

■ WE PROUDLY A V 25-27.11. 2016

PRESENT YOU THE THIRD

GUARDIAN

VOORUIT GENT

EDITION OF THE EASTERN DAZE FESTIVAL

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THIS festival is a co-joined effort between Sound in Motion, Vooruit, and ourselves. This edition is again loosely inspired by the common and parallel paths *off-stream* music is following in every corner of the world. We shift from post-postmodern exotic music over female Touareg music to possible ethnic tapecollages, zenlike proto-minimalism, kosmische music and more.

One of the themes is the idea of identity and its counterpersonae authenticity. The 'I' can be seen as a multilayered complex of conscious and subconscious forces instead of a fixed and never changing core. In art and music especially there are many shape shifters and / or Tricksters. As well **SPENCER CLARK**, **MIKE COOPER** or **GIANCARLO TONIUTTI** could be seen as Tricksters. They create music that raises smoke curtains. They like to obscure reality, and to project shades of other and possible worlds into your ears. They are presenting themselves as continuous shape-shifting beings, not because they like to dress up, but because they believe in the shamanistic power of the artist. The artist as the enhancer of the trance.

Cases in point; **MIKE COOPER** is obsessed by Island cultures and makes records that could be read as logbooks of his inward and worldwide travels. **SPENCER CLARK** presents on his latest record *The World of Shells* a creature that travels over space, time, earth and oceans. **TONIUTTI** will present on the festival a post-structuralist composition to create possible ethnic cultures.

BEAR BONES LAY LOW could be a Venezuelan superstar, but reality let him divert from his path to arrive Brussels where he became one of the thriving forces of an obscured diy underground scene.

The same scene where **YZ** found his freedom to blend sufi music with electronic dance. **DENNIS JOHNSON** left the path of being the composer. In the 60ties he shifted from writing notes to writing mathematical formules. History forgot him, until his composition *November* travelled through an old cassette to the ears of Kyle Gann who reconstructed the piece. Minimalist music suddenly had a new grandfather and a Brussels pianist will perform it for at least 4 hours.

Also *E2-E4* is a record about which its creator, **MANUEL GÖTTSCHING**, never could have foreseen its place in history. He might have conceived it as a game, or at least as a musical equivalent of a game. A strange side effect: techno was suddenly born. Or when you think about *Sakala*, an experimental short movie by **SIMON HALSBERGHE**, about a boy that is now known as the first immigrant of Ghent. The boy became a statue which can be called racist in some points and that is a silent witness of Belgium's dark past. In 2016, Simon Halsberghe used the statue to raise questions about the collective memory in a poetic movie.

All these storylines will cross each other at this festival, it's main point being: music is a way to travel faster, not only over continents and cultures, but also through possible histories ■ and musics.

Artwork: Jelle Crama, Olivier Smets (Eastern Daze logo),
Watcharita Aroon (De neus van God)

Design: ruitens-wille

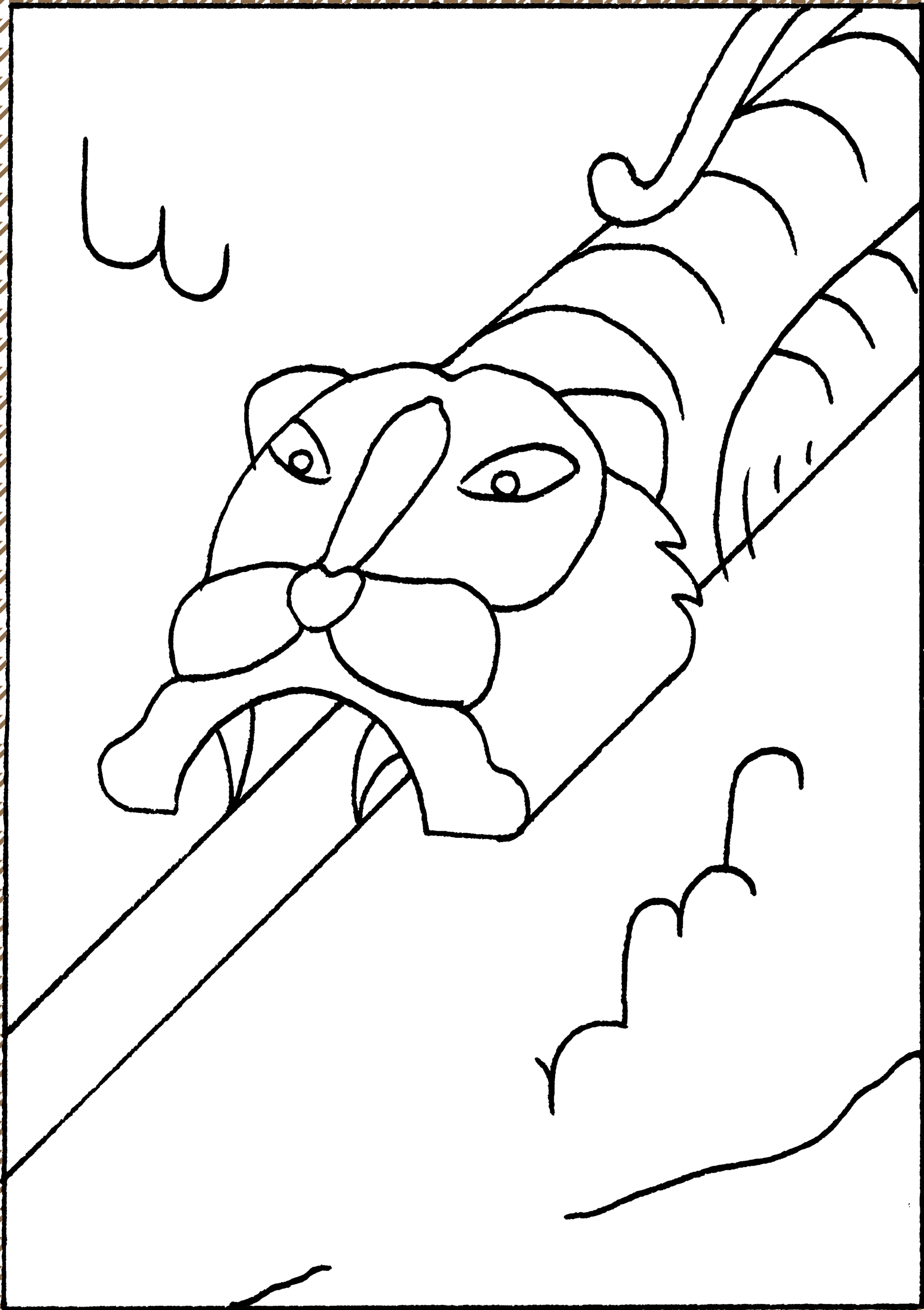
KRAAK is supported by the Flemish Government.

Eastern Daze is an initiative by Vooruit, in collaboration with KRAAK and Sound In Motion

The Avant-Guardian is free magazine on music. It pins down temporary events into long-lasting articles and creates a frame for off-stream music. It's one of the parts of the polymorphous body called KRAAK — www.kraak.net

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■ GIANCARLO TONIUTTI ■

A nonsentimental journey through complexity as resource

Cristina Amelia Messer

The Internet has it that Giancarlo Toniutti’s music compositions, especially the first ones, might be a link between Tangerine Dream and Whitehouse / Nurse with Wound. The truth is, he doesn’t give a flying fuck about categories perched on a chronological and fetishised timeline (music genres, currents, western canons etc) or representation of reality. He has always seen himself as a marginal figure, never interested in dealing with what we are coerced to perceive as reality. The only word that can encompass his practice is SOURCE. He has a penchant for cosmogonies, the clash of forms and morphology. A tautological statement at first glance; however, it encompasses three of his main interests: anthropology, sonic reality and word formation (a branch of linguistics).



There is a great deal of theory the listener has to go through in order to grasp Toniutti’s sonic realities. His releases are always accompanied by long explanatory texts, diagrams and images. This might be problematic in the sense that his compositions might not stand and speak by themselves in terms of the chosen medium. But this is not just a quirk. In order to understand a form, one must try to understand how different lines of force pull it together. Research/documentation is central to his practice. No romanticist fancies are allowed in this functional endeavor. Therefore, his sound pieces should be heard as “translations” of different anthropological and linguistic perspectives.

Since the early 80’s his practice has been developed through different methods. One is his 1985 “La Mutazione” (unearthed in 2015 by Oren Ambarchi’s Black Truffle)

wherein different coherent sound surfaces overlap. Here the use of electronic devices is evident since it coincides with his electro acoustic apprenticeship. “Epigenesi” represents a switch from electronics as sound source to analogue devices. This results in “layers formed with the contribution of many diverse sub-layers, so that their interaction with the other layers is more of a densifying type, creating specific niches etc. The final form, thus, is originated through the “conflicts” between the continuity points within layers and such “conflicts” mainly depend on the sonic “environment” generated by these process trajectories.”* Collaborating with other musicians could also be seen as method, and here is worth mentioning “Tahta Tarla” with Andrew Chalk and** KO/USK” with Sigmar Fricke.

His sonic realities bare no images, as sound is vibration and therefore abstract. The use of field recording is strictly functional. Toniutti is not emotionally attached to this tool, nor to what is being recorded. This attempted divorce from representation, and therefore his ego, wants to open the gates of objectivity. Where does sound come from and what kind of syntaxes space can generate? The arbitrary element is at the core of these enquiries.

To summarise this for the neophytes, I will leave the man himself speak:

*“I consider myself more like a culture within myself, in the sense that I compare myself, and I confront myself, with the cultures of the world, preferably those on the margins: like Siberia or the Arctic, like Chukchi, Nganasan, Yukagir, Ket, Tuva, Eveuk, Koryak, S-uni, Aleut, etc., or also Mongol, Tlingit, etc., those with which I find to have a greater continuity, on the cosmogony plane... I view sound like an acoustic phenomenon and not like a codified language that implicates any hierarchical codes like the taxonomical dependence of instruments, the existence of measuring models, questions of literary supremacy, et cetera. This is part of a culture I don’t share anything with.” ***

* Source: <http://www.timesquotidian.com/2011/06/26/point-a-to-point-a-interview-part-three-authorship/>
** Source: <http://ronsen.org/monkmink-pinkpunk/5/toniutti.html>

■ TYPHONIAN HIGHLIFE ■

The World of Shells Video Club

Gabriela González

There is no one way to introduce Spencer Clark. More like, there are multiple introductions to be made, all into the different auras that he’s created over the years. With the Skaters, he assumed half of a gurgling persona, swallowed by the crackling echoes and screeches of two encephalic hemispheres colliding and bouncing off of each other in a holy feedback dance. Alone: initiatory rites and ceremonial intonations rattle off with Vodka Soap; warped melodies construct a funnel of escapist symbolism and spiritual freedom

through Monopoly Star Child Searchers; and, most recently, the dream world of Typhonian Highlife brings forth the arcane, the uncanny, and the archetypal through the lost sounds of distant memory.

