Composing from Memory: the convergence of archive creation and electroacoustic composition

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***The Video Archive of Electroacoustic Music*, an oral history project begun in 1996 by the author and sociologist, Barbara Cassidy, captures a first-person history of many pioneering electroacoustic music composers, scientists and engineers from 1950 to present. Transcript excerpts from *The Archive* are presented. Simultaneous with the founding of *The Video Archive*, the author began composing a series of pieces that draw on archival materials (from within and without *The Video Archive*) in a number of ways. Some possible compositional opportunities and approaches are mentioned and explored as embodied in the author's *Left To His Own Devices* (1996), and *Crossing Boundaries* (2000).**

1. INTRODUCTION

The act of composing has always engaged memory. For most of the history of Western music though, this has primarily meant the working out of the composer's memories of other music. The ability of electroacoustic music to build structures from absolutely any recorded material allows it to reference memory in new ways – to create layers of meaning in dialogue with one another. Recordings of older music can be restructured into new works to produce deliberate musical commentary on our past. And layers of text (spoken and/or sung) can add a poetic dimension – a metamusical narrative aspect. Indeed, Katherine Norman makes an argument that such layering is so rich as to move the art form beyond music (Norman 2000: 217).

The early electroacoustic composers recognised the new possibilities for expanded text painting. Masterworks such as Berio's *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958) and Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1956) come immediately to mind. Some fifty years on, a convergence of technical and cultural forces with the accelerating interest in oral history and ethnography has led some composers in a more 'confessional', biographical, even autobiographical direction.

With all of recorded history at our disposal, the 'themes' we might invoke in a new composition are endless. And once material is chosen, a composer can decide whether or not a piece reveals, even revels in its sources material. Just how much the material will remain a personal secret, and how much will be a public conversation becomes a central compositional decision. When a composer chooses iconic recordings and texts, the overt conversation with the past can capture the power of shared, communal memory. The challenge though is to do more than simply quote well-known sources and take a free ride on fame. A composer needs to digest the material and come up with a piece that through manipulation and recontextualisation has something of its own to say.

My own music to date has explored a broad spectrum of possible solutions, from pieces that extract some essential quality of well-known material (such as *And It Flew Upside-Down*, 1994) to those that recontextualise iconic 'samples' (*'Scuse Me* for electric guitar and electronic sound, 1998, which is saturated with motives from *Purple Haze*), to a series of composer portraits (*Left To His Own Devices*, 1996, Milton Babbitt; *Portrait of the Artist*, 1997, John Lennon; *Wolpe Variations*, 2003, Stefan Wolpe; *Into Your Ears*, 2004, Mario Davidovsky), all of which draw upon interview and oral history sources as well as the subject's music.

It is this last category of work, the archive-derived piece, which demonstrates a way that scholarship, citizenship, and the act of composition have converged at this moment. And while this article demonstrates this convergence in my own work, the principles and the opportunities are broadly applicable. One central principle is that the responsibility for documenting the history of electroacoustic music is our own – that this historical moment both enables this work and demands it of us. The ubiquity of high quality digital recording equipment enables virtually the entire community to be involved in document collection. And as no one else is doing it, composers *must* become engaged in building archives of primary source materials.

2. *THE ARCHIVE*

The above cited series of biographically inspired compositions, most likely not by coincidence, was begun in 1996 just prior to the creation of *The Video Archive of Electroacoustic Music*, an oral history project co-curated with sociologist and former documentary film producer Barbara Cassidy. *The Archive* currently

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comprises about fifty hours of digitally recorded interviews, primarily on American subjects, composers and engineers across a broad spectrum (see Appendix for the current inventory). Our mission is to capture a first-person history of the pioneering composers, scientists, and engineers from 1950 to present. Age and illness have since claimed several interview subjects and many other potential subjects. Luciano Berio, Earl Brown, Herbert Brün, David Lewin, Pierre Schaeffer and Iannis Xenakis have all died in recent years, underscoring the urgency of this work.

