

# **An Exercise: Dismantling the Silence**<sup>1</sup>

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Originally published in *Interface* (Brussels: Vol. 18, No. 3, 1989).

*And of labor:  
Light lights in air,*

Zukofsky, A8

It has always seemed to me that the relentless processes of change, formation and re-formation that constitute our world are actually experienced as a succession of moments striving toward isolation. In the words of Charles Olson: "The motive...of reality is process not goal."<sup>2</sup> Yet, Olson also notes: "Nature takes nothing but leaps."<sup>3</sup> Everywhere we sense the struggle between continuity and discontinuity; not a struggle to fashion one from the other but a struggle to integrate the two as they act, simultaneously, to shape our perceptions. Reality is in constant flux; yet what is experienced is a succession of moments: interconnected, yet isolated - a perfect stasis of contradictory forces pulling against one another. This, in my view, is one of the crucial areas of inquiry for artists today (and the extreme push toward nonlinearity in much important new art, music and literature suggests that I am not alone in this feeling). The recognition of both the continuity of events and the fragmentary, isolated nature of experience lies at the very center of my work. It is within the context of these thoughts that I proceed to a consideration of my own compositions.

There is much that is both logical and, at the same time, unpredictable in the creative act and, a composer is really in no better position than anyone else to analyze the confluence of forces that interact to shape his own artistic endeavors. At best, he can set forth his intentions and accept - indeed, embrace - the uncertainties through which both he and his audience are led. So, the comments that follow are intended only to clarify my

concerns and identify regions of exploration which - whether the explorations themselves have failed or succeeded, wholly or in part - I believe are central to that ongoing search to model human experience which is art.

## **Moments**

Traditionally, the composer chooses his sonic materials and gradually shapes them into a specific musical design. For some time during the early '70's, I was very interested in bringing all of the preliminary stages of the creative process into the very audible framework of the final product. In this way, I hoped to equate the process of making a piece of music with its form and to project this fact with great immediacy. In addition, and most important for my more recent compositions, I wanted to project the various stages of this process as moments, isolated from one another as much as possible. Thus, I attempted to articulate this process as a seemingly unrelated series of events - snapshots, if you will. The goal was to project a sense of continuity through its dialectical opposite - moment-form (representing, at the same time, a sense of fragmentation and isolation).<sup>4</sup> Toward this end, in the early 1970's, I created three sets of solo and chamber compositions entitled *Series 1, 2 and 3* (1973-75), as well as a solo piano work entitled *Serenade* (1974), a complex, computer generated score.<sup>5</sup> The following discussion will center on *Series 1, 2 and 3*.

### *Series 1:*

*Gestures* (1973) - soprano saxophone and piano

*Traces* (1973) - flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, violin, viola, cello and piano

*Marginal Developments* (1973) - piano

### *Series 2:*

*Partial Coordinates* (1974) - flute

*Uniform Selections* (1974) - violin

### *Series 3:*

*Drafts* (1974) - 3 Bb Clarinets, violin, viola cello and piano

*Margins* (1975) - 3 flutes, violin, viola, cello and piano

It would be useful, first, to briefly outline the structure of one piece from the first series, *Gestures*, and then consider its relationship to the other two works in that series. *Gestures* is scored for soprano saxophone and piano. The work consists of six brief movements grouped into three pairs that will be labeled A, A', B, B', C, C'. The movements labeled A and A' are the most thoroughly composed structures of the composition. In this respect, they reflect more traditionally conceived notions of form, with clearly defined and fully developed pitch, timbre and spatial structures. The movements labeled B and B' are more indeterminate, leaving many aspects of their ultimate realization to the performers discretion. Finally, the movements labeled C and C' are the most indeterminate of all - the structure of each being reduced to a particular statistical distribution of pitches (Examples 1, 2 and 3).

For me, these three pairs of movements represent three very different stages in the evolution of a musical structure. They are, in a sense, metaphors for certain stages in the evolution of a musical structure. The A movements are the most highly organized designs of the composition and represent what might be the final product of some compositional process. In contrast, the C movements are much less shaped. Their perceptible level of order is only statistical and thus concerned exclusively with generalized relations. They represent what might be the initial stages in the creative process. Finally, the two B movements represent some intermediate stages between these two extremes.

In addition, each pair of movements may itself be understood in terms of these compositional polarities. Within each pair, one movement represents a much more highly organized counterpart to the other. Thus, in movement A', I present a succession of brief, isolated gestures which are then united in A to form a single, continuous totality. Likewise, the pitch collections of B represent a refinement over those heard in B'; those of C, a refinement of the rather random distribution of C'.

