you have brothers?

Éliane Radigue: No, I am alone. I was very much alone.

Louise Marshall: And your father was a merchant, is that correct?

Éliane Radigue: What?

Louise Marshall: Your father was a merchant?

Éliane Radigue: Oh. Yes. So, yes. *Un commerçant, oui.*

Catherine Facerias: *Il avait un magasin?* [He had a shop?]

Éliane Radigue: *Non, non. C'était une boutique* [It was a small shop]. *C'est tout, c'était un petit commerçant.* [That's all, it was a small shop].¹⁰ That was a very simple family, you know, very *populaire* [working class]... Music was not... Yes, my father would have dreamed of me to play accordion (laughter)... rather than to be attract by the piano and other instruments and classical music. No, no, no. Hmm?

00:09:08

Louise Marshall: So did you learn the piano when you were a child?

00:09:13

Éliane Radigue: Yes, so... the big chance in my life has been that the mother that a friend of mine from the school, who was

¹⁰ Radigue stresses the aspect of her father's business being a small shop – probably a small district shop or *magasin de quartier* – as opposed to one of the larger and more select *magasins* in the Les Halles district in which it was situated. The gradation of social status in terms of merchants and shopkeepers is a theme here.

close also for my mother, was playing piano. And the mother of this young friend saw my fascination for that, so she said to my mother that at least I should try and the fact was that Madame Roger, this teacher, was in the same house as this woman, you know. And so my mother, who had respect for her friend, say, yes, okay. And the chance of my life was to meet Mme Roger because, you know, Mme Roger immediately (snaps fingers) has feel that there was really something... She gave lesson to child where, all of a sudden.... I can say so now, you know, because I have also been through that on the other side [as a teacher], when you see someone with really deeply, a deep interest, immediately you want to give, to give more, and now for me the test is that there have been one or two time to the little piano in the *salle*, the living room, and almost immediately she put me on the [grand] piano and she learn me everything, everything. I was fascinating by the story of music, I was fascinating by another, which was the construction, by harmony, by everything. The problem has been that my mother became jealous, because I was always speaking of Mme Roger. Mme Roger was my goddess, you know!

Louise Marshall: I see. You were about how old?

00:11:23

Éliane Radigue: I was about... I was still at the primary school, because... I was eight, nine, ten. It was before the high school, which we were at eleven. After a while, my mother decide that, you know, that it was too much and, I don't know, and she bring me to Mme Roger, saying to Mme Roger: "You know, Éliane doesn't want any more to take lessons with you. *Hein*, Éliane?" [00:11:50] Yes.

But everyone understood what was happening, knowing my mother. And there has been a kind of, er... that was very... very funny, because the friend of my mother, through who I had, I had met Mme Roger and was in the same house, invited me to through my mother to play with her girl together and when I arrived, she said, so go up to the fourth floor. Mme Roger is waiting for you. And for years Mme Roger secretly, without even pay, you know, was giving me a lesson –

Louise Marshall: It's astounding.

Éliane Radigue: You know, like that. I was only afraid of one thing and that was if my mother had discovered that.

Louise Marshall: You must have been heart-broken.

Éliane Radigue: Ah, that [Mme Roger] was a wonderful person. Her daughter was... a *chanteuse lyrique* [classical singer], lyric singer, you know –¹¹

Catherine Facerias: She would sing opera.

Éliane Radigue: Lyric singer, you know. Lyric singer, you say? Yes, yes. And so she [Mme Roger] was very generous person, of course. She was, at that time she was, I would say for me she was quite old, of course. Sixty years now is just so young, but let's say she was in her sixties. (Laughter). Her mother was still alive also and I know her... so that was the best part of my life at that time.

¹¹ Renée Roger was a well-known soprano in France during the inter-war period.

Louise Marshall: Goodness. What were your early listening experiences?
Can you remember your earliest listening experiences?

Éliane Radigue: Excuse me?

Louise Marshall: Can you remember your earliest listening experiences?
The first thing you can remember hearing?

Éliane Radigue: Ah. Hearing. So you know, at that time there was only the little radio and every time when I was turning [hand moves to indicate turning the dial] and... I have been – and I still am – very much passionate by classical music. It's really what sometime, even now, when I listen, sometime, ah, *voilà!* I just stay completely... *je ne sais pas, même en français je ne trouve plus le mot-là, alors où on va [rires], complètement... complètement, euh, scotched*¹² [completely, I don't know, it's the same in French, I can't find the word, I was glued to the spot {by the music}] to the listening, so this was my first discovery – and of course, through Mme Roger, because Mme Roger was give me to play Mozart, Bach, and through her I discover, of course, the simplest things for my ability, which was not that great.

00:15:00 And also, after that time, when... what brings the end to that is when the mother of this friend, quit Paris. I was living in Paris, so I did not have any more this complicity to go to see Mme Roger. But it was a time also when I start to go to the lycée,¹³ to the high school, and here at

¹² In French, the trademark of a sticky tape, Scotch, is used as a transitive verb. To be glued (to something), fascinated, mesmerised, can be expressed as *être scotché*.

¹³ Being in the catchment area for the Lycée Fénelon, in the Latin Quarter on the Left Bank of the Seine, this was the (state-run) high school that Radigue attended. It is (and was then) one of the most prestigious *lycées* in France: Radigue will make it clear that she was there by chance of the operation of the catchment areas for each school.

the school, at the class of music, I had a nice soprano voice, you know –

Louise Marshall: So you sang.

Éliane Radigue: – and I made a chorale [choir/chorus] and you know, in Paris at that time, maybe it is still there, there was a chorale of the *lycée de Paris*, where every high school, they choose ten, twenty, I don't know, musicians and we made once a year a concert at *la Sorbonne* and I was, of course, part of that because, of course, I know how to read music. It was... I did not have a strong voice, I could never have been a soloist, you know. One of my grandchildren, he has a voice but, he [does not] make something with it. But I have never been a voice, you know! I just have a nice... and of course, I could be very easily... from the first year, I was chose, year after year, in every classroom, I was taken in the chorale.

00:17:00

Louise Marshall: The war and the Occupation had started by the point you had started at the lycée. Were there sounds you associated with the war? The mechanical [aero]planes?

Éliane Radigue: Ah! This was much later, much later, if I may say so. You know, the feeling of time is quite different when we are young. When we are two years old, one day is half of our life.¹⁴ Let's say that the airplanes that was between

¹⁴ Initially, I thought that Radigue misunderstands – or perhaps avoids – my question about the war. However, this is a misconception on my part. Because Paris was the capital of the Nazi Occupation between 1940-44, I assumed that the city would have experienced the sounds of enemy aircraft. But, unlike London, Paris was not bombed. An example of a transposition of my understanding (from the point of view of British history and stories I was told of the Blitz) of the history of the Second World War onto Radigue's own experience. She is talking here about the aerodrome near her house in Nice, where she lived as a young woman.

my [ages of] nineteen – not ninety (laugh) – and thirty, yes, thirty-something, when I married and lived Nice.¹⁵ Where we lived, we were living not so far from the airport, which at that time a very, very small airport, of course. Maybe not bigger than that – there was five flights a day. But I found that very interesting, you know, because every airplane had his own personality. And we can use what we have [hear]. Our ear can be a very nice filter, you know. Our attention goes to what we prefer to hear.

And I remember a flight in between Nice and La Corse [Corsica] a little bit later in an airplane where it was just a symphonia, all the time, you know, by going. Sometimes now [snaps fingers] they are not so subtle. I mean the big aeroplane now, it is all too much. This is not my style. But by that time they were nice airplane, you know, just to follow, you just followed the sound.

Louise Marshall: When you were a child, too, did you listen to the drone of the aeroplanes during the war?

Éliane Radigue: By that time, when I was a child, a small child, I was living in Paris in the... near the Châtelet, the *première*, first *arrondissement*, thus the middle, the heart of Paris. I had a chance to go, to be on the right side [Right Bank] of the Châtelet and I would go to the lycée on the left side [the Left Bank of the Seine, i.e., the Latin Quarter], the Lycée Fénelon. Now, now I realise what a privilege it was to go walking through Pont au Change and Pont

¹⁵ Radigue's partner (later husband) was the artist Arman, a member of the *nouveau réalisme* movement (Armand Fernandez, Fr/US, 1928-2005). He was born in Nice. Together, they had three children. They married in 1953 and separated in 1967, divorcing in 1971. Arman was exploring creativity and destruction in his work, creating a series in which destroyed musical instruments were mounted on canvas.

Saint-Michel or Pont-Neuf, as you know, and visiting the Sainte-Chapelle, where, you know, you can enter like you enter anywhere, or go to the [Square du] Vert-Galant, sit.¹⁶ Now I realise, what a privilege it was and during wintertime just seeing the reflect of light on the water at night and that was a fantastic situation, a fantastic location. It has nothing to do with music, but it has something to do with some nourishment, like the bronze doors of the Sainte-Chapelle are a wonder. The colour of the light through the... mainly, I prefer the first [i.e., ground] floor of the Sainte-Chapelle.¹⁷ And all that was, yes, a nourishment for the mind anyway.

00:21: 08

Louise Marshall: You have spoken about how your mother was jealous of your mu–, your attention to Mme Roger when you were a child. But what were your family attitudes to any sense of you becoming an artist or becoming...? As you got older, did you think about making a career as an artist? As a musician?

Éliane Radigue: Hmm?

Catherine Facerias: *Est-ce que vous pensiez quand vous étiez petite que vous alliez devenir une musicienne?* [Did you think when you were little that you were going to become a professional musician?]

Éliane Radigue: *Non*, no, no. I had no idea of that. No, I had no idea it was possible. I love music, I was so happy to play music,

¹⁶ Radigue is describing her walk each day from home to the Lycée Fénélon, a journey that took her through some of the most historic parts of Paris and, if she went via the Square du Vert-Galant on the Île Saint-Louis, across the bridge to the Île de la Cité, and close to Notre-Dame de Paris. She would have heard the reverberating tones of the bells of the cathedral and of the many chapels.

¹⁷ The Sainte-Chapelle is renowned for its Gothic stained-glass windows.

but I could never – never – dare to have the slightest idea of making a career with music.

Louise Marshall: Why?

Éliane Radigue: Because you know, as I told you, I was from a very simple family and music was just like a *saltimbanque* [street performer], it was not a way to make a life, you know. It was unthinkable and I didn't have this... No, no, no, I was very happy to sing, I was very happy to...

Louise Marshall: You got married at nineteen, but you met your husband at the lycée?

Éliane Radigue: [No.] He was in Nice, in the south of France.

Louise Marshall: Oh, in Nice, okay.

Éliane Radigue: Yes. And I met him in Nice where I had been a few weeks with friends of my parents. I had been living in Nice for about seventeen years and here, also, the first thing I did because after three weeks I never came back home, I lived there. I was there for three weeks and I stayed there.

I had a chance of having friends who knew my mother and my mother sent me to them in order, you know, to make me... mm-hmm. But rather than that, they left me there.

Louise Marshall: Your mother sent friends down to Nice to bring you back?

Éliane Radigue: My mother was quite difficult, really. She was a strong character, very much dominative and very difficult to deal with. She was always right. She was someone who was *always* right and everyone always had to do what she wants to do and if I had had a stronger character, like children now, I would probably have been a big rebel. But I couldn't even have this opportunity because it would have been too much. I mean that I was, okay. So later, when I was older we had problems from time to time, much later.

Louise Marshall: So your revolt was getting married at nineteen, maybe?

Catherine Facérias: *Est-ce que votre mariage si jeune était une façon de –*
[Was your marriage so young –]

Éliane Radigue: *Non*, we had children before we were to be married.
(Laughs) At that time, there was no birth control and it was just after when I was pregnant with the second one that we got married. Because he [Arman] was quite young also. And his parents were very much against, you know. I was informed [told] that I was silly or stupid.

00:25:00 You know, when I was twenty-three and a half when my son – the third one – had been born. I don't know. It was crazy. Three children at twenty-three. When I see young people at twenty-three... it's just completely crazy.

Louise Marshall: At that age did you listen? Did you have any time to listen to music, to play music? When you had all of your children [with you]?

Éliane Radigue: No, the first thing I did when I arrived in Nice and I had something strange in life, but you know that, when things are ready, there is always something which happened. One thing, sorry, the reason why I stayed in Nice was that I had met this artist – I forget actually the name of this director of a chorale. [Snaps fingers] Bernard Gérard Foucault? So! His name will come back.¹⁸

We had a chorale and... who accepted me, of course, immediately in the chorale. And another thing, and the first thing even, with my husband, it was rather difficult financially. There had been a sale for pianos and he bought me a piano, a very poor one, you know, a wooden...

Louise Marshall: Upright piano, yes.

Éliane Radigue: But at least he [i.e., the piano] it does [work].

Catherine Facérias: A keyboard.

Éliane Radigue: A keyboard! But it was just like that for me. On the other hand, I was also... I had followed... yes, something which is important that is the way Mme Roger immediately understood that I was interested by the theory of music, by the history of music, by harmony. Every time, you know, before we played, we analysed the score – the first key, the modulation and all that. And I have always been fascinated by the modulation, by what happens during a modulation where you are not anymore in the first tuning? Tune. You have two or three

¹⁸ Radigue speaks briefly about her musical studies – piano, harp, choral singing and classes on harmony at the Conservatoire. Her piano and harp skills were, Radigue says, held back by “*un horrible handicap... j’ai les mains moites.*” (Girard 2013: 30)

possibilities to go further. There is this kind of uncertainty. This is something which fascinates me and which has always been in my music and mainly in the part of electronic music. Most of the time I play in between that.

Somehow, I think when I was young I was very much interested by how the music is done also – this wonder which leaves us completely. You know, I had also, yes, because I had also something which has been very important in my life, I had a great-uncle which for New Year gives me what was an important sum of money and [I spent it so I could] see-[a concert series] at the Theatre of the Châtelet.¹⁹ And every week I could have nine concerts in the year, just at the door. And here my parents couldn't say anything. My father came to make sure that I was going in, came to make sure that I was coming back. I don't know if he was staying outside all the time to make sure that I was not going away. But here I could start to hear.

And you know, at that time that was very strange because I remember this Theatre of the Châtelet which is quite big. I took the second, not the first price [i.e., of a range of ticket prices and seats] and at the orchestra, the second price starts just as the first row below the balcony which was... And all the places were empty in front me, you know, with ten people because there were concerts in the afternoon also, of course, [otherwise] I couldn't have gone. But here I had an opportunity to hear young

¹⁹ Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris. *Les étrennes*, the presents that Radigue refers to, are a traditional gift of money to children above a certain age at New Year. They are in lieu of Christmas presents.

musicians, old musicians like Jacques Thibaud²⁰ and the young girl who became... Oh, their names! My memory now is full of holes. I can't...

00:30:20 I just enjoyed that was really nine times a year. I could have nine, no more.

Catherine Facerias: *Est-ce que c'était avec les Jeunesses musicales de France?* [Was it the Jeunesses Musicales de France Orchestra?]

Éliane Radigue: *Non, c'était les Concerts Colonne, donc c'était les grands classiques, il y avait la série des neuf symphonies, les concertos de Beethoven, avec toujours des très grands, des très, très grands solistes, c'était vraiment de l'excellente musique.*²¹ *Chaque année c'était un nouveau cycle. Et si je m'en rappelle neuf, c'est que les seules pour lesquelles ça comptait juste c'était pour les neuf symphonies. Bon, il y en avait d'autres où ça durait... il m'en manquait trois, quoi.* (Laughs) *Mais, bon, c'était quand même...* [No, it was the Concerts Colonne, therefore very great classical concerts. There were always Beethoven concerts, with great soloists; it was excellent music. Every year, they had a new cycle. The year when the cycle consisted of nine pieces, it matched/was enough for the nine [Beethoven] symphonies.] Will you excuse me, but that rests my mind to be speaking French for a minute.

²⁰ Jacques Thibaud (Fr, 1880-1953), French classical violinist and well-known soloist.

²¹ Founded in 1873, the Orchestre Colonne, based at the Théâtre du Châtelet, was a professional orchestra with players who tended to be younger than those in most average orchestras. Its subscription concerts (the Concerts Colonne) were aimed at younger audiences as a way of promoting affordable and high-quality classical music. Audiences would subscribe to nine events, so Radigue had enough tickets to hear all Beethoven's symphonies performed. See: www.orchestrecolonne.fr/index.php/1-orchestre/historique (accessed 5 December 2017)

Louise Marshall: That is okay.

Éliane Radigue: It's all so weird.

And so I think I was involved with the construction of music as well. So I love the history of music, you know; its foundations since the Greek tetrachord and the size of the, mmm, string or of the pipe and how there was defined the fifths and all that, the double for... were defined and all that.²² What is ordinary – *apprentissage* – learning for everyone and I had started with Mme Roger and she had opened a door and after when the door was open and when I went in she gave me... she was a very good teacher in that sense that she had given me the means of following, maybe roughly, you know, but following in my way and led to where my curiosity was.

Louise Marshall: So with your interest in this structure of music, of course, when you came across serialism...

Éliane Radigue: When?

Louise Marshall: When you came across Webern and serialism and Schoenberg?

Éliane Radigue: Yes, and so this happened...

Louise Marshall: These musical puzzles to...

²² Rudiments of musical construction, from the ancient Greek four-note scale to a reference that sounds change according to length of string or resonator (woodwind). The doubling Radigue briefly mentions is a reference to the splitting of a sound wave on, for example, a string, and its harmonic effect.

Éliane Radigue: This happened when I was married. The year I was married [1953] where I discovered and where I learnt, of course, about the dodecaphonic theory and I spent a while working with the theory. But the only thing which is not really my cup of tea are the dissonance and the rule with dodecaphony is this dissonance. And my play, my way of playing with twelve tones was to respect as much as possible all the rules of verticality or horizontality *renversement, recurrence*, [reversal, recurrence], etc, – but to try to avoid dissonance. And due to this learning of Greek music, I tried to have separate, how do you call that? *Na, na, na! Comment on appelle ça chez les Grecs? Ça me reviendra, cela n'est pas la peine que je cherche, ce qui fait les tonalités, les quintes*, the separation, you know? [How do you call this in Greek? I will remember – it's no use me searching, it was what made the separations].

Louise Marshall: The ratios?

Éliane Radigue: No, no. The rules, the main rule of the Greek music through which all the modes have been defined... a very common noun. Maybe it will come back if I don't... It is a very, very, very current...

00:35:00

Louise Marshall: The Lydian mode, the mixolydian mode... I think I know what you mean.

Éliane Radigue: Yes, it will come back. It will come back or if not I will just have a glance in one of my books and I will know immediately.

Louise Marshall: Now, I think it was in 1950 that you heard a piece by Pierre Schaeffer on the radio and that –?

Éliane Radigue: It was in the [19]50s when I heard for the first time Pierre Schaeffer²³ on the radio when I was in Nice and I discovered that there was also another way. You know, somehow, I was happy with these aeroplanes' sounds but that was something, you liked to play with something. But, here, Pierre Schaeffer widely opened the door and said with it, like John Cage, like several musicians at the same time, just to say, "But everything depended."

Here maybe we come to the real point of our meeting it is in our way of listening that sounds can have their own meaning and their own sense. And you can hear to some pipe with water running and it is music. And so everything can become music depending on the way you listen to it.

You can like it or not and, of course, your ear will choose what you like, but that was just a complete discovery and it was the beginning also for his music. It was [Schaeffer's] *Étude aux chemins de fer* [1948], this period where he was working with only recordings on vinyl; not even vinyl, but 78 [RPMs records].²⁴

Louise Marshall: Yes, 78s. Can you still recall that feeling of excitement that hearing Schaeffer on the radio gave you at that point?

Éliane Radigue: I am not sure I understood that.

²³ Radigue speculates (Warburton 2005: 29) that the composition she heard was Schaeffer's *Étude aux allures* (1958).

²⁴ The *Étude aux chemins de fer* was the first of Schaeffer's *musique concrète* compositions, the *Cinq études de bruits* (1948).

Louise Marshall: Can she remember the feeling of excitement of hearing the Schaeffer on the radio?

Catherine Facerias: *Vous vous souvenez du sentiment ou de l'excitation que vous avez ressenti quand vous avez entendu ce morceau à la radio, vous vous souvenez de l'état dans lequel vous étiez émotionnellement, ce que ça a produit sur vous, ces notes, ces sons?* [Do you remember what you felt when you heard it on the radio, do you remember the state you were in?]

Éliane Radigue: *Ah! Comme une révélation. Oui, oui. Comme une révélation. Oui, oui. Une révélation, c'est quelque chose qui semble évident, une évidence, et c'est tout, c'était ça.* [It was like a revelation, it felt very obvious, that was it.] It was there, it was obvious, you know; just natural, if I may say so. There was no discussion about that, just when you meet something: yes, it is there and that was okay. And I could give up on my twelve tones, which was a little bit like now training my mind, trying to keep it working and doing some sudoku or crosswords [puzzles], you know. The process was a more interesting thing for me than the result, you know.

The result... of course, I found some interest, mainly on the Webern, the small pieces. But they were small. When reading them and I analysing, them because they are very accurate and very interesting, there is a lot of imagination. But somehow, I would prefer just to read it like I would read the word than to hear it, that is, the results of the music. And this is why I quote Webern because it was only very pure, very perfect his way of

writing. Berg was much more romantic and Schoenberg much more grandiose which was not exactly my cup of tea, in terms of music anyway.

00:40:00 I had an interest in that, but I was not passionate as much as I was with classical music. And on the other hand, so, I found interest in listening to my airplane. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Did you? And soon after you met Pierre Schaeffer in Paris. How did that happen?

Éliane Radigue: So this was also one of these events which happen when everything is ready. My parents were still living in Paris and I used to come to visit them two, three times a year; my children were quite young at that time, so I just had to put them in some coffins [*couffins* – Moses' baskets/baby carrier], and they were very near.

Louise Marshall: Put them in some coffins?

Éliane Radigue: No, it is just a joke, okay? (Laughter) Having two coffins with the sweet children thinking they take the train. *Couffin ça veut dire cercueil – ah oui? Ah non, ce n'est pas ça! Un couffin? Non, non!* (Laughter) [00:41:02–00:41:17: CF explains in French to ER the linguistic confusion between *couffin* (baby carrier) and coffin (*cercueil*)]. No, no, to take the train and my parents were very happy to have the children.

And one time I had an appointment with a friend of mine, who... I was interested by that time also by

Hinduism with, you know, Sri Aurobindo²⁵ and [00:41:41, unclear, Pan Panisham?]. This has always been also a track in my life, this studying about religion. And at that time I even thought that I would like to make... And yes, I even said so, because I remember after I went to a contest, *l'examen*, the exam for the baccalaureate, at the end there was some interviewer who chose a few persons and I don't know why I had been chosen. I went there and they asked me, "What I would like to do?" I answered and I don't know how it come to me: "I would come to study about religions."

That was very strange, you know. And after I had been born Christian, you know, Catholic, and so I had problems at the time with it [i.e., Catholicism], like I think several people with religions sometime. I was at that time studying Hinduism. And there was Lanza del Vasto²⁶ in Paris, you know, who had a conference – [*Comment-on-dit, conférence?*] – conference in Paris [in 1954] where I was meeting this friend of mine. And at this conference it was in fact *une table ronde* [a round table] and who did I see just next, alongside Lanza del Vasto, Pierre Schaeffer himself.

I asked to this friend who was very *beaucoup d'entre gens*, who knew a lot of people, I asked her, so, "By

²⁵ Indian politician turned yogi and mystic (1872-1950). Writings on Sri Aurobindo by Satprem (aka Bernard Enginger, 1923-2007), a French author who became a disciple, were influential in some European cultural circles. Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Aus den sieben Tagen* (1968) for what he termed "intuitive music" certainly drew from Aurobindo's philosophy.

²⁶ Lanza del Vasto (Italy, 1901-81), a Catholic mystic with an interest in esoteric religion and utopian society. He was an acquaintance of both Mahatma Gandhi and of Georges Gurdjieff, of whom Schaeffer was a devotee. In the early 1960s, del Vasto founded The Ark, one such community, in Languedoc in southern France. While Arman himself had an early interest in spirituality (Hinduism, Rosicrucianism, and Zen Buddhism), this is possibly the first time that Radigue encounters such a social grouping. It is also evidence of her exposure to, and interest in, spirituality. After coming into contact with Tibetan Buddhism in the mid-1970s, Radigue will retreat from music for a period to live and study at a retreat in the Dordogne. She will return to music only at the insistence of her guru.

chance, would you know Pierre Schaeffer?” And she said, “Oh! I just have dinner with him tonight. Do you want to meet him?” (Laughter) “Of course, yes!” And this was the beginning of it because at that time the *musique concrète* had several problems, I mean, to be accepted by all means.²⁷ And having someone, a young woman who was interested by that so the day after I was visiting the Studio d’Essai, de la rue de l’Université, which is famous somehow because it was a very little [recording] studio. There were *un, deux, trois, quatre*, four rooms which were altogether like that, you know and it was a place where, has been announced the Liberation of Paris in [August] 19... er... 44.²⁸ And this is how I put my finger into it [got involved].

00:45:12

Louise Marshall: So Pierre Schaeffer invited you to work as an assistant [in 1955]?

Éliane Radigue: So, first of all, I was living in Nice, you know, but like I told you, I was going back and forth in between Nice and Paris and while my children was – *were?* were – (laughter) young, it was quite easy. They have been born in 1942, ’43, 4-. No, ’41, the beginning of ’43 and the last one September ’44. And so, until, let’s say, ’46... No, ’50. No, no, what am I saying? No, I have made a mistake of ten years. You readjust that.²⁹

²⁷ The influential composer and conductor Pierre Boulez had spoken out against *musique concrète* and this is probably the trouble that Radigue is alluding to.

²⁸ Schaeffer, as an engineer working for the Radiodiffusion Française (RDF, the precursor of the RTF, which was formed in 1949), was thus a civil servant. He combined his overt activities with a covert role in the French Resistance. Gayou (2007a: 205) describes how Schaeffer arranged the broadcast calling for the Liberation of Paris in August 1944.

²⁹ Radigue and Arman had three children: Marion (b. 1951); Anne (b. 1953) and Yves (1954-1989).

Louise Marshall: No, I understand.

Éliane Radigue: In '44 I was too young. That was in the Fifties. Even in '44, *musique concrète* didn't exist yet. But just because I described the '44 Liberation of Paris.

Louise Marshall: Your children were small, so they didn't go to school [and] so they could spend time with your parents and you would come to Paris and you would see Schaeffer in his studio? What did you do in the studio at this point? What were your first tasks?

Éliane Radigue: Ah! I was just accepted like a kind of visitor first, you know, there was a lot of freedom. By that time, Pierre Henry³⁰ was working there with his first wife and there were little [i.e., young] people. There was Philippe Arthuys,³¹ but Philippe Arthuys left after he made *Le crabe qui jouait avec la mer* (1957, radio play) he left. There were very little people because at that time Pierre Schaeffer was still the director of the Soraform³² and he only arrived at the end of the afternoon in the studio just to check... He gave instructions to Pierre Henry of what had to be done and I was mainly with Pierre Henry and Pierre Henry gave me some... Here I learned splicing, knowing exactly how to check for the sounds... All the techniques which are fairly very simple and there are not so many because the phonogène³³ and all the instruments

³⁰ Pierre Henry (Fr, 1927-2017), composer, electro-acoustician, one-time colleague of Pierre Schaeffer, and co-founder of the Studio APSOME. It was the first privately-run electronic studio in France.

³¹ Philippe Arthuys (Fr, 1928-2010), composer.

³² *Société de radiodiffusion de la France d'outre-mer*, the state radio for overseas France. It was set up by Schaeffer in 1955.

³³ Designed by Jacques Pouillon, the engineer who worked closely with Schaeffer, the phonogène chromatique was a twelve-headed, multi-speed tape machine which could provide twelve different pitches (hence, it was chromatic) simultaneously. The output of each tape head was controlled by a single-octave keyboard. It was used in the composition of *musique*

were too complicated somehow because I didn't have the... I have here several documents about this period.

Pierre Schaeffer was mainly interested at that time by establishing a kind of vocabulary³⁴ or *sofège générale* [akin to sol-fa scale] to give some name to the sounds there were the *allure d'objet*, there were *les grains*, to give some names to the sounds. I know –.

Louise Marshall: This was his general outline?

Éliane Radigue: And he was also working at that time Abraham Moles,³⁵ Abraham Moles who was involved with the smallest, it was Greek also. It was Démocrite³⁶ [Democritus] who brings the notion of [the] atom and the bric [unclear], the sensibility of Abraham Moles. which was the slightest part of sounds that the ear can get [hear], if you follow.

There is on the one hand the theoretical work from Pierre Schaeffer, so this comes from his formation [training] of *polytechnicien*,³⁷ as you know, and on the other hand it is the artistic side but which was more in charge with Pierre Henry. And I worked mainly with Pierre Henry.

concrète. Radigue will later mention the phonogène manufactured by Tolana. I thank Jo Hutton for these technical details. For details of Pouillon's technical inventiveness and other phonogène models, see Gayou 2007a: 208.

³⁴ Radigue is referring to Schaeffer's *Outline of a Concrete Music Theory*, in which he sought to establish a vocabulary – a modern-day solmization – for electroacoustic music. See also Schaeffer, 1966, 2017.

³⁵ Abraham Moles (Fr, 1920-92), like Schaeffer, an engineer by training. The two men worked together in radio research in the 1950s.

³⁶ Ancient Greek philosopher who postulated the theory of the atomic basis of the universe. Radigue's blending of Moles's – and Democritus' – idea of the materiality of the smallest sounds is pertinent in considering her own compositional works.

³⁷ Schaeffer studied at the École Polytechnique in Paris. A university specialising in engineering sciences, it is situated on the level of the *grands écoles*, i.e., elite universities in France's two-tier tertiary system. This explains why Radigue singles him out as a “*polytechnicien*”: she is indicating both status and his mathematical, systematic bent.

00:50:00 I don't know who he was and I was the one who was ready to cut a hundred, to do everything, no discussion. I was just learning, how first of all, to make precisely... in the attack of a sound, you know, there are several micro-attacks and depending on the way you want to make a loop, to make the loop you should be very precise to have it perfectly. So I was learning all that.

Louise Marshall: Were you paid?

Éliane Radigue: No. No, no. It was just I received this information but as I told you I was not there all the time I came, for, let's say, a period of two weeks or so. Before [I left, in] '56 Pierre Schaeffer had given me a letter for to ask the [director of the] radio in Nice to give me a few hours a week to follow my... Which meant that he considered that I could have enough independency for that, this radio, but when I came there immediately I realised that the director who received me was much more attracted by my anatomy.

Louise Marshall: By your anatomy?

Éliane Radigue: Because I was young, I was quite nice, you know. So I was very clear on that point and I knew exactly how to take this stance in avoiding any wrong move which would go to [encourage]... But the result was that he answered [to] Pierre Schaeffer that he had no time and job to give to me.³⁸ (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: No job in Nice for you. I see.

³⁸ Schaeffer either showed Radigue (or she saw separately) the letter, dated 6 April 1956, from the Nice director turning her down for work: the excuse given was that *musique concrète* was out of favour. (Girard 2013: 33)

Éliane Radigue: This was, you know, the real macho system and it was so obvious. You know, you know it is obvious when a man is just checking you out and without saying anything, ready to make... If you want but we will make a deal. I said, "I don't want to make this deal." And that was over.

In fact, that was a chance because maybe I would have remained there and, I don't know. So. And so after that I was still going from time to time to the Studio d'Essai in Paris but it was impossible at that time to have private equipment because, you know, there was only big tape recorders and all that.

Louise Marshall: Yes. Were you the only woman at the Studio d'Essai with Pierre Henry?

Catherine Facerias: *Etiez-vous la seule femme ou y avait-il d'autres femmes qui travaillaient avec Pierre Henry?* [Were you the only woman or were there other women working with Pierre Henry?]

Éliane Radigue: *Non, non.* No. When I was at the Studio d'Essai, I told you, it was before Pierre Schaeffer... When Pierre Schaeffer left the Sorafom, he came back to take the full direction of the Studio d'Essai and it was in [the end of] 1957.³⁹

³⁹ What Radigue describes next is, essentially, the end of the GRMC (1951-58) and the beginning of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales – the GRM (1958-). A renewal of personnel, with younger composers welcomed into the fold, ensued. In addition to the three whom Radigue mentions, Iannis Xenakis (Greek/Fr, 1922-2001), Bernard Parmegiani (Fr, 1927-2013) and, a little later, François Bayle (Fr, b. 1932), were also recruited.

Here, he gave the first group of students – you know, Luc Ferrari,⁴⁰ François-Bernard Mâche,⁴¹ Beatriz Ferreyra⁴² would probably be the first woman I had met in the studio. But here I was already going there when I was in Paris just for a short visit and to say hello to everyone. And that was probably one of the last times I came here when he was giving this lesson and I was there. And Pierre Schaeffer was very, very fascinating because he used a lot of digression, you know, so, when you listened to him you were just travelling in different countries and not knowing where he wanted to bring you. And at the end, in the five last minutes, so everything would get together.

00:55:00

And he gave us *un exercice*, an exercise, to do which was the interest for musicians like Schaeffer, John Cage, and all that at the time and in your own deep listening, the way of listening; namely the concentration, the attention to listening and he gave us lessons. You know this *abat-jour* – how do you say? – the *abat-jour en opaline*, old *opaline*, *les abat-jour en opaline*. *C'est ce qui était utilisé à l'époque des lampes à pétrole. C'était une sorte de porcelaine, et donc, selon la manière dont on tapait les différents maillets, ceux qu'on prenait, de pouvoir discriminer les différents sons que l'on pouvait avoir* [Milky-glass lamp-shade for an oil lamp, it was a kind of porcelain, with the different ways you hit it with the sticks, you could discriminate between different sounds

⁴⁰ Luc Ferrari (Fr, 1929-2005), composer. With Schaeffer and Mâche, Ferrari co-founded the GRM for both theoretical and experimental sonic research in 1958.

⁴¹ François-Bernard Mâche (Fr, b.1935), composer and a former pupil of Olivier Messiaen. A co-founder of the GRM and member between 1958-63.

⁴² Beatriz Ferreyra (Argentina, b. 1937), a former pupil of Nadia Boulanger; an electro-acoustic composer and a long-standing friend of Radigue's. She lives close to Paris.

that you could get].⁴³ So that was already deep listening before the name and that was the end of the lesson after he had been leading us, travelling all around.

So now, and he said, “So now, work your... *maintenant travailler votre abat-jour* [work your lamp shade], which is more funny in French. I don’t know how it goes in English but in French it is very funny. *Travaillez votre abat-jour! Mais vous voyez, cet abat-jour rond, vert en général, on en trouve encore chez les brocanteurs. C’était ce qu’il y avait dans les campagnes. L’opaline, c’est un matériau en verre, mais qui était coloré en vert, et qui avait effectivement une jolie résonance.* [Work your lampshade! There are round lampshades, green in general, which you can still find in antique shops, but you would find in the countryside, the milky glass, it was a coloured-glass material, which had a lovely sound.]

Louise Marshall: Were you beginning to think that you could be a composer now?

Éliane Radigue: That is a good question. That’s a question... I mean if I had put myself in that time I probably wanted but I didn’t know if I could do so. Because to do so I had first of all to give me the means of doing it. It was obvious that this was not through piano; that it was not through paper; hat it was through this direct contact with the sounds. And I was very interested, very rapidly I was interested working at the Studio d’Essai when we made some exercise on the feedback effect.⁴⁴

⁴³ Schaeffer’s classes in listening were designed to introduce subtle listening practices in the participants. Radigue kept notes in which sounds were classified according to structure and density. (Warburton 2010: 28)

⁴⁴ Larsen effects.

And here it was real electronic sounds which was garbage for a good technician, of course, but I was fascinated when you keep the right distance in between a loud speaker and your mic. By just moving slightly the mic on this right distance to have a kind of... many sustained tones, but slightly changing. Of course, if you go too near it is like, “*Ahhh...!*” If you go too far, it disappears. This was one.

And on the other hand also by the re-injection from one tape recorder to the other one, you know, here also you can control more or less with this spot, all that. And here, strangely enough, it was mainly reserved various speed beats or even possession, depending. This had been my first fascination of the sounds with which I wanted to do something.

My first piece, if I may say so, *Jouet électronique* (1967, for feedback on magnetic tape)⁴⁵ is made out of this process when I was... that was in the '50s, no, '60s, I am now, no. Yes, because there have been ten years of my life where I have been completely out of this [compositional] world because Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry had a big fight. And even though I loved Pierre Schaeffer, I considered that he was wrong, that he had gone too far and, of course...⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Feedback on magnetic tape. *Jouet électronique* was created using two Studer and two Tolana reel-to-reel tape recorders (to achieve four-track recordings), which had their output signal connections plugged back into the machines to feedback the signal on itself, which Radigue used to generate feedback tones and exploiting the sonorities of these effects. The *Jouet électronique*, alongside the four-part *Elemental I* (which used a Stella Vox reel-to-reel tape recorder, given by Arman to Radigue) were recorded in Paris at Henry's Studio APSOME on rue Cardinet during downtime while Radigue was working on his *L'apocalypse de Jean*.

⁴⁶ Gayou (2007a: 206-7) suggests that Schaeffer's resentment of the growing reputation of Henry (and Arthuys) led to the conflict. Henry and Arthuys resigned from the GRMC in April 1958. Schaeffer and Henry were estranged until 1968, when Radigue organised a

1:00:12

Louise Marshall: The big fight was to do with feedback?

Éliane Radigue: Oh no. The big fight was about the fact that Pierre Henry was mainly working on the pieces. Of course, there were a double signature, but the signature of Pierre Schaeffer was sometimes...you know. And Pierre Henry wanted to sign himself [i.e., take credit for the composition], and since I was working with them I know the whole story and I take his own side. All these things I don't remember – if Pierre Henry left or if Pierre Schaeffer sent him away but since I took the side of Pierre Henry, I was [sent] away from the studio. And that was sometime in '57, '58, I think, something like that. *Donc...* So I couldn't go anymore to the studio. Yes, Pierre Schaeffer said, "If she wants to come to the studio, she will put stamps on letters." [i.e. become the studio secretary] (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: Was the *Jouet électronique* one of your *propositions sonores*?⁴⁷

Éliane Radigue: Ah! So, yes, so when I separated from my husband that was 1956, 1957. Yes, '56 was the beginning of...; '57 it becomes official, so this is another story. But I came back to Paris.

birthday dinner for Henry and, having also invited Schaeffer, brokered a rapprochement between the two.

⁴⁷ Radigue spoke of her *propositions sonores* in an interview in *The Wire*: "I always thought that [becoming a composer] was somehow forbidden. At the time Arman's career was taking off, so I let him forge ahead. I had our three children to raise and my priorities were clear. I never referred to my works back then as compositions, either – I called them '*propositions sonores*'. Unfortunately, few of them survive." Only one – a graphic score titled *Asymptote Versatile* (1960) – seems to have survived. (Warburton 2005: 29)

ÉLIANE RADIGUE

Louise Marshall: Hold on, madame! Do you mean '57 or '67?

Éliane Radigue: '67. (laughs)

Louise Marshall: '67, pardon.

Éliane Radigue: I am sorry. (Laughs) By chance [luckily], you are always there. No, I came back with my children to Paris in June '67 and, by chance, the assistant, Pierre Henry had until then, had just left him and I came here and he also, you know, one situation out there, from the day to the other [claps hands slowly to indicate the alternate balance], I could be at that time the assistant of Pierre Henry because we had already worked together.

I became his assistant and the first thing he asked me to do there was to make classification of that. It was the year when he met his actual wife, he was in love and, you know, being in love at that time... I don't know! I was alone very, very often in the *studio* – studio – and, of course, I used [it] also for my own [work], when I had had enough of marking, cutting – I would play a little bit, he knew that – use that time; that was obvious. I was also like a *benevole* [a volunteer], like that. I was not paid.

Louise Marshall: You were not paid? Pierre Henry didn't...?

Éliane Radigue: No, no, no, no. I was a *benevole*, but he has been fair after that. But I was like I was at the Studio d'Essai, you know!

Louise Marshall: How did you live? How did you pay your bills?

Éliane Radigue: I had the chance to have, who I called with a lot of tenderness a sponsor, my husband who, until his death ten years ago, has always –

Louise Marshall: I see. He [Arman] was a big supporter.

Éliane Radigue: – sustaining my life. I didn't have to look after any of those situations. Other than that [i.e. without that support], it would have been very difficult. First of all, when we divorced [1971], our children were in their *ado* [adolescence]; they were from twelve to seventeen, so and after. when they left, he kept [me] because he considered [i.e., took into account] when I took this ten years out in Nice that was also for his own career. Because his own career also was in Paris, not in Nice.

01:05:00 At the time we thought of coming in [moving to] Paris but it was too difficult with the three children and so he considered that I had given ten years for our children and that is why he considered it like natural, which was fair. This is why I always said, “Consider him like my sponsor.” He has – I have been sponsored [sponsored] by and we remained... I used to say, “We had ten years, wonderful in our marriage, we had a difficult but, um, you know, elegant separation, you know, and we always kept a lot of respect and tenderness.”

Louise Marshall: That is a remarkable story.

Éliane Radigue: Somehow he considered that he could have made his career due to the fact that I was living with the children. Because when it was him living with the children at the time he became so crazy, you know, that these poor

children – you should ask them! – like they said sometimes, “*Ah, nos parents à nous sont nouvelle vague!*” [Our parents are so modern!]

Catherine Facerias: *Une nouvelle façon de faire.* [A new way of doing things.]

Éliane Radigue: (Laughs) *Oui. Mais bon, on a été loin d’avoir été des parents parfaits, hein? Vraiment. Mais enfin, maintenant, ça va, maintenant ils se disent que cela en valait peut-être la peine, qu’après tout ils ne sont pas si mal que ça leurs parents. Nous en étions ceci étant, c’est moi qui ai fait une digression, là, et j’ai perdu le fil de la question. Où on en était?* [Yes, but you know, we were far from being perfect parents. Really. But at last, now, it’s okay, now they say maybe it was worth it, after all, we were not that bad as parents. We were... Where were we? I’ve made a digression and I’ve lost the thread of the question and where we were –]

Catherine Facerias: *On en était à Pierre Henry, vous devenez assistante de Pierre Henry* – [We were talking about Pierre Henry, you became Pierre Henry’s assistant –]

Éliane Radigue: *Voilà! C’est ça! À mon arrivée...* When I arrived in Paris almost immediately I have a job with Pierre Henry for one year. It was a very important year for him also because it was the year that he was preparing the *L’apocalypse de Jean* and in ’67 he had a concert at Bordeaux, where we have been The Sigma [venue], I think that was The Sigma where I was there. I am even in one of the photographs working with them.

And then he had this long period without concerts. There was *croisière musicale en Méditerranée* [musical cruise on the Mediterranean] where he was invited but, like I told you, he preferred me to go there. And in fact it was also the period where in May '68, there was a lot of trouble.⁴⁸ So I could have been on the boat but the equipment didn't have a chance to come, which meant that I was there, just doing...

So when he came back... Pierre Henry is the type of people for whom doing something the last time is always best. I am the total contrary of that. But his concert at La Citié – [searches for name of venue, snaps fingers] – La Gaité Lyrique [famous Paris venue], *donc*, in 1968, November, I think, was a twenty-four-hour concert – yes – and he was creating there the *L'apocalypse de Jean*. This is where I have said he has been very elegant with me anyway because we couldn't work together in the studio; the studio was very small also and he installed at my place two tape recorders, two old tape recorders, [the] Tolana [phonogène], which were quite good from the beginning, quite good and also unsure. But this is another story which interests me very much. And so I used to go to the studio where he gave me...

Louise Marshall: The tapes.

Éliane Radigue: Yes, tapes and he explained me, “With that you make *na, na, na* [blah, blah, blah]” And I prepared some pre-mixing which I have, if you want, three. I made five/six that he had to choose. Loops, of course. I don't know how many loops I have made for him, hundreds of loops.

⁴⁸ A reference to *les événements* of 1968 in Paris and across France.

and about once a week we were together. And at the end to make all the recording he asked his first assistant, Isabelle Chandon,⁴⁹ who is still living in Brazil, to come, because it was just impossible, when there were three tape recorders – it was impossible to make it at two and Isabelle Chandon came. We were two helpers together. So, you know, things were going like that until I am in a very bad mood. (Laughter) One time I came back with all... He said, “Ah, yes that’s interesting, that’s nice, well done, well done.” And this one time, he get great anger: “What have you done there? What did you do? I asked you, *je t’avais demandé de faire un style polyphonique très différencié.*” (Laughs)

01:10:45

Catherine Facerias: “I wanted you to make a polyphonic style, very differentiated.”

Éliane Radigue: *Ah, et voilà ce que tu m’apportes.*

Catherine Facerias: “And here is what you bring me.”