To date, *The Archive* includes Bebe Barron (who collaborated with John Cage, filmmaker Maya Deren, and choreographer Merce Cunningham); Milton Babbitt; Mario Davidovsky; David Smith, founder of Sequential Circuits; Mel Powell (who performed with Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller, and then established studios at Yale and CalArts); John Pierce and Max Matthews of Bell Laboratories, Morton Subotnik, and many others. The interviews have an informal, conversational quality, and often reveal much more about the subjects than their ideas about art, music, and technology. Some excerpts give a sense of the material:

> *Max Matthews, Bell Laboratories*: I had the idea that if we could digitise speech . . . and get it into the computer, that we could simulate the new telephones . . . then, we went to a . . . concert . . . John [Pierce] looked at me and said, 'The computer could do better than this, why don't you write a program?' So I went away and wrote Music I, which did not do better . . . And I guess the real question, which I often ask, is why at that time we didn't give up and forget the whole thing. There were two reasons. One was a mathematical theorem of Claude Shannon's, which basically proved that . . . any sound that the human ear could hear could be made this way . . . The other thing was the encouragement of a number of very, I think, perceptive musicians and composers . . . Edgard Varèse, Vladimir Ussachevsky, and Milton Babbitt.
>
> *Dave Smith*: Sequential was the first, technically to ship a MIDI synthesizer in December of '82, then at January of '83, at the NAMM show, Roland brought over their JP6 and they plugged it into the Prophet 600, so it was the first MIDI connection, and it worked!
>
> *Bebe Barron*: For a wedding present somebody gave us a wire recorder, so we were indeed very lucky when we were able to obtain the very first tape recorder in the world . . . in about 1949 . . . we shot off to New York, moved to the Village. Anyway, we started a recording studio. We built almost all the equipment ourselves because there wasn't any to buy, really. And it turned out the studio became something of a centre. John [Cage] brought . . . Stockhausen, Edgar Varèse. Lou Harrison was around a lot. He gave a name to our first piece . . . the *Heavenly Menagerie*.
>
> ©1996–1998 Eric Chasalow and Barbara Cassidy

With almost ten years of collecting history, it is possible to critique the work of *The Archive* and to extrapolate some lessons for those who might take up a similar challenge. (N.B. While outside the scope of this paper, standards for oral history collection and analysis and ethnographic study are well established and worthy of further consideration by anyone embarking on a similar project.) As curators, our intention all along has been to build as inclusive and broad an archive as possible. Nevertheless, constraints of time and funding have dictated the interview inventory to date. Most subjects are American. Many comprise the circle of Bell Laboratories in Murray Hill, New Jersey, and the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, New York City. While this emphasis is in conflict with *The Archive*'s stated mission of inclusiveness, there are implications for a model of oral history collection that has some advantages.

Our first efforts to collect oral histories were directed by two practical considerations. Foremost in our minds was the need to interview aged and ailing pioneers. Thus, we started with Ivan Tcherepnin, Bebe Barron and Mel Powell, all of whom were seriously ill at the time (Ivan and Mel died shortly after being interviewed while Bebe has, thankfully, recovered). A second factor became an organising principle. Practitioners are often associated with particular studio/communities (this is particularly true of early practitioners from the time when access to practice was primarily through institutional studios). Collecting interviews from the group of individuals around a studio allows for multiple perspectives on a particular time and place as well as institutional ways of working. A rich dialogue among voices emerges as one reviews these sub-collections.

As a member of the community that I have collected the most assiduously, I have an interest in its documentation. While this may seem a peculiar kind of self-interest, I wish to emphasise two positive aspects of the model. First, there is often an intimacy to the interviews as a result of the subjects' comfort with us and our intentions. Subjects tend to speak 'off script', which yields much more meaningful material. The second advantage is of a practical nature. It would be entirely possible to spend several lifetimes simply collecting oral histories. But a 'distributed model', where many composers become involved in documenting their own communities, will build a more complete record than could a centralised project team, even a well-funded one. Furthermore, with a distributed model, it is entirely possible for a composer to engage in document collection without becoming devoured by the process and ceasing to do the work of a composer.

3. THE CONVERGENCE OF COLLECTING AND COMPOSING

Vivian Perlis curates an extensive composer archive at Yale University, primarily consisting of audio

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recordings. This archive quite naturally coincides with her authorship of a number of composer biographies, notably two volumes on Aaron Copland. The synergy of archival collection and composition is by contrast less obvious. Composers are by nature inward beings, and this would seem to be in conflict with the objectivity required by scholarship. I contend though that pieces composed from archival materials provide another voice in the creation of knowledge around that material, albeit a decidedly subjective voice.