This rather complex set of relations may be summarized in a simple chart (Example 4). Each movement, then, plays a dual role. As such, the work as a whole articulates a multi-leveled succession of morphological transformations. Now, to enhance this multi-dimensional aspect of the composition the six movements are ordered in a non-linear succession (Example 5). In addition, I specify the duration of silence that is to separate

Example 1: *Gestures*, Structure A' (Movement I), excerpt

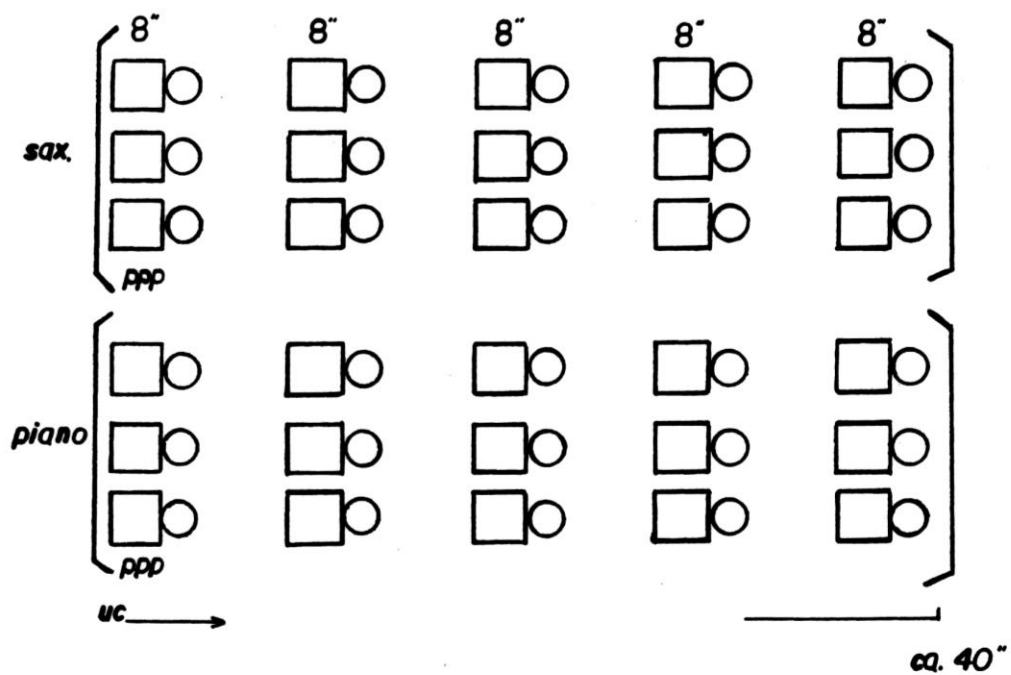
Musical score for Example 1, Structure A' (Movement I), excerpt C. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 60. It consists of three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. The piece begins with a *pp* dynamic. The Treble staff features a melodic line with three triplet markings. The Alto and Bass staves provide harmonic support. The piece concludes with an 8-measure rest, indicated by "8" silence". A "uc" marking is present in the Bass staff at the beginning.

C

Musical score for Example 1, Structure A' (Movement I), excerpt D. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 60. It consists of three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. The piece begins with a *pp* dynamic. The Treble staff features a melodic line with a long slur over the first two measures. The Alto and Bass staves provide harmonic support. The piece concludes with an 8-measure rest, indicated by "8" silence". A "uc" marking is present in the Bass staff at the beginning.

D

**Example 2:** *Gestures*, Structure B (Movement II)



**A**
**B**
**C**
**D**

Example 2, continued: *Gestures*, Structure B (Movement II), instructions

Notes (Movement 2)

- 1) Materials: four pitch cells (A, B, C, D)  
four density values (2, 3, 5, 8)
- 2) Each performer, independent of the other, pairs the four density values with the four cells. (Saxophonist should note that the cells are not transposed.)
- 3) Each then randomly fills in his part with the cells and their density values.
- 4) With respect to the piano part, during each eight second segment the notes of each cell are to be played in any register and in any order. The number of notes to be played is given by the appropriate density value. They are to be played one note at a time in equal  $\frac{1}{5}$  note values, legato at  $\text{♩} = 60$ . Within each eight second segment the performer will always play through one gesture completely before beginning another.
- 5) With respect to the saxophone part, the same instructions as those for the piano part should be followed with the exception that each cell should be played in the notated register only.
- 6) See the following example (notated in C):

The musical notation shows a piano part and a saxophone part. The piano part consists of six staves with the following pitch cells and density values: B (8), A (3), C (2), D (8), B (2), and A (5). The saxophone part consists of two staves with the following pitch cells and density values: B (8), A (3), C (2), D (8), B (2), and A (5). The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 60$ . The piano part includes dynamic markings like *ppp* and *uc* (ultra-crescendo). The saxophone part includes slurs and accents. The notation is in 6/4 time.

Example 3: *Gestures*, Structure C' (Movement VI)

10° per measure

Piano Solo

*mp*

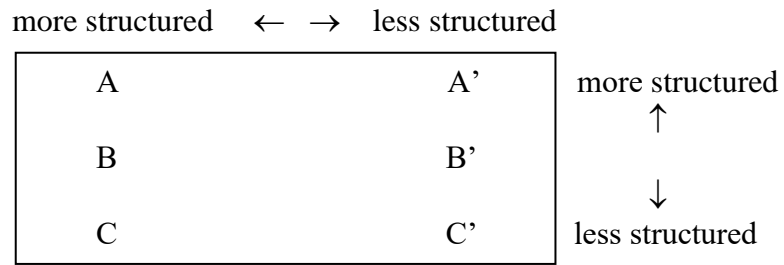
*p*

*uc*

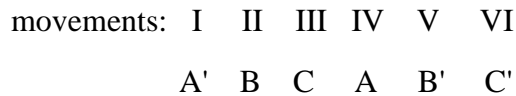
90°

The musical score is written for Piano Solo and consists of five systems of two staves each. The first system includes the dynamic marking *mp* and the instruction *10° per measure*. Below the first system, there are markings *p* and *uc* with arrows pointing to the right. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals. At the bottom right of the fifth system, there is a marking *90°*.

