MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC
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THESIS
ERIC SALZMAN (1933-2017)
A Dynamic Voice in Twentieth Century Music and Beyond

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 2

INTRODUCTION – 4

CHAPTER ONE – EARLY LIFE 7

CHAPTER TWO – THE 1950S – EDUCATION AND EUROPEAN TRAINING 20

CHAPTER THREE – A FULL RANGE OF ACTIVITY (THE EARLY 60S) 42

CHAPTER FOUR – COUNTER CULTURE, EUROPE AND THE AVANT GARDE 52

CHAPTER FIVE – THE NUDE PAPER SERMON, FEEDBACK & THE LATE 60S 88

CHAPTER SIX – NEW MUSIC THEATER 113

CHAPTER SEVEN – PRODUCER, EDUCATOR AND LATE PERIOD COMPOSER 131

Appendix 1 – ESSAY: SPEAKING IN TONGUES, OR WHY SHOULD ECLECTIC BE A BAD WORD (By Eric Salzman) 165

Appendix 2 – WORKS PRODUCED BY SALZMAN AT AMTF (WITH COMMENTARY) 170

Appendix 3 – AMTF ALUMNI 180

Appendix 4 – SALZMAN: SELECTED WORKS 187

Bibliography
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The support of my parents, Gary and Karen Joiner, throughout my DMA and this dissertation made it all possible. They encouraged me to attend the Manhattan School of Music, where they believed I could thrive. My major professors during my Doctoral studies at MSM
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To my wonderful friend Eric Salzman, whose passion for music, art, nature and life was irrepressible, I dedicate this thesis. He showed me great generosity, entrusted his music to my voice, championed my compositions and brought me wholly into his world. I will never forget our five years of adventures. I hope that this thesis does justice to his wildly creative life. As he himself would always say: Excelsior!

– Scott Joiner

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Acoustic musical instruments all have two important components: a driver, the part of the instrument that makes the sound; and a resonator, the part of the instrument that vibrates with and amplifies the sound. To describe Eric Salzman in these terms seems a fitting analogy for a life and a personality like his. Salzman not only generated music as a composer, but he vibrated so ecstatically with the music that bounced off of him, constantly adapting to and engaging with the artistic movements in the environment around him. Yet his greatest legacy to the music world was as a tireless amplifier of the sounds, music and artistic concepts that he was passionate about – as a writer, broadcaster, record producer, concert/theatrical producer, teacher, colleague and collaborator with so many of the century’s musical giants.

Preparing a biography of one who was so thoroughly engaged and productive turned out to be, inherently, a monumental effort of absorption and selection. This experience was made significantly richer, but not easier, by the fact that Salzman was a close friend for the last five years of his life – one whose music I performed, produced and archived. While still in his late seventies, he asked me to consider being his artistic executor after his passing, and so began a very fruitful account-taking of what materials existed, long before the idea of this thesis was born. Currently, I am President of Quog Music Theater, founded by Salzman in 1970, and which houses the Salzman Archives at the composer’s home of more than sixty years. Nonetheless, this thesis represents many thousands of hours spent reading books, letters (thankfully saved by his widow, they include notes and letters on various subjects from the likes of Milton Babbit, Harry Partch, Leopold Stokowski, Gian-Carlo Menotti, Gordon Mumma, Paul Fromm, Joseph Fuchs, Earle Brown, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Julius Rudel, Luciano Berio, Thais Lathem, Cathy Berberian, Stanley Silverman, Audra McDonald, Friedelind Wagner and countless others), and several hundred essays and articles. I also recorded (and transcribed) over ten hours of interviews with Salzman and his colleagues,
listened to large quantities of music (not only Salzman’s own, but the music he was writing about, producing, and the music of his close colleagues), studied scores and attempted that ever-elusive task of trying to come to an understanding of an individual whose vastness truly contained multitudes.

The issue of what materials to select and include was difficult, since Salzman lived through a period of enormous change in which cultural and classical musical perspectives shifted drastically. I have tried to imagine and to counterpose what might be of interest from a human narrative point of view (how a unique life was lived), with what was important to the living “dramatis personae” of a particular point in time (even if that importance is diminished through our modern lens), and finally to encapsulate what seems most relevant and indispensible about the time periods in question and Salzman’s role in them from our current perspective. Something that may have seemed straightforward, typical or quotidian to Salzman might be considered of enormous interest looking back from a future century – and vice versa. Needless to say, the author could have easily filled a book with the stuff of memoire from letters and anecdotes of years spent travelling, listening to concerts and meeting interesting, consequential people. Similarly, the author could, and plans to fill a book with a selection of Salzman’s evocative, critical, erudite and entertaining writing on music.

As a biography and a research paper, this thesis will examine Salzman’s body of work, as well as his life, addressing certain aspects of expression that correspond to the general musical, artistic and cultural scene (even occasionally making use of non-musical parallels, for example, the literature of Philip Roth). As the terminus of a DMA in Voice Performance at the Manhattan School of Music, it will spend considerable time on Eric’s major fascination with the relationship between words and music, his advocacy for New Music Theater as a genre and his passion for the communicative power of the human voice in general.
The first chapter in Salzman’s *The New Music Theater* (co-authored with Thomas Desi), under the heading “The Voice,” surveys the development and employment of the human voice throughout centuries of music, theater and artistic communication, from primitive roots in sexual display and communication, through the advent of language, following the threads from Greek theater through opera to the digital age. This is, in fact, the point of intersection for all of Salzman’s diverse endeavors and thinking about music. The questions of what music is, where it came from and where it is going – framed by Leonard Bernstein as Charles Ives’s ‘Unanswerable Question,’ “whither music?” and its relatives (as Bernstein lists them), “whence music?” “what music?” and “whose music?” – are also the questions to which Eric Salzman devoted most of his life.¹ To the aforementioned, Eric would likely have added, “how music?”

The subtitle of Salzman and Desi’s book, “Hearing the Body; Seeing the Voice,” is a paradox with an implicit warning to the reader: be ready to question assumptions. It also evokes the very physicality of the body and voice. Salzman was interested in the “nature” of things, of the body and the expressive power of communication between living things (it is not surprising that he and his wife were naturalists or that Eric even became a respected expert in birdsong). In the activities of his artistic campaign for a comprehensive approach to music and theater, he was both subject and object; thus uniquely positioned to advocate for the art form. He was driven toward the big questions about music by a deep love of all music – the very potential of music’s existence – and it was the dynamism of his approach, attacking the questions from every possible side, that made his life and work consequential.

CHAPTER ONE – EARLY LIFE

Cultural Inheritance and the Seed of Rebellion

Eric Salzman was born in 1933 and grew up in the St. Albans neighborhood of Queens, just east of Jamaica, with his brother Paul (eighteen months younger), grandsons of east European Jewish émigrés. The cultural ethos into which he was born, specifically that of New York City and environs, then in the midst of the Great Depression, is a remarkable one. Particulary notable is the widespread economic amelioration, cultural prosperity and accomplishment that it engendered for the families of European immigrants, especially Ashkenazi Jews, who distinguished themselves disproportionately in areas of cognitive achievement and in the arts. Certain themes from Salzman’s ancestral heritage can be traced in his work and life, even though their influence on him varied in nature during different periods. Salzman’s life was exactly contemporaneous with that of the writer Philip Roth (also a child of eastern European Jews) whose fiction explored affects of Jewish heritage on the creative artist. This convenient historic simultaneity gives an opportunity to compare Salzman’s artistic motivations in music and theater with those of an artist in another medium. His cultural inheritance created a context against which Salzman, like Roth (and many of their generation), made a conscious decision to push with deliberate irreverence, pursuing new and different courses. Channeling a potent admixture of pride, self-consciousness and frustration, these artists used their talent to great advantage in the twentieth century American conversation, wielding social commentary, political satire, transgression (in Salzman’s case deliberate avant-gardism), comedy and irony as devices of post-modern rebellion.  

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Both sets of Salzman’s grandparents were among the nearly two million Jews who came to the US during the period between 1881 and 1914, when a third of all eastern European Jews left their homelands. The Salzmans and the Klenetskys both left different parts of what is now Poland (then part of the Russian Partition). By all accounts, the two families seem to have followed, roughly, the narrative Irving Howe lays out in *World of Our Fathers*; migration from the shtetl driven by economic and social change, often to the slums of cities (like Warsaw, Łódź, Vilna, etc.), where a Jewish proletariat was nascent. For a sizeable fee, one family member might come ahead to the US via extensive underground organizations that conducted émigrés across the borders into Germany or Amsterdam where they could get on a boat. Once settled in the US, they would establish the financial means by which the rest of the family could be brought over.4

Eric’s great-grandfather on his mother’s side was a Rabbi and Chazzan, though in a sign of increasing change within the Jewish community, Eric’s own grandfather, Louis Klenetsky, got involved in Jewish and Yiddish theater. It is unclear whether that theatrical involvement began in Europe (perhaps in Warsaw, Łódź or Krakow where an active Jewish community of writers, performers and thinkers advocated for shared Yiddish culture beyond religion), but by the time the family was settled in New York, where Yiddishkeit was in full force, all of the Klenetskys were heavily involved in the Yiddish theater. Eric’s grandfather Louis had come to America first, most likely to the Lower East Side, where he worked for a year before bringing over the rest of his family which included three brothers, a sister and his parents.

It was from his mother’s side of the family that Eric claimed that all of his musical and theatrical talent came.5 Salzman’s mother, Frances (born Klenett; the version of the name the

5 The author’s interview with Eric Salzman, 19 February 2017.
family eventually adopted) was the daughter of theater performers, had classical piano lessons throughout her childhood and travelled occasionally with Yiddish theater companies as a child-actor – even without her parents. In a recorded interview, Frances recalled travelling with a tutor (the Gary Plan for standardized education in force in New York from 1914-1917 had strict regulations on child performers), and on one traumatic occasion, being accidentally left at a train station by the travelling troupe.

With a growing family, Frances’s mother wanted the family to leave the stage altogether, and as a result her husband tried various business ventures (a hat store, a chicken farm, a peach farm, shirtwaist manufacturing, an ice cream parlor and various other endeavors) often with hardly any prior knowledge. Invariably, the businesses would fail, all of the money saved would be lost and Louis would return to the stage. The family’s oft-repeated joke was that “He could never make a living at anything but acting.” Again, to quote Frances, “He was smart – but not good with money. My father was not a good business man, but he could sing, he could dance, he wrote music, he wrote stories – he earned enough money to bring his whole family over and was not crummy about money.”

Eric himself recalled that when he was a boy growing up in St. Albans, his mother’s father came to live with them after losing his wife:

“I remember he had trunks of his numbers for a pit band so that when he toured he could take these arrangements with him. And I also remember noticing that the words to the songs were in Hebrew characters, even though the language wasn't Hebrew, it was Yiddish. And years later I though to myself..."But Hebrew goes the other way, how could this be?" and my mother said, I don't know, they just broke it up by syllables. But it never occurred to me at the time to question what it was.”

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6 Stephanie Salzman and Eva Salzman. Interview (recorded) with Frances Klenett Salzman. 16 March 1985.
7 The author’s interview with Eric Salzman, 19 February 2017.
Frances recalled that when he lived with them her father, a lifelong atheist, would go regularly to synagogue to hear the singing of the chazzans, which he found stimulating, beautiful, and culturally meaningful. He also went daily to the library and traveled up to Harlem to hear the controversial African-American spiritual leader Father Divine whom he found fascinating. In very distinct ways, this tradition of interest in culture and music as a way of life or means of galvanizing society would become a central tenet of Eric’s own life.

Treading the fine line between interest in intellectual pursuits, erudition and the label of “luftmenshn” (a Yiddish word for those who live in a world of ideas rather than the practicalities), could be perceived as a generational concern on both sides of Eric’s parentage. On his father’s side there is evidence of a thorough intellectual interest in culture. Sam Salzman’s forebears were chinaware peddlers and farmers in the Polish countryside, and they seem to have been on the more prosperous side (though still poor) compared with other European Jews. Born around 1900, Sam remembers walking through an unknown village or city (possibly Łódź or a smaller village or shtetl) en route to private or small group education with a Rabbi at the age of 5 or 6, and getting lost walking home by lamplight. He vividly recalled visiting his grandfather’s farm, where “tziganes” (gypsies) cast an eerie presence camping in fields in the distance, and, in another old-world image, huddling in fear at the clopping of Cossack horses on the cobblestones outside their house in a Polish village (one whose identity he could never recall). Sam’s father, a bookbinder in Poland, came to America after the 1905 Revolution in Poland, leaving his wife and all the children back in Poland until he could afford to pay their way to America the next year (or as late as 1907). Sam’s memories of the boat journey, Ellis Island, and the family’s small apartment near the Alphabet City area of the East Village as a young child were not unpleasant ones, which again points to a social status above that of more destitute immigrants.
Among his vivid recollections of Brownsville Brooklyn where the family settled sometime after 1910, were the “Labor Temples” where the socialists and unions met, and men on the street corners preaching Karl Marx. Sam, mirroring his future wife, also regretted that his father was not a good businessman or concerned to a sufficient degree with financial matters. Sam and his brother Harry picked up the slack, supporting their younger sister (who became a school teacher) and their youngest brother Leon (b. 1916), who became president of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and a professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical School, acquiring considerable notoriety as the author of the first major medical literature on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, *The Obsessive Personality*. 

Sam Salzman went to NYU Engineering School, worked as a math teacher at various private schools, and eventually earned a Ph.D. in Psychology from NYU. He made his career mostly as a teacher (though he practiced psychology privately after Eric and his brother became adults) and it is in this context that he met Frances, who worked in the registrar’s office in exchange for free tuition at the small private preparatory school (one set up primarily to help immigrants). After marrying they relocated the family to St. Albans, a fairly nice middle class area of Queens, around the time Eric was born.

Speaking of her own husband, Frances explained in an interview, “He wasn’t ambitious – he was always satisfied, always content.” In his literature Roth cites lack of strong ambition and a general timidity of male role models as a cause of generational frustration for young Jewish men of Salzman’s era. Salzman would later admit that his attraction to avant-garde music was a rebellion against his parents. Highlighting a parallel, Robert Greenberg notes, in *Transgression in the Fiction of Philip Roth*:

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8 Stephanie Salzman and Eva Salzman. Interview (recorded) with Sam Salzman. 16 March 1985.
“In literature… Jewish-American writers like Roth and Mailer seem particularly keyed to defiance. The aforementioned taboos and discipline of their fathers are perhaps part of the reason, since the second-generation son seems to feel that his manhood depends on violating the taboos that his father – too busy working, too puritan, or too hemmed in and timid – never dared to defy.”

Whether or not Sam Salzman met the profile of “too busy working,” he must have been a consistent earner. Both Sam and Frances took jobs with the public school system during the Great Depression (he as a psychologist/counselor and she as a teacher of English and drama) and were eventually financially stable enough to buy property in Brooklyn Heights (including a rental property that eventually became a home for Eric and his family), a summer cottage in Hampton Bays, and eventually a summer house in East Quogue where Eric spent nearly every summer through the end of his life.

Eric’s mother retained a connection to theater throughout her life. Relying on the financial stability of her husband, Frances eventually started a theater program in the schools, a Board of Education pilot program, as an adjunct to her work at Junior High School 43 on 129th St. While it was not lucrative, she told her children and grandchildren that the ideal situation in life was to be a person who did things for love and still managed to get nicely paid. Of her connections to people in the theater world, she mentioned knowing the successful silent film actress Dagmar Godowsky, daughter of the Polish composer Leopold Godowsky. According to Frances’ account, Dagmar thought that Eric and Paul might benefit from being friendly with girls in the Gershwin and Godowsky families, perhaps with a matchmaker’s intentions. Frances turned down the idea because she heard that these young women were seeing psychiatrists and assumed, reflecting the views of the time, that there must be something wrong with them, and she aspired to raise perfect “American” boys.

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Taken as a whole, Eric’s cultural inheritance was an extremely rich one including a tradition of theater, scholarship and broad cultural awareness. In a way, the lives of Eric’s immediate forebears represent the translation of a long tradition into a new American context. One might reflect on Howe’s description of 19th century shtetl life against the context of Eric Salzman’s mid-twentieth century life: “It was a world dominated by an uneasy alliance between a caste of the learned and the somewhat wealthier merchants.” Applied on a personal level this can be viewed as a balance between what was intellectually or spiritually stimulating and what was financially lucrative.

Howe goes further explaining, “Scholarship was, above all else, honored among the Jews – scholarship not as ‘pure’ activity, not as intellectual release, but as the pathway, sometimes treacherous, to God. A man’s prestige, authority and position depended to a considerable extent on his learning.” An atheist like his father, Eric instead pursued a pathway toward communion through shared artistic experience and scholarship that would help bring the public to greater understanding. His pursuit of scholarship earned him entry into two Ivy League institutions and prestige came in the form of numerous awards and fellowships, but the difficulty of balancing the creative, the intellectual, and the financial would prove to be a life-long, sometimes treacherous, struggle. Salzman’s uneasy relationship with this past would be one of the spurs of his artistically radical trajectory.

**Childhood**

It was with considerable relish that Eric recalled his mother’s background in the theater. Eventually, she had expanded her work as a drama teacher in the school system and organized a children's theater company of her own (arranging several children's classics), for which she wrote music, played the piano and stage directed. The company, Stage for Youth at New

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York’s Sullivan Playhouse in Greenwich Village, gave performances in Town Hall regularly on Saturday mornings toured the New York City and adjacent school systems during the week. Salz
man remembered rehearsals and meetings in the house with many young performers that were often around. His brother Paul, who would later pursue engineering, was not part of the family’s creative pursuits beyond early clarinet lessons, and the two brothers, though close in age, did not get along well at any point in their lives. Yet, Eric describes a rich creative atmosphere at home, though his father’s only creative pursuit was amateur painting on Sundays.

Frances played the piano regularly in the house with an odd amalgam of her own music and an assortment of classics that included a solo version of the Mozart D minor Concerto, various Chopin pieces, and the Grieg Sonata. She composed songs for her school students and later on for her children’s music theater troupe, adapting texts like *Treasure Island*, *John Brown’s Body* by Steven Vincent Benet (described by Eric as “a Gospel opera” incorporating spirituals), and stories by Anatole France. She even wrote a musical during World War II called *Ah, Men!* with a an all-female cast and a plot centered around a community where all the men had been drafted out to sea. By Salzman’s account it was a musical in the style of Richard Rodgers, performed in regional Summer Stock and optioned for Broadway, but never moving to the next phase.

Salzman’s mother arranged for her son to start violin lessons from around the age of 5 or 6 with an Italian teacher named Capobianco. While he was eventually good enough to play in school orchestras and string quartets, he quit lessons in his early teenage years when he became dissatisfied with his own playing and frustrated with the endless difficulty of the instrument. In 1948, Columbia records introduced Long Playing Records and it was around this

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time that Eric was given a record player and a few classical LPs, of which he remembered clearly Rudolf Serkin playing Beethoven’s “Appassionata” sonata (probably a reissue of the 1936 recording), and Bruno Walter conducting the NY Philharmonic in Beethoven’s fifth symphony (almost surely a reissue of the 1941 recording), in addition to whatever 78s his parents had around the house.13

After quitting violin lessons, Salzman wanted to learn piano, and taught himself to read bass clef. In the house Eric’s mother kept volumes of piano classics, graded according to difficulty, and it was by starting at the beginning of the book and playing as far as he could that he not only learned to play the piano, but first considered music composition:

“At one point I came across a Mozart minuet which I played, and at the bottom it said, ‘This Mozart was written in such and such a year when Mozart was five years old’ and I was about eleven. So I was stunned and I thought to myself, I have to try to do this. So I wrote a minuet in the style of Mozart or as close as I could get to it.” 14

There was staff paper around the house, and Eric had discerned what he needed to know in order to notate music. Afterwards he played the composition for friends and Eric’s parents decided he needed composition lessons. They found him a teacher whom they had met at the post office, who, “Had just had a piece performed by Dmitri Mitropoulos at the New York Philharmonic.”15 A look through the NY Philharmonic archives shows all the performances Mitropoulos gave, of which the living composers included mostly European immigrants and a handful of Americans. * It is very feasible that one of these composers had spent time in Hampton Bays in the summers of the early or mid-forties.

14 The author’s interview with Eric Salzman, 19 February 2017.
15 Ibid.
* The composers listed were John Verrall, Alexandre Tansman, Hermann Hanz Wetzler, Philip Greeley Clapp, Richard Mohaupt, Frederick Woltmann, Anis Fuleihan, Zoltan Kurthy, Frederick Piket, Harilaos Perpessas, Abram Chasins and Karol Rathaus.
What Eric recalls about these few lessons is disappointment. He brought with him the few pieces he had composed (inspired by the piano technique books) – the Mozart-style piece and a character piece called *March of the Trolls* – to which the unidentified teacher’s response was, "We don't write music like that anymore." Disappointed, Eric managed to return for a few more lessons, and wrote some pseudo-modern pieces for him, but the relationship seems to have been irreparably damaged. “When I think about it I realize what an idiot he was to talk to an eleven-year-old kid like that. It was a stupid thing to say. Of course I didn't register it, I was just crest-fallen and then I wrote a piece for two bassoons or something.”

In 1946, Eric started high school at Forest Hills High School, where Burt Bachrach had graduated the previous spring. For the first two years of high school Eric’s musical education consisted of playing string quartets and orchestras. As he put it, “That was an education unto itself.” Eric’s classmate at Forest Hills and tuba player in the orchestra was Mike Stoller, who wrote (with lyricist Jerome Leiber) more than seventy chart hits including, “Hound Dog” and “Jailhouse Rock.” Years later, according to Salzman, Stoller recognized him in an NPR studio and called him by name, reminding him, "We both were in the Forest Hills Orchestra but I was a lowly tuba player, you wouldn't remember me. You were a violin and you conducted.” Indeed Eric (who did not, in fact, remember knowing Stoller in high school), conducted the orchestra on a few occasions, though it is not clear whether it was in rehearsal or performance. The quality of musical culture in the community must have been high during the next few decades. The rich legacy of musical talent (much of it Jewish or first-generation American) that came through the Forest Hills High School included legendary mezzo-soprano Tatyana Troyanos, who started there the year after Eric graduated; Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel who started three years later; and later still, pianist William Westney, orchestrator/arranger Daniel Troob, blues guitarist Ronnie Earl, and the Ramones band members.
After the abortive start to his composition studies, Salzman’s parents were able to arrange private study with Morris Lawner, who taught at the well-known High School of Music and Art. Unlike Eric’s earlier snobbish teacher, Lawner would not likely have sneered at piano character pieces, since Weintraub Music Company (known for publishing music of Virgil Thompson and George Antheil) published Lawner’s *Five Children’s Pieces* under the name Mark Lawner in 1950 while Eric was his student. Salzman’s own title, *March of the Trolls*, might fit right in with any of Lawner’s, such as *It Won’t Stop Raining, School’s Out*, and *Square Dance*. Eric recalled that Lawner taught rudiments out of the Schoenberg *Harmonielehre*, and not so much counterpoint as harmony – calling it, “Traditional harmony – but Schoenberg’s version of traditional.” Another student who, like Eric, had been discouraged by a previous teacher gave a vivid portrait of how engaging Lawner could be:

“Mr. Lawner was the antithesis of all that [negativity]. He was a man with genuine warmth and a friendly smile… He regarded my musical creativity as something to be developed and cared for… I started to learn about musical forms, counterpoint, thematic development and suddenly everything was ablaze with interest for me. It was like taking apart a watch and finally learning how it works.”

That composer, Charles Fox, went on to Fontainebleau (with a letter of recommendation from Lawner) to study with Nadia Boulanger, eventually writing more than a hundred film scores, the theme songs to *Happy Days* and *Love Boat* and winning a Grammy Award as composer of the massive hit tune, “Killing Me Softly With His Song.” Perhaps these young students gleaned from Lawner a sense that musical tools could be applied in myriad ways, which led each to break from the “box” of traditional or “ivory tower” music, though for Eric this full departure was still some years away.

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At this point Eric quite clearly did not see himself going into the theater like his mother’s family, but writing serious modern concert music – “What was then [considered] avant-garde music.” He remembered going to listen to music at “a library in Manhattan,” by which he could only mean the listening booth associated with the 58th Street Library circulating music collection (the predecessor to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts), to which Victor and Columbia Record companies had both given a “representative collection” of their material in 1929. The listening booth could be reserved by an individual for one hour per day, three days per week and was frequently booked two weeks in advance. The pieces Salzman remembers hearing there give a sense of what he viewed as avant-garde music: Alban Berg’s Lyric Suite, Alexander Mosolov’s Op. 19 Factory: machine-music (more commonly known as “The Iron Foundry”) and Edgard Varèse’s Ionisation. Regarding the Berg, Salzman remembered the excitement he felt on first hearing: “That got me off. It was amazing that he could write such things.” The Mosolov is a piece of modernist, quasi-romantic program music, while Ionisation is clearly more genuinely ground-breaking. Something from each of these pieces can be heard in Salzman’s future works, especially in what he wrote during his college years. Even titles of Eric’s works from the fifties (Night Dance, Suite for Piano, Inventions for Orchestra) are redolent of his childhood/teenage inspirations and show a latent predisposition for theatricality.

In looking at Eric’s teenage attraction to the avant-garde, a comparison of his own words with key excerpts from Greenberg’s analysis of Roth again yields a fascinating parallel between their related heritage and their attraction to rebellion.

In The Anatomy Lesson (1983) Philip Roth provides an explanation for Nathan Zuckerman's involvement with transgression as a man and a writer. [Roth's] frustration is also clearly determined by his position in Jewish-American culture - by his

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embroilment in and rebellion against the world of his parents...[A] facet of this ethical substratum in Roth the novelist is a certain ambivalence about succeeding in the American mainstream. A second-generation American from a lower-middle-class Jewish home, Roth dramatizes in his fiction the arc of a career of a talented literary rebel who uses liberal times, the permission of his gift, and early success to express dammed-up Jewish ambition, appetite, and anger only to then suffer the backlash...\textsuperscript{21}

Throughout Salzman’s career, ambivalence about success in the mainstream is an ever-present theme. He frequently and deliberately will choose a less lucrative or well-trodden path in exchange for artistic freedom and time to pursue his own interests. This is inextricable from Salzman’s ambivalence about his father’s role as a timid “luftmensch” who yet managed to provide for his family. In addition to this father figure, we have with Roth’s character Portnoy, “A melodramatic mother, aspiring to impress Gentile America with her perfect offspring, [who] turns minor infractions into operatic disappointments...”\textsuperscript{22} Eric’s own words demonstrate with astounding coherence the themes of Jewishness, parentage and artistic rebellion:

“My family was very anti-religious and my father said he didn't understand Yiddish at all, but I know that wasn't true. My mother certainly spoke it and spoke it with her father. But my father was against it. He was a big assimilator, and was a big influence on me, but in a different way. He was a philosophical intellectual; but what was often called in Yiddish a luftmensch, someone with two feet firmly planted two feet off the ground. But he made a living and so did my mother. They were able to buy houses and property. My father had a big influence on me intellectually. Not artistically so much. When I started out, going into Avant-garde music was a bit of a rebellion against my parents. My mother was very disappointed in what I finally turned out to write because she couldn't make head or tail of it. She was supportive of my degrees, but she never understood it. And it never occurred to me that I was going to go into theater, because HER family was so theatrically-oriented, that I was obviously rebelling against it.”