Louise Marshall: Ah, so a big fight?

Éliane Radigue: Yes, but how would you interpret “*un style polyphonique très différencié*”? *Il pouvait y avoir un malentendu et je l’ai très mal pris, j’ai continué, j’ai continué, j’ai continué mais ce jour-là* [There could be a misunderstanding, and I took it very badly that day. I just kept on.] That very day I said, “Okay, I go to the Gaité Lyrique, but that will be the last time. I will not work anymore with him. I cannot stand [it].” And so I did my work to the end and after the concert at the Gaité

⁴⁹ The co-founder, in 1959, of the Studio APSOME alongside Henry and Jean Baronnet.

Lyrique, the day after in the morning, he didn't know, I didn't say anything. And when he called me a few days after he was still in provocation with his actual [i.e., *actuelle*, current] wife, he asked me, "Could you make the score of *La noire à soixante*?"⁵⁰ I said to him, "No, I am sorry." And I said, "No, now I don't work anymore with you. I am sorry. I can't."

Because we could have this light explanation about that, but the way he was, "I considered you one of my best assistants and look at what you have been doing." That was a *really big* scene, you know. No, no. He could just have said, "No, I'm sorry and give me another explanation." I would have brought him something else. That was really too much and too much is too much for me.

Louise Marshall: Yes.

Éliane Radigue: We have seen each other since then, but we keep [our] distance. But he had the elegance, even saw I had been working freely with him to leave me his tape recorder with which I could work for me, you know. Which means that I had been paid because since that I have been starting to work for myself. I bought a third one, a Telefunken and so I could start to work.

And that was by the end of 1968, after *La Gaité Lyrique*. So now you know everything? (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: Yes. When...?

⁵⁰ Henry's *musique concrète* composition, 1961.

Éliane Radigue: We can we make a break?

Louise Marshall: *Oui*. Yes, let's have a little break.

Éliane Radigue: Would you make a break with chocolate first and would you make a break with a tea?⁵¹

**Pause in recording. Éliane Radigue serves green tea,
cake and chocolates to us.
Recorder switched on again**

Louise Marshall: Yes, we're going [recording]. Yes.

Éliane Radigue: So I told you about listening practice, which starts from the very beginning, and which was at that time, where was really so, like people like Pierre Schaeffer or John Cage and, I guess, all [these] musicians of this generation in the Fifties. We discovered, at least, what was important was the way of listening. Now, briefly, like everything in life, unless you are completely concentrated, bringing all attention, here you get much more whatsoever. Another example, for like, if you are in a dark situation, you get accustomed, and see something that you will not see if it comes.⁵²

01:15:26 For the sounds, it is the same. If you are in the silence, just a slight vibration of the sounds gets its meaning [across]. And now, with the musician that I'm working [with], not all the time, but by example, Julia

⁵¹ I had presented Radigue a box of chocolates from a Parisian chocolatier as a small gift.

⁵² Radigue means that in the dark, one's eyes become accustomed to the lack of light and to see more subtle shapes is possible. Listening to subtle sound is the same.

Eckhardt,⁵³ who is an artist, she has one of her solos, we are talking about this theory. Her solo starts when she's playing with C [01:15:55, unclear], and – you cannot hear if you have not the ear, where she has, but slightly, there is *something which is in the air and it becomes sounds*. So. And all ... the process, usually, in a concert, people start to be quiet, and keep this attention, and this attention is fundamental. With Deep Listening is just so simple as that. Just bring your full attention and concentration of the sound, and here you get all the infinite [infinity] of the possibility.

There is... for me, there is no more rule than that about listening. And even though your mind sometimes is freely going here or there, you just let it go, like clouds... in a summer... sky, where clouds disappear, some other appears, and it's a freedom. *Deep Listening, for me, is a total freedom.*

Louise Marshall: Is your interest in long-durational tones precisely because of this?

Éliane Radigue: Ah! So this is another question which comes necessarily to my way of working I was just telling you about, because when I have, when I hear, I should make the link in between the...*la... la prehistoire, ce que j'appelle préhistorique* [the prehistory, what I call the prehistoric] –

⁵³ Julia Eckhardt is a German viola player, now based in Brussels. Radigue created *OCCAM IV* (2012) for her. Eckhardt has been involved in the creation of subsequent pieces in Radigue's *OCCAM* series, all of which use acoustic instruments rather than electronic sounds. Radigue says "Eckhardt" twice, shifting from a French to a German pronunciation. Luke Nickel provides an analysis of how Radigue works with and transmits ideas to other musicians working in the *OCCAM* series. (Nickel 2016)

Louise Marshall: Prehistory?

Éliane Radigue: – *celle* [i.e., the prehistory] of the feedback, when I had for the first time access to a synthesizer, with Laurie Spiegel and with Rhys Chatham in NYU, which immediately, I had been taking out every effect – so, you know, you can have a lot of effects with a synthesizer.⁵⁴ And all naturally, I have been looking for these kind of very simple sounds, which for me appears like their own way of expression, like their own language, if I may say so, so that I had to hear them for what they say, and trying – so, what they say, if we could discuss, manage together, but I never want to bring these sounds in the system I have been educated with, you know [i.e., ER makes a formal separation between electronic music and its sources and the format of conventional classical music]. This is why I came back to Paris with my own [ARP 2500] synthesizer, I left the keyboard in the United States, because I didn't want, if I had a problem, to have the temptation, you know, of going there.⁵⁵ Now, of all this long [speech] is to say why my pieces, my work, is rather long. I cannot work on a short, on a short time.

01:19:18

Let's say, for electronic music, a rough sample would be like taking sounds, which is composed out of – as you know, my synthesizer was modular. And [with] modular [synthesizers], we had to make our sounds out of oscillators and a suite for a type of modulation and filtering and mixing. So, when I had that adjusted, there were a few – I never touch the oscillators because *rrrrr*,

⁵⁴ A reference to Radigue's extreme filtering process on the synthesizer, in which she shaves off frequencies of harmonics and sounds. It is an exact and laborious process.

⁵⁵ By refusing the use of the ARP 2500's accompanying keyboard, Radigue signals that, for her, new technology is separate from any preceding technology.

hein?⁵⁶ – and every piece was made as long as it was made with the same kind of oscillations. It would just [really] be, when it's long, for one year. After one year, maybe there may be a slight changing, but it is mine, it was in tune, you know, I didn't have to readjust, but I had about twenty to forty spots where I should very, very delicately changing the sounds.

It has to be slow, because if I would have been just a little bit too far [fast], here my cat⁵⁷ was saying, “So what are you doing?” (Laughter) And okay, so I have to redo it. I had always had my synthesizer, [it] was there [gestures to a section of the living room, behind me, where there is a desk], that was an old [thing? unclear], now it's anything what I call my office.

Louise Marshall: Do you have your ARP here [in the apartment]?⁵⁸

Éliane Radigue: My ARP was here [gestures to a space behind me] on the highest part [of the desk], where are the ... actually the CDs, the recorder, and, you know... it was here. *Là*. This is why, and here it was lower, it was not lower, there was no table, and I had...⁵⁹

Catherine Facerias: The computer?

⁵⁶ This “*hein*” does not have the force or characteristics of a sonic artefact; it is merely idiomatic.

⁵⁷ Radigue's cat is sitting near her.

⁵⁸ The ARP 2500 modular analogue synthesizer was first manufactured in 1970 in the US. (About 100 units were made in total.) Unlike the other modular synthesizers of the period, the ARP 2500 uses a matrix board, with moveable, colour-coded pegs, rather than cables, to make signal connections. This is the instrument that Radigue used to compose on between, approximately, 1970-2000. She used the synthesizer without its accompanying keyboard, accomplishing her work via modulation adjustment before filtering the result through the ARP's twin filters. The results were then mixed down onto magnetic tape.

⁵⁹ Radigue is discussing the height of the desk on which the ARP was placed. Back troubles caused by sitting in a position needed to operate the synthesizer contributed to her moving onto a new way of composing after 2000.

Éliane Radigue: I had this [length] to put the elbow on. This is why it was higher, to have better control, having something stable.⁶⁰

Catherine Facérias: Precision.

Éliane Radigue: Below [the desk] I had the tape recorder, which was here all the time I was working.

Louise Marshall: But it's not here now?

Éliane Radigue: So! We'll come back to that. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Okay.

Éliane Radigue: This is my way to be. When something is over, it's over, I don't... You know, it's just like ageing. When ageing, there is a lot of things I cannot do, which I love to do, to swim, to dance, *na, na, na, na, na, na* – the list will be much too long, and if I will have to complain about that I will spend my day on that. And, at the worst, I will completely waste the pleasure of what I *still* can do, which is much more important –

Louise Marshall: I understand.

Éliane Radigue: – So now I cannot work both with that, and I couldn't, anyway, due to some physical problems. So, it's over. It [the ARP] is in a good place, anyway. So now! I will come back to the question. The fact it's [her music] of the length [it is] is just because it's slow, it's changing,

⁶⁰ The gestures accompanying this section of speech convey Radigue's embodied memory of working with her ARP at this desk. Her bodily movements at this point reflect the elbow resting on the table, the hand moving to the potentiometers of the ARP, at approximately eye level, or downwards to the tape recorder's switches.

it should make [made] very, very slowly. When I make, let's say, a ten-minute changing of a process, bringing it from, let's say, a size like that [gestures one size with her fingers], to the size like that [a pinch-gesture to signify a reduction in size], it takes time. Because... if I just like to take the thread, one by one, of some of the parts, of the partial of the sounds, anyway. Here, again, it was already not working with the fundamental, which are just there, but it was all the system of amplitude modulation, ring modulation, a little bit of... um, ah! (claps hands in frustration at lost word). *C'est comme, bon, peu importe* [That's like... (hesitates), good... It doesn't matter] – all the systems of modulation and all the system, also, of filtering and bringing that into another position. It has to be slow.

The same, now, for the musician to get all these subtle aspects of the sounds, which is natural, which is there. If they play it too fast, it is there, of course, but it goes.⁶¹ I don't mind. Classical music is made out of that [i.e., all sound shares fundamental physical properties, however it is generated], and it's wonderful, but it's not our purpose.

01:24:20

So it is slow by nature. It will be impossible to make that music without this slow process of changing. It changes all the time, and with... from the very first minute, it changes when I was working there [gestures to the desk behind me where the ARP sat], but we realised it [i.e., created it]. Even myself, I realised it

⁶¹ The transition from electronic to acoustic sound sources has implications for musicians playing Radigue's post-ARP compositions in terms of how they expose the physicality of the harmonic structure.

after a while, it does. You know, if you turn, if I was turning just from the *l'épaisseur*...

Catherine Facerias: Thickness [or depth, layer].

01:25:00

Éliane Radigue: ... Of one air, *opp!* it just disappears. It requests [i.e. requires] a lot of control. By chance I had already acquired this kind of control with the feedback effect, you know, in both ways, because when I made it with the Tolona [phonogène] that Pierre Henry left me, the feedback through the injection, that was an old system and sometimes, you know, I just [click sound, to indicate the click of a dial] by pushing one of the knobs, I had, like, changing. If I would have turned it, it would have disappeared. It was very, very delicate. The way of working with these sounds, the same way that the musician does now; the musician is incredible. Yesterday, I had a friend who was at the concert of... the orchestral formation, and she said how fascinated she was by the musicians themselves, by their concentration, because they're in perfect control, you know. To control is something special. So you have heard it, you have heard it, so you know.

And I used to say that it's a kind of eye virtuosity, which is contrary of the virtuosity of speed, but virtuosity of very, very strict control over the sound. It's like the Deep Listening, you know. It's like doing this sound, you can hear this sound with real... whatsoever you call it, but I like the term of Deep Listening. I am glad to see that you adopt it, in mentioning that it comes from Pauline [Oliveros], but

we owe the term to Pauline, “Deep Listening”, but deep listening is there, and is there from a...

And so it’s working, also, in and within the kind of listening which is made of full concentration, full attention and, for the musician, full control, like it was for me with my knobs, like it is now for the musician, whether with the blow, with a wind instrument, whether with the string, and also... but this is another effect with the tuning. I don’t mind about the tuning. I mean, as you know, the ‘A’ or the ‘La’, when there is five, that is... [01:27:57, unclear] when it’s – when I ask to music specialist about music, when I ask her how many tunings there are, she say, “Oh, much too much!” (Laughter) That was her answer.

So, you know, when I work with just one musician, the rule is to say, “Now, your instrument, now, in this place, with this weather,” because all the instruments – how do your instrument, at what tuning [does] your instrument react the best? I mean, is it less unhappy in unhappy weather, and the less happy anyway, whatsoever, and from here we start. Of course, when we work with twenty-seven people, we have to readjust, but even so, we discover that it is sometimes very interesting, where there is a slight difference in the tuning, less than a half-tone – four, five, comma [i.e., .4 or .5], is enough. Enough to produce some slight [harmonic] beating in between the...

01:29:20

So this is another way of working. I don’t know if I answered your question.

Louise Marshall: No, it's very interesting. Can I ask you just a few quick questions now? You went to America, to New York in the late Sixties, yes?

Éliane Radigue: I went to New York before that, in the late Fifties, but that was with my husband when he had his first exhibition in New York. I lived in New York for a scholar period [semester] in the early Sixties, '63, I think, '63, '64, a year or so. It was rather for the work, my husband had his first contract with the Galerie Sidney Janis⁶² and we went there. He choose an apartment where there were a piano. (Laughter) He has been... And then, after that, I have been in New York every year, and sometimes for quite extended periods of time, because I have very good friends in New York.

Louise Marshall: You were living there in the late Sixties and that was when you met Pauline [Oliveros] and Phill Niblock, and Jon Gibson and Steve Reich, and –

Éliane Radigue: That's right, that was later, that was in the Seventies. In the Sixties, in '63, I met James [Tenney]⁶³ and that was a very important meeting, because at that period, New York was – *oof! C'était un...!* [gesturing to head, forgetting an English word] *un terrain, un terrain de vie extraordinaire*, in every level, you know, dance, with a... dance every night there was something happening in one of the studios of SoHo, which were, at the time, really, er...

⁶² The Sidney Janis Gallery on East 57th Street in Manhattan was an important promoter of the French school of new realism, of which Arman, alongside compatriot artists Yves Klein, Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely, was part.

⁶³ James Tenney (US, 1934-2006) was a composer with links to John Cage and many other significant composers. He was married for a period to Carolee Schneemann, who was a friend of Annea Lockwood.

Catherine Facerias: Really cheap?

Éliane Radigue: Yes, that's changed, it was not [as it is now] this elegant part, that was the real one. Every night there was something. There was also something very interesting, which just does not exist anymore now, that there were cross-meetings between musicians, painters, etc, dancers, which now, it's rather separated, which is a shame, I think. It's a pity. It was a very rich period. You, first of all, saw with Arman, with the all the painters, it was the full period of the pop art and we met everyone. I met all of them. The last party we had at home, I can't tell who we had. (Laughter) It was really – now there all are in big museums. (Laughter) In the other end, due to James Tenney, I met people like Philip Corner, like Malcolm Goldstein,⁶⁴ etc., etc., etc.

I met, of course, John Cage, and David Tudor, and in this big loft, you know, just naturally. There was a basket at the entrance in which we put our bag, and then we sit where we could. It was very much alive at that period. A little bit later, during the Sixties, always due to James Tenney, I met Phil Glass and Steve Reich at the period they were still working together, before they get apart.⁶⁵ I met them again when I was there in '70, '71, but separately, you know. One or the other.

⁶⁴ Philip Corner (US, b. 1933), an experimental composer with a Zen Buddhist practice, and composer Malcolm Goldstein (US/Canadian, b. 1933) were, with Tenney, co-founders of Tone Roads, an ensemble that played their music. All three composers worked in collaboration with artists from other media, typifying Radigue's theme of a contact between disciplines.

⁶⁵ Although Reich and Glass had played in each other's ensembles in the late Sixties/early Seventies and had played several European concerts together on a tour in 1971, their relationship later became strained. The cause of this souring has been a source of speculation in the musical world.

Louise Marshall: It was about 1970 or '71 when you were working at NYU on the Buchla, first of all.

Éliane Radigue: Yes, on the Buchla.

Louise Marshall: Which was installed by Morton Subotnik [we both say this name together], and you shared a studio with Laurie Spiegel?

Éliane Radigue: So, this is where, like I told you, we met sometimes saying hello when one or the other was leaving, but we didn't have a real relationship, we were just [checking] our time on...

01:34:15 We were three, using the studio: Laurie [Spiegel], Rhys Chatham and me, and we put [on the rota] our favourite hours, and sometimes, when we arrived, we all had the key, we arrived there was no one, and sometimes one was leaving, but at that time we didn't have so much relationship. That was strange. We were all working in the same studio, not knowing really everyone. I remember I came to know better Rhys Chatham after I had my first concert in New York in the 6th April 1971.⁶⁶ (Laughter. She says this date precisely and with a little flourish) This was something at the New York Cultural Center, it was the first piece I had made on the Buchla synthesizer and Rhys Chatham came and it was so nice, because after, he called me the day after, saying me, "So, I came to be polite," because I was the eldest, Rhys was very young and *je ne sais pas comment il l'a dit mais voilà ce que ca voulait dire*,

⁶⁶ At the New York Cultural Center, a venue that had a small auditorium accommodating less than fifty people. Radigue presented three variations of *Chry-ptus* (1971), a two-track magnetic tape composition realised on the Buchla and focusing on the effect of synchronisation and desynchronization on structure. See Gayou 2013.

“*bon, je m’attendais à une musique, another music*”, *et là il est parti en disant qu’il avait entendu... et donc on est devenu*, after that, that was April” [I don’t know how he said it exactly, but he said, “I was expecting some music” – implying he wasn’t expecting much and was pleasantly surprised].

Catherine Facerias: “I was expecting some...” [Crosstalk]

Éliane Radigue: After that – that was April – and after that we spent a lot of time, until June, when I came back, and we remain very good friends. It started like that. I remember we had been along this period also to a great experience, Max Neuhaus, this experience in a *piscine*, a swimming pool, in water, when we had been together.⁶⁷ So I had this sense, you know, of now I have left home, now I don’t know anything about what is going... (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: I know you’ve said in other interviews that you were confronted by this Buchla, and you spent three months trying to figure out what to do with it.

Éliane Radigue: Yes, absolutely.

Louise Marshall: So you were teaching yourself how to use it and how to modify it, I suppose?

Éliane Radigue: No, we were free, completely free.

Louise Marshall: You could do what you wanted with this thing?

⁶⁷ Radigue is referring to one of the events in musician/sound artist Max Neuhaus’s (US, 1939-2009) *Water Whistle* series from the early Seventies. These events involved various sounds played through the medium of water. Listeners would enter the pool to hear them.

Éliane Radigue: If I want to teach?

Catherine Facerias: *Vous pouviez l'utiliser autant que vous vouliez et c'est vous qui vous êtes appris* [You could use it as much as you liked and you taught yourself].

Éliane Radigue: *Ah, oui!* [Composer] Michael Tchaikovsky, who was a director, and it took the three of us, after the first time we met, once or twice just to show us the differences between the plugging of the control, *tension de commande* – control voltage, what was sounds, which was really meant and after that – pop! whoosh! [noise] – yes, he learn [taught] us also how to clean.

Louise Marshall: How to clean?

Éliane Radigue: How to clean all the parts because we would always have to keep the instrument in perfect condition. This has been our first lesson, you know: how to clean the *les cordons, les extrémités, les trucs qu'on pluggent* [the cables, the end bits, the things you plug...]

Catherine Facerias: *Les jacks* [plugs]?

Éliane Radigue: *Oui, les jacks, voilà.* How to clean them and also to clean the instruments. This was our first lesson. After, he explained us, so which model was there, and how. This is the only instrument in which there are two kinds of plug-in, which are one is more kind of banana [plug] than the other one, to make the difference between which ones were used for control voltage, and which

were used to control the sound. That's it, and after that,
whoo ...

Louise Marshall: You used a Moog synthesizer also?

Éliane Radigue: I used a Moog synthesizer. That was in 1973, I think.
Oh yes, I had been in Iowa.⁶⁸

Louise Marshall: You were teaching in Iowa.

Éliane Radigue: There they had a Moog. This was interesting, but it's
not my favourite.

Louise Marshall: When did you meet your ARP [2500]?

Éliane Radigue: My ARP?

Louise Marshall: When did you meet the ARP synthesizer?

Éliane Radigue: You ask me about the better of my love affairs?
(Laughter)⁶⁹

Louise Marshall: The best of your love affairs: your ARP.

01:39:22

Éliane Radigue: Of course, I have some other ones, but you know, this
year when I was in New York working at the Buchla,
there were not that many. I had heard already about the
Moog, and I had an opportunity through some friend to

⁶⁸ In 1973-74 period, Radigue was composer-in-residence first at the University of Iowa, and then at the California Institute of the Arts.

⁶⁹ Radigue recapitulates here the language of love in which she has previously described her relationship with her ARP to Tara Rodgers (2010) and to Bernard Girard (2013): "I really fell in love with the ARP synthesizer. Immediately. Immediately! That was *him!*" (Rodgers 2010: 56, her italics); "[...] *je suis tombé sur l'ARP, cela a été le coup de foudre. Je me suis dit: c'est celui là qu'il me faut.*" (Girard 2013: 61) In French, *synthétiseur* is a masculine noun.

check, roughly, how it was, how it worked. It was not that different to the concept of the Buchla, except that the plugs are bigger. I'm sorry to say so but I think it's heavier by all means. The sound is heavier, it's heavier. So that is not exactly what I wanted. There was also the ElectroComp,⁷⁰ which was the last company they didn't make that much. Of course, there was at EMS in London, which is a nice instrument. It is nice, but –

Louise Marshall: Yes, that's right. This is Peter Zinovieff, yes?⁷¹

Éliane Radigue: Yes, it's the oldest, I think that the first one. I've been working recently with Ryoko Akama⁷² and Thomas [Lean? Lynn?] with their- what they are. It is still a very nice instrument, of course, limited, and which one did I meet again? Of course, I knew about the Buchla. The Buchla, until that, became my favourite because it has a nice sound. The sound's also important. Then I met... [pauses] the A.R.P. [Here, Radigue spells out the initials, rather than pronouncing it as a single word as she had before.]

Louise Marshall: Where did you meet this ARP?

Éliane Radigue: In an exhibition somewhere. The first thing are being the sounds, of course, even if it was with a keyboard, but it has a very nice and rich sound. Also, no more [of] the patching where on the – ah, I forgot the name. You know, you have seen them...

⁷⁰ A small range of ElectroComp audio-synthesizers were made by the US manufacturer Electronic Music Laboratories between 1969-76.

⁷¹ British engineer Peter Zinovieff (b. 1933) was a co-founder of EMS, the company which manufactured the VCS3 synthesizer.

⁷² Japanese sound artist/composer who is a current member (with Kaffe Matthews and AGF) of the Lappetites, an all-female ensemble making electronic music. Radigue was a guest member in the group's first iteration.

Louise Marshall: You have the patch, at the front with the patch.

Éliane Radigue: *Voilà*. So in the middle, at this stance, were the modules, at the bottom were the two patches, to patch things together, which means you take one element from every module, one line, bring it into the other one. No wires everywhere, because, like the Buchla, when you were working into all this while, it took all these wires, like spaghetti, but [make a] bad move and some of this plugging, it disappears, you don't know which one, you have everything to – or here, I have always it, just in a glance I know that that was going there, there and they are going back there, there and there. It was just completely readable, and much more accessible. Since I was not using the keyboard, it was even richer because the same part up was made to be normally plugged with the big keyboard, but I could take here with some wires, but it was just on the side, some of the elements of the keyboard, to use them, to enter into it.

Louise Marshall: So you modified it.

Éliane Radigue: This is why I had such richness and complexity of elements to... yes, it was very light. I didn't move that much. This is why it was so slow and took so much time. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: We've talked about your love affair with the ARP; can we now talk about something you've called the most important experience of your life, and that was your first contact with Tibetan Buddhism. I know you met students at Mills [College].

Éliane Radigue: This is another story, again. First of all, when I had been to the CalArts and that was in 1973 after I had been in Iowa. I had been at the CalArts, to work here with the Buchla again. And so I had a mentor, but the mentor immediately understood that I already had been through that. I had achieved here in Paris with my own ARP *ψ 847* [in French] – *ψ 847* [in English] *Ah! Je ne me rappelle plus.* [I can't remember anymore.] *Oui, ψ 847.*⁷³

Catherine Facerias: *847.* [In English]

Éliane Radigue: *Oui*, which is the first long piece of eighty minutes. I had given it at the CalArts while I was there, and after that I was going to San Francisco to meet Terry Riley, and here I met his former wife, Marta, who is a pianist where I was staying. She had received a card from the CalArts saying that someone has heard a concert from Éliane, a very meditative experience. [Pause] Okay. [Pause] I was not involved with Buddhism at the time, and in 1975 – oh yes, in 1974, I had the concert in Paris of *Adnos I* (1974), the first *Adnos*, and I had been after that in California at Mills College. Here, at the end, I gave the *Adnos I*.⁷⁴ Here, at the end of the concert, three French people came to me, normally dressed, you know, and they said to me, “So do you know that you are not doing your music yourself?” [Pause] Very strange, indeed.

⁷³ Or *Psi 847* (1973), for ARP 2500 synthesizer and magnetic tape. It received its premiere at The Kitchen, New York.

⁷⁴ Compositions made with the ARP 2500, three Revox quarter-inch tape recorders and an octave filter. *Adnos I* (composed 1973-74) was followed by *Adnos II* (composed 1979) and *Adnos III (Prélude à Milarepa)* (composed 1979-80).

01:46:00

Louise Marshall: What did you say?

Éliane Radigue: *Ooof!* Like that, you know. What could I answer to that?⁷⁵ So after they told me about Buddhism and that was quite all right. That was quite alright because... I remember after that we had been for dinner with, er, Bob Ashley,⁷⁶ who was actually director [of what was then called the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills] with two or three people, and I was thinking of that. They managed to meet me at the place I was after, and here they started to speak. They first of all showed me two photographs: one of the Sixteenth Karmapa⁷⁷ – you are familiar with Tibetan Buddhism?

Louise Marshall: Yes, yes.

Éliane Radigue: And one of Kalu Rinpoche.⁷⁸ When I saw the Gyalwya – the Sixteenth Karmapa, he had the Gampopa⁷⁹ *coiffe* [hat], not the black one, with brocard [ornamented], which is *en brocard*.⁸⁰ For a while, I just saw three faces. I mean, his face and two – that was like saying to me, and of course, the humanity of ... immediately

⁷⁵ In her narrative, Radigue's voice registers her amazement at the message that the French students gave her. In Girard (2013: 93), she expands on this: "*C'était pour moi un peu comme de retrouver un pays perdu que je connaissais déjà. C'était une sensation extraordinaire.*"

⁷⁶ Composer Robert Ashley (US, 1930-2014) was the director of Mills College's Center for Contemporary Music in the 1970s. (The Center grew out of the Mills Tape Music Center, which was created when the San Francisco Tape Music Center moved to the college, with Pauline Oliveros as its first director.) Radigue was later to use the voices of Ashley (in English) and Lama Kunga Rinpoche (in Tibetan) on her five *Songs for Milarepa* (1981-83).

⁷⁷ Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, the Sixteenth Gyalwya Karmapa (1924-81). After fleeing Tibet in 1950, the sixteenth karmapa was an important figure in setting up Buddhist study centres in exile and transmitting the teachings to new audiences.

⁷⁸ Tibetan lama (1905-89). He founded a study centre for Tibetan Buddhism in France.

⁷⁹ The twelfth-century Gampopa ("the man from Gampo") was a physician and student of the saint, Milarepa.

⁸⁰ In the Tibetan lineage, there is a series of ritual hats or head coverings that all signify various denominations and affiliations.

Kalu Rinpoche seems to me more human. Of course, they gave me an address in Paris, Kagyu-Dzong, which was at that time near the [Parc des] Buttes-Chaumont. The first thing I did when I arrive, when I came back to Paris, I'd been going there; Kalu Rinpoche was in London, and was leaving ... I heard that he was after that going back to... [French spoken, searching for word] *le Bhoutan* [Bhutan].

Louise Marshall: Dharamsala? No, not Tibet.

Éliane Radigue: So, I took... I had been immediately to London to meet him. He also, strangely enough, [was looking]. I was looking – it was a special place, and two people came to me; a young woman and a young American, and asking me, “What are you looking for?” when, of course, they were disciples. They brought me there and that was it, you know! So as simple as that! When things are really so simple as that! After that, so I was going three or four times a week at Kagyu-Dzong to receive the teaching, because the teaching has been something very important. That was it. I had the chance, after, to meet... the meeting with the master is quite something also. To meet Pawo Rinpoche,⁸¹ who now..., now his successor,⁸² is in Lhasa.

01:49:32

Louise Marshall: Oh, he's in Tibet? It's safe for him to be in Tibet?

⁸¹ Tsuglag Mawey Wangchuk (1912-91) was the tenth Nenang Pawo Rinpoche, a position that is one of the most important lamas of the Karma Kagyu lineage in Tibetan Buddhism. He escaped from Tibet in 1959. In later life, he founded the Nenang Samten Choling hermitage and study centre on the site of a ruined farm near Plazac in the Dordogne, where he lived between 1978-86. He became Radigue's teacher. Between approximately 1975-78, Radigue describes herself as a “almost a recluse” (Warburton 2005: 29) as she devoted herself to a Buddhist life. The Pawo Rinpoche eased her back into making music. *Koumé*, the third section of her *Trilogie de la mort* is influenced by his “grand departure” (ibid).

⁸² Tsuglag Tendzin Künzang Chökyi Nyima (b. 1993), the eleventh Nenang Pawo.

Éliane Radigue: Of course, because at this period, when the Buddhism came to the Occident, that was oldest generation. I mean, the lama[s who] came from Tibet [were] quite young, and now, except for the Dalai Lama, who is the youngest, almost all of them now have passed away. The successor of [the tenth Pawo] – [the] young [eleventh] Pawo Rinpoche – who should be now, oh, yes, forty, forty-five. I have photographs and I still have news, but he's in Lhasa. But that was ... I met him a little bit after, but also, I don't know if you are familiar with... you seem to be, which is why I speak so freely, with Tibetan Buddhism –

Louise Marshall: No, a little bit.

Éliane Radigue: One of the first teachings of the Buddha to his students, was never accept anything without having experiencing that it is true, hmm? When the followers ask, “Even your teaching, *maître* [master]?” “*Surtout* – mainly, my teaching, you know.” (Laughter) I think something like that, and, among all the teaching, because at that time there were a lot of great masters who came in Paris, you know, it was incredible. At the time, when they came into Paris, they were in places like that, we were twenty or thirty people. And now there are thousands, five thousand, even younger, because these elders, like the actual [current] Dalai La– [corrects self], the actual Karmapa. He is nearly thirty, I think.

And so one of the teachings was, which I had received from the head of the Nyingmapa tradition, Dudjom

Rinpoche,⁸³ and he gave a teaching about the way we should be very careful before we choose a *maître*, to make sure that what he says and his way of living, that everything is okay, because this could avoid *na, na, na* [and so on], so it was a very, very long teaching, and he ended up saying, “So, anything, don’t worry, it is always the teacher who will choose you.” (Laughter) For Pawo Rinpoche and me, this has really been so, because I would *never* have dared to become so close with. He is someone fantastic.

Louise Marshall: And he chose you?

Éliane Radigue: Yes, so.

Catherine Facerias: Yeah, he chose you.

Éliane Radigue: This has been an even bigger than the meeting with [the] ARP. (Laughter) This also has been a big love affair. (Laughter) *Is* also, is always a big love affair. (Laughter) I’ve been living thirty years with my ARP, but [I] am still living with Pawo Rinpoche. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: What is it about the importance of sound within Tibetan Buddhism that is important for you as a musician?

Éliane Radigue: Ah! Ah! Strangely enough, that’s the first time that someone has asked me this question and I have to think about it. I would say that for me, an experience, coming from true experience, the most important is when we are a group doing a puja, reciting mantras and where,

⁸³ Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje (1904-87) was the second Dudjom Rinpoche. In his later years, he lived in the Dordogne – near to Plazac – at the Nyingmapa Cultural Association’s centre at Urgyen Samye Chöling in Montignac-Lascaux.

when it goes well, there is all these sounds, overtones, which are floating. Really. For me, this is the strongest experience. Of course, there is the gyaling, which are interesting, this is a sort of an oboe, the rag-dung,⁸⁴ the long one, also, are very interesting. The percussion, the *la, la, la cloche* also...

01:54:44

Louise Marshall: *La cloche?* The singing bowl?

Éliane Radigue: [Crosstalk, non-English speech] *Non, non. Ça si autre chose. Ma cloche et le dorjé,⁸⁵ c'est de l'autre côté. Mais, bon...Ça oui, oui. Ce qui me vient a l'esprit* [What comes to my mind]. The most important is that. I remember one extraordinary experience like that, once. We were, I don't know, maybe thirty or forty people. It was in Dordogne at the place of where... Pawo Rinpoche, was living, and it was the last year he was there for the Losar – the Losar is the New Year of Tibetans – he was leaving for Kathmandu the year after, I don't know why, maybe for the special occasion. There was something very special, also, in the air. And, you know, all this... the gompa [unclear, temple architecture], [it] was in the ceiling, you know, like that.⁸⁶ We had several times at the already great experience, but at that time it was just like, you know, if all the sounds were – *ahhh!* We were like [that], bathing in the sounds. The sounds were there within, inside, outside, and all, that was the same.

⁸⁴ Radigue names two instruments that play a significant part in Tibetan Buddhist ritual music: the gyaling, an oboe-like woodwind instrument; and the long, rag-dung trumpets. A puja is a ritual prayer ceremony, which includes chanting.

⁸⁵ Both the handbell and the dorjé (or vajra, “thunderbolt”) are significant Tibetan Buddhist ritual objects and symbols.

⁸⁶ Possibly the idiomatic meaning here is that people's imaginations had floated upwards to the temple's ceiling.

For me, that's the most extraordinary experience with music. Not only with Tibetan – and it's not really Tibetan music – but in the experience with sounds, this fullness. This probably has been very important with what I am doing now with musicians: looking for this... “flavour” is not the right word, but for this part of the sounds that we cannot catch. It's impossible to catch that, it's completely unreal, it's completely floating, it is free. At the same time, it is complete freedom. Of course, it requests this kind of concentration, attention. Because of course, there is the sounds of the mantra, but the sound is rough by itself. The sound is just what the produce which is important. We forget. That's clear, or is it...?

Louise Marshall: Yes, it's clear. To me, it also feels that you're also speaking about a shared experience; a communal experience, and so it's almost, if one moves from the alone-ness of being an individual, into being a communal experience, when you're in this community of sounds.

Éliane Radigue: Yes, of course, of course. But as you know, this is the base of the Buddhism. Our main enemy is our ego, you know. Once we have... it is still there, unfortunately, and it is requesting, and it is always demanding and it is, and it is, and it is, and it is, but at least we know that sometimes – [whistle sound] – please, take away, or give me freedom. We know that what the experience of sharing – what we are doing now, we have a good experience, we share something together, I don't know what you will do out of that, this is not any more my

problem, but I can tell I am very free with you, and there is something floating also, around that, that you cannot catch like that [gestures in the air] and take and put... We cannot put it in our pocket, but it is there.

And that's it, that's right now, and I'm so happy when musicians are happy to play this music like that, and when, like Carol [Robinson],⁸⁷ when she called me today, she said that people have said to the group that they have never heard them playing like that.

01:59:20

Even though it was in difficult condition because it was in a church, it was raining outside, there was a tavern, so everyone was in the tavern, but you know. That was not the best concert – I mean, the conditions around it – but they played, they were very much involved, with what they played, and the people said to them, to this group, that, and so. And here also, I think this kind of music, either you come into it by this kind of listening... or I think I never had a concert in which, at least, between ten and twenty minutes from the beginning, there are always people who leave, who cannot stand it. I am quite sure there, that I have very, very harsh detractors, that there are people who will just hate what I do, but this is not my problem, because on the other hand I know that I have people who are really happy to come into this kind of world.

Louise Marshall: Yes. Yes. I know you've spoken about how the ego is our enemy, but I want to ask –

⁸⁷ Carol Robinson (Fr/US, composer and clarinettist) has played on recordings and concerts of Radigue's *Naldjorlak I, II and III* and many of the *OCCAM* compositions.

Éliane Radigue: And also, too strong ego, and also this is — we should be careful about it – it is also necessary. Not an ego, but to have kind of a personality, if I may say so, to do something. I mean, if you are just no- [you are] neutral, so, okay. (Laughter) But that's not a goal, either. If we do, with the ego, you know, it's just [grumbling noise], here, it's become an enemy. It's permanent learning. Permanent learning! (Laughter) It's every day in our morning, in the morning when we open our eyes, so, and... but, at least, you know. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: I am going to ask you about your legacy to the future. We've talked a little bit about transmission and the importance of transmitting one's work, one's experience, to the future, and with the kind of music you produce, of course, it's very difficult. For starters, it's not notated in the conventional way that a symphony, for example, would be notated. I wanted to ask you where you see yourself within the history of music?

Éliane Radigue: *Offf!* This is not my problem. (Laughter) I'm sorry, this is none of my concern. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: (Laughter) It's okay, I ask everybody this, to see what they say.

Éliane Radigue: Yes? No, I feel a big privilege of having *avoir eu...* having used?

Catherine Facerias: Having *had*.

Éliane Radigue: Having *had*, thank you, having had this opportunity of this fantastic experience, to meet wonderful people all throughout my life, to be still working and having wonderful projects. I know by experience, amongst three projects, rarely the three work, but at best two, and sometimes just one, but here, since I have more than three, I probably will have two or three, maybe, which will work, and which will...

So, okay, I cannot walk more than 150 meters, so I can't take a flight because [taps her heart] my *cardiologue* [cardiologist] has told me if I do, so I don't... okay, I stay home. I have a quiet life which means I keep in as much of a good condition for my age, and I enjoy to have, you know, like the time we had together, like when the musician comes here and when we are working, and all the world is there [i.e. here]. All the best of the world is there.

Louise Marshall: Thank you so much for your generosity and your time.

Éliane Radigue: Thanks to you, because, you know, I used to say, and it's very much right, believe me, through my experience, that interviews are first of all, the reflections of the person of the interviewer. When the interviewer asks good questions, it's a good interview, and so it's a good sharing.

02:04:40

Louise Marshall: Thank you.

Éliane Radigue: You know, I could give you the worst example. Once recently, it was just after a *première*, someone asked me

if she could ask me some questions, came with her mic, and so I said okay. She asked me, “Could you present yourself?” (Laughter) It doesn’t go that far, you know. (Laughter) I would quote here also another good interviewer who is from the GRM, *mon amie* Évelyne Gayou⁸⁸ – the GRM has been the continuation where I have never been of the GRM, because the GRM happened after I have been there. The first thing she asked me, she said, “*Si je dis, ‘Asnamus’, qu’est ce que ca vous dit? ’’ J’ai eclate de rire.*”⁸⁹ [“If I tell you, ‘Asnamus’, what does it say to you?” I burst laughing] I cracked [up] laughing, because that was one of the words of Pierre Schaeffer, which came from his commitment to Gurdjieffism. Gurdjieff, you know?⁹⁰ He had also, Pierre Schaeffer, he was also very much involved with Gurdjieff. You have heard of Gurdjieff?

Louise Marshall: Yes. I didn’t know this [about Schaeffer’s relationship with Gurdjieff’s teachings].

Éliane Radigue: “Asnamus” is the word to say, so this is really baloney, it doesn’t mean anything, and it was a word that Pierre Schaeffer used quite often, so when she asked me so, that was a late question, you know, and I cracked [up] laughing, and of course [it opened the interview] immediately, that was only immediately very free, you know. I had this interview for one year [ago] here [in

⁸⁸ French academic, director and historian of the GRM/ Institut national de l’audiovisuel (INA). I thank Évelyne Gayou for supplying me with details about “asnamus”, a meaningless word used by Gurdjieff and, afterwards, Schaeffer and his friends at the GRM.

⁸⁹ This 2014 interview is viewable on the INA website: <https://tinyurl.com/y9qm3k5a> (accessed 24 January 2017).

⁹⁰ Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (Armenian/Greek/Russian, 1877-1949), mystic and philosopher. He moved to France in 1922; Schaeffer met him in 1941. Schaeffer chose the word “Groupe” in GRM as a connection with his Gurdjieffism; the practice of this philosopher brought adherents together in “groups” for teaching purposes. (Gayou 2007a: 204)

this flat], before I have an opportunity to listen to it, and I immediately called her and I said, “So.”

Once more, I am right. A good interview is made by a good interviewer, or else it’s just nothing. That [our time] was a very, very nice time.

Louise Marshall: Thank you.

Éliane Radigue: I think I would like to know you more, you know. I hope we will see each other again.⁹¹

Louise Marshall: I very much hope [so]. I’m going to turn this off now.

02:07:22 **End of recording**

⁹¹ Radigue and I have subsequently met on several occasions.

Interview 3

**Annea
Lockwood**

Date

11 May 2016

Venue

Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK

Keywords

AL = Annea Lockwood

Names mentioned

Alston, Richard (choreographer)	Amirkhanian, Charles (composer, writer)
Anderson, Laurie (artist, musician)	Anderson, Ruth (composer and AL's partner)
Austin, Larry (composer, editor, <i>Source: Music of the Avant-Garde</i>)	Berio, Luciano (composer)
Bielecki, Robert (Bob) (sound engineer, artist, academic)	Boulez, Pierre (composer)
Cage, John (composer)	Cardew, Cornelius (composer)
Chopin, Henri (sound poet)	Cobbing, Bob (sound poet)
Corner, Philip (composer)	Cunningham, Merce (choreographer)
Dalcroze, Émile-Jacques (musician, academic and educator)	Davies, Hugh (composer)
Ea (Pacific goddess)	Evangelisti, Franco (composer)
Fricker, Peter Racine (composer, professor at Royal College of Music)	Fullman, Ellen (artist, musician)
Griffiths, Thomas Vernon (professor of music, University of New Zealand)	Hays, Sorrel (composer)
Ione (poet, writer, partner to Pauline Oliveros)	Kendall Taylor, Edgar (pianist, professor at Royal College of Music, London)
Knowles, Alison (artist)	Koenig, Gottfried Michael (composer)
Lifton, John (artist)	Lockwood, Annea (formerly Anna)
Lockwood family (New Zealand)	Maderna, Bruno (composer) Matusow, Harvey (promoter, AL's former husband)
Metzger, Gustav (artist, auto-destructionist)	Moon, Gwen and Ron (teachers, New Zealand)
Moore, Stephan (electronic music composer)	Moorman, Charlotte (cellist and Avant-Garde Festival promoter)
Mumma, Gordon (composer)	Niblock, Phill (composer)
Nyman, Michael (musicologist, writer and composer)	Oliveros, Pauline (composer, writer, Deep Listening developer)
Ortiz, Ralph Montañez (artist)	Pierrot, Paul (artist)
Radigue, Éliane (composer)	Rimbaud, Penny (musician in UK anarchist-punk band, Crass)

Stewart, Madeau (BBC Radio 3 producer)	Schneemann, Carolee (performance artist) and her cat, Kitsch
Steyn, Mike (producer)	Stockhausen, Karlheinz (composer)
Summers, Elaine (choreographer)	Sveinsson, Atli Heimir (pianist, composer)
Tenney, James (composer, former husband to Schneemann)	Vaucher, Gee (graphic designer, artist)
Westerkamp, Hildegard (composer)	Wood, Elizabeth (musicologist)
Wood, Marilyn (choreographer)	Young, La Monte (composer)

Places, venues and organisations mentioned

Amarillo, Texas	Bealey River, New Zealand
Canterbury, University of, New Zealand	Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, New York
Chiswick, London	Christchurch, New Zealand
Contactorgaan Elektronische Muziek (CEM) studio, Bilthoven, Utrecht, The Netherlands	Darmstadt, [West] Germany (Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt and the Darmstädter Ferienkurse)
Datrys, Llaanrwst, Wales (arts organisation)	Hunter College, New York
Ingatestone, Essex	Middle Earth (concert venue, Covent Garden, London)
Pacific Ocean	Pilkington Glass
Royal College of Music, London	

Compositions, festivals and publications mentioned

Bach (JS), <i>Partitas</i>	Destruction in Art Symposium, London, 1966
“Lili Marlene” (song)	Glass Concerts (Anna Lockwood)
<i>In the Garden of Sonic Delights</i>	<i>Jitterbug</i> (AL)
<i>Piano Burning</i> (AL)	<i>Piano Drowning</i> (AL)
<i>Piano Transplants</i> (AL)	<i>River Archive</i> (AL)
<i>Silence</i> (book, John Cage)	<i>Software for People</i> (book, Pauline Oliveros)
<i>Sound Maps</i> (AL)	The First Days of Ingatestone Festival, 1970
<i>Tiger Balm</i> (AL)	<i>Wild Energy</i> (AL and Bob Bielecki)
<i>Womens Work</i> [sic] (2 x publications, Anna/AL and Alison Knowles)	<i>World Rhythms</i> (AL)
ICES 72 (International Circus of Experimental Sound, London), 1972	

Social/art/political/miscellaneous

Buddhism: Tibetan and Zen	Consciousness-raising (Women's Liberation movement, 1970s)
DAAD (German scholarship programme)	Experimental Intermedia Foundation
Feminism	Fluxus
Instruments, piano, decorating piano	Maori culture, lack of contact with
Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV)	Nature: cats, kiwis, tigers, geysers, geological sounds, solar emissions, water, oceans, rivers
Scratch Orchestra	Sexuality
Shozygs (Hugh Davies's invented instruments)	Sonic Arts Union
Sonification (of sounds from natural world)	

File: Composer Annea Lockwood and researcher Louise Marshall

Duration: 01:34:58

Date: 11 May 2016, morning

Place: Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK

00:00:00¹

Louise Marshall: And yes, this [recorder] is working, this is great. Right.