**Example 4**

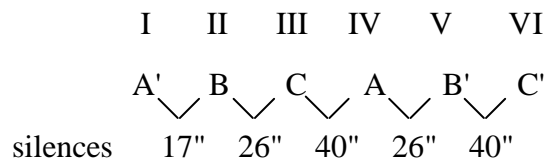


**Example 5**



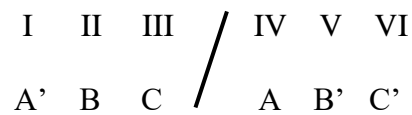
each movement. I use very long silences - often as long as the movements themselves - to create a great sense of separation and isolation (Example 6).

**Example 6**



One specific by-product of this use of silence is that the six movements are partitioned into two sets of three movements each (Example 7). Each group of three contains one

**Example 7**



each of A, B and C. In addition, each half moves from a state of high organization



toward a state of disorganization ( $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$ ). Moreover, the first half of the composition contains B and C while the second presents B' and C' thereby heightening the general sense of dissolution that characterizes the entire work. In contrast, however, the A's - which, as may be recalled, represent the most highly organized structures of the composition - move from a less ordered state toward a more ordered one ( $A' \rightarrow A$ ) effecting a rather striking opposition to all the other transformations which take place over the course of the work.

Turning to a consideration of the series as a whole, it would be useful to compare the structures employed in all three works, *Gestures*, *Traces* and *Marginal Developments* (Example 8)

**Example 8**

<i>Gestures</i>	<i>Traces</i>	<i>Marginal Developments</i>
A'	A'	A'
B	C	B
C	B'	C
A	A	B'
B'	B	A
C'	C'	C'

Most significant, is the fact that C and C' are identical in all three compositions. Both are piano solos that are shared, without variation, by each work in the series (indeed, the piano is the only instrument shared by all three pieces). All other structures vary quite a bit from piece to piece while maintaining the same position within the overall morphological scheme (i.e. A is always more ordered than B, etc.). With regard to the entire series, then, my goal was, simply, to repeat certain materials without variation (e.g. the two statements of C), placing them in three different contexts both in terms of structural evolution and instrumentation.

As the great composer Iannis Xenakis points out in his book *Formalized Music*:

Since antiquity the concepts of chance, disorder and disorganization were considered as the opposite and negation of reason, order and organization. It is only recently that knowledge has been able to penetrate chance and has discovered how to separate its degrees...in other words to rationalize it progressively...<sup>6</sup>

In each of these works, I tried to capture the very essence of this ontological vision; to integrate various states of order and disorder into a single totality. As stated earlier, however, most important for consideration of my more recent work is what happens in the temporal domain. Each level of structure (movement) is presented as an isolated event in time with no apparent predecessor or successor. Thus, though the structure always appears to continuously evolve and change, it is actually constructed from a succession of isolated moments; process and flux vs. separation and isolation.<sup>7</sup>

More recent works (from the late '70's and '80's) that follow in this line of inquiry are all computer-generated scores: the piano pieces *Sequence* (1982) and *Text* (1983); a composition for wind ensemble entitled *Partial Manifolds* (1983); *Against the silence...* (1986) for percussion ensemble and 4-channel computer generated tape; and *contrecoup...* (1987) for chamber ensemble.<sup>8</sup> *Against the silence...* is a study in discontinuity both with regard to its large scale structure as well as numerous local sonic formations. Throughout the work, sound arises from and decays into a silence that ultimately overwhelms it - hence the title, from the work of the American poet Paul Blackburn.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, silence plays a crucial role in both the structural and expressive designs of the piece. Unlike the chamber works discussed above, *Against the silence...* is a large work of twenty minutes duration in only two movements. Each of these movements consists of alternating sequences of sound and silence. Sonic events are variously sparse or densely packed with activity while silences separating those events reach lengths of almost sixty seconds in duration. The challenge was to integrate such enormous spans of silence into one structure without losing the coherence of a single connected musical evolution. At the same time, I wanted each silence to push the sonic events surrounding it away from one another thereby ensuring the ultimate isolation of each such event. In this sense, silence became an active force pushing out from within itself, keeping the events of sound from connecting. Here again, my purpose was to develop a structure which was, on the one hand, perceived as a single continuous

evolution, and yet, at the same time, seemed to consist exclusively of moments frozen in time, existing in apparent isolation from one another.

On a more detailed level, the structures of each of the two movements of *Against the silence...* were derived from the sonic attributes of attack and decay. The design of the composition integrates manifold amplifications of these attributes. In the first movement, typically, the percussion provides the attack component - moving simultaneously toward an intensification and dissipation of its sonic presence. The tape, in contrast, provides the decay, within which are often embedded various sonic expansions that seem to struggle against the overriding sonic dissipation. As perhaps the ultimate amplification of its role, the percussion is heard only through the first third of the movement, gradually dying out and leaving the tape behind as "residue" which fills the remaining two thirds.