But Spencer Clark is really a total dude—yes, in the Lebowskian sense. You see him ambling towards you, wearing that Inspector Gadget trench coat and his signature snarl, and will most likely be greeted by a wave of goodwill, perhaps with “Hey G, how’s it vibin’?” or something along those lines. Something evocative of the surfer

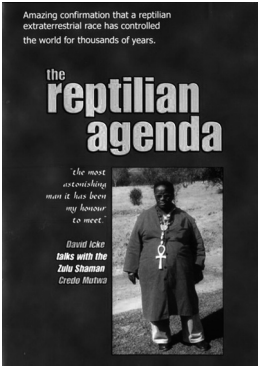
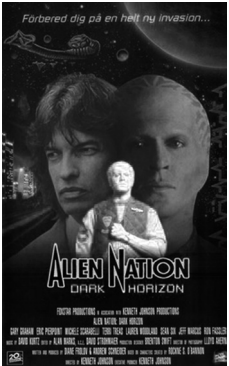
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movies and 80s TV you saw but never lived. Which is why it seemed fitting to ask about this strain that someone who’s never been to California and never fully experienced that sorta kowabunga state of mind could attribute as being embedded in his DNA. Might explain the slang, the cartoon faces, the video game appreciation. Might not. But visions of Pinhead and the recent summoning of Darth Maul as a swaying female apparition show that there are projections at work. Indeed, the World of Shells Video Club has a place in the world today...

In the 80s and early 90s video stores were so packed out of renters that small visionary directors began to have bigger budgets to Imagine greater heights... I am not interested in the slashing and the murder so much, as an Imagineer’s gift of willing visions to happen! Just like Disneyland, the Typhonian Highlife record presentation was meant to physically present the imagination of the landscape of the record! One time only. Here are three movies that helped me make this record!

Alien Nation Dark Horizon

After the original Alien Nation movie, they made a TV SERIES. Then it got canned, so the director decide to then make 5 MADE FOR TV MOVIES. What dedication. The aliens are called newcomers! The newcomers embrace this sort of junk-new age



👉 MIKE COOPER ■

Eastern Daze
connects traditional folk music and contemporary underground.
A reflection by Mike Cooper.

Hans van der Linden

Hi there...What is underground? Presumably non mainstream pop /classical / contemporary culture? Talking music that probably means all “folk music” is underground?

My musical life started with Skiffle which was the original DIY folk music genre of 50s Britain. Afro American folk blues for the most part and the thing that got me started. It quickly became hi-jacked by the mainstream and turned into a money making recording industry product. Original exponents came via a couple of sources such as Ken Colyer, a devotee of New Orleans jazz, who had a skiffle group that played between sets of his jazz band and Chris Barber who had a similar set up. Soho had skiffle cellars where only coffee was served as refreshment. It was underground in all senses. My participation was brief and I graduated to the next phase quite quickly which was to singing in a Rhythm and Blues band, The Blues Committee, still underground, mostly at The Latin Quarter Cellar Club in Reading where I grew up.

style. They are into really elaborate new age world music dress, and play pretty sick new ambient fusion music. The director went full on for the set design and the aesthetic, filling in all possibilities.

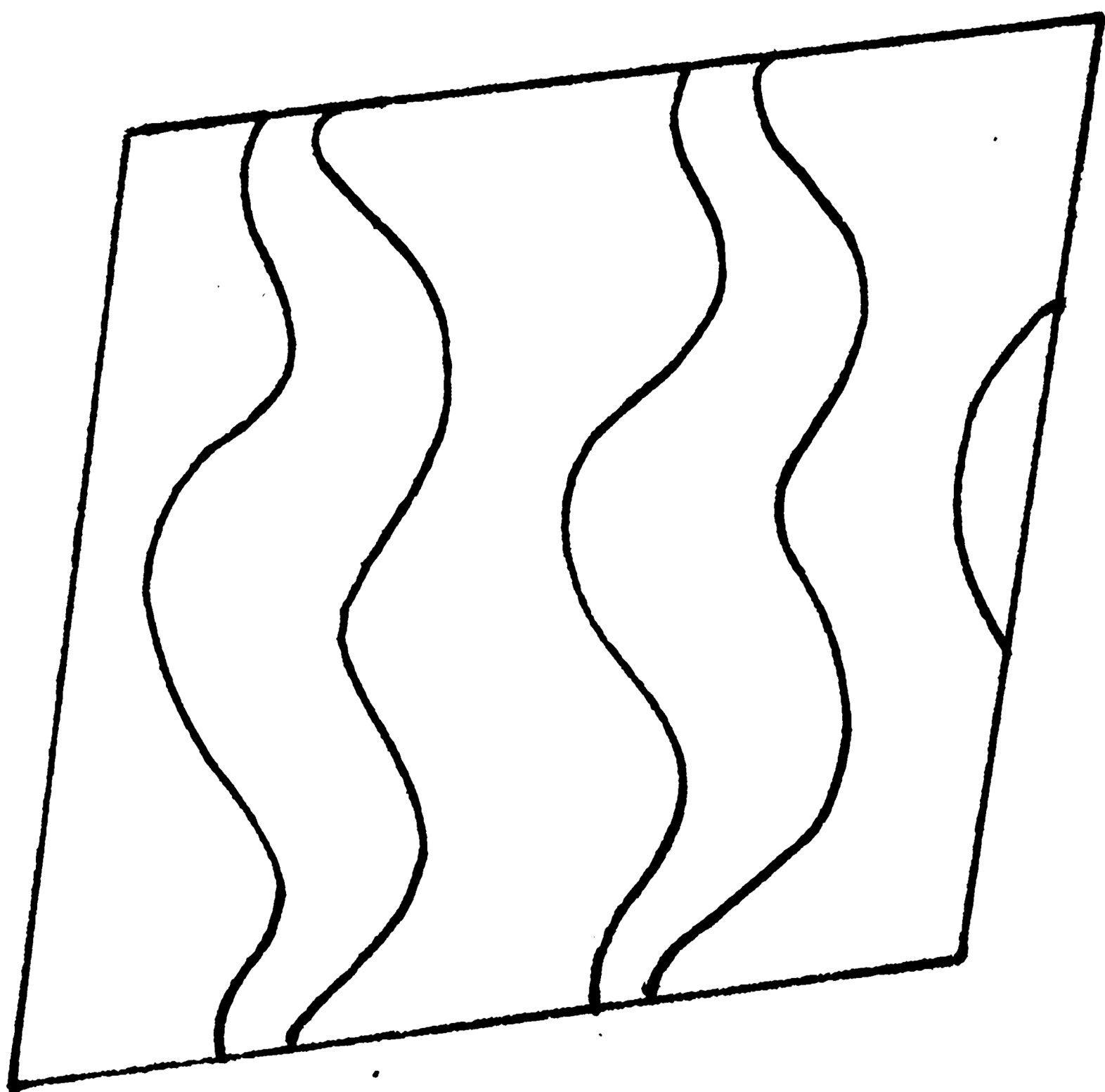
The Reptilian Agenda with Credo Mutwa

Credo Mutwa is one of the true influences for “THE WORLD OF SHELLS”. He was an Artist in Afrika who created sculptures and paintings based on secret myths of pre-history alien being, called THE CHITAHOORI... In this video he is interviewed by David Icke, who is a drone. But Icke doesn’t talk much. All you get is six hours of very fantastic story telling. I am not concerned about whether his theories and stories are true, because the theories obviously do have a creative effect, and his work and language and style are what makes one, an “Imagineer”...

Arcade

“Arcade” hasn’t much real effect on “The World of Shells”, it has an effect on life as I know it! There is no better example of raw budget special effects. Straight up and down Virtual Reality Electronic Cenobytes on a LawnMower Man-type Grid. The director just believes in his world, and for me that is the most important quality to art, a true belief in your fantastically flexing head.

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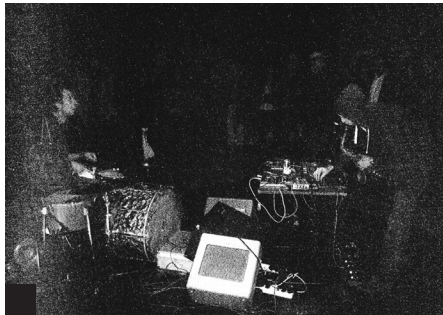


■ North America, by Hawaiians, it captured the imagination of blues and then rock musicians who turned the slide into bottleneck and repositioned the instrument into its original playing position but the true believers still play it “lap style”. Hawaiian music is a true underground / folk music — lap steel guitar is called, in the Hawaiian language, Kika Kila and there is an acoustic finger picking version caled “Slack Key” or Ki Ho Alu. People (especially Americans) tend to forget several things about Hawaii; first that it is, now, part of America, and secondly it wasn’t always; thirdly it has its own language and last but not least it was illegally stolen from the Hawaiians by American business men who deposed the monarchy (locking the then ruling Queen into her own home) and culturally occupying the minds and hearts of the population. At least thats what the Americans thought. In fact language and music was the one weapon that the Hawaiians did maintain and proceeded to use to great effect from the occupation and into the 20th century. Few American mainlanders spoke Hawaiian but Hawaiian music and Hawaiian musicians became extremely popular at the begining of the 1900’s. Hawaiian music was one of the first musics to be recorded (first onto wax cylinders) and went on to become the biggest selling form of music on records (78 rpm) right up until the 1930’s. Most of it initially sung live and on record in an underground language (Hawaiian) in a deliberate attempt by Hawaiians to maintain contact with their hi-jacked culture by singing in a language that mostly only they understood and even if perhaps you did happen to speak Hawaiian you needed also to understand context, cultural references and hidden meanings within the poetry of the songs to appreciate what was going on.

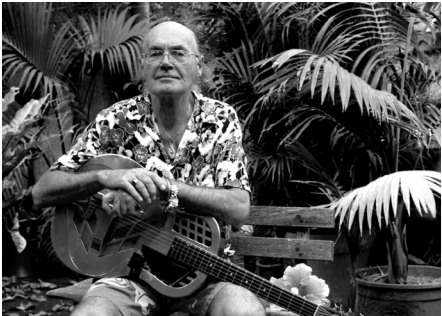
■ NIBUL ■ The people who drum together, stay together!