By the late 1960s, Salzman would embark on a precarious path to balance the competing attractions of rebellion, establishment recognition, avant-gardism, theatricality, philosophical intellectualism and family responsibilities.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 489.
CHAPTER TWO – THE 1950S

Columbia University

Columbia College did not have undergraduate majors until 1954 (just after Eric left for Princeton), so he received a Bachelor of Arts with the requisite credits in specialized electives (in his case music, though it was not essential that specific studies all be in one area). A Columbia education in 1950 was centered on a core curriculum of classics of literature and civilization. Based on the education philosophy of Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago and Columbia’s own John Erskine (also the first president of the Juilliard School), this was the concept that spawned the broader “Great Books” movement.¹ It was, in fact, the offer of a major scholarship and not the fame of the music department that made the school Salzman’s best option. This seems to explain why Salzman continued private lessons with Lawner until 1951 – music classes would have commenced for him in the Fall semester of 1952.² Nonetheless, for Salzman the intellectual it was a wonderful opportunity to learn from renowned thinkers: Joseph Wood Krutch, Moses Hadas, Quentin Anderson, Mark Van Doren (known for inspiring Merton, John Berryman, Ginsberg and Kerouac), and Lionel Trilling (incidentally a first generation American of Polish Jewish heritage), the latter of which Salzman remained quite proud. For a man with interests and endeavors as broad as Salzman’s would be, the shaping of his mind at Columbia may have had an equal impact to his music studies. He was as excited about words and ideas as he was about music, and decided, independently to undertake the writing of a verse-drama based on the biblical life of Joseph.

He sought guidance from Van Doren, who agreed to look over scenes from the play and help the young Salzman along.

After his academic requirements at Columbia were dispensed with, Salzman took private lessons with Otto Luening that consisted of having his own compositions critiqued each week. Additionally, he received classes in formal subjects (including species counterpoint) with Vladimir Ussachevsky, theory and harmony with William Mitchell and various classes with Jack Beeson. This was in the period before Columbia and Barnard merged, but because Barnard lacked a music department, most of the music students in Salzman’s classes came from the sister school.

Peter Westergaard and William Bolcom, important future colleagues of Salzman, give a backdrop against which we might consider the music scene at Columbia. The major music programs in the US had contrasting approaches to music education. Westergaard (born in 1931) attended Harvard for his undergraduate degree, where he says the theories of music were still, “very much stuck in the old days of the Boulangerie,” referring, of course, to Nadia Boulanger. What one encountered in a harmony or counterpoint class at Harvard, according to Westergaard, was based on whatever conservative rules “were approved by the French government” in the eighteenth century.”³ At Yale, somewhat closer to New York, Hindemith had by this time established a home for his form of neo-classicism that influenced students like Sam Adler, Yehudi Wyner, and Lukas Foss. Though different in approach, both cases underscore reactionary neo-classical concepts. “This was a period in the 1950s,” says William Bolcom (born in 1938, five years after Salzman), “where everybody was convinced that Hindemith was the Bach of the twentieth century and everybody was sort of putting down Milhaud because he was French and had a sense of humor, so he couldn’t be grand. It was

³ The author’s interview with Peter Westergaard, 21 September 2018.
easy to put down French music in the Austro-German-oriented conservatories, so that’s what happened.”

On the conservatory side, Salzman described Juilliard as “a performer’s school,” and conservatories in general as decidedly conservative and anti-modern at this time. “Where new music [was] being performed, developed or taught,” he claimed, “was at universities.”

Westergaard, who would later teach counterpoint at Columbia, asserts that Eric was almost certainly better off learning harmony with William Mitchell at Columbia than he himself was with the conservative French tradition of “chord successions” that he got at Harvard; but he admits that Columbia was certainly not on the vanguard. That vanguard, in his mind, meant thinking about music in linear, Schenkerian terms rather than those of traditional harmony. Whatever the case, Salzman was not dazzled by the music education he received at Columbia and he decided not to stay on after his undergraduate, explaining, “I wasn't so impressed with their music, frankly.”

Given that he would later be recognized for use of multi-track tape, there is a question of whether Salzman included the tape music of Luening and Ussachevsky in this assessment, or whether his issues were primarily with their non-tape music. Luening, a former student of Ferruccio Busoni, wrote in a fairly conservative fashion, if his songs (recorded on the CRI label that he co-founded) and chamber music can be considered reflective of his general style. Even the now-legendary 1952 Luening/Ussachevsky tape music concert at the Museum of Modern Art juxtaposed the newest techniques with much that was backward-looking; tonal, neoclassical and neo-romantic (namely Luening’s *Lyric Scene for Flute and Strings* and his *Legend for Oboe and Strings*). Luening was known as a conductor and writer of opera, and his music was described succinctly by music-writer (and Columbia-graduate) Tim Page: “Mr.

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4 The author’s interview with William Bolcom, 27 September 2018.
5 The author’s interview with Peter Westergaard, 21 September 2018.
Luening has little natural affinity for drama; his best works are weighty, formal, and rather meditative.” It is no surprise that these were not such attractive qualities to a young rebel of Salzman’s stripe. Ussachevsky, similarly, had been a student of Hanson’s at Eastman, which Salzman did not consider modern. Salzman’s closest affinity among his teachers, perhaps related somewhat to their closeness in age, was Jack Beeson, whose music had a dramatic sensibility even if it was not avant-garde.

Nonetheless, Columbia was in the midst of changes that would factor into Salzman’s future and his oeuvre. In the fall of 1951, the Columbia Music Department received their first Ampex 400 tape recorder. Luening and Ussachevsky put it to use, along with a microphone, a pair of headphones and a borrowed Magnacord recorder, to achieve their greatest recognition, resulting (with the acquisition of the RCA Mark II Sound Synthesizer eight years later) in the founding of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. In his liner notes to a 1999 retrospective of Ussachevsky’s music for CRI Records American Masters series, Salzman claims that Ussachevsky had no knowledge of the prior work of Pierre Schaeffer and other Europeans, but gives an evocative account of the birth of American tape music and a precursor to the event at the Museum of Modern Art:

On May 9, 1952, a Columbia University music-major-to-be slipped into a back seat of the McMillan (now Miller) Theater on upper Broadway in New York City to hear a most extraordinary event: a musical performance in which there were no musical performers. Instead, a dark-haired, serious, youngish man with horn-rimmed glasses, evidently the creator of what we were about to hear, turned on a tape recorder (the “tapesichord” someone dubbed it) and a series of previously unheard, unsuspected sounds, organized in musical form, gushed forth. It was Day One of a new musical era… The tape-recorder operator was Vladimir Ussachevsky, who had joined the Columbia music faculty only five years earlier and who was shortly to co-founded the Columbia Experimental Music Studio, later the Columbia Tape Music Studio and

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eventually to become, as the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, one of the world’s major studios for computer and electronic music. The would-be music major was the undersigned who afterward studied with both Ussachevsky and Otto Luening in the Columbia music department.  

After developing their techniques over the summer, on November 22 some of their new works were presented in the auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art by Leopold Stokowski, another “apostle of new musical ideas,” to quote again from Salzman’s notes. Despite the experimental nature of these works (whose impact on Eric would manifest later), impressions of equal magnitude were left on Salzman by various other musical events around New York City of the early 1950s. His friends and flat-mates at Columbia were aspiring writers – not musicians. A young journalism student, Salzman’s closest pal, had a passion for be-bop jazz and took him to hear Charlie Parker at Birdland. He absorbed it happily (though without deep personal interest) as the avant-garde side of jazz, but did not perceive any substantial relationship to his decided identity as a classical avant-gardist. In hindsight, his undergraduate pieces merely flirt with the avant-garde in the true sense – the Suite for Violin and Piano based on American Indian Themes employs (as the name might suggest) an American folk-infused bimodality redolent of Bartok’s Mikrokosmos, and O Praise the Lord, a psalm for a capella chorus has an architecture of quartal and quintal harmonies infused with modal counterpoint that calls to mind Hindemith.

Salzman’s major memories of the time, according to an interview, included attending a concert of Varese who was then in New York, and being in attendance at the McMillan Theater for the premiere of John Cage’s Imaginary Landscape No. 4 – a piece for 12 radios, each controlled by two performers. “They were twirling the dials,” he remembered, “and some Mozart came on and somebody yelled, ‘Leave it on!’” Notably, it was the scale and

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theatricality of the piece that made the deepest impression on the young student. In the end, however, the decision was clear: Sessions and Babbit were at Princeton and they, as far as Salzman was concerned at the time, "were the American avant-garde – even more than these people fooling around with tape music and electronics."⁹

**Princeton University**

Luening and Ussachevsky discouraged Salzman from continuing his education at Princeton, warning that he would be forced to write in “that dodecaphonic style.” The question of musical epistemologies was as complicated an issue in the 1950s and 60s as it has been at any other time in music history. The extent to which institutional dogmas are real or perceived at any given time is important as it pertains to Salzman’s penchant for pushing boundaries. Often, the perception of dogma results inadvertently, from the responsibilities given to (or thrust upon) teachers, including selection of material, means of presentation and the necessity of assessment. Bolcom, who later taught with Salzman at Queens College, gave a severe critique of the general academic scene of the time in an interview with the author, making the claim that the American atonal serialists were the dominant force of the era:

“One of the problems that you had (and one of the reasons I didn't want to be teaching) with universities and schools of music, [was that] there was a real dictatorship of style in those years. You only got played if you wrote music in a canon which was anti-tonal - in fact when you look back at it there was a lot of un-listenable music. I think what you hear from it mostly is a certain kind of fear. It was an overwhelming peer pressure of those years of the 50s and 60s, people really suffered through it… When it came to after the war, the best way to get rid of the whole guilt [of that time] was try to just to turn over a whole leaf, throw the whole past out and start over from zero. That was very much of the whole reason that people like Boulez were so polemical and noisy about it and tried to shut up anybody that wasn't of their stylistic ilk. People felt there was something in the romantic era of music, for example, that caused the possibility of Hitler. So the idea was to get out from underneath all of that – Wagner particularly, but everyone else also – the whole being carried away by emotion – that whole style from Schumann on. And it was a problem for someone who couldn't just throw everything out.”

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⁹ The author’s interview with Eric Salzman, 19 February 2017.
In this view, composers following in the traditions of Copland, Barber, Nicolas Flagello, Ernest Bloch, Howard Hanson, Paul Creston, and even Europeans like Britten, Shostakovich and Prokofiev, would be kept out of the major scene. However, Joseph N. Straus, researching which composers were published, performed, recorded and reviewed in the 50s and 60s, in addition to who controlled the academic institutions or won top prizes, showed that “tonally-oriented” composers still held a majority in every category during the period. In *A Revisionist History of Twelve-Tone Serialism in American Music*, Straus goes further to show that not only did the applications of serial techniques vary widely (one example is Stephan Wolpe’s smaller pitch set “constellations”), but so did the sonic musical results. Salzman himself, writing the liner notes for a 1988 recording of the Juilliard Orchestra that included Sessions’ pre-twelve-tone *Suite from The Black Maskers*, reminds the reader that Sessions had studied with Ernest Bloch, produced celebrated concerts jointly with Aaron Copland between 1928-1931, and pursued “a highly developed symphonic modernism” of an expressionistic style – all long before embracing serialism. By the time Sessions had Salzman and Westergaard as students he had integrated serialism into his highly evocative brand of tonal expressionism and linear chromaticism.

Westergaard recalls Salzman’s music at that time being much more diatonically-oriented than his own, and remembers Salzman taking a strong interest in Stravinsky’s early forays into non-twelve-tone serialism. According to Westergaard, it was Sessions’s idea of constructing music linearly that was the emphasis at Princeton, rather than serialism, twelve-tone or atonality:

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* Sessions’s *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1955-56) is a perfect example.
“When we got to Princeton there was a much more liberal, much more Schenkerian
view of tonal music – it didn't mean they were all Schenkerites – but they all knew it;
and Schenker had changed the way they understood the structure of music. That
included Sessions. Milton told me it was Sessions that got him on to Schenker in the
first place… The myth is that we were all told we had to be twelve-tone composers.
That is about the last thing that any of our mentors, including Milton, would have said.
As Milton put it, he didn't want the place to proliferate with bad twelve-tone
composers. ‘If you're happy with the tonal system use it’ – that was the attitude! You
still have plenty of ways that you can use it. To me, that answers the question of why
Eric tried writing so many different kinds of music: he is willing to try something just
because he hasn't tried it yet. That would be in keeping in with his character. I believe
I still got a sense of that when I ran into him again after so many decades. That kind of
thing doesn't change in people.”

Salzman’s first major works date from this period; the String Quartet and Suite for
Piano dated 1955 and the Sonata for Flute and Piano dated the following year, are excellently
crafted Sessions-influenced pieces in linear expressionist contrapuntal style. While all three of
the pieces are chromatic and freely dissonant, they range from neoclassical pan-diatonicism in
the piano suite to near-total atonality in the flute work. In Twentieth Century Music: an
Introduction, Salzman’s own seminal 1967 textbook, his description of Sessions music
applies aptly to his own music of the time: “The primary impulse is contrapuntal… a
characteristic web of long, shaped lines gives a typical sound to the music. But Sessions’s line
is also concrete in conception, vocal in shape, and dependent on a complex sense of phrase
accent and motion that gives a dynamic impulse to the music remarkably parallel to the way
in which Classical harmonic progressions did.” 11

The environment under Sessions was one of camaraderie. Says Westergaard:

“We were all buddies. It was a very friendly world at the music department. We
weren't out to get ahead of the other guy or any of that. We took anything that Ed
[Cone] and Milton [Babbitt] were giving and it would depend on the luck of the draw
whether you got History of Theory - everything you need to know about theory in one
semester given prestissimo by the fastest talker in the world Milton Babbit. We were

all fascinated by what our teachers had to say, and were gorging it up, but we were also talking in very friendly ways about what we thought mattered. Each of us came at it from a different point of view.”

While Sessions was the only official composition teacher at Princeton, anyone not deemed ready for Sessions worked with Earl Kim. Salzman and Westergaard went straight to Sessions, taking other classes from Kim, Edward Cone, Oliver Strunk (music history), Nino Pirotta (Italian Renaissance music and opera) and Arthur Mendel. But for both composers it was probably Milton Babbitt who turned out to make the greatest impression. Of the countless remembrances of Babbitt’s death in 2011, Brandeis University’s Naumberg Professor of Composition David Rakowski might have written the most evocative, noting Babbitt’s “Devotion to his students, his extravagant wit and wordplay, his love of baseball and beer, and the warmth of his personality,” in addition to marveling at his intellect, powers of synthesis and gifts as a teacher.12 Affectionately referred to by his students in the 50s as “Uncle Milty,” Babbitt was, by Salzman’s account, a charismatic, delightful person who was loved by all. “In spite of his seriousness and rigor as a composer, he was not like that as a teacher,” he recalled.

While Babbitt did not teach private composition at Princeton at this time, his classes were based on the same principals of establishing the clearest possible understanding and mastery of the relationship between musical materials and the intentions of the composer. Salzman studied orchestration with Babbitt and found it fascinating that a man who came to New York to write musical theater shows had developed such erudition and greatness as a serialist. Letters from Babbitt to Eric in November 1957 (when the latter was in Italy) are characteristic of both his warmth and his aesthetic approach toward his students:

Dear Eric:

Your letter was a great and wonderful joy. It is the most complete and revealing report that I have ever received, and was such a virtuoso piece as to leave me relatively un-depressed, which is remarkable, in view of the matters and events described. In any case, you appear to be weathering the storm of verbal arrogance in which the wave of the future imbeds its absurdities.

It goes without saying that I would be delighted to be represented on the concert in Rome… Let me know what appears possible and I’ll send the scores along. What is the proposed date of this shindig?

Life is hectic as hell, to apparently no purpose; at least the apparent purpose dissolves as soon as one stands two paces and two minutes away from it all. As for news: Roger’s new symphony is played in Boston early next month, and then here… What news can you communicate with regard to the electronic studio in Rome? Did the Webern issue of Diapason ever appear; various people promised to send me a copy, but either they were negligent or the publishers were…

...I am very anxious to see your new work. I do wish you wouldn’t feel obliged to spend time seeking sets. Please let me know what the specifications are; I feel certain I have them in stock. But, in all seriousness, why spend the time doing what has been done, or can be done very easily mathematically? Save your time and energy for composing music, rather than sets. Thus ends my lecture for today.

As ever,
Milton

Salzman brought himself (not without effort) to like Babbitt’s music, observing later that it sounded better and better with each passing decade as players developed a better sense of how it should be played. Remarking on Salzman’s music from the Princeton period, Westergaard remembered that in spite of its diatonicism (relative to his own), “It didn't sound like anyone else.” He noted a contrast between Salzman and another classmate of theirs, Michael Sahl, who would play a major role in Eric Salzman’s career as co-composer of six

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music theater works. Westergaard remembered that Sahl “wrote very impressive pieces that sounded like Copland, whereas Eric didn’t sound like any one person. He sounded like himself.” Salzman described his own music as “Sessions-y, free-atonality.”

To get a sense of Eric as a young man from this period, we can turn to letters that he wrote from Princeton. The spur to Salzman’s great epistolary awakening was romance. On a weekend trip during his first year at Princeton, Salzman had paid a weekend visit to Cornell to see a girlfriend. Before driving back to Princeton on Sunday evening, a friend suggested that he meet a young woman named Lorna Jackson, who reviewed concerts for the Cornell Daily Sun. Together they went to a student concert where a feeling of boredom was so pervasive among listeners that visiting professor Ralph Vaughn-Williams, who was sitting directly in front of them reached up and, according to Salzman, turned off his hearing aid, which they both found hysterically funny. But something important happened that day, for Salzman and Lorna Jackson exchanged letters that grew in intensity after Jackson’s previous engagement was broken off and Salzman’s aforementioned girlfriend disappeared. The two years of letters between Eric and Lorna are not only full of giddy creativity but they contain valuable insight into the young composer’s state of mind. Salzman’s letters are full of word-play, comedy and extravagant romance, typed out in various designs, of all lowercase characters, giving the obvious impression of E.E. Cummings in their wit, romance, innuendo and at times overt sexuality. Salzman and Jackson were engaged in 1955 and married on Christmas Eve.16 Occasionally, as graduation approached the letters turned serious, as when Eric discusses frustration with his work, anxiety over the suspense of the Fulbright application process, or politics within the music department. In an undated letter from spring semester of 1956, Salzman writes:

16 “Miss Lorna Jackson a Prospective Bride,” New York Times (5 October 1955): L 31
what i [sic] was saying last time about the quartet was simple… when you actually hear something you can really judge it for the first time…imagination is fine and wonderful…but the specific effect of something comes out really only in performance… and i hear things i’m pleased with and proud of and things that… well… i just wish i hadn’t written… that’s natural and to be expected… particularly at this stage when I’ve still so much to learn about writing music…

after all i can’t really expect to write a good piece of music for another ten years or so… that’s perfectly natural too… in spite of all the prodigy stuff… the best music of practically anybody was written at the end of his life and most composers got successively better with years… only 1 exception i know of: Mendelssohn… but all the rest; Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Brahms, Verdi, nearly everyone got greater as the years rolled by…

and most of them them (4 of the 5 above for instance) didn’t do anything worth a damn until well past their youth…

well this is silly; the only point is that after all i can’t really expect to be writing anything good just yet…

They also give information about Salzman’s other activities at Princeton, such as playing bass in a dance band called “The Eggheads,” teaching classes for the Princeton “adult school” at the request of Ed Cone for 20 dollars per class, writing concert reviews for 5 dollars, and coaching singers for the performance of an opera by Roger Sessions. Salzman, like most his age, was vulnerable to distractions – by Lorna, by a fast friendship with Michael Sahl, and by an obsession for the card game bridge. Another undated letter from 1956 reads:

working on this damn fugue… you know this fugue stuff is really the hardest… i could always do species counterpoint without any trouble
and harmony exercises always come out all right
i feel competent to handle that stuff
but writing 18th century fugues is absolutely the hardest thing I’ve ever tried… makes you really appreciate Bach… what a fantastic master he was in a technical way undoubtedly the greatest…
it’s not the details that bog me down… but it’s the larger conception of keys and how to get to them and from etc…

the thing is, with species counterpoint you’re interested in line and in intervals… in straight harmony with keys and tonality and chord functions… but with the damn 18th century counterpoint you’ve got to keep track of everything and have them under control at all times… makes life difficult.

hey, don’t feel guilty about keeping me from composing. First of all you’re the most important thing in my life anyhow, i can compose any old time but when can i see you only so very little
when i say i must compose like that it has nothing to do with you or that you prevent me from getting work done or anything…
it’s just that i never will in my life ever really write music at the rate i think i should write it…partly because i’m slow…and partly just a matter of disciplining myself…
i think however this artificial student life – with all its distractions is partly at fault--- or rather it’s the other way round…it’s the lack of real distractions with the immense opportunities to goof off…i always find i get the most done when I have the least time… i think when we’re settled down somewhat (we never will be totally i suppose) the composing will fall more into place with all the other jobs and projects…
boyoboyoboy
come to think of it, I’m really looking forward to that…i mean to making a life together as they say…you and me…hubby and wifie…lover and mistress…für ewigkeit
that means always

Salzman’s Fulbright Fellowship (1956-57), for which they departed by boat in September, followed by an additional year abroad, would amount to a two-year musical honeymoon in Europe.

**Europe, Darmstadt and Early Compositions**

Sessions had met Luigi Dallapiccola on his Fulbright year in 1951-52 and the two immediately developed a deep and faithful friendship, which lasted until Dallapiccola’s death.\(^{18}\) Sessions sent something on the order of a dozen students to study with the Italian in Florence over the subsequent two decades and recommended Salzman to him in 1956. Unfortunately for Eric’s application to the Fulbright Commission, that was the year that Dallapiccola began teaching at Queens College. In his absence from Europe the Commission felt that only place appropriate for Salzman study modern music was Germany. They suggested he study with Wolfgang Fortner in Detmold, which sounded absolutely unappealing to the young Salzman. He strategically played up his discomfort, on ideological

and political-historical grounds, at the thought going to Germany as a Jew barely a decade after the holocaust.

Finally the commission agreed to send Salzman to Rome to study with Italy's other great composer, Goffredo Petrassi. Largely forgotten outside of Italy in recent decades, he had just been commissioned to write his Sixth Concerto for Orchestra by the BBC for the Third Programme (later BBC Radio 3), which they premiered in 1957, and had just completed a term as President of the International Society of Contemporary Music (of which Sessions was President of the American section). Highly regarded as Professor of Composition at Rome’s Conservatorio de Santa Cecilia, he had been teacher of such Italian composers as Ennio Morricone and Riccardo Malipiero.\footnote{Calum, MacDonald, “‘Tutt' Ora Vivente': Petrassi and the Concerto Principle,” \textit{Tempo}, no. 194, (1995): 2.} Salzman was not the only foreigner who showed up to study with Petrassi that year – a young British composer one year younger than Salzman had also earned a government scholarship to study in Rome – Peter Maxwell Davies. The newly married Salzmans spent time with Davies, in addition to other Americans studying music in Italy that year (Ramiro Cortes and Salvatore Martirano), and young Italians like Domenico Guaccero; all documented by various group photos.

In letters to their parents jointly written by Eric and Lorna, it becomes increasingly clear that after an initial period of admiration of his music and appreciation for his gregarious personality (they attended at least one party at his home, where they were dazzled by his modern art collection and where they also met Bohuslav Martinu and Alfredo Antonini), Salzman had become disenchanted with Petrassi. He met with Petrassi about once per month, and took more regular (quasi-weekly) lessons with Guido Turchi, in whom he found a more enjoyable and competent teacher. In fact, despite Salzman’s continued appreciation for
Petrassi’s skill as an orchestration teacher, it seems that a notable tension had developed between them. Interviewed, Salzman said:

“It was just [about] the funding. I met with Petrassi a few times, but it was fairly pro forma. And also he thought everything I did was twelve-tone and it wasn't, but he didn't know the difference. So you can imagine how clever I thought he was…”

Salzman hoped to renew his Fulbright for a coveted second year and transfer his studies to Dallapiccola, who was due to return to Italy, but not a single one of the Fulbright composers of 1956 won a renewal. After making the decision to stay in Europe for an additional year with family support, Salzman finally met with Dallapiccola. He was genial, but refused to take him on as a student; regarding him as tainted by Petrassi whom he viewed as a Fascist collaborator and opportunist. Dallapiccola (whose wife was Jewish) was particularly sensitive to this issue, made even worse by the fact that Dallapiccola had only ever secured a post as a piano teacher, while Petrassi enjoyed a prestigious post as professor of composition.

The more exciting aspect of life was travelling Europe and seeing the sites. On the boat from America they had seen the Azores islands of Portugal, the Rock of Gibraltar, stopped for twenty-four hours in Barcelona (where they witnessed both traditional flamenco, a bullfight and the Parsifal monastery in Montserrat), and continued along the French Riviera making brief stops in Cannes and Genoa before disembarking in Naples. The Fulbright orientation program and a month of language classes began in Perugia, in Central Italy where Salzman organized a concert of the Fulbrights, with a performance of Salzman’s On The Beach at Night (1955) sung by Jeanette Pecorello (whose European career would subsequently flourish). The performance received such a positive response that Salzman decided to orchestrate it almost immediately.

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20 Eric Salzman and Lorna Salzman, Letters to Salzman/Jackson families. 29 September 1956 - 20 May, 1957. Quog Music Theater Salzman Archives, Brooklyn, NY
After concluding the month in Perugia, the Salzmans settled in Rome in early November where lessons began. Shortly after arriving in Rome the Salzman’s attended a rehearsal and performance of Igor Stravinsky conducting his Bach transcriptions, a production of *L’Histoire du Soldat* complete with French actors and dancers and the recently-written *Canticum Sacrum*, which Salzman described in a letter: “The new work is strange – as you may know his recent music has been using some of the techniques of Schoenberg but this one is the most far gone – more like Webern than Schoenberg. It also has Stravinsky type neoclassism, but with more than the usual dash of the 14th century and just a bit of the 21st.”

There was also a brief meeting with Igor Stravinsky (who was not talkative) and his wife, Vera.