In the second movement, roles are reversed. Here the tape focuses primarily upon the attack component (with occasional, rather dramatic references to its former role), while the natural decay characteristics of various percussion instruments are highlighted. This movement climaxes with a rather delicate perceptual balance in the final statement of the tape part that consists of a series of extremely rapid pulsations that often appear just at the point of merging into an impression of sustained sound. In addition, on larger structural levels, the roles of percussion and tape are also the reverse of those found in the first movement. For example, here, the tape is heard only through the first third of the movement leaving the percussion behind this time as residue.

Throughout the composition, time, density and timbre are organized with the aid of certain proportional series that come in and out of focus at various moments. With respect to time, in the first movement, proportions initially seem rather erratic. Gradually, however, they are taken over by one particular series. In the second, this series dominates various levels of activity moving in and out of focus in a variety of ways. With respect to timbre, the second movement begins with a series of interrelated sounds that gradually evolve into one particular color. In contrast, the first movement begins with a predominance of this very color and gradually moves away from it. With respect to space, in the first movement, the taped sounds begin in the left front corner of the hall and gradually spread out toward the right rear of the hall. At the end of the movement, they briefly recede back to the left front. In the second movement, this spatial

evolution is reiterated many times, in various guises and on different levels of the composition's structure. With respect to the percussion part, this movement from left front to right rear is greatly expanded. In the first movement, all percussion sounds emanate from left front. In the second movement, percussion sounds travel throughout the hall, again spreading, at various times and in various ways, toward the rear and right.

## Objects

From the mid-70's through the present, I have worked on a series of compositions for small, mixed ensembles which stem from a desire to construct a musical work that is perceived more as a static object than any type of process evolving over time (Example 9).<sup>10</sup> My interest is to focus totally on a sense of the present; only to accept the

**Example 9:** *Five (12-86)*, No. 5 (transposed score)

♩=60

Bb Cl. 1

Bb Cl. 2

Bb Cl. 3

Vla. 1, 2

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

immediate perceptions of a moment uncolored by any prior developments within the composition and unencumbered by any projection toward future developments

Each work consists of a series of very short pieces - approximately 15" to 25" in length (titles always refer to the number of pieces in a set). Each individual piece consists of a single static block of sound or a combination of several such blocks superimposed upon one another in various ways and performed at a very soft volume

level. Typically, each individual block consists of octave duplications of a single pitch class, sustained simultaneously, without change, for a prescribed period of time (Example 10). Differences in timbre set one block off against the other but also provide important

**Example 10:** *Five (1-88)*, No 1 (transposed score)

♩=60

Bb Cl. 1

Bb Cl. 2

Bb Cl. 3

Vln. 1, 2

Vla. 1, 2

Vcl. 1, 2

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

contrasts of color and texture. In Examples 9 and 10, the pure color of the clarinets is played off against the more textured string sound.

Occasionally, the foreground is represented by a single tone rather than a block of octaves (see Example 9). Each piece is set off from those around it by long periods of silence (anywhere from 30" - 50") in order to isolate it from other pieces in the set, thereby further emphasizing its object-like character. It is important to reiterate that each work consists of a series of separate pieces - not movements of one larger work - which complement, complete or balance one another. Each is a separate piece. In these works, there is no development, growth or evolution (even the order of the pieces is irrelevant). The goal is to create an experience of independent, isolated moments.

The first works of this type, dating from the mid-'70's consist of three series: *Six Variants* (1974-76), *Five Variants* (1974-76) and *Four Variants* (1976). Each, in fact, consists of multiple series of works. *Six Variants*, for instance, exists in two formats, each with two series, and three sets (Example 11). This total structural scheme was not

### **Example 11**

*Six Variants I*: Series I, Sets A, B and C  
Series II, Sets A, B and C

*Six Variants II*: Series I, Sets A, B and C  
Series II, Sets A, B and C

designed a priori but evolved gradually as various possibilities became apparent. Each set is approximately six minutes in duration. Any individual set or combination of sets may be performed on a concert. Each set consists of six separate pieces that I have labeled variants. The goal here was not only to create a series of compositions that were separate objects (without evolution, growth or development) but also to explore, rather systematically, different types of sonic objects.

In *Six Variants I*, Series I, Set A, a block of three flutes is superimposed, in various ways, onto a background of three strings (Example 12). In Set B, precisely the same temporal and spatial formations as those found in A are used, but the three flutes are replaced by three Bb clarinets - merely a change of color in the foreground. (The order of pieces is changed to avoid giving undue importance to any particular temporal succession of events). In Set C, the three flutes are replaced by three violins (Example 13). Mutes are used to distinguish background sonorities from those constituting the foreground. I liken the result to a white on white painting - a painting of white objects on a white ground.

In *Six Variants II* I introduce new types of objects. Primarily, foreground and background are dislodged and separated from one another. The foreground material is no longer necessarily heard against the background. Indeed, at times they do not even overlap at all (Example 14). The various series and sets in *Six Variants II* bear the same relationship to one another as do those in *Six Variants I* - with variations in timbre,

**Example 12:** *Six Variants I*; Series I, Set A, No. 2 (transposed score)

♩=60

Fl. 1  
Fl. 2  
Alto Fl.