Wouter Vanhaelemeesch

When asked about musical influences Nibul percussionist Bertrand Fraysse names the exploratory and lengthy improvisations of jazz colossus John Coltrane and the American Primitivism of guitarist and composer John Fahey. He also casually mentions a youtube list he keeps updated regularly that goes deep into all types of ethnic music. Scrolling down this impressive list of footage from all over the world one can find examples of Sacred Shinto music, Bulgarian polyphony, traditional Ghanese drumming to Tibetan nuns singing and much, much more. What connects these forms of music for Fraysse is that they all favor drones and have some form of explicit communal aspect. And, most importantly, it’s the sort of stuff that simply moves him personally.



The act of sliding an object along a string is Hawaiian guitar in Hawaii but it exists in other cultures as well, although often not on a guitar but some other local instrument like a vina in India for instance. There are glissando strings in most folk cultures and my own playing is informed by many of them now not just Hawaiian music. Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Greek, Arabic, African; all of these musics feature a string instrument played by sliding an object along its strings. Often that instrument is in fact a lap steel guitar because the Hawaiians and their guitar conquered almost every corner of the globe with their underground language, music and instrument and they still do.



I realised that in all of the musics quoted above (as well as in jazz) improvisation played a huge part in its energy and contributed to its long life. Coming back to your question of where am I on the traditional / contemporary continuum? Combining with my love of improvisation and various techniques acquired from playing and investigating Blues, Hawaiian, Greek and other folk music I finally found a way of releasing the song from its fossilised state and turning it into something non-reproducible; a fluid form that is different everytime I perform it. Anything non-reproducible is of little interest to the mainstream and hence remains underground — fortunately.

There is definitely a ritualistic and communal aspect that drives Nibul’s music that seems to be found also in these examples. Fraysse and saxophone player Julie Gineste state that interaction (with each other and the audience) and energy are key to their jams. That would explain why Nibul always insists on playing on the floor with the audience gathered around them. This live experience — instigating and being part of the ritual or communion — is what matters most to them, confessing not being overtly interested in reproducing their sound on record. Or as they put it; “music is not the center of what is happening at a concert”. Nibul clearly aims to bring an audience together into trance and the Toulouse based duo do this through improvised sets of long and brutal drones, created by loops and saxophone and augmented with vocalizations from both members. The Tibetan style percussion propels these into a high energy maelstrom that is hard to swim out of. Fraysse and Gineste talk about how when they started Nibul the music was supposed to be “free”, but say a sort of unplanned structure somehow emerged, a mold that they use to get where they need to go. There is a functionality to their

music that seems to be at the heart of what creating trance music is about and in their responses they touch upon the impossibility of understanding the music outside of the ritual of live performance. In “Why Do People Sing? Music in Human Evolution (2011)”, evolutionary musicologist Joseph Jordania puts down a thesis that early human survival was aided by creating a collective state through music known as the “battle trance.” All night long sessions of ceremonial drumming and dancing made participants enter a state of mass hypnosis, an altered state where pain and fear were thrown out of the window and where they acted as a single unit, ready to sacrifice their lives for the community. Self-awareness dissipated into unified thought and collective action

■ SANSKRITI SHRESTHA ■ OUTGROWING TRADITION: In an article for Dawn.com* Pakistani author Uzma Aslam Khan asks herself where the women tabla players are. Well, here’s one: Sanskriti Shrestha. She plays in the ensembles Avatar and Moksha as well as performing solo. Growing up in Nepal, she took her tabla and the traditional music she was raised on and ventured out for the North.

Claire Stragier

cs What convinced you to play music professionally?

SANSKRITI SHRESTHA: The combination of my love for what I do and the opportunities I got, are what naturally took me into the direction of making music my profession.

cs Was it immediately clear that you would focus on the tabla as an instrument?

ss When I started playing Tabla I was very little and it was more of a toy for me. I was sent to dance and Vocal classes but the way I bonded with the sound of the Tablas and the way I could communicate with the language of Tablas, was different than any other musical direction I tried to go into. So yes, I would say it was pretty clear that Tabla was the instrument I would focus on.

cs You moved from Nepal to Norway to study music. Which program did you choose and why Norway?

ss I had always wanted to go out of my country to study for discovering the different styles or the scene of music. Of course the tradition I come from is very rich and the process of learning never ends but my heart always said there is more! It started with the interest of learning different kinds of percussion traditions. Norway was the first country overseas I travelled for performing. It was a talent project in Forde folk music festival. I was 17 years old and very curious and keen to play with everyone. I got to get in touch with many good musicians and also travelled here the year later for a tour with the local musicians. In that way, it was very natural for me to move to Norway since I already had some projects starting before I moved here. I got enrolled in a program called “Free candidate study program” where you basically build your own

through repetitive beats and movements. The spontaneity in which we still react to repetitive drumming and music might be traced back to this sort of natural selection. In short, the people that drum together, stay together! In today’s day and age it’s not like we still need to hype each other up to go out and kill a wooly mammoth en groupe, but there clearly is still a strong connection between trance inducing music and the bonding of a community. And there is still a need to come together and experience something that connects us to to each other as it did our former ancestors. Nibul most probably won’t play all night long on Eastern Daze III, but they will surely conjure some sounds that will spark our ancient, reptilian brains.

syllabus working together with the teachers. It is made for the applicants who are good but there idea’s or the work doesn’t fit into any of the study programs that the school can offer. I am very happy that I could be under that program and the academy had such an open platform.

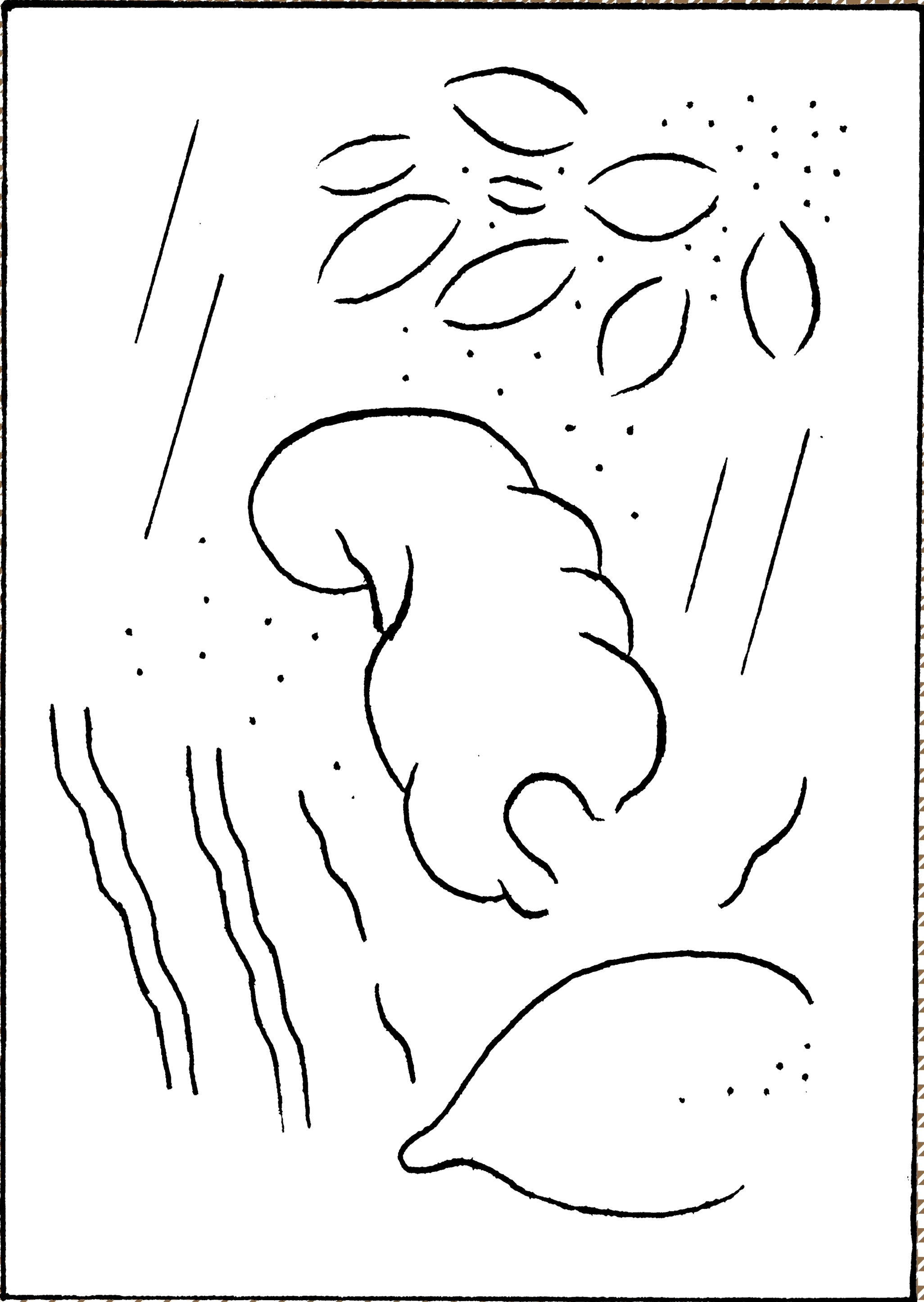
cs During your studies, were your peers interested in Nepalese traditional music?

ss Yes, they were interested in both Nepalese and the Hindustani traditional music. One of the reasons many people I have collaborated with chose to have me because they are also interested on the musical background I come from. I have also worked with different folk musicians where I mostly try to bring a lot of materials from the Nepalese folk tradition too.

cs Should Western and non-Western music still be treated differently in music education? Is it time to get rid of the divide?

ss I personally think the line between the Western and non-Western music has been fading out gradually since a couple of centuries. That includes the education too. People are very much open to all sorts of music and especially in times like now where we have access to reach to anything we like, the division is disappearing itself. There shouldn’t be any boundary between any kind of genres but yet keeping its own identity is also important for deepening the learning process of any kind of music tradition. The tradition becomes richer if we broaden up the way we bring it together. When it comes education, I don’t necessarily think we have to get rid of the division between categories but it’s definitely essential to have the programs where people can get deepened knowledge about the genres they want to explore which also helps in new creations.

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■ In this, I would like to add that I have felt the division when it comes to the platform. Some venues want to have certain kind of music. Here, I am not talking about the fusion music we know about.