A bit of personal history explains how the creation of *The Archive* began to converge with my own compositional process. About 1997, shortly after the first round of interviews had been conducted, I began identifying video clips to use in a courseware project at Brandeis University. The result, a multimedia timeline of the history of electroacoustic music, highlights some of the more personal interview moments – those that draw students into the world of these pioneers at work in their studios. When I returned to work on my own music, texts from the videos stuck in my mind and became wrapped up in the creative process. It all felt very similar to the way that poetry can work its way into the subconscious and instigate musical shapes.

Texts from oral history constitute a kind of 'found poetry'. Casual spoken phrases may have little meaning in the context of a long interview. But isolated and recontextualised, one phrase can influence another, emphasising the music of the word-sounds and the metamusic of constructed text narrative as it unfolds. Once one steps out of the realm of archivist and into the creative role of composer, the distortion of meaning for expressive purposes becomes, not only appropriate, but essential. In my own case, I have chosen two different approaches regarding respect for the words of the interview subject. Most often, I create portraits that, while they distort certain personality traits for emphasis, attempt to remain faithful to the historical record. In other pieces, I create a whole new script, where the subject's voice is used primarily for its musical qualities, and the spoken text no longer refers to an individual subject, but rather to some larger idea.

There clearly are points in the cycles of music history where composers are compelled to discard what have become ingrained habits to create new practice. In the past few decades, this has meant that some electroacoustic pioneers discarded foundational notions about music and music terminology to explode boundaries in the continuum from 'music' to 'sound art'. I contend that in 2005 we have sufficient perspective on this continuum to combine both old and new practices in compelling ways (indeed I felt this way in the 1990s or would not have composed the music in question).

One built-in assumption with each electroacoustic piece I have composed to date is that it is still music. That is, whatever new opportunities are afforded by manipulating text and other materials through electroacoustic means, these are further extensions of musical principles. Traditionally speaking, music is fundamentally about our experience of time passing. All of the elements that we think of as comprising music, pitch, rhythm, timbre, etc., interact to create a sense of moving through time. Expectations are built, thwarted, and fulfilled as a piece progresses, suggesting where the piece might be going and revealing surprising aspects of where it has been. I wish to claim (at the risk of an extreme lack of humility) that the work discussed in this article makes a case for combining more recent concepts of distilling meaning from sound (if *musique concrète* might be considered new at this point) with older ideas about 'line', 'pacing', and yes, even 'harmony' in the deepest sense. For example, the exact amount one chooses to speed vary, pitch shift, or vary the spectrum of a bit of text, changes not only our perception of timbral qualities but also the way it opens into the next moment in the piece, perhaps creating a strong 'downbeat' for example. Likewise, such manipulations determine what harmony projects from a piece as well as the 'harmonic rhythm' – important factors in determining our sense of where we are in the piece and how fast or slow the music is. A piece that has been carefully made with respect to these more traditional concerns in no way disadvantages our perception of other aspects of sound. On the contrary, there is a rich counterpoint of elements, even for the moment putting aside consideration of the poetics of the text layer.

Two pieces included on a 2003 New World Records CD, *Left To His Own Devices*, embody my two different approaches to oral history-based composition. The title composition, an homage to Milton Babbitt on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, is a somewhat satirical composer portrait, while *Crossing Boundaries*, commissioned to mark the millennium, turns archive voices into thematic archetypes in order to take on the larger ideas appropriate to the nature of the commission.

The 1996 composition, *Left To His Own Devices*, was the first of my composer portrait pieces. The choice of Milton Babbitt as a subject was entirely organic. From 1977 through 1985 I was fortunate to be part of the last generation mentored by the founders of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. The Center was an incredibly rich environment with a strong sense of community among the students, guest composers, teachers and staff. The staff and directors at the time included Mario Davidovsky, Bulent Arel, Alice Shields, Pril Smiley, Vladimir Ussachevsky and Milton Babbitt. Beginning during that time of intense study, I had many opportunities to internalise, not only a large number of personal aphorisms associated with Babbitt, but also the extraordinary quality of his voice in every sense of

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the word. The sheer force of personality, musical and otherwise, made it ripe for commentary. Furthermore, the sound of the RCA Mark II synthesizer, the instrument that 'speaks' the electroacoustic music of Babbitt, seemed especially rich and idiosyncratic.