Vln. 1, 2  
Vln. 3, 4  
Vln. 5, 6

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

**Example 13:** *Six Variants I*; Series I, Set C, No. 1

♩=60

Vln. 1, 2  
Vln. 3, 4  
Vln. 5, 6

Vln. 7, 8  
Vln. 9, 10  
Vln. 11, 12

*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

**Example 14:** *Six Variants II*; Series II, Set A, No. 2 (transposed score)

The musical score for Example 14 is a transposed score for six instruments. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 60. The score is divided into two measures. The first measure is in 5/4 time, and the second measure is in 2/4 time. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Fl. 1:** Treble clef, 5/4 time, quarter note, *ppp*, *senz vib.*
- Fl. 2:** Treble clef, 5/4 time, quarter note, *ppp*, *senz vib.*
- Alto Fl.:** Treble clef, 5/4 time, quarter note, *ppp*, *senz vib.*
- Vln. 1, 2:** Treble clef, 7/4 time, quarter note, *ppp*, *con sord.*, *senz vib.*
- Vln. 3, 4:** Treble clef, 7/4 time, quarter note, *ppp*, *con sord.*, *senz vib.*
- Vln. 5, 6:** Treble clef, 7/4 time, quarter note, *ppp*, *con sord.*, *senz vib.*

register, etc. The series *Five Variants* continues these explorations in a similar manner with one major change; the foreground is rendered more complex. Here two blocks (one of three flutes, the other three clarinets) are played off against one another and the background of strings. In multiple formats, series and sets, I once again, explore the various relationships of foreground to background using different timbre and spatial dispositions. The most important new developments occur in the last set of the composition where the background disappears completely, leaving only the two foreground elements sounding. (Example 15). Finally, the series *Four Variants* explores, still further, new ways to fashion such objects. For example, there are pieces with no foreground, only an empty canvas (Example 16).

Beyond the *Variant* collection, I explored various ways to fragment the sound blocks themselves. In one composition entitled *4 Series/I, II, III, IV* (1977), I examined situations in which the ground might tend to appear more as a surface element, so that the distinction between foreground and background is blurred (Example 17). Here the strings take on a more tenuous, less stable character and this leads to a more dynamic



**Example 15:** *Five Variants I*; Set C, No. 2 (transposed score)

$\text{♩} = 60$

Fl. 1  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Fl. 2  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Alto Fl.  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Bb Cl. 1  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Bb Cl. 2  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Bb Cl. 3  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

**Example 16:** *Four Variants*; Set A, No.3

$\text{♩} = 60$

Vln. 1, 2

Vla. 1, 2

Vcl. 1, 2

Vln. 3, 4  
*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

Vla. 3, 4  
*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

Vcl. 3, 4  
*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

**Example 17:** *4 Series/I, II, III, IV, Series I, No. 2* (transposed score)

♩=60

Bb Cl. 1  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Bb Cl. 2  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Bb Bass Cl.  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Vln. 1, 2  
*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

Vcl. 1, 2  
*ppp*  
*con sord.*  
*senz vib.*

interaction between strings and winds.

Subsequent to these initial attempts at object making, I turned toward a greater synthesis of elements to heighten the listener's sense that he was perceiving a sonic structure to be grasped all at once, as a totality (Example 18). Also, I worked on sets of

**Example 18:** *Five (3-88), No. 1*(transposed score)

♩=60

Bb Cl.  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Vln. 1, 2  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Vla. 1, 2  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

Vcl. 1, 2  
*ppp*  
*senz vib.*

pieces in which there was less similarity among the individual objects. For instance, in one set, Five (11-85) (1985), the first piece is scored for Bb trumpet, bass clarinet and three strings; a second for flute and Bb clarinet; and a third for three Bb clarinets and cello.

In these and similar compositions, I have tried to remove all extraneous detail, as well as all vestige of compositional rhetoric, in order to achieve an impression of concreteness; that is, an impression of sound as a concrete, almost tactile entity - not a material to be shaped into "musical" gestures, but rather, an end in itself to be appreciated for its own inherent qualities. Toward this end, I have created a rather severe sonic structure in which blocks of sound are enveloped in silence, thereby forced into perceptual stasis. By rejecting certain basic tenets of traditional musical discourse (in particular its compositional/dramatic rhetoric), and by severely limiting the general format (the number and kind of shapes), I hope to achieve a music that is, in some sense, at one and the same time, both ephemeral and monumental.

## **Installations**

Toward the end of his last book, *Mr. Palomar*, Italo Calvino contemplates his perspicacious character's ability to sense and, in turn, be sensed in the world:

And what about him, also known as "I," namely Mr. Palomar? Is he not a piece of the world that is looking at another piece of the world? Or else, given that there is world that side of the window and world this side, perhaps the "I," the ego, is simply the window through which the world looks at the world. To look at itself the world needs the eyes (and the eyeglasses) of Mr. Palomar.<sup>11</sup>

Through this eloquent synthesis, Calvino, echoing Wittgenstein and many others, determines that what we understand about the world is rooted in the way we perceive the world. Through the act of perception, Mr. Palomar discovers that his presence constitutes the nexus of all the forces that form his understanding of reality. Through his presence, he gives meaning to every event on his horizon. Calvino and Palomar are, of course, one and the same. Palomar's eyes and eyeglasses are those of Calvino who, through his creation, reaches for the impossibility of separating himself - for even one moment - from

his perceptions, only to find himself inevitably drawn in at the moment of each perception.

