

Thomas DeLio

space / image / word / sound II

surround sound, text and video

après Belle-Isle (2014)

Hörreste (Soundscrapes) (2014)

inents (version 4) (2015)

In Prag (In Prague) (2014)

inents (version 3) (2015)

Sakuteiki (surround version) (2014)

Schaufäden (Sight Threads) (2014)

inents (version 7) (2015)

Sichtbar (Visible) (2014)

Vorflut (Outfall) (2014)

inents (version 5) (with video; 2015)

Weissgrau (Whitegray) (2014)

inents (version 6) (2015)

text by P. Inman;

Thomas DeLio

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Spatialization is an essential component of all of the compositions on this DVD. **They are to be played in 5.0 surround sound only** (five channels, full range; no subwoofer). **Tracks may be accessed via ID #.** In addition, a Menu (track 28) can be accessed either with the menu button on the remote control or by selecting track 28.

1. <i>après Belle-Isle</i> (tape; 2014)	2' 10"
<i>Hörreste (Soundscrapes)</i> (tape; 2014)	
2. <i>Hörreste I</i>	1' 55"
3. <i>Hörreste II</i>	1' 28"
4. <i>Hörreste III</i>	1' 39"
5. <i>inents</i> (version 4) (tape; 2015)	5' 20"
<i>In Prag (In Prague)</i> (tape; 2014)	
6. <i>In Prag I</i>	2' 19"
7. <i>In Prag II</i>	2' 23"
8. <i>In Prag III</i>	2' 32"
9. <i>inents</i> (version 3) (tape; 2015)	9' 59"
<i>Sakuteiki</i> (surround version) (tape; 2014)	
10. <i>Sakuteiki I</i>	2' 13"
11. <i>Sakuteiki II</i>	2' 00"
12. <i>Sakuteiki III</i>	2' 00"
<i>Schaufäden (Sight Threads)</i> (tape 2014)	
13. <i>Schaufäden I</i>	0' 55"
14. <i>Schaufäden II</i>	0' 51"
15. <i>Schaufäden III</i>	1' 41"
16. <i>inents</i> (version 7) (tape; 2015)	5' 22"
<i>Sichtbar (Visible)</i> (tape; 2014)	
17. <i>Sichtbar I</i>	1' 49"
18. <i>Sichtbar II</i>	1' 43"
19. <i>Sichtbar III</i>	1' 57"
<i>Vorflut (Outfall)</i> (tape; 2014)	
20. <i>Vorflut I</i>	0' 37"
21. <i>Vorflut II</i>	0' 30"
22. <i>Vorflut III</i>	1' 05"
23. <i>inents</i> (version 5) (tape with video; 2015)	16' 28"
<i>Weissgrau (Whitegray)</i> (tape; 2014)	
24. <i>Weissgrau I</i>	1' 29"
25. <i>Weissgrau II</i>	1' 31"
26. <i>Weissgrau III</i>	1' 45"
27. <i>inents</i> (version 6) (tape; 2015)	3' 11"

Neuma Recordings

on **Thomas DeLio**

from *Traffic/Light: Post-Cage Discourses on Silence*

Bill Sallak
Associate Professor, Kent State University

John Cage, in a 1991 interview:

When I hear what we call "music," it seems to me that someone is talking: talking about his feelings or about his ideas, of relationships. But when I hear the sound of traffic here on 6th Avenue [in Manhattan], I don't have the feeling that anyone is talking. I have the feeling that sound is acting, and I love the activity of sound...I don't need sound to talk to me. (Cage 1991)

Thomas DeLio, in an interview with Tracy Wiggins:

For Cage, silence is the space in which all unintended sound comes into play... However, my sense of silence is different. Silence is like a location for the experience of sound. For me, it defines place with respect to sound. My silence frames sound, isolates it and creates an opportunity to hear sound both as an object—an entity unto itself divorced from

its role as a mere unit of linguistic baggage—as well as part of a process of evolution. (Wiggins 2008, 212)

It is indisputable that John Cage's work has forced many musicians to address their relationship to silence; what might be more interesting is an examination of the function and importance of silence in the work of composers who ultimately use Cage as a landmark to define, in large part, where their work does not reside. Specifically, the work of Thomas DeLio makes up a significant part of this rich web of philosophy, influence, difference, and dialectic on the uses of silence in music, the effect of silence on memory, the use of musical silence as a means of control, and the responsibilities of listeners confronted with silence.