Annea Lockwood: So, it wasn't – at least in the way I view it now – it wasn't so much that I felt a deliberate exclusion from the scene, but I –

Louise Marshall: We're talking about Cornelius Cardew now.²

Annea Lockwood: And the Scratch Orchestra, and that particular cluster of artists, but there really wasn't room for anyone else in the scene by the time the Scratch Orchestra was well under way, and Cardew's career, and various others...

Louise Marshall: Were you ever interested in joining the Scratch Orchestra?³

Annea Lockwood: No, I went with an old friend, Hugh Davies, who was himself a beautiful musician, and important.⁴ We went

¹ This transcript has been seen and approved by Annea Lockwood. Some very minor edits were made to this text and its audio file.

² Composer Cornelius Cardew (UK, 1936-81) was an energetic musician, theoretician and left-wing political activist who dominated the British experimental and new music landscape from the late 1960s until his death in a hit-and-run accident in 1981.

³ The Scratch Orchestra was formed in 1969 by Cardew with fellow British composers Michael Parsons (UK, b. 1938) and Howard Skempton (UK, b. 1947). Theoretically, anyone could join the orchestra, regardless of their ability to play an instrument. The orchestra endured until approximately 1974.

⁴ Musician and composer Hugh Davies (UK, 1943-2005). In the mid-1960s, Davies had worked (as had Cardew) as an assistant to Karlheinz Stockhausen in Cologne. After his return to London a few years later, Davies brought electronics into the work of the group, the Music Improvisation Company. He also inaugurated a series of invented musical

to either the first or one of the first meetings of the Scratch Orchestra to see what was going on and if we wanted to be involved, and it just didn't look like my sort of thing. The communitarian – I'm not a good communitarian, I suspect, and that aspect of it didn't draw me at all, and nor am I a good follower.

Louise Marshall: That's an interesting thing: maybe we can come back to those London years in a minute. But if I could just take you back to your early years, first of all, could you tell me a bit about your life as a child in New Zealand, and your musical education; your first awareness of sound, perhaps?

Annea Lockwood: Sure, sure. First awareness of sound is so far back that I'm not going to retrieve that, I don't think, but what I have been telling people as an early memory of sound is the experience of lying at night in a bunk-up at my family's little hut in the New Zealand Alps, Southern Alps, which was near a river, the Bealey River, and my brother and I would listen to see if we could hear kiwis in the bush across the river, kiwis were already rare. We were listening intently, and, of course, in the process hearing the river, the river's sounds, which was very nice ear training, and I don't recall... occasionally we would hear a kiwi.

I was lucky; I was born into a family that were passionate music lovers, and my mother was, in fact, a musician and composed, and studied Dalcroze and worked with young women in poor areas – she was

objects/instruments, to which he gave the name, shozygs. The first shozyg was a miniature synthesizer housed in an encyclopaedia volume covering entries from *Sho-Zyg*, hence the name.

born here, in England, in Southampton – of London and elsewhere, doing sort of dance-theatre productions, which she created with them.⁵

Louise Marshall: Amazing. So that would have been before the war?

Annea Lockwood: She was highly creative. Hmm, yes, it would have been. It was between the wars.

Louise Marshall: How interesting. Mmm!

Annea Lockwood: She, through various circumstances, went out to New Zealand, did a guest teaching stint, found my father – they found each other – she fell in love, went back to England for five years while he tried to decide what he was going to do about this circumstance, and eventually he enticed her back to New Zealand and they married.

Louise Marshall: What did your dad do?

Annea Lockwood: He was a lawyer. He was a barrister – no, he was a solicitor. I've been in the States too long to remember the distinction. He was a solicitor. I think he was really a mountaineer first, and a solicitor second, for sure.

So, of course, my brother and I were going to grow up taking music lessons, and I was very fortunate, my mother placed me with Gwen Moon, who was an exceptionally good piano teacher and musician. Very

⁵ Émile-Jacques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) was a Swiss musician, academic and educator. His emphasis on the holistic relationship between body and movement is the origin of eurhythmics and, in schools, of music and movement classes. In addition, the Dalcroze method stressed movement, solfège and improvisation as well as a very focused listening practice to unleash a child's innate musicality.

good with kids. And my brother, with her husband, a violist and violinist, Ron Moon, and Gwen and Ron formed a little string orchestra.

Louise Marshall: This would have been in Christchurch?

Annea Lockwood: In Christchurch, yes. So by the time I was twelve they were getting me to write tiny pieces for that string orchestra of their students, which was a lovely experience, and then the professor at the university, Vernon Griffiths, had been encouraging me all the way through my high school years, and knew my parents well.⁶ So I went on to Canterbury University, and under him, and did a bachelor's [degree] there, and got plenty of encouragement.

Louise Marshall: You were a pianist: were you studying as a concert pianist, or were you studying composition also?

Annea Lockwood: I was primarily focused on composition. I was studying piano all through those years, and I eventually got a scholarship to the Royal College of Music [in London] to do both piano and composition, and there I was lucky too, I ended up with the pianist Kendall Taylor, who was a very fine teacher, a lovely pianist, and very good to me.⁷ For composition with Peter Racine Fricker, and Fricker, in my... I think it might have been my first summer at the Royal College,

⁶ British-born composer Thomas Vernon Griffiths (1894-1985) was professor of music at Canterbury University College, Christchurch. The college became a university independent of the University of New Zealand in 1961. It is in this latter identity that Lockwood refers to it.

⁷ Edgar Kendall Taylor (1905-99) was a professor of piano at the Royal College of Music in London from 1929-93.

encouraged me to go to Darmstadt, and Darmstadt was a *complete* revelation.^{8 9}

Louise Marshall: So this was 1961, this would be about '61 when you came to the UK?

Annea Lockwood: I went over in '61, it would have been '62, I think.

Louise Marshall: Okay, and your first visit to the UK?

Annea Lockwood: Yes, yes.

Louise Marshall: On the boat?

Annea Lockwood: Yes. Six weeks on the boat. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Did you enjoy it?

Annea Lockwood: Delicious experiences and some long, boring passages.

Louise Marshall: That's an introduction to a very big body of water.

Annea Lockwood: Oh yes. I love the Pacific, for example; it's my ocean.

Louise Marshall: Were you thinking of the ocean musically at that point, do you suppose?

⁸ Peter Racine Fricker (1920-90) was a professor of composition at the Royal College of Music, and afterward at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He was an early adopter, among British composers, of Schoenberg's twelve-tone system.

⁹ Darmstadt refers to both the Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt and its hugely influential summer school (Darmstädter Ferienkurse), which, from its post-war inception in 1946 in the new state of West Germany, was attended by many influential contemporary classical and experimental composers. Its alumni include John Cage, Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Fricker had attended the summer schools. For a history of Darmstadt school, see: Iddon 2013.

- Annea Lockwood: Oh, I'm sure I wasn't. (Laughter) I was very into setting text at that point, I loved poetry and I was setting Saint-John Perse as I recall, and I can't remember what else, but I was very into text at that point.¹⁰
- Louise Marshall: And so you came to the Royal College, and then Darmstadt, the summer schools, was that where you met Gottfried Michael Koenig?¹¹
- Annea Lockwood: Yes, I did. I went to Darmstadt two successive summers, and Darmstadt really woke up my audio cortex. I ... it was in '62, I'm sure it was '62, La Monte Young was there, Cage had been there the previous year, and I was going to seminars by Stockhausen and Boulez and Maderna, and Berio and La Monte [Young],¹² and working hard at comprehending total serialism as it was evolving, but not drawn to it.
- Louise Marshall: Was it more of... a puzzle? A mathematical puzzle? You know, you had the tone row....
- Annea Lockwood: No, no, not that so much. I, hmm, I like unpredictability. I just do. I like juxtaposition, surreal juxtaposition.
- Louise Marshall: You don't get that with serialism.

¹⁰ Saint-John Perse (aka Alexis Leger), French poet and diplomat (1875-1975).

¹¹ Gottfried Michael Koenig (b. 1926), experimental composer and educator. He was a frequent presence as a lecturer at the Darmstadt summer schools. Koenig's self-developed algorithmic compositional methods, developed at the University of Utrecht, influenced Lockwood as a student in the 1960s.

¹² Pierre Boulez (1925-2016), Bruno Maderna (1920-73) and Luciano Berio (1925-2003) were hugely influential composers with their significance played out in both the musical field and the systemic (orchestral, educational, foundational) fields. La Monte Young is often referred to as the first minimalist composer; he is known for his long, durational works.

Annea Lockwood: You do not get that. (Laughter) Well, you didn't at that point, with total serialism, but it was fascinating watching all of these people mull over the possibilities, and it got me thinking really hard about musical parameters in a way which I hadn't before, which was very good for me, actually, and it got me heavily into thinking about timbre.

But at the same time, I was experiencing La Monte Young pushing furniture around the room, and I *loved* it, I just totally fell for it, so in that summer and subsequent summers I kept reading *Die Reihe* and kept plugging away at following, trying to follow evolving thought, along serial lines.¹³ But at the same time I started reading *Silence* –

Louise Marshall: The John Cage book?¹⁴

Annea Lockwood: Yes, and annotating it heavily, and by the time I left the Royal College, I spent a year, I got a DAAD student fellowship to go study with Koenig. Yes, I met Koenig at Darmstadt. I had become friendly with Franco Evangelisti and was talking to Franco about who I could study electronic music with, and he really recommended Gottfried Michael, who was the perfect teacher.¹⁵ He was a great teacher: very kind man, very nice man, and a great teacher.

¹³ The German-language (and later English-language) music journal edited by Stockhausen and Herbert Eimer. It was operational between 1955-68. Its title (“The Row” or “The Series”) is a reference to the twelve-tone rows that characterize the fundamental structure of serialist music.

¹⁴ Cage: 1961.

¹⁵ Franco Evangelisti (1926-80) was an Italian composer, living in West Germany, who was a regular at Darmstadt's summer schools. He was interested in techniques of sonification, a method that Lockwood would utilise in compositions after, approximately, 1980.

Louise Marshall: And he was based at...?

Annea Lockwood: It was the year before he went to Utrecht. He was teaching in a small studio in Bilthoven, the CEM studio in Bilthoven, where we got three hours of straight *hochdeutsch* lectures on technical aspects of electronic music in the morning, which was good for one's mind, but (laughter) hard going, and then studio work.¹⁶

Louise Marshall: Was it electro-acoustic in those days?

Annea Lockwood: No, it wasn't at all. It was purely electronic. It was this term *reinelektronisch* and then in the afternoons we would work in the studio, and that clarified things for me. I was really drawn to, excited by electronic music, because now, finally, other than writing for one's own instrument, I was having the experience of feeling that sound was in my own hands, and malleable, just there for me to work with, which was thrilling.

At the same time, I sort of wasn't interested, I wasn't sparked by the sorts of sounds I was hearing, and again, the thinking behind the building up of sound structures at that time was very systemic, which never pulls me, draws me.

00:10:39

So I began to puzzle over why I didn't find compilations of ring-modulated sine tones fascinating and figured out that they're really not that intricate. The sounds that result are not complex in the way that I

¹⁶ Contactorgaan Elektronische Muziek (CEM) was founded in 1959 by the Gaudeamus Foundation, which, from its inception in 1945, promoted contemporary music. Both organisations were based in Bilthoven in the Utrecht province of the Netherlands.

enjoy complexity, but that environmental, natural sounds are indeed. Then I started looking into electro-acoustic music, and *musique concrète* of course, and started just looking for sounds around me, and was looking for a material that hadn't been much exploited, but which likely would produce very interesting sounds and found glass, and settled into the Glass Concerts, which were the best ear training ever, actually.

Louise Marshall: And the Glass Concerts were towards the end of the Sixties. We'll come to that later.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, by that time I'd been freelancing in London for quite a while as a musician.

Louise Marshall: I mean, you came, in your early years, from a very conventional musical background, learning the piano and composition –

Annea Lockwood: But also a very sturdy training.

Louise Marshall: So you were absolutely grounded –

Annea Lockwood: Fundamentals were good, yes.

Louise Marshall: – in the Western classical canon. Was it a natural progression for you to sort of move from Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, those people, towards, Cage, Berio, and Stockhausen? Did you feel that you were leaving one tradition behind to go off pioneering into another?

Annea Lockwood: (Laughter) That's funny. I'm chuckling because I was asked that question just a few days ago, in Scotland. No, no, not at all. To which I replied, "I really haven't been thinking about tradition since I was in my mid-twenties." (Laughter)

It wasn't that I, I mean, I wasn't concerned with all of that. It wasn't that I was denying or repudiating a tradition that I felt was stifling, none of that at all. My ears and my brain were just fascinated by new sounds, and new ways of working with sound. It was sort of that simple.

Louise Marshall: Right, right. So, after you graduated from the college, you were freelancing in London. I mean, presumably no one ever said to you at any one point, "You can't be a composer. You can't be an artist."

Annea Lockwood: No, no. Nobody has ever said that to me, fortunately. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Was there a point where you suddenly thought, "Yes, I am a composer," or you thought, "I'm a musician, and I'm going to compose."

Annea Lockwood: I guess as early as the experiences of writing for that little string orchestra in Christchurch when I was twelve sort of consolidated my view of my identity as being that of a composer, so from then on, I had absolutely the intention of being a composer.

Louise Marshall: So, you were freelancing in London. Describe a little bit about the London scene at that point. It would have been in mid-Sixties by now.

Annea Lockwood: Sort of '65/'66. Ooh, I'm not sure that I can be clear about what happened in which year.

Louise Marshall: Whereabouts were you living in London, for example?

Annea Lockwood: I was living in Chiswick at that point. I had been living all over the place, as students do, you know. I was down in Chiswick. I had become very friendly with Hugh Davies. Some of my more delightful memories, I mean, I loved being in London in those years, it was totally exciting, I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to be there at that point. One of my more delightful memories, most delightful memories is going with Hugh to a very special shop somewhere in London, which specialised in repairing dolls, and we were looking for dolls' parts. Hugh, of course, was looking for springs for his shozygs.¹⁷ He was always looking for things for the shozygs. I was looking for anything I could put inside a piano. I was living in Chiswick with an old, essentially defunct piano. I'd been playing a little Cage –

Louise Marshall: An upright [piano]?

Annea Lockwood: Yes, an upright. I'd been playing a little Cage with an Icelandic composer whom I met at Bilthoven, Atli [Heimir] Sveinsson.¹⁸ We'd been doing some two-

¹⁷ See footnote 4 above, pp. 154-155.

¹⁸ Atli Heimir Sveinsson, pianist and composer (Iceland, b. 1938). He also studied with Koenig.

piano, four-hands stuff around. It occurred to me that Cage was never able to prepare a piano to the hilt, because of course, somebody else was going to come along and play it before long, but this piano was decrepit, it wasn't going to see better days. It was a piano I could fool with.¹⁹ So Hugh and I went down to this doll shop and I found a pair of eyes with eyelashes, which would blink when you triggered them correctly, and various other odds and ends, and Hugh found Lord knows what, and –

Louise Marshall: Where was the doll shop, by the way?

Annea Lockwood: I have no idea at this point, I'm sorry.²⁰ It was a delightful discovery, however. So I put some mascara on the eyelids (laughter) and started assembling all sorts of things, and this was a lot of fun. Hugh would come by, and Hugh inherited that piano eventually. It was my permanently prepared piano; it was the first of the piano transplants, actually.²¹ There was a little toy train engine that would run up the bass strings if you pulled a string. Oh, what wasn't there in that? I took little slivers of bamboo and made tiny holes in the soundboard and installed them in the sound board, and you could play them like a...

Louise Marshall: A thumb piano?

¹⁹ Lockwood's permanently prepared piano is now in the Hugh Davies Collection held at Goldsmiths, University of London. It featured in the exhibition, *Orgasmic Streaming Organic Gardening Electroculture*, at Chelsea Space, Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London (25 April-25 May 2018). It was curated by Karen Di Franco and Irene Revell.

²⁰ I speculate that Lockwood is referring to the Dolls' Hospital, 16 Dawes Road, Fulham: this was not far from Chiswick. The hospital closed in 1987.

²¹ In "How to Prepare a Piano" (Lockwood 2005), Lockwood describes how her piano preparations developed.

Annea Lockwood: An mbira, yes. And of course, the soundboard resonated beautifully. There was some sort of heavy glass ball that you could rumble back and forth across the bass strings, and there was a lot more to it. And a friend of ours, a delightful artist who has been living in the States a long time, John Lifton, cut a mouth in the side of the piano for me, and we made big, red lips out of Plasticine, or something like Plasticine, and John rigged up a bubble-blowing device.²²

Louise Marshall: A what-blowing?

Annea Lockwood: Bubble-blowing device.

Louise Marshall: Oh, bubble-blowing.

Annea Lockwood: So that when you pushed the soft pedal, bubbles would stream out of this mouth. (Laughter) It was funny. Which was an inducement not to use the sustain pedal too much, but to go to the soft side.

Louise Marshall: It's so funny. I'd read somewhere about how you put these googly eyes –

Annea Lockwood: Yes, oh, that's right, when you trilled. Excuse me. When you trilled on the right notes in the treble, the eyelids would, of course, go up and down, and it would flirt with you; they would flirt with you.

²² Artist, academic and theorist working on the interface between technology, environment and the arts (b. 1944, UK). He is the founder of the New Arts Lab in London (1968), a venue for new film and video art. Moving to Colorado, US, in 1977, Lifton co-founded the Teluride Institute. He is a former director (with Charles Amirkhanian) of the Other Minds (“Revelationary new music”) festival. Lockwood, Ellen Fullman and Pauline Oliveros were among the twelve composers who appeared in the Other Minds VIII festival (2002).

- Louise Marshall: Did you think about the fact that you were feminising the body of the piano, at that time?
- Annea Lockwood: No. (Laughter) Feminism took a very serious turn in the late Sixties, at which point I was thinking about it on more serious terms. No.
- Louise Marshall: Let's come back to that. But did the body of the piano represent anything to you at that point?
- Annea Lockwood: No. I don't think so.
- Louise Marshall: Okay. It was one of the things that I've been fascinated about with your work is that you're a pianist, that was your original training, and over the years you've done some pretty drastic actions on pianos, and I was just wondering about some of the psychic ramifications of that.
- Annea Lockwood: Yes, everybody does wonder about that. (Laughter)
- Louise Marshall: I can plant the seed there. Maybe we can come back.
- Annea Lockwood: No, let's take it now. Let's take it now.
- Louise Marshall: Oh, let's take it now.
- Annea Lockwood: The piano did represent various things to me. I loved playing it. I loved the feeling of playing it, the experience of playing it.
- Louise Marshall: Tactile.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, I loved the instrument for its own sake. I also view it... It's hard to know when my views moved in this direction, but I also viewed it then as a cultural icon from the nineteenth century.²³ Later, I also came to view it as a perhaps constricting, particularly female-constricting, cultural icon, [it] was the –

²³ Destruction, as a central component of a creative process, was being explored within the wider counter-cultural artistic/ "happenings" setting at the time, and the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS), organised by the artist Gustav Metzger (1926-2017) in London (9-11 September 1966) was widely reported. Responding to an email from me in which I asked her about the DIAS, Lockwood replies: "And as for the DIAS symposium – to tell you the truth it was never very significant to me, something I participated in as much because of my prior work with Bob Cobbing, and his own participation as for any other reason, so my memories are thin, but ask away, of course. *My strongest memory is of how unsatisfying the piano destruction that Ralph Ortiz and I did was and how it contributed to my strong preference for placing defunct pianos in situations of slow decay via natural processes* [my italics]. You might say – sounds a bit pompous but as far as I recall, true." (Lockwood 2016c.)

On 20 October, I email Lockwood: "Thank you so much for casting your mind back to the DIAS for me. I realise that a number of your friends – Bob Cobbing, John Latham, Henri Chopin – either performed at, or were instrumental in, the DIAS events. The DIAS – which stated in its press release that 'The main objective of DIAS was to focus attention on the element of destruction in Happenings and other art forms, and to relate this destruction in society' – gave itself a very wide scope. I imagine that a political twang (Vietnam, especially) was part of it.

"I find it really interesting when you speak of how 'unsatisfying' the piano destruction you did with Ralph Ortiz was. I don't think that is a pompous thing to say at all! Could I please ask you if it was the direct experience of this event that lead onto your *Piano Transplants/Burning/Garden/Drowning*, a series that started the next year in 1967, all of these being compositions/installations that show a completely different approach to time/change/instrument/destruction. (I suppose you could file these under a 'Music of Changes' heading!)

"Was Ortiz's piano destruction (am I right in thinking it was accomplished with hammers and various other tools? I know that you had experience of treating pianos (including your google-eyed piano you told me about), but was this your first experience of full-scale piano destruction? I wonder if you can remember how you felt about it at the time?" I attached a link I had found to a photograph of Ortiz and Paul Pierrot using hatchets to destroy an upright piano during DIAS (see: <http://tinyurl.com/gvhfra3>).

Lockwood replies on 21 October: "Talking of destruction – DIAS and your questions: As I recall, it was a combination of hearing/reading about the craze for dismembering pianos as a celebration of the end of the academic year which was quite common then, and the direct experience of doing so with Ralph – yes, my first piano destruction, which turned me off such action. I liked Ralph and probably did it with gusto, but never wanted to repeat such a, to me, brutal and crude approach. How I felt about it, more precisely, is hard to reconstruct now, uncoloured by all my very different experiences with the *Transplants* since. That's a fascinating photograph – thanks!" A few minutes later, Lockwood adds, in a separate email: "PS Looking at that image of Ortiz and Pierrot having at a supine piano with axes does, however, give me more of a sense of why people construe my *Piano Burning* as destructive in intent, though." (Lockwood 2016 d, e)

00:20:00

Louise Marshall: I read a very interesting paper on this; let me tell you about it later.²⁴

Annea Lockwood: Yes? – The approved instrument, like flute and violin, but not cello, and not trumpet and trombone, and so on. The gendering of instruments became more and more obvious to me, and more and more irritating, you might say.

Louise Marshall: This is why I asked about the mascara on the eyes.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, I realise. But there was one little detail about the piano that I didn't pass on. As long as I owned it – and I owned it for about two years, and we did some TV work with it and so on – you could only play “Lili Marlene” on it, by fiat.²⁵

Louise Marshall: Why could you only? Oh, I see, by fiat, okay. Okay. Why?

Annea Lockwood: It was just part of it. Because I like that tune, and it always sounded like a bar-room piano anyway.
(Laughter)

Louise Marshall: True, it's a great song.

Annea Lockwood: It's a great song, yes. (Laughter) And when I left for the States I gave the piano to Hugh, or you could say

²⁴ Vorachek 2000.

²⁵ A Second World War-era German song. With verses by Hans Leip and music by Norbert Schulze, it was a song popular with audiences from many countries. Given that its best-known interpreter is Marlene Dietrich, the song had then, as it does now, a certain smouldering sensuousness.

ANNEA LOCKWOOD

that Hugh very kindly took it in, and under his aegis you could only play a certain Bach partita on it.

Louise Marshall: Okay. So “Lili” had gone. (Laughter) The piano didn’t have a name, did it? You never named it?

Annea Lockwood: No, no, I didn’t go that far.

Louise Marshall: Just wanted to check. (Laughter)

Annea Lockwood: I was attached to it, but not so attached.

Louise Marshall: Okay, so that’s the piano, and you were still in London at this point, or had you moved out to Essex?

Annea Lockwood: No, I was still in London at that point. I was doing the Glass Concerts, of course, which started roughly [in 19]60... You’ve probably got the right date.

Louise Marshall: I’ve got the January ’68 at the Middle Earth [in London] venue.²⁶

Annea Lockwood: Okay, so I started on them in either late ’66 or early ’67, and they went on until, I think my last performance was in New York in ’73, so they were a constant in the latter part of my life in London.

Louise Marshall: Tell me about the thinking, the process by which you got to the idea of starting your glass works.

²⁶ Promoted and hosted by Jeff Dexter, Middle Earth, which was held in a big cellar in King Street, Covent Garden, London, was an important counter-cultural music/club venue in the mid to late Sixties. Assisted by her then-husband, Harvey Matusow (US, 1926-2002), Lockwood performed seventy-six Glass Concerts between 1968-73.

Annea Lockwood: Of doing the Glass Concerts... I... In moving from listening to pure electronic sound to listening to other types of sound, the acoustic environment, let's say, and the sorts of sounds that you can create with objects and so on, I was wanting, I was looking for very complex sounds. I began to feel that I never in the studio could create sounds of the complexity of what I was just hearing around me, with frequencies that come and go extremely fast, in water, for example, because it's one of my obsessions, and rhythmic patterns that dissolve and reform differently, it's constant variation. I would never be able to create anything that intricate in the studio, so why try? Why not go straight to the source?

And from there I began to start thinking about such a sound, or perhaps I could say 'in its unfolding' as actually having its own intricate structure, which was well worth listening to as a composition in itself. In which case, why do we pile them on top of each other? Why do we use them as *objets sonores*, and compile them, play them off against each other, blur their details in the process?²⁷ Why not listen to such a sound by itself, for itself, as a beautiful little composition already? So that got me thinking about what material I could use, could develop, work with, that really hadn't been explored much, and I thought of glass. I mean, metal, skin, paper, any fabrics of all sorts have all been super-developed, but glass had not.

So I was living with an American, Harvey Matusow, at the time, who had no qualms about approaching

²⁷ In using phrase *objets sonores*, Lockwood is referencing the work of Pierre Schaeffer and his theories of acousmatics. See Schaeffer: 1966.

Pilkington's, which I probably wouldn't have done on my own, at least not quite the same way.²⁸

Louise Marshall: What? He phoned up Pilkington's? The glassworks?

Annea Lockwood: Yes, and Pilkington's got very interested, bless their hearts, and started –

Louise Marshall: And they gave you what?

Annea Lockwood: They would get me to come to their main factory, and I would just begin –

Louise Marshall: Where was their factory, in London?

Annea Lockwood: In the Midlands somewhere.

Louise Marshall: In the Midlands, okay.

Annea Lockwood: And I would just be given the run of the factory to find all sorts of different types of glass, including glass waste, it was fantastic, and try it out. I accumulated a whole repertoire of glass, such things as four-foot lengths of very thin glass tubing, which of course are cut to certain lengths for laboratory work. A lot of the glass I was looking at was designed for labs.

Louise Marshall: You used micro-glass, didn't you?

²⁸ Matusow, Lockwood's former husband, had a colourful life. Julian Cowley (2012a: 39) details some of his activities, which included a stint in the McCarthy-era 1950s as a paid informant for the FBI. This period, and his resulting notoriety, was behind him by the time he met Lockwood. While living in the UK, Matusow promoted the huge music festival, the International Carnival of Experimental Sound, which was staged across London, in 1972. For an eye-witness account of ICES, see Mumma 2015: 73-78.

Annea Lockwood: Micro-glass, yes.

Louise Marshall: Which I hadn't come across until reading about your –

Annea Lockwood: Yes, and used for electro-microscopy slides, which would produce surprisingly low frequencies for very small pieces of four inches by six inches, very fine glass.

Glass threads, which were extruded from some process and thrown out, which would make a ferocious crunching sound when I crunched them together, and I started to evolve the Glass Concert, and Harvey had a very strong visual imagination, so that kicked in, and it turned into this two-hour exploration of sound *per se*, in itself, what goes on inside some of these sounds, or all of those sounds. It was wonderful; I loved working on it, it kept growing.

Louise Marshall: I wish I had been able to see it. I've read descriptions of the Glass Concert and the sound off stage, coming onto the stage.²⁹

Annea Lockwood: Yes. Oh yes, starting in complete blackout, which was always hard to persuade theatres to allow, but one always did persuade them. Half an hour in complete blackout so that people would become totally aurally focused, and let go of their eyes, and really, in becoming aurally focused with no other stimuli, begin to go inside the complexity of these sounds.

²⁹ For a description of Lockwood's Glass Concert and its reception among the non-mainstream musical community, see, for example, Thompson: 2013.

Louise Marshall: So, describe a little bit about the trajectory of a typical Glass Concert: the audience would be in blackout, the sounds would start off stage?

Annea Lockwood: Yes, just off stage. I was working with the small objects at that point, with glass rods, which were slightly uneven, rolling down a sheet of glass, which is elevated so it resonates, and they resonate.

Louise Marshall: And they'd be mic'd up, the sheets would be mic'd up. Would you do any delays, or reverbs, or anything like that?

Annea Lockwood: No, no processing, because I wanted people to hear the sounds for themselves, and to be interested in what was intrinsic. Which is still my approach to the rivers, I don't process the rivers, except for a little EQ. It's the intrinsic nature of the sound that I'm after revealing, so why process it? That just confuses the picture. And it's the intrinsic energies of these sounds that I'm fascinated by.

Louise Marshall: One of the things that I want to talk about as we go along is the liberation of energy, and of course the piano, and the *Piano Burnings*, and the *Plantings* and the *Drownings*, all come into that. But this is very interesting, in terms of the Glass Concerts and the theatrical settings.

Annea Lockwood: So you have a half-hour in blackout, and some extraordinary sounds, and these are sounds that people haven't heard before, so they're totally fresh and they can't imagine how they'd be played.

Louise Marshall: And it was just you doing it, or did you have helpers?

Annea Lockwood: The late concerts it was really me and Harvey. In the early concerts we incorporated some other events, and I can't quite put my finger on what they were, because we let that go very early on, and sometimes worked with a third helper, sometimes not.

After half an hour the stage lights come on, and I move on stage, and Harvey did too, and we start to work with the objects on stage, one of which was a bottle tree, which French vintners use to –

Louise Marshall: Duchamp used it; it's a bit like a cone, isn't it?³⁰

Annea Lockwood: Sort of, yes.

Louise Marshall: Duchamp has, it's ready made, no?

Annea Lockwood: Yes, with pegs, on which bottles are inverted so that they can dry.

Louise Marshall: Yes, Duchamp has it as a readymade, I'm sure.

Annea Lockwood: Is it? Yes, I've seen pictures of it.

Louise Marshall: It's sort of conical; it could be a Christmas tree, almost.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, that's right. So we had either one or two bottle trees, sometimes two I guess, down through which I would drop shards of micro-glass, which made the most beautiful sound, and they would filter their way

³⁰ Marcel Duchamp's *Bottle Rack* (also known as the *Bottle Dryer* or *Hedgehog*), 1914. It was the artist's first unmodified readymade.

down through the bottles. It wouldn't be just over in seconds.

00:30:00

There was a big mobile, and here I'm going to say, I only cut myself once, and people often imagine that I broke a lot of glass. We broke glass in the first two concerts, and then I said, "No more, that's too crude," and I only cut myself once, and not in a performance.

In any case, the glass mobile was wonderful. It had a very big six-foot-by-six-foot pane of glass, I can't convert to metres, I'm sorry.

Louise Marshall: I think in imperial, [too]. Don't worry: I can't [convert] either. (Laughter)

Annea Lockwood: We had this big six-by-six pane in the middle, around it were smaller panes, and on the outside the most beautiful panes, which glowed red, there was some sort of mineral in the surface coating on one side so that when you spun them they shone gold and red, they were gorgeous. The mobile was a lot of fun, I'll come back to it. There was always a challenge, which I liked.

There was a little sort of, I thought of it as a corridor of these four-foot lengths of glass tubing, a double row on one side, a single row on the other; the double row involved tubing of different thicknesses, so that the sound was varied. I would walk through that and I would just swish those curtains of tubing with my hands.

The mobile was great fun. I could bow, I used a glass tube to bow the edges of one of the panes, which were of course irregular. The central pane was wired glass, which resonated differently, because of the wire. The wire wasn't damped; it added resonance.

What I did as the sort of climax of the concert was to walk into the mobile and start the six-by-six pane swinging, and in such a way that it would just touch one of the neighbouring panes.

Louise Marshall: A transfer of energy again.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, and then I would work my way through to having everything swinging. The challenge was, of course, that nothing should break, and I would twirl the red panes around the outside, so light would be flashing all over the place –

Louise Marshall: So you had coloured lighting from the –

Annea Lockwood: Yes, Harvey designed lighting and designed the bottle-tree structures and so on.

Louise Marshall: Sounds incredible.

Annea Lockwood: But just working that mobile in such a way that the gong-like resonances of those panes were unimpeded, would resonate fully, but everything was going. That was fun.

Louise Marshall: I know these concerts were an incredible influence on the counter-culture in those days, but –

Annea Lockwood: Really?

Louise Marshall: I mean, I say in the counter-culture in the most general way, there were lots of young musicians, composers, people who'd end up in the rock world, for example, who were coming to them and had their minds completely blown. There is an interesting book called *June 1st 1974*, you can get it on Kindle as an eBook, that's the easiest thing, I think Dave Thompson [wrote it]. It's really talking – *June 1st 1974* was a concert that was done by [Brian] Eno and John Cage and Kevin Ayers and Nico.³¹ Was there anyone else? But it really looks at the musical trajectories that all those musicians took to the culmination of this concert, and your Glass Concerts feature heavily. I think lots of these people had seen them.

Annea Lockwood: Really? Ha!

Louise Marshall: I've got it on my Kindle in my bag, I'll show it to you after. I mean, did you have much of an idea who your audience were? I mean, we're in the mid-Sixties, we're in the middle of swinging London, was it something picked up by hippies on acid, or...?

Annea Lockwood: Well, we did one of the early Glass Concerts at Middle Earth, which was exactly the right venue. It seems to me, thinking back, that the audience I was most aware of were [was] other experimental artists, and people like Bill and Wendy Harp from Liverpool, who presented it at [the] Bluecoat [centre for contemporary

³¹ A parapraxis. I mean the musician John Cale (who had played with both La Monte Young and, later, the art-rock band Velvet Underground), and not John Cage as I say on the audio.

arts], which Wendy was managing at the time, one of the early concerts there, and with whom I did things on and off at the Blackie, when they got the Blackie going.³² So, people like that, other musicians, you know, and just curious people.

Louise Marshall: Nyman, Michael Nyman was very interested.³³

Annea Lockwood: Oh, he wrote a really nice review, really understanding what it was all about.

Louise Marshall: He was a good writer. He was a very good writer.

Annea Lockwood: He was a very good writer. Of the *Glass World*, which was this recording, LP, that Mike Steyn put out. That was a two-year project, recording it.

Louise Marshall: This was *Glass World of Anna Lockwood*?³⁴

Annea Lockwood: Anna Lockwood, right. And Michael Steyn, S-T-E-Y-N, was the exceptional producer. He was an exceptionally curious mind and he was a very good studio recorder, recording artist. We worked on it for two years; we were recording in a little church in north London, late at night when it was super-quiet, the church had beautiful resonances, and I kept performing

³² Contemporary arts venue in Liverpool founded in 1968. It has since changed its name to the Black-E.

³³ Michael Nyman (UK, b. 1944), British composer, musicologist and writer. In the Sixties and early Seventies, he covered the British experimental music scene as a writer for publications that included the *New Statesman*, *Studio International* and *The Spectator*. His writings offer a sympathetic and still critically cogent account of new music in this period. See: Nyman: 1974.

³⁴ *Glass World of Anna Lockwood* (1970). Titles of pieces on the twenty-three track album include “Micro Glass Shaken”, “Rod Against Edge of Pane”, “Bottle Tree Showered with Fragments”, and “Deep Water Gong”. The LP’s sleeve notes described the album as “An exploration into the complexity of sounds drawn exclusively from glass”. An acknowledgement was also made to “Pilkington Bros for their generous assistance”. The album was given a CD format release in 1997 by ¿What Next? Recordings.

it, and kept finding new sounds, and new pieces of glass to work with, and Mike would say, “Oh, we’ve got to get that, we’ve got to put that in,” and so we worked on it for two years, which were the most amazingly ideal circumstances, and then he put it out.

Louise Marshall: What were you doing as your day job in those days?
How were you paying the rent?

Annea Lockwood: I would teach piano. Various evening schools and so on, and do gigs with other musicians. Myself, I was making... doing pieces for [choreographer] Richard Alston who at that point was running Strider [dance company], so I did three things for him, one of which – he took up *Tiger Balm* (1970). I hadn’t done it for Richard, but he took it up, bless his heart.³⁵

Louise Marshall: Yes, because it was used for a ballet.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, it was, and he did a beautiful piece of choreography for it, and I did two other pieces, which I have since jettisoned completely, they’re not that good, electro-acoustic pieces for two of his dancers, two others of his dancers.

Louise Marshall: Was that *Jitterbug*? No.

³⁵ Lockwood’s *Tiger Balm* (1970) is a twenty-minute sound work on stereo tape. Alston used it for his six-dancer choreography, which was premiered by Strider on 18 December 1972. The first release of its recording of it was on a ten-inch LP attached to issue 9 of *Source* magazine (1970), an issue that also reprints its score. See: Austin and Kahn (2011: 294). This recording has subsequently been released by the following record companies: New Wilderness Audiographics (1978); Opus One (1981) and, in 1982, EM (*Early Works, 1967-82*); the latest release is by Black Truffle Records (2017).

Annea Lockwood: No, *Jitterbug* was for Merce Cunningham and that's a relatively recent piece, that's from 2006.³⁶

Louise Marshall: Okay. So, you were in London, the Scratch Orchestra and all the dynamics around that were making a big noise, to use a metaphor, in the experimental music world. Could you talk a bit about how you first came across Cardew and...?

Annea Lockwood: Not really.

Louise Marshall: No? Okay. You don't remember, or he was just always there as part of the woodwork?

Annea Lockwood: I'm just not that interested in that side of music in London at that time. I didn't get involved with it. I liked Cardew, and he was personally kind to me, nice, but it just didn't interest me. So I don't have much to say about it.

Louise Marshall: Okay, okay. At some point you moved up to Ingatestone [in Essex].

Annea Lockwood: Ingatestone.

Louise Marshall: Ingatestone, yes.³⁷

Annea Lockwood: Yes, I went to New Zealand with Harvey, we did Glass Concerts there and in Australia, and I got to be with my family. Then when we came back, Henri Chopin, because I'd been involved with Bob Cobbing and the

³⁶ *Jitterbug* (2007), a six-channel tape work with graphic score for two dancers. It was commissioned by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

³⁷ A village on the Essex-Suffolk border, about an hour's train from London. Lockwood pronounces the village's name phonetically; I use the local sounding, "Inkstone". I offer this audio-duet on the pronunciation of the village's name as an impromptu example of our reflective positioning in joint histories that have points of mutual contact.

sound poets for a while I knew Henri, and Henri was living out in Ingatestone in an old sort of country home owned by Alan and Pat Human, which is a most wonderful name, of course.^{38 39} Alan was very interested in experimental arts and artists, and had made it possible for Henri and [his wife] Jean and family to live there –

Louise Marshall: Was he an artist as well? I don't know –

Annea Lockwood: He wasn't. A sweet guy. We were looking around for somewhere to live, and Henri told Alan about us, and we moved out into one of the little cottages on that property.

Louise Marshall: This was about 1970, maybe?

Annea Lockwood: This would have been, yes, 1970, yes.

Louise Marshall: It was at the time that gazumping had happened, in a very big way. Had you suddenly been priced out of London? As an aside, this is what happened to our family. We lived in Hampstead and –

Annea Lockwood: It's probably why we moved, yes.

Louise Marshall: – we moved out to Suffolk in that period as well, so Ingatestone I know quite well because it's on the line to London, it's probably about twenty miles or so from where we were.

³⁸ Henri Chopin (Fr, 1922-2008), sound poet. He lived in Ingatestone, Essex, for many years.

³⁹ Bob Cobbing (UK, 1922-2002), sound poet.

Annea Lockwood: Yes. That was probably why we moved, but there was something very appealing about Ingatestone, it was a charming place, big old garden. Yes.

Louise Marshall: So you had Penny Rimbaud and Gee Vaucher –⁴⁰

Annea Lockwood: Yes, right, living nearby, which was great, and they were great.

Louise Marshall: – in an interesting, creative moment to go in, going on there. And you did a festival? You made a festival there.

00:40:00

Annea Lockwood: Oh... yes, Harvey had the idea of getting together in one place as many experimental musicians in groups as possible, which I got caught up in, of course. It was the International Carnival of Experimental Sound, ICES '72.

Louise Marshall: Yes, I was thinking of the First Days of Ingatestone Festival [13 June 1970],⁴¹ and then – but then maybe ICES comes into that.

Annea Lockwood: Oh, the Ingatestone Festival, oh, I seem to remember that as something that Henri was much involved in running, but I don't... I did a *Piano Burning*, they got me to do a piano burning at the Ingatestone Festival, beyond that I don't remember many of the details. Do you have some?

⁴⁰ Penny Rimbaud and Gee Vaucher, who in 1977 founded the anarchist punk collective, Crass, lived at Dial House nearby. Vaucher, a graphic artist, later designed the poster for Matusow and Lockwood's festival, the International Carnival of Experimental Sound (ICES) in 1972.

⁴¹ For mention of Chopin's First Days of Ingatestone Festival, see Zurbrugg: 2004.

Louise Marshall: No, not especially, I was just curious because I know that area of the world and I was around as a very young teenager around that period, and I was just thinking, if you'd brought something like that to... our villages were very parochial and they were very cut off. I mean, my village is on the Essex border, so I sort of know... I just remember what they were like, very small 'c' conservative, inward-looking.

Annea Lockwood: Uh huh, that sounds right. But you know, I did the *Piano Garden* at Ingatestone. It was the perfect garden for that; three pianos, one little grand, little defunct baby grand next to the gate, it wasn't on the street, but it was planted among laurels near the gate. One Sunday morning I got up and a little guy had got off the train and come up – we were on Station Road [sic]– the road and come in through the gate and [he] was playing the piano.⁴²

Louise Marshall: That's nice.

Annea Lockwood: It was lovely. It was just right.

Louise Marshall: That was nice.

Annea Lockwood: So conservative with a small 'c', but playful. There were, of course, sound poets galore at the Ingatestone Festival, as I recall.

Louise Marshall: And *Tiger Balm* was 1970, I think?

Annea Lockwood: Yes. That sounds about right.

⁴² The correct address is Gate House Cottage, Station Lane, Ingatestone, Essex.

Louise Marshall: Okay, and then I guess you were starting to work on ICES? The International Carnival of Experimental Sound.

Annea Lockwood: *Tiger Balm* was the first piece I did after the Glass Concert, in which I began to work with combining sound again. So it sort of mattered to me that piece, because I opened myself up to projecting more than one sound simultaneously. I think there were, other than the little sort of toy gamelan which ends the piece, it's a group of people in Great Georges [in Liverpool], actually, playing [Carl] Orff instruments in fact, but pitch-shifted.⁴³ But beyond that I think there are not more than two streams of sound superimposed at one point.

Louise Marshall: And the sound sources?

Annea Lockwood: There is Carolee Schneemann's cat, Kitsch.⁴⁴

Louise Marshall: Kitsch, that's it. I knew it. I had it written down somewhere, I knew the name of it.

Annea Lockwood: Kitsch, who was a wonderful old cat who sneezed wonderfully just at the right moment.

⁴³ Various percussive instruments. In the 1920s, German composer Carl Orff devised a pedagogical music programme to promote a holistic approach to children's music and movement education. Cf. the Dalcroze method of teaching, in which Lockwood's mother was trained in.

⁴⁴ American performance and visual artist Carolee Schneemann (b. 1939) situated the feminist and the erotic body at the front of her work. Living in New York City, she was familiar with the players and the currents in the new music scene in the city. Incidentally, her cat was no stranger to artistic process. Kitsch featured in Schneemann's films *Fuses* (1965), in which she is an observer to love-making between Schneemann and her husband James Tenney) and *Kitsch's Last Meal* (1978).