The most exciting art of our time strives for some tangible representation of those acts that define experience: the reciprocal forces of perception and consciousness. Toward this same goal, for the past eight years I have been working on a series of electronic sound installations designed to interact with the various architectural properties of their respective sites. Through the introduction of subtle sound combinations, as well as occasional visual elements, all carefully placed throughout the space, I attempt to bind site and perceiver together, heightening the perceiver's awareness of the locus of his experience. As is the case with a number of recent composers and visual artists such as Alvin Lucier, Max Neuhaus, Robert Irwin and Carl Andre, through my installations I attempt to draw the perceiver to the site of his experience - the frame that surrounds all experience and from which all meaning arises.

In fashioning each installation, I attempt to draw its structure from that of the environment in which the work is perceived rather than from any abstract notion of design; "place," then, becomes "structure." Toward this end, I have found it necessary to move music out of its traditional performance environment and, simultaneously, to strip it of all the rhetoric (dramatic, gestural, linear) that was born of, and is still nurtured by that medium. Typically, I introduce a few barely perceptible elements (sonic and/or visual) into a space. These act as invisible bonds uniting perceiver with site, leading him toward a new awareness of that site and the ways in which space appears to change as he moves through and around it.

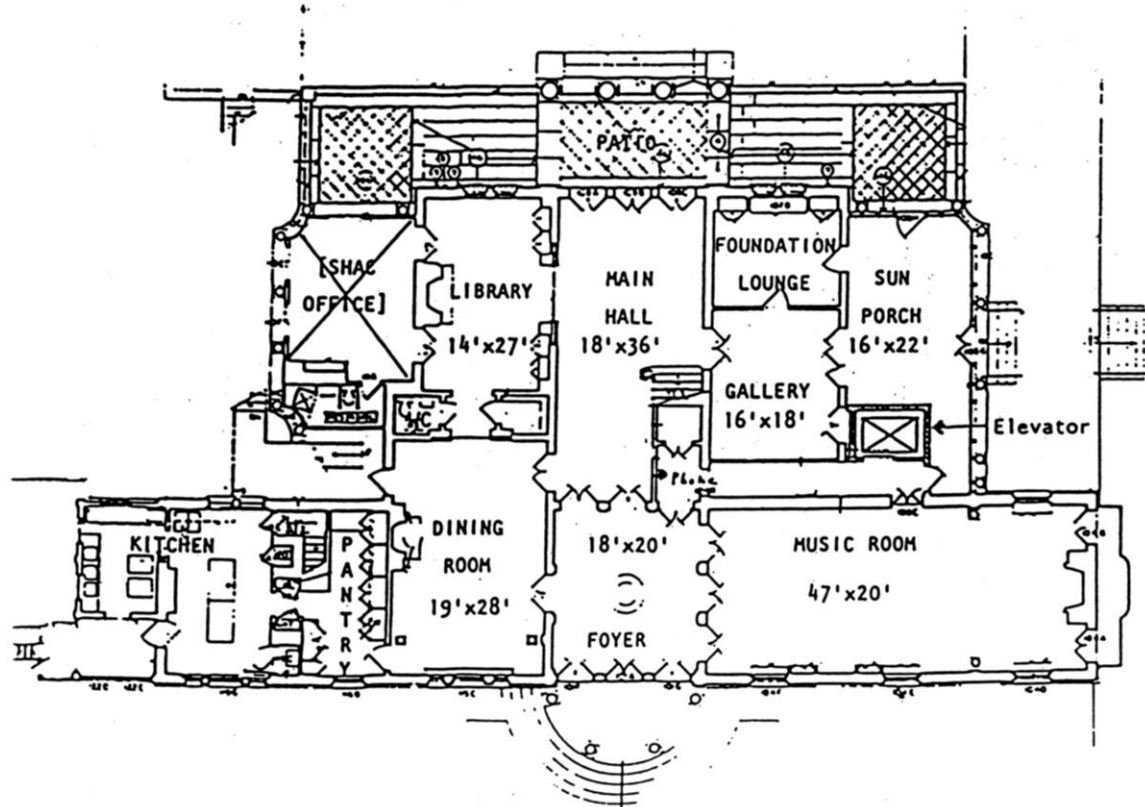
In this shift from abstraction to site, I hope to engage the perceiver in new ways and challenge the belief that, in experience, there is an ideal, "geometric" congruence between idea and object. Emphasis is placed upon presence: the simultaneous presence of oneself and the locus of one's experience. As the perceiver becomes conscious of the site, he becomes conscious of his presence as the focus of that site for himself. The perceiver and the perceived define each other as contradictory, yet inseparable boundaries, each drawing the other into consciousness simultaneously. In my installations, the site becomes the ground upon which this reciprocal action occurs. For me, these works are

an expression of the reality that "place" is the focal point between the individual and the world around him.