DeLio's work invites immediate comparison to Cage's late music (especially the time-bracket works) in its generous proportion of silence to sound, and in the terms in which DeLio discusses it. In his seminal essay "The Complexity of Experience," DeLio states that he "would like to be rid of gesture and process and get sound back 'clean'"; regarding his 1991 piece *between* for flute and percussion, DeLio lists his aesthetic objectives, which include "replac[ing] development and evolution with presentation," and "rid[ding] sound of gesture" (DeLio 1993, 65-66). So far, so Cagean, but DeLio soon elucidates the

differences between his approach and Cage's, to wit: "I continue, of course, to use long silences and so place each sound event on a trajectory moving toward isolation." (DeLio1993, 66) And furthermore:

Typically, my compositions are constructed from discrete segments of music which, though they coexist as a group, never become fixed with respect to one another through hierarchical relationships; in this respect my pieces are never organic. I strive for this condition in order to avoid as much as possible the expression of subjective priorities from which such hierarchies are engendered. In addition, I always try to avoid constructing transitions linking individual events. I avoid anything which might convey a sense of continuity and connection. I desire everything to be segmented, halted, separated. I have no interest in memory, which seems to me an illusion. Only the direct perception of the moment seems important to me. (DeLio 1993, 65-66)

This line of thought thoroughly pervades DeLio's work. The third page of his 1992 piece *not* (for percussion and piano) illustrates these ideas as well as any other. The page provides notation for 21 seconds of the work. 16 of those seconds (the first system) contain sound: piano, vibraphone, and one chime note, all marked *ppp*. DeLio indicates that the

initial group of instrumental attacks should be completed before five seconds pass; the next two attacks in the piano follow after approximately seven seconds of unpunctuated decay. The last five seconds of the page are silent; DeLio asks that all resonating instruments be dampened simultaneously at the end of the first system. Feldman's influence is readily apparent in the choice of instruments and dynamic, as well as the generous time allowed for the enjoyment of the instruments' decay—though it should be noted that while DeLio does acknowledge the deep influence that Feldman has had on his music, his music regularly uses the full conventional dynamic spectrum, as well as percussion instruments not normally associated with Feldman (such as claves, tom-toms, etc.).

What is most striking about this passage is the way that DeLio seems committed to actively managing the listener's relationship to silence. As a post-Webern, post-Cage, post-Feldman composer, DeLio surely understands the conventionality of the first five seconds of this passage—its chromaticism, its texture, etc.—but it becomes something uniquely his only at the end of the first system, where the two piano attacks punctuate—nay, puncture!—that sonic decay, right before the whole is smothered. This is a passage written by a composer who is intently interested in demonstrating the gradations of near-silence that approach and meet silence, and who is willing to do so in near-finger-pointing fashion.

DeLio's use of silence extends beyond microscopic textural moments such as this; he also uses carefully measured periods of silence as an element of structure, and this idea represents one of his most direct borrowings from Cage. A large number of Cage's early works have structures governed by patterns of duration, and Cage notably observed that the primacy of duration as a musico-structural element is due to duration being the only parameter that silence shares with sound. DeLio's works often have structures governed by intersecting fields of sound and silence whose durations expand, contract, or remain constant with respect to each other, and he feels that the macroscopic actions of these fields growing, shrinking, interfering with and impinging upon one another is in large part what gives his compositions their internal energy.

An illuminating example of this is found in DeLio's recent work *et avant / image*, for nine percussionists and flute, premiered in February 2012 at the University of Akron (DeLio 2011). *et avant / image* is typical of DeLio's work in several ways: players are spatially located throughout the hall in and around the audience according to a specific scheme, the percussionists speak and whisper phonemes as well as fragments of text (in this case, Mallarmé, a common choice for DeLio), and percussion instruments are chosen to offer the composer sonic options along several spectra, including frequency,

pitch-perceptibility, and bandwidth (narrow- to wide-band). The following three tables give the durations (in seconds) of alternating periods of sound and silence which have borders that are relatively easy to define; parentheses mark instances where it's hard to determine the precise starting moment of the silence in question. The flute plays only in Section II.