Then I confess to taking a copy of a recording of tigers mating from the BBC archives. That's one of the things I was doing, which was really ear-opening, and a wonderful opportunity at the time, I was making some programmes for Madeau Stewart, who is a producer at BBC3 Radio.⁴⁵ Drawing on the archives, because I was drawing on the non-Western recordings, which had been stashed there over the years by people, anthropologists and ethnologists, and people involved in sound and so on.

Anyhow, I made a copy of a couple of tigers mating and combined that with a female voice – mine. The purpose, or the heart of that, was my identification with the tiger as a... 'Totem' never feels like quite the right word, 'avatar' never feels like quite the right word, but some sort of really strong – and still strong in me – identification, myself with the tiger, so it's like plumbing one's nature, that duet it feels to me like plumbing my own nature somehow.

Louise Marshall: And it's a very feminist piece.

Annea Lockwood: Yes.

Louise Marshall: Were you thinking in terms – I mean, had you been following women's liberation as it came along in those

⁴⁵ Madeau Stewart (1922-2006) was a musician and BBC Radio 3's archives feature producer in the 1960s/70s. Lockwood recalls one of Stewart's programmes, possibly in her *Music of Necessity* series, which covered the relationships between music and trance. Interestingly, Stewart seems to have been a figure who promoted an interest in listening to many types of music through the BBC's radio programming. She also worked with composer Daphne Oram (1925-2003) in the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. In an email to me, Lockwood writes: "The original *Tiger Balm* was for live actions and tape – sound-producing actions such as sweeping branches of bamboo across the floor, blowing through a leaf of grass – sounds, which at the time, I thought might possibly awaken atavistic/ritual memories in the audience [...]. So those programmes directly influenced *TB*." (Lockwood: 2016b)

days, or reading Pauline [Oliveros] on women composers?

Annea Lockwood: Oh, I was in touch with Pauline.⁴⁶ You couldn't be working in London at that time as a woman musician and not be aware of the gender imbalance, cultural gender imbalance, not be personally very aware of it. In terms of Pauline, she became a good friend during those years. Charles Amirkhanian in San Francisco thought we ought to be in touch, and *Source Magazine* had published a Glass Concert score [in issue five], for which I am deeply grateful to Larry Austin and his colleagues, they really got me started, connecting to Americans.^{47 48} Pauline saw that in *Source* and I saw the early *Sonic Meditations*, and we started communicating, and she would send me more *Sonic Meditations*, I would send her performance pieces that I was evolving and doing in London, and, yes.

⁴⁶ Oliveros and Lockwood corresponded – at the suggestion of Allen Strange – before meeting in person. Lockwood emailed me: “Well, PO and I were meeting in person for the first time but had been corresponding well before that meeting, after we saw one another’s work in SOURCE magazine and recognised our kinship. So by that time, we knew one another rather well. Accordingly, the actual meeting was indelibly exciting for me, so it’s meant a lot to be able to hear it once again. (Lockwood 2017b) The two composers first meeting was the occasion of the recording of an interview on KPFA’s radio programme, *Ode to Gravity* (20 December 1972). Oliveros begins the interview by relating a series of dreams she has had about Lockwood, including visiting her at Gate House Cottage in Ingatestone. Lockwood replies that the house has been the venue where she has participated in several of Oliveros’s *Sonic Meditations*. During the 83 minutes’ duration, Lockwood’s *Music for Multiple Hummers* (1972) is performed by thirty people in the studio. The interview and details of its recording are available at: <http://radiom.org/detail.php?omid=OTG.1972.12.20.A> (Accessed 14:00, 30 June 2017). I thank Annea Lockwood for this information.

⁴⁷ *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde* was published between 1966-73 by students and faculty around the University of California, Davis. Larry Austin was its chief editor. The magazine covered new developments in experimental music, duplicated scores (including one for a *Piano Burning*) and released accompanying sound works. See Austin and Kahn (2011).

⁴⁸ Charles Amirkhanian (US composer, b. 1945). An informative interview (in two audio files) between Amirkhanian and Lockwood, recorded at Gate House Cottage, can be heard at: https://archive.org/details/pacifica_radio_archives-AZ0014A and https://archive.org/details/pacifica_radio_archives-AZ0014B. Lockwood speaks about piano burning and her interest in the tones of rivers. She gives Amirkhanian a tour of the pianos in her garden. (Accessed 12:42, 15 June 2016)

Louise Marshall: She's a real hub, you know, there are certain people who are absolute hub people.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, that's right, they're essential –

Louise Marshall: Pauline Oliveros; Phill Niblock is another; Bob Bielecki is another –⁴⁹

Annea Lockwood: Yes, Bob Bielecki. Oh, I just did a collaboration with Bob.

Louise Marshall: Yes, I know. I mean, they join everyone together. There is a lovely bit of correspondence I think between you and Pauline in something collected in her *Software for People* book.⁵⁰

Annea Lockwood: Oh, I'd forgotten that.

Louise Marshall: Yes, and it was so nice.

Annea Lockwood: I think we were both really excited to meet each other.

Louise Marshall: You'd done the *Drowning*.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, that's right, in Texas, the perfect place for it, in Amarillo, Texas. Yes, we were really excited to make contact, mentally and conceptually and in other ways, yes. Then Pauline, when I moved to the States in '73 and divorced Harvey and got together with Ruth Anderson, then, who was also a friend of Pauline's,

⁴⁹ I identify the US composer/artist Phill Niblock (b. 1933) and the artist, academic and sound engineer Bob Bielecki as a linking node or hub for artists of many different formations. Their work, premises (Niblock's New York loft doubled as a performance space) and ingenuity created significant networks linking many artists. In this sense, Oliveros also functions as a hub person.

⁵⁰ Oliveros 2015a.

Pauline invited Ruth and myself out to San Diego for our first Christmas together, which was lovely.⁵¹

Louise Marshall: Ah, that's nice.

Annea Lockwood: Which was lovely, yes. She's a good friend.

Louise Marshall: How did you meet Ruth, first of all? Was that through Pauline?

Annea Lockwood: Pauline talked to Ruth about me when Ruth was looking for a substitute because she was taking a sabbatical. Ruth was one of the first three women who, certainly including Pauline, to direct an electronic music studio in the States, which I am always very proud of. She ran an excellent electronic music studio at Hunter College, which was part of the City University of New York. She's a composer, of course, and has made some really beautiful pieces.

So she was looking for someone to substitute in her studio, and Pauline knew I was dying to get to the States. I mean, the scene over there was so alive, and the scene in London felt so... There was an economic depression underway, and it felt lethargic.

Louise Marshall: Was it just getting very difficult to work in England?

Annea Lockwood: There was a lot less work around here [in the UK].

⁵¹ Ruth Anderson (US, b. 1928) is a notable electronic composer, educator and a pioneering artist. In 1968, as a faculty member at Hunter College, City University of New York (CUNY), Anderson founded its electro-acoustic studio. She taught at Hunter until her retirement in 1989. She and Lockwood have been partners for many years and they have collaborated on many musical projects.

Louise Marshall: It was just...

Annea Lockwood: There was both less work around, and people's mood seemed down.

Louise Marshall: And just as an aside, America made more sense to you than, say, going to the Continent and Darmstadt and Paris, and all the things that were happening there?

Annea Lockwood: I mean, the music that really excited me was what was being done by the Sonic Arts Union composers, by Pauline, by John, of course that was always, in John Cage, it was always exciting, but especially the younger group, by MEV [Musica Elettronica Viva], who would appear in the States, Phill Niblock, many people, and I'd made contact with them as they came through London over the years, and the ICES first of all brought many of them to London, of course, so I met them then.⁵² America was just aglow, it was bubbling over. So Ruth needed a sabbatical substitute and Pauline recommended me and Ruth invited me over and I leapt at it, and...

Louise Marshall: That was it.

Annea Lockwood: That was it. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Incidentally, there is a book of collected writings by Gordon Mumma that's just recently come out, and

⁵² A group of musicians involved in live electronic improvisation. It was based in Rome, Italy, but drew its members from various countries. Its members also used sounds from found objects, such as glass and tin cans.

there is a fantastic piece about the ICES Festival in it –

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Annea Lockwood: Oh, I've got to see that.

Louise Marshall: – which was written for a magazine that went bust before they were able to print it, so it hasn't been printed before. So if you've got access to a library –

Annea Lockwood: Yes. I'll look for that.

Louise Marshall: – you can get it there, otherwise I'll photocopy it for you once I get back to London.

Annea Lockwood: Oh, would you mind? I would appreciate that very much.

Louise Marshall: I'll post it to you, so make sure that I've got a postal address.

00:50:00

Annea Lockwood: Thank you. Gordon [Mumma] was very kind to me personally during ICES.⁵⁴ ICES was hard for me. I mean, I found it hard, and the artists did, and –

Louise Marshall: It was huge.

Annea Lockwood: It was huge. It was under-funded. It was non-stop.

Louise Marshall: It was berserk in so many ways.

⁵³ Mumma 2015.

⁵⁴ Something of the creative chaos surrounding ICES 72 and its lasting repercussions on musical composition is captured by histories of the festival written by Julian Cowley (2012) and Dave Thompson (2017).

Annea Lockwood: Yes, it was fun. It was great fun, but I always felt as if we hadn't managed to support the artists properly, other than with venue and equipment and so on, there wasn't a problem in that respect, but in other ways, and I felt bad about that. It was strenuous, I guess; it was sort of strenuous all round, but it was wild. It was great fun. I mean, getting black spaghetti delivered to the train to Edinburgh, we put the festival on the train to Edinburgh.

Louise Marshall: Black spaghetti! (Laughter)

Annea Lockwood: Yes. Trying to make an ice cello for Charlotte Moorman, which was —⁵⁵

Louise Marshall: You tell me about the ice cello! I do know you had —

Annea Lockwood: — appallingly ugly!⁵⁶

Louise Marshall: I do know you had trouble with that ice cello.

Annea Lockwood: It offended her aesthetic sense — and mine, too, for that matter.

Louise Marshall: She was expecting a perfect —

Annea Lockwood: Cello-shaped thing! (Laughter) ICES as well, but it was strenuous, and Gordon was particularly, I don't know, supportive, kind, personally, as was David Behrman, in particular. I mean, all of those four guys

⁵⁵ Charlotte Moorman (US, 1933-91) was a cellist who specialized in experimental music. She collaborated with the video artist Nam June Paik (1932-2006) for much of her career. She was a concert promoter of some genius, founding the Avant-Garde Festival, which was held (mostly) annually in New York, from 1963-80.

⁵⁶ For Moorman's reaction to the ice cello that Lockwood made, see Rothfuss: 2014.

were, but I remember Gordon with particular fondness from that time.⁵⁷

Louise Marshall: Am I right in thinking that one of the first things you did when you went to America, which, of course, was your second great move, the first great move was from New Zealand to England, and then now we're moving to the States, was the *Womens Work* [sic] collection of feminist scores that you did with Alison Knowles, which is a great piece of work.⁵⁸

Annea Lockwood: Yes. Have you seen both issues?

Louise Marshall: I've only seen the one issue of *Womens Work*.

Annea Lockwood: The first one? There was a –

Louise Marshall: The first one, which was approximately fifty scores, if I remember, and they're bound with a bulldog clip, maybe?

Annea Lockwood: I think we just stapled them. There's a second –

Louise Marshall: It's got a *Piano Burning* in, it's got a Bici Forbes' –⁵⁹

Annea Lockwood: Bici Forbes?

Louise Marshall: Bici Forbes' piece.

Annea Lockwood: Ah, so many people, Elaine Summers, and a Japanese artist [Mieko Shiomi]. We did a second one, which was just a fold-out, it was on a single sheet, that was what

⁵⁷ David Behrman (US, b. 1937), composer. He co-founded the Sonic Arts Union alongside Robert Ashley, Alvin Lucier and Gordon Mumma in 1966.

⁵⁸ Alison Knowles (US, b. 1933), Fluxus artist.

⁵⁹ Bici Forbes (Nye Ffarrabas, US, b. 1932), Fluxus artist.

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we could afford, with yet more women. Many people don't know about it. We distributed it, but it doesn't seem to have ended up in libraries. I've just about run out of copies, I think, I've got three left. Then we decided we really couldn't afford to be doing this anymore; besides, things shouldn't go on forever. *Womens Work* must have been, what, '75 or so, '76?

Louise Marshall: Yes, yes.

Annea Lockwood: I was hanging out at Alison's. I'd met Alison in London when the Fluxus people were coming through and liked her a lot. So we met up again in New York, and I was hanging out at Alison's studio, she was teaching me photographic development, she had a developing studio there when we were doing things like putting out an edition of t-shirts with statements about music, about visual art and so on, on them. Things like that.

Louise Marshall: Was *Womens Work* part of a crystallising idea to do with political thought and identity?

Annea Lockwood: Yes. Oh yes.

Louise Marshall: Could you tell me a little bit about how feminism was hitting your brain, and your artistic brain at that point?

Annea Lockwood: I joined a consciousness-raising group of other women artists, not long after –

Louise Marshall: In New York?

Annea Lockwood: Yes, not long after I got to the States, which was quite basic training, experience, and being a New Zealander and coming from England, was not at all accustomed to talking to people I didn't know particularly well about intimate personal experience. It was good for me; it was great. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Liberating, I guess.

Annea Lockwood: Eventually. It took me a long time to get used to it.

Louise Marshall: Did you feel like a very buttoned-up colonial?

Annea Lockwood: I distinctly felt my natural reticence, which was absurd. It was good for me. There was the CR [consciousness-raising] group, but Alison and I were by then both definitely feminists, not heavy-duty movement feminists, but wanting to act as feminist within our own milieu.

Louise Marshall: What did that mean in practical terms, do you think?

Annea Lockwood: It meant such weird things as my trying something that I've never succeeded with, and didn't this time, but getting together a group of other women, a mixture of musicians and non-musicians to see if we could evolve a cycle, an ultimately performable cycle of pieces in which we were trying to evoke basically atavistic memories, which is something I was also after with *Tiger Balm* actually, years before. Atavistic female memory, and tying together all sorts of female symbolism, and of course, it was based on the cycles of the moon, which we eventually did. We workshopped

that for a number of weeks, which was an interesting experience, and eventually we invited people and did a performance of it.

Louise Marshall: It's very interesting. I mean, we're getting to an emphasis on the social and the connectiveness of things now. Am I right in thinking that this is approximately the time that Anna becomes Annea?

Annea Lockwood: I guess, yes.

Louise Marshall: Yes. And Ea is a specific Maori goddess?

Annea Lockwood: My information at the time, which may be completely wrong, because I've never seen it again anywhere, but at that time I had read somewhere that yes, precisely, that there was a goddess, a female deity in Maori tradition, connected with the Pacific Ocean, whose name was Ea.

The other part of my changing my name was that I felt a diminishing connection to New Zealand, because I'd been away so long. But especially, I felt that there was something strange about being born in a country... It was not so much a diminishing connection to New Zealand as a non-existent connection to the Maori people. It began to seem increasingly strange to me to have been born in a country within such a clear racial divide, and I didn't like it, and wanted, was deeply regretful that I had not made an opportunity for myself to connect with Maori people. Not that that's something you can just... It doesn't imply that –

Louise Marshall: This is so interesting. This resonates with my own family history, and when the tape is off, I'll tell you about it. Not in New Zealand, but in India.

Annea Lockwood: I mean, it's not as if one can... Of course, one can just pop up at a marae [Maori communal space] and say, "I would like to make some connection to you." Of course, there is no way to do that, but I regretted having grown up in a bicultural country with no connection to the other culture. So I attached Ea to my name. I like the sound of it –

Louise Marshall: It's a very nice sound.

Annea Lockwood: – and it occurred to me, why should one not create one's name?

Louise Marshall: Exactly, exactly. A rebirth. Is that a Maori symbol you've got on your necklace?

Annea Lockwood: Yes, it is.

Louise Marshall: It's beautiful. Will you tell me what it is?

Annea Lockwood: No, I can't anymore. I was given it by a very dear friend of my mother's, years and years ago.

Louise Marshall: Is it made of ivory?

Annea Lockwood: It's cow bone.

Louise Marshall: Cow?

Annea Lockwood: Cow. Cattle bone.

Louise Marshall: Cattle bone, goodness.

Annea Lockwood: It's not ivory anymore.

Louise Marshall: And you've got it on a little string [of tiny coral sections].

Annea Lockwood: Yes, yes. And I love it dearly, my talisman.

Louise Marshall: And it's spirally and circular and I'm just describing it in sound terms, it moves like a wave.

Annea Lockwood: Yes. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: So, we were at consciousness raising and we were at the *Womens Work* and the name changed.

Annea Lockwood: And working with choreographers such as, let's see, Elaine Summers, this beautiful Australian choreographer, and Marilyn Wood, who were part of the Experimental Intermedia Foundation, and working more and more with women and becoming a close friend of Sorrel Hays, who is a composer, a good strong feminist, who is currently finishing off an opera on Bella Abzug.⁶⁰

01:00:00

Louise Marshall: Goodness.

⁶⁰ Bella Abzug (1920-98), US lawyer, congress member, peace activist and feminist. With Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, she helped created the National Women's Political Caucus. Sorrel Hayes (b. 1941) is a US-born composer and pianist.

- Annea Lockwood: Who is the perfect person to focus on, wonderful person to make an opera from, along with an Australian, the librettist is a very strong Australian feminist scholar, Elizabeth Wood.
- Louise Marshall: Elizabeth Wood. Now that name is definitely familiar.
- Annea Lockwood: A feminist and a lesbian scholar who has done important work writing in those areas. Elizabeth Wood, she's a terrific writer, a beautiful writer, a very good scholar.
- Louise Marshall: Yes.
- Annea Lockwood: In any case, Ruth and I were both reading all sorts of feminist texts and becoming excited about all of that. It's important.
- Louise Marshall: It is important.
- Annea Lockwood: It's always important.
- Louise Marshall: It's so important that there is a pause here, because I need that to sink in.
- Annea Lockwood: It has magnitude that importance, and silence is one way to summarise it.
- Louise Marshall: It does. It's very curious, in the interviews that I've done, there has barely been any silence, but now and then a statement gets made and you need to see it as such.

Would I be too off the mark in saying that once you went to America, this huge country, that your work was liberated in a way to think about sound structures and sound sources in a different way, and you started moving in a more environmental direction? I'm thinking about the *World Rhythms* (1975) with Ruth, and then the river recordings, the river archives –⁶¹

Annea Lockwood: With the sound maps of the rivers.

Louise Marshall: The sound maps.

Annea Lockwood: The move to America was deeply liberating in so many different ways. I became a lesbian. I was working with more and more women, where the environmental focus, that had been there for a long time. When I was here in London I started the River Archive, that was in the mid-Sixties, and that was to be an archive of all the world's rivers and springs and creeks, and so on, obviously an impossible thing. I like taking on impossible tasks sometimes. (Laughter) Friends would contribute to it, travelling friends, and everyone was travelling then, would be in the Himalayas, or Pauline was recording in Massachusetts and would send me recordings of little rivers there. Carolee Schneemann sent me something from the Himalayas and so on. I was recording in Wales and whatnot, and I began to accumulate a miniature archive, a very small archive, concocting – and when I got to the States I had that with me and I started concocting installations from the

⁶¹ *World Rhythms* (1975), originally a ten-channel live improvisation which employs sound sources that include tam-tam and recordings of geological phenomena (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, geysers) and of crows in Ingatestone. A revised 1997 version appears on *Sinopah* (1997), a joint album with Ruth Anderson.

River Archive. I had also been collecting old postcards of the rivers in the archive, which of course are beautiful, I mean, nineteenth-century-, twentieth-century-postcards and drawings and so on, really lovely.

Louise Marshall: Yes, hand-tinted.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, hand-tinted and so on, absolutely exquisite. So I remember doing one of these shows at The Kitchen in New York fairly early on. I mean, I arrived there when there were all sorts of loft performance spaces and so on opening up, there were innumerable opportunities to do performing, which was very different from the scene in London at the time. So I remember getting a whole lot of foam-rubber mattresses or pads, laying them out on the floor in the old Kitchen building on Broome Street, and projecting these slides of these postcards along with the rivers, probably multi-channel, I don't remember how many channels, but also managing to pump a little ozone into the space, so everybody slowly got high. (Laughter) It was not explicitly illegal at the time, but later it became so.

But you know, I started with the River Archive in the mid-Sixties, so it had been a layer, an element of my work for a very long time.

Louise Marshall: I mean, water is obviously thought of as a feminist symbol in the mutability aspect of it. Was that any part of the thinking?

Annea Lockwood: No. I love the sounds. It really wasn't. I love the intricacy and what I think of as the aliveness of the sounds moving water makes, creates. And then of course it has tremendous meaning for everybody. The other delightful thing about doing work with water is that all sorts of audiences completely get it. It's a *lingua franca*, those sounds are a *lingua franca*, which is what I like about environmental sound in general, and I realised pretty early on, everybody gets them, because we've experienced them. We have associations with them; they're part of our lives, so...

Louise Marshall: It's also about perhaps locating both oneself and the listener in the music, and making them complicit in it –

Annea Lockwood: Yes, very much a part of it.

Louise Marshall: – as opposed to formal music here, audience here.

Annea Lockwood: Yes. It was such a relief. After several years of experimental instrumental music, which was not experienced so easily, not experienced as so welcoming, it was such a relief.

Louise Marshall: It's hard to communicate serialism.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, it is. It is. So it was a relief to be working with sound sources that people just get, and love already, you know, very nice.

Louise Marshall: So, is each river different?

Annea Lockwood: Ohh, you know every single tiny little stretch of any river is different from every other tiny little stretch and, moreover, that little stretch is going to change during...

Certainly it changes from day to day, depending on the volume of water coming, and it even changes by the hour sometimes. So every river is eternally in flux, they're all in flux. You can say, sure, "This river has many more steep shifts of gradient than that river, so there is a lot more white water on this river than that river."

I guess I think of them both culturally and sonically. So it just goes through my mind that, the Danube stands out for me among the three rivers I've done, particularly strongly in good part because it traverses so many different cultures and they're so fascinating, and their relationship with the river is so interesting. So it's particularly rich, very rich in that way.

But rivers are marvellous. I've concluded by now that, I've come to finally realise, that rivers create their own sounds. They're thoroughly creative. They create their sounds, their various multitudinous little soundscapes by the way they create their banks. So a river undermining a bank is creating a certain bank of sounds that way.

Louise Marshall: True, true, and they lay them down in a long duration composition in that sense.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, that's right.

Louise Marshall: Would you ever treat a river by making a little dam?

Annea Lockwood: (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Putting some stones in.

Annea Lockwood: Oh, of course, I've played with that, and Phil Corner did a delightful piece years and years ago, he was an American composer who is now living in Italy, does a lot of lovely conceptual work.⁶² He did a delightful piece in which he just – it was a text piece – just directing people to go to a particular stream, assemble some rocks, build a little- Precisely that, what kids do often.

Louise Marshall: Building dams, yes.

Annea Lockwood: Build a little dam and see how the sound changes, and play the sound that way, which is a lovely idea.

Louise Marshall: Yes, yes.

Annea Lockwood: Philip Corner, yes.

Louise Marshall: We touched a bit earlier on about the liberation of energy, and I am interested, I think you've done something with Bob Bielecki –

Annea Lockwood: Bob Bielecki, yes, he and I did a collaborative installation called *Wild Energy* (2015).⁶³

Louise Marshall: Thank you, that's the title I was looking for. I mean, the *Piano Burnings*, the *Drownings*, etc., I've never looked at them as destructive things.

Annea Lockwood: They were about gradual transformation, actually. I mean, the piano burning was so that I could get a sound

⁶² Philip Corner (US, b. 1933), composer, musician and Fluxus artist.

⁶³ Installation for electronics, sound and hammock, Caramoor Center for Music and Arts, Katonah, New York.

to use in a piece with Richard Alston, but subsequent, I mean, the other *Piano Transplants*, they're about gradual transformation, yes, transformation by atmospheric forces and water, or transformation by plants growing through the interstices of the structure.

The *Piano Garden* is in action; I mean, the plants are doing their thing in Wales, in North Wales. An organisation called Datrys [in Llanrwst], which is a great organisation that does many art events, invited me up there two years ago and we installed, amongst other things we did, an upright in a little sculpture trail in the woods, in a beautiful little wood up in North Wales.⁶⁴ They installed a camera that is triggered by motion, and the ferns started to move in on that piano right away. They did a sweet thing: they planted a climbing vine, a honeysuckle, at one end of the piano. Of course, honeysuckles are rampant in no time at all, and the piano, the parts of the piano are sort of... It's collapsed down, of course, but the parts are still there on the ground, and people still come by and mess around and make some sound, and every now and then a dog will come and inspect it, or a fox.

1:10:45

Louise Marshall: But the sound of the piano is implicit now, isn't it? It's become a sculpture.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, that's right, there you go. Oh, that's lovely. Yes, it is implicit, exactly, yes.

⁶⁴ In 2013, Lockwood visited Wales to perform a *Piano Burning* in Bangor, a *Piano Drowning* on the shore of Hawrich Beach and installed a *Piano Garden* on the Gwydyr Forest Llwybr y Ceirw sculpture trail.

- Louise Marshall: It's changing its nature. I mean, it will make micro-sounds as the plants and the insects and –
- Annea Lockwood: That's right, you can always make sound on a piano, but not the conventional way, by any means.
- Louise Marshall: So, how would you... I mean, is the Water Archive, the River Archive still continuous? Are you still – ?
- Annea Lockwood: No.
- Louise Marshall: Water is...?
- Annea Lockwood: I'm no longer adding to it. I haven't added to it since, I don't know, since about '74 or something like that.
- Louise Marshall: Tell me about the kind of sound sources that you've been interested in more recently.
- Annea Lockwood: Then I'll talk about *Wild Energy*, which has its origins in... Excuse me, I'm fazing out a little.
- Louise Marshall: Do you want to stop for a bit?
- Annea Lockwood: *World, World...* What was it? The multi-channel, ten-channel piece that you referred to earlier.
- Louise Marshall: Rivers, *World Rivers*.⁶⁵
- Annea Lockwood: *World Rhythms* (1975), yes.
- Louise Marshall: We can stop for coffee or anything if you fancy?

⁶⁵ My mistake. I meant *World Rhythms*.

Annea Lockwood: Let me describe *Wild Energy*, and then maybe take a pause.

Wild Energy is eleven-channel, I think it ended up being, or was a multi-channel installation set up in a somewhat wild patch of briars and saplings and undergrowth in general on the edge of a lovely estate just north of New York City. If you walked, it was part of a show... Actually, I do need to take a break, because I'm phasing out on names and things.

Louise Marshall: Okay, don't worry.

Recorder switched off for a short break.

Recorder restarted

Okay, let me see. We're taping again now. This is perfect. So, *Wild Energy* from scratch.

Annea Lockwood: So, *Wild Energy*. I was listening to and looking at a public broadcasting system *NOVA* [popular science] programme, I guess in... we're talking about in 1913 ...2013! (Laughter) It happened to be on the subject of Mount Kilauea in Hawaii and volcanic events, and the infrasound laboratory, which has been making, amongst other things, other forms of data collection, extraordinary recordings of those events there, and the sounds that I was hearing, some of the sounds I was hearing were gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous, a little like a choir, and a little like some piece of fine metal, flexing extremely fast and giving off a huge amount of energy, and I wanted those sounds. They're beautiful,

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they turned out to be sounds from a vent on Kilauea, Pu'u 'O'o vent, I think, which was particularly active at that time, beautifully recorded.

So I started, I tucked that away in the back of my mind, and then Stephan Moore a really lovely American composer and teacher, Stephan Moore, M-O-O-R-E, of course, was planning with Caramoor, which is an estate, north of New York City, which runs a very well-regarded music festival all summer, he was planning a show of sound art for Caramoor. Caramoor was the perfect place to do it. Which went through, got funded, and he titled it [*In the*] *Garden of Sonic Delights* and I happen to like [Hieronymus] Bosch very much, so that was dead on.

He invited, I think fourteen sound artists, to come up with new work, commissioned. Caramoor commissioned us to come up with new work, Steven Vitiello, Bruce Odland, Laurie Anderson, Betsy Biggs, a whole slew of people doing... [Gerhard] Trimpin doing interesting, interesting work.

Louise Marshall: Yes, I saw a beautiful [Conlon] Nancarrow thing that he'd done.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, yes. I love that piece. So I'd worked with Bob several times over the years. I love his work, and he's great to work with. Like all good techs, he's super-calm and very creative.

Louise Marshall: Amazingly generous.

Annea Lockwood: A very generous man, he's a lovely man.

Louise Marshall: So many. We talked a bit about hub people; he's a hub person. He connects everybody.

Annea Lockwood: Oh yes, absolutely, and tremendously inventive. Anyway, so I got in touch with Bob and said, "I want to work with transposed infrasound and ultrasound from non-human sources, can we do this together?"

So by that time I had been assembling a sort of vocabulary of sound, and I'll tell you what we ended up using. I played them back to him and he fell for them too, they're wonderful sounds. We went out to Caramoor together and were walking around with Stephan, we were some of the first artists to choose a spot, which was by design, and we were walking around the edge of the estate and came across this totally wild little patch, with thorns that were really quite long, you would not want to get trapped in those thorns, and dense undergrowth.

Both of us wanted to hide absolutely all the equipment, make everything invisible, so we looked at that spot and said, "Perfect, nobody is going to go through those thorns to sneak a speaker out," and we started working on it together. I worked with the sounds and assembled them into a forty-five-minute piece, which works episodically, because the other aspect of the piece, which was important to us, is that it should have spaces for the ambient sounds of that particular little corner of the world to come through, so that it was a sort of collaboration between the natural sounds of that little spot, the birds and the wind and the leaves and

everything else that's going there, the trains and the planes flying over, and people mowing the lawn on the next estate, and our infra- and ultrasounds.

The sounds are some of the most amazing, to me, just conceptually: solar oscillations, oscillations from the sun through which oscillations continuously pass, huge numbers, picked up by –

Louise Marshall: Radio telescopes and things, yes.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, exactly, and NASA, and there is a solar laboratory at Stanford University. I wrote, having found them online – I found a lot of this online – and asked if I might use such and such a sound file, and got a lovely letter back saying, “Yes, we'd love to hear what it turns into.” So, solar oscillations, which are extraordinarily low in frequency, and had been transposed.

Louise Marshall: Do they oscillate like a sine wave? (Sings in oscillating tone) *OoooOoooOooo*.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, they pulse.

Louise Marshall: Oh, they pulse, go *bomp-bomp-bomp*.

Annea Lockwood: No, no, with a sort of... Yes, like a sine wave, I think of that as a pulse. It's not technically a pulse, but I think of it as pulsing.

Where was I? Yes, so Stanford sent us these files, transposed hugely up. I've forgotten what the mark of

transposition is, but it's very large.⁶⁶ From Hawaii... I got permission from the scientist [Milton Garces] who directs the Infrasound Laboratory to use the sound files he'd put on SoundCloud already, and he sent me a few others, which were gorgeous. These are emissions of gas being emitted from magma at very high temperature, and resonating –

01:20:05

Louise Marshall: (Emulates gas sounds) *Phsst, phsst?*

Annea Lockwood: No, they don't sound at all like that, in fact. And resonating in magma chambers, hence the choral effect. If you go online you can hear a bit of *Wild Energy*, and the sounds of shelves, shelf structures within vents collapsing and all sorts of really good stuff from him.

Louise Marshall: It's like envelope structures on the synthesizer, you know, you have the parameters, synths are set up with a soft parameter, here you've got the natural parameter.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, exactly. I have a connection to Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, which is Columbia University's multifaceted observatory, amazing people doing really wonderful research there in the earth sciences and so on. She put me in touch with Tim Crone who had been recording underwater vents in the seabed of the Pacific, just off the Oregon coast on the Juan de Fuca Ridge, which is a volcanic ridge.⁶⁷ There are these chains of vents in the seafloor, which are essentially small

⁶⁶ The transposition is x 42,000 (email from Lockwood to Marshall, 29 June 2016).

⁶⁷ Timothy J. Crone is a marine geophysicist at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Columbia University. Some of his recorded sounds can be heard here: <http://www.fluidcontinuity.org/research/ventsounds/>

volcanoes emitting all the time, and Tim had been recording down at the vents, which emit super-heated water, super-heated, but the heat falls off within a short physical distance from the actual vent itself, so it's possible to put a hydrophone down there. They'd been putting them through super-fine filters, and filters with an extremely high Q and extracting harmonics from the roaring sound that the vents emit.⁶⁸

So, he gave me harmonics at all sorts of frequencies, I think from the lowest [which] was about 47 Hz on up – they only go up as far as 8k [kHz], and I looked at him and I said, “Why do you stop at 8k?” (Laughter) That's all the data they needed. I wanted to know how far up those frequencies would go. Anyway, I got those hydrothermal vent recordings from Tim, and from two Swiss researchers working in Zurich I got infrasound from the interior of a Swiss pine.⁶⁹ They were super, they sent me beautiful sounds –

Louise Marshall: Interior?

Annea Lockwood: Yes, trees emit a little ultrasound –

Louise Marshall: They put a little needle, or how do they do it?

Annea Lockwood: A contact mic on a branch, but a super-fine contact mic, able to pick up in the ultrasound range. Yes. Really interesting stuff. I already had cavitation events, which are air bubbles, which travel up the channels within the tree bark and burst and emit ultrasonic

⁶⁸ The Q (quality) factor is a term used in physics and engineering. It indicates a relationship between energy, bandwidth and resonation.

⁶⁹ Roman Zweifel and Marcus Maeder.

bursts. I'd already had that from another scientist, many years before. One of the most fascinating sounds, just because of its sources, was something I got from a scientist at Wake Forest University in New York State, a recording of a bat and a tiger moth having at it. The bat, of course, emitting ultrasound bursts, echolocating ultrasound bursts, but the moth is also emitting ultrasonic bursts to interfere with the bat's sense...

Louise Marshall: Sense of direction, yes.

Annea Lockwood: The bat's echolocation ability. He is... the moth is blocking the bat.

Louise Marshall: Incredible.

Annea Lockwood: It is really remarkable.

Louise Marshall: Do bats eat moths?

Annea Lockwood: Oh yes.

Louise Marshall: Okay, so this was a defence mechanism, yes.

Annea Lockwood: Oh absolutely, it's been really rather recently discovered that moths can jam bats, and now this is –

Louise Marshall: Bats jamming moths is just the best!

Annea Lockwood: Or moths jamming bats, rather.

Louise Marshall: Moths jamming –

Annea Lockwood: Yes, yes, it's a tiger moth.

Louise Marshall: Of course.

Annea Lockwood: Since this discovery, other moths have been found to have this ability too, which is really wild.

Louise Marshall: That's so interesting.

Annea Lockwood: There are more sounds, atmospheric sounds, there are choruses and whistlers, which are wonderful sounds, but that's the bulk of it.

Louise Marshall: We're talking about composition, but we're also talking about listening, and very much listening, and my last two or three questions to you I think now are really going to be about listening, and listening practice, and what does listening mean to you, in this day and age?

Annea Lockwood: Ah. Can I just jump in?

Louise Marshall: Yes, please.

Annea Lockwood: Because really, our purpose with *Wild Energy*, in the title, refers to the fact that the energies we are tapping, sonically, this way, are in fact beyond human control, so they're truly wild. So our purpose, or what we were proposing with *Wild Energy* is that these are energy waves that are passing through our bodies. We have corporeal experience of them on an on-going basis, all the time. They're passing through our bodies. They are affecting us, but beyond that, the fact that we experience them corporeally, I think of them as making

a sort of web around us, gives, creates a sort of visceral connection for us, with these phenomena. So they're not detached from us; in this respect they are sort of re-shaping us, in a way. They're far from detached from us. We have this connection to them. Through that connection we're both proposing that we, as human beings, can recognise how completely interdependent we are with the world's phenomena, how at one with it we truly are, and can incite us to act accordingly.

Louise Marshall: It's a necessity, to act accordingly.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, totally, totally necessary. And that's really the underlying intention of the sound maps of the rivers. By listening you can feel the river in your body. If I do it right, you can feel the river in your body, doing so not only evokes associations with the river that you yourself happen to love, and live near, but also makes you – helps you, rather, nothing makes – sort of fall in love with the river, and by doing so, then you can't help beginning to care more and more.

Louise Marshall: And I see a direct link from the 1970s and the beginnings of your feminist work and locating sound –

Annea Lockwood: Yes, I do.

Louise Marshall: – and locating the woman in a sounding universe to your environmental compositions now. You know, they're social, cultural, political, they're joined, they can't be anything other.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, I see that too.

Louise Marshall: They can't be anything else.

One very last thing. One of the things that I've been struck by is the link between Buddhist listening practices that many of the composers and the musicians that I'm talking to seem to share, and it's not just something on a kind of floaty level, but it's a really direct engagement. Éliane Radigue is the obvious example.⁷⁰

Annea Lockwood: Yes, she's far from the only one, Laurie Anderson is deeply –

Louise Marshall: Deeply involved, and it's not something that she's –

Annea Lockwood: – in Tibetan Buddhist practice, yes.

Louise Marshall: It's not something she's really spoken about, but she's been giving clues over the years.

Annea Lockwood: And *The Heart of a Dog* (2015) shows it clearly, which is exquisite.⁷¹

Louise Marshall: It is a wonderful film.

Annea Lockwood: Yes. Anyway, many of us, well, Bob Bielecki himself, is a practising meditator.

Louise Marshall: Is he?

⁷⁰ Radigue has been a practising Tibetan Buddhist since the mid-1970s. She is a close friend of Lockwood's.

⁷¹ Anderson 2015.

Annea Lockwood: Yes, which doesn't surprise one at all.

Louise Marshall: No.

Annea Lockwood: A wonderful man to work with.

Louise Marshall: Pauline to Ellen [Fullman], who is my age, more or less exactly, there are ten days between us. She's in [inaudible] –, and it's something that's not coincidental. It's not something to do with trendy New York, or anything like that, so I'm asking everybody I speak to. Is there something about Tibetan theories and Buddhist theories of sounds and listening that speak to you directly? Is there a relationship, for you?

Annea Lockwood: Well, let's see, Ruth and I both, as we put it, studied and practised Zen Buddhism for about ten to twelve years, with Bernie Tetsugen [Glassman], Sensei and we went to it because it felt like a natural home to us.⁷²

Louise Marshall: Would this have been Seventies, Eighties?

001:30:00

Annea Lockwood: That would have been starting in the mid- Seventies, and not so much Buddhist thinking about sound specifically, but Buddhist perception and thinking in general affected us both deeply and has from then on. We're no longer practising Buddhism, but it doesn't leave our lives. Yes, it's been very important.

Louise Marshall: Okay, thank you, thank you so much. Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about while we're here? No?

⁷² Bernard Glassman (US, b. 1939), Zen master and teacher.

Annea Lockwood: England was a great... London and England in those years was the best possible place to grow up as a musician. I feel lucky. I've always felt lucky to have been here in those years, very lucky.

Louise Marshall: And the people who cluster in your memory, who would you say were your three most important mentors in that?

Annea Lockwood: Mentors... (Laughs) Well, Cage for sure, through just hearing, seeing him perform, hearing him, being around him a little bit. I would never claim him as a friend, but he's been always friendly, reading him, Cage, really important. My connection with Pauline was really strong, really great.

Louise Marshall: Profound?

Annea Lockwood: Yes. Yes, absolutely. Hugh, the years of friendship with Hugh Davies were very important to me, in particular; and Ruth.

Louise Marshall: Of course.

Annea Lockwood: Once Ruth and I got together we influenced each other so much and she has been... I feel about Ruth that she has given me the major part of my life and my work, just gave that to me, being with her, being able to be with her has enabled everything that I've done, since I went –

Louise Marshall: That's generosity, and that's a good partnership.

Annea Lockwood: Oh, she is immensely, immensely generous, and funny, and dry, and creative, and imaginative –

Louise Marshall: I hope one day that I will get to talk to her. I'd love to.

Annea Lockwood: Oh, she's highly imaginative, she's wonderful.
(Laughter) She's wonderful, but I feel as if she has given me the bulk of my life as a composer, for sure.
Bless her heart.

Louise Marshall: Thank you. Thank you so much, Annea, for your time and generosity.

Annea Lockwood: Not at all, Louise. Sure, of course –

Louise Marshall: I'm going to switch this off now.

Annea asks for recorder to be switched on again

Louise Marshall: Okay. What was the one last thing?

Annea Lockwood: *Wild Energy*.

Louise Marshall: Go on.

Annea Lockwood: I want to describe what it's like to encounter it. So you're walking along a slightly formal path of cedars, an alley of cedars, and you come across this little clearing in this wild bushy area at the edge of the estate and there are two hammocks –

Louise Marshall: Mmmm!

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Annea Lockwood: So – and the sound filtering through the clearing and the trees. So you lie down in a hammock and you spend as long as you like there and the sounds come and go. Some of them are very low – we had three sub-woofers and seven other outdoor speakers so we could just leave it there, it stayed up for two years, actually. You just lie back in a hammock and sometimes you don't know which sounds are created and which sounds are coming from the environment itself.

Louise Marshall: That's nice.

Annea Lockwood: And I love the hammocks! I've been wanting to do an installation with hammocks for years and Bob loves hammocks, so we just went for it! (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: That's lovely. I hope that many more hammocks feature in your compositions.

Annea Lockwood: I do too! I do too! (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Shall I turn off now?

Annea Lockwood: I just wanted to add that. It seemed sort of pertinent.

Louise Marshall: Absolutely. You're totally right there.

Annea Lockwood: [It's pertinent] because it matters how people physically experience these things. If you're relaxed, you're really hearing. If you're standing, sort of en route to another piece, just checking pieces out, see what's where, you're not hearing anything. You need

to be physically comfortable to really sink into a sound
or a sound source is my feeling, so hammocks are
ideal. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Thank you.