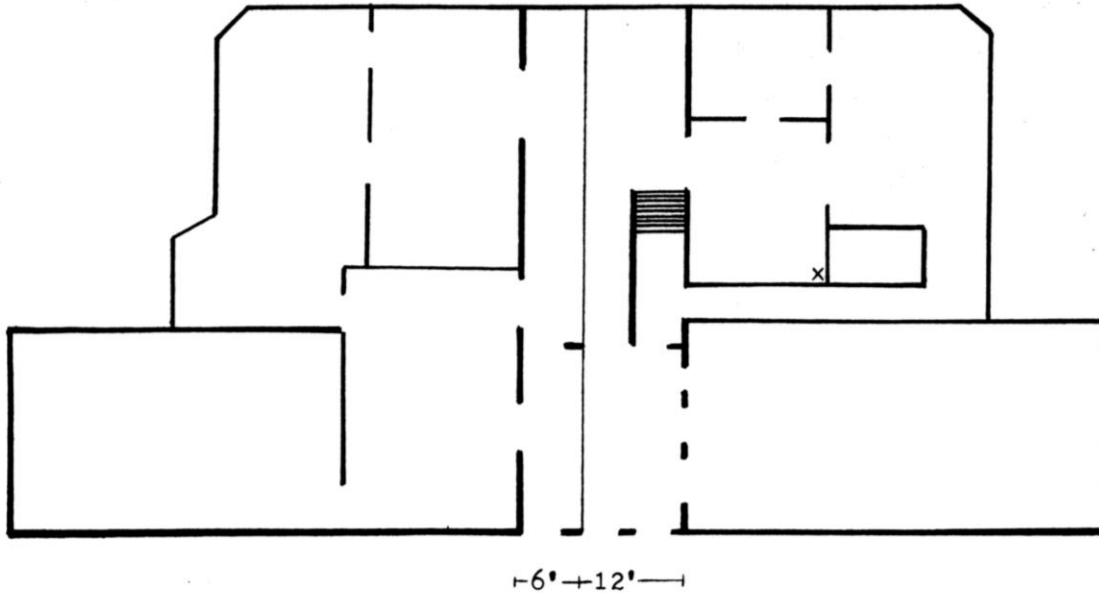
I have presented a number of different installations since 1978 at such institutions as The Baltimore Museum of Art and The Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.<sup>12</sup> The work that I will discuss in this paper is untitled and was created for the Strathmore Hall Arts Center in Rockville, Maryland (Examples 19 and 20). It was installed at this site from March 9 through 17, 1985. The Center is located in a spacious 19th century mansion in which rooms on both the first and second floors are used to display artworks. I used the entire first floor. In particular, I was drawn to the rather fragmented experience of space that I had when walking around this first floor. I was struck by the fact that, aside from perhaps the central hallway, no matter which room I happened to be in I tended to feel isolated and cut off from the rest of the site and found it difficult to locate myself within the entire space of the building. One of my goals, then, became the experiential unification of this fragmented environment. This presented a challenge quite different from that posed by any other space in which I had previously worked, where the site had always been extremely well integrated and my contribution tended either to enhance or play against this internal coherence.

The perceptual integration of Strathmore Hall was achieved through the use of two extremely different materials - one sonic and the other visual. These were used to help the perceiver draw the space together in his mind. The visual component of the piece consisted of a single, very thin thread of transparent monofilament stretched in an unbroken straight line through the entire length of the mansion - front to back - at a height of approximately seven feet from the ground. This line was drawn through the foyer and central hallway of the first floor (which follow one another consecutively) and divided these spaces asymmetrically (Examples 19 and 20). Due to the nature of this monofilament - its extreme thinness and near transparency - it was always just barely visible and at times, as the light changed or as one shifted one's vantage point, it even seemed to disappear. In general, the line was not visible from a distance of more than five or six feet and, more important, was never visible from any room other than the ones in which it was hung. Finally, of great significance was the fact that, due to its length, one could never see all of it at once. If one stood still and attempted to visually trace the

**Example 19:** Strathmore Hall, Rockville Maryland; first floor



**Example 20:** Strathmore Hall, Rockville Maryland; diagram of installation



— = one piece of very thin, barely visible monofilament, stretched taught approximately seven feet above the floor.

x = miniature speaker (3"x3"x3½") placed unobtrusively in corner, near ceiling; all wires and sound equipment hidden from view. The sound employed consisted of one, extremely soft square wave (fundamental frequency, 466 Hz - Bb<sup>4</sup>), filtered to almost sine tone purity (audible throughout the room in which the speaker was placed but inaudible from any other room).

line along its entire length, it always seemed to disappear into space. The sonic component of the piece consisted of one square wave, filtered to almost sine tone purity (fundamental frequency 466Hz, Bb4), played continuously and quite softly. This particular sound was chosen because it was especially resonant in the space in which it was heard, one of the small side rooms just off the main hallway. Though very soft, it could be perceived from any point in this room; however, it was inaudible from any other room in the building. Basically, a signal from a square wave oscillator was routed through a low pass filter and played through a special, high quality, miniature speaker (3" x 3" x 3 1/2") which was discreetly placed in a corner of the room, near the ceiling and covered with material which blended into the environment. All wires and electronic equipment (oscillator, amplifier, filter etc.) were hidden from view. As such, the tone appeared to simply hover in the room with no apparent point of origin.

As one experienced the piece, these two components tended to complement one another. The line united the space from end to end. Since it was never itself entirely visible from any one location, the viewer was drawn to move along it and discover its limits - the limits of the building. The line cut through the space of the central rooms of the mansion asymmetrically leading the viewer to reintegrate those spaces as he constantly attempted to focus upon the monofilament, locate its position in space and orient himself to it. In contrast, the sound appeared to fill one entire room. It was perceived as a material filling a specific volume of space. The room itself, then, appeared to function rather like a container. By extension, each room took on a similar quality and the entire building seemed no longer an agglomeration of random spaces but rather a body of irregularly shaped containers - one filled, the others empty. This gave each room a more object-like quality than is usually associated with such spaces, especially those in a museum where rooms are used for the display of art works and are not in themselves the center of our attention.