Section I

Sound	3		5		4		4	
Silence		17		5		16		21

Section II (with flute)

Sound	18		28		41	
Silence		7		7		7

Section III

Sound	15		13		5		(9)		13		36		29
Silence		10		17		23		(24)		30		9	

It is easy to discern the general sound/silence character of each major section: Section I consists of four relatively short episodes of sound, alternating with periods of silence which, comparatively, are generally much longer; Section II inverts this relationship, alternating three significantly (and increasingly) longer periods of sound with brief periods of silence, each precisely the same length; Section III contains the most complex durational interplay between sound and silence. The methodology of this formal scheme shares little with Cage's methodologies, but one is hard pressed to find a composer giving the same kind of hard thought to silence and durational structure as DeLio.

It would be simplistic, however, to describe any Cage-DeLio relationship as being purely oppositional: DeLio is an American who studied in America, teaches in America, and openly acknowledges his debt to Cage for just these things. In fact, Chris Shultis drafts DeLio onto Team Cage, as it were, in his excellent essay "The Dialectics of Experimentalism" (2008), which extends the 1950s Cage-Boulez binary opposition to the present day in the persons of DeLio and Brian Ferneyhough. For me, DeLio's music inhabits a space where modernist-postmodernist modes of thinking don't operate clearly: DeLio carefully crafts minutely detailed sound events, treating sound and silence as binary opposing forces, making ownership claims ("*My silence frames*

sound”), using acoustic instruments to re-create the effects of electronic music a la Xenakis or Serocki, and otherwise doing just about everything I’d expect a European-trained modernist to do, but when he talks about where his music comes from, he stands pretty firmly in line with Cage. His is a rich musical landscape indeed.

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space / image / word / sound II

Thomas DeLio

après Belle-Isle (2014) is a very short transformation of a longer work composed in 2003 entitled *Belle-Isle*, a set of four interrelated movements. The newer work is in a sense a brief reflection on that earlier composition, compressing its sonic events into a series of very short aphoristic moments.

In 2014 I created a series of compositions, each consisting of three variants on a basic idea: *Hörreste* (*Soundscrapes*), *In Prag* (*In Prague*), *Schafäden* (*Sight Threads*), *Sichtbar* (*Visible*), *Vorflut* (*Outfall*), *Weissgrau* (*Whitegray*) and *Sakuteiki*. In all but the last of these pieces I was interested in exploring several concepts. The first was spatial. Rather than have sound move through space along various trajectories, I wanted to create a sense of space as volume. I was deeply influenced by the recent work of two visual artists: Frank Stella's three dimensional "paintings" from the late 1980's where visual elements protrude from the flat surface of the wall on which they are hung;¹ and Gerhard Richter, who famously spreads paint on a canvas in multiple layers.² Richter's approach led me to try an analogous approach mixing in surround sound; I mixed a series of events in 5.0 surround, then took the resulting five mono files associated with each of the five speakers (left, center, right, left rear, right rear) and spatialized each of these in a new surround mix. I then took the resulting mono sound files of each of these mixes and further spatialized them. And so forth. The result of these many mixes, when played together produced a spatial field with great depth. For each of the compositions listed above I repeated this entire process three times, hence the three versions of each piece presented on this disc. The

only composition listed above which was not the result of this process was *Sakuteiki* which is a simple remixed surround version of an earlier work originally in stereo.

inents (versions 3, 4, 5 and 6) (2015)

text: P. Inman

speakers: Tina Darragh, Linda Dusman, Tom Goldstein,
Zachary Maslanik, Susan McCully, Thomas Moore