01:34:58 **End of recording**

Interview 4

**Joan La
Barbara**

Date

23 May 2016

Venue

**Joan La Barbara's room at Hotel Casa 400,
Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

Keywords

JLB = Joan La Barbara

Names mentioned

10 th Street (rock band, JLB a member of)	Anderson, Laurie (artist, musician)
Ashley, Robert (composer)	Bell, Gelsey (singer and researcher)
Berberian, Cathy (singer)	Berio, Luciano (composer)
Blum, Eberhard (flautist)	Bryars, Gavin (composer)
Cage, John (composer)	Cardew, Cornelius (composer)
Clayton, Jay (jazz singer)	Collins, Judy (popular singer-songwriter)
Copland, Aaron (composer)	Cornell, Joseph (artist)
Cunningham, Merce (choreographer)	Davis, Lydia (poet)
Eno, Brian (artist, musician, founder Obscure Records)	Feather, Leonard (music critic)
Feldman, Marty (comedian)	Feldman, Morton (composer)
Fullman, Ellen (artist, musician)	Freschl Szekeley, Marian (singing teacher)
Gann, Kyle (composer and writer)	Gilberto, Astrud (singer)
Glass, Philip (composer)	Grierson, Ralph (pianist)
Goldovsky, Boris (conductor)	Jacobson, Bill (photographer)
Johnson, Tom (writer/composer)	Lotz (JLB's family name)
Lucier, Alvin (composer)	Menotii, Gian Carlo (composer)
Milarepa (Tibetan Buddhist saint)	New York Dolls (punk band)
Nyman, Michael (musicologist, writer and composer)	Oliveros, Pauline (composer, writer, Deep Listening developer)
Parsons, Michael (composer)	Portsmouth Sinfonia
Radigue, Éliane (composer)	Reich, Steve (composer)
Riley, Terry (composer)	Rothenberg, Jerome (poet)
Saul, Michael (composer)	Schubert, Megan (researcher)
Scratch Orchestra	Sebesky, Don (jazz arranger)
Sender, Ramon (composer)	Sherman, Judith (singer, producer)
Spiegel, Anat (composer)	Stratos, Demetrio (singer)
Subotnick, Jacob (son)	Subotnick, Morton (composer, Joan La Barbara's second husband)
Summer, Donna (singer, sexualised music)	Truong, Monique (librettist)
Twain, Mark (novelist, JLB's memory of great-grandfather)	Vasuslka, Steina (artist, co-founder of The Kitchen)
Waits, Tom (singer-songwriter)	Woolf, Virginia (novelist)

Places, venues and organisations mentioned

Amsterdam	Avignon (with Philip Glass Ensemble)
Berlin	Café Oto, London

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CalArts (California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles)	Cross College, Syracuse University, New York
Free Music Store, WBAI, radio, New York	Mercer Arts Center, New York
San Francisco Tape Center	Spectrum, New York (music venue)
Tanglewood Institute youth music programme	The Julliard School of Music, New York
The Kitchen, New York (arts centre)	Philadelphia (La Barbara's early life)

Compositions, books, festivals, exhibitions and publications mentioned

<i>The Art of Joan La Barbara</i> (LP, JLB)	<i>Doctor Selavy's Magic Theatre</i> (Richard Foreman and Stanley Silverman, music theatre, JLB in)
<i>The Dream of Ariadne (or Joseph Cornell Observes a Constellation of Regrets)</i> (composition, JLB, libretto by Monique Troung)	<i>Drumming</i> (composition, Steve Reich, JLB's part in)
<i>Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond</i> (book, Michael Nyman)	<i>Einstein on the Beach</i> (opera, Philip Glass and Robert Wilson, JLB's part in)
<i>In C</i> (composition, Terry Riley)	<i>La Barbara: The Name, The Sounds, the Music</i> (composition for voice and computer music, JLB and Larry Austin)
<i>Music For...</i> (composition, John Cage)	"Only" (song, Morton Feldman)
<i>Palimpsest</i> (composition for JLB, Alvin Lucier, text by Lydia Davis)	Sign language
<i>Silver Apples of the Moon</i> (LP, Morton Subotnick)	<i>Singing Alphabet, Sesame Street</i> (children's TV programme)
<i>SoHo Weekly News</i> (New York free newspaper, JLB writing for)	<i>Song Books, Solo for Voice 45</i> (composition, John Cage)
<i>Still and Moving Lines of Silence in Families of Hyperbolas</i> (composition, Alvin Lucier)	<i>The Last Dream of the Beast</i> (composition, Morton Subotnick for JLB)
<i>The Rape of El Morro</i> (LP, JLB's involvement in and anger at)	<i>Tapesongs</i> (LP, JLB)
"Three Voices" (composition, Morton Feldman)	<i>The Transmigration of Morton F</i> (online project)
<i>The Transmigration of Timothy Archer</i> (Philip K. Dick novel)	<i>This Is a Voice</i> (Wellcome Collection, London, 2016)

<i>To the Lighthouse</i> (novel, Virginia Woolf)	<i>Topkapi</i> (film, Jules Dassin)
<i>Voice Piece: One-Note Internal Resonance Investigation</i> (compositional/performance, JLB)	<i>Voice Is the Original Instrument</i> (LP, JLB)
“Winter Music” (<i>Atlas Eclipticalis</i>) (John Cage, JLB performing)	“ <i>WolfSong</i> ” (song, JLB)

Social/art/political/miscellaneous

Acoustical beating	Children, having
Composer (JLB thinking of self as a composer)	DAAD (German scholarship programme)
Horn & Hardart (automat)	Improvisation, collaboration (crediting issues)
Listening and hearing	Miscarriage, guilt over, lack of information from medical staff
Moog synthesizer (using as a student)	Music (classical, electronic, experimental, folk, rock, music theatre)
Parents (mother: home-maker, father: builder)	Prizes (DAAD, John Cage award, Demetrio Stratos International Prize)
Supernatural (astral projection, hearing voices)	Talisman (amber bead)
US presidential election, 2016	Women composers, lack of
Voice (changing over time; coloratura, gesture, imitating instruments, shape, soprano, techniques, Tibetan overtone chanting, working with sine waves)	

File: Composer/singer Joan La Barbara and researcher Louise Marshall
Duration: 2:36:31
Date: 23 May 2016, afternoon
Place: Joan La Barbara's hotel room, Amsterdam

00:00:00¹

Louise Marshall: I will turn this on.

Joan La Barbara: Did you come over this morning? You came over today?

Louise Marshall: I came over this morning. I had a 6:00am flight [from London].

Joan La Barbara: Ah! (Empathetic groan) Oh God, okay.

Louise Marshall: (Laughter) But then you know, it is not as bad as the jet lag for you [from New York] and then straight into it [filming work on the project she is in Amsterdam for]. Just to ease into things; tell me a little bit about the project that you are working on here in Amsterdam.

Joan La Barbara: It is called *The Transmigration of Morton F.* It was inspired by a Philip K. Dick book – which I just read – called *The Transformation of Timothy Archer*.² I think it is mostly the idea that is the inspiration. I don't think that they are really following the book in any way. The idea is that I play myself and I've come to Amsterdam and I seem to see the reincarnation of Morton Feldman as a little boy. I begin to follow this

¹ This transcript has been seen and approved by Joan La Barbara.

² Dick, Philip K., 1982. *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. New York: Timescape Books.

little boy around various places in Amsterdam.
Ultimately, it will become a video internet game.³

Louise Marshall: A game?

Joan La Barbara: For free, that you can access and play. Part of it is like a virtual-reality thing. As you follow me and this little boy around the streets, you wind up in a certain place and you either hear music by Morton Feldman or music by Anat Spiegel, who is an Israeli composer, woman composer.⁴

Louise Marshall: You are improvising?

Joan La Barbara: I'm not singing.

Louise Marshall: You are not singing at all?

Joan La Barbara: I'm just acting.

Louise Marshall: You are silent in this.

Joan La Barbara: I don't think there is any dialogue at all so people have to wander through this situation. There will be towards the end: they are using my recording of Morton Feldman's "Only".⁵

Louise Marshall: Yes, which you sang at Café Oto.⁶

³ A web-based game that describes itself as "An interactive ode to Morton Feldman".
<http://mortonf.net/>

⁴ La Barbara is a leading interpreter of and authority on the vocal music of composer Morton Feldman (US, 1926-86). Anat Spiegel is a Dutch-Israeli musician composer and performer.

⁵ "Only" (1947) is Feldman's setting of a poem in Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* cycle. It is approximately two minutes in length.

⁶ La Barbara's performance at Café Oto (a performance space by night), London, 16 April 2016.

Joan La Barbara: I did, yes.

Louise Marshall: And it was lovely. It would be nice if it were a little bit longer. (Laughter)

Joan La Barbara: Yeah! (Laughter) That's all there is.

Louise Marshall: As I explained to you when we met in London, I am building an archive of interviews with pioneering women composer/ artists.⁷ I tend to use the phrase "composer/ artist" because it signifies, I think, the range of their practice and the uniqueness of the practice. I am absolutely delighted that you have agreed to talk to me.

I am going to ask you a few questions to begin with about your early life and your initial engagements with music and art. Could you tell me a little bit about your early years growing up in Philadelphia and your family?

Joan La Barbara: Yes. I was born and raised in Philadelphia [in 1947]. Born in the city and then raised for a short time in the city and then we moved, my family moved out to the suburbs. I was evidently always singing, my mother tells me. I believe that, because, having raised a son, he was always singing, too.⁸

Louise Marshall: Did he become a musician?

⁷ We first spoke at any length at the Wellcome Collection, London, on 15 April 2016. La Barbara was in the UK to appear in the Collection's *This Is a Voice* exhibition (14 April-31 July 2016) and to perform at Café Oto, inter alia.

⁸ Jacob Subotnick, a sound designer. La Barbara is married to composer Morton Subotnick.

Joan La Barbara: He did. He now does sound design and music for theatre. I sang in school, in church choirs and things like that. I picked up the guitar at a certain point. I studied piano from... well, my grandfather started teaching me and then I actually began formal lessons when I was four.

Louise Marshall: So, early. Were [was] your family musical?

Joan La Barbara: No.

Louise Marshall: Were you a slight oddity here?

Joan La Barbara: Definitely an oddity, yes. I always felt an alien.

Louise Marshall: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Joan La Barbara: I have one sister who is two and a half years younger. My whole family is Republican and I am a Democrat.
(Laughter)

Louise Marshall: That is an interesting thing to state here just before the election.⁹

00:05:00

Joan La Barbara: Well, you know... but it really was growing up in an atmosphere where they thought one way and I thought another. Although they were very supportive of me and my work, I really don't think they expected me to go into music professionally.

⁹ A reference to the then-forthcoming US presidential election in November 2016. At the time that La Barbara and I spoke, the two parties' primary processes, with Donald Trump for a reluctant Republican side, and senators Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders fighting it out for the Democratic nomination, were particularly vicious and were making headline news around the world.

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Louise Marshall: Can I just ask what your dad did?

Joan La Barbara: My dad was a building contractor. He built factories and industrial parks. He was a civil engineer.

Louise Marshall: He was working on quite a large scale then?

Joan La Barbara: Yes. I asked him one time why he never built houses. He said, "No, they are too difficult." (Laughter) "The plumbing is too difficult." In an industrial building, you put the bathrooms here and that's it. Whereas an apartment building, they have to be stacked or even in a single-family home the plumbing is more complicated. (Laughter) It seems silly, but that is the truth of the matter. My mother was a homemaker, a stay-at-home mother. She at one point went and got her credentials to be a substitute teacher and was very proud of herself and came home and told my father about it. He was very offended. They were of the generation... He had gone into the army.

Louise Marshall: He would have served in the war then?

Joan La Barbara: He served in the Second World War and, of course, when the men came back... When the men were away, the women took the jobs and were all working. When the men came back what happened was there was this whole psychological impetus to get the men [back] to work as quickly as possible. There was this whole thing about the woman should be in the home and all of this. He bought into that.

- Louise Marshall: It would be an affront to one's masculinity that the wife worked, I guess.
- Joan La Barbara: Yes, yeah. He basically said to her, "What am I not giving you? What is it that you need that I am not giving you? Who is going to be here when the girls come home from school?" So... um. Both arguments were specious. She felt that he seemed so hurt that she decided not to push it.
- Louise Marshall: She never took up the teaching?
- Joan La Barbara: Uh-huh, no. Anyway, the question about music; no, they weren't musical. My great-grandfather played piano by ear, I would say. He could play all of this honky-tonk, music hall-type piano playing, which was great fun to listen to.
- Louise Marshall: That is slightly *déclassé*.
- Joan La Barbara: These kind of the roll...
- Louise Marshall: Yes, boogie-woogie.
- Joan La Barbara: Yes. He was quite a character. He worked for the railroad. He was a great storyteller. He would go to all the baseball games. He did a lot of walking. He lived well into his nineties. He would tell stories about having met Mark Twain and listening to opera. He would name some of these opera singers that he had heard. Interesting.

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Louise Marshall: Yes, it is interesting. It sounds like you had a good relationship with him.

Joan La Barbara: Yes, it was nice.

Louise Marshall: Nice person to talk to.

Joan La Barbara: Yes.

Louise Marshall: Your parents certainly didn't expect you to make a career out of music. At what point did it appear clear to the family that you weren't just an ordinary child taking ordinary piano lessons and a bit of voice, but this was going to turn into something more serious?

Joan La Barbara: I did theatre also in [high] school and so performing was very important to me. When I was ready to go to college I went to Syracuse University [New York State] and I was actually dual-enrolled in the music department and the English department in creative writing.

00:10:00 After a year or so I was gravitating more toward music. I still wasn't doing anything all that unusual. In high school, I had a folk music group and then in college I was studying western classical music. I began to hear people experimenting with instruments. I thought that that sounded pretty good.

Louise Marshall: What kind of things stuck out? [What kind of things] hit you at that time?

Joan La Barbara: Just the idea that they were improvising, they were stretching the acceptable sonic terrain of their instruments. I thought that was a pretty good thing to get into. Of course, there were recordings of Cathy Berberian that I could listen to, predominantly the work that she had done with Luciano Berio. I heard that before I heard any of the John Cage work that she had done.

Also around 1966, I guess it was '67 maybe, the Moog synthesizer had come out.¹⁰ There was a teacher at Cross College, which was the music school at Syracuse, who convinced the department that they had to buy a Moog synthesizer. He installed it in this room in the high tower at Cross College. Cross College had been a kind of castle on a hill owned by probably some family and then was absorbed into the university.

The synthesizer was installed in this tower and instead of doing a class he just allowed a couple of people to work on it and I was one of the people that he allowed to work on the synthesizer. It was a very tedious process at that point. It had to do with making some electronic sounds and recording them on analogue tape then slicing it and piecing together the sounds that you liked. It was very much like a kind of mosaic.

It was interesting. I won't say that anything great came out of it. I don't even know if I have any of those tapes

¹⁰ Robert Moog's voltage-controlled analogue synthesizer revolutionized the musical landscape in the 1960s. The first production model, the 900 series, was introduced in 1967. Although it was not the first synthesizer to be manufactured, it was the first one to crossover from the university/communications laboratories to a wider field of popular music, where it was enthusiastically deployed.

JOAN LA BARBARA

from that point in time. It was interesting to explore that and to begin to explore my voice a little bit.

Louise Marshall: Was it the experience of using tape recording and doing all those tape edits to mess around with time and tone and timbre – because, of course, you can do that with tapes – that led you to think, okay, there is a way that you can expand your voice in real time?

Joan La Barbara: I am not sure that I was thinking in that way at that time. I really separated the two. The electronic sounds that I was generating and recording were more of a kind of curiosity on my part. I don't think I yet thought of myself as a composer. I think I was more thinking of myself as just being an experimenter and trying things out: wanting to experiment with different things. This was something that was offered to me. I did sing some [Gian Carlo] Menotti and some [Aaron] Copland while I was still at Syracuse.

I transferred after my third year to New York University. I was just frantic to get my career started. I moved to New York City at that point and was in the music education department. I didn't study with any of the vocal teachers at NYU. I had auditioned for Juilliard and not got in, but the teacher at Juilliard liked me very much and liked my voice. She said, "You come and study with me privately and I will get you in."

Louise Marshall: You had a wonderful quote when we last spoke in which she said something like, "I will fix your voice and [we speak in unison] then I will die." (Laughter)

Joan La Barbara: Yes. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: What was her name?

Joan La Barbara: Her name was Marion Szekely Freschl. Szekely is S-Z-E-K-E-L-E-Y [00:15:33]. Szekeley [sic] Freschl.¹¹ F-R-E-S-C-H, no, F-R-E-S-C-H-L. She was Hungarian, yeah. She had gone to school with Bartók and he had helped her with her theory lessons, which she evidently wasn't very good at. (Laughter)

I think having known Bartók and certainly known his struggles, she said to me, "You *must* work with composers. You must teach them about the voice because they don't understand how to write for it." There was that awareness put into my mind: (a), that composers were living people. And (b), that you as a singer had a responsibility to work with them to advance the vocal repertoire and to have them write better and in a more educated way about the voice.

Louise Marshall: Am I right in thinking that even at this stage you were still being trained up as a coloratura soprano with all the elaborate ornamentation that that [implies]?

Joan La Barbara: I told you all that, yes [at our previous meeting in London]. As I said, at a certain point we moved to the suburbs and I had been singing folk music and various kinds of other music. I decided that I should get serious and take voice lessons. I went to study with someone

¹¹ Marion Szekely Freschl (Hung/US, 1986-1984), contralto singer and, later, operatic vocal coach to many major singers. She taught at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute in the 1940s and, later, at the Julliard School of Music in New York City. In spelling out her name, La Barbara mistakenly adds an extra "e".

locally who opened up a music school and taught trumpet, piano, voice, and everything else.

Louise Marshall: So you were a teenager at this point?

Joan La Barbara: I was a teenager, yes. She had always wanted to have someone sing the Bell Song from *Lakmé*.¹² Ah... you know... My voice, when I was younger, yes, I was a lyric soprano, but I had no business singing high coloratura work. When I was auditioning – I auditioned for Oberlin and, as I said, Juilliard and other places – I was singing this repertoire that I had no business singing. I would go to these auditions and squeak away and, of course, didn't get into any of the conservatories. I evidently sang well enough to get into the music department of a university. In a way, I guess it sort of saved me because my intellectual pursuits were also such that I very much wanted to be taking university-level courses in various subjects. I had taken advanced placement in English so I didn't have to take freshman year.

Louise Marshall: You were a dab hand with Virginia Woolf, I have heard?

Joan La Barbara: Yes. I started to get into Virginia Woolf's work in high school. When I got to university, because I didn't have to take freshman English, I could take an elective. I wound up in a graduate course. I don't remember if it was specifically focussed on Virginia Woolf but I chose to write my papers on Virginia Woolf and study

¹² The late nineteenth-century opera by Leo Délibes. The Bell Song ("*L'air des clochettes*") is a standard aria in the classical soprano repertoire.

her work in more depth. I do remember a paper I did about colour symbolism in *Orlando*.

That was a very early strong connection to Virginia Woolf, which then follows later on in the story that I have been trying for about fourteen years now to write an opera inspired by the life and work of Virginia Woolf. It has now expanded to a kind of parallel study of the life and work of Joseph Cornell¹³ because I find them singular artists in their own discipline and also in their lives in a way.¹⁴ Very private, very internal, investigating their own – traumas is [sic] not the right word but –

00:20:11

Louise Marshall: Interior life.

Joan La Barbara: Interior life, yes. Very definitely.

Louise Marshall: There was a great Cornell exhibition in the Royal Academy in London I think last year, a big one.¹⁵ Some of the boxes made sounds, which I hadn't known about before.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. When you see them in museums they are in a case and they are just sitting there, but they were intended to be played with. Some of them, as you say, make sounds, some of them have balls that roll...

Louise Marshall: That's right. That is what I was thinking about, yes.

¹³ Joseph Cornell, US artist, 1903-75. Virginia Woolf, British writer, 1882-1941.

¹⁴ *The Wanderlusting of Joseph C.*, a song cycle by La Barbara with a libretto by Monique Truong, was premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, on 24 May 2018.

¹⁵ *Joseph Cornell: Wanderlust*, Royal Academy, London (4 July-27 September 2015).

Joan La Barbara: ... Or sand that comes out and makes sound as it falls. There were moving parts in a lot of them. Now we basically see them in a fixed position. A friend of mine, Bill Jacobson, who is a photographer, was fortunate enough to take photographs of the boxes for a catalogue.¹⁶ He was allowed to manipulate the boxes and get them into whatever position he wanted. He did find it really fascinating to actually work with the boxes.

There was a little girl who lived near Cornell in Queens. She would come by and play with the boxes and he would let her take them home and play with them. Then she would bring them back and take another one. There is that very interesting sort of Lewis Carroll, *Alice* –

Louise Marshall: Very much so. I didn't know about this actually. In my mind's eye he was this strange loner in his big, spooky Charles Addams' house. This bit I have made up myself clearly. (Laughter)

Joan La Barbara: Yes. I don't know about big spooky, I think it was more like a tract house. (Laughter) Very ordinary looking from the pictures that I have seen. The spookiness comes I think, the father seemed to be a kind of absent personage. Cornell and his younger brother who was very sickly – I think there was also a sister, although she doesn't figure strongly in a lot of the narrative.

¹⁶ Artist photographer (US, b. 1955).

Louise Marshall: It sounds like there has been a lot of erasure from the family history.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. He was very, very much a homebody. He would actually walk to the water in Queens, I guess Long Island Sound, and pick up the detritus on the edge of the water, like the sea was bringing him gifts. He would pick up these bottles, seashells and various little bits of flotsam and jetsam and bring them home and then put them in these drawers and categorise everything. He did take the subway, which at a certain point goes over ground from Queens into Manhattan quite often. He would wander around or go to the automat. You know the automat is like the –

Louise Marshall: The laundry? No?

Joan La Barbara: It is for food. The food was all in these little glass compartments like his organisation trays and put in a coin and you would bring out a sandwich or a piece of pie or something like that. They were called automats.

Louise Marshall: That is interesting.

Joan La Barbara: It was like a restaurant, it was like going into a buffet except you paid individually for each item. They were all in these, as I said, little glass boxes.

Louise Marshall: Yes, you have a taxonomy there. You have the sandwich line and the potato chips line and the chocolate line.

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Joan La Barbara: Yes. It was not like a vending machine. The vending machine is sort of a crass thing that has come down to us since that time. This was actually a place you would go to called Horn & Hardart, the Horn & Hardart automat.

Louise Marshall: Horn & Hard-?

Joan La Barbara: Horn & Hardart. H-O-R-N and I think Hardard; H-A-R-D-A-R-T, if you want to check that. I know they were in New York, they were in Philadelphia. I don't know if they were nationwide. Then at a certain point they simply went out of fashion. They were certainly in fashion in the Fifties. I don't know how far into the Sixties they went.

Louise Marshall: That is very interesting. Isolated food.

Joan La Barbara: Isolated food, yes. (Laughter) Individual isolated food objects. I suppose you could get an apple but pies, I think, slices of pie or slices of cake. I seem to remember vaguely that he was into sweets so the idea of cakes and things.

Louise Marshall: Your opera with Woolf and Cornell; I think that is what you were talking about before I led you down the garden path.

Joan La Barbara: It still is relevant because the connection, there were certain tragic elements in both Cornell's life and in Woolf's life. Woolf's mother died when she was, I believe, thirteen. It was very traumatic.¹⁷ Her father went into full Victorian mourning and insisted that the

¹⁷ Cornell's brother, Robert (1910-62), whom La Barbara mentions, suffered from cerebral palsy. Cornell was thirteen when his father died; Woolf was thirteen when her mother died.

girls go into mourning as well. Then at a certain point he remarried. She had a family that became attached. I think the new family had a couple boys. One of them raped her, I believe, or sexually molested her.

Louise Marshall: There was some sexual assault; I am not quite sure to what extent.

Joan La Barbara: Which was very, very traumatic. Then it turns out I learned in this exhibition at Wellcome [Collection], *This Is a Voice*. There is a book there of Woolf's memoirs in a way. She talks about [how when] the first time she heard voices was when her father died. Again, a kind of traumatic psychic break I guess at that point. The voices that, of course, got worse and worse and were what finally caused her to fill her pockets with rocks and walk into the water.

The tragedies in Cornell's life; his younger brother was very sickly. I think part of the reason that he stayed home and so close to home was that he wanted to help take care of his brother. At a certain point there was an assistant, a woman; Jane Something.¹⁸ He trusted her. He may or may not have been sexually attracted to her. I don't think there was any consummation. But she betrayed him. She started stealing the boxes and then selling them. He dismissed her at a certain point and she was murdered. That is a story that I need to follow a little bit better and get more details. How much of any of this would go into the opera, I am not sure.

Louise Marshall: There is no suggestion that he murdered her?

¹⁸ Joyce Hunter, a local waitress whom Cornell befriended. She stole several of his boxes and tried to sell them. She was murdered in 1964 by a male friend. Cornell mourned her by making (with Larry Jordan) an eight-minute silent film, *Flushing Meadows* (1965), which has scenes of the Flushing cemetery where Hunter is buried.

Joan La Barbara: No, no, no. Just there was this betrayal. There is betrayal for each of these protagonists, let's call them. Then their incredible personalising of the material: Cornell living out this endless childhood in the boxes, these little magical, fantastical things with birds. There are children in the woods, fairy-tale kinds of things and a lot of stuff with the stars, celestial constellations and things like that.

00:29:44 With Woolf, it was very much about working out issues with her family, her families, I guess, and the psychological implications of various relationships. I remember this incredible passage from [Woolf's] *To the Lighthouse* where James and his mother are sitting there. James is one of the littlest children, maybe the youngest of the children. He and his mother are cutting out magazine pictures. He sees his father walking by the window and he thinks to himself, "Oh, she is going to leave me now." That the mother will change, shift her focus from him, little James, to the father who was equally needy of her attention.

Louise Marshall: It is a transformation of roles as well. This person, who is a human, changes from being your mother to being his wife.

Joan La Barbara: His wife, yes, and all of that.

Louise Marshall: And never be the little boy's wife because –

Joan La Barbara: Right.

Louise Marshall: I guess you are into Oedipal territory.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. There was a lot of investigation in her writing about those relationships. Also – how would you put it? I am sure there is a word for it – humanise or speaking about inanimate objects in a human way.¹⁹ She talks about the little airwaves [31:56] that crept in through the cracks of the seashore house once they have left it.²⁰

Louise Marshall: I can see how this is feeding into how your music developed.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. The little airwaves come in and creep along the floor, up the walls and things. In one of the early versions of what I called at that point, *WoolfSong* [sic] (2003),²¹ I did a whole piece that was a surround-sound piece, where I created a sound that for me was the little airwaves. They crept in and I sent their trajectory around the auditorium.

Louise Marshall: They become sculptural as well.

Joan La Barbara: Absolutely.

¹⁹ Anthropomorphology. At the time of our interview, La Barbara and I were both very tired, due to jetlag and early morning flights.

²⁰ “Nothing stirred in the drawing-room or in the dining-room or on the staircase. Only through the rusty hinges and swollen sea-moistened woodwork certain *airs*, detached from the body of the wind (the house was ramshackle after all) crept round corners and ventured indoors.” (Woolf, 1992: 138). Woolf elaborates the image with references to “little airs” and “fumbling airs”. La Barbara’s memory of the text renders Woolf’s “air” instead as “airwaves”, an interesting expansion that creates the possibility of the sonic with its own sound waves. In addition, waves are never far away in Woolf’s prose, being one of her favoured tropes for life’s surface multiplicity and underlying unity. My thanks to Julian Cowley for his pointing this out.

²¹ *WoolfSong* (2003), an opera in progress.

- Louise Marshall: Because the sound then becomes sculptural volume. Volume as in how loud it is, but [also] the volume of the space if you see.
- Joan La Barbara: It becomes physically present as a real object. The way that Woolf wrote about the little airwaves, you heard them, you saw them, you felt them, although no one ever heard or saw or felt them, so she was imagining these. For me, they were as real as the way she described them. I wanted to try to create them, generate them in sound and to get the kind of *creepiness* of these little airwaves, which were the only things that were left inhabiting the house at that point.
- Louise Marshall: You have spoken, um, very poignantly and dramatically about betrayals in Woolf's life and in Joseph Cornell's life. I was just suddenly struck once again with something that you told me when we were in London, when you were talking about your wonderful Hungarian teacher who got you in to – was it the Tanglewood summer school?
- Joan La Barbara: No, no, I got myself into Tanglewood. (Laughter) This was Boris Goldovsky's opera workshop.²² It was in Virginia or West Virginia.
- Louise Marshall: It was clear to you at that point that this is the road in which you had to make a decision. One road went that way, the other went that way.

²² Boris Goldovsky (1908-2001) was a Russian-born conductor, opera champion and broadcaster. He moved to the US as a young man. He was the opera director of the Tanglewood Music Center, Massachusetts, for many years.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. I had already by that time become enamoured of experimental music and experimenting with the voice. I was starting to ask questions about what was I doing in opera? I was learning these roles that had been done for centuries and learning them the way people were doing them and I just felt more and more being controlled. My impulse was to free.

Um, and so when she [Marion Szekeley Freschl] left – she always went to Europe in the summertime – when she left I called up this workshop and I said, um, “My voice is broken. I am not coming.” They said, “Don’t worry about it. We have many teachers here. We can fix it.” Thinking, “Oh, I said, “No, no, no, I’m not coming.” I ran away literally from the classical music world at that point and gravitated toward this more experimental fusion. There was a lot of work between jazz fusion and new music.

Louise Marshall: You never spoke to Marion again?

Joan La Barbara: I never did.

Louise Marshall: I remember when you told me the story originally when you first started to talk about her. Your face lit up when you remembered her then you told me this very dramatic development. You also said that you knew that she would understand. I understand what you mean by that.

Joan La Barbara: I felt that she would understand.

JOAN LA BARBARA

- Louise Marshall: You had grown up. You had found your voice. You were beginning to find your voice.
- Joan La Barbara: Find my way of being in the world. I know in my heart that she would have approved because when she died she set up a kind of scholarship at Juilliard for composers to write music for the voice. I know from what she said to me, “You have to work with composers,” that she felt the contemporary music was valuable. The composers were also living people, not just dead people. There were very few women composers at that point. We now know more historically about Fanny Mendelssohn and Amy Beach and these people. At that point in time there was Thea Musgrave and I am at a loss to think of other women who were alive and working.²³ I certainly didn’t know of Pauline’s [Oliveros] work at that point. What I was doing was going into this field as an experimental vocalist is what I called myself.
- Louise Marshall: You were living in New York?
- Joan La Barbara: I was living in New York.
- Louise Marshall: Whereabouts? On the Lower East [Side] where all the others were?²⁴
- Joan La Barbara: When I first came to New York to finish up my education I was living in an apartment on 14th Street. Then I moved for a while to another apartment on 15th Street. I moved to SoHo, I had a loft in SoHo for a

²³ Fanny Mendelssohn (1805-47), Prussian-born pianist and composer and sister to Felix; Amy Beach (1867-1944), US composer; Thea Musgrave (b. 1928), British composer.

²⁴ I am thinking here of Philip Glass (b. 1937) and many of the others of the so-called minimalist scene in New York who were based around New York’s Lower East Side.

while on Greene Street. I moved to the Upper West side, 81st Street that was, and then, hmmm, 81st Street and then down to SoHo. Because NYU is in the Washington Square area, I spent a lot of time down in that Greenwich Village; West Village more than East Village area. The East Village at that point in time – this was late Sixties, early Seventies – was still a pretty rough and tumble –

Louise Marshall: It was a very rough area in those days. I am not quite sure whether Philip Glass was in the Lower East Side by that point. He was certainly there by the Seventies.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. I am not sure. I think he was. Certainly, at the time that I worked with him, he was doing a lot of concerts in galleries and stuff, and in lofts. When I first met him, I was working with Steve Reich. I had worked with Steve on the development of *Drumming*.²⁵ I had come to him because I was doing commercials and working with a composer whose day gig was to be the music director and pianist for Judy Collins – Michael Saul.²⁶ He also was a composer.

00:40:00 And so we would do these commercials. One of them I remember was for a Japanese perfume. They had hired a Japanese singer and then the ad agency people decided that she sounded too Japanese for the American audience.

Louise Marshall: I am not quite sure what that means. (Laughter)

²⁵ Steve Reich (b. 1936), US composer. *Drumming* (1970-71) is one of the classic texts of minimalist music. La Barbara appears on the first two recordings of the work, dating from 1972 (John [sic] Gibson + Multiples, Inc) and 1974, reissued 2003 (Deutsche Grammophon). British composer Cornelius Cardew also appears on the 1974 recording.

²⁶ Judy Collins (b. 1939), a leading US singer-songwriter in the field of popular music.

Joan La Barbara: Don't begin to try and understand the workings of advertising executives! (Laughter) They have their own idea about what people want to see, hear, taste, touch, experience. Anyway, Michael brought me in and they didn't know what they wanted, so we started out imitating the sound of a koto, which was, of course, not a koto because the koto sounded too ethnic, so it was a harp imitating the sound of a koto. I was imitating the harp imitating the sound of a koto.

We went through this gamut of sounds and finally wound up with this sort of breathy, Astrud Gilberto-esque voice.²⁷ I only go through all the details of that because, when Steve Reich was looking for somebody who could imitate instruments, Michael said, "I have the person for you." (Laughter) So that's what led me to Steve Reich.

Steve, as I said, was developing *Drumming* at that point.²⁸ He would play these tape loops and I and Jay Clayton, who was a jazz singer, a friend of mine, and Judith Sherman, who was a singer, became now a producer, a recording engineer producer.²⁹ ³⁰Anyway, we would listen to these interlocking tape loops and improvise the patterns that we heard. He would then

²⁷ Brazilian bossa nova vocalist (b. 1940). She had a popular 1964 hit with "The Girl from Ipanema".

²⁸ La Barbara was hired to imitate the sound of marimbas in the development of *Drumming*. Reich had considered using her voice in lieu of the bongo drum sound, only to later decided that the male voice was better suited to this instrument. See La Barbara interview with Kalvos & Damian for the *New Music Bazaar Show*, June 2003 (No. 448): http://econtact.ca/12_2/LaBarbaraJo_KD.html (accessed 19 January 2017).

²⁹ Producer associated with Reich, Glass, Terry Riley and many others.

³⁰ Singer Janice Jarrett was also involved in the vocal explorations that went into *Drumming*.

write down the ones that he liked, and they would go into the music.³¹

I bring that up because it was at the point that I was working with Steve that I thought, “Well, I am contributing a lot to this music and I should really think seriously about composing.” Also, I was doing a lot of improvising. I had an ensemble that I was working with. There was a place called the Free Music Store, which was run by [New York public radio station] WBAI.³² On Thursday evenings people would just show up and improvise together. I was creating these improvisatory settings for [a] musical ensemble.

Louise Marshall: I haven’t looked at the sleeve notes to *Drumming* for a long time, actually. Is there... do you feel at all that you and your colleagues – you mentioned Judith Sherman and –

Joan La Barbara: Jay Clayton –

Louise Marshall: And Jay Clayton – perhaps weren’t given your due respect with Steve [Reich]?

Joan La Barbara: Yeah. Of course. I think there was a certain idea on Steve’s part that the musicians were there to serve his ideas and that it was basically all fair game. He created the music that was on the tape loops. The fact that we were listening and pulling out the resulting patterns – we were simply articulating what was there. He could

³¹ Jay Clayton (b. 1941), US vocalist active in free jazz and avant-garde groups. She sang with the Steve Reich Ensemble for many years and is on the first two recordings of *Drumming*.

³² The Free Music Store was a series of broadcast events organised by the radio station WBAI and recorded in a former church.

have done the same thing himself and then written it down, but we were providing access to our way of thinking, listening and producing material that shortcut that.

Louise Marshall: That is very interesting.

Joan La Barbara: I think that is the kindest way that I can put it. Certainly, what we did was to contribute to the making of his music. I have worked as a singer, musician, for many composers who have asked me to participate in some way. Some of them were more generous than others about what that participation consisted of.

I do a lot of teaching now and I've had a lot of students ask, particularly with respect to [John] Cage, "Who is the composer?" I say, "The composer is the one who sets down the ideas in a formal way." Those of us who agree to realise these ideas come to that knowing that that's what we are doing.

I happen to be an expert interpreter or realiser of the works of Cage. I also took what I learned from interpreting his graphic scores and used that in my own scoring so that I do have a tendency to see sound, I see gestures. As I make sound, I hear sound in gestures. One of the ways of translating what I hear and see is to make a graphic and sometimes to work with the graphic, sometimes to translate that graphic into notation that is clearer and more precise.

It depends on what I want. If I, as a composer, want the musician to explore with his or her full body of

knowledge and expertise these graphics, then I will leave it as graphics. If I want to control the musical situation and get specific pitch material, get specific ordering of sounds and rhythmic material, then I will go and use more traditional notation to get that effect.

Louise Marshall: I am very interested in what... you're talking in a way of equivalences of sound and physical action in the visual realm as well. I know that visual art has been hugely important to the way you have developed your voice, too. We will certainly come to that. That is very interesting.

Am I right in thinking that Cage as a composer was perhaps slightly more generous in how he collaborated with his interpreters?

Joan La Barbara: I think so. I think that... he was very demanding. In other words, you had to follow his instructions and do the work. If you did that then he gave you not only a great deal of credit but encouragement and respect and acknowledged what you were bringing to that.

I know there was a situation with a work of his called *Music for...* and there are seventeen parts: one for voice. You can do any combination of these. The number of parts that you use, it's like if you have three, then it's *Music for Three*. It can be up to *Music for Seventeen*.

When he first gave me the score for that there was a certain indication for vowel sounds. Or there was no indication, I can't remember which it was. Whichever

it was, I interpreted that score. Then when it came time to record it, the publisher sent me another score and it had the opposite. I can find out which is which and let you know that.

I called him up and I said, “Well, John, there is a difference between the score you gave me and the score that the publisher sent me.” He said, “Oh, I would never question your judgement.” Which was trust and acknowledgement and treating me in a way as an equal partner in this, which he did.

Louise Marshall: He sounds exceptional.

Joan La Barbara: I think so. I have worked with other people, like Alvin Lucier, who I have worked with over a number of years. Alvin’s work always was in some sort of border territory between science and art. Realising scientific principles and stuff like that.

00:50:00 The first piece that I did with him was a work called *Still and Moving Lines in Families of Hyperbolas* (1972).³³ It consisted of his playing sine tones from four speakers placed around the periphery of the area. I would move into that area – we did a lot of talking about things before. In this rehearsal he would say, “Just see what you can do with this.”

³³ Correctly, *Still and Moving Lines of Silence in Families of Hyperbolas*. A four-section work that Lucier began in 1972. In total, it involves combinations of performers and dancers. La Barbara performed this in 1974 at the Festival d’Automne in Paris. For an account by Lucier of working with La Barbara, space and sine tones, see Lucier (2012: 80-82). In this, Lucier is writing of a separate work, *Wave Songs* (1998), which were a response to Lee Lozano’s eleven *Wave Paintings*. *Wave Songs* are for eleven solos for female voice with a pair of pure wave oscillators: the presence of the human body and voice will disrupt the sine wave and so “send out [ripples] with small movements of [the] human body” (p. 82).

So we went out into the space... we were rehearsing in Merce Cunningham's studio. I went and I worked in the space for a while and then when I was finished, I came back and he said, "Now tell me what you were doing." I said, "The first thing I did was to find my acoustical centre of the room," which was not necessarily the geographical centre. It was where I was being bombarded equally by these sine tones that were all in unison. Then, by just singing with the sine tones and microtonally shifting away from them, I could move them, push them away physically because sound is in waves and, if you are in unison, those waves are going simultaneously. If you go slightly microtonally apart, they begin to bump into each other.

Louise Marshall: They go out of phase and you get that shimmering.

Joan La Barbara: Yes, shimmering, acoustical beating we call it.

Louise Marshall: Yes, the beating; that's the phrase.

Joan La Barbara: What I could do then was to move the sound away from me with my voice. Alvin found that *fascinating*. That became my part of the piece. Whenever he talks about it, and he does in interview and in writing and everything, he talks about that. He is another generous composer.

Louise Marshall: Were you involved in the development of the voices on Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* in a similar way?

Joan La Barbara: Yeah, yeah.

JOAN LA BARBARA

Louise Marshall: Did you get the credit for that? I know you were in Avignon with Philip [Glass] and Robert Wilson.³⁴

Joan La Barbara: Yes, I was in Avignon. Huh... At a certain point I said to Philip, "This is an opera, right?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, operas have arias, right?" He said, "Yes." I said, "So write me an aria." So yes.

He wrote what he wrote. He wrote this long, electric organ cadenza that starts it. Then there was a point in the opera where this long rectangular platform of light very slowly goes from a horizontal position to vertical and then rises up into the fly space [of the theatre's stage]. The "Bed" aria – that object was called the bed – was this. Philip writes about that. He tells the story. That is there.³⁵ I joined the [Glass] ensemble, I think, in '73 or '74, singing the trumpet part of existing works like –

Louise Marshall: Was it on [Glass's] *Music in Twelve Parts* (1971-74)?

Joan La Barbara: No, this was before *Music in Twelve Parts*.

Louise Marshall: I can't remember when it was now.

³⁴ Composer Philip Glass and theatre director Robert Wilson's opera, *Einstein on the Beach*, was premiered at the Avignon Festival in 1976. It was Glass's first opera and is regarded as one of the break-through works of minimalist music and music theatre.

³⁵ "About then, Joan La Barbara (who, although beginning her compositional career was still performing with the Ensemble as a soprano vocalist) came to me with a complaint. 'Look,' she said, 'this is an opera, and I'm the soprano lead, and I don't have an aria. I want an aria!' I agreed that it was a good idea." (Glass 1987: 48) Glass refers to La Barbara interchangeably as both a singer and a composer. It is noticeable that Glass couches the aria conversation as a demand on La Barbara's part. He does however acknowledge La Barbara's part in the Philip Glass Ensemble, noting that it was she who "prompted the addition of a soprano voice" (op. cit.: 113) to it, and that he has used one ever since, an indication of the importance of her suggestion and her work there.

- Joan La Barbara: This was *Music in Similar Motion* (1973) and [*Music in*] *Parallel Fifths* (1973), those things.³⁶ He was just starting to write *Music in Twelve Parts* when I joined the ensemble. He had written a keyboard part. I could also play keyboards, so I played the keyboard part. Then he began adding voice parts.
- Louise Marshall: Something had happened to the trumpet player, hadn't it?
- Joan La Barbara: I think he died. I think he was into astral projection and went off one day and couldn't find his way back. That may be a total fantasy story on my part but something about that kind of resonates.
- Louise Marshall: That is quite a story in itself.
- Joan La Barbara: Yes, he was into astral projection. You know what that is?
- Louise Marshall: Yeah, yeah.
- Joan La Barbara: You know these astral planes?
- Louise Marshall: I do know [about] the astral planes. To be frank, I don't know my position on all this.
- Joan La Barbara: Yes.
- Louise Marshall: But many people have spoken about it. Actually, many vocalists I know serious, serious vocalists, have spoken about it, because when you are using your voice you

³⁶ Philip Glass, *Music in Fifths* (1973).

are breathing in a very particular way and it doesn't take that much shift in one's breathing to alter one's consciousness, I suppose.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. Certainly, you can hyperventilate, that is the technical term for what happens. I know with my *Voice Piece: One-Note Internal Resonance Investigation* (1974) I was performing it and John Cage was in the audience. That piece requires a great deal of concentration because I am moving a central tone into various resonant spaces in my face and body and also working on –

Louise Marshall: It sounds quite *bel canto*, actually.

Joan La Barbara: Yes, but *bel canto* – isolating the resonant areas instead of combining them. In *bel canto* you combine them to make this pure, golden tone but also dealing with overtone focussing and multiphonics and all of this. At a certain point I felt myself leaving through the top of my head and I said to myself, "Pull yourself together. John Cage is out there in the audience. You can't leave your body at this point." (Laughter)

I did manage to ground myself and finished the performance. Cage came up to me afterwards and said it was marvellous and, "Do you want to work with me?" And I said, "Yes, of course." That is another story. He gave me *Solo for Voice 45* (1970) from the *Song Books*. A very, very rigorous work. Eighteen

pages where one has to make a lot of decisions and a lot of work to get into it.³⁷

I mentioned that situation to Pauline [Oliveros] sometime later. She said, “You need something to keep you grounded.” I think I had found an amber bead that sat on a burlap rope around my neck. It sat right at my breastbone. For many years afterwards, I would never perform that piece without that necklace.

Louise Marshall: Do you still use it?

Joan La Barbara: No. I don’t seem to need it at this point. It probably is around somewhere. I am on the hoarder spectrum. (Laughter) I have discovered all sorts of things that are still around somewhere in some box.

Louise Marshall: An initial training as a classical singer will teach you to use your body and use its resonant spaces to harness that power, harness that projection. Was it this initial training that allowed you to access overtones and multiphonics in the first place? Or did you come across that style of physical singing, if you like, from a different direction?

Joan La Barbara: I think I came from it more from the experimental direction. What happened was I would do a lot of improvising and come up with sounds that were intriguing to me. I did a lot of recording so that I could go back and listen and try to recreate those sounds.

³⁷ Cage uses constellation maps to determine the pitches in *Solo for Voice 45*, alongside casting from the *I Ching*, so the performer needs to make a stream of decisions in order to perform this work. La Barbara recorded the definitive version of this work for her LP, *Tapesongs* (Chiaroscuro, 1978).

01:00:01

I know that the multiphonics sound came out the first time as a result of working with Jerome Rothenberg, a poet. He was reading from [the Tibetan Buddhist saint] Milarepa. This sound came out of me. I had no real connection at that point with the sounds of the Tibetan monks.

Louise Marshall: How did you feel when this sound came out of you?

Joan La Barbara: Very, very curious. Kind of, “Wow. What is this?” Luckily, we were recording at the time and so I could go back and listen to it and try to figure out a way of replicating it. Now it turns out what I was doing was actually getting the false vocal folds to sympathetically vibrate with the true vocal folds and then tuning them. So. That is my way of producing it. Other people have other ways.

The Tibetan monks don't do that at all; they are just singing in very low tones. They are intoning their prayers and, in the intoning of their prayers, they are getting these very low tones and these whistling overtones on top, whereas what I was doing was using the false vocal folds to produce this subtone. That is the best way I can explain it. It was all part of this grand investigatory period that I was in at that point.

Louise Marshall: Singers often talk about finding their voice not just in musical terms but in a very holistic way as well, because as your work says, the voice is the original instrument.³⁸ The voice is the body. You have nothing

³⁸ La Barbara 1976.

to hide behind. I guess the question I am asking is: what was the meaning for you of finding your voice, not expanding your voice? Were you finding that you had many voices?

Joan La Barbara: I think both. The idea that there were many qualities and timbres and colours and I guess even emotional weight to some of the sounds that I was making. All of that was part of the process, I think. Finding out what the voice could do was just one part of it. Then deciding what to do with that was the next part, which was more in the realm of composition.

It is one thing to discover all these wonderful sounds that you can make. It is another thing to put them out in such a way that they convey a musical idea, that they carry a kind of logical trajectory, follow a logical trajectory.

I have heard now a number of singers who it seems to me just give examples – “I can do this, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this” – but they don’t necessarily follow to me what is a kind of musical form.

Louise Marshall: I see. I see exactly what you mean. Composition is absolutely essential to the whole notion of having a voice.