Sometimes for a musician like myself who likes to bring in different inspirations together and create something new, a new sound, it can become little difficult to get the platform to perform it. It is not always very easy to categorize everything specifically and that becomes a challenge, I think.



cs **What is your personal relationship with traditional Nepalese music?**

ss I was born in Nepal, and the traditional music in Nepal is not there just for performing or expertise but is very much included in our daily life. It is as rich as the culture itself. Therefore, it is in my blood and I connect to it very easily and naturally. I also sometimes perform Nepalese classical or folk dance which is like meditation for me. It brings a different personality to me. In this last few years, I have been aware of the fact how the music from my own ethnic group is getting extinct and I really feel that I have a responsibility to protect it and bring it more forward in different musical context.

cs **Should we guard and protect traditional music, make sure it's written down and recorded for future generations?**

ss Yes, Definitely! We have always learned from the old and that's how we have been able come up with many interesting idea's and creations. I feel that I am able to do what I am doing now and adapt to all other kinds of music because I have a strong bond my the traditional music or the tradition I have followed. My own tradition has always been a major inspiration for me in my work.

cs **The link between all the artists booked for the Eastern Daze festival is that they reach a state of trance with their music through repetition.**

ss I agree with that very much. I love the process of repetition. One thing I have experienced is that the repetition gives you time to really get into tones and rhythms and feel it. It's like you let the vibration from the instrument do it works. In this process, I usually feel that I become so small and the sound just covers everything around me. It also puts a huge impact on the changes you bring after each repetition, which makes both musician and the audience feel what is going on.

cs **How important is that state of trance for you? Does it give you energy?**

ss Yes, it is important for me! Whenever I have had a chance to take ■ my time, have repetitions and feel

it, I am more myself and I become one with the music. Like they say in Sami vocal tradition "Joiking", one doesn't Joik about someone but one Joiks someone or something. In the same way, I feel what I play is the transformation of myself than I am playing something. Everything in nature and around us has its cycle and it repeats. It applies to music too and it definitely gives me a lot of energy during the performance or while I am practicing. Especially I do that very much when I practice.

cs **What's the biggest difference between Asian and European music scenes?**

ss I can't talk about Asia in general but I feel that the European music scene is very open to innovations whereas in some parts of Asia we like to keep the tradition. Going far away from that is something not everyone can digest. You might sometimes be mistaken for it and people might think you do what you do because you are not skilled enough to carry on the tradition.

cs **Tell me something about your sextet Avatar.**

ss Avatar is a band that I put together a year ago. It is an outcome of all the new influences and forms of music I have encountered these last years. Especially the creative thinking, openness, free style of playing, spontaneity is something that I experienced a lot in the music scene here in Europe which I just love. At the same time, I can't stop getting fascinated by all sorts of old traditional music I have come across. From the Tibetan prayers to the noise music, all of it is so powerful and gives so much that you have to somehow express it out in some way. So as a musician processing it out through my own compositions was the best way and that's where Avatar comes in the picture.

Most of the players are mostly occupied with jazz and improvised music. Some of them are also very much into folk music. I think the band gets different elements from the each member while sharing the same direction of creativity, which has given it a very distinctive sound.

cs **What do you like most about improvisation?**

ss Freedom!

cs **When does improvisation go wrong?**

ss For me, it is when I don't feel like I can contribute to something that's happening and that doesn't mean not playing!

cs **What's in the future for you?**

ss In the future... there is a lot of music! The first half of 2017 will be occupied by tours with bands that I play in. Avatar will be giving out its debut album in autumn 2017. I am also very glad to be doing solo projects, which people will get to listen to more of it in near future. There are always a lot of ideas popping in my head which I don't always get time to work with. I really look forward to experiment all those ideas and hopefully, it will be something I can present it or share with people and experience it together with the music lovers.

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LES FILLES DE ILLIGHADAD

Seb Bassleer

Modern *Ishumar* tuareg music is not just a male affair anymore, let it be heard. We now slowly see female artists stepping out of the shadows, bringing with them the tradition of female chants set in an acoustic sound. Fatou Seidi Ghali & Alamnou Akrouni are two young women from Niger who call themselves Les Filles De Illighadad, named after the village where they come from. Illighadad is a small village in the central heart of the Niger Sahel, a clutter of mudhouses without electricity or wi-fi access. It's a world apart from Agadez, from Niamey — both major cities in their own right, dense with people, noise, and the trappings of modernity. During the rain season, the desert is vibrant and green, after the rains have parched the otherwise thirsty landscape. The desert here is cyclical, and follows a predictable schedule. The days in Illighadad are long, and time is not measured by hours, meetings, or not even by the muezzins prayer call — but by the suns passage, the movement of the animals, and the sound of the crickets. Music here comes with the rural character of the seasons and the extremes of weather are not easy on musical instruments, which often appear in a dried, bended and worn state.

Fatou Seidi Ghali plays an old blue guitar that has been tormented by these conditions. As one of the very rare Tuareg female guitar players, her playing style is measured and calm, and speaks to a different pace. Before recording the session that would become the album, Christopher Kirkley of Sahel Sounds saw Fatou playing a long session. It moved seamlessly from one song to another, with many covers of Tuareg group Etran Finatawa whose music is renowned in this part of Niger and the main inspiration for her to pick up the guitar. She insisted that she doesn't just play guitar, but plays and performs *tende* as well with her

cousin Alamnou Akrouni, a renowned vocalist. The "tende" is named for the drum, stretched with an animal skin and is joined with polyphonic chants. In a place with the absence of sound, no hum of electricity, no cars, no white noise, and no physical impediments, the *tende* travels far. As the village plays, people get drawn in from around. Singers exchange the lead, backed by the chorus of Illighadad echoing in polyphonic harmonies, with staccato clapping, led by a deep and continuous thumping that goes on for hours.



The debut album '*Les Filles De Illighadad*' on Sahel Sounds was one of sublime and intimate purity, recorded under the trees in the open air of the desert with fluttering bird sounds in the background. While Christopher Kirkley had the original concept to meet Fatou and record her guitar, every night was accompanied by *tende*. Guitar by day, *tende* by night, as the tradition goes, a reminder of the village music that inspired the guitar, and continues to do so. In the end, they produced an LP with two sides — each unbroken sessions, representing the two sides of the music: the mellow guitar and personal expression of Fatou in intimate songs, the timid voice of Alamnou flickering back and forth like a firefly and the cooperative and constant village music of the *tende*. It's sublime dreamy *Ishumar* music for those who want to get intoxicated. Eastern Daze is proud to support their first ever tour in Europe and it promises to be quite an impact.

BEAR BONES, LAY LOW

Ernesto González can be found under the name Bear Bones, Lay Low. But the young musician has also been called 'the Brussels based prince of modern psychedelic electronics' for several years.

Next to this alter ego was Ernesto a part of the band Sylvester Anfang II and other formations. You can watch him live with his power drone project Bear Bones, Lay Low on the 26th of november on the Eastern Daze Festival at the Vooruit (Ghent).

Lizzy Vandierendonck

The friendly Ernesto is born a collector. In his house, that is currently situated in a typical Brussels suburbia neighbourhood, are artworks on every wall, a well organised record collection and videocassette-filled shelves. There is coffee for the guests and sweet pretzels on the table, Ernesto prefers ginger tea.

In 2003 he arrived in our humble Belgium, all the way from Venezuela. And even though he always played music, his

experimental chapter started on Belgian territory. His first band was at the age of twelve with his sister (who is also part of The Avant-Gardian's editorial team) and best friend. Trying to make the same kind of music as Tool, they didn't like their sound that was similar. González says he always felt more attracted to the more fucked up side of popular music. Giving an example of Nirvana's '*Radio Friendly Unit Shifter*' and peeping guitars.

At the age of 17 he made a couple of CDR's he put out through his own record label, *Eat The Sun*, and a tape on the Canadian *Knife In The Toaster*. Since then his discography expanded to more than 20 releases. His latest album, *Hacia La Luz*, is out since august through No 'Label' (Rush Hour). He created it in the home of many underground *affinidos*, Les Ateliers Claus, between the 13th and 26th of april 2015.

Composed out of repititive forms and layers and layers of ancestral synth, hand drums and shakers, González created a mind expanding soundscape that lifts us off into a cosmic space and lets us spin in a Tangerine dream. He says he



■ MANUEL GÖTTSCHING ■

An essay on E2-E4, an opening move in chess or a highly influencial record in contemporary music.

Niels Latomme

Let me tell you something about the millennium old game of chess. Some people find chess incredibly dull, others are addicted to it. The game fights a war between two minds, equipped with the same weapons, and the same limited amount of moves. It's a war ruled by restrictions, and it is incredible poetic; or, depending on which side you're on, it's a game for nerds, boring, slow and abstract. No matter which angle you look into, it earned its place in the history of mankind. It even provoked a complete mythology, as it was a huge shock for mankind when a chess champion got beaten a computer. Not to speak about books like *The Chess Novel*, by Stephan Zweig, or the records by Wu-Tang Clan.

Some people feel the same about the record *E2-E4* by Manuel Göttsching, recorded in 1981, but released in 1984 — in some ways a pivotal year. I was talking to Spencer Clark and he finds the record incredibly dull, and values Ashra's output way more than this piece. But other people think it's one of the best records ever made. This record, not unlike the game of chess, earned its place in musical history, being considered as the first house or techno record. (A side remark: Göttsching admitted that he not really likes dance music.)

The record is loosely inspired by chess. But, it has more resemblances to chess than the cover and the title. Let's start with the title: "E2-E4" is an opening move in chess, it's called the *King's Pawn Game*.

always liked making trippy music, sometimes it can be poppier (the 2012 album *El Telonero*), other times abstract, like *Hacia La Luz*. His music is mostly a mixture of styles, something I see back in his home decoration.

Improvising is González first attempt to make a Bear Bones track. You can compare it as making a collage, but with layers of sound. Sometimes it starts with a melody in his head whereafter he makes the rest of the song up. He records a synth or a bass so he can come back to it later. The result is that most of the time his albums are an mix of old and new songs. And this probably explains him having the habit of doing different things at the same time. But with *Hacia La Luz* his work progress was a bit different. He created it at his recidency in Les Ateliers Claus in two weeks time. Mostly all the sounds he produces go first through an amp, then through a mic and then onto tape. Which is a slower process than recording on the computer. But the result is far more authentic that gives his sound a warm layer.

His aim is to make underground music for his people, with no intention to make hits. Playing with a bunch of effects, guitar fuzz and vocals, his music evolved from bedroom dronemusic to colourful sounds. You can find him on stage sitting behind his synth filled desk that is elegantly draped with blankets.