Together, these two disparate sonic and visual ideas balanced one another. One cut through space while the other filled it; one led the viewer to join different spaces, removing the internal partitions of rooms within the building, while the other led him to conceive each room as a distinct and separate object. Each element led to very different,



almost contradictory, conceptions of space. Faced with this, the viewer was, I hope, led to focus more intensely upon just what constituted the experience of this particular site.

In addition to the issues of presence and perception, which, as discussed earlier, are of paramount importance to this and other installations which I have created, several other related issues arise. The first involves the notion of impermanence. Each installation exists only for the duration of its presentation at the site (usually imposed by outside forces - gallery directors and museum schedules). It cannot be written down in the manner of a more traditional piece of music and then transported to any number of different locations and performed over again. Each is wedded to its site and would make no sense if somehow perceived apart from that specific site. This rather fragile temporality leads one to focus upon the moment, with no experience of past or future tied to it. Thus, through these installations, I strive for an expression without memory; not an expression "of something" but a "presence" to be experienced anew each time.

Another significant issue is the creation of a non-performance art. In the recent twentieth century, significant transformations have taken place in and among the various media in this regard. In the visual arts, one today finds a flourishing group of practitioners of what is known as "performance art"; while, in music, one finds a number of composers trying, in various ways, to step out of the world of performance in order to create an entirely new mode of expression. In my sound installations, I strive for a musical experience that eschews all vestige of performance and theater and is, therefore, perhaps more closely allied to the traditional world of the visual arts. In them, I try to create a situation in which the listener and his relationship to the space around him are of paramount importance. My specific purpose is to make the perceiver more conscious of his experience by focusing on the framework of that experience (the site) and, ultimately, to make that framework the very subject of experience itself.

Mercutio. ...Come, we burn daylight, ho.

Romeo. Nay, that's not so.

Mercutio. I mean sir, in delay

We waste our lights in vain, light lights by day.

## Footnotes

1. This paper was originally presented at the Washington Project for the Arts (Washington, D.C.) in 1987 on a lecture series entitled "The New Music Seminar Series."
2. Charles Olson, *The Special View of History*, Ann Charters, ed. (Berkeley, California: Oyez, 1970), p. 49.
3. Charles Olson, *Letters for Origin*, A. Glover, ed. (London: Cape Golliard Press, 1970), p. 11
4. For a detailed analytical discussion of an early work in which I begin to develop the ideas outlined here see: Wesley York, "A Draft of Shadows," *Percussive Notes* (March, 1984), pp. 42-67.
5. Scores of several works discussed in this essay are available from Smith Publications/Sonic Art Editions, 2617 Gwynndale Ave., Baltimore, Maryland, 21207, USA). The score of *Serenade* is published by Editore Semar (2 Via S. Agata de' Goti, 00184 Rome, Italy). Recordings of *Gestures*, *Marginal Developments* and *Serenade* were released on LP on the *Spectrum* label: *Gestures* (SR-163), *Marginal Developments* (SR-144), and *Serenade* (SR-128). *Against the silence...* is available on CD: *Wergo* (WER 2029-2) and *3D Classics* (Paris: 3D 8014).
6. Iannis Xenakis, *Formalized Music*, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1971), p.4.
7. I might add that another work from the early '70's in which I explored similar ideas, though in a very different context, is *Serenade* for piano solo (recorded on the *Spectrum* label, SR-128). In this work, I explore various applications of mathematical information theory to musical composition. The work is in three sections and traces the evolution and dissolution of various fixed pitch and time fields which are constantly juxtaposed, integrated and transformed. The detailed structure that unfolds is a mosaic of time variant stochastic processes, each of which occupies a distinct temporal, pitch and spatial field. In addition, I used the computer extensively in the composition of this work. Specifically, various stochastic processes were employed on both the micro- and macro-compositional levels. The computer was employed both to facilitate the use of these mathematical structures and to control their ebb and flow over time. In addition, the computer was used to calculate the entropy of each process as it evolved and was transformed over time, and, based upon the result of these calculations, made decisions which ultimately determined the large scale structure of the work. Here, using very different methods, I tried to achieve results similar to those found in the three chamber series. *Serenade* constantly moves between moments that are highly organized and others which are barely ordered, as well as various stages in between.

This structure is then chopped up and organized into a nonlinear, discontinuous series of events. For a more detailed look at the computer-aided aspect of this composition see: Charles Ames, "Automated Composition in Retrospect," *Leonardo* (Volume 20, Number 2; pp.169-185. The score is available from Editore Semar (2 Via S. Agata de' Goti, 00184 Rome, Italy).

8. A recording of *Partial Manifolds* was available on LP from Spectrum Recordings (SR-302). Score available from the Smith Publications/Sonic Arts Editions (2617 Gwynndale Ave., Baltimore, MD, 21207, USA).
9. Paul Blackburn, *Against the silences*, (London: Permanent Press, 1980).
9. Michael Hamman, "Toward a Morphology of Presence: The Sound Installations of Thomas DeLio," *Interface* (Vol. 16; Nos. 1-2). Errata, *Interface* (Vol.16, No. 3), p. 246.
10. Italo Calvino, *Mr. Palomar* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich Publishers, 1985), p. 114.
12. Hamman, *Op. Cit.*