Joan La Barbara: Well, I think it certainly... It takes it from the realm of the purely experimental into the realm of, “Okay, now I have –” like having a palette of colours.³⁹ You can

³⁹ Colour and visual art are two of La Barbara’s favoured analogies in describing the tonal range of her voice. On *La Barbara: The Name, The Sounds, the Music* (1991, for spoken and sung voice and computer music on tape), a joint composition with Larry Austin, she speaks

use all the colours in all of your paintings or you can limit to a certain range of colours or specific ones that you choose. That is what makes you an artist or a composer as opposed to a dabbler who uncovers sounds. If all you are is a dabbler, then you may as well attach yourself to a composer or a bunch of composers and say, “Here, this is what I can do. Use it.”

Louise Marshall: You become a pen for hire in effect.

Joan La Barbara: In a way, yes.

Louise Marshall: A voice for hire.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. In a way if you have compositional ideas, it is then your responsibility to take all of this material that you have and put it forth in musical ways because that’s the next step it seems to me. You don’t just uncover all these gems, you layer them together in a necklace.⁴⁰

Louise Marshall: Just thinking in terms of putting the voices out there, once again I am struck by something we spoke about a couple of weeks ago when we were in London in which you talked about hearing voices in Bologna... You were perhaps there with Laurie Anderson, doing your duets?

Joan La Barbara: No, not at that point. Laurie and I did work – we would share concerts in the mid Seventies. I would say around ’75, ’76.

of Paul Klee, and of adding colour, blocks of colour, in varying layers and thicknesses, with the overtones adding sonic depth.

⁴⁰ Cf. La Barbara’s reference to her talismanic amber bead earlier. Compositional creativity and ambition are implicitly linked to a safety touchstone.

- Louise Marshall: But way before “O Superman”?⁴¹
- Joan La Barbara: Before “O Superman”. “O Superman” she did in ’79.
- Louise Marshall: Was it so late?
- Joan La Barbara: I believe so because I was in Berlin. I had my DAAD [scholarship] at that point and I was living in Berlin. Laurie was, I guess, in London at that point.
- Louise Marshall: It was a big hit in London. A hit in England, actually, and then bounced back to America.
- Joan La Barbara: Right. I think it soared to the top of the charts in England first. I don’t know where she recorded it but that was her break-out hit.⁴² I was in Bologna, I had a boyfriend at that time that was the drummer with the Gil Evans Orchestra. They were on tour and I travelled around for a while with them. We wound up in Bologna... I can’t remember if he was working with Gil Evans at that time or with [jazz trumpeter] Enrico Rava.
- Anyway, very late one night – I had been drinking too much – I can’t be certain whether I saw anything, but I

⁴¹ “O Superman (For Massenet)” is a song that features in Laurie Anderson’s *United States I-IV* (1983) and that multimedia event’s short-form studio corollary, the album *Big Science* (1982, Warner Bros). One of the song’s sources was the 1979 hostage siege in the US embassy in Tehran, and it is possibly this date to which La Barbara alludes rather than the song’s vinyl release. Originally released on B George’s New York independent label, One Ten in 1981, “O Superman (For Massenet)” was championed by BBC Radio 1’s *John Peel Show*. Its subsequent success led to a rush multi-record deal for Anderson with Warner Bros (and its auxiliary company, Nonesuch), which continues to this day. The record company spearheaded an international release for the song, which reached number two in the British pop charts in 1981. As a consequence of this popular music success, Anderson began to be seen by critics as a musician rather than as an artist whose critical leverage came from a feminist/social justice-inflected fine-art formation. I contend that this imbalance has only been critically noticed within the past decade or so.

⁴² “O Superman (For Massenet)” was recorded in the hallway of Anderson’s New York apartment.

certainly heard voices. It was somewhat frightening. It was not in any language that I understood. For some reason I had a book beside the bed and I grabbed a pen and I wrote down what these voices were saying. Then they went away. That somehow by putting it down, writing it down, maybe it satisfied what they wanted.

Louise Marshall: What were they saying? Can you remember? Were they phonemes, were they just sounds?

Joan La Barbara: It was just... it was sound, it had phoneme-like sounds as if it were fragments of language. It wasn't purely abstract vocalising. All I recall at this point was writing down what it sounded like to me, not in musical notation, but the syllables, the vowel-consonant combinations. The act of writing it down made them stop.

One could interpret that in a number of ways. One could say, well, I was dreaming, I raised myself to a certain level of consciousness; writing it down took me out of the dream. That is one way of analysing it.

01:10:00 Another way is to say there were some sort of spirits in the room that were attempting to communicate on some level and found a receptive being there and were trying to get their message across. It's funny reading *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, the Philip K. Dick book, now. There is a long passage that Timothy Archer, who is the bishop of California, episcopal bishop, talks about glossolalia as being false, that there really was no such thing.

It takes him into this whole discussion of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, which he felt ceased to be prevalent and relevant in religion at a certain point in time because there was no more of this speaking, and that actually the Tower of Babel was this collection of different languages, not that is was glossolalia; it was many, many languages of many, many peoples. Anyway, there is that whole thing.

I told the Bologna story to John Cage and he said, "Well, you need a guide." (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Did you find a guide?

Joan La Barbara: No. (Laughter) No, I never did. I just kept muddling along by myself.

Louise Marshall: Were you thinking of yourself as a composer by this point in about the mid Seventies? Or were you still a vocal experimenter?

Joan La Barbara: Well, it was complicated. I —

Louise Marshall: It is very interesting. I am very interested in that moment that artists say to themselves, "I am a composer," because it is a fraught one.

Joan La Barbara: Yes... I started writing rock songs in, oh, I guess, around 1972 or 1973. I think that would be around the right time, '73, '74, maybe.

Louise Marshall: Why? Were you in a band?

Joan La Barbara: I was in a rock band.

Louise Marshall: What were you called?

Joan La Barbara: 10th Street. We rehearsed on 10th Street. It was the era of the horn bands like Ten Wheel Drive and stuff like that. We had a horn section and guitar, bass, drums, voice. I wasn't very good as a rock star. I was trying everything to try to find my voice, find what I was good at. I sang jazz, I sang rock, did this experimental stuff and felt that I was best at doing the experimental stuff. At a certain point, I had joined the Chapel Music workshop, songwriter's workshop. Chapel Music was trying to –

Louise Marshall: The publishers?

Joan La Barbara: The publishers, yes. They were trying to find another stable or artists that they could support and bring into their publishing realm à la Carole King and her husband at the time, Gerry [Goffin], I forget his last name. That was the idea. I was studying to write rock songs.

At the same time, I think I was appearing in Richard Foreman and Stanley Silverman's *Doctor Selavy's Magic Theatre*, which was playing off Broadway, because I joined [the Actors'] Equity [Association] at that point.⁴³ I initially joined the cast understudying all the female roles, which ran the gamut from rock singing to classical singing.

⁴³ Richard Foreman's *Doctor Selavy's Magic Theatre* was a 1972/73 stage production without dialogue. Its composer, Stanley Silverman, had written about twenty-eight songs for its shows. (Its title references the Dadaist artist Marcel Duchamp's quondam alter ego, Rrose or Rose Sélavy and is pronounced "C'est la vie".) Pierre Boulez was reportedly a fan of the show.

When I auditioned I remember I sang Carole King's "You've Got a Friend" and Mozart's [motet], "Exsultate Jubilate". I think Richard said, "Is there anything you can't do?" I said, "No." (Laughter) So they hired me.

It was playing at the Mercer Art Center, which was also where the Kitchen began. They had multiple theatres, like four different theatres, I think. In another theatre the New York Dolls did their show.

Louise Marshall: So you saw the New York Dolls, did you?⁴⁴

Joan La Barbara: Yes. (Laughter) Over the course of my working with that production I played at one point in time each of the female roles. The female pirate, who was Mary Silverman, Stanley's wife, the classical role, she left the production and I then joined the production singing that role.

Then as you know the Broadway Central, which was the front part, it was like this welfare hotel, and the Mercer Arts Center was in the back of the Broadway Central. There had been cracks that the building inspectors knew about for years and just got paid off and looked the other way. Then finally the damned thing collapsed, the building collapsed literally.

Louise Marshall: Was anyone in it?

⁴⁴ Proto-punk rock band famous for its excesses; active 1971-74.

JOAN LA BARBARA

- Joan La Barbara: No, I don't believe so. I don't believe anyone died. I think there was enough warning. I could dramatize it and I could say, "We left running from the theatre."
- Louise Marshall: As bricks rained down on your head.
- Joan La Barbara: I don't think that was the case. I do recall talking to Steina Vasulka, who started the Kitchen with her husband, Woody, saying that they got a call that said, "You better come and get your equipment out of here. The building is really in danger." There was enough time that people could get in and get their stuff out and get out. That was the end of *Doctor Selavy's Magic Theatre*.
- Louise Marshall: Was this around the same time you did *Sesame Street*, by the by?
- Joan La Barbara: This was a little bit earlier.
- Louise Marshall: I haven't heard you on *Sesame Street* so I am not quite sure what you did.
- Joan La Barbara: Ah! Okay. You can actually go on YouTube; it is on YouTube.⁴⁵ It was up for a while and then they took it down. There has been this whole thing about copyright issues, blah, blah, blah. My feeling was, "Why not let it be up there? Let people hear it." I did *Sesame Street*. It was a voice and electronics treatment of the alphabet for the signing letters, sign language. Not words, but A, B, C, D, E.

⁴⁵ La Barbara's signing alphabet is available at <https://youtu.be/y819U6jBDog> (accessed 14:40, 12 July 2016). It was broadcast on a 1977 edition of the children's TV programme, *Sesame Street*. In it, La Barbara sounds out the alphabet phonetically, all the while using a sound palette that is drawn from expanded vocalising.

It was a wonderful animation by Steve Finkin. It would go from the actual letter to the shape of the hand making the letter. My voice was used in this wonderful transition as the... what the animation was doing was really animating the change from the letter into the hand and then the next letter into the hand and everything.

Louise Marshall: From the ephemeral to the *concrète*?

Joan La Barbara: *Concrète*, yeah. They wanted hearing children to get intrigued with this, to possibly get interested in being able to communicate with deaf children.

Louise Marshall: By the by, when I was waiting for you downstairs, there was a woman on her phone, she was doing Skype. She was doing sign language. She was signing. She was holding her iPhone like this [away from her face, arm outstretched] and signing into the Skype thing.

Joan La Barbara: Oh, how beautiful!

Louise Marshall: I guess that her interlocutor was doing it back. It was obviously a great conversation because now and then her face lit up. I was eavesdropping on her because it was a lovely thing to watch.

Joan La Barbara: I have seen people sometimes on the subways or on the street and the conversations get very *animated*, you know. They are very emotional and everything. My son, when he was in the second grade, his school insisted that they learn a second language. They had

just lost their Spanish teacher, but we were in Santa Fe at that point and there was a school for the deaf there. They decided to cooperate with the school for the deaf so my son learned sign language as a second language in third grade. Second grade and third grade, it continued.

01:19:47

They partnered with kids at the school. We would pick him up from school and he would start signing to us. We wanted very much to be supportive, but we said, “Jacob, we actually don’t know that language, so you need to speak a little so that we know what you are saying.” (Laughter) You can sign and speak but he was so enthused by it. He said, “When you want to say things louder you make them bigger.”

They did these productions on stage where they would be doing songs and they would be making them bigger, it’s louder. You just make the gesture bigger. I haven’t yet seen the production of *Spring Awakening* in New York, which partners with deaf actors. They are signing and speaking and singing at the same time. You obviously have partner-actors doing all of these things.

Anyway, the signing alphabet was 1977. I did *Doctor Selavy’s Magic Theatre* in ’75 and ’76, so... The way the *Sesame* thing came about: Mimi Johnson who started [the US record label] Lovely Music and I was working with a number of people. I was working with Alvin [Lucier], with David Behrman, with Robert Ashley, with Mother Mallard’s Portable Instrument Company; David Borden also. She put on this series of concerts at the Diplomat Hotel, which probably no longer exists, in the ballroom of the Diplomat Hotel.

JOAN LA BARBARA

Every night there was a different concert. The guy who was the music director of *Sesame Street* heard me at several of these concerts and invited me to do this. I was composing at that point in time so I am a composer and performer on that. I was smart enough to get a small percentage of the publishing from that, so since 1977 a few pennies have come in every year.
(Laughter)

Louise Marshall: I have got a picture of you as a young artist setting out and you are doing everything –

Joan La Barbara: Everything I could do, yes! (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: – to make your career and set yourself up. At some point you met Morton Subotnick and you got married. Is it easy for you to talk about the effect of motherhood on your career and also a partnership with a musician who is already very well established?

Joan La Barbara: Um, yeah. While we are still in the early years – we will get back to that – I also started writing about music.

Louise Marshall: *About* music?

Joan La Barbara: Yes.

Louise Marshall: Okay.

Joan La Barbara: The reason that I started – my friends, composers, were getting badly written about in publications because they were doing these experimental things. Either they

eschewed programme notes or they wrote lousy ones, so I decided that I would write these preview articles where I would go and talk to a composer and then I would write a preview article about what was going to happen at the concert and how to focus on some of the ideas that were being presented.

What happened was that John Rockwell who was writing for *The New York Times* at the time started to quote me in his reviews because he didn't know what to say.⁴⁶ And he was at the time... I was writing these things for the *SoHo Weekly News*, which was being distributed to the doorsteps of SoHo, free of charge.⁴⁷

Louise Marshall: A free sheet. (Laughter)

Joan La Barbara: John was writing for *Musical America* at the time and suggested to the editor, Shirley Fleming, that I should start writing –

Louise Marshall: Writing for *Musical America*.⁴⁸

Joan La Barbara: Yes. I went from writing for the *SoHo Weekly News* to writing for *Musical America*, which I did for ten years. Then the last writing that I did was for [classical music magazine for the record label] Schwann Opus. They were specialty articles. I did an article early on for an Italian [Milan] publication called *Data Arte* analysing some of Philip's [Glass] early string quartets. I also

⁴⁶ Critic John Rockwell (US, b. 1940) joined *The New York Times* in 1972 as its classical music critic. In this position, he thus assumed a national cultural weight.

⁴⁷ A free New York City listings and arts coverage newspaper; it was published between 1973-82. During this period, many artists, including poets/musicians Patti Smith and Richard Hell, were taking on journalistic duties to critique and promote their own media. Tom Johnson was another such classically-trained musician turned critic.

⁴⁸ Classical music magazine that ran in print form between 1898-1998.

wrote for catalogues. I wrote for the Berlin SoHo catalogue.⁴⁹

Louise Marshall: This is very interesting. We are still in the realm of new and experimental music and so this is another way in which you are developing a language for this music. A lot of the writers at this point were completely out there about how to do this. There are notable exceptions: Tom Johnson...

Joan La Barbara: Tom Johnson was one of the few exceptions.

Louise Marshall: Was one of the few exceptions. Kyle Gann got better.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. Tom was better, because Tom was a composer. Kyle...

Louise Marshall: Kyle was a composer, but he was a bit wonky. His early stuff is...

Joan La Barbara: Yes, yes. Tom really tried to understand what the composer was trying to do. I think that was very important. I am glad that his writings from the *Village Voice* were collected.⁵⁰

Louise Marshall: Yes, I have got that book. [Michael] Nyman's book is in a similar way.⁵¹ I guess he was starting to write at that point. His book on that scene in London, the experimental –

Joan La Barbara: *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*.

⁴⁹ SoHo in Berlin Arts Festival catalogue.

⁵⁰ Johnson 1989.

⁵¹ Nyman 1974.

Louise Marshall: – is still fantastically good. I use it all the time, actually.

Joan La Barbara: The only problem – Tom heard things first hand. Michael, unfortunately, didn't hear a lot of stuff first hand so he was getting second-hand accounts, and so some of the mistakes that he made were due to that. Michael was one of the musicians that we picked up when Steve Reich came to Europe. He couldn't afford to bring his whole ensemble, so we picked up people in London; so Michael Parsons, Michael Nyman, Cornelius Cardew and Gavin Bryars.

Louise Marshall: They all came into the Reich Ensemble, did they?

Joan La Barbara: They came and they did the Arts Council [of] Great Britain tour and also some of the European tour that we did.⁵²

Louise Marshall: I see, that is interesting.

Joan La Barbara: That would have been early Seventies. Maybe '72, I want to say. '72, '73, something like that. Michael and I would sit on the back of the bus and he would show me the galleys from that book and say, "Is this right? Is that right? Can you correct any of this stuff?" As I said, some of it was second hand and he was putting it together that way.

Louise Marshall: He was good on the British stuff, though. He was good on the Cardew stuff and the Gavin Bryars and all that lot.

⁵² The Arts Council has subsequently been regionalized and now consists of separate councils for each of the UK's four devolved regions.

- Joan La Barbara: Well, because he knew that.
- Louise Marshall: He knew that scene.
- Joan La Barbara: He performed in the Portsmouth Sinfonia.⁵³
- Louise Marshall: Portsmouth Sinfonia. (Laughter) Happy days. Why does everyone laugh?
- Joan La Barbara: Oh God, that was so wonderful.
- Louise Marshall: You weren't ever in the Portsmouth Sinfonia?
- Joan La Barbara: No, no. I did, I think, maybe attend a Scratch Orchestra rehearsal at one point. No, but I do have that somewhere in some box I have the LP.⁵⁴ (Laughter)
- Louise Marshall: I don't. I wish I did, actually.
- Joan La Barbara: Oh God! Yes, there were those early LPs that were put out. Brian Eno had – and, of course, Gavin Bryars.
- Louise Marshall: Yes, Eno had his Obscure label and he put Gavin Bryars out.

⁵³ Gavin Bryars was a founder of the Portsmouth Sinfonia in 1970. Membership was open to any player, regardless of their ability and players were encouraged to take up instruments which were new to them. Thus, Nyman, a pianist, played the euphonium in it; and the emerging sound artist/non-musician Brian Eno played the clarinet. Its repertoire favoured classical favourites such as the overture to Rossini's *William Tell* or Johann Strauss's waltz, *The Blue Danube*. The amateurish sound produced by the Sinfonia was part of its democratic ethos. Unlike the Scratch Orchestra, which performed new works, there was no political element to the Sinfonia. The Sinfonia had a cult following which was sufficiently large enough to sell out a concert at London's Royal Albert Hall in 1974. (Saint: 2004)

⁵⁴ La Barbara means one of two LPs: either *The Portsmouth Sinfonia Plays the Popular Classics* (1974) or *Hallelujah! – The Portsmouth Sinfonia at the Royal Albert Hall* (1974).

JOAN LA BARBARA

Joan La Barbara: Yes, Gavin Bryars had *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1971).⁵⁵ Beautiful. It's so much better than when they redid it and added Tom Waits's voice.

Louise Marshall: Was that the one on Point [Records]?

Joan La Barbara: Maybe so.

Louise Marshall: Because Philip [Glass] had a label at one point – would that have been a run-through version, Virgin? Philips [Classics]? I can't remember, but it was called Point Records. He put out a few people. John Moran, he put out, who is a nice guy. They did a re-recording of *Jesus' Blood* and I am not quite sure if that is when Tom Waits came in.

01:30:00

Joan La Barbara: Yes, it could be. They left [the voice of] the bum, the recording that Gavin had found, but they layered in Tom Waits. Tom Waits is thoroughly believable and wonderful when he is doing his own stuff, but his layering over the real thing –

Louise Marshall: With Tom Waits, it becomes an interpretation of something. He is not there.

Joan La Barbara: Yes.

Louise Marshall: It moves away from the real thing and the pathos of the real thing.

⁵⁵ Bryars's *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* received its first record release in 1975 as the debut LP on Eno's *Obscure* label. Nyman played the organ on it. Philip Glass's Point record label re-recorded the work for a 1993 release, with the singer-songwriter Tom Waits taking the vocal part. Bryars's original version used a recording of a homeless man singing in the streets around London's Waterloo/Elephant and Castle area as a found sound.

Joan La Barbara: Also, the fact that, with the bum's voice, what Gavin had found was just a snippet, which he then looped. What Waits did by layering over the top if it, if they had done a similar thing, if they had recorded Waits and then looped that and let that intersect in some way, in some way, in some unpredictable way; that might have worked better than Waits bringing his intellect to that situation.

I love Tom Waits. I love what he did with William Burroughs and *The Black Rider* and his [covers of a song from Brecht and Weill's] *Threepenny Opera* and all of that stuff.⁵⁶ I love what he does. But in this case, it was a mistake. Well intentioned, but a mistake.

Louise Marshall: I came across an interview in which you spoke – we are talking generally now – about how Cage and Berberian opened up the territory, I am quoting you here, “To considering sounds that we would have thought too private to make. To say, okay, this can be considered music.” I am interested in this phrase you use, “Too private”. I wondered whether you could unpack it a bit?

Joan La Barbara: I think that Cathy, when she was working with Berio, began to use very, very human sounds: gasping, coughing, laughing. There was also a kind of sexual overtone that came into it. What just came to mind was [Greek actor] Melina Mercouri in *Topkapi*.⁵⁷ Her making these quasi-sexual sounds that were then

⁵⁶ *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets* (1990) was a theatrical collaboration between Waits, Burroughs and director Robert Wilson. In 1993, Waits released an album of his music for the show. Waits has covered “What Keeps Mankind Alive?”, a song by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill from *The Threepenny Opera* on at least two recorded occasions.

⁵⁷ Jules Dassin's 1964 film in which a criminal gang attempt to steal the jewels of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul.

recorded into this mechanical – I seem to think it was like a parrot or something, but it was some sort of mechanical device and it was used to get the guards away while they were trying to steal the Topkapi museum jewels.

Cathy’s introduction of these quasi-sexual sounds into classical or contemporary classical music opened up this territory of, if we are going to explore the voice, where do we go with it and how specific do we want those sounds to be? Do we want them to remain abstract? Do we want them to be associated with other things? That of course, takes me to *The Rape of El Morro*, the Don Sebesky [album].⁵⁸

Because ... this was 1971, I believe. As you say, I was doing all sorts of things. I was working with a lot of improvisation and this jazz arranger Don Sebesky had done this album and he had a tune called “Spanish Blood” and he was looking for Yma Sumac to improvise or come sing a vocal track.⁵⁹

He finished all of the instrumental tracks and he couldn’t find Yma Sumac and someone suggested me. He contacted me and I came in and recorded this track. He loved it. Then I went off on tour with Steve Reich in Europe. I came back, the LP had been released. They had changed the title [of the track] from “Spanish Blood” to “The Rape of El Morro”.

⁵⁸ Recorded and released in 1975 by CTI Records.

⁵⁹ Yma Sumac (Peru, 1922/3-2008), soprano singer and actor. Sumac’s vocal range extended to at least five octaves and she was also adept at various aspects of extended vocals. For a discussion of Sumac’s mysterious origins as well as her manufacture as a site for exotica, see Toop 1999: 71-77.

It had a very sexually – I won't say exactly explicit, but disturbing picture on the cover. It seems to me it was two women in some sort of cave-like thing. The liner notes written by Leonard Feather, a jazz music critic, were very specific about, "Oh, how, of course, these sexual sounds are...."⁶⁰ So my improvising, which to me had nothing to do with sexual acts, to me it was abstract vocal sound, was then labelled in a very specific way.

So, I don't know if I can fault Cathy for that, for having introduced that. (Laughs) At the same time, at that point in time, Donna Summers [Summer] was doing a lot of disco stuff –

Louise Marshall: And the "I Feel Love" (1977), with all that very breathy, sort of "orgasmic" sounds and stuff.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. I was furious. I was just livid. It may have been a turning point for me because I was also doing, again with Sebesky, I was recording with [jazz guitarist] Jim Hall and [classical/jazz flautist] Hubert Laws. I was beginning to get a career in the quasi-commercial world.

Louise Marshall: It is an interesting moment though because on the one hand we have spoken a little bit about Cathy Berberian putting sounds that could be quasi-sexual sounds out there. You have got the introduction of the female body in a way that is beyond just the octave range. Then immediately it comes into the mainstream and then

⁶⁰ Leonard Feather (UK, 1914-94), jazz musician, arranger, composer and journalist.

with Donna Summer it is a producer like [Giorgio] Moroder who overtly sexualises it.

Joan La Barbara: Yes.

Louise Marshall: And also with *The Rape of El Morro*, I guess it is a sonic objectification. The feminist discourse very much around that period spoke about the objectification of the female body; it is the objectification of the female voice... An old system replicates itself in the sonic, which is why the experimental and what you do is so hugely important because it tears away all those associations. You can have them if you want but it expands things.

Joan La Barbara: You can have them if you want, as you say, but you can also say, "Well, it is merely a voice using all of the sonic terrain in a particular kind of way." Because it is abstract you can take it almost any direction you want but if we talk about intentionality, for me the intentionality was the exploration of sound in its abstraction as opposed to the intentionality of turning somebody on. They are two very different things. The focus is something.

01:39:55 It is not to say that somebody couldn't get turned on by the abstract sound. It is just my intentionality was not to do that with that sound. I think that is the difference. I think with Berberian and Berio there was a kind of fuzzy territory there. Titillating. With Donna Summers [sic] it was overt and intentional.

Louise Marshall: Hugely overt. But then you had that mechanism of control because that Donna Summer disco hit is such a

fabrication of the technological studio and what you can do. You wonder how much of her voice is there in the end and how much of it is Giorgio Moroder looping away and synthesising this and synthesising that.

Joan La Barbara: Yes... Then she had to learn it (laughs) to be able to perform it after the fact, after he had worked his magic with it. Then she had to go out there and do these disco –

Louise Marshall: She has to learn the robotic form almost. It is a strange erasure of the real human, the real female, and all that [that] means. Can I just pull you back to something I touched on earlier about when you met Morton [Subotnick] and working with him? Did he bring new musical circles for you?⁶¹ Did you move out to California at that point?

Joan La Barbara: Yes, I did. We met initially in 1976 when John Cage brought me out to CalArts. He had been invited to come out there and do some performances.⁶² He said to Nick England, who was the dean of the music school at CalArts at the time, he said, “If you love my music so much why don’t you let me alone and let me write it?” Then he said he would come under one condition. That was that they would also bring me.

I went out there and did a performance of [Cage’s] *Solo for Voice 45* from the *Song Books* with twenty pianos playing [Cage’s] *Winter Music* (1957) in the main

⁶¹ Morton Subotnick (US, b. 1933) is a leading electronic composer and a co-founder of the San Francisco Tape Center. He has also been a central player in the development of various technologies concerning electronic, computer and multimedia music.

⁶² California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles.

gallery of CalArts.⁶³ I don't know if you have been there?

Louise Marshall: I haven't. Twenty – in real time?

Joan La Barbara: Twenty, yes, at the same time. *Winter Music* is very sparse. It is chords and it is choices of when to play those chords. The main gallery at CalArts has a balcony that runs all around it. There were some pianos on the floor level and some pianos above. We did that performance. I remember meeting Mort at that point. I knew his name. I knew some of his music. Certainly, I knew *Silver Apples of the Moon* but we just met as musicians.⁶⁴ Then about a year later I had been invited by Morty [Morton] Feldman to –

Louise Marshall: It is funny: there is a British comedian called Morty – Marty –Feldman.

Joan La Barbara: Marty Feldman, oh, I know. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: When you said Morty Feldman and I thought, “Oh!”

Joan La Barbara: Marty Feldman! Oh God, he was so wonderful with his bulging eyes. Oh God! Oh no. Morton Feldman, who invited me to Buffalo as a visiting composer. I went up there and I did some concerts. They usually would bring their creative associates, which was what they called their musical ensemble that did contemporary music. They would bring them down to Carnegie

⁶³ *Winter Music*, for one to twenty pianos, is part of John Cage's *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1957).

⁶⁴ Morton Subotnick's 1967 LP, *Silver Apples of the Moon* (Nonesuch Records) was the first commissioned commercial recording of electronic music. He became the associate dean of the school of music at CalArts between 1970-74; he was later its head of composition.

Recital Hall, it was at that point. It's now called the Weill [Recital] Hall at Carnegie.

Mort – Morton Subotnick – had a work on this concert and I had a work on the concert. Morton Subotnick was using a lot of electronics, which were misbehaving. His rehearsal went well over into my rehearsal time and I just remember being very angry at that point.

01:45:00

Sometime after that he used to tour a lot and he would bring in composers to teach for him, to substitute for him. He invited me to come out to CalArts and to teach his classes for a two-week period while he was away. At the end of his tour – I guess he was away for ten days – he invited me to dinner. He said, “I always invite the visiting composers to dinner.” I said, “Okay, fine.”

I was staying at CalArts at the time in their faculty apartment or whatever it was. I drove down. Mort was living in Santa Monica at the time. I got there, and he was on the phone. He just said [beckoning gesture], “Come in.” He was talking to his son. I only heard one side of the conversation, but it was clearly a situation that needed very careful, considerate, thoughtful advice, fatherly advice.

And I fell in love with the man that I heard giving this advice to his son. The situation, I learned later because I only heard one side of the conversation, but Steven, his son, was going on a camping trip with his roommate. The roommate suddenly professed his love

for Steven, and Steven was very conflicted and confused.

Mort basically said, “Well, what would you say if it were a girl and you were not interested?” I guess Steven gave some answer. He [Morton] said, “Well, there is no difference. You know, it’s just a person. It is a human being who has expressed something, and you say you don’t reciprocate, but there is no real problem.” And it was just such a human, sympathetic way of dealing not only with his son but also with the feelings of this other person.

Louise Marshall: Yeah, that is impressive.

Joan La Barbara: I was just blown away. Of course, I was in a difficult position at that point. I had a guy I was living with, this percussionist from the Gil Evans Band. I also was seeing two other people. (Laughter) One in Berlin and one in San Francisco.

Mort and I went to dinner and we had a lovely conversation and everything. We went walking on the beach in Santa Monica afterwards and it was right after some huge storm and there were boats that had beached up on the sand. The ocean was kinda phosphorescent – purples and blues and everything. I told this story to a friend of ours, Ralph Grierson, a wonderful pianist some time later. He said, “That was just algae.” (Laughter, claps hands) He said, “It just got washed up because of the storm.” I took it as this incredible sign.

Louise Marshall: A sign from the cosmos that this is meant to be.
(Laughter)

Joan La Barbara: Right. (Laughter) Yeah. Anyway, we got together at that time. My friend from San Francisco was going to drive down and visit and I said, “No, maybe you better just not come. Or if you come, don’t come for me.” I was living in New York and then we had this long-distance relationship. We would meet occasionally in what we considered to be the centre of the country, which was Santa Fe, New Mexico, which was also a wonderful place. It was clear that we had a relationship developing but Mort’s daughter was still in high school at that point.

Louise Marshall: Was he divorced by then?

01:49: 44

Joan La Barbara: Oh yeah, yes. By that time, he was divorced. His children were from his first marriage. That marriage had dissolved very badly. Then he married his second wife, Doreen Nelson, Doreen Gehry-Nelson, the sister of [architect] Frank Gehry. That marriage was very short lived. There was conflict about the relationship with the children.

Then I came along, and I was in therapy at the time. My therapist – you know, this long-distance relationship and everything – she basically said, “You lack the ability to make the commitment.” I thought, “Well...”

Louise Marshall: That is like a red rag to the bull. (Laughter)

JOAN LA BARBARA

Joan La Barbara: What was that about therapists not supposed to tell you what you are supposed to do?

Louise Marshall: Yes.

Joan La Barbara: Anyway, I thought, “Well, alright.” I called up Mort and I said, “I am coming out *tomorrow* to move in with you.” I packed up my two cats and a roll of posters and moved out to Santa Monica. Shortly thereafter, maybe within a couple of months, I found out that I was awarded the DAAD to come and live in Berlin.

Louise Marshall: Oh no.

Joan La Barbara: And I thought, “Well, either this relationship will grow, and you know –”

Louise Marshall: A DAAD is one year?

Joan La Barbara: It is one year. A calendar year. I guess you could take it as a season if you wanted to. “– Or it would fall apart.” There was really no question in my mind that it was very important for me to take it. I left for Berlin in January [1979] and arrived in Berlin. It was snowy, grey, cold. (Laughs)

I remember going out to this piano warehouse because I needed a piano to work with. The man who owned the piano store wanted me to play something on the piano. He thought I was a pianist. I played a little bit. He gave me this wonderful Bechstein piano, beautiful, beautiful.

Louise Marshall: A grand?

Joan La Barbara: Rented. It was a small grand.

Louise Marshall: A cottage grand?

Joan La Barbara: Yes. It couldn't fit in the elevator. The elevator was this little two-person thing. They had to walk up four flights of stairs –

Louise Marshall: Carrying this piano.

Joan La Barbara: Carrying this piano. Piano movers are accustomed to doing that, particularly in places like Berlin where there are a lot of places [built like this]. It was this wonderful, large spiralling staircase. It wasn't like a straight up, it was a curving thing.

Then after six months Mort came with his daughter. She had then graduated from high school. At first, she was excited, she was going to take German and go to school and all of this. She lasted two weeks and just felt too... too isolated, I guess, too alien. She went back and lived in the house that we had gotten up near CalArts.

[Interruption. Telephone rings. It is the sci-fi ringtone on an iPhone]

Opps. Is that yours?

Louise Marshall: No, I think it's yours. Let me –

Joan La Barbara: [Switches iPhone off] It shouldn't be mine. It should not be able to get calls. There are strange calls that

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come through that – yes, it didn't even register. It is like an advertisement. Right, let me turn this off. So, okay.

Louise Marshall: You were in Berlin; the daughter went back home...

Joan La Barbara: She went back home and went to the community college back there. We stayed and got married in Berlin in December of that year.

Louise Marshall: Oh, did you? Which year would that have been?

Joan La Barbara: '79.

Louise Marshall: December '79.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. That was a long process, too, because, um, we had initially thought we might get married by the Archbishop of Canterbury but that was very complicated.

01:55:00

Louise Marshall: Why? It is quite a big –. (Laughter) Well, I mean, why not, of course?

Joan La Barbara: Being of two different religions there was a way that the Archbishop of Canterbury would do it, but you had to leave England and then come back. It was some weird, complicated thing, so we decided that was too weird.

Louise Marshall: Did you know the Archbishop of Canterbury?

- Joan La Barbara: No.
- Louise Marshall: Did you have any contact with the Church of England?
- Joan La Barbara: No. No. No. (Laughter) It was just –
- Louise Marshall: One of those things. (Laughter)
- Joan La Barbara: One of those things. (Laughter) We got to Berlin and started thinking about this again. In Berlin it is another long process. You not only have to prove who you are, but since each of us had been married, and Mort had been married twice and divorced twice, I had been married and the marriage was annulled, so we had to get all of the paperwork –
- Louise Marshall: Gosh. When did you get married?
- Joan La Barbara: I got married in... 1970.
- Louise Marshall: So you were very young?
- Joan La Barbara: Very young. Twenty, twenty-one. The marriage was annulled ten months later. I liked the name, so I kept the name.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ La Barbara's surname is a slightly amended version (she takes out an "e") of her the surname of her first husband. On *La Barbara: The Name, The Sounds, The Music* (1991), she speaks about being drawn to the "flow" and 'gesture" of the name "La Barbara": she illustrates this sonically by improvising sounds around the name. The musicologist Hannah Bosma (2013: 186) comments that this activity: "[...] stresses the connection between [La Barbara's] authorship and her vocal sound. Her name is presented as a consciously chosen artist-author's name. By improvising with it, this name is integrated into her vocal art. This name has a typical feminine history: it was acquired through marriage. But this name soon changed its status, not being the name of her husband any more, but being chosen, appropriated and changed on musical grounds. In this composition, La Barbara is presented as an embodied, plural author, referring to other works outside the composition."

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Louise Marshall: Oh, that is where La Barbara comes from?

Joan La Barbara: Yes.

Louise Marshall: Ah, okay.

Joan La Barbara: My family name is Lotz. L-O-T-Z.

Louise Marshall: German?

Joan La Barbara: It is German, maybe Polish-Alsatian. His mother's family, Albright, were Alsatian and my mother's people were English, Scot and Irish... so the basic Anglo-Saxon mongrel. (Laughter)

We had to get all that paperwork together and then Mort's name on his birth certificate is different from the name that he uses and that was a whole story. We had to go visit –

Louise Marshall: And you were doing it in German.

Joan La Barbara: In German. We had to go visit the local *Standesbeamter* [registrar], which is the mayor, I suppose, of our Charlottenburg area where we were in residence. We went with a translator, a friend of ours, Eberhard Blum, a flute player.⁶⁶ Eberhard was there to translate Mort's stories, which was [were] very funny because Mort is a wonderful Jewish storyteller and –

⁶⁶ Flautist Eberhard Blum (Germany, 1940-2013) was a leading figure in post-war new music. He was one of three founders of the Gruppe Neue Musik Berlin, which concentrated on interpreting and performing American new music. The group had close contacts with existing systems of patronage, including the DAAD artist-in-residence programme. See Beal 2006.

Louise Marshall: I saw him in London in December [2015] when he was over and he was very, very funny.⁶⁷ He was talking about how the [San Francisco] Tape Center basically had burnt down after Ramon Sender did the electrics.⁶⁸ (Laughter)

Joan La Barbara: Oh God, yes. The electrics. Ramon put a penny or something in, yes. (Laughter) And there was some building they were in that had been the Communist Party headquarters. Unbelievable.

Louise Marshall: That's right. It was an extraordinary story in so many layers. It went on and on and on. The audience were there with him.

Joan La Barbara: Yes, he is a great storyteller.

Louise Marshall: Then the police came and then it burnt down.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. Then he must have told the story about the policemen, they [the Tape Center] were supposedly not allowed to give concerts. They spoke to a lawyer and they said, "Well, where is the sign?" He said, "Well, it is on the outside." They open the door and just stand there and so Mort had to stand there with the policemen while Terry Riley's *In C* (1964) was being performed for the second time. He performed in the first

⁶⁷ The occasion was an afternoon panel discussion (12 December 2015) featuring Pauline Oliveros, Ellen Fullman and Morton Subotnick in conversation with Holly Ingleton. It was staged as part of the London Contemporary Music Festival, 11-17 December 2015.

⁶⁸ For details of the early years of the San Francisco Tape Center, see Bernstein 2008.

performance but not in the second because he had to entertain the policemen.⁶⁹ (Laughter)

So the story about his birth certificate. When his mother was pregnant her father came to her in a dream – her grandfather came to her in a dream – and told her to name the child – the child was going to be a boy – to name the child after him and he would bring her great *nachas*. *Nachas* is a Yiddish term for great pride [in one's children]. That is the best way you can put it.

01:59:42

His name was Moshe [Moishe?] – Morris. In the Jewish families you are not supposed to name a child after a living relative. Her brother had also been named for the grandfather, so he was named Morris. So on the birth certificate Mort's name is Morris. And Mort, as he tells the story, says, "I can see my mother saying, 'His name is Morris', and watching while somebody writes it down and saying, 'Oh no, no, Morton.' The nurse says, 'Shall I change it?' 'No, no, it's okay.'" On his birth certificate it says Morris – "

02:00:00

Louise Marshall: But he is Morton?

Joan La Barbara: He is Morton. He didn't find out about it until he went into the [US] army.

Louise Marshall: He would have done [army] service, wouldn't he? Yes. That is another story. (Laughter)

⁶⁹ One of the foundational works of minimalist music, Terry Riley's *In C* received its two first performances at the San Francisco Tape Center on 4 and 6 November 1964. Among the musicians playing it were Pauline Oliveros (accordion), Morton Subotnick (clarinet; first performance only) and Ramon Sender (Chamberlin, an electro-mechanical keyboard instrument). Steve Reich and Riley were among the keyboard players. See: Bernstein, 2008:26.

Joan La Barbara: Yes, he served during the Korean War [1950-53].

Louise Marshall: Was he in action?

Joan La Barbara: No. He enlisted so he could go into the army band.

Louise Marshall: Good choice.

Joan La Barbara: So, anyway, that is a long, long story, but your question about the relationships and getting involved with someone who already has an established career. Of course, he was very supportive of my work and of my being a composer. But, of course, as a composer what is the first thing he wants to do? [It's to] is write something for me. So he did. He wrote a beautiful piece, *The Last Dream of the Beast* (1979), which was to be part of an opera.⁷⁰ We recorded it in 1984 for Nonesuch [Records] on an album called *The Art of Joan La Barbara*, which had three of my pieces and one of his.⁷¹ We worked together for a number of years. We collaborated on pieces. He wrote a lot of things for me.

And then, um, we started having miscarriages. I had three miscarriages before I had [our son] Jacob. The first one was devastating because we were in Berlin. At that point it was 1981 and Mort had a DAAD. I was heading off on a tour. We were going to Poland and then to Warsaw to the Warsaw Autumn Festival and

⁷⁰ Morton Subotnick's *The Last Dream...* is scored for soprano, tape, cello and "ghost electronics"; it was a 17-minute aria taken from his staged tone-poem, *The Double Life of Amphibians* (1984).

⁷¹ La Barbara 1985.

from there I was going to do a small three-city tour in [West] Germany.

02:04:08

Just before that I found out I was pregnant. I went to see this doctor and I said, “I am going off on tour.” He said, “Well, fine. Come and see me when you get back.” And everything went fine in Poland. I did concerts in – I want to say Cologne. There were three cities, Cologne was one of them, and wound up in Morau [Mörel? Uncertain spelling, 2:04:36] in the Ruhrgebiet, which is this industrial area [in western Germany].

And. Um. And I started spotting in the afternoon and... I realised something was wrong. I took a washcloth and stuffed it in my pants and did the concert, did the Q&A afterwards, and then said to the museum director where I was doing the concert when everything was finished, I said, “Now we have to go to the hospital because I am pregnant, and I am probably losing the baby.” With that clarity, you know. The blood drained from his face. We got into his car and I said, “You had better put a blanket on the seat because I am bleeding, and I don’t want to mess up your upholstery.”

And we got there and... I mean, it was very traumatic. I can tell it this way, but it was that kind of cold, doing what must be done that one gets into in a situation like that.

Louise Marshall: In emergency situations.

Joan La Barbara: And the doctors examined me, and they said, “You are no longer pregnant.”

Louise Marshall: And you were by yourself?

Joan La Barbara: I was by myself. And at that time where I was in Germany, I – the doctor, a good doctor, he was Asian – we conducted this conversation in German. I had enough German by that point to deal with it. I do remember his explaining two things. First of all, I had to take off my wedding ring, which was, “Oh, come on. The baby has gone, you also have to take [off] the wedding ring?” Because your fingers might swell.⁷²

Then also he said to me, “Did you eat? How long ago was it that you ate?” I had not had lunch or dinner. Because I was feeling odd I [had] just rested and I never eat before a concert anyway. It had been well over eight hours. He said the strangest thing. I said, “I haven’t eaten for x number of hours.” He said, “If you are lying we may have to put – do – a tracheotomy because if you start to choke we have to open that up.”

How many things do you have to go through? I said, “I am not lying. I didn’t eat.” We did this. The doctors, of course, called Mort. He got on a train. We are talking West Berlin. He had to take a train through East Germany to get to Morau [?]. He talks about it that when we realised that I was pregnant he was very conflicted because he wasn’t sure. He had two grown children at this point. One was twenty-one and one was

⁷² The meaning here is that La Barbara’s wedding ring should be removed to minimise pain in the event of her fingers swelling, rather than a cynical suggestion that she was unmarried and wearing the ring as a pretence that no longer needed upkeep.

sixteen, seventeen, I guess, at that point. He said he had all that time travelling through eastern Germany to think about it. When he finally got to the hospital he realised that he did want to have a child with me. But I am still alone there at the hospital –

Louise Marshall: It is a kind of *Winterreise* of its own making: the journey to an understanding.

Joan La Barbara: The journey, yeah, yeah. I woke up the next day and I was in the maternity ward because, you know, that's where they do the operations like this. I said, "I want to see the babies." And there were all of these Turkish women who had no problem giving birth to babies... It was just this kind of reality check. I wanted to experience the whole thing and that's what I did. It was very emotional.

Louise Marshall: How many weeks had you been [pregnant]?

Joan La Barbara: It was the first trimester. It is when it happens to so many people. I didn't know this at the time. It wasn't... When I got back to Berlin and I went back to the doctor and I told him he said – the other thing the doctor, a different doctor, in Morau said to me, "You shouldn't have been travelling. You shouldn't have been carrying a bag." You, now, I had these electronics that I carried with me. Not only did I go through all of this, but then there is another layer of guilt. [02:10:30]

When I got back to the doctor in Berlin, he said, "No. It happens." I was so confused at that point. I went through two more miscarriages and finally got to a

wonderful doctor in Santa Monica [in California] at Cedars-Sinai [Medical Center]. She started giving me the statistics. These other doctors just said, “It happens,” but they didn’t give me the statistics. She gave me the statistics that said [that] one out of every six pregnancies ends sometimes before you even know that you are pregnant. You miss a period and then the period comes back. You don’t even think about it. The first trimester is this really treacherous time.

02:11:21

Louise Marshall: And once again we think of this in terms of the circulation of info, what has been available and what people have been able to speak about. Your story is a devastating story and I haven’t heard one like it, but I have known many women who have, um, lost pregnancies in the first trimester. They have been told that it’s very common, and this point doesn’t make it any less devastating, but until – you need that information otherwise a whole mythology starts acting on you.