My title is a personal Babbitt reference. More than once in the 1970s he told me that he intended to write only one more piece for tape and instrument – a violin and tape piece entitled *Left To My Own Devices*. Sadly, not long after, the studio was broken into and the RCA vandalised, rendering it inoperable. The RCA was gone and the piece never written.

In *Left To His Own Devices*, I have combined archival interviews with Milton Babbitt that go back as far as the 1960s (mostly an interview conducted by composer Bill Brunson in 1984) with a virtual RCA synthesizer of my own creation. This has allowed me to write music that draws on quotations from Babbitt's instrumental music but to have it 'performed' by the sounds of the RCA. The text is my own composite of phrases that some of us have heard Milton speak many times over the years. In the best tradition of text setting, I have tried to intensify these phrases by building a dramatic, musical structure both *from* them and around them. The text moves among biography, thoughts on music in general, and an early lecture specifically about electronic music, allowing me to make musical puns between text and accompaniment (sound example 1 – excerpt, first three minutes of *Left To His Own Devices*).

A few examples of structuring techniques help demonstrate my approach and the interaction of text and musical materials. The piece begins with a large upbeat gesture built out of layers of RCA synthesizer and vocal samples. At the moment of articulation that follows, the biographical portion of the text begins with the phrase, 'I am Milton Babbitt'. In the text that follows, Babbitt characterises himself in a number of ways. He states a biographical fact ('the only composer from Jackson Mississippi [there was one other . . .]'), followed by a half-joking, professional self-definition that embodies both a compositional approach and, only a bit less obviously, an historical/political one ('an old-fashioned academic twelve-tone serialist'). The next line is musically somewhat cadential, with a text that supports the cadence by commenting on the previous few lines ('Fine, I have no quarrel with that whatsoever').

The process of breaking text into different narrative streams that comment on one another continues throughout the piece. Sections begin with statements by turns mysterious ('It became our tradition') and mundane ('I grew up playing the clarinet . . .), each followed by an intensification or explication ('new Regions of thought about Time in music . . .'). Periodically, some theme is drawn out of the text to become musical material, as in the rhythmic repetitions of, 'you think' (about the piece) or 'time' (quite literally marking time using the word 'time'). There are several points at which the text manipulation creates a musical pun. For example, at one point Babbitt is again 'allowed' to make the following characteristic statement:

> Well the joy of the electronic medium is of course that anything which can be perceived and differentiated can be structured – and now those aspects are not susceptible to change . . .

At the moment that he reaches the words, 'not susceptible to change', the word 'change' is stretched and layered. In other words, while I agree with Milton's statement, there is another joy of the medium, which is that seemingly fixed things are extremely susceptible to change – perhaps even demand to be changed.

Musical sources for the Babbitt piece include his *Sheer Pluck* (composition for guitar) (1984), *Philomel* for soprano and tape (1964), and *Three Compositions* for Piano (1947). My practice was to extract motivic material from the works and build new lines of counterpoint. At about two minutes into the piece, an episode begins that abandons intelligible text. The music that follows is a three-part counterpoint built out of motives extracted from *Three Compositions* for Piano, and 'played' by three distinct samples of Babbitt's voice. In this way, the composer's voice quite literally speaks his musical motives which I then weave into a new piece of music.

In employing these various techniques, I have framed and honoured, while simultaneously commenting on, certain signal aspects of Milton Babbitt's personality as embodied by his words, music, even vocal quality.

Left To His Own Devices (1996) Eric Chasalow
(To Milton Babbitt at 80)

I am Milton Babbitt
the only composer from Jackson Mississippi (there was one other . . .)
an old-fashioned academic twelve-tone serialist (Right)
Fine, I have no quarrel with that whatsoever

It became our tradition
It changed the whole atmosphere of how we thought about music in every respect
into new Regions of thought about Time in music, about Order in music

It was susceptible to such enormous personal extensions and embodied such powerful compositional notions of time in music and order in music that as I say I remain unreconstructed and did not have to be born again . . .