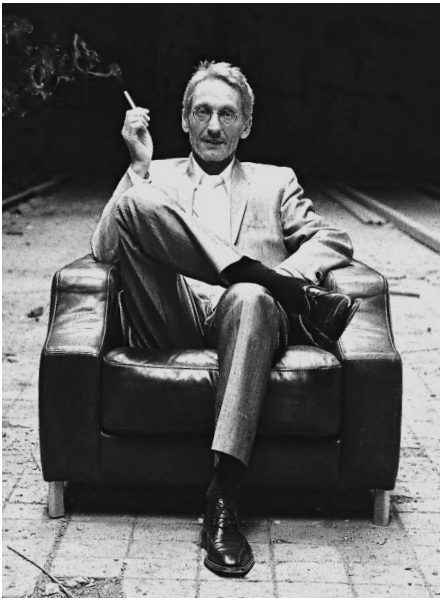
Wikipedia says: "*White opens with the most popular of the twenty possible opening moves. Although effective in winning for White (54.25%), it is not quite as successful as the four next most common openings for White: 1.d4 (55.95%), 1.Nf3 (55.8%), 1.c4 (56.3%), and 1.g3 (55.8%).*[2] *Since nearly all openings beginning 1.e4 have names of their own, the term "King's Pawn Game", unlike Queen's Pawn Game, is rarely used to describe the opening of the game.*

Advancing the king's pawn two squares is highly useful because it occupies a center square, attacks the center square d5, and allows the development of White's king's bishop and queen. Chess legend Bobby Fischer said that the King's Pawn Game is "Best by test", and proclaimed that "With 1.e4! I win".[3]

King's Pawn Games are further classified by whether Black responds with 1...e5 or not. Openings beginning with 1.e4 e5 are called Double King's Pawn Games (or Openings), Symmetrical King's Pawn Games (or Openings), or Open Games — these terms are equivalent. Openings where Black responds to 1.e4 with a move other than 1...e5 are called Asymmetrical King's Pawn Games or Semi-Open Games."

The title of the record misleading, though. The opening is just one of the 18 possible moves, and is not as defining as such. Depending on the players, each game goes its own path. Although... If you think deeper about cause-consequences, each opening has its consequences for the rest of the game, and I think you can apply this to the record too.

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Chess is a closed circuit with very defined rules. Each piece has its own movement, weaknesses and strengths. The board has only 64 places and the goal is very simple: you have to conquer the other party's king. Paradoxally, its very rigid set of rules and limitation creates a field in which endless possibilities appear. It's a field in that enhances imagination, psychology and poetry. You start a game, and by intuition you move pieces. You can learn about the best opening moves, and how to respond to the other's moves, and eventually threats and attacks, but you can never rationalize the game completely. A game develops by having unconscious preference for certain pieces and their moves. Some people even claim that you can be read through the moves you make on the board.

E2-E4 is like the game of chess. It's equally meticulously composed, following a very strict set of rules and limitations. It's a truly teutonic musical composition, more dehumanized than Kraftwerk ever will be. If you listen closely, the piece is made out of 8 layered sources. The sources — synths, delay effects, drumcomputers — are synced together, by a very influential invention called MIDI. It allowed the composer to prepare a set of limitations and defined rules, and let every source slowly fade in and out. During each part Göttsching tweaks and triggers the sounds, so that a slowly shifting structure appears. It's not unlike minimalist avant-garde music, in which the base structure is founded on a few basic notes or structures that are repeated with a very limited amount of variations. The context creates this extraordinary effect in which the slightest change of the parameters — could be the note, the cadense, the rhythm, or the filter and the frequencies — has a maximum of consequences in the sound; the minimum of changes even defines the nature of the piece *per se*. The revolutionary aspect is that he applied minimalist idea's to new technology, and showed the way for Derrick May, Juan Atkins, Jeff Mills and likes how to let people dance themselves towards transcendental salvation.

Although the record suggests a defined start and end, and even though it has 8 defined parts (again $8 \times 8 = 64$, the same amount of squares on the board of chess) with names that suggest a specific mood, there is more to it. On a deeper level, you can consider *E2-E4* as just one possible output. Göttsching could have started with other filters or other tunings and drum rhythms. As if every game of chess is one possible outcome of the very rigid system beyond it.

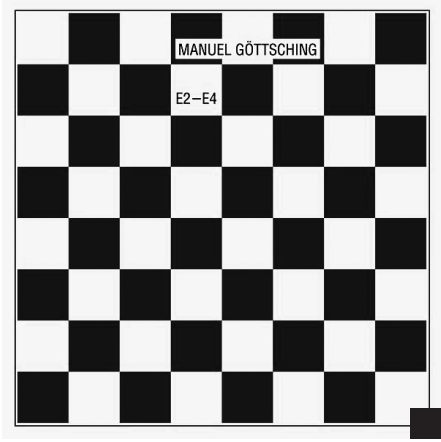
The emotional and the psychological plays a very big role in both chess and *E2-E4*. As I pointed about above: the game of chess thrives upon rationalized rules and limitations. The concrete output is defined by the players consciousness. But even more by our subconscious, as we are not the enlightened, rational creatures we'd like to be, but driven by forces that are the result of thousands of years of evolution.

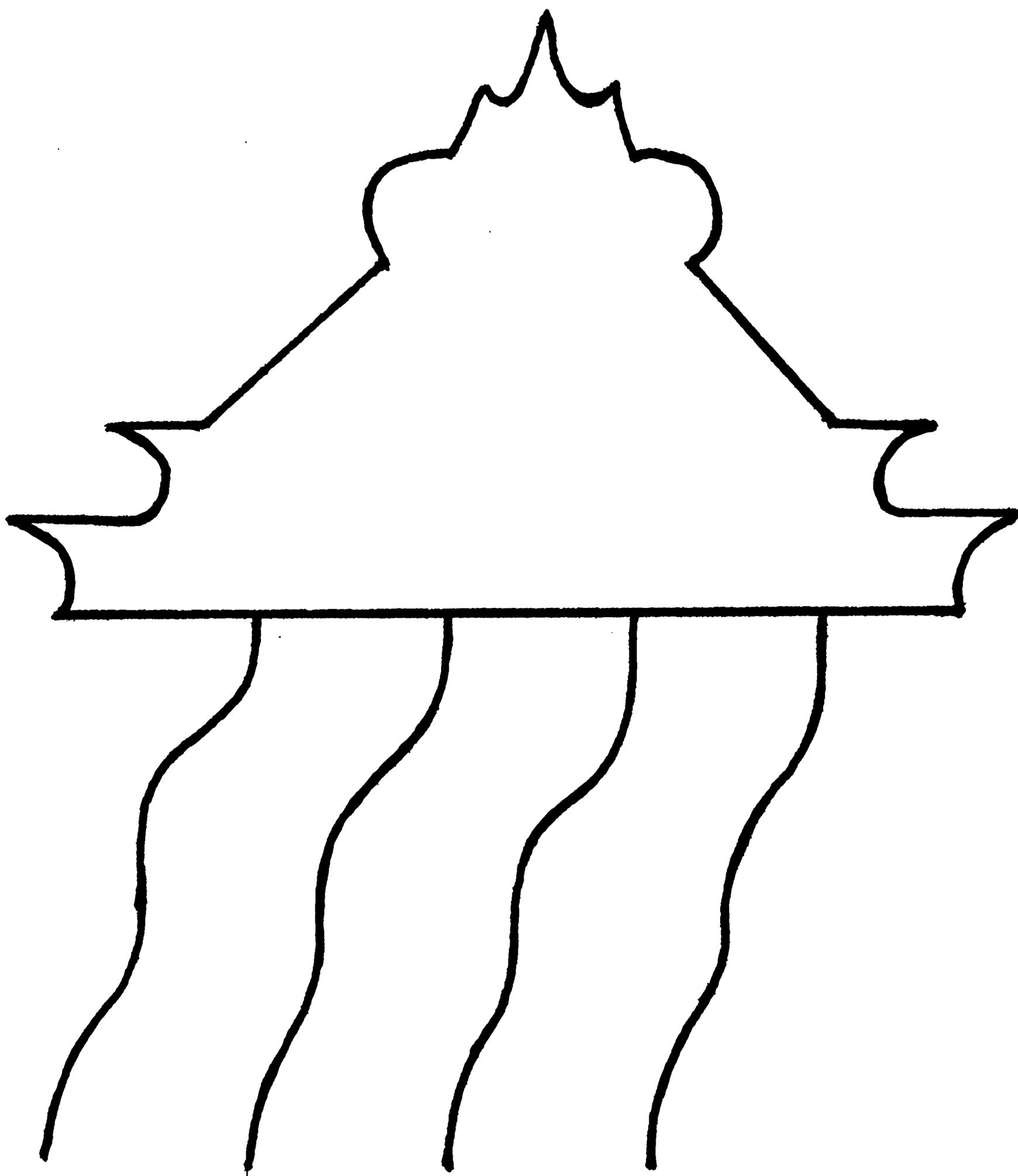
This defines the way we perceive the composition. He himself meant it as a abstract, minimalist piece. But history taught us that the record influenced a stream of dancers and techno musicians. You can either listen to it, or dance to it. But the complexity of sounds, created by a minimum of sources, let's you drift away in it's sheer beauty and emotional warmth. The record does not contain emotions, but I'm sure it conveys a lot of emotion.

This brings me to what I have seen as a striking parallel between the game of chess and the record. On minute 32.00, or just 2 minutes far in the part that is called *Promise*, somewhere in the beginning of the B-side if you're used to listen it on vinyl, suddenly a guitar kicks in. Göttsching is a master guitarplayer. His work with Ashra Temple, and even more the album *Inventions for electric guitar* exemplify this. Moment 32.00 is a flipping point in the record. It suddenly changes the complete mood of the album. Depending on your mood, it could make the timeless sounding synthesizer structures sound like a cheesy, kitch, outdated lounge track. Is it the guitar shredder Göttsching coming in, as a persona, pointing out that electronic music is minor to real instruments? Or couldn't he just resist to show off his guitar skills?

It could be also another equivalent to a game of chess. Every game of chess has a flipping point. The point of no return to which everything before was building up to. The point that makes clear who is losing and who is winning. Mostly the game evolves pretty quickly after that point, one of the parties will lose his or her important pieces and the game falls apart.

If the Guitar Part is consciously conceived as the point of no return in the Göttsching record, I think he truly understands the game of chess, and its merits. He could have kept on building up towards the so-called 'drop', the point in which the beats falls away on clubfloors, to pimp up the dancers. But he didn't... he choose to use his master guitar skills to change to mood, as one of the possible outcomes of the rigid game. To point out the endless possibilities and to prove that a rigid structure can be the portal to deepened aesthetic beauty.





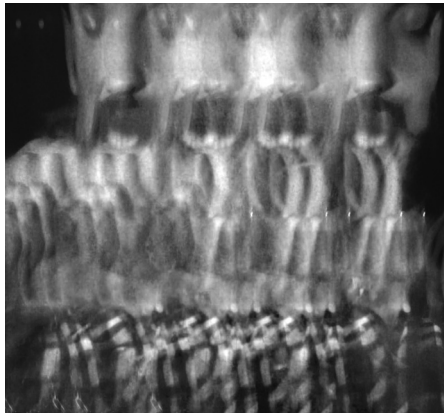
YZ is Younes Zarhoni's moniker to create a highly personal blend of Sufi mysticism and electronic music. His powerful voice sings medieval Arabic poems on top of acid-like electronics and beats. Music led him towards a deepened identity in which beauty, freedom and spiritualism is more dominant than culture, background and the place where you've been born.