Living and working in Rome the Salzmans made excursions to Pompeii, Paestum, Capri, and, eventually, most of central and northern Italy. They bought a Volkswagen which they travelled to Munich to pick up in January of 1957, driving it back to Rome over the Alps piled high with snow. They busied themselves with the concert and opera season in Rome and became friendly with Roman Vlad, who gave encouragement after looking over Salzman’s scores. By letter at the time, Salzman claimed to have completed some nine orchestral scores during his time in Italy.

At the end of May 1957 the Salzmans attended the International Society of Contemporary Music “World Music Days” Festival in Zurich, where Roman Vlad and Roger Sessions were serving on the Jury. The seven-day festival featured vast amounts of music, including one of Zurich’s first electronic music concerts (with music of Maderna and Berio, etc) and ending with a performance, on June 6, of the world premiere staging of Schoenberg’s

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21 Eric Salzman, Letter to Sam and Frances Salzman, 10 December 1956, Quog Music Theater Salzman Archives, Brooklyn, NY
Moses und Aron at the Zurich Stadttheater. The Salzmans saw the opera twice (dress rehearsal and premiere) and found the work powerful and emotionally effective. In general, the festival’s range of quality was so varied and the mood so severe that in one concert of a Swiss composer, Stephan Wolpe made a show of walking out in protest during the piece. The entire crowd from Italy (including Petrassi) was present, in addition to Sessions, Roman Vlad and all of the leading serialists in Europe. After the festival the Salzman’s were relieved to spend several weeks travelling through France and returning briefly to Rome before arriving at Darmstadt on July 16 for the legendary Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music (Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik) that ran until July 28.

According to records, Darmstadt events that summer included the premiere of Stockhausen’s Klavierstück XI (Paul Jacobs stepping in for an ailing David Tudor), a performance of Earle Brown’s Music for Violin, Cello & Piano and Adorno’s lecture (also published) on “Die Funktion des Kontrapunkt in der neuen Musik” about issues with counterpoint in twelve-tone music (built on his lectures the previous two years) – addressing the need for change in modern music. Boulez, who had previously committed to being present, cancelled a few months before, but gave his presentation, “Alea,” to Heinz-Klaus Metzger to translate and deliver in his absence. The printed version appeared in November and has been the subject of much discussion and analysis. While Salzman only made a passing reference to a Boulez presentation read aloud, the very fact of its subject as a topic of conversation (especially with reference to the Stockhausen premiere) prefigures not only Salzman’s work of the 60s, but specifically his two collaborations with Boulez himself.

The subject of Boulez’s Alea is the concept of “chance” versus “choice” in music – beginning as a criticism of “inadvertent” chance in music (widely interpreted as a polemic against the techniques and aesthetics of John Cage and, to a degree, Stockhausen’s
Klavierstück XI), followed by a criticism of mechanization as an even more “poisonous” shirking of compositional responsibility (even “a fetishism of numbers”), and finally as the beginning of a recipe for reinstating the “free creative impulse” in contemporary music. 22 He makes the claim that the pursuit of total Objectivity in the mechanistic approach results in another kind of arbitrariness, which is “most often encountered when most shunned.” He fully elaborates:

Composition chooses to approach as closely as possible perfect, smooth, untouchable objectivity. And by what means? Schematization, quite simply, takes the place of invention; imagination - an auxiliary - limits itself to giving birth to a complex mechanism… until in the absence of any further possible combinations, the piece comes to an end. As for the imagination… it would disturb what is absolute in the development process, introducing human error into such a perfectly deduced ensemble; a fetishism of numbers, leading to pure and simple failure…. Once this overt objectivity had failed, they hurled themselves like madmen into a search for arbitrariness... Do you see what we are getting back to? Constantly a refusal of choice. The first conception was purely mechanistic, automatic, fetishistic; the second is still fetishistic, but one is freed from choice not by numbers but by the interpreter. One transfers one's choice to the interpreter's. In this way one is protected, camouflaged; not very cleverly, for nonetheless arbitrariness, or rather a kind of tip-of-the-finger arbitrariness, imposes its presence... 23

Boulez proceeds to describe various solutions, such as “a certain number of aleatory happenings inscribed in a mobile period of time, but having a logic of development, an overall sense of direction.” Thus the Western closed form of composition (and composer’s responsibility of choice “inherent in creation”) could be respected while the “Oriental” concept of chance (open form) could be introduced. 24 We will come back to “Alea” in further detail in a later chapter, as Boulez discusses in it the role of the conductor in a large-scale ensemble work containing aleatoric elements. The idea for such pieces would take hold of Salzman in the 60s, leading to two works that Boulez would choose to conduct with the BBC

24 Ibid., 51.
Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic, respectively. We can assume, with relative certainty, that these general topics were under much discussion and absorbed by the young composer (though it is unclear what translations were available – Salzmann may have read Alea in the original French, which he understood better than German).

1957 was Stockhausen’s first summer as a faculty member (having been, in previous years a “participant”), though he did not lead a composition course until 1959. Regarding the *Klavierstück XI* premiere, Salzmann recounted:

“This was the premiere of a Stockhausen piece which subsequently became quite well-known. The piece consists of a bunch of different fragments which the performer is allowed to perform in any order. And so the piece was rolled up on a big scroll and put into a round box, like what would contain a map or something. And the performer was Paul Jacobs, the late Paul Jacobs... first person I ever knew who died of AIDS... and when he came there... well, we were sitting next to a composer and a character who was Schoenberg's secretary, Richard Hoffmann. And Paul Jacobs comes out with this round thing; pops it open, pulls out the scroll and opens it up to clip the edges of it to the music board... And Richard Hoffmann says, "AHHHH RACK N' ROLL" in a loud voice from the audience.”

In general Salzmann found the Darmstadt crowd and the European serialists to be particularly rigid and difficult, “without the leavening charm of a Milton Babbitt.” Though it should be stated that the scene at the ICSM Festival was in all likelihood significantly more rigid than the scene at Darmstadt. In any case, perhaps it was because of this seriousness that one of Salzmann’s other great Darmstadt memories was again a comical one. Bruno Maderna was conducting a piece by Bo Nilsson (possibly *Kompositioner 1955-1966*, No. 3 – the only piece that fits the instrumental description if it was, in fact, a Nilsson piece) and amid the “bleep bloops” [sic] of neo-Webernian serialism came a loud trombone splat, at which the entire audience burst into laughter. Maderna got angry, turned to tell the audience to stay quiet and started the piece again – and at the second occurrence of the same trombone splat the
audience burst into even greater hysterics. After yet another restart with the same result, Maderna resolved to continue the piece until the end.

In addition to the many concerts, the courses listed in a Salzman letter home dated July 18 (the third day of the festival), were “Scherchen on Webern,” “Stockhausen on Stockhausen and Boulez (more or less)” and “Luigi Nono on Schoenberg.” In the end, the young Salzman felt that there was an anti-American sentiment among the rigid leftist (or pseudo-leftist) European composers. But that was only part of what gave him a feeling of being not quite at home. If John Cage was the culprit of inadvertent indeterminacy, then it was very much Schoenberg who was to blame for the more poisonous Objectivism that Boulez found so destructive. In that sense, according to Salzman, Darmstadt saw Schoenberg as the enemy (though Lorna Salzman’s letters at the time contradict this somewhat). They felt he represented a kind of neo-romanticism, which Salzman remembered thinking was strange at the time, but with which he came to sympathize. Nonetheless, he said of his twenty-three year old self, “I came from Princeton with Milton Babbitt and, to some extent he and Sessions were still somewhat sympathetic to Schoenberg and twelve-tone. I would call Babbitt an American serialist, but he had strong connections with the Schoenberg school and certainly Sessions did.”

The young composer tried not to think about how and where he fit in with the artistic movements of the time. In all of his studies there was no conversation about career – it was too disconcerting a topic. He assumed, to a certain degree, that when he got home he would teach somewhere, but was not enthusiastic about a life in academia. He wrote a report of Darmstadt which he submitted to the Saturday Review, but it was rejected as “too specific”

for their readership. He also tried to organize a concert of American composers in Europe through the United States Information Service (USIS), with the support of Roman Vlad. Eric put considerable stake in the endeavor, which was strung along and then callously crushed by the USIS as “not the kind of the thing which would interest an Italian concert-going public.”

Eric, judging from correspondence with Michael Sahl, was extremely disheartened. As we will see in the next chapter, Salzman would eventually have his revenge on the USIS.

Fortunately for Salzman, his father had surreptitiously sent some of the letters that Eric had written from Europe to Ross Parmenter at The New York Times. At almost the same time, in August of 1957, The New York Times chief music critic, Howard Taubman asked fourteen of the leading composers (Babbitt, Arthur Berger, Copland, Dahl, Irving Fine, Howard Hanson, Andrew Imbrie, Luening, Douglas Moore, Robert Palmer, Persichetti, Piston, Bernard Rogers and William Schuman) to make a list of gifted young American composers between the ages of 20 and 35. They came up with a list of one hundred forty-one names, including Salzman and his very recent fellows in Italy, Salvatore Martirano and Ramiro Cortes. Also on the list were Dominic Argento, Jack Beeson, Jacob Druckman, William Flanagan, Carlisle Floyd, Leo Kraft, Teo Macero, George Perle, Daniel Pinkham, Mel Powell, George Rochberg, Ned Rorem, Frederic Rzewski, Gunther Schuller, Leland Smith, Peter Westergaard and Yehudi Wyner. The timing was ideal for Salzman. On the quality of his letters, and no doubt on the momentum of the report on promising composers, the Times asked Salzman for an article about being a young American composer in Europe. Eric produced the piece and on November 19, 1957, he received a reply:

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Dear Mr. Salzman:

I’ve got good news for you. Both Mr. Taubman and myself like your article very much. We hope to run it in a Sunday not too far in the future, and shortly after it appears you’ll be receiving a cheque for $75.00. The piece is very well written and nicely though out I am glad to have it.

Yours sincerely,
Ross Parmenter, Music Editor

The fee (over $600 today) was substantial. The article, “What Europe Offers the U.S. Composer” ran on December 1 and effectively began Salzman’s career as a professional music writer outside the collegiate nest. While the article highlighted the best of his experiences and opportunities in Europe, he also wrote frankly, “studying with a European teacher is quite a different experience usually from studying with an American one; not everyone takes to it. European teachers tend to be stricter and more dogmatic. Studying with them can be an immensely rewarding experience or an utterly useless one; it usually depends on the personalities and musical predilections involved.” But of studying abroad he admitted, “its really deep significance lies in the contacts with musicians and composers of other nationalities… [it] enables you to return with a new understanding and appreciation for your own, and a richer artist and person for it.” Salzman certainly returned a richer artist and the contacts he made created an international network that would support much of his future career.

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27 Ross Parmenter, Letter to Eric Salzman, 19 November 1957, Quog Music Theater Salzman Archives, Brooklyn, NY.
CHAPTER THREE – A FULL RANGE OF ACTIVITY (THE 1960S)

A Professional Critic

Between November 1958 and May 1962, Salzman wrote more than five hundred fifty reviews for The New York Times signed Eric Salzman, and nearly one hundred more signed only E.S, covering a rich and exciting era in New York concert life. Almost immediately upon the conclusion of their European adventure (that ended with sight-seeing trip of Great Britain) in 1958 the Salzmans took up residence in Brooklyn Heights, and on August 3rd the Times published a second piece of Eric’s on his musical travels entitled, “Types of Composing in Italy.” By mid-November he had been offered a job as a “stringer,” writing freelance reviews. What he did not know at the time was that this was a try-out for a staff writing position, which they offered him shortly thereafter.

By January, he was averaging twenty reviews per month, with fall and winter being the busiest seasons. The pieces ranged from one hundred and seventy-five-word reviews of recital debuts, to a sixtieth birthday tribute to Aaron Copland that sprawled out over six pages of the Sunday Times. The articles cover all types of classical music, including record reviews and music-related news stories – but Salzman seems to have been called upon regularly to cover contemporary music, recitals, chamber music, opera (especially New York City Opera rather than the Met) and vocal ensembles. Occasionally articles signed only with initials were quite short, such as the fifty-word “Tenor Gives Concert Here” in Oct of 1961, which ends with “Mr. Dellimore was severely handicapped by vocal quality and equipment that were not up to professional standards. E.S.” On Sundays, Salzman was frequently given more space to write record reviews or interesting stories like the Copland tribute, and to cover a range of music from Stravinsky
to Orff, Ives, Ruggles and Dallapiccola. Not only was it possible for these to be as long as a thousand words, but they put modern music in a context for it to be explored by a wider public, which is a quality that earned them much attention. They often featured interviews, including one with Eliot Carter on March 20, 1960.¹

The distinguishing characteristics of Salzman’s best music writing throughout his life are already present in much of his writing for the Times – versatility and mastery of tone, as well as a thorough knowledge and memory of all things musical. His style could be exuberantly playful as in this over-the-top percussion ensemble review:

BOOM! Zoom! Wacka Donk, Clunk, Thud! The Manhattan Percussion Ensemble capped and rapped its collective way into Town Hall last night with a program of pure percussion pyrotechnics and poetry under the expert beat of Paul Price.

There was the world premiere of a piece for piano and percussion, a Bartok type of Divertimento from the pen of Nicholas Flagello, beautifully put together. Lou Harrison’s “Labyrinth No. 2,” sprinkled with bowls blocks, pots, bells, gongs, guiros, bass drums, brake drums and the like proved to be pretty and colorful, too, with plenty of rhythmic by-play. But finally, its pleasant patter outlasted its welcome…

Also performed were a Rondeau by Frank Bencriscutto and Gardner Read’s “Los Dioses Aztecas,” making quite a pack of percussion pieces in one pile. The players are past masters, and they put it over brilliantly. But one poor bystander’s bean is buzzing yet (Bang! Crash! Blat! Crunch! Ping-a-Bing, KA-BOOM!).²

It could also be poignant, as in his 1961 review of Ravi Shankar (signed E.S):

EVERY once in a while an artist of a cultural tradition alien to our own can come across the barriers that divide men and reach us. Ravi Shankar is one of those artists… Hearing and following the subtle shapes of line, phrase and rhythm take a little more patience and understanding… But the strangeness and exoticism vanished when an art as venerable as that of the Greeks and Romans was freshly recreated for us and made meaningful, expressive and new.³

In these and in the many other moods he could call forth, he gave the same impression that the writer loved the music and loved writing about it. His prodigious knowledge of the material enhanced by anecdotes, both personal and second-hand, was like having a veritable internet of information at his constant disposal. This served Salzman in two important ways. Most importantly, while many reviewers contented themselves to describe the event at hand and lodge their opinions of the performance, Salzman often managed in the most entertaining way, to give a sense of what was important about the music, why it was worth performing and how the performer dealt with the essential aspects of the music. The second way his memory served him was simply by making the above synthesis a faster process than it could have been for many writers, which was an asset in a field where writers were constantly under the gun.

On weekends there could be three events for one reviewer, which often meant covering a concert in the big hall at Carnegie (now Stern) and a recital in the hall upstairs (now Weill) with nearly overlapping schedules, necessitating the use of the backstage staircases to catch both. On evenings, a concert would end at 10 or 10:30 pm and the review had to be finished by 11:30. Salzman laughingly noted the exception of a Brünnhilde debut – the soprano would never come on until 11:30 so the review was necessarily delayed. Salzman and his fellow writers had to get back to the office immediately to write the review, which had to be done on the premises.

“The Times was then on 43rd St. and I would saunter down, usually waiting until the end of the concert. If it went very late I would leave [before it ended] but usually not. And I would saunter down to the Times. And they had a copy boy standing there and everything was on multiple carbon sheets. And you would write one paragraph at a time and then hand the carbon packet [12 sheets] to the copy boy who would rush it upstairs. So your first paragraph was already being set in print when you were writing your second paragraph. You couldn't go back
on anything. You couldn't change your mind. The copy boy would run back and forth as long as it took. And my reviews were short. I didn't have too many major reviews at that time, a few long ones but not usually. But they covered all the cast-changes in the opera in those days. And they covered a lot of contemporary music concerts… Going to all of the things in Europe and doing the Times stuff gives you a lot of perspective. You hear a lot of music. You hear too much music. You hear more music than any one person should be subjected to.”

Basically, being the new young reviewer meant covering things that nobody else wanted to cover, like Ravi Shankar or a saxophone quartet – unusual but also interesting events. And there were the occasional longer Sunday pieces, where his writing stretched out in a way that presages his days at HiFi/Stereo Review.

Salzman was still composing a little on his off days, but more importantly, he was getting some performances of pieces that he had written in Europe. Salzman’s Night Dance from 1957, revised 1960, was performed by the Minneapolis Symphony (predecessor of the Minnesota Orchestra) under Stanislaw Skrowaczewski on December 2, 1960, in the latter’s first season as music director. The conductor may well have met Salzman and seen a score for Night Dance in Italy when in Rome in 1956 for a conducting competition. In an example of excellent and colorful programming, the piece was featured on the second half of the concert (the first having been mostly occupied by Prokofiev’s Fifth Piano Concerto), sandwiched between Debussy’s Prélude à l’après-midi d'un faune and the Scherzo from Dukas’ Sorcerer’s Apprentice. The program note by John H. Harvey, provided by the Minnesota Orchestra, mostly quotes Salzman’s own note about the piece:

The title ‘Night Dance was chosen because it seemed to describe the general character of the piece; it has no other particular significance. The work has a muted, nocturnal ‘misterioso’ kind of flow. The full orchestra is rarely used

4 The author’s interview with Eric Salzman, 11 June 2017
– each time it begins to gather force, the music subsides before a real climax is reached. The harp, vibraphone, saxophone and a great variety of muted instruments are combined in various ways to help create the ‘atmosphere.’

The work has a simple form. There are three main sections which contain rather different ideas and textures. They are presented in 1-2-3 order and them immediately in reverse march, 3-2-1, with a good deal of condensation the second time around (section 2 is barely referred to). The first section then turns towards section 2 as it did in the beginning, but the latter hardly gets under way when the piece comes to a quiet end.”

With such a structure, the piece would be palindromic if the compression were not so dramatic (occurring in the final twenty percent of the piece). This imbalance gives it, instead, a combined sense of symmetry and sonata form, the latter being enhanced by the fact that the third section includes thematic material from the previous two, fragmented and inverted. Stylistically, the piece echoes Shostakovich and Hindemith but more closely matches the coloration of Varese’s *Amériques*. While Salzman’s works list gives this piece a date of 1957 (revised 1960), an early version of the score and program note from Minneapolis gives a date of 1953, which matches the sonic profile described above. Thus it provides strong evidence that some of the “nine” orchestral scores produced in Europe were actually earlier works, resubmitted to meet the requirements of the Fulbright. In any event, the 1960 revision calls for the addition of soprano saxophone and tuba, increasing the color palette.

In a way, the issue with dating the piece described above points to a bigger issue for Salzman – that of busyness and balance. As he mentioned both in a Princeton letter and again interviewed in his eighties, Salzman produced works more slowly than some of his colleagues. This was at least partly because he was an eminently social and culturally

engaged person who could not and would not be constrained by the monastic life of a composer. As just one example, eight months after having twin girls – in the height of the busy concert season – the Salzmans decided to drive from New York to Minneapolis for the premiere of Night Dance, stopping to visit as many Frank Lloyd Wright houses as possible. But his slower compositional output was also because of his multifaceted career, particularly his writing.

In addition to his work at the New York Times, in 1959 Salzman produced two pieces for HiFi Review, one of a group of listener-oriented music publications that chronicled every aspect of the new recorded-music industry. The first piece to mention, a 650-word review of two twelve-tone pieces by Ernst Krenek, underscores earlier points made about twelve-tone and serial composition technique, noting that the pairing of two dissimilar works by the same composer, “clearly demonstrate[s] how little the ‘12–tone’ maneuvers have to do with the kind of music being written.” He expounds,

Composing with 12 tones is a procedure which will not give any particular results or styles any more than writing in a succession of keys will produce music that sounds like Beethoven. Both methods can lend coherence to a piece of music, a coherence which will make itself felt in time, if the music is good enough. But both can be put to so many different uses that it is obvious that the basic essentials of style, personality, and communication are to be found elsewhere.6

The other (appearing first, chronologically) is a 2,700-word piece divided into three sections about the European perception of American music. The first section deals with the European exposure to American culture through our commercial exports (Hollywood, advertising, refrigerators, popular music etc); the second lays out a hypothetical dialogue in the form of a play between an American and a European, of

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which the latter will only accept jazz as a true non-derivative American music; and in the third Salzman discusses the wide variety and quality of contemporary American classical music, framed by a blow-by-blow account of the should-have-been USIS-sponsored concert of young American composers that never occurred. In the piece he opines that it is, in fact, the responsibility of the USIS and other organizations to publicize the full breadth of American artistic endeavors across the world, noting,

The most important single medium for bringing all our new music before European eyes is, of course, our astounding recording industry. The Louisville Orchestra, the Columbia, Mercury, and Composers Recordings series of American music have formed a basic library which should be made available overseas as widely as possible through a variety of channels, not forgetting our USIS. If this be done, perhaps, we may eventually see young and eager composers from Europe arriving on our shores to learn their trade and to absorb some of our fine American musical tradition.⁷

It is a brilliant response to the struggles he encountered abroad (and is available online to the curious reader). Finally, there is a nearly 4,000-word examination of the sonic effects of orchestra seating and other recording practices (such as the advent of reverb) in both concert and recording in High Fidelity, titled “Towards the Stereophonic Orchestra,” which shows the remarkable depth of Salzman’s historical acumen as well as his familiarity with the most recent trends (many set by Stokowski, who felt that seating should be adapted to each hall). Salzman put this knowledge to very practical use over a decade later as a record producer.⁸ In Making Easy Listening: Material Culture and Postwar American Recording, communications professor Tim Anderson cites the Salzman article heavily, arguing that the more that record companies pursued their stated

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⁸ Salzman Eric, “Towards the Stereophonic Orchestra,” High Fidelity 9/10 (October 1959): 48
mission of recreating the sound of the public concert experience in the privacy of the home, the more they were actually responsible for creating a new, independent sonic experience and redefining the distinction between music and sound. Salzman would later point out that early music heard through the medium of recorded sound is really new music, since it is heard in such a dramatically altered context than the original. “Towards the Stereophonic Orchestra,” to illustrate the breadth of material in these journals, appeared in an issue that also featured a pictorial of custom home installations, equipment reports, articles on what to look for in stereo loudspeakers, “How to Buy Stereo Control Power Amplifiers,” and seemingly incongruously, “A chronicle of the love affair between Eleonora Duse and composer-poet-librettist Arrigo Boito.”

Later, as a staff writer at HiFi/Stereo Review, Salzman exploited the unique consumer platform these journals created to educate a generation of music enthusiasts on how to listen and interact with music. Increasingly in subsequent decades, his musical (and music theater) works themselves would question, challenge and explore the interaction between composer, listener, score and sound. Thus, even if Salzman as a composer spent much of the next decade capitalizing on the compositions he wrote between 1953-58, he was nonetheless flexing a different muscle and starting to develop the two-pronged approach of composer and statesman that would become his trademark.

Salzman’s role as a statesman took a new turn in 1962 when celebrated drama critic Brooks Atkinson retired after thirty-one years at the New York Times and Howard Taubman – who had been one of Salzman’s supporters – was promoted to Chief Drama Critic. While Ross Parmenter stayed in place as Music Editor, the paper promoted junior

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critic Harold Schonberg to Chief Music Critic. Schonberg wasted little time voicing his disapproval that there was a composer on the staff, since he viewed the interests of the roles of composer and critic as conflicted. In fact, it is hard to imagine a character with views more antithetical to Salzman’s than Harold Schonberg. According to Schonberg’s *New York Times* obituary, he wrote “for himself, not necessarily for readers, not for musicians.” He regularly carried scores to the concerts he reviewed, believing in the authority of the score, and had no reservations about disparaging virtually all the serial-dominated music of the fifties, “a hideously misbegotten creature sired by Caliban out of Hecate.” One of Schonberg’s immediate and permanent changes at the *New York Times* was instituting a code of conduct in which friendships with performers and composers were prohibited. "I saw too much of that at the Herald-Tribune," he wrote, "where most of the critics were composers and some of them jockeyed shamelessly to get their music played."¹⁰ In a post-retirement article entitled “A Lifetime of Listening,” Schonberg went further:

The Times always let me follow my own tastes, and those tastes happen to be oriented in the 19th century. Of course I also reviewed a great deal of contemporary and avant-garde music, and my approach to the avant-garde did not make me very popular in those circles. Early in my career as senior music critic I took a strong stand against the international serial movement, calling it sterile, academic, boring and sure to alienate the public. Naturally I was branded a bourgeois conservative, and there was a good deal of resentment. Critics are supposed to encourage the new, not attack it. But the more I studied and heard the new music, the more appalled I became, and I saw no reason to be a propagandist for a kind of music I thought simply hateful.¹¹

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It’s hard to imagine Salzman surviving under such an employer. Yet the death-blow to Salzman’s tenure at the *Times* may have been non-musical. Schonberg was a chess fanatic, and when he found out Salzman could play, he challenged him to a game and was beaten. Salzman, in any event, was given a choice: either he should agree not to have performances of his music in the New York area or leave the newspaper. When he would not agree to this, he was offered a job on the culture desk writing fluff pieces in praise of the new Lincoln Center (Rockefeller had supposedly appealed to *New York Times* owner Sulzberger to improve press around the project). When he turned it down, they fired him without severance until he appealed to the guild and had the severance reinstated. By then he had already lined up another job in a new venture where radicalism was the norm.
Radio Broadcaster - WBAI

When KPFA, the FM radio station in Berkeley, California, broadcast Ginsberg’s *Howl* in 1956 it was already known for its eclectic mix of culture, commentary, news, poetry, experimental programming, classical, jazz and folk music. Founded by Stanford intellectual and pacifist Lewis Hill as the first of five stations under the Pacifica Foundation, it was so successful that philanthropist Louis Schweitzer donated the license for his commercial radio station, WBAI, to the Pacifica Foundation in 1959.\(^1\) By 1962 WBAI already had a reputation for counterculture. In January of that year, Bob Dylan performed a set for WBAI’s “Folksinger’s Choice” (broadcast in March) with the social protest song *The Ballad of Emmett Till* (or *The Death of Emmett Till*).\(^2\) In May, Dylan appeared again on WBAI’s “The Broadside Show” repeating the song and singing *Blowing in the Wind*, which he had written the month before.\(^3\) In April, between Dylan’s two appearances, WBAI started a Department of Music and brought in Salzman as the first Director of Music.\(^4\)

Among the immediate innovations Salzman brought to the station was the “Music Forum,” a series devoted to important issues of modern musical life. The first Forum program was a discussion of the International Society for Contemporary Music with Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter and music publisher Felix Greissle, who was also a

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4. Tim Dunn, *The Bob Dylan Copyright Files 1962-2007*
conductor and Schoenberg’s son-in-law. The next week Salzman had Milton Babbitt, Thomas Hilbish and Gunther Schuller, who according to WBAI Pacifica broadcast logs, discussed a concert he conducted featuring a piece by Salzman’s young wunderkind friend Salvatore Martirano, requiring one hundred hours of rehearsal. Salzman’s “Report[s] on Music” chronicled the developments in contemporary music, providing an event calendar, discussion of trends and recorded examples. On one May episode of “Report on Music,” for example, Salzman discussed improvisations and compositions by Lukas Foss and his Improvisation Ensemble, music by Varese, Henry Cowell and others. Cowell had already done WBAI programs about folk music (Music of the World’s Peoples), so Salzman interviewed him in the studio about his own works.