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You think about the piece, you think about the piece, you think *in* the piece, you think in the piece you're still not satisfied you know if you sat down to write it you'd be forcing it you'd probably never write the piece, and then it clicks and you feel 'Yeah, that's what I want' and you start to compose
You think about the piece you think in the piece
you think you think you think you
youthinkaboutthepieceyouthinkaboutthepieceyouthinkinthepieceyouthinkinthepieceyouknowifyousatdowntowriteityou'dbeforcingityou'dprobablyneverwritethepieceandthenitclicksandyoufeel
back to my Firebird – No to my, Fireworks
you think you thinkabout you
you think about youthinkaboutthepiece
Fine! I have no quarrel with that whatsoever.

(fine . . .)

you think about the piece you

Ha ha Oh, I remember it well
Well the joy of the electronic medium is of course that anything which can be perceived and differentiated can be structured – and now those aspects are not susceptible to change
they're not susceptible to change

and now those aspects are not susceptible to change (its a great and remarkable thing)
It was susceptible to such enormous personal extensions and embodied such powerful compositional notions of time in music and order in music
Quantitative Time
Of musical time
What's the effect of time
What's what's what's the
effect of time

Then you begin to concern yourself necessarily about quantitative time
What's the effect of time on timbral relations Which make it possible for you to specify the temporal aspects of music, and therefore *All* of the aspects of music . . .

. . . how much time we had lost . . .

I grew up playing the clarinet, playing the violin, playing popular music of all kinds, arranging it writing it I don't like *kinds* of music
But musical literacy is so lightly regarded, so slightly rewarded, that our superfluousness is being virtually legislated.
meant to diffuse and dismiss
This is one of those dreadful stories that one is hesitant to tell but it happens to be true (there are more than a few of us)
We have almost the paradoxical situation that very few people want to hear our music but very many want to write it
and again I think its characteristic of our situation
So I grew up as a performing musician as most of us do in this country if we're going to end up trapped in music at all, I began composing when I was about four only because there was (a participant in the ongoing primary practice of contemporary musical creation) some blank music paper at the back of my violin exercise book,
you feel, yeah that's what I want, and you start to compose,

If you learn to control those oscillations you don't need any thing that has any kind of limitations
You'll understand why the synthesis of sound, the creation of sound electronically was understood to be possible (its a great and remarkable thing) just as soon as it was understood that you could record sound

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You simply have oscillations, electronic oscillations
Indeed

Change change c h a n g e

nothing and no nothing resents more than someone who knows nothing the know-nothing knows plenty of nothing and nothing's plenty for him
We're talking again about a composer who goes to a medium with a complete mastery of this medium to convey to it every aspect of his musical conception.

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A more complex layering of many sources takes place in *Crossing Boundaries* (2000), which was commissioned by Bates College in celebration of the millennium. The College's request was for a piece that would engage some aspect of the meaning of passing through this time. The piece responds to this request both in its constructed text narrative and in its approach to musical narrative form. The bits of English text that one hears are, taken individually, non-specific. They consist primarily of aphorisms and reminiscences, removed from context and recombined to make a counterpoint of different spaces, places and events and to give different senses of the passage of historical and musical time. Meaning is partly conveyed by the sound quality and inflection of the voice speaking the text fragment.

Crossing Boundaries draws voices from among the many that comprise *The Video Archive of Electroacoustic Music. The Archive* subjects in this case include, Charles Dodge, John Pierce, Max Matthews, Bill McGinnis, Mel Powell, Ramon Sender, Alice Shields, Mario Davidovsky and Milton Babbitt. In contrast to *Left To His Own Devices*, the assumption here is that the voices are anonymous – telling something about common human history rather than personal history. It was my own intimacy with the spoken phrases of the interviews, rather than the fact that they had been spoken by composers, that allowed me to integrate them into this musical structure. With this more abstract approach, other texts could be extracted from a wide variety of sources, including interviews with family members, family videotapes, even answering machine tapes. On one level, there is a deeply autobiographical nature to this piece. The result though is a more universal musical statement.