In November he will release his debut 10" on Lexi Disque, and he will conclude the Saturday of the Eastern Daze festival in Ghent. We met him at the always cosy Brasserie Verschueren, in the center of hipster Sint-Gilles.

Niels Latomme

NL Tell me something about the co-joined release by Lexi Disques and Pneu Records.

yz They were recorded last January. I have written 5 to 6 tracks, which I used to play as defined pieces with an end and beginning. More and more I noticed they are becoming more vague. Mostly I play pretty late and loud, and people dance to it. I feel that it would be better if they don't have this defined start and stop, so that you can stay in the trance.



It was never my intention to create dance music. It came out naturally because I like it. On the moment I started to play live shows, I noticed that the music started to vibrate within the audience, and that there are possibilities in the music to make a more dance oriented sound. I'm still figuring out how to create a more fluid and transcendental structure out of the elements of the original songs. It's new territory. The challenge is to avoid the clichés of techno, but still make something that is still rudimentary and that triggers people. One way is to use the same elements, but using them in another way — for instance playing with the pitch of the harmonies — so that the mood becomes different by changing the pitch. You'd have to start think like a dancer, not like a singer or songwriter. It's the craftsmanship of a DJ, *Quoi*.

In songs, you have the concept of duration. You are restrained to think within 3, 4, 5 or 6 minutes. The duration and timing is very important in a real song — to kick it off, let it develop and finish it properly. In more trance-like music, this works different, over a longer time. The organic character is way more important; it's more about mixing than composing. I rather like working on longer tracks than to be a constrained by a standardized timeframe.

NL You could say you are in search for a method in which the songs serve as context, more than a structure to hold on?

yz Yes, totally.

NL Is it something that is equally important in Sufi Music?

yz You find Sufism over the whole world, from Morroco to Senegal to Indonesia. The main concept is trance and music is a tool to get into it. Sufi rituals are meant to last to whole night. Music, meditation and movement can take on different forms, depending on the context. By example, in Tanger, rhythm is very important. Myself, I'm more interested by the lyrics.

I see a parallel in both Sufi Mysticism and dance music. Both are trying to achieve a state of transcendentalism through repetition. Although, there is a difference. I don't wanna be too negative about techno and the club scene, because it's also a form of making sense in your life. But Sufism aims to become closer toward God, or another transcendental thing. Sufism is about taking distance of the ego, and it becomes the context for an ethic or moral code. The trance is not the goal in itself, but a tool to reach this. It's all about creating meaning in your life. It's about a purification of yourself — all things mystical, you see.

NL You told me earlier that as a kid you use to sing in Arabic ensembles.

yz When I was 6 years, I started singing in mosques, I learned singing the Qur'an. You can recite it, but you can also sing it. It's a discipline called the tajwid, in which you learn the scales, pretty similar to classical singing.

Later I became more interested in Sufi and religious music and also the M'shmuda anasheed and unshuda, which is more politically and socially engaged Islamitic music. In the 80ties and 90ties in certain circles it was not done to use instrumental music, which started a new genre. Tanger was pretty known for these groups.

In the 90ties several students out of this movement moved to Antwerp and Brussels to study. It was there that I got in contact with them. It was my first musical experience that was not related to the Qur'an. They played a lot of covers of Arabic singers like Sabah Fakhri and George Wassouf, but they changed the lyrics into a more ethical and Islamitic version.

It was a great time, we were one of the first youngster bands started in Antwerp. Later I joined a band with adults that played a lot. Every week two, three shows all over Belgium, in mosques, wedding parties, regular concerts and so on. Which was pretty cool. On a certain point I met the singer who was more Sufi-oriented. With him I formed a new group. Strange enough, the Islamitic Movement music was pretty awkward towards their tradition, because Sufi music is less engaged, I suppose.

NL This movement was more about empowerment?

yz *C'est ça*, Sufi music is too static for them. Although, nowadays there is more a revival of music coming out of the Sufi tradition. Also the better singers are coming out of that background, like Rachid Gholam.

NL Do still make music together with those guys?

yz No, not really. I still see them time to time, but that's all.

NL How come you started playing solo, as you were used to do music in groups?

yz It was a purely practical thing, because I was a lot abroad. On the other hand, I always have a very defined idea about what I wanted to do. My solo music was a starting point, in which I laid down foundations that could be used to play together with others. But it turned out I felt more comfortable with the foundations. So I choose that path.

In collaboration with 'Western' musicians — although I consider myself as a 'Western' musician as well — I choose for people with a very specific sound. For my earlier band, Spandau, I wanted to work with Nico (Sale) and Mathias, with a background in contemporary classical music, or free jazz people. Although I noticed in those collaborations that it was very hard to create one entity, and that people took an individual position. It made that I was seen as the 'non-western' musical element, which felt a bit uncomfortable.

NL Because you were seen as an exotic part?

yz No, not really. The music started to lean towards world music. Maybe we never managed to create a sound that transcended the clichés of it.

NL How you feel then about being part of a festival that highlights the mutual influence between non-Western and Western music? I'm aware that framing people in this black-and-white opposition can cause that we overlook what matters, and over the complex thing music is. Especially your music, you can be considered as Brussels, but also as Arabic, but does it matter?

yz For me it doesn't matter that much. I think framing people in this

or that tradition is a bit difficult. I'm influenced by everything what I see and hear, and by what I like — Arabic music, free jazz, blues or whatever... At the same time my own memory and my parents theirs — my origins so to say — influences me. As kid I heard something that triggered me, something that connects. My granddad collected long-distance radios that could receive stations from all over the world. Before my dad shipped them to my granddad, I used them to scan all these stations. I always heard connections between different traditions of music. I'm convinced that those are there. In Mauritanian music I hear Flamingo for instance.

The diaspora effect is pretty interesting as it connects all those traditions.

Although I notice that the fact that I sing in Arabic involves people into something more complex, which shouldn't be if I would sing in Flemish. It isn't contemporary Arabic, neither street dialect. One poem is for instance written by a poet out of the Saath Dynasty, that was located on Zanzibar in the 18th century. It has a very beautiful and specific cadence that is in strong contrast with the electronic music. I always like things that are made out of strong contrasts.

NL I think the answer seems pretty complex, but is in the end pretty simple for music. In 2016 you have this framing, which is about identity. But I don't think it matters for good music.

yz If you look at the Cuban music hype from some years ago, it didn't matter if people didn't understand the lyrics. Although I'd have to admit people are more aware about Arabic, certainly when it's not music to dance to. But I think definitely defined by context.

NL Do you have the feeling it matters in the Brussels cellar scene where you mostly perform?

yz No, not at all. In that way is Brussels a great city. I always wondered what I could do sound wise, and that's why I think Arabic is interesting. In Brussels I have the freedom to present it in that way. People care more about to the fact if it's musically interesting or not, if there is beauty in it, if it vibrates... and less about where it's from.

STEPHANE GINSBURGH

NOVEMBER MUSIC

Brecht Ameel

BA Stephane can you tell us a little about your background, both as a pianist and as a listener?

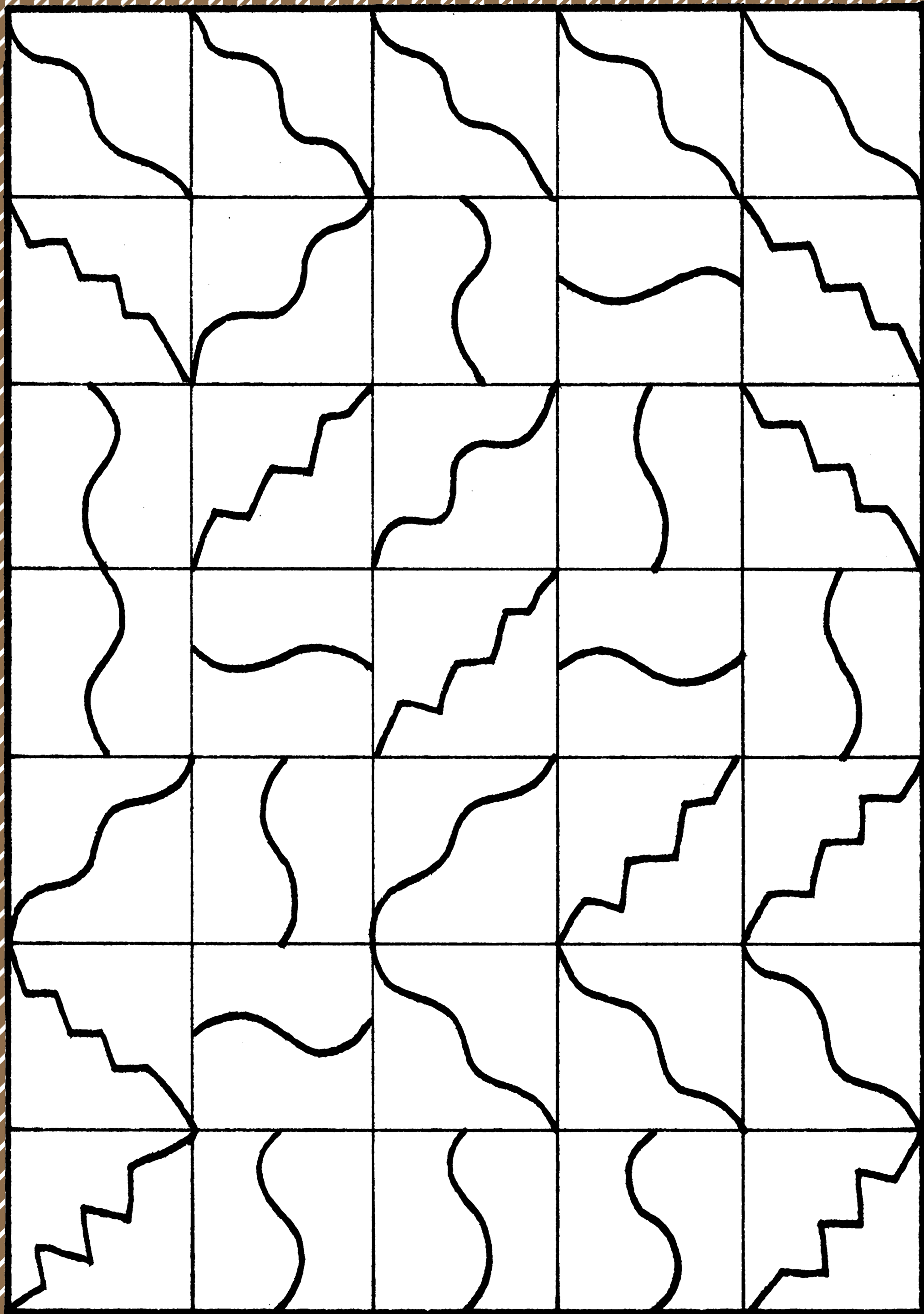
sg My first experiences as a listener happened in a music loving family where I could hear all kinds of styles ranging from the early classical to the modern, opera, Lieder, chanson française as well as alternative rock, and even some electronic music. The transition to playing music was therefore quite natural and I started playing the piano when I was 6 years old. I never stopped since then. What followed consisted mainly in encountering musicians, all of them

somehow influential in my evolution, and discovering the vast territories of music and knowledge in general.