02:11:48

Joan La Barbara: Yes, yes, yeah. “What’s wrong with me?” This whole thing. And there is, there is almost a kind of shame associated with it. You know – *the shame that was imposed by that doctor, “Your fault. Your fault”* – but also because we don’t talk about it, it is not spoken of openly. [02:10:58] It is just one of things that we need to talk more about. We need to just open up all of this. Mort found out, I think after that happened, that his mother had lost a child in between he and his sister that she never spoke of. Um, you know, it’s *weird*.

And now, just to bring it to the current political situation, we have someone [Donald Trump] running for president who seems to be fixated on women and embarrassed by bodily functions of any sort. We have got this whole conservative movement that's trying to go back to the Dark Ages and prohibit women from having control over their own bodies and it's insane. It's just insane.

So, um... back to, I think, what was the crux of your question: is it difficult to be in a relationship with another composer? And how complicated is that?

Louise Marshall: I mean there are many beneficients of course? Because you are two artists, you both work together and yet...

Joan La Barbara: Yes. Very supportive, but then I think there is, naturally and understandably, a kind of competition. We write very different music so we don't compete for the same kinds of things. But there is that thing that, every once in a while, he decides he wants to write another piece for me. Then I have to make a decision, "Do I want to set aside that amount of time from my work? Am I working on something that requires a hundred per cent of my focus? Can I give that focus to this work of his?"

Right now, we are working on a new piece. I just got the John Cage award from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts in January.

Louise Marshall: Congratulations. I saw that. It is a great thing.

Joan La Barbara: Thank you. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful thing.
This is my year. I have this nice pot of money. I want to work more on the opera.

Louise Marshall: The opera, this is Woolf and Cornell?

Joan La Barbara: This is Woolf and Cornell.

Louise Marshall: The librettist is Monique?

Joan La Barbara: Monique Truong. She is Vietnamese American. We have done two works together now. She wrote a text inspired by one of the Cornell boxes called *The Dream of Ariadne (or Joseph Cornell Observes a Constellation of Regrets)* (2014).

Louise Marshall: That's nice.

Joan La Barbara: It's that wonderful word again. (Laughter) This is from one of the boxes that shows a birdcage and an open window and the bird has flown. There is a night sky, a constellation outside. Her text, her poem, and that one is actually a poem, is more dealing with Ariadne. I had to do some research about mythology, Greek mythology, who Ariadne was and all of this.

There is a lot of stress in the poem where she is talking, because Ariadne was also a weaver, so part of the poem has to do with, "*If I had that string tonight I would tie your hands. I would tie your feet and I would tie your neck and I would pull and pull and pull and pull.*"

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I set it for voice and piano. I have only performed it once. It was performed at this funny little place called Spectrum on the Lower East Side, on Ludlow Street [in New York City].⁷³ It has a fabulous piano. One of the few pianos that actually when you play the bottom end of the instrument is still has pitch and isn't just, "Boooooom!" (Laughter)

There is a certain place where I recorded my voice so that it could echo. I played back that recording from laptop so I just introduced that. Essentially the work is live, it is voice and piano, with this one little sample that sort of echoes. That could certainly be a part of the eventual opera at some point.

I am struggling still with trying to figure out whether I, Joan, am performing in this opera or whether I am writing it for other people. Or some combination. Now my vocal range is considerably lower than what it was forty, thirty, even twenty years ago.

Louise Marshall: And this is just natural physiology?

Joan La Barbara: It is natural physiology. It has nothing to do with extended vocal techniques. If you look at [classical singer] Plácido Domingo, God bless him, he is still singing, but he's not a tenor anymore. He is doing – what? – baritone roles at this point. It is just what happens to the body. It ages, things change shape, get heavier, the vocal cords are not as flexible.

⁷³ La Barbara set Truong's text for voice, piano and laptop. The world premiere of the work was at Spectrum on 3 October, 2014.

When I did that talk at the Royal Opera House [in London], I can't remember if you were there?⁷⁴

Louise Marshall: No, I wasn't there.

Joan La Barbara: There were three of us and a moderator. Myself talking about my work, extended vocal techniques. There was a vocalist who sang traditional operatic roles and also contemporary music, who is now more of a teacher. Then there was an operatic coach who dealt with opera singers. He was explaining all about the larynx and how it worked and everything.

At a certain point, it's clear – he said, “The vocal cords, the soprano voice,” and he explained A440, A880 and what was happening that the vocal cords were vibrating x number of times per second to sing an A440.⁷⁵ At A880 they are vibrating that much faster and the further up you go the vocal cords are vibrating very, very fast. As you age everything in your body doesn't work as well as it did when you were younger. The vocal cords can't vibrate that fast anymore. Also they sometimes can tend to get thicker. Again, that would complicate matters.

Louise Marshall: The voice is the original instrument; how do you feel about that? Because your original instrument is changing before your eyes, before your ears.

⁷⁴ *Insights: Exploring the Voice* was an event held at the Royal Opera House, London, on 14 April 2016. It was staged in collaboration with the Wellcome Collection's exhibition, *This Is a Voice*. La Barbara appeared alongside two operatic vocal coaches and a presenter to discuss extended vocal techniques.

⁷⁵ A440 (also referred to as A4) is a concert-pitch tuning standard of 440Hz. It is the A – the la – above middle C's do. A880 is a harmonic of A440.

Joan La Barbara: It doesn't change the statement: voice is the original instrument. The fact that I am a living being, I am very, very happy that I recorded so much with the voice that I used to have. I am working now with the voice that I do have. Certain things in my former repertoire I can no longer sing, like Feldman's "Three Voices". I can still sing "Only", it was originally set in a much lower tessitura. It's actually written in viola clef. It starts on the A below middle C and it raises up to the B. I can sing much lower than that but I can still get up to that B. I just have to pick and choose what I can do.

02:22:02 I am about to do in October a festival of music by Alvin Lucier. I have worked with him for forty years now. We have to choose repertoire.

Louise Marshall: Can you still do the *Family* one? The *Parabola*?⁷⁶

Joan La Barbara: Yes, I could. We can set that in any pitch terrain. We just have to set the sine tones for whatever we decide to do. That one is certainly possible. He [Lucier] also wrote me a piece recently, I think two years ago, that he calls *Palimpsest* (2014). Are we out of—?

Louise Marshall: [Checking recorder] No, no, we are fine. I am just looking.

Joan La Barbara: Okay. Which was written on a wonderful text called *If at the Wedding (At the Zoo)*. I am trying to remember the name – anyway, it will come to me – of the woman

⁷⁶ My mistake. I meant to say Lucier's *Still and Moving Line of Silence in Families of Hyperbolas* (1972).

who wrote it.⁷⁷ It is all spoken. It uses the similar idea to [Lucier's] *I am sitting in a room* (1970), where you record and then speak and record again while the recording is being played back and you get layers and layers and layers of this. That one we can certainly do and that is quite beautiful. We just have to find the right repertoire.

Back to the question of whether I am singing in my opera. If I were to write a role for myself I have to write it in such a way if I choose for this work to go into the future that someone else could come over and take over that role. It is one thing to write for opera voices. There are opera singers born every day so that is not a question. (Laughs) There are a few more singers now who are beginning to take up some of these extended techniques; singers who can do both, which is also very interesting.

There are a couple of young singers that I have worked with; Gelsey Bell, who just got her PhD in performance practice from NYU. Part of her PhD thesis was studying my work.⁷⁸

Louise Marshall: She came to look at your journals?

Joan La Barbara: Yes. There is another one, [soprano] Megan Schubert, who I also taught. There are a few –

Louise Marshall: We have a lineage going.

⁷⁷ Lydia Davis (US, b. 1947), writer. Davis specializes in very short stories, of which *If at the Wedding (At the Zoo)* (2013) is one.

⁷⁸ Bell 2015.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. Going forward. That is important. You don't want to create a body of work that is a dead end. I think about that with Demetrio Stratos.⁷⁹ D-E-M-E-T-R-I-O. Stratos is S-T-R-A-T-O-S. Greek-born, but lived predominantly in Milan. Singer. He sang with a rock band: Aerea. A-E-R-E-A, I believe it is. He also did a lot of vocal experimentation. He worked with John Cage. John heard his voice. He sang the [Cage] *Mesostics* and I believe recorded them. I am not certain, but I think he did. Demetrio also released a couple of recordings, originally on the Italian label Cramps, of his vocal experimentation. He did a lot of things that were a lot more extreme than what I do. He died quite young. He got cancer that went undetected and [was] badly treated in Italy. By the time he came to New York and went to specialists, it was too late. He is one of these in the realm of extended vocal techniques. He is one of these iconic figures. His wife, his widow, has established this Demetrio Stratos [International] Prize that has been awarded a few times. I received it a couple of years ago.⁸⁰

Louise Marshall: That is where I have heard the term. The name was familiar, and I was having difficulty placing it.

Joan La Barbara: Yes. It comes up because some of the things he was doing were so extreme that I would not even advise someone to try to take that up. I think it is just vocally dangerous. And he was ... He didn't care. Coming over on the plane today – not today – mean, this time,

⁷⁹ Demetrio Stratos (aka Efstratios Dimitrou, classically trained Greek instrumentalist/singer, 1942-79). His rock band was called Area. As a soloist, Stratos worked in a progressive, cross-platform musical space. Among the Cage recordings he made were the *Sixty-two Mesostics re Merce Cunningham*.

⁸⁰ In 2011. The prize is for experimental music. La Barbara's prize was in the career award category.

several days ago [Sunday], I watched *Janis Joplin: Little Girl Blue*, and thought a lot about her vocal delivery.⁸¹ There are people who can imitate that. Whether they can imitate it and go away from it and sing without that gravely quality, I am not sure. Again, she was someone who didn't care. This was how she wanted to sing; full-out screaming. The film does make a point that she would sing in this earthy, brittle way, but then when the voice got tired she would go to the screaming, which is interesting on an analytical level.

Louise Marshall: Yes, it is. I am just thinking because I remember Ellen Fullman telling me about how Janis Joplin had been her big heroine when she was growing up in Memphis, Tennessee. I think she went to a school talent contest as Janis Joplin. It was curious because she mentioned very, very, very few people from popular music at all. One was Janis Joplin; the other was an Afro-American singer who had played on the riverboats. I want to say Little Eva but it is not.⁸² I hadn't heard of her. The other one was Mahalia Jackson.⁸³ She spoke incredibly about – how Jackson] would just kind of go into a trance when it came upon her. Her wig would get all wonky. I find this way of a woman's voice being in the world I think is very interesting.

I think also of your voices as landscapes. We talk about expanded vocals but we are talking about expanded body. I won't say a feminising of the world because

⁸¹ *Janis: Little Girl Blue* (2015), a documentary on the blues-rock singer Janis Joplin directed by Amy Berg.

⁸² It was "Little" Laura Ella Dukes. (See p. 17.) Little Eva (Eva Boyd, US soul/pop singer, 1943-2003) became famous through her Gerry Goffin/Carole King hit, "The Loco-motion". I speculate that I relocate Little Eva into my anecdote about Fullman's musical memory because of La Barbara's previous mention of Goffin and King.

⁸³ See Fullman transcript, p. 64.

that is wrong, but it is a way of stamping the woman's body in the world. You told me a very traumatic story about how the woman's body was repudiated, your terrible experience of miscarriage in Berlin.

I want to ask you one last question. That is: what is listening to you?

02:31:24

Joan La Barbara: [Pause] You know, it is very complicated because it depends on what the purpose of the listening is. I am often times listening for sounds, like a collector of sounds. That is very purposeful listening. It could be listening to birds or cars or language – so non-musical listening at that point. It is more of a collector or sonic vocabulary, let's put it that way.

When I am listening to music sometimes I am listening for ideas, whether it's listening to, let's just call it classical music, or listening to contemporary music, and seeking inspiration of some sort. It can come from music of any era and any style. It can just be a wisp of a sound that can inspire a whole myriad of things.

Louise Marshall: Éliane Radigue speaks about the sound before it is even made. Just that microsecond, which I think is a very interesting way of being attuned, actually.

Joan La Barbara: Yes, being attuned, being aware; purposeful listening, I think it is. Then there is the listening that is for sheer enjoyment, being transported by a performance of one kind or another. I think that is on a kind of artistic

opening up and artistic sharing without an ulterior motive.

Louise Marshall: Would you differentiate listening from being heard?

Joan La Barbara: Listening from being heard? Yes. When I am performing I am listening with my ears, but I am also listening with my mind. I am making decisions, especially if the piece has any level of improvisation in it and real-time composition, if you were.

It is different from when you are a classical singer and you are judging how well you are doing something. The listening in improvisation is more about how long do I want to stay with this material? Is my mind telling me to take a fragment of it and follow that trajectory? Is there a way that I can use the acoustic of this room to amplify and enhance the sound that I am putting into it? It is a kind of intellectual exercise that is the combination of listening, hearing, judging, evaluating and producing very, very fast.

Also, sometimes following the voice and saying, “Okay, I have put this sonic gesture out there. This is what my voice is doing with it right now. Do I want to shape it in a certain way? Do I want to crunch it down? Do I want to open it up? Do I want to thin it? Do I want to fatten it? Do I want to colour it in some way?” That is slightly different. That is working with the pure vocal sound as opposed to the musical gesture that the voice is making. All of those things are operating in a very exciting way when I am performing.

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In front of an audience... there is something stimulating about being in front of an audience that is very different from simply being in a recording studio. There is an energy. There is an energy in oneself and there is a – well, it is an altered state of consciousness in a way when you are out there performing. You realise that you are in front of people. It is not as if you are doing it for them. In a way, the best thing that you can do is to do it completely for yourself.

Louise Marshall: They are witnessing, perhaps, but it is also a communal activity.

Joan La Barbara: It is a communal experience where they are sharing in my sharing of this artistic activity in real time.

Louise Marshall: I think that is a fantastic place for us to switch off. Joan, thank you so, so, so much.

Joan La Barbara: You're welcome.

02:36:32 **END OF RECORDING**

Interview 5

**Pauline
Oliveros**

Date

23 June 2016

Venue

**The restaurant at Double Tree Hotel
London, SW1, UK**

Keywords

PO = Pauline Oliveros

Names mentioned

Anderson, Laurie (artist, musician)	Bark, Jan (composer)
Beethoven, Ludwig van (composer, as image of greatness)	Bernstein, David W. (author)
Cage, John (composer)	Chadabe, Joel (composer)
Chase, Ronald (artist)	Chatham, Rhys (composer and former administrator at The Kitchen)
Cunningham, Merce (choreographer)	David-Neel, Alexandra (author, traveller, Tibetan Buddhist, writing on mystical nature of sound)
Dempster, Stuart (musician)	Erickson Robert (Bob), composer and PO's teacher
Feldman, Morton (composer)	Fullman, Ellen (artist, composer)
Glass, Philip (composer)	Gold, Heloise (choreographer, performance artist and Deep Listening practitioner)
Gutierrez, Edith (PO's mother)	Gribbens, Pauline (PO's maternal grandmother)
Harris, Elizabeth (choreographer)	Henry, Pierre (composer; PO has no contact with his "boys' world")
Ichiyanagi, Toshi (composer)	Ione (Carole Ione Lewis, poet, author, Deep Listening practitioner and PO's partner)
Jones, Spike (big band leader who utilised unconventional sound sources)	Kenton, Stan (big band leader)
Koenig, Gottfried Michael (composer)	Knowles, Alison (Fluxus artist, worked with PO on <i>Postcard Theater</i>)
Ligeti, György (composer)	Machover, Tod (MIT new instruments creator, musician, "such a fair-haired boy")
Maus, Fred (musicologist)	Mockus, Martha (musicologist)
Monk, Meredith (composer/vocalist)	Monroe, Marilyn (actor, re PO's composition)
New York Philharmonic (re John Cage's <i>Atlas Eclipticalis</i>)	Nochlin, Linda (art historian)
Ogden, Will (composer)	Oliveros, John (father)
Ono, Yoko (Fluxus artist, musician)	Otey, Wendall (composer, PO's professor at San Francisco State)
<i>Peanuts</i> cartoon (Charles M. Schultz), Schroeder character in it	Pearson, Tina (composer, Deep Listening practitioner, PO associate on Second Life platform)
Radigue, Éliane (composer)	Rabe, Folker (composer)
Reich, Steve (composer)	Riley, Terry (composer)
Rodgers, Tara (musicologist)	Rush, Loren (composer)

Schaeffer, Pierre (electro-acoustic engineer, composer; “boys’ world”)	Sender, Ramon [Barayón] (composer, PO’s SFTMC colleague)
Solanas, Valerie (author, artist, re PO’s composition)	Spiegel, Laurie (composer)
Stevenson, Robert Louis (author)	Stockhausen Karlheinz (composer)
Subotnick, Morton (composer, PO’s SFTMC colleague)	Tai Situpa Rinpoche (Tibetan Buddhist)
Takahashi, Aki (composer)	Takemitsu, Toru (composer)
Tudor, David (composer)	Walshe, Jennifer (composer)

Places, venues and organisations mentioned

Bilthoven, The Netherlands	Darmstadt, [West] Germany
Embarcadero, San Francisco (Ronald Chase’s loft)	Houston, Texas
The Kitchen, New York (arts venue)	Mount Tremper, New York State (Zen Center)

Compositions, books, festivals, exhibitions, publications and recordings mentioned

<i>A Side Trip</i> (PO, concert, 1966)	<i>A Theatre Piece</i> (PO, 1965)
“And Don’t Call Them Lady Composers”, <i>New York Times</i> (PO, article, 13 September 1970)	<i>Atlas Eclipticalis</i> (John Cage, 1961-62, and New York Philharmonic, 1964)
<i>Beethoven Was a Lesbian/ Postcard Theater</i> (PO and Alison Knowles, approx. 1974)	Deep Listening
Deep Minimalism festival, London, June 2016	♀ Band
<i>High Fidelity</i> magazine	<i>Magic and Mystery in Tibet</i> [also published as <i>With Mystics and magicians in Tibet</i>] (David-Neel, 1929)
<i>Metal Skirt Sound Sculpture</i> (Ellen Fullman, 1980)	Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival (PO performs, mid-1980s)
<i>Pieces of Eight</i> (PO, 1964)	New Music America festival (1980)
<i>Reverberations: Tape and Electronic Music, 1961-1970</i> . 12 CDs. Important Records (PO, 2012)	<i>The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde</i> (Bernstein, 2008)
<i>Software for People</i> (PO, collected writings, 1984/2015)	<i>Sonic Meditations</i> (PO, 1970 –)
<i>Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality</i> (Martha Mockus, 2008)	<i>Streetwalker</i> (Ellen Fullman, 1980)
<i>To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation----</i> (PO, 1970)	Tape-athon (1967)
<i>Treasure Island</i> (R. L. Stevenson, novel, 1882)	Tudorfest (1964)
<i>Tuning Meditation</i> (PO, 1971)	<i>Water Piece</i> (Yoko Ono, 1964)

PAULINE OLIVEROS

“Why Are There No Great Female Artists?” (Linda Nochlin, <i>ARTNews</i> , January 1971)	“Why haven’t women composed great music? Why do men continue to ask stupid questions?” (PO, <i>Numus West</i> , 1973)
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Social/art/political/miscellaneous

Accelerometers (inside accordion)	Accordion
Bonding (men and technology)	“Boys’ world” of technical music
Buddhism, Tibetan; 16 th Gyalwa Karmapa, Black Crown ceremony	Composers’ Workshop (Wendell Otey)
Community, importance of; Cage and cooking	Ecology (loss of acoustic habitats)
Expanded Instruments Series	Family (mother and grandmother: music teachers; father absent after war service)
Feminism	Gaudeamus International Composers’ Award Prize (PO awarded, 1962)
Gendered activity, “setting cap” at boy,	Improvisation
Instruments: accordion, horn, piano, tuba, violin	Karate and t’ai chi (PO trained in)
Labelling (PO dislikes)	“Lesbian musicality” (Mockus)
Listening and hearing	National Endowment for the Arts panel (PO served on)
Networks	New Music Alliance
New Music America	New Music, New York
Nature (listening to insects, birds, katydids)	“Psychological safety”
Reverberations, vibrations	Second Life (online platform)
Self-taught practices	Women, marginalised
Wire and tape recorders (gifts to PO from her mother)	Trips Festival, San Francisco (1966)
VW, Volkswagen (bug) car	

File: Composer Pauline Oliveros and researcher Louise Marshall
Duration: 01:35:35
Date: 23 June 2016
Place: Restaurant, Double Tree Hotel, London, SW1, UK

00:00:00 ¹

Louise Marshall: Okay. That is recording now. Pauline, it is such a great honour to see you. Welcome to London because I know you are here for the Deep Minimalism season that the Southbank [Centre] are organising.² I will just explain a little bit of the research I am doing first of all. I am looking at the work created by experimental women composers post-1945 and the way in which they work. I am interested in the two things together: both the work that composers such as yourself have made and also the way in which you have worked.

I speculate that one of the reasons women have been so important in the experimental music scene and have been so dynamic and inventive is because of systemic sexism in the mainstream and they have had to find new ways to work around it. I am using as my title, well, I am borrowing your term of course. I am borrowing Deep Listening as my title because not only do I want to deeply listen to the material that the composers have made, the compositions they have made and the audiotapes they have given me. I also

¹ This transcript and the audio files from our interview were sent to Pauline Oliveros and Ione in early October 2016 for checking and comments. I have no way of knowing whether Oliveros started this job before her death at home in Kingston, New York, on 24 November 2016. Subsequent communication with Ione suggests that they approved of the transcript.

² The Deep Minimalism festival was organized by the Southbank Centre and held at St John's Smith Square, London SW1 (24-26 June 2016). Oliveros was its invited composer. The weekend included works by Oliveros, Éliane Radigue, Laurie Spiegel, Meredith Monk and others. Its curator was Oliver Coates.

want to deep listen in a metaphorical sense to the way they have worked and their milieu.

So! You have got an incredible lifetime of work, very, very rich. I am not proposing to work chronologically here because we are going to duck and dive with the times, so don't worry about that. Please just feel free and talk at will. Maybe we can start, please, with some questions about your early life and your early engagement in music and art. Could you tell me please about your early years and your family? How would you describe them?

Pauline Oliveros: Sure. Okay. First of all, I was principally raised by my mother and my grandmother.³ The men of the family – first of all, my grandfather died aged fifty-one, and my father⁴ left for the World War II service in the Coast Guard. My mother and grandmother⁵ were both piano teachers, so my early recollections are listening to piano lessons early in the morning and the afternoons, and taking turns at the piano sometimes getting lessons from them, but having interest in... Well, let's see, first I was given violin lessons, which didn't last too long.

Louise Marshall: How old were you then, do you think?

³ Oliveros has characterized her mother, Edith Gutierrez (1913/14?-2008?) as an “emerging composer”, who began writing for music theatre late in life. Oliveros speaks of how she “burst with pride” on seeing Edith take her bow as a composer in her own right at a performance of *Rumpelstiltskin* in 1992. See

http://iawm.org/stef/articles_html/Oliveros_Emerging_Gutierrez.html

⁴ John Oliveros (d. 1999). He left the family when Oliveros was nine years old. Oliveros tells Martha Mockus (Mockus 2008: 124) that she had a difficult relationship with him.

⁵ Pauline “Dudda” Gribbens (US, piano teacher, 1881-73), Oliveros's maternal grandmother lived with her daughter, Edith Oliveros Gutierrez (US, music teacher and, latterly, composer, 1913/14-2008), and the Oliveros family.

Pauline Oliveros: I don't know, maybe I was around seven or in that age range. That didn't last even a year, I am pretty sure. I think the violin teacher was too mean. (Laughter)
Always made me cry because I wasn't putting my fingers down in the right place. That kind of teaching – it is not the right way, no, it's not the right way to teach, I don't think. I guess meanness works sometimes, but for me it is not the right way.

My mother brought home an accordion when I was about nine years old and that was very fascinating to me. The keyboard was familiar because of the piano keys, but the instrument itself had lots of fascination for me. I remember really looking it over, touching it and wanting to play it, so that is how I got started on the accordion.

Louise Marshall: It is an incredibly physical instrument; it breathes, doesn't it?

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, definitely, so that was happening. The other thing that is pretty important to me, and I talk about often, is the fact that there was a lot to listen to in the environment in Houston, Texas, in the Thirties and Forties, where there was a very rich life of insects, birds and sounds that I loved to listen to and did spend a lot of time listening to. The sadness of today is most of that is covered over with asphalt and concrete, so the sounds of my childhood are greatly diminished. You can still hear katydids [bush crickets], cicadas, and so on, but mostly the frogs are disappearing. The habitats have been so, so encroached upon and that is a sadness for me.

00:05:46

Louise Marshall: It sounds like this animal and insect worlds were a source of early sounds for you as well.

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, very much so, yes.

Louise Marshall: I read in an interview you had given and [that] you described the accordion you were given at the age of nine as a relatively lucrative instrument.⁶ Could you expand?

Pauline Oliveros: Lucrative?

Louise Marshall: Lucrative, yes.

Pauline Oliveros: What does that...?

Louise Marshall: Lucrative, meaning one can make money out of it.

Pauline Oliveros: That didn't even enter my mind. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: I got that from a quote that you gave in an interview. You also learned the horn and was it the tuba when you were a child?

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, the tuba was first, because the accordion wasn't admitted into the junior high school band. There was no place for an accordion: it is an outsider instrument.

Louise Marshall: That is an interesting way to think about it.

⁶ For example, Baker: 2003. I note here that Oliveros talks in this radio broadcast about her mother bringing the accordion home "to increase her [own] earning power" as well as her later remunerated accordion activities, so there is a certain elision.

Pauline Oliveros: Yeah, well, I thought of it that way. The instructor then presented me with a tuba and a book so I could go off in a room by myself and learn how to play the tuba, which I did.

Louise Marshall: You were self-taught?

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, yeah.

Louise Marshall: Wow.

Pauline Oliveros: So I came back and sat in the band, which was a very distinct experience to sit in the middle of all those instruments in a reverberant room, probably. It was a sound that I had never experienced before; my body feels it still when I talk about it. I had to gradually learn how to input my notes. (Laughter) Where do I put them in this wall of sound? That gradually became clear to me.

Louise Marshall: So you have got two breathing instruments in a way.

Pauline Oliveros: Oh yes. Definitely.

Louise Marshall: You have got the brass on the one hand and you have got the bellows of the accordion, which considering the way your composition shapes as you grow older, there is quite a holistic emphasis on your music, it is an interesting way. In general, your musical education when you were at school and when you were at high school before you went up to university: were there people who encouraged you? Do you remember people

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saying that a girl shouldn't do this and they shouldn't do that?

Pauline Oliveros: There was simply the modelling. I mean, my grandmother, I guess would, be the one who prescribed girl activity or boy activity, which I resisted.

Louise Marshall: Give me an example of girl activity and boy activity in terms of what your grandmother said?

Pauline Oliveros: Well... maybe a girl doesn't mow the lawn with the lawnmower or use tools or something like that. Or you dress in a certain way or these kinds of things: manners, different manners. (Laughter) One of my grandmother's interesting little sayings was, when I was of the age, that I should set my cap for a certain guy, you know, boy: "You should set your cap for him." (Laughter) Mmm!

00:10:00

Louise Marshall: At that period in your life were you aware of any music outside the conventional box? You have already described to me that rather wonderful memory of sitting in the school orchestra surrounded by all the brass and feeling this sound –

Pauline Oliveros: Oh yes, definitely.

Louise Marshall: – Which is quite a memory to have.

Pauline Oliveros: I was always interested in anything that I had never heard before. I absorbed all of the different kinds and

styles of music that were available. I remember when Stan Kenton came to town with his band.⁷

Louise Marshall: Was that a big band, dance stuff?

Pauline Oliveros: Stan Kenton was a very big band leader. His music was the avant-garde of jazz in the Forties. I also remember when Spike Jones came to town.⁸ (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: I am sorry. I don't know who Spike Jones is.

Pauline Oliveros: Ah! Well, I would like to educate you!

Louise Marshall: Thank you, I'm here! I'm listening.

Pauline Oliveros: I would advise you to get a Spike Jones record and listen to it. (Laughter) Or go and find Spike Jones on the web and find out what he did. He was hilarious.

Louise Marshall: What kind of...?

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, it was satire. It was really amazing satire, beautiful music. (Laughter) When I went to see Spike Jones at the music hall in Houston, sometime in the Forties, his band on the stage, you know, and he had a female singer who was about 300 pounds. She was amazing.

Louise Marshall: A big voice.

Pauline Oliveros: A wonderful voice. There was a moment when she did a wind up, a pelvic wind up, that was going to end in a

⁷ Stan Kenton (US, 1911-79), jazz pianist, bandleader and orchestrator.

⁸ Spike Jones (US, 1911-65), bandleader and percussionist. Employing unconventional sound sources (including kitchen implements, gunshots) within a musical format, he became famous for comedy records and satirical versions of well-known classic tunes.

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big bump – right? This went on and the music was... the band was on bleachers and she was in the front of the band. She finally gives that bump, the whole bandstand fell down and the whole back of the stage opened out onto the street. (Laughter) The drama was amazing. That will give you an insight into them. (Laughter) Hilarity was important, I think, in my life, it still is. My mother and grandmother both had great senses of humour, so that was always part of our repartee in life.

Louise Marshall: That is good. What was your mum's attitude to you wanting to be a composer, artist or musician?

Pauline Oliveros: Whatever I wanted to be, she was fine with it. Yes, that was fine. You have to realise that composing was not something that people did. If you were going to be a musician, you either played an instrument or you were a musicologist or a listener or something. Composing was something...

Louise Marshall: Way down the line.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, I announced that I wanted to be a composer when I was sixteen.

Louise Marshall: You were fixed in your mind at that point?

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, I was.

Louise Marshall: Tell me some of the things you had been composing at that point.

Pauline Oliveros: I hadn't, only in my mind.

Louise Marshall: Only in your mind. Can you access those early...?

Pauline Oliveros: All I can remember is in my mind's ear, so to speak, I heard sounds and I heard musical thoughts. I was listening inwardly.

Louise Marshall: Yes, I understand. By the time of about sixteen you were giving music lessons yourself, weren't you, teaching the accordion?

00:15:01

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, I was teaching the accordion from about fifteen on.

Louise Marshall: Then you went first to Houston University.⁹

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, the University of Houston, right.

Louise Marshall: Then transferred to San Francisco State. How did the experience of academic music study in these two places help start shaping your musical consciousness? I am asking for your own words; I have obviously read what you have done.

Pauline Oliveros: Well, I was very committed. As I said, by the time I was sixteen that I wanted to be a composer. The classes at the University of Houston, I tested out of music theory, because I had already studied that privately before I got there. I was in a composition class, which

⁹ Oliveros studied composition and accordion at the University of Houston between 1949-52. She transferred to San Francisco State College (now University) in 1952 and took her BA in music composition there in 1957.

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didn't help me that much because the instructor was using Mendelssohn as [a] model[s] and I didn't need a model. I needed to be able extract from my own mental space what I was hearing and that is what I was going for. No matter what the instructor said, I would go home and do something different. (Laughter) They finally gave up and then offered me a scholarship when I was going to leave. I did write pieces and they were performed then.

Louise Marshall: But you left anyway. You went to San Francisco.

Pauline Oliveros: I did.

Louise Marshall: Was that for the teaching or was that for personal reasons?¹⁰

Pauline Oliveros: It was personal, but it was also in a quest to find the mentor that I needed, which I did eventually find.

Louise Marshall: Was this Robert Erickson?¹¹

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, Erickson. Uh-huh.

Louise Marshall: Could you tell me a little bit about your first contact?

Pauline Oliveros: Yes. That was very wonderful. When I went to San Francisco State there was a Composers' Workshop run by Dr Wendell Otey.¹² I would go to the workshop and

¹⁰ Martha Mockus suggests that one reason for Oliveros's move from Houston to San Francisco was a search for a more liberal and less homophobic environment than that of Houston, Texas. (Mockus 2008: 13)

¹¹ Robert Erickson (US, 1917-97) was a composer who taught Oliveros and such other significant composers as Morton Subotnick and Terry Riley.

¹² Wendell Otey (US, composer and teacher, 1914-92). Oliveros mentions Otey and the Composers' Workshop in Bernstein: 2008: 97.

present my music there and all, but there was also a concert that would happen each semester. This concert came from pieces out of the workshop, the Composers' Workshop. I had a piece on the programme and Robert Erickson had a piece on the programme. He was teaching at San Francisco State as a substitute teacher. After the concert we both sought each other out because I wanted to tell him how much I enjoyed his piece and he had the same thought. My string quartet: part of it was played and he was interested in the part that wasn't played... well, because they couldn't play it. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: It was too difficult?

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, it was.

Louise Marshall: Too technically difficult or they just hadn't had the time?

Pauline Oliveros: Musically difficult. Uh-huh, yeah. I made an appointment to see him because I was looking for instruction or mentoring, so he very generously taught me without charge. I remember my first lesson, the feeling of that was so exciting and just his way of dealing was so different. He was very open and interested in the work. He wasn't interested in showing me something else that didn't have anything to do with what I wanted to do.

Louise Marshall: It was at San Francisco that you started improvising with musicians – there was Loren Rush and Terry, Terry Riley?¹³

Pauline Oliveros: Terry Riley, yes. Loren was already studying with Robert Erickson before I was. Erickson encouraged us to improvise, so when the moment came that Terry needed something for a film that he was working on, I mean, a filmmaker, a five-minute soundtrack. We decided to go and improvise it for him because he didn't have the time to write a five-minute soundtrack. (Laughter)

00:20:15

Louise Marshall: Did it come easily to you, improvisation? Some musicians find it hard.

Pauline Oliveros: Oh my, no. No, it was... but you can listen to those first improvisations: they are available on the Other Minds site. 1957.¹⁴

Louise Marshall: I have heard some of them, but I am always interested how musicians approach improvisation because it is a difficult...

Pauline Oliveros: No, it was not difficult. It was simply natural. We just sat down and did it. We discussed it afterwards; we would listen to it and then we would do some more. If we tried to set up any kind of plan, then it would usually fall flat, so it was better to just listen. That we

¹³ Composers Loren Rush (US, b. 1935) and Terry Riley (US, b. 1935) were both early colleagues of Oliveros in San Francisco.

¹⁴ Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley, Robert Erickson, Loren Rush and others, early improvisations: https://archive.org/details/C_1957_XX_XX (assessed 15:05, 19 September 2016).

learned. From that point, my method was sit down, play, record, and then listen to it.

Louise Marshall: By this time in your life you had already had your tape recorder that your mother had given you.¹⁵

Pauline Oliveros: That's right.

Louise Marshall: So you had started improvising with yourself, you had started playing with the possibilities of taped music, taped sound.

Pauline Oliveros: What I started doing was recording out the window.

Louise Marshall: Oh yeah? Tell me.

Pauline Oliveros: I would just put the microphone in the window and record and then listen back. That is when my remark was, listen to everything all the time and remind yourself when you are not listening.¹⁶

Louise Marshall: That is one of the *Sonic Meditations*, I believe, isn't it?

Pauline Oliveros: That was one of the things I said to myself, yes. I have mentioned it more than once.

Louise Marshall: Right. Then San Francisco [College] was followed by being involved in the San Francisco...

¹⁵ Edith Gutierrez, Oliveros's mother, gave her daughter two significant gifts: a Sears Roebuck wire recorder in 1947; and, in 1953, a Silvertone magnetic tape recorder (Mockus 2008: 17).

¹⁶ After her early tape-recording sessions recording the natural world in 1953, Oliveros realised that there was a lot of sound she was not conscious of. "With this discovery, I gave myself a meditation: 'Listen to everything all the time and remind yourself when you are not listening.'" (Oliveros 2010: 28)

Pauline Oliveros: San Francisco Tape Music Center.¹⁷

Louise Marshall: – Tape Music Center, yes, which was a hothouse of activity. What are your memories looking back on that now?

Pauline Oliveros: Right. Oh, it's marvellous. It was a marvellous time. It was a time when community formed. From my friendship and relationship with Terry and Loren, the three of us we were sharing our ideas, thoughts and improvising together. Then Ramon Sender came to town. He began to work with Robert Erickson as well and we started to improvise together. Terry and Loren by then had gone to Europe. Loren got a Paris prize and Terry, I think he went to New York and then Europe: he went to Paris also, a different way. So they were gone and I was improvising with Ramon and then the idea of putting equipment together to get a tape music studio happened and then Morton Subotnick joined our party. Then in 1962 I went to Europe because I got the...

Louise Marshall: The Gaudeamus Prize.¹⁸

Pauline Oliveros: The Gaudeamus Prize, yes. So I was away for a few months.

Louise Marshall: Where did you go in Europe with that?

¹⁷ Founded in 1962 by composers Ramon Sender [Barayón] (Spain, b. 1934) and Morton Subotnick (US, b. 1933), the San Francisco Tape Center (SFTMC) grew to be a hugely important locus for the growth and promotion of experimental music. One of its precursors was Sonics, an improvisation group founded by Oliveros in late 1961. She herself was involved deeply in the SFTMC from a very early stage. She was to become its director when it moved to Mills College in 1966.

¹⁸ Oliveros was awarded the Gaudeamus International Composers' Award Prize in 1962 for *Sound Patterns* (1961), for a mixed-voice chorus.

- Pauline Oliveros: I went to Holland.
- Louise Marshall: Okay. To Bilthoven.¹⁹
- Pauline Oliveros: To Bilthoven in Holland.
- Louise Marshall: With [Gottfried Michael] Koenig?²⁰
- Pauline Oliveros: György Ligeti.²¹
- Louise Marshall: Oh, Ligeti, okay.
- Pauline Oliveros: He was the judge of that prize.
- Louise Marshall: Did you go to Darmstadt [summer schools]?
- Pauline Oliveros: No. No, no, I didn't go to Darmstadt. Where did I go? I took my prize money and rented a Volkswagen Bug and drove all the way up to Scandinavia.
- Louise Marshall: Did you?
- Pauline Oliveros: Yeah.
- Louise Marshall: So you flew into Holland, got your car...?

¹⁹ The Contactorgaan Elektronische Muziek (CEM) studio, which was founded by the Gaudeamus Foundation in 1959, was in Bilthoven. Gottfried Michael Koenig taught there.

²⁰ Gottfried Michael Koenig (Germany, b. 1926), experimental composer and educator. He lectured at the Darmstadt summer schools. His algorithmic compositional method was an influence for Annea Lockwood.

²¹ Composer György Ligeti (Hungary, 1926-2005) was a colleague of Stockhausen and Koenig at the Studio für elektronische Musik des Westdeutschen Rundfunks (Electronic Music Studio of the West German Radio) in Cologne. Oliveros moves over the personnel of Bilthoven in her answer.

00:25:00

Pauline Oliveros: Uh-huh. Got the prize, got the car and drove and visited the friends I had met at Bilthoven, I visited in Stockholm – Folke Rabe and Jan Bark.²² That was really fun. It was really a nice connection, a long-time connection.

Louise Marshall: Did you go to Paris?

Pauline Oliveros: Ah. You know, I am not sure I did. I don't think I did. I don't think I had a connection there that I could use.

Louise Marshall: I was just wondering whether you were coming into contact with, say, Pierre Schaeffer or Pierre Henry.²³

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, no, no, no.

Louise Marshall: Or any of the people in the radiophonic or electronic radio studios?

Pauline Oliveros: No, not at all, no.

Louise Marshall: So that was a separate world.

Pauline Oliveros: Right, exactly. (Laughter) That's the boys' world.

Louise Marshall: Let's talk about the boys now because in that wonderful book about the San Francisco Music Center, which is wonderful, you say a number of things.²⁴ You

²² Swedish composers Folke Rabe (1935-2017) and Jan Bark (1934-2012).

²³ Pierre Schaeffer (Fr, 1910-95) and Pierre Henry (Fr, b. 1927-2017): both major theoreticians working with the *musique concrète*/electroacoustic field.

²⁴ Bernstein 2008.

talk about how you were self-taught with all the electronic stuff.

Pauline Oliveros: That's right. Yes.

Louise Marshall: That was there. You also say the boys put you off. What do you mean?

Pauline Oliveros: It is pretty much unconscious. Mort and Ramon bonded and they actually formed the San Francisco Tape Music Center non-profit, so they called themselves the founders of the San Francisco Tape Music Center. Mort was very set on making a studio; he wanted a place to work. That was his goal and that happened. I met David Tudor around 1963 and then we did what was called the Tudorfest at the San Francisco Tape Music Center.²⁵ This was not something that Mort was interested in, although he participated in it and he was very excellent with that.

Both Mort and Ramon were a little taken aback because the Tudorfest was so big; it really put the... moved the San Francisco Tape Music Center into the public eye a lot more than just the studio. But it was different; the goals were different. This was performance-centre orientated for composition, using it in that way. There is a recording now of that.

Louise Marshall: The Tudorfest.

Pauline Oliveros: Yeah, it is out.

²⁵ David Tudor (US, 1926-96), US pianist and electroacoustic composer and John Cage's chosen performer for many of that composer's works. The Tudorfest (30 March-3 April 1964) was a three-day event presenting works by John Cage, Oliveros, Alvin Lucier, Toshi Ichianagi, and others. Tudor himself also performed.

Louise Marshall: You talk also in the Tape Music Center book about safety, about your personal safety. Was that because you were working at night and the place was empty?²⁶

Pauline Oliveros: No, I didn't have any sense of insecurity or current concern in that. When I talk about safety I think it is psychological safety. (Phone rings in the restaurant)
There is a phone ringing. It just rang, that is all.

Louise Marshall: It has stopped now. What do you mean by psychological safety?

Pauline Oliveros: Well, that my dignity is not impaired as a human being, as a person and as a woman working alongside of men; that there isn't [aren't] any discriminatory feelings that would cause me to be insubordinated or feeling less than, or excluded. Exclusion, you know. The thing about technology is that men always bond around technology and the bond is very strong. They lock in to talk about it and experience it without realising that they are locking people out.

Louise Marshall: That is an interesting thing to talk about and maybe we can come back to it in a bit. You have been such a strong supporter of many kinds of technological platforms and multimedia platforms like your Expanded Instrument Series or Second Life concerts

²⁶ "I worked most often in the studio from midnight until dawn when the daily hubbub was over and there was a quiet and peaceful space. I had no training in electronics, mathematics, or physics. I had to teach myself about the hardware in the analog studio. Though well meaning, the 'boys' were not necessarily helpful. The tech-orientated attitude put me off more often than not – mostly because of lack of vocabulary and knowledge on my part. Men have a way of bonding around technology. There seemed to be an invisible barrier tied to a way of treating women as helpless or hapless beings. [...] I learned by drawing pictures of every piece of equipment, noting every term, then searching in references for their meanings. [...] this was hands-on, trial-and-error learning." (Oliveros 2008: 88.)

and things. This is a fantastic feminist reclamation of that bond with technology.

00:30:00

Pauline Oliveros: That is right.

Louise Marshall: In terms of what you were talking about – feeling valued, feeling validated, and feeling not subordinated in anyway even unconsciously by the guys – was this a conversation that you had to have overtly with Morton and Ramon?

Pauline Oliveros: No, it was not.

Louise Marshall: It was never out in the open?

Pauline Oliveros: No, it was not. They were very supportive of me, they really were, but at the same time that male bonding took place. It is just programmed, you know.

Louise Marshall: Was it lonely for you then?

Pauline Oliveros: No. I was very interested in what I was doing. “Just let me do my work, friends.” No, I had a rich inner life.
(Laughter)

Louise Marshall: San Francisco was this hub of all kinds of cultural activity, including the explosion of the counter-culture in all its various guises. How did that impinge on you? There was the Trips Festival, which I know that...

PAULINE OLIVEROS

- Pauline Oliveros: I had my own trips. I had *A Side Trip* (1966).²⁷
- Louise Marshall: What was your *Side Trip*?²⁸
- Pauline Oliveros: (Laughter) Well, I did a theatre piece at the Marines' Memorial [Theater]. No, what is that theatre? I can never think of the name of the theatre. There was a theatre, it wasn't the Marines' Memorial but it was another smaller theatre. I did a theatre piece with Elizabeth Harris and Ronald Chase. Actually, the director of the [San Francisco] Mime Troupe took part in that theatre piece as well. I did the music; it was electronic music or electroacoustic music that I did. There was fairly elaborate staging that went on.
- Louise Marshall: What was it called, this piece?
- Pauline Oliveros: *A Theater Piece* (1965). (Laughter)
- Louise Marshall: Oh, okay.
- Pauline Oliveros: This was happening... the Trips Festival was going on at its own site and I never went to it, I don't know what happened there.
- Louise Marshall: Oh, you didn't?
- Pauline Oliveros: No, I was busy with the *Theater Piece*. (Laughter)

²⁷ According to Thomas W. Welsh's chronological list of events at the San Francisco Tape Center (Bernstein 2008: 265-282), Oliveros's *A Side Trip* concert was at the Encore Theatre, where the San Francisco Mime Troupe produced it. *A Theater Piece* (1965), also by Oliveros, was in the programme. In the hubbub of activity in the city during that period, it seems that many people were involved in various scenes: for example, the SFTMC's Ramon Sender was, with Ken Kesey, a co-producer of the psychedelic Trips Festival (21-23 January 1966).