Another Salzman idea was to broadcast lesser-known music of Mahler over the airwaves. According to Leonard Bernstein, Mahler’s reputation at this time was for “German music multiplied by n,” which also meant unendurable “exaggeration and neurotic intensity.” Bernstein’s own neurotic and intense second symphony, titled after W.H. Auden’s Age of Anxiety was now already over a decade old, having been written the same year (1948) as the long-overdue US premiere of Mahler’s sixth symphony. It astounded Salzman that many of Mahler’s symphonies, including the third, seventh and eighth, were rarely heard in the concert hall, let alone on the airwaves, despite the efforts of New York’s Mahler and Bruckner societies. Through his travels in Italy and WBAI’s non-profit connections he had access to unique recordings from the BBC, Italian radio and the German Rundfunk. Together with audio engineer Jerry Bruck who had recently

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5 Bernstein, Leonard, “Mahler: His Time Has Come.” High Fidelity 17/9 (Sept 1967): 51
joined the station, WBAI presented over a dozen Mahler programs as part of a “Mahler Festival” in 1962.

It may have been through Felix Greissle that Salzman came to possess a long-lost manuscript of a single movement from Mahler’s *Piano Quartet in A minor*, which Mahler had written as a student. The composer’s widow Alma Mahler had recently discovered the manuscript, which according to Greissle had not been performed since 1876 when the sixteen-year-old Mahler played it with friends. Salzman put together a group of musicians to play through the score live on the air, giving a kind of Mahler world-premiere. Greissle informed Salzman that Alma Mahler, who was then living in New York had been impressed by the Mahler Festival on the radio and wanted to meet him. The rest of the story is best told by Salzman himself:

“He took me over to meet Alma Mahler and I was ushered into her luxurious turn-of-the-century townhouse which looked like something plucked out of Vienna. And you know where the money came from to buy a new townhouse? Franz Werfel. So I was received in her parlor by maids wearing little black and white frilly things and she was at the end of this room in a pink frilly thing and seated on a chair like a throne. And Greissle brings me in, and it was like being introduced to royalty or something. And he said, this is Eric Salzman, composer etc etc, Music Director of WBAI and she looks at me and says, I guess in English or [in German that] I understood, ‘He looks like Alban Berg,’ so I was 'in like Flynn' from that moment on. And she starts talking, and for like, two hours I'm sitting there listening to Viennese backstage gossip in Viennese dialect, of which I can't understand one word and Greissle is whispering in my ear, desperately trying to translate some of it. It was unbelievable. It was hilarious. She seemed like a very ancient lady to me. That's the Alma Mahler story.”

Despite his innovations, Salzman’s first period at WBAI was short-lived. The constant upheaval and controversy at WBAI (documented decade after decade in the *Village Voice, New York Times* and elsewhere) meant frequent turnover. But the

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7 The author’s interview with Eric Salzman, 11 June 2017
programs he initiated endured, and he came back to them in a second stint at WBAI in the late sixties. Regarding three major composers he highlighted on the air – Virgil Thomson, Henry Cowell and Edgard Varese – he said:

“I wanted to give a space for people to come to know about important American composers that were really of interest to me, and were not necessarily in the then-prevalent serial mode, because I think all three of those examples are people who stayed outside the serial mode. Well Thompson certainly, but Cowell was a bigger avant-gardist in the 20s, but Cowell famously was asked once (I don't think this was part of the interview, but I think it came up during the interview) "why did your music stop being avant-garde?" and Cowell looked at him and said, "Listen harder," in his little leprechaun way. So I liked that. You can see that's part of the pattern here. These composers to me, I mean Varese was an important composer, even the Europeans had to recognize that, but he was not a serialist, and he was certainly not a minimalist - he was the opposite in a lot of ways.”

In a strange turn of events, Alan Rich who had been sent by KPFA to help supervise operations at WBAI, left to become a music critic at the New York Times, but in 1963 Salzman recommended him for a more senior position at the New York Herald Tribune. Meanwhile, WBAI was in a nearly constant state of upheaval. After yet another turnover in management, Salzman needed a job and Alan Rich brought him on board at the Tribune early in 1964, where he not only wrote concert reviews, but also frequently editorialized on musical subjects, specific composers and other musical phenomena: for example, an article about audience behavior at the Metropolitan Opera, another article advocating for more thorough score analysis from solo performers interpreting the classical canon, and even a plea for the release of Berg’s manuscripts for Lulu into the hands of George Perle.⁸

Ford Fellowship, Europe 1964-65

A few months into Salzman’s stint at the New York Herald Tribune, the Ford Foundation announced $86,500 (over $700,000 in 2018) in grants to eleven critics, reporters and editors – the first such award for criticism. Other notable critics among the eleven chosen for the 1964 Fellowships were architecture writers Esther McCoy, Franz Schulze and Wolf Von Eckhardt; legendary theater critics Robert Brustein, T. E. Kalem and Jerry Tallmer; as well as film critic Stanley Kauffmann. According to an unsigned announcement in the New York Times, the funds, ranging from $3,200 to $10,000, would “enable recipients to enlarge their knowledge of their fields through travel, observation and study” for up to two years.⁹

Salzman’s award must have been a fairly large one, for by September he and Lorna were settled in Paris. With this location as a home base, Eric would absorb – and occasionally cover for the Herald-Tribune – many European festivals over the course of the next year, beginning with Salzburg where he was on a panel for a Babbitt-led symposium called “The Structure and Content of Contemporary Music – Theoretical Systems” at the Ninth Congress of the International Musicological Society.¹⁰ This was followed by the 32nd Venice Biennale where Luigi Nono’s La fabbrica illuminata premiered; the Bucharest Festival; the Warsaw Autumn Festival (where the Merce Cunningham Dance Company was touring with John Cage, David Tudor and Robert Rauschenberg); the first – and only – International Biennial of Contemporary Music in Madrid (the twenty-fifth anniversary of Franco’s rise to power was the impetus for many

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¹⁰ Unsigned, “Musicologists at Salzburg; Delegates From East And West Cooperate At Recent Congress,” New York Times (27 September 1964)
musical events in 1964), where Frederic Rzewski performed several programs including an enormous recital including music of Cage, Nono, and Earle Brown; other festivals and countless non-festival performances throughout Europe.

Brought to Paris by relatives, the Salzman’s twin four-year-old daughters stayed for several months, long enough to enroll in school in Paris and travel with their parents. Among friends that winter in Paris were music journalist Claude Samuel, Earle Brown, Skrowaczewski, the French Bulgarian serialist/aleatorist André Boucourechliev, Iannis Xenakis, Stockhausen and Maderna. Besides covering concerts and taking short trips from Paris, Salzman finished the text for the book-length, *Twentieth Century Music; an Introduction*, part of the Prentice Hall History of Music Series edited by H. Wiley Hitchcock, and the final edits on his chapter for Richard Kostelanetz’ *The New American Arts*, called “The New American Music.”

In April, the Salzmans traded apartments with the Kostelanetzs, who had a flat in London, and Eric lectured at London’s American Embassy, met with the BBC’s Controller of Music William Glock, a rare advocate for atonal music in Britain, and attended a concert of Babbitt, Carter and others, performed by Charles Rosen. In mid April the Salzmans returned to Paris. Meanwhile, back in the United States, Lukas Foss’s ensemble at the Center For the Creative and Performing Arts in Buffalo, with guitarist Stanley Silverman, presented Salzman’s “In Praise of the Owl and the Cuckoo” (for Soprano, Flute, Viola and Guitar; and written to text from Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labor’s*
Lost, 1963-64) both in Buffalo and on a Rockefeller concert Carnegie Hall on April 27th.¹¹

After their daughters returned to the US with their grandparents, the Salzmans embarked in May on travels to the 3rd Annual Music Biennale Zagreb (at which Stockhausen, Maderna, Messiaen, and Pierre Schaeffer were present), followed by Budapest, Vienna, Prague, and Florence for a “music congress.” They continued on to Split and Dubrovnik in Croatia, followed by the Athens Festival, and finally Bayreuth at the invitation of Friedelind Wagner. While in Prague, the Salzmans stayed with Paula Kotik, mother of the twenty-two year old Petr Kotik whom they had met at the Warsaw Autumn Festival, where Musica Viva Pragensis (the Czech composer’s innovative new ensemble) had performed with John Cage and the Cunningham Dance Company, and where Kotik had presented his scandalous Music for Three, noted for “sonic extremity” and calling for “maximally ‘ugly’ and harsh sounds.”¹²

“Prague was trying to pull itself up and do what Poland already had done which was free the arts, so they invited Cage and Cunningham to perform there. And with Kotik, there was sort of an avant-garde underground. And you went to see artists living in Stalinist housing projects on the outskirts of Prague who had been in jail and all kinds of stuff like that. But it was a very heady time and it was growing. The Russian invasion was intended to cut it off and did for a while. But then, of course, Prague was the center of the whole uprising with Havel and so on. And artists were very involved in it and music was an important part. A lot of pop music, but also avant-garde music. We actually stayed with them in the family house. And I got tons of music. I was taken to the official “State Composers Alliance” and I got tapes and huge scores of socialist realist music and I gave it all to the New York Public Library.”

Salzman also met with György Ligeti in Vienna and became friendly with Luigi Nono after meeting him at the Biennale in Venice, where, in addition to the international press, Jean-Paul Sartre and many other cultural luminaries were present for the premiere of *La fabbrica illuminata*. The work was part of a commission from RAI Italia for a larger political/social music-theater work about and for the working class. While the complete work was never brought to fruition, *La fabbrica illuminata* was created to protest working conditions at the Italsider factory in Genoa. The music-theater and sonic components must have made an impression on Salzman, as the textural contrasts between solo singer, tape effects of all kinds from voice distortion to group shouting, to a cappella choral singing, would all be put to use in many of Salzman’s major compositions between 1966-69. Salzman would substitute philosophical comedy, and later, environmental activism for the prominent socialist aspect present in Nono’s work (and present in much European music). Nono believed his work was for these working-class people despite its abstract modernism - and a large contingent of Italsider factory workers were invited to the premiere. Whether or not they were able to appreciate this modern atonal spectacle, Salzman would have been interested in the belief that it could be possible, given enough time, for atonal experimental music-theater to connect with a lay audience. Salzman simultaneously admired and was critical of what he observed among European composers, describing them as predominantly leftist or socialist, competitive, “puffed up” and convinced of their own importance in the tradition of art culture, stating bluntly: “They weren’t humble.” Salzman’s own American liberalism would play out differently, eventually leading him away from “high-brow” theoretical music.
Looking through Salzman’s correspondence from the time just before, during and after Europe, a picture emerges of a frenetic time with an unclear trajectory. As a music critic for the *Herald Tribune* he had national notoriety and consequently received all manner of correspondence – arguments or congratulations regarding a particular concert review, inducements to write articles on specific subjects or review specific concerts, inquiries from colleges and music societies – all the while constantly looking to expand the reach of, and income from, his writing and speaking. He was in regular contact with Paul Fromm of the already well-established Fromm Music Foundation and he wrote coverage of the 1964 inaugural Festival of Contemporary Music at Tanglewood (which Fromm sponsored) and adapted the material for publication in Fromm’s Perspectives on New Music in 1965. He was in correspondence with MIT Press about selecting and editing an anthology of writing that had appeared in *Modern Music* between 1924 and 1946 that never came to fruition, and in correspondence with Random House (Knopff) about a book on modern American music in which they expressed considerable interest. He was aggressively seeking a publisher for a major article he had written on Charles Ives, which was rejected by *Esquire, High Fidelity, New York Magazine* and others on account of similar material having been published in the previous decade. It was eventually published in *Commentary Magazine*, years later in 1968. Yet he was also working to organize concerts, festivals and discussions about contemporary music, and perhaps, somewhat losing his identity as a composer.

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13 Salzman did write a retrospective article on *Modern Music* for *Perspectives of New Music* (Vol. 2, No. 2, 1964)
Casting Off - Setting the stage for New Music Theater

Concomitant with his scattershot activity was a gradual tectonic shift in Salzman’s artistic identity between 1964 and 1974 from the charted territory of his mentors and musical luminaries (whether it be Thomson, the European serialists, Babbit, Sessions, the Cage/Feldman establishment, the tape music experimenters working at Columbia/Princeton, etc) to an uncharted wilderness as an all-inclusive, post-modern free agent. Instead of trying to fit in, he would deliberately try not to, and this quest for ideological liberation would land him solidly and finally in the theater. The turn would also complete the revolution begun in the early 50’s toward a total autonomy. Even in his avant-gardism Salzman refused to stay with any of the “orders.” Like the earlier move into avant-garde music, this adult shift amounted to a rebellion. Unlike the earlier rebellion, which had occurred in the safety of academia, this second rebellion would include a revolt against academia as well as domestic life, coinciding with a gradual artistic unmooring that ushered in a decades-long search for stable creative ground.

On the domestic front, a college professorship might well have allowed Salzman to keep a more regular schedule and to participate in a hands-on approach to fatherhood and home life. Instead, Salzman’s pursuit of an artistic life outside of the institutional infrastructure translated to time-consuming projects with little promise for remuneration. Not only did his work receive most of his focus, but maintaining a social life with the community of artists whose work aligned with his own also required an investment of time and energy. The result is that Salzman’s daughters recall their mother as the active parent, whose further job it was to make sure that the children did not disturb his work. The fact that Salzman often did what he wanted rather than what was most prudent was,
in some way, linked to an avant-garde idea of total freedom. It was, as noted earlier, partially a pushback against the constraints of a past generation, but Salzman also linked himself to great causes that enabled him to justify his self-interest. His wife and daughters were left to compete for his attention, which was often directed elsewhere.*

The period of change began with a great success: Salzman’s book, *Twentieth Century Music; An Introduction* (1967). From 1961 to the end of that decade, a wave of books (several also called “Introductions”) on Twentieth Century music appeared from different publishers and written by notable authors such as Peter Hansen, Otto Deri, Paul Collaer, Arthur Cohn, William F. Austin, Peter Yates, Robert D Wilder and Joseph Machlis among others. Salzman’s “Introduction” was part of Prentice Hall’s complete History of Music Series, edited by H. Wiley Hitchcock. Its major asset, not surprising given Salzman’s natural gift for writing, is readability achieved by broad synthesis of details into dense but engaging sentences. Raymond Ericson pointed out in his book review, that the condensation of a vast amount of material into a small space “puts the revolutionary events of the century in vivid perspective.” In the preface to that book, Salzman writes:

> Although the first edition of this book was published in 1967, the bulk of it was written on a boat to Europe in […] 1964. This moment had more than symbolic value for me; it marked a change in direction for me as a composer beginning with my *Foxes and Hedgehogs*, on texts from John Ashbery’s “Europe.” The culture change – the clash in values from Old World to New – scored out in that piece as the structure of a music drama has come to serve as a metaphor for the vast upheavals and changes of the 1960s throught 1980s.14

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* See Chapter Six.
In this assessment from the early 2000s, Salzman seems to link his own transition to the wider cultural leap from modernism to post-modernism. However the context in which Salzman’s revolution occurred had sociological, field-specific (within the broader art music institution), and personal motivations. In one statement Salzman went so far as to use the phrase “personal crisis,” which possibly connotes an emotional component to the changes, but in his chapter on “New American Music” for Kostelanetz’s 1965 book on the arts (originally published by Horizon Press, then by Collier in 1967), Salzman lucidly articulates the artistic post-modern dilemma as it pertained specifically to musical changes in America:

[...] You cannot define the historical necessity of the avant-garde without immediately implying some still newer avant-garde which instantly obliterates the old avant-garde one historical necessity back.

All good, red-blooded Americans know that history is bunk – that’s what makes America great. We are entering what has been called the post-historical age, not because history is failing us but because the classical Hegelian-Marxist synthesis is no longer relevant to our experience. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein, America is the oldest country in the world because it was the first to enter the post-Marxist age. The received European notions of historical avant-garde necessity are essentially foreign to the American experience of pluralism and individualism, of optimism and alienation, of rationality and eccentricity; they are irrelevant to American technological civilization and to the American tradition of handwork, of doing things, of tinkering, of activity as a good and an end in itself; it is alien to the American experience of the frontier, of the idea of the extension of possibility of conformity on the one hand and freedom of action on the other, of mass-cult – ugly, brutal, closed on one side – and multiplicity – always open at some other, almost unknown, outer end.

[...] The essentially open character of the music of Ives, open in content and form in every direction; the original, intense chromaticism of Carl Ruggles; the vast accumulations of new materials and ideas by Henry Cowell; the abstract spatial concepts of Edgard Varèse with the growth of new forms out of sonority, timbre, texture and accent – all of these musical ideas and others (including forerunners of serialism and of improvisation-chance procedures – date back 40, 50 and 60 years but also carry forward into recent years the expanding nature of aural experience.

…[This] defined and created the conditions under which latter-day ideas have developed, conditions which can now define the very different meaning of creative possibilities today:
1.) All possible aural sensations in any sequence and in any combination are available and of equal esthetic (though not necessarily equal artistic or psycho-acoustical) validity as raw material. These include the entire range of pitched and noise sounds, artificial and “natural,” recorded and live (also including non-sound or silence), up to and even beyond the thresholds of perception and pain.

2.) All levels of pre-performance control are available, from total determinism (or some close approximation thereof; e.g.: a totally predetermined electronic conception fixed in its unalterable form on tape) to improvisation and random choice within open patterns whose shape and content may be determined at any level, at any time before or during the performance of the music and to any extent by the use of performer choice and/or random and chance procedures.

3.) There are no generally accepted symbolic meanings or referents inherent in any usage. However “real” sounds or even quotes from other music may stand for themselves, words may appear as sound objects as well as meaning-conveyers, and physical pain and even boredom can be (although with more inherently questionable esthetic-psychological significance) literally evoked. Formal patterns and structures may represent or exemplify thought processes, and non-verbal mental structures may be realized as relationships of sound; such patterns may also grow out of and exemplify the range of human perceptive abilities and related states, mental and psychological.

Now this is an unprecedented state of affairs; the assumptions of the newest “new” music grow our of an awareness of the entire range of aural possibility and its meaning conveyed through heightened and widened experience. The actual content of a work and the relationships of its parts as they unfold – as they are acted upon, interact or intersect in time – are defined uniquely by each work as its own form or structure. In the end, the effect is to redefine every aspect of the creative act; the relationship between creator, performer and listener is then redefined by each new work and indeed, in the best and most important new works at least, so is the very way we perceive and understand.

It is interesting to note that the very first “totally organized” music was written by Milton Babbitt in 1948, the same year that the first “musique concrète” experiments with sound effects began in Paris. […] At a certain point, the cumulative result was a new awareness which made the old narrow kinds of exclusiveness seem no longer necessary. The creative process was reversed; it became analytic, so to speak, instead of synthetic, growing out of this new discovery and acceptance of the totality of possible experience. In the earlier new music, the materials and means of the work of art were formed by rigorous selection, often defined negatively by a strenuous, pre-compositional exclusion of possibility; in the comparable developments of the last few years, the entire range of possible experience is represented by a portion of it – a cross-grain cut, so to speak – organized, not through pre-compositional assumptions, but through musical and psychological structures established uniquely by each work itself.15

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It is an especially clear description of the post-modern conundrum (and opportunity) facing Salzman and composers of his generation, at least in the context of Western art music. The dual effects of having had to articulate the history of modern music for the Prentice-Hall book and Salzman’s own recent prolonged exposure to the leading European composers who wanted their work to be understood as the legitimate next stage in the unfolding of Europe’s venerable history, resulted in optimal conditions for reflection and shrewd analysis. Salzman seems to conclude that a kind of musical work is possible that could stand alone and be understood according to its own parameters – he writes of “musical and psychological structures established uniquely by each work itself” – in the Aristotelian sense (i.e., the structure of component parts in relation to the whole) with only the loosest adherence, if any, to preconceived notions of genre. This bold conclusion could (and did, in this period) lead artists to produce work that is, on the one hand, so eclectic and inclusive, and on the other so challenging with regard to genre and form, that in either case it would risk losing any meaning for a paying audience. Expectation and context in the theater, whether deliberately defied or acquiesced to, is an important component of reception. If no parameters for expectation exist (in one of Salzman’s examples, even words could be used as mere sound objects) meaning is difficult to construe. Thus, even when a highly evolved intuition or cultivated musical taste like Salzman’s is involved in the creation and selection of materials, the result, however esthetically pleasing, may engender a sufficiently passive listener response as to preclude the desire to hear the piece a second time or build a musical culture around it.
Within the broader sociological context, the environment to which Salzman returned was unstable on both the personal, the occupational and the national level (the Vietnam War and Civil Rights movements are only two of the major sociological challenges the nation was facing). Upon his arrival, he went immediately back to work at the Tribune though only nominally, as nearly all New York newspapers (including the Tribune) went on strike in mid-September and Salzman and his wife Lorna walked the picket lines. The paper remained on shaky ground amidst nearly constant strikes until it folded the following year. Throughout that winter Salzman worked to get other musical projects off the ground and attempted to secure other writing assignments. A letter from William Anderson, the editor of HiFi / Stereo Review, gives a picture of negotiations for a writing assignment there. Anderson touts his publication as “the only general-circulation music magazine in the this country that consistently addresses itself in an adult and responsible way to covering the world of music without snobbery, pedantry, or false erudition,” going on within his letter to list Harold Schonberg, Igor Stravinsky, Virgil Thomson, H.C. Robbins-Landon and Henry Pleasants as notable past contributors. All of this was to induce Salzman to “compromise” [sic] by accepting an offer of $600 for a 7500-word piece on Carl Ruggles.\footnote{William Anderson, Letter to Eric Salzman, 28 January 1966, Quog Music Theater Salzman Archives, Brooklyn, NY.} Salzman ultimately accepted the offer and managed to piece together a living from this kind of work while looking for a solution to the imminent end of his newspaper career. He contributed writing to at least two hundred seventy-five issues of Stereo Review (or HiFi/Stereo Review) between 1966 and 1998, often having several articles in an issue.
For his obituary of Salzman in the *New York Times*, writer Neil Genzlinger interviewed Tim Page, past music critic of *The Washington Post* and professor of journalism at University of Southern California. Page, mentioned earlier in reference to Otto Luening (Page was also a Columbia grad), clearly had Salzman’s *Stereo Review* contributions in mind when he described Salzman’s impact on a generation of music enthusiasts:

“When Eric Salzman was writing monthly for *Stereo Review*, he was pretty much the only music critic who was covering all aspects of the avant-garde. He was not necessarily enthusiastic about everything he wrote about, but he covered many kinds of new and unusual work thoroughly and with discrimination and distinction…In 1970, Virgil Thomson called Salzman ‘the best critic in America for contemporary and far out music’ — and this was at a time when John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luciano Berio, Alvin Lucier and others were testing the limits of the ‘far out.’ Young critics and composers read Salzman avidly.”

That is not the only way Salzman made an impact on young musicians. In the summer of 1966, he traveled to Bayreuth to teach a course on New Music Theater at the invitation of Friedelind Wagner (Salzman returned for a second summer in 1967). A young Michael Tilson Thomas, then an assistant conductor at Bayreuth, attended Salzman’s classes. By the fall of 1966, just at the time the Herald Tribune’s final demise was announced (it was no surprise given that an unprecedented 140-day strike had engulfed the paper since the spring), Salzman had luckily obtained an assistant professorship at Queens College, along with William Bolcom who also began teaching

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18 Salzman recounted an anecdote regarding Thomas: “I remember taking a train trip from Munich to Bayreuth with Michael. We were playing a game called ‘Catch that Kitsch’ that consists of trying to identify melodies that everybody knows; but you try to identify what they actually are and who might have actually written them. It’s a very fun game.”
there that year. Neither lasted into a third year. In an interview, Bolcom described the atmosphere as “a bit poisonous at the time.” Everything in class, according to Bolcom, had to match a syllabus set by the AAUP (American Association of University Professors), who negotiated on behalf of the teachers. While teacher salaries were consequently quite high, Bolcom reported that his music theory class had forty-five students, and graduate assistants were paid merely to sit in class – not to grade papers, teach or tutor. Bolcom also claimed that the students did not have the skills or preparation to handle the union-mandated curriculum, in which Schenkerian analysis began in “the third or fourth week.”

Salzman chafed against the restrictions imposed on the teaching methods. He remembered being constantly reprimanded by the department chair and the dean for infractions that included failure to attend the school-wide annual performance of Handel’s Messiah and, significantly more egregious, playing a Beatles record for his music appreciation class. If the post modern dilemma and the birth of the counter-culture meant that one had to take sides, Eric’s encompassing of new and potentially radical ideas may have been perceived by the administration as a taking the wrong side. In a virtuosic three-thousand-word article in the avant-garde, often erotic literary-philosophical magazine Evergreen Review, which was titled “The Prevalence of Rock or Rock Lives!” (1967), Salzman traces the musicological and sociological evolution and trends of Rock music with an exciting flourish and an impressive application of wordplay.

20 The magazine published original material by Sartre, Camus, Beckett, Bukowski, Burroughs, Genet, Allen Ginsberg, Günter Grass, Kerouac, Norman Mailer, Henry Miller, Kenzaburō Ōe, Susan Sontag and Malcolm X (to name only a few), often published alongside a serialized erotic comic, The Adventures of Phoebe Zeit-Geist and other erotic or avant-garde content.
appropriate to the other edgy content in the issue. A long series of excerpts (though still only a small portion of the article) is presented below because the material covered, from McLuhan, to dancing, the poetic importance of words – especially in the Beatles – to Happenings, electronics, violent sexuality, and rock’s relationship to the “classical” avant garde and to the visual arts, are key motivators for a shift in Salzman’s work:

Make no mistake, we live in a Rock-bound Musical Culture. It is all-inclusive; it surrounds us, it inundates us. As Marshall McLuhan would say, it is tribal, it is total and it is instantaneous. It’s ‘cool’ – it suggests detachment and involvement simultaneously. It requires the suspension of the rational faculties; it demands participation… Today’s pop gets back to essentials. The beat is simple, hypnotic. Harmony consists of a few basic chords strummed out over and over again… Tone-color – the Sound – is a major feature; the new pop sound is that of mikes, electric guitars, amplifiers, and loudspeakers that set out the electronically charged plunks, twangs, and thumps of the big basic beat. In its hypnotic qualities of regularity, repetition, and reiteration, this pop is op too, an aural equivalent of vibrating optical patterns and colors…

The new pop and the new dancing that comes with it are totally different in quality from the old… Instead of partners in physical contact, moving, acting, and interacting in pairs (a kind of rehearsal for love-making), there are individuals standing apart and moving alone in violent, independent activity that suggests isolation, even alienation, yet, at the same time, total participation and involvement. Think of the symbolic figure (yak) of the go-go girl. The dance floor takes on curious patterns – a series of furious, unphased fields of activity, independent and unconnected, yet simultaneous and even collective. Virgil Thomson calls it ‘the touch-me-not-fuck’ but if this is sex, it’s that special kind of modern cool sex; violent physical-sexual movement in the context of utter detachment and utter absorption – orgasmic, narcissistic, without external object. *Is the big beat the real rhythm of sex?* Distinctions between male and female are obliterated (as they are in hair and dress), everyone is equally immersed, physically and sensually, in total activity and total environment. Individual consciousness is submerged in the tribalized, ritualized, encompassing experience.