What excites me about poet P. Inman's work is that it does not just talk about the world (feeling, places, etc.) it becomes part of it, a *thing* in it. It seems to me that in this poetry we become aware of language in two very different ways. At times words and phrases seem to move from opaque to transparent, caught in the process of taking on referential associations to objects or ideas and thus caught on the verge of losing their alternate identity as concrete sounds and black lines on a piece of white paper. At other times Inman's words and phrases seem to move in the opposite direction; they seem to become so opaque that they lose any such associations. In his introduction to a recently published volume of Inman's collected work entitled *written*, the scholar Craig Dworkin notes that when reading Inman's work a "kind of cumulative textual logic can...unfold to *triangulate* [my italics] seemingly isolate, nonsensical words."³ This triangulation is precisely what I hope to extend to the sonic level of words and language in my settings.

inents (2015), the most recent composition on this CD (written 43 years after the oldest) is my third setting of

Inman's poem *aengus*.⁴ The first was a sound installation entitled "*aengus*" (2013); the second, an electro-acoustic composition in surround sound.⁵ The installation, my third based upon an Inman text, consists primarily of moments and surfaces. Both of these settings of *aengus* are drawn from recordings of the text read by six different readers, three male and three female, which provided the source material for the work.

For *inents* I returned to the same six recorded readings. Indeed, *all* sounds heard in this piece are derived from those readings. Prior to *inents*, in my electroacoustic work with text, I typically broke up words and phrases to the point where they were generally unintelligible. My impetus for *inents*, however, was to create an electroacoustic setting in which the text would often be apprehensible, on the surface of the composition. I wanted the text as spoken by the various readers to be heard side-by-side with the fragmented, transformed elements from which the language is made. I feel that, in this context, the result renders the moments where we simply hear people reading the text as music. We become aware of the timbre of each individual voice, the timing of each reading, pauses, breathing... I wanted the listener to experience even a "straightforward" reading (if there is such a thing) as itself, first and foremost, a sonic event. (Perhaps this is a sonic reflection of the linguistic variability that Inman infuses into his poetry.) Even normal speech becomes a musical event when placed in the context of the chopped up, filtered phonemes and stretched, attenuated consonants which create the sonic

framework within which these simple readings are often heard (and now recognized as not so simple).

I also worked from a new idea of form (new, at least for me), also inspired by the often variable formal (often visual) designs of Inman's poems. For this piece I first created approximately forty sound events: some containing the aforementioned straightforward readings of the poem; others containing words and phrases transformed sonically in different ways (filtering, reverberation, cross synthesis...). The events ranged from complete readings (by different readers), through partial readings, to transformations wherein the speech was still partially recognizable, and finally to events where the source of the sound material was only barely recognizable as speech. I also created a series of time-frames which ranged from quite short (20") to over a minute. Each sonic event sits somewhere within one of these time-frames and this seems to convey a strangely open quality to the final composition; a feeling of moments and surfaces floating freely in time and space. I then arranged these events in different ways to create multiple versions of the composition – the shortest around five minutes, the longest around sixteen. Some were created in stereo, where nothing would take attention away from the sound material, others in surround sound, in which spatialization became a component of the experience, and one surround version with a brief bit of video. No version contains all of the sound events and all present the events in different orders. My goal in determining the order in each version was to create as disjunct a succession of events as possible, to create a kaleidoscopic sense of the juxtaposition of the various

presentations of material. My guiding rule-of-thumb for each version was to try to create a succession of events in which similarity and connection would become meaningless in the creation of hierarchical relationships. Curiously, I initially thought that I might leave it up to the listener to create his/her own order, but, over time, this seemed less and less desirable to me (I am not a Cagean in that sense, though his work is never far away from mind). Sensitivity and care was needed in order to create the multilayered, non-linear experience that I wanted to convey. I also hope that different listeners may become familiar with different, but not all versions, so that each listener will have a different sense of what the piece is.

Five surround versions are presented on this disc, among them the longest version thus far, version 5, with video. It might be noted that the visual images in this version only appear in the final few minutes of this sixteen and a half minute version. So throughout most of this version the screen will be black.

¹ Mark Prince , “Anarchy and Objecthood,” *Art in American* (December, 2012), pp.140-147.

² See “Gerhard Richter Painting” (Lober Films, 2012).

³ Craig Dworkin, “Introduction” to *written, 1976-2013*, P. Inman, if p then q (Manchester: Great Britain, 2014), p. xxvi.

⁴ P. Inman, *aengus* from *P. Inman 2 poems* (London: tolling elves 4, 2002); reprinted in *ad finitum* (Manchester: if p then q classics, 2008).