²⁸ I mistakenly assume that Oliveros was speaking metaphorically rather than concretely.

Louise Marshall: So the whole of psychedelic San Francisco and flowers in your hair it passed you by?²⁹

Pauline Oliveros: Well... I was doing my own thing. (Laughter) Let's see... by the time all of that was really going on I became the first director of the Tape Music Center at Mills [College] for one year. Then I left San Francisco to take the job at UCSD.³⁰

Louise Marshall: Why did you do that?

Pauline Oliveros: Well, it was *a job*. A real job with real money, plus Robert Erickson was there; he and Will Ogdon started the department [at UCSD].³¹ The idea of the department was to make it a comfortable place for composers and they wanted me to come and establish an electronic music programme for the graduate students. It was very interesting to do. It was hard to leave San Francisco or to leave the Bay Area. But [the] Mills job was very tenuous; it wasn't necessarily something that would go on. They waited too long to ask me back, so I took that job.

Louise Marshall: You said goodbye with your Tape-athon [on 22 July 1967], of course, which was a pretty amazing event.³²

²⁹ Scott McKenzie's 1967 laudatory pop song to hippy culture, "San Francisco" – "*If you're going to San Francisco/ Be sure to wear/ Some flowers in your hair*" – had been a huge hit.

³⁰ Thomas M. Welsh dates the move of the SFTMC to Mills College, Oakland, California – the alma mater of both Subotnick and Sender – to the summer 1966. (Bernstein 2008: 282) Oliveros moved to UCSD in 1967 to take up a job in the music faculty of the University of California, San Diego. She later gained academic tenure as a full professor there.

³¹ Willbur Ogdon (US, 1921-2013), composer. Ogdon was the founding chair of UCSD's music department, along with Erickson. The department was, unlike many more traditional academic music faculties, open to new music and it an international reputation for its engagement with experimental music.

³² Oliveros writes, in her chapter 'Memoir of a Community Enterprise' (Bernstein 2008: 93): "My farewell to San Francisco was a 'Tape-athon' at my artist friend Ronald Chase's loft on the Embarcadero. The Tape-athon ran from 6pm to 6am and included all the tape music I had made to date. Morton Feldman was one of the distinguished audience members." The presence of Feldman (1926-87), a composer at the heart of John Cage's circle, provides link between Oliveros and older American composers and visual artists. I suggest that Cage's

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, it was. It was. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: What do you remember best about it? What are your best memories of it?

00:35:00

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, my God! Well, it was in this wonderful loft on the Embarcadero in San Francisco. A lot of people came, including Morton Feldman. (Laughs) It was from 6:00pm to 6:00am for twelve hours. I have that boxed set now of...³³

Louise Marshall: I have it.

Pauline Oliveros: Do you? All of that music was played and it takes about twelve hours.

Louise Marshall: When did you meet [John] Cage?

Pauline Oliveros: John Cage. I met David Tudor first in 1963; we did the Tudorfest at the San Francisco Tape Music Center and John Cage came because he was passing through on his way to the East-West festival in Hawaii. With him were Toru Takemitsu, Aki Takahashi and Toshi Ichihyanagi. That was really nice, so that is when I met him in 1964.³⁴

circle was able to model for Oliveros the possibility of expanding music into allied artist realms.

³³ Oliveros 2012.

³⁴ Japanese composers Toru Takemitsu (1930-96) and Toshi Ichihyanagi (b. 1933), along with the pianist Aki Takahashi (b. 1944) were all associates of Cage. They were embedded in the contemporary classical music world of that period.

- Louise Marshall: Was Merce [Cunningham] with him?³⁵
- Pauline Oliveros: No, it was just him.
- Louise Marshall: What was the nature of your relationship? How did you...?
- Pauline Oliveros: At that time?
- Louise Marshall: Yes.
- Pauline Oliveros: I remember we did an interview for a radio station and so we were talking. It was very warm; after all, we were playing his music. This was not long after New York Philharmonic had sabotaged *Atlas Eclipticalis* [in 1964], so we were playing that and it was actually, I think, very healing for John.³⁶
- Louise Marshall: Did you have a sense that – [and] this is not meant to be an impertinent question in any way – but do you have a sense that Cage gave you permission, [that] Cage’s work, gave you permission to expand? My feeling is your work, especially all the work you have done around the formulation of Deep Listening, is the most radical expansion of *4’ 33”*. You take what Cage has suggested and you comprehensively radicalise it and send it out in so many different directions. That is

³⁵ Merce Cunningham (US, 1919-2009, dancer and choreographer) was the founder of the hugely influential Merce Cunningham Dance Company and also Cage’s partner.

³⁶ The SFTMC’s Tudorfest programme included an electronic version of Cage’s *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1961-62) on its third and final day. It is probable that Oliveros felt protective of the composition as a consequence of this earlier engagement. For an account of the “sabotage” Oliveros refers to, see: Piekut: 2011; and Panzner 2015:162-163. Cage’s own account, narrated to interviewers Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras in 1980, of the *Atlas* debacle are reproduced in: Kostelanetz 1988: 120.

part of the fantastic potential of what this thing called Deep Listening is.

Pauline Oliveros: Mmm. So much attention was paid to Cage, but my friend was David Tudor and David Tudor, was of course, the great interpreter of John Cage. It was his [Tudor's] way of approaching that music that I think was more influential than anything you could think of. You have to experience that, so we were great friends.

Louise Marshall: You and Tudor?

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, we played together quite a lot. What impressed me in terms of that festival we did was his meticulous preparation for it. It would be something like tying your shoes with attention. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: I am going to jump around just a little bit.

Pauline Oliveros: Okay. That's all right.

Louise Marshall: One of the things you say in the San Francisco book is, that music is community.³⁷ You say that very, very strongly. We have talked a little bit about the musical community you had in your high school band; but [really] more importantly, perhaps, the musical community you start building up while you are with Loren [Rush] and Terry [Riley] in San Francisco and then with all the people at the Tape Music Center. It seems to me that community is one of the most

³⁷ Oliveros: "For me, music helps people to bond with one another and often plays an important role in communities and as a community focus. The San Francisco Tape Music Center in the 1960s was the basis of a community for me and helped launch my career as a composer and improviser." (Bernstein 2008: 8)

significant and revolutionary aspects of your work from the Sixties right up to now and it runs as this theme throughout, you have never dropped it for a single instant.

00:40:00

Pauline Oliveros: Never. No, not at all.

Louise Marshall: I was wondering if we could talk a little bit about what a musical community is and what a sound community is.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes. You have hit on the core theme. A core activity is connections with people who are interested in expanding their minds with music and sound. The experimental music community that developed partly out of the work of David and John, David Tudor and John Cage... Community was very important to them, and to Cage; he cooked for a lot of people.

Louise Marshall: Did he cook for you?

Pauline Oliveros: It was David and I who did a lot of cooking together. (Laughter) I didn't have that much to do with John. I did a piece for Merce Cunningham in 1969, I think it was.³⁸ I saw him in New York around that piece and all, and I would see him occasionally from time to time, but I can't say I was close to John Cage. I would say I was very close to David Tudor. Let's see, but the community theme is very important and there is a huge community around John Cage and his work, which I

³⁸ Oliveros's composition, *In Memoriam: NIKOLA TESLA, Cosmic Engineer*, was commissioned by Merce Cunningham's company for *Canfield*. The dance had its premiere on 4 March 1969.

acknowledge and appreciate and I appreciated his music as well. I kind of resist being lumped into that, you know?

Louise Marshall: Exactly, it is important that you are not and you are honoured in your own right. There is an interview you did with Fred Maus in 1994 in which you say, and I quote: “I have been extremely marginalised, even though people know my work all over the world I am certainly not out of the margin.”³⁹

Pauline Oliveros: That sounds right. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: This is extremely important because in the past fifteen, twenty years feminist musicologists are starting to put the female composers into the map. They should have been there anyway and the fact they weren't –

Pauline Oliveros: They were not.

Louise Marshall: – is really what interests me and I am trying to...

Pauline Oliveros: You are trying to do something about it! Right!

Louise Marshall: I am trying to do something about it. Let's talk about Beethoven as an image because it is a way of talking about women and composition. I am thinking about your *Pieces of Eight* work from 1964 with the alarm clocks. There is a crate and a link with *Peanuts*, the Charlie Brown [Charles M. Schulz cartoon], isn't there? There is the character in the Charlie Brown

³⁹ Oliveros and Maus 1994: 191.

cartoon who plays the toy piano and he [only] plays Beethoven.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, Schroeder.

Louise Marshall: Schroeder, that's the one. Stuart Dempster has suggested that *Pieces of Eight* is your way of saying, "Here is the God, Beethoven, but where are the goddesses?"⁴⁰ ⁴¹ Is he right in this?

Pauline Oliveros: (Laughter) Perhaps, I don't know. I was certainly making fun of the whole establishment with it. I was using *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson.

Louise Marshall: Really? What were you doing with *Treasure Island*?

Pauline Oliveros: Well. There is a pirate... the clarinet is a pirate and he looks through the clarinet like a telescope, right? There were different aspects of the piece that were related to *Pieces of Eight*.

Louise Marshall: The pirate saying, yes.

Pauline Oliveros: That comes out of *Treasure Island*. It was a remix of *Treasure Island* imposed in this as references, right?

⁴⁰ Trombonist and composer Stuart Dempster (US, b. 1936) recalls how the staging of Oliveros's *Pieces of Eight* involved eight alarm clocks, a packing crate and a large bust of Beethoven, perhaps four feet in height, adorned with flashing lights. "There really was this kind of great god Beethoven. I think that was Pauline's way of asking, 'Ok, well, where are the goddesses? And is there anybody else? Anybody new that we can talk to, or are we stuck [with] Beethoven forever?'" (Bernstein 2008: 256). Dempster also shared his memories of *Pieces of Eight* with me in 2016 via a Facebook post.

⁴¹ Dempster met Oliveros in late 1954/early 1955 when they were both students at San Francisco State College. They were both members of Otey's Composers' Workshop. After Dempster graduated in 1958, and following military service, he returned to the Bay Area in time to participate in many events at the SFTMC. With Oliveros and Panaiotis (originally Peter Ward), Dempster was also a founder member of [the] Deep Listening Band in 1988. (Its definite article was dropped in 1991.)

Louise Marshall: But then we can take the idea of Beethoven and run with him because in 1973 you have got this fantastic article, “Why haven’t women composed great music? Why do men continue to ask stupid questions?” You have got that little picture of the bust of Beethoven and you have put some lipstick on him.⁴²

00:45:00

Pauline Oliveros: They did that [the picture]. *High Fidelity* [magazine] did that.

Louise Marshall: *High Fidelity* did that and they [also] put a little hat on him.

Pauline Oliveros: That was their...

Louise Marshall: Then before that, this fantastic article you did for the *New York Times*, “And Don’t Call Them Lady Composers” [13 September 1970].⁴³ Now, the *New York Times* article doesn’t talk about Beethoven, but nonetheless both these pieces you have written are both very much... the writing is saying the wrong questions are being asked and the wrong parameters are being set over and over and over again. These are having the effect of excluding what the women are doing.

Pauline Oliveros: Yeah.

⁴² Oliveros 2015: 97. The title of the article is: “Divisions Underground: A psychologist vs. a feminist. Why Haven’t Women Composed Great Music? Why do men continue to ask stupid questions?”. It was originally printed in *Numus West* (Vol II, No. 4, 1973). The text is Oliveros’s response to an article by Judith Rosen and Grace Rubin-Rabson, “Why Haven’t Women Become Great Composers?” for *High Fidelity/Musical America* monthly magazine. (No. 23, February 1973: 46-52)

⁴³ Oliveros 2015: 47-51.

Louise Marshall: I was wondering if we could talk a bit about what should the right questions be, what should be asked?

Pauline Oliveros: The right questions are where..., let's find all the women who are composing and, of course, that's happening now. For instance, this festival that I am here for that they are calling Deep Minimalism, much to my chagrin. I don't consider myself a minimalist.

Louise Marshall: It is a very strange title.

Pauline Oliveros: Yeah, it really is. In any case though, mostly women are the composers; the majority of the composers are women.

Louise Marshall: Sure. There is you and there is Laurie Spiegel and Éliane Radigue.

Pauline Oliveros: Jennifer Walshe.

Louise Marshall: She is fantastic.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes: that is right. This is a very nice milieu. It's not called a women's composers' festival, thank God. (Laughter) Come on, let's just have some composers, but let's even up the playing field. Let's make it more equal. If anybody gripes about it being all women, well, look at all the rest of the concerts that are going on right now. They are all men.

Louise Marshall: When you told Fred Maus back in 1994 about feeling extremely marginalised, were you angry?

Pauline Oliveros: No, I don't think it is anger so much. I can get angry about certain things, from time to time, if I think there is unfairness going on. It was simply recognising how things are and how things were and that times were changing. When I wrote that article for the *New York Times*, they just asked me to write whatever I wanted to write and that is what I wanted to write. That is, well, let's look at this.

Louise Marshall: The *New York Times* piece exists in the same time as this very important essay by an art historian called Linda Nochlin.⁴⁴

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, Linda, yes.

Louise Marshall: You know it, of course: "Why Are There No Great Female Artists?" (1971). In my mind the two articles are like that [joining gesture], they are together.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, they came together.

Louise Marshall: So you are both very much surfing the same zeitgeist and asking the same questions.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, exactly.

Louise Marshall: I think they represent a really powerful attack on what...

Pauline Oliveros: But it was time for that to happen. Nobody told me to write that it. It just came to me to do that. Let's just

⁴⁴ Nochlin 2015: 42–68.

look at this catalogue, what does it say and what does it tell us?

Louise Marshall: Let's turn to what you do. It is Deep Listening, of course. I remember asking you after a workshop you did in Oslo a few years ago (14 June 2014) what Deep Listening is. You replied, "Oh, I don't know."⁴⁵ (Oliveros laughs) I thought that was a wonderfully interesting response because of course you know a lot about what Deep Listening is, but I like the way you throw the question back. So, tell me what Deep Listening is.

Pauline Oliveros: Well, it is an investigation. It is a research and it is a question that I am asking.⁴⁶

Louise Marshall: Still asking?

00:50:00

Pauline Oliveros: Yes. I still am because I don't think we know. I don't think I know. I think I understand that listening is the essential area of consciousness that if you are... In order to listen, you have to have memory. Then you have to have attention which can be directed, but where does all of that come from? What are all of those neurones doing and how do they gang up so that you can recognise a cough, for example, that just happened?

Louise Marshall: Could you talk a bit about the link between listening and being heard?

⁴⁵ From my verbatim notes taken at the time (2014), Oliveros said: "When people ask me, 'What's Deep Listening?', I now say, I don't know. It's an ongoing process."

⁴⁶ Oliveros positions Deep Listening as a methodology.

Pauline Oliveros: Yeah. We think of our ears as being what we train, which is really false. Ears don't get trained; ears are open and they are a sense organ. They take in soundwaves and transduce the soundwaves to electrical energy in the cochlear so it can be sent to the brain. From there we have this mysterious process that is called listening. What is it and how does it happen? It starts in the womb: babies are listening. By the time they are four and a half months old, the ear is fully formed so they can listen in that way. There are other ways of listening as well. The skin of the body comes from the ear, the development of the ear. There is just so much we don't know. For example, deaf people listen: how do they listen?

Louise Marshall: Vibrations.

Pauline Oliveros: Well, yes, vibrations. How does that get interpreted and why don't we hearing people pay more attention or give more attention to vibration at the minimalist level, at the most minimal level, I mean?

Louise Marshall: One could also talk about listening and being heard in times of the feminism of music, if you like. I am thinking of pieces like your *Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe* piece, these two women who were not heard.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe In Recognition of Their Desperation* ---- (1970), performance work for any group or groups of instrumentalists.

- Pauline Oliveros: They were heard, but maybe in the most negative way, as suicide and attempt to murder.⁴⁸
- Louise Marshall: Which are pretty ghastly ways to be heard.
- Pauline Oliveros: Yes, but they were heard.
- Louise Marshall: They were heard in their desperation and their pain.
- Pauline Oliveros: That is right.
- Louise Marshall: I am trying to make a link between listening, being heard, the feminist experience and putting the feminist experience into the world. I am thinking about how you developed the *Sonic Meditations* series when you were at San Diego and [you] then formed the ♀ Band.⁴⁹ Is it possible to draw these things together?
- Pauline Oliveros: Yes, I think so. I think very much so. I noticed the women were not being heard. Women were being excluded in these ways that I talked about before. I thought it would be good to get together a group of women to do music together, to improvise together, to work together and to study together, which is what I did. That was when I was forming *Sonic Meditations*, writing them and composing them so that we would do those *Sonic Meditations* in these weekly sessions that were at my house.

⁴⁸ Monroe committed suicide in 1962; Solanas attempted to murder Andy Warhol and one other person in 1968.

⁴⁹ The correct term is the ♀ Ensemble. Oliveros describes it as an improvising, all-female group “devoted to unchanging tonal centers with emphasis on changing partials”. (Mockus 2008: 40) The group met regularly at Oliveros’s San Diego home between approximately 1970-72. The *Sonic Meditations* started as single works written for meetings of the group.

00:55:00 That was a very important period at the time. It was a couple of years that we did that and met together. Then I did a tour; I was invited to go and perform at various universities and places. I arrived with nothing and I would invite the audience to do *Sonic Meditations*, which was outrageous at the time. It was in the early Seventies. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Did it go down well or were they outraged? Did they throw tomatoes at you? (Laughter)

Pauline Oliveros: I did this at Merce Cunningham's studio [in New York]. I remember Merce running around the studio looking bewildered.

Louise Marshall: He didn't get it?

Pauline Oliveros: I don't know. We will never know.

Louise Marshall: Maybe that was his way of doing a meditation.

Pauline Oliveros: Maybe it was, I don't know. (Laughter) I arrived at the SUNY-Albany [University], where Joel Chadabe was teaching and he had invited me.⁵⁰ He wanted to know, "Where is your electronic equipment?" I sat on the stage barefooted and got the audience to do *Sonic Meditations*. (Laughter)

⁵⁰ Joel Chadabe (US, composer, academic and technical innovator for musical software and interactive systems b. 1938). He founded the electronic music studio at the University of Albany, State University of New York (SUNY) in 1964. Oliveros is one of the many composers invited by Chadabe to attend the campus and to give presentations and performances.

Louise Marshall: There is a group at my university and my college who has a *Sonic Meditations* group.⁵¹ It meets once a month.

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, really?

Louise Marshall: We sit in the park and do these things.

Pauline Oliveros: Wonderful.

Louise Marshall: It is okay if the weather is good. (Laughter) The meditations build a community –

Pauline Oliveros: Exactly.

Louise Marshall: – if only for a short period. I have witnessed this at your workshops, but we will be doing it at Deep Minimalism when you do your *Tuning Meditation*, which I am really looking forward to.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes. That is going to be fun.

Louise Marshall: You did the *Tuning Meditation* at the Womyn's Festival at Michigan didn't you, in about 1989 or something like that?⁵²

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, that is right. I don't remember exactly the time. It is back there ways, yes.

⁵¹ Convened by research student and musician, Artur Vidal.

⁵² The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (1976-2015) was an annual women-only festival held in the countryside near Hart, Michigan. It had a very strong lesbian identity. Its spelling of "womyn" reflects a historical thread concerned with sexism and language within feminist discourses of the 1970s.

PAULINE OLIVEROS

Louise Marshall: Tell me about it. I think there were about 6,000 women there.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, 5,000 or 6,000, yeah.

Louise Marshall: What was that like?

Pauline Oliveros: A big soundwave. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Did you go there again or was that the only time you went?

Pauline Oliveros: That was the only time I ever went to that.

Louise Marshall: Did you like it?

Pauline Oliveros: No, not really.⁵³

Louise Marshall: Go on, why not?

Pauline Oliveros: I don't know.

Louise Marshall: I have never been.

Pauline Oliveros: You have to experience it, I think.

Louise Marshall: Well, it has finished now.

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, yeah. Well, there were lots of different attitudes prevailing, [it was] just hard to relate.

⁵³ When interviewed by Cole Gagne in the early 1990s, Oliveros tells a slightly different story. "That's the largest group that I've ever dealt with at one time. It was amazing... There was [sic] just waves of sound. This was outdoors and 6,000 women...!" (Gagne 1993, cited by Mockus 2008: 54)

- Louise Marshall: Identity politics can sometimes be quite abrasive.
- Pauline Oliveros: That is right. It was oppressive in that respect.
- Louise Marshall: Thank you. We talked about community.
- Pauline Oliveros: Let me just go back for a minute there.
- Louise Marshall: Yes, sure.
- Pauline Oliveros: I guess what I did in terms of the structural aspect of my music embodied the principles of feminist ideals, ideas and interests – yes? – in the structure of the music, the deep structure. That was important. For example, you mentioned *Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of Their Desperation* ---- and that piece from 1970 was a piece that embodied equality. Everybody had the same part, but every individual could develop that part individually, but at the same with respect to the community they were involved in performing with. Okay, this is inner structure of the music.
- Louise Marshall: This is hugely important.
- Pauline Oliveros: It is, but it is not something that you could share at something like the Womyn's Festival with 5,000 people.⁵⁴ You could ask them to try to do this piece, but to try explain to them that this represents the structure of what is in music, of what it is you are wanting to have happen. That was a deep

⁵⁴ The lower figure that Oliveros has mentioned earlier.

marginalisation and I could feel there was no way I could deal with it at the time.

01:01:21

Louise Marshall: It sounds really frustrating.

Pauline Oliveros: It was.

Louise Marshall: And disappointing.

Pauline Oliveros: Well, it was frustrating and it was [disappointing], but I could understand it, you know. In as far as music was concerned in terms of feminism, songwriters, who were expressing feminist ideas but were still dealing in the same old musical structures, you know, were what people could understand and deal with, but they couldn't deal with the likes of me. (Laughter) Maybe they never will, you know, maybe never, I don't know. (Laughter) It was important for me to get that across to you.

Louise Marshall: Thank you for doing that. We talked about community and I think that leads me into thinking about collaboration and connective work. I have to say that I have spoken to a number of composers in the course of my research and every single person I have spoken to have talked about your importance in their own careers: Annea Lockwood, Ellen Fullman and Éliane Radigue. [Oliveros acknowledges each name: "Annea, yeah, {Fullman}, mmm, {Radigue}, mmm."] You are this hub person in that you connect people with a generosity of work, creativity and spirit. You connect them and these connections radiate out into the next

stages. I wanted to express this to you that, for a lot of people, you are not deeply marginalised.

Pauline Oliveros: Well, I appreciate that. I can feel that. I feel it and appreciate it. It certainly has changed over time, you know, especially in the last few years.

Louise Marshall: Was there a sense... when you are meeting people and helping to connect people one to another or point them to opportunities, was there a sense of urgency or is this just something that you do anyway?

Pauline Oliveros: It is just something that occurs to me. I mean, you know, if I talk to somebody, I find out what you are interested in, for example, and then down the line something will have happened and I will connect it with you. Then I will send you the message saying, "Check this out." It just comes naturally. It is always interesting to me.

Louise Marshall: Ellen Fullman told me when she was a young artist, really, she got this postcard out of the blue from you saying, "Let's collaborate!" So you did and you ended up making some fantastic record together, which was the Deep Listening Band [said in unison] and the Long String Instrument.⁵⁵

Pauline Oliveros: Right, no. Yeah, we commissioned her. Actually, we did.

Louise Marshall: That was a really important early stage [for her].

⁵⁵ Deep Listening Band & the Long String Instrument: 1997.

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Pauline Oliveros: Well, I met Ellen just before she started to develop that instrument, in 1980.

Louise Marshall: She was doing her *Metal-Sounding Skirt Sculpture* – that incredible sculpture. I have seen the video.⁵⁶

Pauline Oliveros: Yeah, that skirt. *Streetwalker*. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: *Streetwalker*. That’s is the one. She told me that you were going... Where was it? Was it Minneapolis?

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, Minneapolis.

Louise Marshall: You were going around the New Music America –

Pauline Oliveros: It was New Music America and that is a very important thing to talk about.

Louise Marshall: You were going around talking to people saying, “Go and see this [*Streetwalker*].” The fact that you were doing that was really important: you got busloads of people to go and see her –

Pauline Oliveros: Yeah –

Louise Marshall: I was talking to a student a few weeks ago, who is in her twenties and from one of the Gulf States.⁵⁷ She was talking about how she had made her own equivalent of the *Metal-Sounding Skirt Sculpture* [sic]; she did it with an Islamic robe [an abaya]. I said, “Wow, do you

⁵⁶ Ellen Fullman wore her *Metal Skirt Sound Sculpture* (1980) to perform *Streetwalker*, a sounding sculptural performance, at the New Music America festival, Minneapolis, 7-15 July 1980. See Marshall 2015a.

⁵⁷ Aminah Ibrahim, *Abaya* (2016), performance for treated abaya in a London street. The work, for Ibrahim’s MA coursework, was conceived as a response to the Her Noise archive at the London College of Communication. See: <https://vimeo.com/158199952>

know about Ellen Fullman?” “She is my idol,” she said.

01:05:00

Pauline Oliveros: Oh! (Laughter) That’s great. It has always been important to me to bring people together any way I could. Maybe it is because my family split apart. My father went off to the World War II, but then when he came back he already had a new family that I hadn’t known about, for example. And so, you know, it seemed... It has always been important to me that people should come together. I think it is partly that, that you could create positive connections with people.

Louise Marshall: Tara Rogers, you know –

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, Tara, uh-huh –

Louise Marshall: – who did the *Pink Noises* book,⁵⁸ has this wonderful phrase she uses called the network of friendship as a methodology and I think that is a very powerful way of thinking of networking, feminist networking.

Pauline Oliveros: New Music America was a tremendously important movement in America and it was important to me. I served on the National Endowment for the Arts panel for maybe five or six years. That was in the Seventies. At that time there were commissions for individual composers, individual composers were given and I was part of the panel who decided who got a commission, right? But also in that panel the importance of

⁵⁸ Rodgers: 2010. Correctly, Rodgers’s phrase is ‘friendship as a method’, a way of working that she, in turn, takes from Lisa M. Tillmann-Healy (2003).

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ensembles for new music came up and also studios that provided equipment too expensive for an individual to own at the time. Having an electronic music studio was really important for compositional development in the Seventies. I was one of the founding members that got the endowment to give money for those purposes.

At the time Steve Reich and Philip Glass, I think, were already into the endowment getting money for their ensembles, but nobody else was. That got expanded and opened up so lots of different people could begin to get money from the endowment for their own ensembles and things. The young man who was at The Kitchen at the time in New York, I can't think of his name at the moment.

Louise Marshall: It is on the tip of my tongue.

Pauline Oliveros: It wasn't Rhys Chatham, but it was somebody else.⁵⁹ Anyway, the point is he wasn't banging on the door at the Endowment because he wanted to get funding for The Kitchen and this thing. The first thing was the New Music, New York. I performed on that and it was a very amazing time.

New Music, New York was the beginning of New Music America. [For] New Music, New York, we gathered together and so there was beginning to be this community of people who were interested in

⁵⁹ Rhys Chatham, composer and flautist (b. 1952, US). He shared a Buchla synthesizer at New York University with Laurie Spiegel, Éliane Radigue, Maryanne Amacher and many others. Chatham founded the music programme at The Kitchen in 1971 and acted as its music director for much of the Seventies (1971-73; 1977-80). Experimental cellist Arthur Russell (1951-92, US) was the venue's music director between 1974-75; composer Garrett List (US, b. 1951) occupied that role between 1975-77. Oliveros could have been thinking of Russell or List here.

experimental music and who wanted to fund it and bring people to their places around the United States. We formed what was called the New Music Alliance and it became a non-profit organisation. That New Music Alliance then took the responsibility of funding New Music America. First of all, New Music, New York went the next year to Minneapolis.

Louise Marshall: Which was where Ellen was.

Pauline Oliveros: John [Kolacky? Spelling uncertain, 1:09:30], I think it was John Kolacky, somebody anyway, changed the name to New Music America. Okay. In 1980, New Music America and every year it would be a different city and this grew all through the Eighties. Every year it happened, every year it was much larger and every year it was a gathering place for everybody around the States to come together and find out who was who, who was doing things and so forth.

01:10:08 It became a big marketplace, actually, for new music, experimental music, and it also became a community, a wide... a nationwide community. If you were connected into that, you knew that you could be okay, all right? That was the development of a statewide and then nationwide community, which is still expanding and connecting. Although New Music America ended in Montreal [in 1990], it was the biggest one. From then on it became New Music Across America, with smaller things happening.

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Louise Marshall: I don't think I knew before that you had been involved in the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] endowment panel. That is hugely important –

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, it was.

Louise Marshall: – because the systemic... the right people need to be involved on these panels, in the corporations and on the committees, etc., in order to filter decisions down, so that's [cross talk].

Pauline Oliveros: Loren Rush was also on it and we did a lot of damage together. (Laughter) Well, we did, we managed to get things happening that were unbelievable.

Louise Marshall: That's very nice, that's very nice.

Can we move to talk about the more recent work in terms of the Expanded Instruments Series? In this sense, I am going to bring in your embrace multimedia platforms such as Second Life and the avatar life in that. You are not only a composer you are a very active performer, improviser and an adopter of these various technologies from early tape work right up to the digital stuff that we have today. Could you talk a bit about what freedoms these technologies give you? Is it wrong also to think of these freedoms in terms of the deep structure that we are talking about earlier on in a feminist way?

Pauline Oliveros: First of all, I play the accordion. The accordion can be a more or less simple instrument, like a twelve-base accordion, which has a few major chords, so you can

play simple tunes, right? An accordion is a technology, any instrument whatsoever is a technology, so musicians have been dealing with technology if they play an instrument. But what has happened now is that instruments have developed technically. The accordion that I play now is an all-digital instrument. It plays like an accordion, looks like an accordion and people think it is, but it is not really: it's just an interface to a computer.

Louise Marshall: You have got it hooked up to a computer with your accordion?

Pauline Oliveros: No, it is the instrument itself is that. You see me playing the accordion, but inside of the accordion is a computer. All the sounds that are available on that instrument are physically modelled computationally. The bellows do not blow air through reeds. They are full of accelerometers that pick up my gestures and send it to the...

Louise Marshall: So it is absolutely linked into your body. Has this been specially built for you?

Pauline Oliveros: No, no. I bought it off the shelf. Roland.⁶⁰ (Laughs) It is interesting to see the technology is going so fast these days and it is going to go much faster – it will make your head swim. I am serious. Things are going to change extremely rapidly. I bought this instrument – what is it – maybe in 2006, not the one I am playing now, but the first one. It has developed as well; it keeps developing because technology keeps developing.

⁶⁰ Company specializing in the manufacture of electronic instruments.

01:15:25

Louise Marshall: Are you involved with the technologists who build and develop new musical instruments? There is a lab, I think, at MIT that is [run by] Tod Machover, maybe.⁶¹

Pauline Oliveros: Oh yeah. Well, he is one of them.

Louise Marshall: Okay, you are not so impressed. (Laughter)

Pauline Oliveros: Okay, we will give Tod his due.

Louise Marshall: You are not so interested in what they are doing at MIT?

Pauline Oliveros: I am interested. I am interested. It is just it is about... Well, what is it about? Tod is such a fair-haired boy. (Laughs)

Louise Marshall: What do you mean by that? I can guess, but I am asking you.

Pauline Oliveros: Oh, I... Hmm. There is so much promotion around him, but there are a lot of other things going on.

Louise Marshall: Look to the margins, then.

Pauline Oliveros: Uh-huh. Exactly.

Louise Marshall: There is one musician I need to tell you about when I switch the tape off I think you will be interested to

⁶¹ Composer, academic and musical technology innovator Tod Machover (US, b. 1953) leads the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Media Lab's Opera of the Future group. I use him as one example of a growing number of composers and musicians who are adapting instruments or developing new ones with technological interfaces.

hear.⁶² Could you talk a bit about your music, your musical work and its connection with Tibetan Buddhism? It might sound a little bit of a strange question, but I have been struck by the amount of composers I am speaking to who have a very, very serious connection with Buddhist practice. Not just in a trendy New York Tibetan House [sic] kind of way, but a very deep involvement. Laurie Anderson, Éliane [Radigue], of course.⁶³

Pauline Oliveros: Éliane Radigue, Meredith Monk and Philip Glass.

Louise Marshall: What is it about the Tibetan strain of Buddhism in particular and sound and listening that works for you and is important to you?

Pauline Oliveros: What works for me is that back in the Sixties, I think it was, early on, I read *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*.

Louise Marshall: I know it, a book by [Heinrich] Harrer – no, Alexandra...

Pauline Oliveros: David-Neel, Alexandra David-Neel.⁶⁴ What an amazing woman. She wrote that book.

Louise Marshall: Yes, I read it. I have got my mum's copy.

Pauline Oliveros: I read that book and that is what introduced me to Tibetan Buddhism. What I discovered in that book were listening practices I think, and the way she talked about sound that interested me very deeply. As a matter

⁶² I am thinking of Victor Gama, the Portuguese-Angolan sound artist and instrument builder.

⁶³ Tibet House is a cultural centre that was founded at the Dalai Lama's request in 1987. Many politicians and cultural celebrities are among its patrons or significant supporters.

⁶⁴ Alexandra David-Neel (1868-1969, Belgian-French traveller, writer and Buddhist). *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (1929) contains accounts of her travels, experiences and Buddhist studies in Tibet.

of fact, I think I need to go back and read that book again now at this distance because it has been a long time since I read it. I thought how amazing it was and how amazing her life was and all of this. Then I thought, “Fat chance I would ever meet any Tibetans.” (Laughter) Of course in 1959 began the exodus in Tibet because of all of those circumstances.

Tibetans did come to Upstate [New York, where Oliveros now lives] and I was living in California. I did meet the Karmapa several times. This was the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa and I got the Black Crown ceremony several times. I think this was very important in my life in learning, in getting transmission, the so-called mind-to-mind transmission. This was not what you read, but it is what happens when you get this blessing. There is a transmission and you feel differently afterwards.

01:20:12

Okay. So all of that happened. I took a sabbatical leave from UCSD in 1980, I think it was. Then I met the Karmapa in Upstate New York in Woodstock. I had my sabbatical leave, had a wonderful time in Upstate New York meeting all of this stuff. I went back to UCSD and resigned my position as full professor and shocked everybody. (Laughter)

Louise Marshall: Did you shock yourself?

Pauline Oliveros: No, no. (Laughs) I wanted to go back to my freelance work and life and just see what happened, so I moved to Upstate New York.

Louise Marshall: To Kingston [in New York state]?

Pauline Oliveros: No, I moved to Mount Tremper and I was living on the Mount Tremper, which was up at the back of the Zen Center.⁶⁵ I had been invited to be the artist in residence there, which lasted a while. Oh... I would go over to the new Tibetan monastery in Woodstock and I was privileged to be present in ceremonies that took place at 3:00am in the morning and things like that. [Crash sound] These things... the things that I experienced nobody gets to do that these days. They have got an established... [The sound of the crash of cutlery in the nearby bar]. That was a good one [addressing the crash].

Louise Marshall: There are some rich sounds going on.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, lots of good sounds. That was a big guy who did something like that.

Louise Marshall: It really reverberated in these headphones. [I am wearing headphones to check recording levels.]

Pauline Oliveros: I'll bet. Okay. Anyway, so I experienced quite a lot of very close connection with Tibetans. I met Tai Situpa Rinpoche. He was one of the four lineage holders that travelled with the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa.⁶⁶ I met all of four them, but particularly him as he spoke English, really good English. I went to a lot of his lectures and found them very, very significant. I got his blessing and also [laughs] I took him and some of his lamas to visit in California. Yeah.

⁶⁵ Zen Arts Center, Mount Tremper, New York State. It is now known as the Zen Mountain Monastery.

⁶⁶ A reincarnate lama of the Kagyu school.

We took him to visit, I can't think what it was now but I think they were working on a particular movie or something... I can't remember exactly right now. In any case we went around with him and there was a good, a very strong connection, so I considered him to be my Tibetan teacher. I have his books in English and I have a drawing that he made for me particularly and things like that. This is a different kind of connection than, say, what others experienced.

Louise Marshall: Éliane [Radigue] talks about the community of sound –

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, exactly!

Louise Marshall: – She talks about being involved in the puja –

Pauline Oliveros: That's right, yeah!

Louise Marshall: – and at some point you are actually listening to the sound and being involved in the generation of sound with a lot of other people and there is this very powerful connection. I can see that is profound.

01:25:00

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, it is very important. I still do feel that my original connection was through Alexandra David-Neel and her writing.

Louise Marshall: It is an exciting book. I reread it a couple of years and there is a lot of adventures and strange wonders as she travels around on her yak.

- Pauline Oliveros: Exactly. I have to read that again, I really do.
- Louise Marshall: My copy is falling to bits.
- Pauline Oliveros: Oh! (Laughter) I have to find mine; I don't know if I can find it.
- Louise Marshall: Can I ask you about three important people in your career and the development of your life practice, which is, of course, Deep Listening? In one interview, you identified Valerie Solanas, Robert Erickson and Yoko Ono, especially one of her Fluxus pieces. I wonder whether they are the same people or...?
- Pauline Oliveros: Well, Yoko Ono's piece that appeared in *The New York Times* somewhere in the Sixties or Seventies, somebody wrote about her. The piece that was mentioned was: "*Get a bucket a water, steal the moon and keep on stealing until there is no more moon.*"⁶⁷ That one resonated with me.
- Louise Marshall: Because?
- Pauline Oliveros: I don't know why. It just did. There's no why. I think that piece, the resonance [of it] just gave me an understanding of how I go about doing some things that I did.
- Louise Marshall: Deep Listening has many strands now. It has got the listening; it has got the community of listening and the community of movement. It's got –

⁶⁷ Yoko Ono, *Water Piece* (1964), instructional score: "*Steal a moon on the water with a bucket/ Keep stealing until no moon is seen/ on the water.*" Much of Ono's Fluxus-influenced work from this period highlighted the importance of sensory acuity, particularly in relation to sight and listening.

Pauline Oliveros: Dreams.

Louise Marshall: You've got Heloise Gold; you have got dreams with Ione.⁶⁸ Can you see it going in any more directions or are all bases covered?

Pauline Oliveros: Well, those are pretty important because it covers inner and outer, so to speak, body. Those were areas I was interested in: dreaming... I did a lot of work with dreams and with movement. I studied karate and all that and t'ai chi, Heloise really takes that and expands it. Ione takes the dream world and really opens it up for people to listen in dreams, so I think those are good areas. I would like to be connected with Deep Listening scientists because I feel Deep Listening is an area of research which needs a great deal of attention. I think it has just begun really so that more and more is surfacing.

Louise Marshall: I am going to ask you one last question and it involves what Martha Mockus defines as lesbian musicality in her rather wonderful book.⁶⁹

Pauline Oliveros: Uh-huh. That is her interpretation.

Louise Marshall: Does it work with you?

⁶⁸ Deep Listening has evolved over time as a holistic practice that includes a 'listening' to one's body in terms of movement and to the unconscious world as expressed in dreams. Heloise Gold is a choreographer and performance artist, based in Austin, Texas. She has co-led (with Oliveros and Ione) Deep Listening retreats and workshops with Oliveros since 1991. Ione is an author, director and performer who, among other things, is interested in mythology and oneiric phenomena: she leads dream workshops at Deep Listening events. She and Oliveros have been partners for many years.

⁶⁹ Mockus 2008.

Pauline Oliveros: Well, I don't know.

Louise Marshall: Maybe you are just beyond those terms.

Pauline Oliveros: Something like that, I don't think of it that way. First of all, I don't like to be labelled in certain ways. I just like to be who I am.

Louise Marshall: Have you been labelled too much, do you think?

Pauline Oliveros: Everybody has. (Laughs) I mean, who are we really and what are we?

Louise Marshall: Pauline, thank you so much.

Pauline Oliveros: I am going to say one thing. You jumped the gun when you are asked me about [the] Expanded Instrument System. You went to the Tibetan Buddhism question, so you never really got any answers on that.

Louise Marshall: No, I am sorry about that. Go for it.

Pauline Oliveros: Do you want to have it?

Louise Marshall: I would love it, please.

01:30:00

Pauline Oliveros: Okay, because it is important. It is my development of electroacoustic music. I did purely electronic music really based on what I had learned from how to listen to my accordion. I learned to listen to difference tones. If you play an interval on the accordion high and pull really hard on the bellows as you get the difference

between these two pitches or frequencies. I loved to listen to those when I was spending my nights in San Francisco Tape Music Center, staring at the equipment and teaching myself how to make electronic music. I realised I could set these oscillators above the range of hearing and I could get difference tones.

Louise Marshall: You have this wonderful quote. You say, I think in one of the essays here, that it makes you feel like you were a witch.⁷⁰

Pauline Oliveros: [Laughs] In a way, yeah. I was conjuring sounds. Articles in there [indicates my copy of *Software for People*, which is on the table] are good, but there is one article you should read which is called, “From Outside the Window”.⁷¹ That describes this process I created and the way I create my electronic music. I added a tape delay system meaning that stringing tape from one machine to another machine so that you get playback heads from two, or even three, machines. You can take the signals from these different playback heads, tracks, since they were stereo tracks. You could send them back to the beginning or you could send them to any place. That’s all described... there’s an article in here called “Tape Delay Techniques for Electronic Music Composers” (1969) that describes that.⁷²

Louise Marshall: Yes, there you go, that is quite a technical one. [We look at the book]

⁷⁰ “I felt like a witch capturing sounds from a nether realm.” (Oliveros 2010: 26)

⁷¹ Oliveros 2010: 255-61.

⁷² Oliveros 2015: 36-46.

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, that's the one which describes all of that. That's how I developed what I call the Expanded Instrument System and applied it my accordion. What I wanted to do was to be able to deal with more musical information than I could generate at one time, so that's the delays, so the sounds come back to me. I consider it a time machine. I play something and it is going to come back in the future. When it comes back in the future, it is part of the past. That is the expansion, it is the expansion of time, so I can play with what I did, I can play with what I am doing and what I am going to do, okay? And I can process those sounds as well.

Louise Marshall: That is an excellent description. Thank you for pulling me back to that one. Are you still using Second Life much?

Pauline Oliveros: Yes, what I am doing now is having my students go to Second Life and make pieces. You know, I teach a course at Mills via Skype and so I have my friend [the composer] Tina Pearson: she's so expert in the technical details of Second Life. I have her teach the students the protocols, the script, how to script and how to work in it. Then I have them collaborate with one another to make pieces, which is a lot of fun. There are some fantastic things they do.

Louise Marshall: Do you have your own orchestra as such on Second Life still?

Pauline Oliveros: Second Life is a group, so whoever shows up is the orchestra. It is a group of composers from different

parts of the world. It's a very beautiful community,
talking about community.

Louise Marshall: Thank you very much. Pauline, is there anything else
you would like to talk about or is important that I
haven't touched on?

01:35:00

Pauline Oliveros: Well, there's always more.

Louise Marshall: There is always more, maybe in times to come we will
have [cross talk].

Pauline Oliveros: I want to ask Ione to come down and bring you a
postcard that you'll want to have. I guess you don't
have "Beethoven Was a Lesbian", do you? (Laughter)
You'll want that, right?⁷³

Louise Marshall: I will frame it.

Pauline Oliveros: Let me see if she can do that.

Louise Marshall: I am going to turn this off now.

01:35:35

END OF RECORDING

⁷³ Ione subsequently brought me from their hotel room a plastic envelope with five postcards inside. Each card has a photograph on and a line of text. "Beethoven was a Lesbian" shows "composeress Pauline Oliveros in her garden" reading *All Hallow's Eve* by Charles Williams. Another postcard entitled "Brahms was a Two-Penny Harlot" reproduces two photographs side-by-side. The first is of a young (certainly under eight years old) Oliveros with her homemade toy dagger and scabbard; she looks completely immersed in the heroic character she is role-playing. Next to this image is a photograph of the collaborating artist Alison Knowles as a toddler. Knowles, an artist who was linked to Fluxus in her adult life, is pictured crawling on a beach and scowling at the photographer. Both are wonderfully non-conformist images of young girls. Chopin, Bach and Mozart feature on the other four cards, which, jointly and separately, represent a playful subversion of canonic male composers in terms of gender roles and, in one case, race. The images are reproduced in Volume I of this thesis.