[Rock] has definitely increased its musical horizons through contact with other musical civilizations; the four-square phraseology is gone and the whole musical expression is more natural, more varied, and richer. But Rock operates as a kind of musical imperialism; it weakens and entraps the traditions it takes over by subjecting them the pounding beat…

An important part of the new pop has to do with the importance of the words. The old song lyric was intentionally conventional – rarely important except as sound and as a general conveyer of sentiment or mood; the music was definitely dominant (and musical life revolved around the pros who could provide
style, solidity, and, hopefully, imagination). Nowadays the new musical simplicity and the cult of wildness (aided by electronics) permits or is even designed for getting across, first of all, verbal meaning… The Beatles were one of the first commercial groups to be concerned with the verbal as well as the musical message, and the presence of folk has brought even overt protest to Rock…

There are, of course, no forbidden subjects any more. Death madness, dope, Viet, and dirt are almost routine; pot, protest, perception, politics and pornography are the items on the agenda… The Fugs, the current Village in-residence pornos, dabble in social comment (‘Kill kill kill for peace’) and existentialist metaphysics (‘Monday nothing, Tuesday, nothing, Wednesday nothing…’) but their specialty is sex (‘Wet dream over you’). They are, they claim, merely being explicit about what everybody else really means anyway. They rev up the amps, flash the house lights, and roll on the floor shouting, moaning and groaning. The ever-phallic mike plays a big role; they clutch it, put it between their legs, rub it, roll around with it; little is left to the imagination. (If the mike is the male member, is the strokable electric guitar the female?)…

The Fugs push the sound up far beyond distortion levels and even past the threshold of pain, but even the not-so-far-out groups rely heavily on electronics to beef up the sound. The marriage of electronics with pop goes back but the union has only been consummated in recent years. This new music is almost totally dependent on the amplifier-loudspeaker esthetic; it wouldn’t be the same music without it (it would be impossible to arrange most of these tunes for conventional orchestra and come up with anything recognizable)… The expansion of pop through electronics was, of course, inevitable (An Exploding Plastic Inevitable?) but it seems odd that with all the tremendous potential of modern circuitry, its uses are still confined to booming up the bit beat and making live music sound, as much as possible, as though it were recorded. The LP (Loud Pop or Legal Pot, Lascivious Pornography, Leary-al Perception, Long-hair Protest) generation demands the canned sound…

…Pop-Rock, in its new contexts of Happenings and Environments, takes on new vitality. The twist (if the words can be pardoned in the context) is that a great deal of the environmental-happening-mixed-media mishegas was organized, inspired by, or produced in close association with people who came out of the musical avant-garde under the influence of John Cage. Somehow, in the huge assault on the senses that followed, sound came to play less and less of a significant role; what hit the ear was somehow incidental to the visual-verbal-tactile-dramatic-literary fun and games. A great opportunity for modern music was missed. Rock rolled in and quickly filled the vacuum. (The Velvet Underground’s John Cale, whose name looks like a misprint for John Cage, is a Welsh born ex-Cage-ian; one group of avant-gardists-turned-Rocknicks called themselves The Sellouts.)

Yet people who are willing to give up representation in painting, narrative in the novel, plot and realism in the theater, plot in the film, and storytelling in the dance are loath to give up the beat. They surround themselves with a multi-dimensional kind of experience in every other area but the cling to the beat. They
need its stability and sense of direction. Without it, they have no focus; they aren’t really able to hear and feel at all.\textsuperscript{21}

In these excerpts, one is aware of conflicting energies from the writer, which seem to vibrate sympathetically with personal frustration and excitement. Salzman is simultaneously critical of and fascinated by (possibly even envious of) the visceral sexual power of Rock music and “the beat.” Furthermore his argument that Rock music filled a void at least partially created by the avant-garde artists who failed to pay sufficient attention to the actual sounds, rather than pursuing abstract games or thought experiments, is a unique perspective. As if in eventual answer to the frustration stated here, Salzman’s works from the 1970s onward would increasingly incorporate and experiment with a “beat,” with pop/world music elements, as well as with experimental, poetic, and sexual verbal expression as theatrical elements. It seems again, as in his college recollection of Cage’s \textit{Imaginary Landscapes No. 4} for twelve radios, that he was “turned on” (elsewhere in the \textit{Evergreen} article Salzman quotes the now legendary Tim Leary/Marshall McLuhan phrase, “Turn on, tune in, drop out” which had only been uttered a few months before Salzman’s article) by aspects of the contemporary, electrified, counter-culture.

It is not surprising given his fascination for aspects of the counter-culture that, in spite of his relationship with the administration, Salzman got along well with the young students at Queens College. In his final semester at Queens College, he said it was they who asked him to create a piece for a little festival of music at the school. He created a

tape piece called *Queens Collage* for which he walked around campus with a Nagra tape recorder – he captured everything from orchestra and band rehearsal, deli orders, campus rants, a political rally and classroom lectures to sounds of typing, mechanical noises, construction, etc – and edited together an open-form, highly creative, aural environmental experience. In the collage he employed contrasting musical excerpts (orchestra tuning and rehearsing an unidentified classical symphony, a concert band bossa nova, semi-out-of-tune parlor piano, violin practice) taped at rehearsals or in practice rooms, words both semantic and sonic, and a rather hypnotic use of repetition and reiteration created with a feedback circuit (even approaching the beat-like). Progressing over the course of twelve minutes from the sounds of human endeavor and effort toward the abstract environmental (ending with machine noise, walking, and finally birdsong) the piece was intended to highlight the “contradictions between the internal and external ‘realities’ of an urban college campus – the kinds of sounds and contradictions that everyone was always desperately trying to shut out.”

He likened it to his version of an “Academic Festival Overture.”

Salzman did not mention the Rock article in interviews or writings in later years, though it was cited by Michael Hicks for an article about marketing for avant-garde music. Regardless, one can hear in Salzman’s pieces of this period a synthesis of key concepts that are outlined in that article, along with concepts of avant-gardism laid out in the Kostelanetz book, and the strong influence of Ives, Nono, Cowell and tape experimenters. It was truly the beginning of a new phase in which he was moving toward the New Music Theater. In a recorded interview he recalled:

“I went through a personal crisis. I was already writing music. I guess somewhat atonal, Sessions-influenced, maybe a little bit serial influenced. But I became interested in vocal music and I became interested also in the question of theater. And I came to the conclusion that contemporary music needed a renovation and that one of the places that could happen was developing or re-establishing links between new music and theater; which is historically where almost every important movement in Western European music came from. At least starting with the Baroque. Baroque music and the protocols of Baroque music came out of the theater – came out of opera. And classical music came out of opera, too…”

We can once again use Philip Roth as a point of comparison. After returning from a Guggenheim Fellowship in Rome in the 1950s and holding residencies at the University of Iowa Writers Workshop, and Princeton University, Roth was back in New York City. He described the period between 1962 and 1967 as one of “literary uncertainty” – of not knowing what to write about. This period ended with the deliberately unserious Portnoy’s Complaint (1969) which was partially the result of Roth setting a goal “of becoming the writer some Jewish critics had been telling [him he] was all along: irresponsible, conscienceless, unserious.”23 If Roth was looking for a way of reflecting America back at itself, he found it in the 1970s through a series of satirical narratives. It is abundantly clear through Salzman’s essays that he, too, was looking for a way to reflect America back to itself through music as he felt Ives had done – and to do in “classical” or “art music” something like what was happening in Rock. It is also clear that he had not yet discovered the best musical means of capturing the ethos.

Early New Music Theater Works

One of the biggest developments to come out of this period was also a likely further cause for the disintegration of Salzman’s relationship with Queens College. In the early 1960s Hunter College recruited Norman Singer, who was then director of the Aspen Music Festival and School, to run the prestigious Hunter College Concert Bureau. Singer, who would go on to lead New York City Center and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, had more modern tastes than his predecessor, and wanted to start a contemporary music series as part of the concert bureau’s twenty-fifth anniversary, called “The New Image of Sound.” Salzman was brought on as artistic director to, “Present music in collaboration with such other arts as poetry, films and dance” and to help the New York scene “Break away from the ‘modern-music syndrome’ and attract not just coteries and cliques but a larger audience of intelligentsia” by “pulling together things that had not been pulled together before.” And, to the apparent consternation of the Queens College administration, none of Salzman’s coverage in the New York Times and elsewhere, mentioned Queens College.

On November 30, 1967 the first concert of the New Image of Sound was to feature Babbitt’s Philomel, Salzman’s Verses and Cantos (later re-titled Foxes and Hedghogs) and Luciano Berio’s Laborintus II, but Bethany Beardslee, the soprano slated for the Babbitt fell ill and Salzman’s long work opened the concert, conducted by Dennis Russell Davies with an ensemble from Juilliard. “Not really a piece in the usual sense. It

is more like an environment,” said Theodore Strongin, who reviewed the concert for The New York Times.

Hearing (and seeing it) is like being at a big Ivesian party. The party noise at the core continues unabated, while instruments, voices, taped sounds, or people wander in and out, seemingly as they please. And just as at a party, you can let your attention wander in and out, too, while going through the motions of listening, or you can hang on every sound wholeheartedly… a busy, amiable piece, friendly and undemanding.²⁶

The perceived anarchy of a performance of this work does not reflect the multilevel organization of the score, which contains such a variety of notations, instrumental and vocal techniques, interpretive indications, material combinations and controlled aleatoric elements (for example a strophic section marked “moderate Lied tempo,” where the soprano and piano “lied” part are marked with repeats – though with so many changes of dynamics, text treatment, tempo, octave, and with addition of tape for the third verse – that the ear perceives only a continuation of through-composed anarchy), all carefully and clearly scored. Going as far back as Brahms, composers have included details of craftsmanship that are difficult to perceive within the total density of the work, but in the 1960s (see John Cage’s book Notations, mentioned on page 71) the idea emerged that a score might exist as a work of its own, separate on some level, or bearing only an indirect relationship with the music as it is heard in performance. Furthermore, because the duration of some component parts are so varied (with markings such as “Free, cue soprano,” “beat measures as indicated, moving quarter note motion, cue voices, instruments fit their parts in,” “irregular but with good pacing,” “speaking tempo, cue tape, “repeat ad lib until cued out” and Feldman-like box grids), the musicians cannot

arrive at key junctures the same way each time, requiring the conductor to maintain traffic control. The result is not random – a performance clearly sounds like what is written in the score and can be easily followed as such, notwithstanding liberal use of graphic notation, but is so utterly dense that it cannot be enjoyed as a mere sonic construction without viewing the score.

Strongin called it a piece, “To look at as well as listen to… Part of the fun was watching the four principal singers smile and even laugh when the music tickled them.” From a compositional perspective, Salzman is responding to and applying those ideas and solutions of indeterminacy outlined in “Alea” – combining closed and open structure with “a certain number of aleatory happenings inscribed in a mobile period of time, but having a logic of development, an over-all sense of direction.” Pierre Boulez would eventually conduct the work with the BBC Symphony in 1972 and Lukas Foss with the Brooklyn Philharmonic in 1977 (in these two latter performances the piece was titled Foxes and Hedghogs). Conductors were likely attracted to it partly due to the virtuosic demands it placed on them. Prior to his later performance of the piece, Boulez introduced it to the British audience:

“The music is only one element of the game… I would tell you what Eric Salzman told to myself. He would like to oppose a kind of puritanical way of looking at art and especially a very single-minded view of art, and to [go to] a kind of, let's say, more American way of looking at it. More relaxed and less sharp - definitely less sharp - on stylistic ideas of what we, as Europeans, consider as the main virtues of an art: to preserve the purity and the unity of the style.”

The text is from poet John Ashbery’s “Europe,” the longest poem in the poet’s most experimental book, The Tennis Court Oath (1962). Salzman and Ashbery met in

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Europe when both had Fulbright Fellowships in 1956. Ashbery stayed abroad to work for nearly a decade and wrote “Europe” in the late fifties, which Richard Kostelanetz called “acoherent” much in the way that modern music could be atonal – “Original work that seems totally unfathomable on first impression, but becomes more familiar with continued contact.” In the 1970s when he won the National Book Award, Ashbery described the poetry of “Europe” defensively: “I succeeded in writing something that wasn't the poetry I didn't want to write, and yet was not the poetry I wanted to write. For me, this was a period of examining my ideas about poetry —sort of tearing it apart with the idea that I would put it back together.”

Salzman found in that tearing a kindred energy that infused the structure of the piece. Continuing in the words of Pierre Boulez:

“The relationship of the poem is much more complex with the music than it is normally. You have many degrees of understanding, you have many ways of playing, in music, with the text. Because the text is also a place on many levels. And that's a reaction which I describe as American, but I have the right to say that because there is a very notorious example in American music – and that's Charles Ives. More or less he is the father of all the very important American music and he's recognized now as this father figure. Of course, he realized these kinds of ideas, multi-level ideas of music in his own way and now Salzman proposes to us a new solution.”

Morton Feldman loudly booed the piece from the audience at the premiere, which Salzman found hilarious and noteworthy. In fact, he was so proud of it that he insisted on preserving for his archive, a separate recording of the applause with Feldman’s “boo.” Yet Feldman’s mentor, John Cage, included a page from Salzman’s score in his 1969 book Notations – a book whose aim was to show, in two hundred sixty-nine entries, the


variety with which the notation and written presentation of music could appear.\textsuperscript{30} Thus with both Feldman’s and Cage’s response, the piece was considered important enough to draw attention and comment.

It is not exactly clear when Salzman began calling the piece *Foxes and Hedgehogs*, but this allusion to a poetic fragment of Archilochus (680–645 BC) became a personal credo. Salzman encountered the fragment – “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing,” – in Isaiah Berlin’s 1953 essay *The Hedgehog and the Fox* where he uses it as a metaphor to categorize those who approach the world through one defining idea (i.e. the serialists or the minimalists) versus those whose approach is comprehensive and whose world view is irreducible. Ever the fox, Salzman advocated explicitly for eclecticism.

Berio’s *Laborintus II*, which followed Salzman’s piece, is a philosophical music theater exploration of Dante’s *Inferno* with text by Edoardo Sanguinetti, nuanced and sensitively controlled, with a text meant to be understood over the variety of natural and electronic textures. But both pieces explore elements of jazz (Salzman with a long semi-improvised saxophone solo, and Berio with jazz drumming) a wide use of vocal ensemble textures, chamber orchestra and tape. Thoroughly covered in *The New York Times* and elsewhere, the first season of the New Image would total five concerts with performances by the Chicago Contemporary Chamber Players directed by Ralph Shapey, who led some of his own works; a program led by Gunther Schuller of Xenakis, Ruggles, Westergaard and Feldman; a concert of the “internationally acclaimed” University of Illinois contemporary ensemble playing, among other pieces, Salvatore Martirano’s “Ballad” for

amplified nightclub singer and instrumental ensemble – with serial accompaniments to 1940s pop songs; and films with scores by Varèse, Parch and Cage.\textsuperscript{31} Bringing Salzman prominently into the world of producing, it would be a launching pad for the next phase of his projects.

Besides the “institutional” scene of the 60s, Salzman (as part of his crisis and resulting epiphany) was acutely aware of a generation of artists who were “doing their own thing,” as he said in an interview. As a \textit{Times} reviewer, he had covered some of the early goings-on of Fluxus and was, by this time aware of the Living Theater (an early producer of and collaborator with John Ashbery), the Open Theater, the Judson Dance Theater, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and many other groups active in the “downtown” East and West Village scenes – groups that were making art (or anti-art) which defied expectation and categorization. It was not uncommon for dancers or jazz musicians to form their own experimental ensembles. Attracted to the ethos, Salzman recalled spending time at the West Village loft of Daniel Nagrin and his soon-to-be second wife, theater artist Lee Paton (better known now as Lee Nagrin) at 21 Bleecker St.

The cumulative effect of Salzman’s musical works of 1966-69, his successful debut as a concert event producer, and his position at WBAI would lead, almost organically, to the foundation of his own experimental ensemble in 1970.

Salzman may have met Nagrin through the Dance-Percussion Trio, formed by Nagrin in the 1950s with pianist David Shapiro and percussionist Ronald Gould for a

national tour, and which commissioned new works from modern composers. It was at
the Nagrin loft, incidentally, that Salzman met the young Meredith Monk, then in her
early twenties and whose work he would later help produce. Nagrin became known as a
legendary dance innovator – dubbed “the great loner of American dance,” by Dance
magazine because of his groundbreaking solo works. He had begun incorporating
multimedia (such as tape collage), as well as contemporary American music and jazz into
his work as early as 1957 (see Indeterminate Figure). For some period before 1967 he
had been working on a big solo piece called, The Peloponnesian War with jazz composer
Archie Shepp that was to feature Frank Langella reciting Thucydides’ Histories
simultaneous with a modern tape score. When Shepp left the project shortly after starting,
Nagrin asked Salzman to take over the completion of the score, which also included
excerpts of popular music and collage material chosen by Nagrin. Clearly a response to
the ever mounting Vietnam War, the Thucydides narration begins to play before the
audience enters the theater and continues in the background throughout the evening-
length work, even during intermission.

Audible and visual war imagery pervades this work… The unconventional text
emphasizes the perpetuity of war since antiquity and the necessity of ceasing its
brutal cycle. A second tape, created in collaboration with composer Eric Salzman,
simultaneously plays the musical soundtrack. The first music heard is the Star
Spangled Banner, played as a collage in six different keys, which harmonically
undermines the fundamental proclamation of American patriotism. The visual
pronouncements against war are even more obvious, such as the moment that
Nagrin discovers the aforementioned arm wrapped in newspaper. Rather than
disgusted or horrified at this representation of carnage, he is fascinated: he
examines the arm carefully, shakes its hand, arm wrestles with it, and kicks it
offstage. The arm represents not only the tragedy of war but also what Nagrin
sees as the desensitized and apathetic mindset of American society. He later fires
a blank into the audience in an attempt to awaken them from their passive

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32 This group disbanded and led to the founding of the New York Percussion Trio, which
continued to commission compositions
indifference. As a collective whole, *The Peloponnesian War* calls for social consciousness during a time of political and wartime controversy.  

At the premiere, for the opening season of the Cubiculo Theater studio (the “experimental arts center of the national Shakespeare Company” in Hell’s Kitchen), Salzman remembers that Nagrin pointed the gun directly at theater critic Clive Barnes, not knowing who he was, and that Barnes jumped out of his seat when the gun went off. In Barnes’s report the next day, he noted the gun shot passively, repining “Mr. Nagrin is a fine dancer, but for any dancer to sustain an entire evening by himself is something of a trial…A little of [his] expressionist choreography and antic, manic grin go a long way.”, However, Barnes also noted, “Some most inventive original music, mostly by Eric Salzman and a tape assemblage ranging from ‘Swan Lake’ to ‘Guys and Dolls’ made by Mr. Salzman and Mr. Nagrin himself.” The work is available to view on location at the New York Performing Arts Library as part of the Nagrin Digital Collection.

In a paper for the 2018 Arizona State University Jewish Studies conference dance writer Dr. Diane Wawrejko argued that Nagrin’s (and his partner Tamaris’s) background as first-generation secular Jews of Russian descent linked them to the culture of *tikkun olam*, in which Jews were culturally “Mandated to repair and ‘make the world a better place’ by seeking higher meaning and purpose, challenging and defying authority, asking

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questions, and transforming the mundane into something holy.”

Sondra Horton Fraleigh writes:

His 1968 concert-length solo, *The Peloponnesian War*, casts modern imagery against a reading of Thucydides’s monumental history and a score by Eric Salzman and Archie Shepp. It is one of the clearest examples of subjective existentialism (and its antessentialist philosophic stance) in modern dance. Its illogical juxtaposition of obscenities, nobility, absurdities, and dreams, its grab-bag nature, its teetering at the edge of things, its recognition of perennial human problems, and most certainly its open and unfinished nature bespeak the concerns (and subjective style) of existentialism.

Although this work was shaped and structured by Nagrin on his own, the description of juxtapositions, open form and subjective style would be apt for Salzman’s musical works of the period. Those works include *Larynx Music* of 1967-68 for extended voice guitar and tape (recorded in 1973 by Stanley Silverman and Elise Ross for Finnadar records); *Wiretap* of 1968, a tape piece made up of vocal sounds originally recorded by Daniel Nagrin for use in *The Peloponnesian War*, that were subsequently organized into an independent composition by manipulating, compressing and multi-track layering; two other pieces which we will examine in greater detail later in this section (*Feedback* and *The Nude Paper Sermon*) and *Can Man Survive?*, a two year temporary exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City to commemorate the museum’s hundredth anniversary in 1969, with a “sound track” or “soundscape” by Salzman. At a cost of $700,000 and covering 4,200 square feet, it was the largest and most expensive

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non-permanent exhibit in the museum’s history and ran continuously until 1971. The AMNH Chief of Exhibits at the time said in a public statement, “We wanted a ‘blockbuster’ of a show,” which meant a full sensory experience that included a cutting edge soundscape in which Salzman “used the cyclical forms of minimalism with the techniques and scale of multimedia to create an ongoing walk-through environment reflecting the environmental crisis.”

The State of Criticism and The Sang Prize for Critics of the Fine Arts

Amidst Salzman’s growing recognition and a flurry of compositional activity in the first part of 1969, he had also been writing monthly (with only occasional exceptions) for Stereo Review since the end of 1966 and it was announced that Salzman had won (along with the Boston Globe’s Michael Steinberg) the 1969 Elsie O. and Philip D. Sang Prize for Critics of the Fine Arts bringing an award of $5000 ($35,000 in 2019). Part of the citation on his award read, "He ventures into fields where opinions have not yet been fully formed and is able to seize on and illuminate... whatever he discusses." It cannot have hurt that the jury included two people Salzman knew well, Vladimir Ussachevsky and Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, as well as Aaron Copland, whom he had interviewed and written about at The New York Times. The fourth member of the jury was Prof. Murray Baylor of the Knox College music faculty. Excerpts from Salzman’s and Steinberg’s acceptance speeches at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois were reprinted in Stereo Review in July, around the time the Salzmans were departing for South America.

Steinberg and Salzman were in complete accord on the state of music criticism in America.\textsuperscript{39} An excerpt from Steinberg’s speech reads:

Music criticism in America is in bad repute, and deservedly so. Most of the writing about music in daily papers appalls with its ignorance, caprice, triviality, its intellectual and even journalistic slovenliness, its tone of condescension, its bad prose... There is plenty to do. Amid the dreary academicism on one side and the claptrap and gimmickry of the know-nothings on the other, there is even some interesting new music being written. Some of the most fundamental and cherished assumptions about the relation of the audience to music and indeed about the limits of music itself are being questioned. It is a delightful moment to take the risk of standing up, thinking whatever you think, saying it clearly, reporting what you hear and see, not as a missionary or tastemaker or publicist, but as a teacher who hopes to make you truly possess your ideas by stirring you into thinking them up for yourself.

Salzman went further, directly appealing to the people of Galesburg, Illinois (where Knox College is located, and where he received the award) to think about music on a personal level; to get involved with it and to have their own dialogue and build their own musical communities based on local values. Salzman believed that the future of classical music relied on re-empowering and re-engaging the listener, who had completely ceased to rely on their own taste and discretion. The timing of this shift coincides precisely with his departure from academic music, and the broader cultural revolution with which the classical music establishment was trying to reckon.

A critic must have a point of view, he must know something about his art and become part of its history. He is a participant in a dialogue, and must see not only the close-up view-the scrape of the bow on the string – but must also have some larger vision of the relationship of this art to the rest of life. This is perhaps the area in which criticism has really failed most dramatically. Not only have our critics failed to comprehend the revolution that has taken and is taking place in music, not only have they failed to see the relationship of music to contemporary life, but they have walled music off from the rest of experience, creating their own imaginary room which they call "art."

\textsuperscript{39} William Anderson, “The Sang Prize for Music Criticism: Winners Eric Salzman and Michael Steinberg discuss their craft” \textit{High Fidelity} 23/1 (July 1969): 64.
The basic attitude of 99 per cent of the newspapers in this country, starting with the *New York Times*, is that the critic owes his allegiance not to the art he criticizes, but to the newspaper and its median readership. The critic—or, more accurately, reviewer—is to provide an entertainment guide to help newspaper readers decide whether or not they should see (or should have seen) the show. Critics who actually know something about and are active in the art they write about are definitely not wanted.

The problem of criticism is actually part of a wider issue, the crisis of the traditional institutions of music. Why, after all, should it matter whether music criticism is any good or not? Why, after all, should performers cringe and quake at what the *New York Times* will or will not say? What is this nonsense that is still perpetuated about the "power of the critics" or the "power of the New York press"? It is, I assure you, purely and totally a myth, and, like most myths, it is operative only so long as people continue to believe in it.

Well, the myth has long since ceased to have any reality, and the time has come to explode it. I mean the myth of the Carnegie Hall debut and the cheering audience and the grumpy critic on the aisle and the rapturous reviews in the next morning's paper and the calls from Sol Hurok and the glamorous career springing therefrom. It is all pure poppycock; it hasn't happened that way, outside the movies, in decades. And yet, every year, literally hundreds of aspiring young singers, pianists, and fiddlers spend thousands of dollars they cannot afford to give meaningless recitals, before papered houses, or, sadder still, a handful of friends, all in a totally vain and absurd hope. Why? Because they hope that their preceding reputation will snow the New York critics (it often does) and that the New York reviews will convince some managers to book them across the U.S.A. What a system! This has nothing to do with art, music, or life. It works not because the New York critics and managers are so allpowerful, but because you--Galesburg, U.S.A.--fall for this nonsense.