The text of *Crossing Boundaries* begins by layering musical gestures of an orchestral character with a simple series of dates, each spoken by a different voice ('It was 1913 [ah, back in those days] a, 1910, 1945, 1969'). It is unclear what, if anything each date means to the person speaking it, but the one comment, 'ah, back in those days' (actually the voice of computer music pioneer Max Matthews) sets up a narrative frame – we are in a story. The next lines of text draw our attention out of the frame to signify that some aspect of what we hear is an artefact of the recording process – an illusion of space and time ('Oh, its getting a little bit of a buzz, uh, that's interesting , its – Say something!'). The piece quickly returns to the narrative frame with text that picks up the mystery of the first lines and, as the piece progresses, gradually attempts (and in the end fails) to become increasing specific. The subsequent passage (culminating in 'It was puzzling, it was in some ways the beginning of a totally different relationship') is still a mystery. What is the 'It' begin referred to? These lines are virtually self-quotation from the Babbitt piece ('It became our tradition') and some are actually the voice of Milton Babbitt. But, while the 'It' of Babbitt is either new music via Schoenberg or, more specifically, serial music, in this context, the 'It' has yet to be explained. To the degree that such text ever becomes specific in *Crossing Boundaries*, (and the piece remains quite abstract for the most part) the 'It' takes on broad possible meanings for the listener. Overall, this is a piece about human relationships and loss. There is an irony in that, while documentary technology can make us feel as if we are capturing and fixing moments of our lives, the captured materials actually serve to remind us of loss rather than to prevent it.

Musical sources for *Crossing Boundaries* include Hebrew chant (which maintains a ghostly presence throughout the piece), Beethoven's piano music, improvised Jazz, analogue synthesised electronic music, and distorted electric guitar. In the main, and in keeping with the underlying autobiography, these recordings were taken from my own performances or those of friends. The piece is meant for playback in a large space and is, on the whole, quite orchestral, even as it encompasses sounds from a large variety of musical traditions. It is my intention that the sound of an analogue synthesizer, set against a piano chord, or chorus will have strong associative meaning for the listener.

Just as the text conveys different senses of time and place, the abstract musical fabric of *Crossing Boundaries* is concerned with different senses of time passing. Most of the piece is without a strong pulse or 'beat'. It moves rhythmically from one large musical moment to the next one, usually reinforcing the phrasing of the text. From time to time a feeling of regular pulse does emerge, but this is often layered with some other pulse. In other places, just as we think we know what the 'beat' is, it cuts off and we realise that what felt like fast

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music is actually very slow. Throughout the piece there is a constantly shifting perception of just how fast we are moving.

One clear example of this rhythmic contradiction comes as Part 3 begins (sound example 2 – excerpt, *Crossing Boundaries*, Part 3). Here the piece seems to consist of fast music. A layer of highly articulated analogue electronic music dominates briefly and is displaced by a constant, rhythmic percussive layer in the foreground. Through this last portion of the piece, the rhythms created by all elements, text and abstract sounds, in opposition to the pulsed layer create conflicting perceptions of motion. As in any piece of music, this motion is a metaphor for the motion of the listener's body. Finally, the pulsed layer, simply becomes a rhythmically irrelevant stream (at 1:25 into sound example 2), having been pushed into the background by the slower moving, more integrated music that ultimately creates the final cadence of the piece.

Crossing Boundaries consists of three large sections plus a 'coda'. The first is primarily expository, setting up the fundamental conflicts of fast and slow, personal and universal, acoustical and electronic. The second section is slow and expansive, consisting primarily of a static, cyclical, and tonal two-part counterpoint – a soprano vocal line against a melodic bass. This soprano line is derived from a Hebrew chant and has been present as mid and background since the piece began. Text disappears for most of the episode to allow the chant to become foreground. The section is intentionally less articulated and meant to convey a very slow sense of the passage of time in a vast space. Section 3 reintroduces text and contains the densest counterpoint of the piece, with many contradictory pulses. A brief coda follows an obvious, mechanical false cadence of section 3 (sound example 3 – excerpt, first three minutes of *Crossing Boundaries*).

Crossing Boundaries (2000) Eric Chasalow
(Commissioned for the millennium by Bates College)

PART 1

It was 1913
(ah, back in those days)
a, 1910
1945 1969

(Hi Eric)
its getting Oh, its getting a little bit of a buzz, uh, that's interesting , its
Say something!

There was no tradition
1944
It was so fascinating

It was puzzling, it was in some ways the beginning of a totally different relationship.

I dreamed of . . .
(Hebrew chant . . . 'shalom')

there was no way for me to connect this to tradition
I really immersed myself

By the early 1970's I was ready to . . .
I wanted to project on her
And it really did teach one the futility of trying really to predict.

. . . unmusical bleeps and bloops
Dear friend, did you hear what I heard?