⁵ For a recording of “*aengus*” (2013) see *Thomas DeLio: space / image / word / sound* (Neuma DVD 450-201); for a recordings of *Song: “aengus”*

see *Thomas DeLio: Selected Compositions, 1991-2013* (Neuma CD 450-108).

aengus

P. Inman

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THOMAS DELIO (b. 1951) is a composer and theorist. He has written music for a variety of solo instruments, chamber ensembles and orchestra, and is especially noted for his work in computer music. His compositions have been performed worldwide and are recorded on numerous labels including Wergo (Germany), 3D Classics (France), Neuma, Centaur, Capstone, ERMMedia and Spectrum. His composition for soprano and orchestra entitled *en l'espace de...* was recorded by the Prague Radio Symphony. He has published over thirty essays in such journals as *The Journal of Music Theory*, *Perspectives of New Music*, *Interface*, *Sonus*, *Artforum*, *The Computer Music Journal*, *Contemporary Music Review* (London), *Revue d'Esthétique* (Paris) and *MusikText* (Cologne). A number of these essays have been anthologized and several have been translated into German, French and Italian. He has also published numerous books about contemporary music, most notably *Circumscribing the Open Universe* (University Press of America; Italian translation, Editore Semar, Rome), *The Music of Morton Feldman* (Greenwood Press), and *The Amores of John Cage* (Pendragon Press). The book *Essays on the Music and Theoretical Writings of Thomas DeLio*, edited by Thomas Licata, was published by The Edwin Mellen press in 2008. It contains essays by leading composers and scholars from Europe and the United States about DeLio's work. His *Collected Essays, Volume I (1980-2000)* is forthcoming from the same press. In 2011 The University of Maryland Special Collections Division established a new archive, *The Thomas DeLio Papers*. This archive holds sketches and manuscripts for his music, books

and essays; master tapes from numerous recording sessions; journal articles, books, CDs and DVDs. In addition it will hold his correspondence, including letters from such composers, poets and artists as Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, Alvin Lucier, Morton Feldman, Elliott Carter, Sol LeWitt and Peter Inman, among others. Eventually all his teaching materials will also be held in this collection as well as work by his students in both theory and composition.

P. INMAN was born in 1947 in Bronxville, NY and grew up on Long Island, NY. He has been a practicing poet since the 1970's. His work has been published in Canada, France, Great Britain, Spain and the U.S. His books include: *Ocker* (Tuumba, 1982), *Platin* (Sun and Moon, 1979), *Uneven Development* (Jimmy's House of Knowledge, 1984), *Red Shift* (Roof Books, 1988), *Vel* (O Books, 1995), *Criss Cross* (Roof Books, 1994), *amounts. to.* (Potes and Poets Press, 2000), *ad finitum* (if p then q, 2008) and *per se* (Burning Deck, 2012). His collected works entitled *written* (2014) is published by if p then q press. In addition, his poetry has appeared in such anthologies as *In the American Tree* (National Poetry Foundation) and "*Language*" *Poetries* (New Directions). Since 1997 his work has served as a sound/text source for several of Thomas DeLio's compositions, of which *inents* is the most recent.

CID CORMAN was an American poet, translator and editor who founded the influential journal of American poetry, *Origin*. Corman published more than one hundred books and pamphlets. Since 1990 three of five volumes

from his series of books entitled *OF*, have been published by Lapis Press.

TINA DARRAGH is one of the leading poets in America today. Her work has been widely published and anthologized.

LINDA DUSMAN is a distinguished composer and Professor of Music at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

TOM GOLDSTEIN is a percussionist and director of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County Percussion Ensemble.

ZACHARY MASLANIK is a percussionist and at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

SUSAN MCCULLY is a scholar of feminist theatre, playwright, and performer. She is a member of the faculty of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

THOMAS MOORE is a pianist who specializes in the music of the 20th century. He is Director of Arts and Culture in the Office of Institutional Advancement at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County

All compositions were mastered by the composer in his studio in Washington, DC.

This DVD was authored by Stephen Lilly, Washington, DC (www.stephenlilly.net).

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