BA Do you remember when you became aware of Dennis Johnson's music? What was it that attracted you to his work in particular?

sg I have been familiar with so-called minimalist music for many years when I participated in my first recording of Morton Feldman's music for Sub Rosa with Le Bureau des Pianistes in 1990. Minimalism has played an important role in the way I consider doing music

26/11 00:00 CAFE
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today. In 1992, American composer Kyle Gann received a tape and a few sketches of Dennis Johnson’s *November* from La Monte Young. Young told Gann that the piece had influenced him a lot in writing his *Well Tuned Piano*. And it’s only quite recently that Gann proceeded to work — hard — on the material he had received in order to reconstruct what seemed to be a 5 to 6 hours long minimalist and tonal piece, probably the first one of its kind. I became aware of the piece when pianist Andrew Lee released his recording of it a few years ago on Irritable Hedgehodge.

BA Do you think there is a reason why Mr Johnson chose ‘November’ rather than ‘December’ or ‘January’?

SG I haven’t found any information about that except that one fragment is dated from early December which could mean that the piece was started in November. But that’s only a very weak hypothesis.

BA Is the indication to start off with a ‘Very Slow’ tempo Johnson’s, or is it an addition made after Johnson’s own recording was discovered?

SG The indication is not found on what seems to be the original sketch and might have been added by Kyle Gann after listening to the recording.

BA If there would not have been any indication, how would you decide on a tempo for a piece like this?

SG Well, in this case, the recording is important in reconstructing the piece and apparently, the tempo IS very slow. On the other hand, the style is clearly minimalistic and invites the performer to play slowly. This is also the case with some of Feldman’s pieces which have no indication but clearly belong to a universe of slowness.

BA I mean this in the sense that with instrumental pieces which obtain a sort of ‘canonical’ status, there often tends to be a sort of established notion about tempo. For example, a Satie Gnossienne needs to be slow. No one dares to take it fast (anymore).

SG Of course, but there still remains quite a large range of speeds even in slowness. You can always play slower than slow. I think speed is not necessarily an absolute data but also depends greatly on the length, the harmonics and the quality of sound.

BA If you could choose, who would you like to be: the performer of “November Music” or a member



of the audience who hears the performance?

SG I always prefer being the performer but I think in the end that in all musical experiences, the performer and the listener tend to merge somehow. We are not considering anymore performing as the active part and listening as the passive one. Every person present become an actor in the listening experience. The performer simply being an operator of sound or a transmitter.

BA I wonder how much of any current recording of “November Music”, or any current performance of this piece, is actually an improvisation based on just a couple of ideas that were outlined by Johnson?

SG Well, the piece is basically a series of harmonic patterns which are played rather freely. There is absolutely no notated rhythm. So you could say there is some improvisation involved. But improvising does not mean you do whatever without reason. The material somehow always imposes its own way to the performer. As Feldman once said to Stockhausen: “You don’t push the sounds.” This means for me that the sounds themselves take part in the way they are played.

BA Do you need to physically prepare yourself for this piece? Or is it a mental thing?

SG I do indeed prepare myself physically because playing for 5 hours is quite demanding for the back. The longest piece I have ever played was Feldman’s *For Philip Guston* which lasts 4 1/2 hours. But I know pianists who play much longer. The mental preparation is very important in order to remain concentrated for a very long time. One of the best exercises I know for this is walking and mountain hiking.

BA When I listen to piano music of Dennis Johnson, La Monte Young and Morton Feldman (to name three composers who were involved in creating looooong piano pieces), Johnson’s seems to be the most clearly overtly emotional. Would you agree on this?

SG No I don’t agree. I think music rouses emotions, but it does not contain any. Music is made of sounds and as such, it can touch the listener in many different ways. The difference between Johnson & Young on one side, Feldman & Cage on the other, resides in the fact that the first ones rely on tonality while the two others are mostly atonal.

BA Music of long duration... I can’t wrap my mind to decide what is the most thrilling moment of a 5 hour voyage: the beginning, when all is still open, and you wonder what will be next, where and how it will grow, what it will lead to... or the end of such a piece, when all of the notes themes reverberations suddenly turn out to be a conclusive thing, leaving a listener with a ring in the ears to take home and brood over.

SG I sometimes wonder if there is a beginning and an ending. There are certainly in the performance, but not in the music. Music is almost infinite.

EASTERN DAZE ISSUES NOVEMBER 2016

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■ DENNIS JOHNSON RECONSTRUCTING NOVEMBER: This is a recording of a major work that has been lost to history for fifty years.

Kyle Gann

My first hint of its existence came around 1992. I was writing an article about the music of La Monte Young, who in the 1960s had introduced long drones into the music of the avant-garde, and in so doing secured himself as reputation as “the father of minimalism.” La Monte gave me a hissy cassette tape of some slow, faint piano music. It was one of those thin, unreliable 120-minute cassettes, and the pitch wobbled badly. It was marked as containing a piece called *November*, dated 1959, by Dennis Johnson, though the recording was indicated as being from 1962. The music was glacially calm and meditative in the extreme, and cut off abruptly after 112 minutes; in fact, there were a few gaps in the audio elsewhere, too. On tape, voices murmured in the background. Occasionally a far-off dog barked. And La Monte credited the work as having been the inspiration and predecessor to his mammoth magnum opus *The Well-Tuned Piano*, which I had come to write about.

Dennis Johnson was one of Young’s college friends at UCLA; they met in 1957 when Young heard him practicing Webern’s *Variations for piano*, and barged into his practice room to see who it was. Along with their friend Terry Jennings, Young and Johnson were the original minimalists, composing austere slow and static music years before Steve Reich and Philip Glass got involved. Young’s “Lecture 1960,” published in the *Tulane Drama Review*, describes Johnson as having performed a piece called Din, with 40 performers in a darkened hall clapping, screaming, shuffling feet, and so on. Young recounts that after the concert a critic asked if the group was “part of Zen,” and Johnson replied, “No, but Zen is part of us.” Johnson was also known for a work using only four pitches, titled *The Second Machine*, and a jazz piece written in chord changes called *the 109-Bar Tune*. After a few years of avant-garde performance, though, Johnson gave up music around 1962, and for decades almost his only public historical record was a hilariously immature letter (credited only to “Dennis”) in the 1963 new-music compendium *An Anthology*, edited by Young and Jackson Mac Low. A rumor persisted, however, that *November* was supposedly, in total, six hours long — the eventual length of *The Well-Tuned Piano*.

For years I kept that ancient cassette, thinking about it and occasionally listening to it. Not until the mid-2000s did I have enough technology at my disposal to digitize the recording and make transcribing it a reasonable possibility, which I did in 2007. The tape contained only 112 minutes of a six-hour work, and I knew I couldn’t completely make sense of it without Johnson’s help; luckily, composer Daniel Wolf was able to provide me Johnson’s address and phone number in California. Johnson generously sent me a copy of the manuscript of the work, six pages of melodic cells and diagrams for conjoining them. He told me over the phone that he was born in late 1938, so he was presumably 20 or

21 when he wrote *November*, 23 when he recorded it at Terry Jennings’s mother’s house. Because of the wobbly pitch, correctly transcribing the tape would have been a dicey operation without the score; comparing my transcription with the score clarified actual pitch levels.

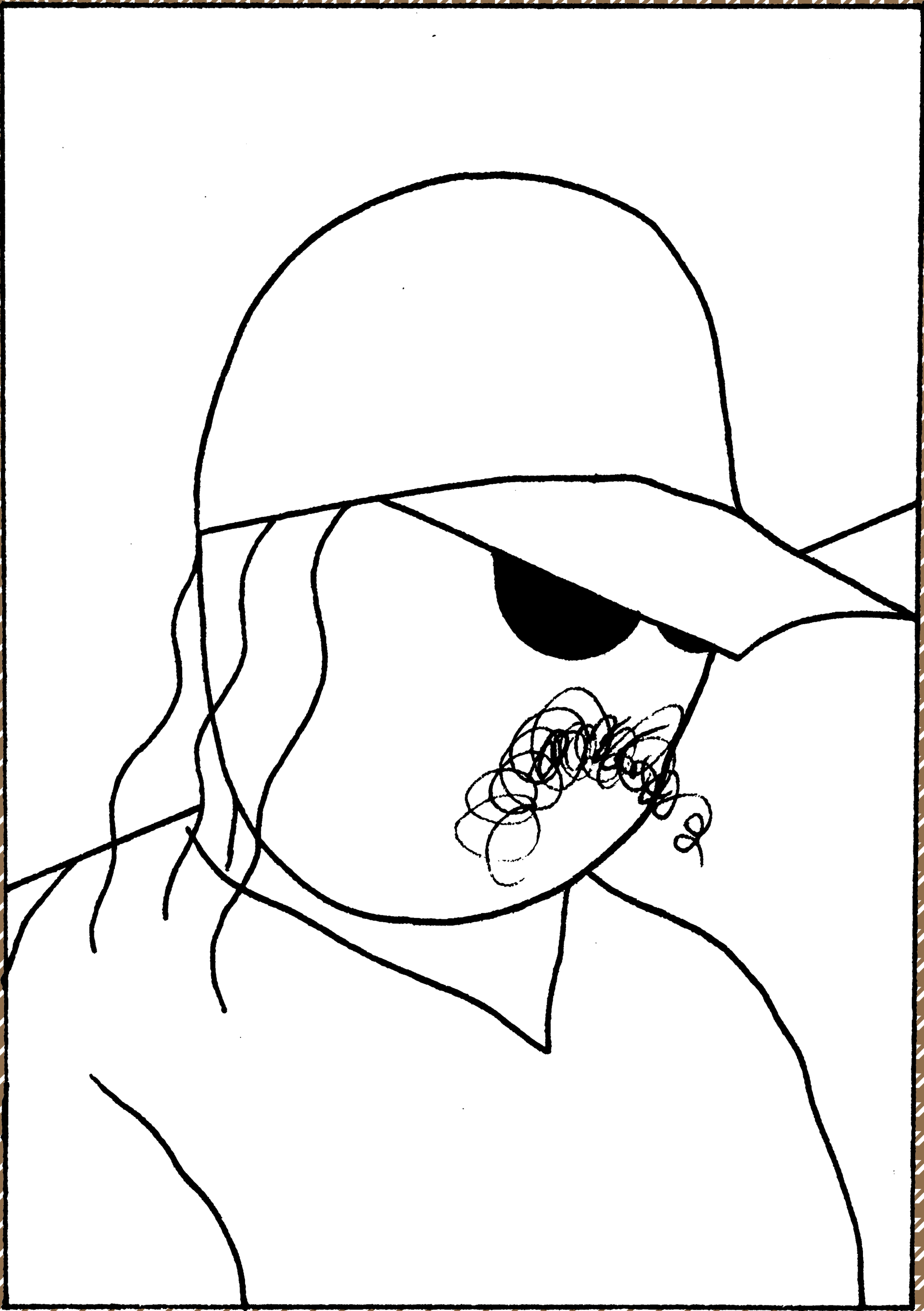
It took months of work to copy down all the notes on that tape, including some thick chords that the tape’s pitch waviness wouldn’t let me match exactly on the piano, but the effort was amply rewarded as I learned more and more how the piece worked. *November*, if it was truly written in 1959, rewrites the early history of minimalism. Before *November*, Young and Jennings had been writing extremely slow atonal music, climaxing in Young’s String Trio of 1958, a twelve-tone piece with notes and chords sustained for several minutes at a time. *November* started off in the key of G minor, and was thus the earliest available tonal piece in the new style of minimalism, which would reintroduce tonality back into avant-garde classical concert music. In addition, *November* was apparently the first piece to proceed through the repetition of small motives, which is the technique now most commonly associated with minimalism via the works of Steve Reich and Philip Glass. *November* is the first static or repetitive piece to be several hours in length (Young’s earlier String Trio having been approximately an hour long without a break). It is the first known piece to proceed via additive process, i.e., starting with two notes, repeating them and adding a third, repeating those and adding a fourth, and so on; the technique would become famous a few years later in the late-’60s music of Steve Reich and Philip Glass.