The average American music-lover--the same one who complains about the powerful New York Establishment--nevertheless demands New York certified Grade-A artists with a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. It is always a mystery to me why mid-America continues to fall head over heels for the New York review. Why should the good people of Galesburg care two cents for what the New York papers said or what S. Hurok sends out as packaged culture? If you really want to hear Jascha Superstar, go out and buy his records. If you want live music, why don't you build your own right here and make it part of your community? Why don't you have a group of young players in residence? Why don't you have and create you own new music? Why don't you have your own opera company? Kaiserslautern (population 90,000) in Germany has one. This country is full of fantastic talent without an outlet--a fabulous, unused, wasted natural resource. Believe me, you are better off making your own decisions and judgments than trusting those of the critics-whoever they are.

Records and record magazines represent the vital part of living musical culture, not yet entirely anesthetized, sliced up, and preserved in so many labeled pickle jars. They have helped to bring into being a new audience, and opened this audience up to kinds of music and musical experiences that were
previously only esoteric byways in the province of a few scholars and experimenters. They have helped make music a relevant part of contemporary life and opened a dialogue between the musician and the listener. In making the whole of human musical expression and aural experience a relevant part of contemporary life, they have given music a past, multiple presents, and, perhaps, even a future. If criticism survives and continues to make its own contribution to music, it will be thanks to them.

During the late 1950s and early-mid 1960s, a number of consumer-centered audiophile, music and recording, and consumer electronic publications came onto the market along with several publications for engineers and other industry professionals. In *Making Easy Listening: Material Culture and Postwar American Recording*, Tim Anderson considers the values expressed in these publications and the way that recording and broadcast technology affected every aspect of musical culture. He even considers how pieces like Cage’s *Imaginary Landscapes* (the fourth of which, for twelve radios, excited the young Salzman) developed the sonic relationships between mechanical/electronic technologies and traditional musical elements. Anderson writes, “Given music’s essential reliance on temporality, the ephemeral moment of the live musical event, no matter the context, is viewed as the most elevated manner in which to enjoy a composition,” and yet he follows this on the next page with a quote from Babbit, who says, “I can’t believe that people really prefer to go to the concert hall under intellectually trying conditions, unable to repeat something they have missed, when they can sit home under the most comfortable circumstances and hear it as they want to hear it. I can’t believe what would happen to literature today if one was forced to congregate in an unpleasant hall and read novels projected on a screen.”

As Salzman’s speech excerpt reveals, he had records on his mind. Not only was he reviewing recordings of everything from Dufay to Stockhausen’s *Momente* and
everything in between, and often comparing side-by-side releases of the same material on
different labels, but through the “Letters to the Editor” section near the front of each issue
he was responding to readers’ comments, defending points of view and engaging in a
public discourse. As his academic record reveals, he was listening to the ever more
sophisticated Beatles records coming out, and as his composition reveals, he was mixing
recorded sound with live performance. Not surprisingly, a piece written directly for the
record medium was not far off.
CHAPTER FIVE – THE NUDE PAPER SERMON, FEEDBACK & THE LATE 60s

*Feedback, South America and a “Happening”*

*Feedback*, a multi-media participatory environmental work for live performers, visuals and tape, created by Salzman with experimental filmmaker Stan Vanderbeek was presented by Friends of Chamber Music at Syracuse University in 1969. The organization’s director, Louis Krasner (a violinist known for commissioning and premiering Berg’s Violin Concerto in addition to premiering Schoenberg’s) was also interested in multi-media, Salzman noted.\(^1\) According to Chelsea Spangemann, Director of the Stan VanDerBeek Archive, the filmmaker had done a project called “Feedback No. 1” in 1965 as part of the New American Cinema Festival and again in 1967 at University of Southern California – these were live multimedia performances which included multiple projections and dancers.\(^2\) Thus, however the invitation evolved from Krasner to bring a multi-media work to Syracuse (most likely through Salzman himself), it is highly likely that their *Feedback* of 1969 expanded upon VanDerBeek’s previous two projects, incorporating a new musical score by Salzman. While one or two black and white photos of the piece are extant, the Film Collections Manager at the New York Museum of Modern Art indicates that several video items titled *Feedback* are awaiting digitization in storage, though previewing the contents is impossible prior to their transfer to digital archives.

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1. In his book for Oxford and in interviews, Salzman erroneously called this music society “Friends and Enemies of Modern Music” which was a festival in Hartford, CT.
2. Chelsea Spengemann, "Re: Estate of Eric Salzman Film Request," Received by Scott Joiner (14 February 2019), Email Statement.
format. Salzman described the piece as modular – “in effect a structure for an environmental, participatory work into which an infinitely expandable range of live performance and media elements can be plugged.” What is known, however, is that some versions of the piece were presented at various locations in South America, most notably Buenos Aires in 1969.

Alberto Ginastera’s Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales (CLAEM) at Argentina’s Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, with funding from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations (and Argentina’s Di Tella family), had been developing an Electronic Music Laboratory and had been inviting artists such as Mario Davidovsky, Iannis Xennakis, Luigi Nono, Vladimir Ussachevsky and, in 1969, Eric Salzman, Larry Austin and Luis de Pablo as visiting teachers. In addition to teaching, visiting artists were also asked to present and develop works. With the flexible, modular Feedback in his back pocket, Salzman’s 1969 trip to South America amounted to a three-month tour (July-September, 1969) organized largely by Ginastera included stops in Bogota, Quito (Ecuador), Lima, Santiago and two different periods at the Di Tella Institute (Aug 10-18 and Aug 25-Sept 6), with a period in Montevideo between, and followed by trips to Brazil and Venezuela. As political and economic/industrial issues had significantly reduced the funding for visiting artists and programs at Di Tella in 1969, Ginastera may have helped Salzman expand his trip as a further inducement to make the trip to Buenos Aires. Salzman recalled:

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3 Without specific grant funding there is no timeline for digitizing the contents of the VanDerBeek films.
“In order to make the trip more interesting and expand it, [Ginastera] was able to use his contacts in different cities, to do these small versions [of Feedback]. They were very small. In some cases just one or two performers, sort of thing… A lot of stuff was on tape, both video and audio.”

In addition to the fortuitously timed $5000 that Salzman had from the Sang Prize for criticism, there was some institutional funding through a grant from the US State Department, under whose aegis the trip went forward, possibly facilitated through connections to the Rockefeller Foundation. Edurado Herrera, in his Ph.D. dissertation and in other essays, has documented the extraordinary history of the CLAEM and the political sociological circumstances (in Argentina and the United States) that led to its flourishing in the early 1960s and demise in the years shortly after Salzman’s residency. From the US perspective, he writes, “Philanthropic and governmental organizations alike saw in modernization the democratic mechanism to promote advancement throughout the Third World, and an antidote to the spread of socialist or communist revolutions,” especially in the wake of the Cuban Revolution. On the Argentinian side, he explains, “The composers at the CLAEM were consciously trying to be part of the avant-garde but they found themselves part of a marginal music tradition that appealed only to a very small minority of people and that was heavily attacked by music critics.” In Buenos Aires of the 1960s, Herrera claims the terms “Experimental Music” and “Electronic Music” were used interchangeably and covered everything from musique concrète to music created with computer synthesizers and live electronics. Salzman’s interest in interdisciplinary

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5 The author’s interview with Eric Salzman, 19 February 2017.
6 Luis Eduardo Herrera, “The CLAEM and the Construction of Elite Art Worlds: Philanthropy, Latinamericanism and Avant-Garde Music” (Ph.D. diss., Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2013), 13, 19.
collaborations was a good fit for an exploration of possible applications for new technology.

In addition to a major lecture at the Di Tella Institute titled, “Music and Mixed Communication Media,” a concert was given on September 1, 1969 called *Homage to Eric Salzman*. The program included *Queens Collage, The 10 Qualities* (a choral piece subsumed into *The Nude Paper Sermon*), excerpts from *The Nude Paper Sermon* (“Breath Death”), *Feedback* (Poem Field No. 1”), *The Peloponnesian War* (“Word Game: Panels for the Walls of the World”) and *Larynx Music* (“See Saw Seams,” and “Will”). Those which required live performers were performed by musicians at the Institute, who came from all over Latin America. Beyond the events hosted by the music arm of the Institute, Salzman experienced some minor brushes with the political unrest of the period when he became heavily involved in a project for the visual arts arm of the Instituo Torcuato di Tella – one of Marta Minujin’s “happenings,” called *La imagen eléctrica* or “The Electric Image.”

Minujin had produced two happenings at Di Tella in 1964 and co-produced a controvertial labyrinthine experiential installation, called *La Menesunda* or “Mayhem” in 1965 where groups were guided by neon lights through sixteen different spaces, encountering bizarre scenarios ranging from a dentist’s office and a walk-in freezer to a bedroom where a semi-nude couple rolled around in bed. The success of these works earned her a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1966, allowing her to be in New York when the Argentine junta of Juan Carlos Onganía took place. Minujin and Salzman had met in New York while back in Argentina Ongania had cracked down on “immoral” art – a

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7 Ibid., 450.
police raid had shut down a Di Tella art installation by Roberto Plate and government
censorship had banned Ginastera’s opera Bomarzo because of its sexual content.

Salzman claimed in his CV and interviews with the author (and with SUNY
Albany’s Robert Gluck, for the Canadian Electroacoustic Community Journal) that there
had been a full production of Feedback, described as a “second edition” of the piece – a
collaboration with visual artist Marta Minujín at the Institute. According to the Archivo
Marta Minujín and several books on the period, the event in question is referred to,
except by Salzman, as La imagen eléctrica (in fact there is no mention of Feedback
anywhere), a party-like “happening” (or multi-media installation event) that involved
sixteen projectors displaying films and images from ceiling to floor, blacklights, and
contributions from conceptual artist/showman Federico Manuel Peralta Ramos, an
improv theater group called “Tiempo Lobo,” and several high profile rock and
experimental music groups (Barra de Chocolate, Almendra, and Grupo de Sonidos
Imposibles). As many as one thousand visitors intermingled as participants dressed in
extravagant costumes (women in medieval helmets and cossack hats, or wearing folk
vests and carrying pitch forks) travelled through the sound and light experience.
According to all reports, including a 2012 interview with Minujín, Salzman and Minujín
were co-creators of the event, and Salzman is credited with the event’s music, though it
remains completely unknown how much of the adaptable Salzman/VanDerBeek
Feedback was reflected in the Minujín “happening.” At midnight on August 26, 1969,
after running continuously for as long as twelve hours, the event ended suddenly amidst

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8 Juan B. Yofre, La Trama de Madrid: Los Documentos Secretos Sobre el Retorno de
Perón a la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana 2013), 65.
9 Julián Delgado, Tu tiempo es hoy (Buenos Aires: Eterna Cadencia 2017), 47.
warnings of a possible police raid and in advance of major trade union strikes (the “62 Organizations” of the General Confederation of Labour went on strike despite a legal ban from the military dictatorship) which were planned for the next morning, and that partially paralyzed Ongania’s government.

The Nude Paper Sermon

The Nude Paper Sermon, commissioned from Salzman by the Nonesuch Record label, is a specific and direct product of its time. “The record audience is the real music audience in this country, and its involvement and commitment are literally changing the nature of musical culture,” Salzman told the Galesburg audience during his acceptance speech for the Sang award. A year before, in an article called “Musicotechnology: The Medium is the Music” he said, “With a rush and a whoosh, the recording industry has suddenly discovered that technology can produce – not merely reproduce – musical experiences. Let’s hear it for Marshall McLuhan, fellas!” Among those record producers who were on the vanguard of this “rush” of activity was Jac Holzman, who founded the pop/folk-centered Elektra Records in 1950 and the budget-classical subsidiary Nonesuch Records in 1964. In Nonesuch’s second year, Holzman handed operational leadership of the classical music label to Teresa Sterne, a former child-prodigy concert pianist whose cultured intellectual upbringing had fostered a brilliant independent mind. Holzman continued to focus on identifying exciting talent and with Sterne’s help Nonesuch immediately plunged into an electronic music initiative, commissioning and producing Morton Subotnick’s landmark Silver Apples of the Moon in 1966-67. Subotnick brought to New York a fresh, west-coast perspective that had evolved largely at the San Francisco Tape Center with innovators such as Pauline Oliveros and Terry Riley. Silver Apples of
the Moon, composed using a synthesizer Subotnick had developed with Don Buchla (the Buchla 100), was a surprise hit hailed as the first “electronic” composition created specifically for the LP medium. The steady rhythmic build-up on side two provided enough of a “beat” for listeners to dance to, echoing Salzman’s Rock article of that same year.

In 1968, Nonesuch followed The Silver Apples of the Moon with the the release of the two-LP Nonesuch Guide to Electronic Music (music by Beaver and Krause) that stayed on the Billboard Top 100 for an astounding twenty-six weeks. A 1968 advertisement in HiFi/Stereo Review: “ELECTRONICS PLUS PEOPLE EQUAL NEW MUSIC ON NONESUCH.” As they raced to commission more synthesizer compositions, the label also released a record by Kenneth Gaburo, called Music for Voices, Instruments & Electronic Sounds New Music Choral Ensemble & Members of University of Illinois Chamber Players.

Other record labels were in the electronic music race as well, with Columbia Records enthusiastically cultivating and producing Wendy Carlos’ massive hit album Switched on Bach and releasing a recording of Terry Riley’s In C in 1968. Composers jockeyed to control the narrative on how the latest technologies should be used. Subotnick was critical of using modern technology for old music, such as in Carlos’ rendering of Bach on synthesizers, instead of using it to create new music specifically for the new tools. ¹⁰ Salzman was, as ever, broader in his thinking, saying that “[Recordings] have made old and ancient music contemporary and helped to make contemporary music

a familiar part of our lives.”¹¹ In the liner notes of *The Nude Paper Sermon* he writes: “Recording technology transforms that which it communicates: it makes all music part of the present and in so doing changes it. There is nothing inherently good or bad about this; technology can liberate and it can oppress. But there is no running away any more; we must master what can oppress us, learn how to use it to create and liberate.”¹²

To survive as a budget classical music label, Nonesuch had to find competitive ways to simultaneously devote attention to the “canon” of classical musical repertoire along with the most modern musical developments. At first Nonesuch succeeded in licensing and re-releasing foreign (mostly European) recordings of standard repertoire, but under Sterne the label sought to produce their own recordings of the canon.¹³ Holzman already had a relationship with Joshua Rifkin from 1965 when he had tapped the twenty-one-year-old Juilliard prodigy to arrange and conduct an album of Beatles music in Baroque style for Elektra (released successfully as *The Baroque Beatles Book*). So in 1968 Nonesuch and Rifkin (then twenty-four) founded the Nonesuch Consort as the label’s own early music ensemble to record Renaissance and Baroque music. To continue the Nonesuch Commission Series they would commission a modern piece to feature the group’s “period” forces. Rifkin, already a Darmstadt alumnus who had studied early music with Gustave Reese, shared Salzman’s dual affinity for new and old music. He remembers his surprise when he and Salzman got into a discussion about Heinrich Schütz’s seventeenth-century *Weihnachtshistorie* at a party after a modern music concert.

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¹¹ Eric Salzman, “The Sound of (Recorded) Music: Records are creating an aesthetic all their own” *Stereo Review* 22/1 (January 1969): 78
Rifkin became a frequent visitor to the Salzman home at 29 Middagh St. and he proposed Salzman to Holzman and Sterne as a possibility for the Nonesuch Consort commission. For their part, Holzman and Sterne would likely have known of Salzman already through his many roles in the city’s musical life; including, at this time, involvement in the Electric Ear series at the Electric Circus (the famed multimedia discotheque and nightclub which Subotnick had helped develop).

*The Nude Paper Sermon: Tropes for Actor, Renaissance Consort, Chorus, and Electronics* had a stage premiere (in what Salzman later described as “A related but different live/theater version”) three months before the Salzmans left for South America in 1969, but since the work was commissioned by Nonesuch and primarily conceived for the recorded medium, its major impact was yet to come. In fact, even Joshua Rifkin who conducted both the recording and performances, could not recall whether the stage premiere had occurred before the recorded version was complete (since it was not released by Nonesuch until late 1969). Musicologist Richard Taruskin remembered the stage premiere at the New Image of Sound series at Hunter College on March 20, 1969, where musicians – including himself on the bass viol (viola da gamba) – were “asked to ‘react’ physically, on their instruments, to unconventional graphic shapes, with little or no prompting from the composer.”14 In addition to the instrumental ensemble onstage, the stage was shared by three soloists and a narrator (actor Stacy Keach), while scattered throughout the auditorium were the twelve members of the chorus as well as several loudspeakers. At the end of the piece, Stacy Keach threw off his robe and turned upstage to exit totally nude.

While it is possible that Salzman’s original conception for *The Nude Paper Sermon* prior to receiving the Nonesuch commission was as a piece for the stage (as with *Foxes and Hedghogs*), the fact of the commission, the nature of the abstract elements, and the absence of any real theatrical or narrative structure make it not perfectly suited for the theater. In his review of the stage premiere for the *New York Times*, Theodore Strongin pointed out that “A standard concert hall, with seats in rows facing front, resists the kind of ‘total environment’ effect that Mr. Salzman sought to achieve.” Strongin felt that three other total environment pieces on the concert (by Gordon Mumma, Alvin Lucier and Behrman) were similarly hamstrung. Alan Rich, in the *New York Magazine* summed up the works of those three: “When a piece of music merely states a condition, it becomes an act of arrogance to extend that statement over twenty minutes.” He felt differently about the Salzman:

Eric Salzman’s *Nude Paper Sermon*, which took up the second half, did at least go somewhere. One has to be dazzled, in a purely technical way, by the complexity of such a conception, the pure chutzpah involved in this kind of juxtaposition. One must also be awed by Stacey Keach, who spoke (and, ultimately even showed) his all, and of the young musicians under Joshua Rifkin who played like fiends. As to the piece itself, I found it for the most part absorbing, occasionally moving as words and music touched for a time on contemporary matters. It, too was overlong, but Salzman at least realizes that duration is a direct function of content. He has, therefore, earned the right to say what he did when a woman who had heard the concert later asked, ‘why’ and he answered, simply, ‘why not?’”

In spite of the existence of few scattered live performances over the next couple of years – including a live performance in Montreal (recorded for the Canadian Broadcasting Company), Salzman described *The Nude Paper Sermon* as, “The first

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‘total’ work to be shaped on, by, and through the medium of modern recording,” adding, “The record is not a reproduction of anything at all but is the work itself.”

No other single musical work of Salzman’s has had more written about it, nor has enjoyed further reach than *The Nude Paper Sermon*. To take into consideration the various responses (from immediately after its release, to decades later) – ranging from high praise to mere acknowledgement, to confusion and criticism – is to deal with the confusing battle of aesthetics that have played out in the postmodern culture. Richard Taruskin included an image from the score of *The Nude Paper Sermon* in his 2005 volume on late twentieth-century music, as an example of 1960s graphic notation even though it is by no means anywhere close to the most radical example (see again Cage’s *Notations*) of the practice, and a 2012 re-release of the record on Labor Records (distributed by Naxos) resulted in a new barrage of nostalgic write-ups, which surged up again after Salzman’s death in 2017. The work reflects many facets of its era – literary avant-garde movements, social movements, new technology, and a rapidly-changing musical landscape.

Around the time Eric received the Nonesuch commission and had been discussing the possibility of a new theater work with poet Wade Stevenson, he received in the mail *Three Madrigals*, poems from John Ashbery. These poems had recently been published as a chapbook by Diane di Prima’s Poets Press in a “holograph” of Ashbery’s original handwritten manuscript. The text, “Conceived of as both a visual and literary work of art” is also “an object that evolves toward the end to resemble musical notation, reinforcing

the acoustic and even theatrical implications conveyed by its title.” 17 The chapbook (available to view through JSTOR) is visually relevant to Salzman’s conception for The Nude Paper Sermon as the book’s cover art and handwritten script – not to mention the evocation of the Renaissance in the title – juxtaposed with abstract open-form poetry, are comparable to Salzman’s own admixture of old and new. Following Ashbery’s avant-garde spirit, Salzman went so far as to put some of the most extreme, impossible examples directly into the vocal score, such as:

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In the liner notes of the Nonesuch album, Salzman wrote that The Nude Paper Sermon was about “the end of an era” (referencing the end of the Renaissance as an analog to the changes of the 1960s) and the beginning of a new one (i.e., the postmodern, LP-driven, electronic age). Distinguishing the piece from a “collage” Salzman described it instead as a “multi-layer sound drama” that functions on a meta level as “an example of the kinds of experience which it interprets and expresses: the transformation of values and tradition through the impact of the new technologies.” In this sense it was designed to include both old and new means of communication, verbal and non-verbal sound, familiar elements and new technologies in a free mixture.

The final product resulted from collaboration on multiple levels. According to the author’s correspondence with Joshua Rifkin, he and Salzman were in regular contact as the piece took shape.18 On the larger scale, it was collaboration between composer (Salzmann), conductor (Rifkin), and producer/engineer (Peter K. Siegel). The individual

elements heard in the final work were recorded (or synthesized) on separate, individually edited tracks, then combined with "live" overlays to create an 8-track master. Next, the live-recorded and electronic elements, “juxtaposed, intertwined, and transformed” were mixed into a final two-track master. In an article for Signal to Noise, the quarterly “Journal of Improvised, Experimental and Unusual Music,” (later reprinted in the CD booklet to the 2012 re-issue of NPS) William Gibson recounted from his own interviews with Salzman and Rifkin:

The availability of an 8-track recording studio at Elektra/Nonesuch was also a decisive factor. “It was state of the art at the time and had only been used for pop recordings,” Salzman recalled. The recording producer, Peter Siegel, also played a role in the creation of the piece’s recording. Rifkin remembers that “the ultimate piece was very much the outcome of the mixing studio, where Eric, Peter, and I spent many long nights bringing the various elements together and ‘sculpting’ them into a whole.” The outcome accords with Salzman’s vision to create a piece of recorded music that was not a reproduction of a live performance but was the work itself. This is in keeping with the studio experiments of both Zappa and the Beatles, but it was probably the first time it was attempted in the “classical” milieu.

On a smaller but not less essential scale, the newness of sounds desired by Salzman for the piece called for a high degree of collaboration from those instrumentalists, vocalists and technicians who produced the live sounds. Synthesized sounds were realized by Salzman at the Columbia Princeton Electronic Music Center with the help of Alice Shields (the Center’s Associate Director) and Ussachevsky on the latest Buchla synthesizer. By 1966, according to Shields, the C-PEMNC had acquired a Buchla analog synthesizer (technology originally developed for the San Francisco Tape Music Center by Don Buchla and Morton Subotnick) – with a voltage-controlled

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sequencer, white and pink-noise generators and other features that allowed for the highest possible creativity in sound creation. On the instrumental side, according to recent correspondence with Rifkin, Salzman’s openness in performance specifications and other elements of scoring necessitated that Rifkin, as conductor, become integrally involved in the composition itself:

This particularly affected the opening madrigal, of which he wrote only the three vocal lines with their little instrumental interludes, but without specifying the instrumentation any other performance details; the countertenor part, too, reflected a certain lack of experience, necessitating some editorial intervention on my part concerning what octave register was sung at various points. But all this was in keeping with a certain “early music” esthetic as it existed at the time. I didn’t feel unhappy with this and other tasks that the realization entailed; it meant something to have a hand in a joint shaping process (this would later extend as well to the producing engineer, Peter Siegel).

Salzman made a special point to note that the unusual sounds and complex passages resulting from live extended techniques from vocalists and instrumentalists were not the products of electronic manipulation. The use of Renaissance instruments included rackett; bass and tenor dulcian; bass, tenor and alto recorders; gemshorn; soprano, alto and bass krummhorns; kortholt; shawm; and rauschpfeife; many of these used in both traditional and very modern ways. Singers likewise made decisions about realizing words deconstructed into phonemes and extremely abstract notations such as punctuation, consonant clusters, grunts and sexual noises. In this sense, even the performers participated in the composition process as they made their way through a musical landscape that included long sections without bar lines.

Besides John Ashbery’s “Three Madrigals,” which is the source for the soloist and chorus texts, the title “Nude Paper Sermon” itself comes from the text written for the actor by Steven Wade (a pen name for Wade Stevenson). Stevenson became connected
with Salzman via Lukas Foss, for whom he had written some poetry (never set), and who put him in touch with Salzman:

I met Eric [in the Hamptons], and he said he had an idea of creating an hour long opera with one actor, one voice, to accompany his music. The actor would declaim a text that would cover a number of subjects, such as contemporary events, the Vietnam War, poetic and philosophical musings, etc. It would be both serious and comic, the words flowing freely, with rising and falling accents, merging with and at times being submerged by his music. It would be a modern day opera, blending voice and sound in a new and interesting way.

Eric invited me to write a text along those lines and to send it to him and he'd see if he could use it. In September I left the Hamptons and moved into my girlfriend's apartment on Gramercy Park, where I confined myself for a month or so and wrote the text that I entitled "The Nude Paper Sermon." It was about seventy pages long, a dramatic monologue, a kind of dadaesque mixture of prose and poems and surrealist songs. I sealed it in a manila envelope and sent it off to Eric.

Thinking about NPS again, it's actually quite contemporary, in the sense it's really about one man's struggle to deal with the constant flood of information assaulting him daily. He desperately tries to find and preserve his own voice amid all the social media noise and fake news babble.20

The composer, who edited the text significantly, wanted the actor to embody those who use words to manipulate others; including preachers, politicians, TV personalities, professors, news-casters, and even poets. “Spoken language,” he wrote in the liner notes, “heard and overheard, comprehensible and incomprehensible, clear, elusive, simple, complex, logical, mystifying - is the subject matter here.” After a buildup of noisy “crowd” commotion that open the piece, the New York Motet singers are heard singing original “imitation” Renaissance madrigals written by Salzman and set to Ashbery’s texts, beginning with the poet’s “Third Madrigal”. The least abstract of Ashbery’s Three Madrigals, it has a traditional structure constructed out of a series of word images. Salzman set this as a “Renaissance ruin—real fake Renaissance music

20 Wade Stevenson, "Nude Paper Sermon" Received by Scott Joiner, 15 August 2019. Email Statement.
("why don't composers write like that any more?") overlaid with electronic graffiti."

While the diction is somewhat problematic on the recording, the effect produced when listening while reading the poem (excerpted here) is effective:

| Not even time shall efface The bent disk [...] Memory falls on your olive hands, The undying luck | Of the dying million ageless Pushed to hands for approval. Along the level bay A dim blaze of diamond Walking to you: what you had |

The imitation Renaissance madrigal with its instrumental interludes is literally defaced with the electronic noise “graffiti,” resulting in a poignant detachment, as if the listener is moving through the ruins of a neglected or defaced ancient city. It creates a mood of reflection before the entrance of Keach's voice that surges and retreats over the shifting maelstrom with exclamations, existential and surrealist statements (often comical), or profound questions.