I heard him hollering my name from the back and I knew I was in trouble
GET! DOWN!
(with little or no self-esteem)
It was that kind of paranoid philosophy
I didn't have a memory you cease to exist
yeah, yeah, yeah, be quite
you get the credit and the blame.

PART 2

I wasn't really sure, where to go
I wanted no part of that world
and for that I'm grateful.

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(whispering) oh! Oh, my! Oh, ok, oh my oh my.

It was 1913
I was ten years old, my sister six and my brother four.

When our usually bedtime arrived, we went to sleep as usual, but were awakened just after ten p.m. when father came home.
Oh, around 1955
After thinking it all over, I decided it was good for communication.

PART 3

My mother taught me to sing harmony.

No, no.
Are we there yet?
Yes we are.

but what appealed to me most of all was her limp helplessness.
and there wasn't any, real emotional attachment.
that's not your problem
and it was hanging on a string.

They get on the machine, and run those through the machine.

I keep, trying to, see my way through to the other side
a picture's worth a thousand words

No, No, no
Do something
Things got better is all I can say
well anyone with any common sense would do such and such
I use to worry about
that a lot
Put a psychedelic cover on it, with all kinds of dirty pictures

You know, you want to be in control
and it burst into oscillations

and how did they do that? I wondered
its, its very, strange
you can turn it off, Eric.

Its getting very depressing, but that's New York for you
Why was I born –
I, I can't go back and pay that price

Lead me on!

I think, I think we've got it
you've about got it.

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Left to His Own Devices and *Crossing Boundaries* are but two examples of musical commentary or 'parody' (in its oldest musical meaning) drawn from archival text and music. The current robust interest across disciplines in oral history and documentation makes this a particularly fertile time for composers who wish to extend the tradition of text setting in new and inventive ways through electroacoustic means.

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APPENDIX

The Video Archive of Electroacoustic Music

Inventory as of July 2005

Austin, Larry; 1 hour
Professor Emeritus, University of North Texas, Denton

Babbitt, Milton; 2 hours
Professor Emeritus, Princeton

Barron, Bebe; 2 hour
Co-produced numerous early electroacoustic pieces, incl. score for *Forbidden Planet*

Berger, Arthur; 2 hours
Composer, Critic (deceased 2003)

Davidovsky, Mario; 3½ hours
Professor Emeritus, Harvard University

Dodge, Charles; 1½ hours
Professor of Composition, Dartmouth University

Ffitch, John; 1 hour
Researcher, Csound developer, Dept of Computer Science, University of Bath

Lansky, Paul; 2 hours
Composer, Professor of Music, Princeton University

Kavina, Lydia; 1 hour
Thereminist and grand-niece of Leon Theremin

Krieger, Arthur; 2 hours
Composer, instructor at the Columbia-Princeton EMC

Matthews, Max; 2 hours
'Father of computer music', former research scientist at Bell Laboratories; Professor, Stanford University

McGinnis, Bill; 1½ hours
Original engineer at San Francisco Tape Music Center

Powell, Mel; 2 hours
Professor Emeritus, California Institute for the Arts (deceased 1998)

Pierce, John; 1 hour
Director at Bell Laboratories, (deceased 2002)

Schrader, Barry; 1 hour +
Professor of Composition, California Institute for the Arts

Semegen, Daria; 2 hours
Professor of Composition, SUNY Stony Brook

Sender, Ramon; 2 hours +
Co-founder of the San Francisco Tape Music Center

Shapero, Harold; 3 hours
Composer. Professor Emeritus Brandeis University. Director of the Brandeis Electronic Music Studio until 1988

Shields, Alice; 3 hours
Composer. Early studio assistant to Vladimir Ussachevsky

Smith, David; 2 hours
Founder of Sequential Circuits, Inc. 'Instigator' of MIDI

Smiley, Pril; 2 hours +
Composer. Early studio assistant to Vladimir Ussachevsky

Strange, Allen; 2 hours
Professor of Composition Emeritus, San Jose State University

Subotnik, Morton; 3 hours
Composer, teacher, founder San Francisco Tape Music Center (with Sender, Oliveros)

Tcherepnin, Ivan; 2 hours
Founding studio director, composer, Harvard (deceased 1998)

Vaggione, Horacio; 1½ hours
Composer and studio Director, Ecole Doctorale Esthetique, Paris 8 Universite

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