In short, in *November* most of the elements we now think of as minimalist appeared all at once. Only the slow, drawn-out time sense was anticipated by Young and Jennings. Assuming it really came from 1959, Dennis Johnson seems to have created minimalism with all its basic elements at once — and then the original piece with which he did it was forgotten for almost half a century.

The manuscript score of *November* is a puzzle. It contains two pages of “motifs,” numbered first with Roman numerals and then switching to Arabic ones, often out of order, with many cross-outs, alternative possibilities, and self-questionings by the composer. These are followed by three further pages on which Johnson tried, with only partial success, to analyze his improvisation and arrive at a more exact notation. Little annotations among the notes, in the same handwriting of Johnson’s letter in *An Anthology*, show him cogitating on paper and rather humorously arguing with himself: “maybe replace IVb with this”; “sounds better to enter with low A#”; “maybe add low E# in first chord — NO!”

Along with the score, Johnson sent me a note with the following description:

Here is the complete “score,” if that is the correct term. It consists of “motifs” plus rules of



which motifs can follow each given motif — at least that is what it should be, but I’m afraid that it isn’t made entirely clear. Items 1-15 were written around 1970-1971. Pages A + B are, I think, an attempt to make the transitions more explicit — or possibly to write down the transitions as they occur in the recording, but it was never finished, so the recording must stand as the primary definition example of the piece. The piece was not meant to be entirely fixed, but somewhat improvisatory, with the given transitions as the rules for the improvisation. No rules were implied about the times spent on any of the motifs, nor on the number of recurrences/recycles of any motif — they do recur in the tape.

This is an enigmatic note. I called Johnson soon afterward, and we had a nice conversation, but his health is failing; he warned me that his short-term memory is very bad and that he would probably repeat his questions, which he did. He confirmed, though, that the score he sent me was made after the fact, in an attempt to set down what he had performed several years earlier; the description above suggests that it was made in 1970-71. Whether he was listening to the tape as he did this is impossible to ascertain, though it seems plausible, because a couple of the transitions match the tape pretty exactly. By implication, some of the motifs (those numbered 16 through 18) were written after 1971 and may represent new material not played in 1962. One passage in the score is dated “Dec. 1988.” Perhaps Johnson continued adding to the piece this late. Much information is missing, and speculation can only take us so far.

Nevertheless, the score clarified much of what I found on the tape, though inconsistencies remained. A motive labeled “Ia” (G D C in the treble clef, G Bb in the bass) was followed by IIa, IIb, IIc and IId in succession; Ib came somewhat later. Some, but not all, of the numbered sets of motives were unified by being all in the same diatonic scale (each number standing for several related motives):

- I G natural minor (though with a B-natural in Ib)
- II G major
- III G# natural minor
- IV F# major (though with one B#)

- V & VI G# natural minor again
- 7 & 8 E natural minor
- 9 Bb major (though with a dissonant Db at one point)

Others, however, were inconsistent in this regard. Little curved arrows suggested movement from one motif to another, but these were inconsistently added, and didn’t always match the progression on the tape. In one place, a frequently recurring chord on the tape did not contain the same notes as its counterpart in the score, which may have been a transcription error on Johnson’s part; as instructed, I took the recording to be the authentic version.

Johnson also preserved in the manuscript an intriguing example of his formal thinking. In an example on area III, he numbers motifs IIIa-d and IVc with a kind of poetic refrain notation, so that IIIa appears as numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, and 13, motif IIIb as 2, 6, and 12, and so on. Follow that in a kind of bouncing-ball motion, and the resulting pattern gives us a succession of motifs in the form

ABACABACDCDBACDCDEDE

More simply put, he works his way gradually from A to E by alternating between adjacent motifs in a kind of permutational additive process. Presumably this type of process could be used to link other motifs in performance as well. Approximately half the material on the score is used in the tape, which means that it is fairly easy to imagine how to double the length of the tape by similarly adding in the other material. However, I also found on the tape passages of material not reflected in the score, which could well mean that the original six-hour performance, if it did run that long, contained more material than has survived in the score.

Among other things, *November* anticipated *The Well-Tuned Piano* in being an improvisatory piano piece whose large-scale areas are held together by occupying the same harmonic field. As models of music improvised from materials written out and played in any order, we might also cite Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI* and Boulez’s *Third Piano Sonata*, both completed in 1957,

as predecessors. Given how focused American composers were on the music of Anton Webern at the time, I also think it is not far-fetched to hear in Johnson’s two- and three-note motives the influence of Webern’s *Piano Variations*, even though Johnson’s language is mostly far more consonant.

Becoming a little obsessed, I wanted to play the piece, or have it played, and we had the perfect opportunity coming up at the 2nd International Conference on Minimalist Music at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, in September of 2009. I set to work on a performance score. I didn’t know if I could sit five hours at a piano, but the amazing pianist Sarah Cahill was going to be there too, so we agreed to alternate by hours. My solution for a score, on which Andrew Lee’s performance is based, was, first, to as carefully as possible transcribe the 112 minutes of the tape, and then create a performing version for the remainder based on continuing the kinds of patterns heard on the tape with the remaining materials found in the score.

I marked off blank measures of 5/4 meter with the 8th-note at 60 pulses per minute; this way each measure corresponded to 10 seconds. At this music’s ultra-slow tempo, I figured that placing every note within half a second was generally precise enough. I transcribed the 112 minutes into notation software and afterward deleted (or made invisible) all the note-stems and rests, so that the disembodied noteheads would float in a John Cage-like proportional notation. Even though no pulse runs through the work and rhythms need not have been notated, Johnson in his performance patently grouped certain notes into recurring phrases, and at this first stage it was important to preserve exact timings to avoid falsifying the phrasing profile of the original. I had to reconstruct some music that took place during gaps in the tape, using the same logic evident in the relationship of manuscript score to tape. Where the tape gave out, I made up a continuation score containing the remainder of the motifs from the manuscript score, laid out in a plausible order so that the pianist could continue improvisatorily. My hope was that the entire performance would,

from the listener’s point of view, maintain a seamless logic. I tried to use in the improvisatory, second half of the reconstruction the same kinds of logic, additive process, repetitions, motivic rhythms, and harmonic connections apparent in the material captured on tape.

Expanding the piece’s length to the alleged six hours presented some difficulty. The original six-hour performance, if it did run that long, seems likely to have contained more material than was eventually captured in notation. A six-hour reconstruction using the extant material might be needlessly repetitious; our 2009 performance went four and a half hours, and Andrew has made a version running almost five hours. Even so, an authentic performance requires considerable creativity on the pianist’s part, along with some analysis of the transcription to get into Dennis’s musical thinking. I made my own private recording of the work on August 12, 2009, and Sarah and I (re-?) premiered the piece September 6 at UMKC. I’m thrilled that Andrew Lee, a pianist devoted to minimalist repertoire, has made it a special project and even given its European premiere.

Musicologists aren’t done with Dennis Johnson and Terry Jennings. Someone needs to locate the scores to *The Second Machine* and The 109-Bar Tune and research the chronology of the original minimalist trio. The importance of *The Well-Tuned Piano* adds to *November*’s place in history, but the work also abundantly stands on its own. I’ve listened to our recordings many times, and enjoyed the limpid pool of tones it creates, its gentle repetitions and insouciant changes of tonality. Had minimalism never happened, Dennis Johnson’s *November* would be a beautiful and radically innovative conception, well worth recording and hearing. Given the piece’s seminal position in sparking a rebirth of tonality in 20th-century music, I would like to think that the piece will take its place as one of the more influential monuments in musical history as well.

Kyle Gann is a composer and author of five books on American music. He was new-music critic for *the Village Voice* from 1986 to 2005, and has taught music theory and history at Bard College since 1997.

FRIDAY.....25.11

BALZAAL

20:15 Giancarlo Toniutti

21:10 Typhonian Highlife

22:00 Mike Cooper

23:00 Nibul

SATURDAY.....26.11

14:00 Record fair (*free entrance*)

15:00

- **Screening *Sakala* (2015)**, dir. Simon Halsberghe, 11 min.
- **Screening *A Story of Sahel Sounds* (2016)**, dir. Neopan Kollektiv, 82 min.
- **Panel talk** with Mike Cooper, Giancarlo Tionutti and Ernesto González

BALZAAL

20:15 Sanskriti Shrestha & Tejaswinee Kelkar

21:15 Les Filles de Illighadad

22:10 Bear Bones, Lay Low

23:05 Manuel Götttsching plays *E2-E4*

CAFÉ (*free entrance*)

00:00 YZ

DJ Sebcát

SUNDAY.....27.11

BALZAAL

13:30 Stephane Ginsburgh performs Dennis Johnson’s *November*

DE NEUS VAN GOD



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at Radio Panique 105.4 fm