*The Nude Paper Sermon* would elicit a greater response than any other composition in Salzman’s oeuvre. It appealed to the imaginations of a generation of young composers and music enthusiasts who came of age in the late 60s. *Billboard* Album Reviews projected onto the piece the rage of a generation, calling it, “As new as tomorrow… Full of anger, protest and deep philosophies, yet beautiful and very moving.”21 Wade Stevenson recalled his surprise when Newsweek chose the *The Nude Paper Sermon* as one of the top ten records in its category in 1970. Composer Michael Dellaira, who taught electronic music classes at Princeton and served as Vice President of the American Composer’s Alliance said of *The Nude Paper Sermon*, “It had a big

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influence on me. It really did push the boundary, but in a meaningful way, not for the sake of pushing boundaries. Eric saw at once that rock music was recorded music (not 'score music'), and with this record he conceptually synthesized a rock 'concept album' with John Cage's radio music.” This view was echoed on the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award-winning radio program Kalvos and Damian New Music Bazaar (presented by composers Dennis Bathory-Kitsz and David Gunn) who featured Eric Salzman as a guest in 2000, and by Michael Schell, past Artist-in-Residence at STudio for Electro-Instrumental Music (STEIM, founded by Louis Andriessen), who described The Nude Paper Sermon as having “‘hit’ status as a kind of American counterpart to Berio’s contemporaneous Sinfonia.”

The intelligentsia were not entirely sure how to respond to music that thumbed its nose at traditional or “accepted” modern ones. In an article about the state of vocal music performance in the United States, composer Ned Rorem was critical that, while Salzman may have been trying to access the “bodily” aspects of simple music (the intuitive freedom of Rock or bel canto music, for example) in the The Nude Paper Sermon, his approach was intellectual rather than visceral. Using the term “dumb” to refer to music that appeals “to the body – as opposed to the intellect – through beat and tune, avoiding byways of harmonic density and contrapuntal nuance,” he argues: “Dumbness which tries for smartness fails, like ‘The Rake's Progress.’ Smartness which tries for dumbness fails, like Eric Salzman's ‘Nude Paper Sermon.’ The mixture of innocence and experience jells

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only when inadvertent, as sometimes in Satie or Scriabin.”23 The best argument made for the piece was made by experimental composer, jazz saxophonist and critic/writer Don Heckman in Stereo Review, which selected the LP as a “Recording of Special Merit.”

I think The Nude Paper Sermon will be, to most record listeners, a totally new kind of musical experience. Perhaps the key word here is "tropes." […] Most noticeable is the use of Renaissance-style trope technique […] The Nude Paper Sermon consists, in effect, of a series of musical segments – instrumental solos and ensembles, choral passages, vocal solos and duets, sound effects, and the like-interrupted by, and interspersed with, a running narration spoken by actor Stacy Keach. The effect is not unlike the world of mass media suddenly gone wild, with a text that is sometimes specific, sometimes absurd, interrupted by whirling musical sounds, effects, electronics, and voices—all similar, I expect, to the fragments of sound and sensation which we constantly experience and express in the ‘real world’… I suppose I’ve heard literally hundreds of compositions, mixed-media assemblages, theater pieces, happenings, and God knows what else over the last six or seven years, all using techniques similar to those employed by Salzman: chance interaction of musical and nonmusical elements, improvisational-sounding “noise” productions by traditional instruments, quasi-logical text material that is often drawn from mundane sources (advertising material, public signs, etc), and a kind of loony but controlled chaos. I can think of very few of those hundreds, however, that sustained interest and drew one into the music with quite the same persistence and emotional effect as The Nude Paper Sermon. The difference, I suspect, stems from Salzman’s implicit understanding of the limits of dramatic intensity. Unlike so many of his contemporaries, he never allows a single element to continue or dominate to the point of tedium. Contrast, interaction, and an effective balance between tension and release are always maintained. Equally important, this is a work conceived to make full use of the resources of the recording studio; like the Beatles’ ‘Sgt. Pepper,’ it is a pioneering work in the use of the total environment of today’s electronic technology, perhaps the most complex record, from the point of recording and mixing techniques, ever made.”24

The Electric Ear and the Free Music Store

Back in 1965, when Salzman had lectured at the American Embassy in London, one of the attendees had been Thais Lathem, an American, Juilliard-trained violinist who

had pursued graduate studies in music theory at Yale University and who was, at that time, secretary of London’s Macnaghten Concerts (founded by Anne Macnaghten with composer Elisabeth Luytens and conductor Iris Lemare). Lathem had an affinity for modern music and asked for Salzman’s help in finding a young American composer for an Anglo-American concert they were presenting in conjunction with the Embassy. Whether or not Salzman ended up getting involved, the Anglo-American was presented in December at Wigmore Hall, featuring Americans Cage, Cowell, Billy Jim Layon, Lejaren Hiller and John MacIver Perkings with a second half of British composers.\(^{25}\) Lathem was married to a Rockefeller Foundation deputy director and when they moved back to the US (and later to Brooklyn) she reconnected with Salzman and helped to develop the New Image of Sound series at Hunter College, which commenced at the end of 1967.

Several miles further downtown, in the East Village, the Electric Circus multimedia discotheque had opened earlier that year as a commercial, public “ecstatic sensory experience” drawing New York’s social elite and also gaining major funding from the American Coffee Foundation. Founders Jerry Brandt and Stan Freeman asked Mort Subotnick to develop their vision as artistic director. Within the dark space on any given night, according to Subotnick’s account, ambient electronic music would evolve into a light show (sixteen carousel slide projectors, eight overhead projectors and black lights, etc, all controlled by a Buchla designed programmable control system) with a growing sonic beat delivered by sub-woofers attached to the floor; as dancing began under a strobe light, recorded rock and electronic music played by DJs would be

interspersed with live rock bands and performances from fire-eaters and other circus performers.

In 1968, Subotnick was successful in lobbying Brandt and Freeman for an avant-garde music night that would occur on the commercially successful club’s “dark” Monday nights. Lathem (leading the new Electric Circus Foundation) and Salzman (whose CV lists the position of “founder/director” of the Electric Ear) helped organize and produce concerts with Ted Coons which included electronic musicians and multimedia artists such as Cage, Mel Powell, Alvin Lucier, David Behrman, Lejaren Hiller, Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley, Salvatore Martiniano, Robert Ashley, Subotnick, David Rosenboom, Gordon Mumma and even Salzman himself.26 According to Thais Lathem’s daughter Alexis Lathem, it was Salzman himself who came up with name, Electric Ear. Audiences stood or sat on the floor, since there was little or no seating. Their first event was the second performance of John Cage’s Reunion best recounted by New York Magazine’s Richard Goldstein:

John Cage sat at one end of a rather ordinary looking chessboard, gesturing absently with a cigarette holder, and sipping a cocktail. He looked eternal, like an obelisk, or a muse. His assistants sat around him, with their ears pressed against countless dials, modulating the noise. Gordon Mumma read an essay into the microphone of a synthesizer, while Dave Tudor and David Berhrman played roulette with the circuitry. Lowell Cross gazed with creator’s pride as random bands of color flashed across the screens of two defrocked television sets. And a woman who I think was Beverly Emmons mixed drinks in a blender. She provided the evening’s only “natural” sound, except perhaps if you listened hard for the soft wheezing which emanates from an audience whenever it is intent on absorbing what bores it silly.

Still this was the American premiere of a John Cage composition called Reunion, and Cage himself was sitting in the nave of the Electric Circus. That combination of art and artifact seemed terribly revolutionary to watch, so the audience gazed with passionate intensity at the chessboard, wired so that each

move would alter the frequency and duration of the evening’s noise. Thus could chance and purpose be blended together into an aleatory cocktail no less potent that the one John Cage was sipping.

Unfortunately, the stage was cluttered with so many mechanical orifices that it was impossible to tell the origin of a given sound, not to mention its variance. But still we watched, hour after hour, intrigued by Cage’s cryptic cool (the evening’s real attraction) and waiting for something to happen. A young man wearing a tightly knotted necktie wondered aloud whether anything was scheduled to explode. And a lady in last year’s plastic earrings whispered to her escort: “I hear Marshall McLuhan is here tonight. Would you recognize him, dear?”

[...] It was media mangle of the highest order (films by Vanderbeek and Emmons; fire-eating by a tribe called the Process). Observed Eric Salzman in a day-glo press release: “Music, once limited to a few traditional and popular styles, is suddenly, astonishingly manifold. Suddenly, in McLuhan’s language, our nervous systems have been extended around the world, and we are receiving impulses from all corners of the global village… Technology makes the entire universe of sound available as raw material for new art.”

A week later, the second concert featured Mel Powell, as Donal Henahan recounts:

The concert’s equipment included some items unusual even in these days of merging media: a trampoline on which an acrobat bounced eerily while a strobe light flashed: an electrified harp; rope ladders on which fluorescently painted creatures of nameless species crawled in accompaniment to a Powell electronic piece, and an overhead line that carried a girl who struggled to escape from a tight bag while another painted creature lurked beneath [...] Mr. Powell’s music was hard put to command one’s full attention, but that is precisely the way it should be in such events as this. At its best, it gave the weird happenings a dreamlike quality, such as in an episode during which a girl clown juggled three balls hypnotically. The light shows, a feature of the Electric Circus, sometimes augmented the music and the theater extremely well, but equally often merely seemed arbitrary [...] In “Events,” to which Judith Fineli juggled so engagingly, Mr. Powell’s use of fragmentary human voices was particularly skillful and disturbing. Whole words came through occasionally, such as “reality,” “relentless,” “imploring,” while the walls and ceiling of the Electric Circus were awash in a mind-transfixing light show.

The major disappointment of the night was a section of “Immobiles” that overmatched Mr. Powell’s electronic machines against live musicians, including African drummers, flutists, electric harp and a rock group called Think Dog! The

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drummers were heard to advantage, but the rock band was impossible to pick out of the uproar.

Nevertheless, the scenes at their best put one in mind of the Magic Theater portion of Hesse’s novel, ‘Steppenwolf,’ and that may be praise enough for any contemporary composer.  

After the Electric Ear’s first year, Salzman and Lathem went their own ways. But another series began on December 21st 1968 at Martinson Hall at the Public Theater that was unlike anything else in New York City. Earlier that year, WBAI station manager Frank Millspaugh asked Salzman to return to WBAI as Music Director, with the aim of doing more music live on air. Originally he hoped Salzman could link WBAI to the Hunter series, but Salzman thought that a series produced by and specifically for WBAI was more likely to succeed. Coincidentally, the aunt of the Public Theater’s board chairman Joseph B. Martinson (of Martinson Coffee), was married to a relative of Salzman’s wife, and thus Salzman had an “in.” Martinson, for whom the Public Theater’s Martinson Hall (then just a rehearsal hall) was named, wanted the space to be used for performances, so Joe Papp offered it to Salzman. The Diggers, a Haight-Ashbery based group of Street Theater activists had opened numerous Free Stores, based on abolishing the power of money until they folded in 1968. Salzman decided to call the new series at Martinson Hall, “The Free Music Store” which would present concerts at no cost, and would “provide a live music venue for WBAI and more importantly, would establish that WBAI was the place where you heard live music or live-tape music that was created or recorded specifically for the station — and not commercial music.”

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29 Gluck, Robert J. “WBAI Free Music Store and Dark, Dark Nights at the Electric Circus: Conversation with music theatre composer and producer Eric Salzman” Canadian
Salzman wanted the series to offer music that was not well represented by the mainstream record industry – thus everything from Renaissance to contemporary music, but little or no Rock n’ Roll. A secondary goal was cross-culturalism; for example featuring Latin music artists who “nobody in the white community were listening to,” by which Salzman referred to Tito Puente and Eddie Palmieri who were an enormous success at the Free Music Store. Remarkably, nobody received a fee. A big water jug was placed at the door for voluntary contributions and Salzman created a Free Music Store bank account out of which FMS covered expenses (a minimal maintenance fee to the Public Theater, cab fare to percussionists and bassists, etc) without asking WBAI for money. Audiences sat on the floor at Martinson Hall programs that included Renaissance music, electronic music, wind ensembles, percussion ensembles and other eclectic offerings. Salzman was rich in musical connections throughout the city and individuals like Joshua Rifkin were helpful in putting together concerts. At the end of the first year in December of 1970, Gerard Schwartz, then a Juilliard trumpet student, offered to conduct all six Brandenburg Concertos in one weekend (Friday and Saturday nights) with freelance musicians who would all play for free. The event was packed beyond capacity with people trying to sneak in up the back staircase. Salzman recounted the story:

Well the second night, somebody came from the Times to write it up. And our original rule was, ‘no press!’ because the radio was the only media press that we needed. And I didn’t know that the press was gonna be there and it was not a critic. It was a culture reporter, but to report on this phenomenon, and I didn’t know about it. And that same night, Papp came out before the event and, this was the second Brandenburg Concerto night, to announce that this was the last night in this hall because they were gonna use it for a show, and got booed off the stage by the audience. The next day it all appeared in the story in the paper. And Papp was

Electroacoustic Community (CEC) Online Journal for Electroacoustic Practices (eContact!) 18/3 (December 2016)
certain that I had called the press on him, which wasn’t true at all. I absolutely didn’t even know they were coming.

The FMS moved first to The Peace Church on West 4th St., then to a deconsecrated church on East 62nd St that was purchased by WBAI. Nearly every concert was broadcasted (the only exceptions were performances unsuited for radio – like dance ensembles), from madrigals to chamber music, Archie Shepp to contemporary classical music. To give specific examples of this range, some of the more well-documented FMS concerts during Salzman’s tenure included Julius Eastman, Petr Kotik, Stewart Dempster and John R. Adams playing music of Cage, Kotik, Donald Erb and others; Lewis Kaplan playing Rochberg’s *Caprice Variations for Unaccompanied Violin*; James Irsay playing the notoriously difficult Schumann Toccata; a concert of experimental jazz by Joe McPhee (later released as a successful album); Free Life Communications with jazz saxophonist Dave Liebman; the pop rock group Seals and Crofts; the famous comedy troupe Firesign Theater Company; and, importantly the Ragtime Revival Reunion concerts. William Bolcom and Joshua Rifkin had each independently developed an interest in ragtime music. Although ragtime music still had a following in America through radio play and festivals (led by figures like Max Morath and Bob Darch), and while it was sometimes heard on television or in movies, it was not widely known within the classical music community. Rifkin explains:

> It was Bill Bolcom, as I understand it, who got Eric enthused about Joplin, and then Eric communicated it to me. My first reaction was, “I know about that”; but as I sat with him at the piano and played through piece after piece, I realized that I didn’t know it at all – or now knew it very differently. Bill and I had already been acquainted, since my Juilliard days. Just when the three of us first got together escapes my memory; and I remember more than one evening where he would play and I would play (I recall how magical he made the repetitions at the end of
the first strain of Magnetic Rag sound, and how I still wish I could play it like that).

According to Salzman, this playing of ragtime began at a party at the Salzman house. The idea of organizing major performances of original editions of the Scott Joplin and other ragtime composers dating from before the first world war resulted in a concert which they advertised as “The 51st Annual Ragtime Reunion Revival.” Pianists who performed included Bolcom, Rifkin, Michael Sahl and James Tenney, and the approach was “classical” in the sense of interpretation – playing with interpretive color and staying true to Joplin’s indication, “It is never right to play ragtime fast.” For one concert, the Free Music Store was able to get ragtime legend Eubie Blake (then nearly ninety years old and living in Brooklyn) to perform some of his music. The effect of these concerts was to elevate ragtime to a concert platform where it made an impact on the New York scene and helped inspire Gunther Schuller to organize a ragtime ensemble in the early 1970s. They also reminded New Yorkers of the city’s own unique musical history. While Salzman left WBAI and the Free Music Store in 1972, the concerts continued until 1976.
CHAPTER SIX – NEW MUSIC THEATER

Quog Music Theater

With the success of *The Nude Paper Sermon*, and following the example set by the Living Theater, the Open Theater, the larger ‘Dance Theater’ movement (Merce Cunningham, Judson Dance Theater, etc) and Meredith Monk’s interdisciplinary performance ensemble, “The House,” Salzman finally felt that the time was right to found an ensemble for the purpose of developing practices and repertoire for new music theater. Original members of Quog included countertenor William Zukof and ensemble singers from the Nonesuch Consort. The original mission of Quog was to develop a musical vocabulary, vocal techniques and to create works all based on group improvisation. While most of the shifting membership was comprised of vocal performers, the personnel would sometimes include one or two instrumentalists such as percussionist David Van Tieghem, accordionist William Schimmel and others. They rehearsed once or twice per week in a rented space in the same building as The Open Theater and the Alwin Nikolais Dance Company, where they experimented with sound, physical action, form and structure, building non-notated compositions. The group soon began holding weekly “open house” nights for improvisation in their own studio (a space which they offered to other groups to use when Quog was not), which were attended by an eclectic audience of curious individuals, that included Philip Glass, for a small fee. At these open houses the Quog members would demonstrate their exercises – for example, two vocalists would stand face to face and take turns making sounds and responding; or, utilizing the entire group, Salzman would employ hand signals to conduct improvisation
and even cue audience participation. The various games and exercises that were used might evolve into pieces and were performed as such.

One important Quog idea was to create pieces designed to employ the specific talents and individuality of its members, such as a 1972 piece called *Biograffiti* in which each person in the group took a turn as leader and did something personal out of their own life as an improvisation. This approach also meant that a piece which remained for any duration in the Quog repertoire would alter over time and often never acquire a fixed or a definitive form (even *The Nude Paper Sermon*, which Quog performed live on more than one occasion, existed in different versions). One such piece, *Ecolog*, changed forms numerous times and was eventually performed by Pierre Boulez in the New York Philharmonic Perspective Encounters series with Quog. The story of that piece begins in 1970. While working on a piece to highlight the various members of the group, Salzman was approached by filmmaker Jackie Cassen to be involved in a project for television. That year, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) commissioned Cassen to develop Artists' Television Workshop at New York City’s public television network, WNET (Channel 13). *Ecolog* thus evolved into something very unique in the public media sphere: an original work for video with FM Stereo Simulcast. Described as, “a three-channel simulcast,” the audience was meant to tune in to WNET on their television and, at the same time, tune their radio to WBAI while leaving the volume on the television turned up. WNET’s program director, Christopher Lukas, introduced the program:

“The program you’re about to see is the product of something new here at Channel 13; The Artists’ Television Workshop. Established under a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, the workshop is just that: an opportunity for artists of all kinds to explore the possibilities that television offers, without
any promise, or threat, of airing the final product. But what follows is a work that I thought should be aired. It’s called Ecolog. The word is a cross between the word Ecology, which we’re all tossing around these days, and a rather esoteric word which means a poem spoken by two shepherds. However this is not a conventional poem. It uses not only regular two-inch video tape, but film, half-inch video and other technical devices. Like all such works and like all poems, not everything is translatable into immediate understanding. You’ll find somethings obscure, or even distasteful. I think you’ll also find some things moving, and interesting, and funny. The people who worked on this call it a media poem, by which they mean not only a poem in television form, but a work about television. It’s in five sections, and each one has something different to say about the television environment; what it means to live in a tv-oriented world; how we interact with our tv sets in this dial-flipping land; and what turns us on or off. Ecolog is also very much a musical poem. I hope you enjoy it.”

Sadly, the author’s attempts to locate Jackie Cassen’s footage for WNET were not successful at the time of printing and the video may not have been preserved. The complete audio for the music portion, broadcast by WBAI, was preserved by the station. The work of Quog is evident, as the use of extended voice techniques, timbres and interactions (both among voices and between the voices and the instruments and tape) are more diverse and evolved. One can only imagine what was in the video as the the piece builds from a mystical drone of echoing “zombie-like” timbres amidst evocative instrumental tone bending and swelling tone colors, interspersed with choral tones, wailing tones (like the opening of the Islamic Adhan delivered by a muezzin), and growing electronics. The piece moves through several collage sections, typical of Salzman at the time, but with completely new materials and combinations; in the middle section, the members of Quog repeat phrases improvised from their own lives with various theatrical and sonic effects; and the climax of the piece is an original rock song co-written by Salzman and guitarist Josh Bauman and based in part on the Dies Irae, but

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1 Lukas, Christopher, Broadcast Introduction: WNET/WBAI, audio file [1971 – unspecified date], Quog Music Theater Salzman Archives, Brooklyn, NY.
sounding as convincingly authentic as The Doors and presaging the punk rock of the Ramones (also, as the reader will recall graduates of Forest Hills High School), and even the large-band sound of Blood Sweat and Tears.

In the live version of Ecolog the middle section was more improvisatory than the one recorded for television, with a middle section called “Up Against the Wall,” where Salzman held lights fixed to the ends of sticks and controlled by buttons, flashing them on Quog members, who each had to respond from an individual repertoire of prepared responses when the light flashed on them. In 1972, when Boulez featured the work in the New York Philharmonic’s “Prospective Encounters” series (less than a month after conducting Salzman’s Foxes and Hedghogs in London), he wanted that section included in this extended form. For that event, Ecolog was paired with George Crumb’s The Ancient Voices of Children (in what was likely its New York premiere) and Stanley Silverman’s Planh, a concerto for guitar and chamber ensemble. Allen Hughes described Ecolog thusly:

At the center of Mr. Salzman’s entertainment was a rather extended rock song called “It’s All So Clear.” It was played and sung by Quog, the 10-member group… Earlier the group had done a kind of choreography while lying on the floor, had performed a brief aleatoric opera in which each member had a stated thing to do or say and did it over and over again, and had recited a little aleatoric drama under probing spotlights.

It was not really clear what Mr. Salzman was trying to say through all this, nor how important music is on his creative palette these days, but it was obvious that for the time being, at least, traditional notions of form, craft, and virtuosity have no place in his work.  

It stands to reason that improvised genres (one might consider Ornette Coleman’s “Free Jazz”) would not be focused on form as much as on process and flow resulting

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from a series of expressive moments. But Salzman was experimenting in a field where there was no accepted vocabulary, which makes reconciling with any “traditional notions” only a remote possibility. In 1972, Quog gave two workshop demonstrations at the Kitchen, and in response, journalist Tom Johnson wrote an article for the Village Voice in the form of a mock book outline. The hypothetical book would be an examination of improvisational music theater. In his explanation of the chapters, he not only hits on the fundamental points and questions of viability of the artistic concepts and practices, but offers something of a review of Quog’s work:

[Chapter 1] "Music, Theatre, and Dance" : A comparison between Quog, the Open Theatre, and Daniel Nagrin's Work Group, showing how similar improvisation procedures are used in all these groups, how each of them has borrowed from the other performing arts, but how, despite everything, there is still a big difference between what the musicians do, what the actors do, and what the dancers do.

[Chapter 2] "The Mirror" : Showing how Quog has taken this exercise used by actors and dancers, and adapted it for vocal or instrumental duet improvisations. How two people imitate and play off one another, using facial expressions, gestures, and often words, as well as music, and once in a while bring everything together in very exciting moments.

[Chapter 3] "Conducted Improvisation" : The conducting and cueing technique devised by Quog's director, Eric Salzman, and how he controls group improvisations with it. Comparisons with Stockhausen's "Momente" and Kenneth Gaburo's things for voices and instruments, which have a similar sound although they are constructed in very different ways. Enumerating the reasons why conducted improvisation is unfeasible in theatre and dance forms. Comparing conducted with unconduted improvisation, pointing out how much control a conductor can assert, and indicating the potential possibilities of this relatively unexplored area.

[Chapter 4] "Audience Participation" : How Salzman conducts audience improvisations with this same basic cueing system. Why this seems less forced than many forms of audience participation, and why members of the audience seem to enjoy it so much.

[Chapter 5] "New Attitudes toward Technique" : The risks involved in true exploration. Contrasting the traditional performer, who never does anything in public until he has mastered the technique and performer, who often overextends himself. The unfortunate results this sometimes has on pieces per se, and, at the same time, the excitement sometimes generated by this honest unself-conscious approach.
[Chapter 6] "Group Art and Group Therapy" : Contrasting groups where individuals relate to each other on a very personal almost psychoanalytic level, with groups who create together in a very detached objective way, and showing how Quog seems to be avoiding both extremes.

[Chapter 7] "Voices and Characters" : Pointing out the occasional moments in Quog improvisations when an improvising singer is able to bring together his personal feelings of the moment, his voice, and his gestures in a strong vivid way. Comparisons with traditional opera where this complete unity of intentions seldom, if ever, happens. Speculating on some of the potentials lying in the area of group created opera.

[Chapter 8] "Problems, Present and Future" : Calling attention to individual musical and theatrical weaknesses - in the group and emphasizing the amount of time it may take for the group to evolve a uniformly high technical level and a vivid group style. Enumerating the difficulties of true group creation of long pieces, and pointing out how the Open Theatre worked together for almost 10 years before attaining the magic of "The Serpent" and "Terminal." But pointing out that masterful products are really only fringe benefits, and how the emphasis, both for Quog and its audience, should always be on the process that goes on.

Clearly Johnson – himself a composition student of Morton Feldman with a master’s degree from Yale School of Music – grasped the potential of the work and understood the need for development of process. He makes the salient observation that time would be an essential ingredient in developing the ability for a group to improvise in a fully integrated way, but he also seems to acknowledge, somewhat tacitly, that trying things out in front of an audience would be necessary, and would require a certain risk and an inevitable messiness.

In addition to Ecolog, Biograffiti and Nude Paper Sermon, other Quog works included Helix, Voices, Saying Something, and Lazarus. Helix was recorded live by Quog at the Free Music Store on WBAI and released as part of the Salzman’s Wiretap album released on Finnadar in 1974 (along with earlier Salzman works, such as Queens Collage). One of Salzman’s most evocative works, it features four singers (who also ring

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hand crotales), clarinet and guitar. Producer David Rapkin offered to edit out the sound of one of the brass crotales falling on the stage, but Salzman with a nod to unplanned aleatory, preferred to leave it on the recording.

There was significant overlap between the Free Music Store and Quog. Another piece that received a first performance at FMS was *Lazarus*. For the piece, Salzman took a twelfth century liturgical drama from the “Fleury Playbook,” written in plainsong form, which Quog would perform with an original sequel by Salzman. After performing the piece at the Free Music Store – where, according to accordionist William (Bill) Schimmel, it was positively received – a run of the show was organized at the Washington Square Methodist Church (“The Peace Church”), which was not well received. According to Schimmel,

> “It didn’t seem like it was gonna be a success, and we were gonna wrap it up. The last performance was on a rainy night and there were three people in the audience, and one of them was a little old lady who we thought was there for the service that was going to occur afterwards. Well, this lady comes to us after the performance and says, ‘I’m Ninon Karlweis and I think you’re awful.’ But then she continued, ‘I think what you’re doing is a good idea and I’ll give you six months to get really good. And I will come watch your rehearsals and if they go well, I’ll take you on a European tour.” ⁴

This was Ninon Tallon Karlweis, the theatrical agent whose many clients had included international experimental theater troupes and playwright Eugène Ionesco (she would later work as European agent for Philip Glass’s and Robert Wilson’s *Einstein on the Beach*). She thought that she could sell *Lazarus* in Europe if she could market it as a LaMaMa production. So Lee Nagrin directed four performances at LaMaMa, which were attended by small private audiences that included figures like Philip Glass, Robert

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⁴ The author’s interview with Bill Schimmel, 7 February 2019.
Wilson, Meredith Monk, LaMaMa founder Ellen Stewart and others. Tom O’Horgan (director of Broadway’s *Hair* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*) would serve as the show’s director for the European Tour, which Schimmel described as a very successful endeavor, after the “tightening up” that the presentation and the music received.

**Collaborations with Michael Sahl**

Salzman left his position with WBAI in 1972 and thus parted from the Free Music Store, which kept running, under the Artistic Directorship of Ira Weitzman until 1976. While he continued to earn money from his regular music writing, 1973 was a busy year for Quog and 1974 saw the LaMaMa production of *Lazarus*, with the aforementioned tour the following year. By 1974, Salzman’s relationship with Joe Papp at the Public Theater had warmed sufficiently (Salzman’s reputation in the theater had also improved by way of association with LaMaMa, Lee Nagrin and Tom O’Horgan) that he approached Salzman about creating a show for the Public Theater. By this time Salzman and his college friend Michael Sahl, who was very active at the Free Music Store, had discussed collaborating on a piece. Michael Sahl, a composer and pianist who also played guitar and banjo had been active in popular music. Joshua Rifkin had done orchestrations on two albums for eclectic folk-rock singer Judy Collins, and in an interview with the author Collins suggested that it may have been Rifkin who recommended Michael Sahl when she needed a new music director in 1968. Sahl spent two years as her music director, and in 1970 she recorded his piece, *Prothalamium* with orchestrations by Rifkin. In any event, the quality of her vocal style and Michael Sahl’s general interest in popular music...
music would be a major influence in the Sahl/Salzman collaborations. Yet all of their six major collaborations except one had a unique aspect: in every piece, both Michael Sahl and Eric Salzman were credited with both music and libretto. Both composers agreed to be completely silent about who did what. The only evidence to this effect is handwriting in the sketched-out scores, but even that leaves as many questions as it provides evidence.

The piece they created for Joe Papp, titled *The Conjurer*, was billed as a “pop opera.” The plot involves an itinerant magician who is mistaken as the long-awaited electric Messiah, John Frum, in a dystopian future “cargo cult” society based in Asbury Park, New Jersey, where the power has gone out permanently. It is certainly more pop-inspired than it is operatic, giving the feel of an experimental pop-musical with some “head-voice” singing. Papp gave them ten nights in the smallest of the Public’s six stages, originally called “The Other Stage,” and now known as the Susan Stein Shiva Theater. There are no reviews from the June 1975 production, but Salzman believed that the piece was being considered for Broadway. Whether or not this was the case, down in the Newman Theater (the Public Theater’s largest space) Marvin Hamlisch and Edward Kleban’s *A Chorus Line* had been running since April. Joe Papp focused on bringing this production to Broadway that July; a move which essentially financed the Public (and the New York Shakespeare Festival) for years to come after it became the second most lucrative show in Broadway history at that time. A recording of *The Conjurer* does not give evidence of a lost masterpiece – in fact, nearly all of the Sahl/Salzman collaborations of which a recording exists might be described as irretrievably muddled. Both the plots and the music range from bizarre anarchic experiments, as in *Civilization*
and Its Discontents, to exhortations such as Stauf, a modern Faust story presented at the Cubiculo Theater in 1976.

Noah is a folk opera that was commissioned by the North Carolina School of the Arts (via Robert Ward) for collaboration between the students of all the different departments (music, theater, visual arts and dance). The school paid several thousand dollars, and brought Salzman and Sahl to North Carolina to cast the finished work, though a performance there was not to be. According to Salzman, the biggest reason for this was discord between the departments. But through a connection at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn it turned out that Noah was good fit for the school’s “Winterim” program – a break between the fall and spring semester in which the students mounted collaborative projects. It was performed there and later recorded for WBAI by Quog at the Washington Square Methodist Church in 1978 with funds from the NY State Council on the Arts. Among Salmzan’s supporters, several were excellent grant writers including Cornelia Foss (wife of Lukas Foss, who had conducted Foxes and Hedghogs with the Brooklyn Philharmonia the previous year).

The Passion of Simple Simon, produced at the Theater for a New City in 1979, is about a punk sniper serial killer named Simon, who gets acquitted because his cause is taken up by the liberal media who argue that the suffering and isolation he experienced as an unappreciated musical artist drove him to anti-social madness. He then becomes a very famous punk rock star who is later killed by the former lover of the investigative journalist who started the movement for his acquittal and subsequently fell in love with him. John Rockwell’s review of this show in the New York Times was brutal:

“None of this is in the slightest way plausible on a realistic level, and metaphorically it is manipulative and confused. The music, a sort of noodling,
eclectic stew, is facile, and some of the choral textures betray a certain cleverness. But it is never exciting or moving – Gian Carlo Menotti’s slickness combined with Leonard Bernstein’s vulgarity without either of their talents. And almost needless to say, the evocation of punk rock is ludicrous.

Most of the performances are in the earnestly amateurish category. But they could hardly be otherwise, given the banality of the two composers’ conception and direction. In the end, this reviewer is at a loss as to what to say about “Simon,” as indeed he has been about all of the Quog productions he has encountered. Mr. Sahl and Mr. Salzman have shown distinction in other fields. But this work so mangles and trivializes those issues it attempts to consider that the result can only be called meretricious.6

While this review is unusually harsh, it does contain germane criticism while taking into consideration the relevant issue of performance quality. The range and demands of vocal styles required from the singers are so broad and the funding for the Sahl/Salzman works were often at such a bare minimum that one can imagine a somewhat different result had they been performed by specialists who had time and resources to rehearse and perfect them. The best qualities of the six works that Michael Sahl and Eric Salzman created together might be considered by looking at their most successful work: Civilization and Its Discontents, which was performed at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy, recorded for NPR broadcast and later released by Nonesuch, winning the RAI Music Award of the Prix Italia (the international radio award of the European Broadcasting Union) and was presented on BBC Radio 2 and other European radio stations.

The plot, in contrast to Simple Simon and other works, is concise and more direct. It opens at a “Club Bide-a-Wee,” where the neurotic out-of-work actress Jill Goodheart meets a talent agent whom she invites to come home with her. Jill’s character, a trope of

a struggling performer of the *Chorus Line* variety (the libretto even comically references *A Chorus Line*), also anticipates the “the kind of desperate, flailing Manhattanite” that is perfectly embodied by the anxiety-ridden Holly in Woody Allen’s *Hannah and Her Sisters.* While, sexism is a theme throughout the work (for example Jill describes the way her boss always “grabs her ass” when she passes by at work and the male lead, Jeremy Jive admits that he’s addicted to women), it is not always clear whether the piece is self-aware enough. At Jill’s apartment, Jeremy gets increasingly angry when she delays love-making, instead completing chores like reading her mail, calling her answering service, and making plans with a friend over the phone. Feeling ignored and sorry for himself, he eventually demands that she hang up, and rips the phone cord out of the wall in a rage. Jill’s roommate, Derek Dude, arrives and there’s an ego competition between the two men, who are business competitors. Jill gets hysterical as the men discuss the incomparable merits of another actress, and she attempts suicide. In the piece’s final scene, some time later, a guru named Carlos Arachnid teaches the characters about “serenity.”

**An Aside: Dealing with Women**

Putting off a discussion of the music, which is excellent and truly inventive, the plot brings up an issue that cannot be ignored. According to William Bolcom, by 1977 (when *Civilization* premiered), Salzman had, for several years, made “no secret” of his extra-marital affairs. Bolcom recalled in an interview with the author that Salzman boasted publicly about his girlfriends and that they, too, were public about it. In fact, Bolcom’s disapproval of the situation caused him to distance himself from Salzman.

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Salzman’s daughters Eva and Stephanie, also interviewed, recalled being aware of his extramarital affairs as adolescents. Bolcom considered that it might have been a public gesture masking a professional crisis in changing times, but further examination shows that similar behavior continued well into the new millennium. Were the issue of problematic behavior regarding women to be unrelated to his artistic output, it would not necessarily be worth mentioning. But there is a connection. Returning to the Philip Roth juxtaposition makes a relevant correlation. In a 1974 review of Philip Roth’s, *My Life as a A Man*, Morris Dickstein makes the point that by casting his misogynistic confessional as a satire, and by comically referencing psychoanalysis (as Salzman, and later Woody Allen will do) as an apology for neurotic behavior, Roth comes dangerously close to legitimizing his shallow and awful portrayal of women.

There are usually two sorts of women in Roth's heroes' lives: bitchy, castrating women who attract and destroy them, and doting sexual slaves who eventually bore them. Unable to combine love and sensuality his men read like textbook cases out of Freud's essay on “The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life.”

However painful this feeling of victimization can be for the man, for a writer it can be peculiarly poisonous if it prevents him from granting full reality to his characters and from getting any distance on the troubles of his protagonist.

Sahl and Salzman’s women were little better, often torn between career ambition and “devotion” to the hero (as in *Simple Simon* and *Stauf*) and tend to be desperate and thinly drawn. The protagonists of the six Sahl/Salzman shows, with the possible exception of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (a sort of ensemble piece) are all men, as are the protagonists of almost all Salzman’s other works (*Lazarus*, *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz*, *La Prière du Loup/Wolfman’s Prayer*, and *Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors*). Exceptions only include stories conceived of by others, such as *Cassandra* (with a
libretto by Salzman’s daughter Eva) and *La Bonne Ame de Setchouan* (a resetting of Brecht). Salzman seems to have been unaware of women’s perspective. In an interview, he recalled an incident with Quog:

“And then I did a piece for the women in the group. At one point there were maybe as many as five or six women in the group and so they developed a piece. And I called it *Women's Work* and I got attacked for that. And now I see there are women writing pieces called *Women's Work*. But I called it *Women's Work* because I thought it was their work and it didn’t seem odd. But I was attacked for it in an early manifestation of what we see now as regressive leftism. But anyway we did perform that a few times before I got yelled at for doing it.”

It was not an area where Salzman’s behavior or artistic perspective improved significantly over time, either. In *Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors* (conceived in the 80s but primarily written around 2008), both the doting “sex-pot” female (described by Salzman as “the trophy wife”) and the bitchy, castrating mother are present. In fact, it was in 2016 that the author of this paper, having previously produced a workshop of *Big Jim* at the Center for Contemporary Opera, insisted that the opera needed a scene in which the audience could sympathize with a female character, resulting in a new scene and aria for the wife in which she explains why she joined the protagonist’s cause. And in the personal arena correspondences with several female colleagues of Salzman, show that sexual advances from the composer were something that had to be navigated even in his later decades.

**Works of the 1970s in Retrospect**

This examination of Salzman’s difficulties with women is more than a digression because it is one of several reasons why even Salzman’s best works for the theater were not more successful, even when the music was of a very high quality as in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. By writing in satire, avant-garde, abstract, rebellious or even
polemical works, Salzman maintained an aloofness that always avoided deep emotion. In his musical crisis of the late 1960s that resulted in his near-total switch to music theater, Salzman admitted that he was influenced by the interstitial music theater works of Weill and Brecht. Bertolt Brecht’s concept of “Heroic Theater” rejected catharsis because it resulted in inaction. To a certain extent Kurt Weill’s music, especially in his collaborations with Brecht, similarly avoided emotionality in lieu of a bitter or satirical aloofness. Notwithstanding William Bolcom’s aforementioned comment that sentimentality was considered by musical academia to be inferior to intellectuality, it may very well be that these qualities of intellectuality and aloofness are rooted all the way back in Salzman’s artistic upbringing and exposure to his mother’s Yiddish theater background.

In any event, the result of this aloofness and the often-effortful amalgamation of pop music sounds which Sahl and Salzman employed, are works which come across as dated rather than timeless, and which keep the audience from ever sitting back in enjoyment. That being said, Civilization and Its Discontents is the most effective of the pop-infused collaborations between Salzman and Michael Sahl. The music is difficult to describe because it transitions so fluidly between a wide variety of musical styles. Peter Davis’s review in the The New York Times said:

The score by Mr. Sahl and Mr. Salzman (who also directed) is a brilliant amalgam of jazz, pop, blues and classical forms, cleverly-developed and timed to make the satiric points stand out in the most vivid musical and theatrical terms. None of the performers had what might be called beautifully trained operatic voices, nor was that necessary. Each could scarcely have caught the antic spirit and tone of the piece more winningly. Candice Earley used her extraordinary four-octave extension for some hair-raising effects.⁸

This description does not do full justice to the stylistic virtuosity that ran the full gamut including bebop, folk, four-part imitative counterpoint in a renaissance style overlaying pop textures, and Earley’s rare ability to produce F6 in a “whistle-tone” register for entire phrases. The melodies and rhythmic text settings are catchy, the subject comically post-modern, and the execution succinct – yet the work is still full of kitsch, with what Davis called “self-conscious and occasionally embarrassing attempts to be psychologically up-to-the-minute. He also commented, “Quog would do well to find a resident poet.” Yet the score was deemed successful enough to be published by Schirmer in 1985. This could, admittedly, be related to the fact that Salzman was doing editing for Schirmer and heading the Schirmer-published Musical Quarterly (see page 131). In fact, the Sahl/Salzman relationship with Schirmer goes back almost a decade earlier, when the two composers wrote a guide to chord changes for non-classical styles, entitled Making Changes: A Practical Guide to Vernacular Harmony, also published by Schirmer in 1977.

Aside from this book, to speak of the Sahl/Salzman collaborations separately from Quog Music Theater is misleading, as Quog was flexibly organized to serve whatever musical and theatrical needs might arise in Salzman’s endeavors. And by the end of the 1970s, relationships with Sahl and Quog had both changed. At the height of their activity, Quog was charging three dollars for an individual to participate in an improvisation workshop, and by offering two or three workshops per week with as many as twenty participants, they had enough to pay their expenses. The boundless positivity of the 70s was cooled by reality. As Salzman remembered:
People began drifting away. And the period of time when people would do stuff for nothing or for just an occasional gig was changing. People got older and they had families. They needed to find employment. So the supply of volunteers and new blood was not coming in. So we just dropped it after a while.

The relationship with Michael Sahl took a downward turn. While the two had agreed to split the work and the credit for both words and music, Sahl felt that his partner received more credit and attention as composer. Salzman claimed that he did everything he could. Michael Sahl’s name always appeared first in scores and press, but Salzman was the better-known figure, which inevitably resulted in him receiving more attention. Since 1975, the pair had put out a new piece every year until the tension between them became too great after The Passion of Simple Simon. There were no collaborations in 1980 or 1981, but in 1982 Michael Sahl asked if Salzman would write a libretto for one work in which he, Sahl, could be the sole composer. Salzman agreed, resulting in the work Boxes of 1983, which was again recorded and broadcast on public radio. This was their final collaboration, after which they remained in only loose contact until their deaths, which occurred within six months of one another. Sadly Michael Sahl died before he could be interviewed, so Salzman’s side of the story is all that remains:

Michael did not like that I got a lot of attention and he didn’t. I was better-known than he was. Michael never really had a successful career as a musician. He played a year for Judy Collins and arranged a lot of her stuff and made at least one album with her. But that didn’t get him any fame. Michael was a very contrary difficult man. And I told him often that he was his own worst enemy, and it basically turned out to be true. But he just did what he wanted and didn’t care what anybody thought.

Judy Collins, whom the author interviewed for this paper, remembered the Michael Sahl of the late 1960s as being “A wonderful refreshing presence, and a wonderful man; bright and full of ideas, and so musical – he was a people person and he
was delightful to be around.” But she acknowledged that in conversations in subsequent decades, he expressed having fallen into career frustration and depression.⁹ Years later, in 1997, Civilization and Its Discontents was performed in the Netherlands and Salzman insisted that the company fly Michael Sahl to Europe for it. Recalled Salzman: “And of course Michael came into the dress rehearsal and there was a bulletin board and on the bulletin board was an interview with me. And so that was the last of Michael.”

Between Quog Music Theater, which pushed the experimental envelope, and the Sahl/Salzman collaborations, which explored the possibilities of total eclecticism, the 1970s was the most experimental decade of Salzman’s career as a composer. After 1979, Salzman’s compositional output would slow somewhat, just as his role as a statesman and producer of New Music Theater would grow.

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⁹ The author’s interview with Judy Collins (19 February 2019).
American Music Theater Festival and Nonesuch Productions

The American Music Theater Festival in Philadelphia, where Salzman served as Artistic Director from 1982 until 1993 is deserving of a research project of its own, and anything we can say here would only serve as a brief introduction. Though the official founding date is listed as 1984, the first events occurred in 1983, and AMTF became Prince Music Theater in 1999, when it moved to a permanent venue. The theater’s producing arm functioned until 2008 and the theater closed in 2014. The festival came about because Marjorie Samoff had been working in the administration of an opera company in the Philadelphia area, but had a passion for English language opera and wanted to produce new works. When she and Salzman met at an opera conference and she expressed her idea of starting an opera festival, he suggested that she start a “Music Theater” festival, instead. Under this nomenclature, the festival would have the flexibility to produce a much wider variety of works, including opera and more contemporary, mixed genre works. In Appendix 1, there is a complete listing of all of the productions that took place during Salzman’s tenure as Artistic Director annotated with supplemental and anecdotal material provided to the author in the form of an interview in 2017. Appendix 2 is a list of AMFT Alumni, which gives a remarkable sense of the quality of the artists who collaborated and developed their skills through the festival’s productions.

According to interview Marjorie Samoff found in Salzman a collaborator who had the perfect credentials, a long list of contacts, the ability to discover and see the
potential in new works. He was ideal partner in getting the festival up and running, not to mention securing the likes of Milton Babbit, Leonard Bernstein and Philip Glass for the advisory board. His tenure lasted until 1993, when Samoff and board chairman Ron Kaiserman asked him to step down. Samoff explained in an interview that having an artistic director who could not also serve as conductor was an added expense, and furthermore she resisted pressure to produce Sahl/Salzman works, with the notable exception of Stauf, which was produced at the Festival in 1987, directed by Rhoda Levine, to mediocre reviews.\textsuperscript{1} An archival video of this production at the New York Library for the Performing Arts shows a terrific cast (Thomas Young, D’Jamin Bartlett, John O’Hurley), but mostly un-memorable music and an overly-heavy message against the evils of modern corporate greed. Whether the pressure Samoff felt to produce Salzman’s works was warranted, or merely a preemptive fear, this production would not have helped Salzman’s cause.

Salzman also felt that there was an effort to curtail the broad artistic license he had been granted early on, and to which after several years, he had almost certainly become accustomed. Reflecting back to the abortive attempt for the USIS concert of the 1950s, it should be remembered that Salzman could, when moved, become quite assertive when it came to artistic matters – and that he tended toward preference for more avant-garde works. Salzman believed passionately in creating a home for New Music Theater and the list of works that Salzman fostered includes many important projects by major artists too numerous to mention except in list form (see Appendices 1 and 2). The

position at AMTF also coincided well with Salzman’s other activities during the period – writing, lecturing and producing records.

In 1979, when Teresa Sterne left Nonesuch records, founder Jack Holzman turned the label over to his brother Keith Holzman, and focused the label on all-contemporary material. Without Sterne or Rifkin involved, Keith Holzman needed skilled classical producers. In 1980, Salzman produced the Nonesuch recording of the New York City Opera production of Kurt Weill’s Silverlake, with cuts and restructuring by Julius Rudel and Hal Prince. This was followed in 1981 with The Unknown Kurt Weill, featuring Teresa Stratas performing unpublished songs that had been given to her by Lotte Lenya. Both albums achieved considerable success, but not in comparison to Salzman’s next idea.

In 1975, Salzman had written a theatrical piece called Accord for accordionist and frequent Quog collaborator William Schimmel. Several years later, according to Schimmel, he called Salzman to tell him that he was reviving the work for an accordion recital. Salzman attended the recital, on which Schimmel also played several tango works, and Salzman had the seemingly bizarre idea to make a contemporary album of tango music. He had become passionate about tango music during his 1969 trip to Buenos Aires and sold the idea to Nonesuch as a follow-up to the 1981 album he produced for them which had been called The Waltz Project. Salzman and Schimmel asked Michael Sahl and violinist Stan Kurtis (and later virtuoso Mary Rowell) to collaborate, and the group began listening to classical tango recordings (some that Salzman had brought back from Argentina) and attempting to emulate the sound. Schimmel says they eventually abandoned this method and decided to make their own,
which he believes ended up being more authentic. The 1982 release, *The Tango Project* was a best-selling classical album, called “the freshest release of the year” by the *Christian Science Monitor* and ended up being featured prominently in two major Hollywood studio films of the 90s: *Scent of a Woman* and *True Lies*.

AMTF and Salzman’s record producing coincided on a few projects, most notably a recording of Harry Partch’s *Revelation in the Courthouse Park*, released 1989 for Tomato Records and William Bolcom’s *Casino Paradise* on Koch International released in 1991. These were both recordings of the AMTF productions (in 1987 and 1990, respectively), and both remain the standard recordings of those works. Salzman had been in contact with Partch since the 1960s when he was researching an article about him. In fact, he had traveled to California to meet with Partch and invited a student from USC to tag along. That student, Victoria Bond, ended up singing in the 1969 UCLA production of Partch’s *Delusion of the Fury* recorded for Columbia Records, before she matriculated at Juilliard, where she became the first woman awarded a doctorate in conducting. Many decades later, she conducted the world premiere staged production of Eric Salzman’s only opera, *Big Jim and the Small-Time Investors* with the author of this paper in the role of Jim.*

**Guest Teaching and Other Activities**

Salzman never stopped writing record reviews for *Stereo Review* until it folded in 1998. In the late 1970s he was hired by Schirmer music publishing to create piano arrangements for English-language versions of standard repertoire, such as the famous translations of Ruth and Thomas Martin. Schirmer proceeded to have many new

* Salzman, who was by this time very familiar with my singing, asked me if I would take on the role for this production.
translations prepared, and had finally gotten around to more diverse and challenging repertoire such as Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*. They needed editions to go with with the new translations, and paid Salzman to create some. Yet just before the editions were to be published, the advent of opera supertitles made English-language performance by American opera companies obsolete and extremely rare – especially for works such as *Pelléas*.

In 1984, Joan Peyser stepped down as editor of Musical Quarterly, which was founded and published by Schirmer until 1989. Salzman, whose article, *Whither American Music Theater* was published by MQ in 1979, was asked to take over as editor, and he agreed, more for financial reasons than any other. He served as editor through the journal’s transition to Oxford University Press in 1989, continuing on in the role until 1991. Salzman rarely contributed to the journal, but his article *Whither American Music Theater* was reprinted in 1991 for an issue featuring “Highlights from the First 75 Years,” and is a wonderful explanation of his ideas of New Music Theater. In it, he gives a historical overview of various strains of sung music theater, discusses the “plateau” at which he felt the classical music world had arrived in the late 1970s. He states that,

> “A subsidized, noncommercial institution (on the model of the Public Theater or the various regional theaters) devoted to music theater, new and old, is the necessary structural solution. There is a public, a repertory, and a tremendous potential for such a theater but, given the state of funding in this country-highly institutionalized, pigeon-holed and conservative--the project will be a difficult one.”

This article first appeared just two years before plans began for the American Music Theater Festival, thus it is not only prophetic but leads one to the conclusion that

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his ouster from AMTF must have been a significant disappointment. The festival had provided Salzman with a major platform to advance his deeply held convictions and passion for New Music Theater in all its forms. He never tired of discussing or writing on the topic.

In 1986, when Oliver Knussen pulled out of a semester-long role as guest professor at Yale University, Salzman agreed to fill the position on two preconditions: that all classes occur on two consecutive days, so that he only had to stay one night per week in New Haven; and that he be allowed to teach a course on Music Theater. The music department administration thought there would be no interest, but Salzman insisted on offering the course anyway, not caring if only two students signed up. It turned out, that around a dozen music students signed up, and brought schoolmates from the Yale Theater School with whom they were working on opera and music theater projects. Among his students that semester were future Pulitzer Prize-winner (and former Manhattan School of Music faculty) Julia Wolfe, and Robert Elhai, a composer and Tony-nominated arranger and orchestrator. Elhai, reached by email, said:

It was a great class. I was so lucky to be at Yale when he taught it. One of the best things about it was all the so-called “alternative” music theater that he exposed us to (including his own work). His ideas about bridging the worlds of opera and music theater were very much in alignment with mine. In fact, much of my career is due to Eric recommending me to work with Elliot Goldenthal!3

That year (1986) Salzman had produced Goldenthal’s and Julie Taymor’s Transposed Heads at the American Music Theater Festival. Among many projects, Elhai worked as an orchestrator on Goldenthal’s score to the film Frida, directed by Taymor, which won the Academy Award for Best Original Score in 2002. Elhai continues to

3 Robert Elhai, "Re: Statement request: Eric Salzman Dissertatation," Received by Scott Joiner (28 February 2019), Email Statement.
compose music theater works produced nationally, regionally, and internationally. Other 
Salzman courses included a music theater seminar at New York University’s Tisch of the 
Arts (where his students included future Tony Award-winner Victoria Clark) a residency 
at Canada’s Banff Centre for the Arts, and a variety of lectures at Conservatoire 
Nationale, Lyon, France; Un Théâtre pour la musique, Vincennes and Quimper, France; 
ASCAP, New York, NY; Netherlands Theatre Institute, Amsterdam; Maison des 
Ecrivains, Paris.

Salzman mostly lived project-to-project with his writing as the most consistent 
income. He took on various odd ventures that came up, such as directing a major musical 
benefit concert at the Shubert Theater to raise money for Vietnam Veterans. Billed as: 
*Joseph Papp and Absolut Vodka Present ‘Absolutly Music’* it was a star-studded event 
featuring the Vietnam Veterans Ensemble Theatre Company and musical guests Dave 
Brubeck, Dizzie Gillespie, Philip Glass (with a new musical setting of Allen Ginsberg’s 
“Wichita Vortex,” featuring the poet himself reading), the Gregg Smith Singers, Tania 
León and Van Dyke Parks. Playwright David Rabe was involved, with readings by 
Christopher Walken, Danny Aiello, Ron Silver, John Savage and Kevin Spacey. Photos 
of the event also show Matthew Broderick and Jennifer Grey, without listing their 
contributions. Dave Brubeck wrote a choral setting of a poem by Robert Penn Warren’s 
“Truth” premiered by the Gregg Smith Singers, Queens College Choir and a brass 
ensemble.4 Salzman held onto all of his notes, with cues, stage plot, etc., from the event, 
and a poster ad that ran in New York publications with his name featured prominently,

but he never spoke of the event. The author unearthed these materials in one of many closests packed with scores and papers in the composer’s home of over six decades.

In Long Island, where the Salzmans spent their summers, Eric Salzman was widely known as an ecologist. Carl Safina, a prominent conservationist, and Eileen Schwinn, vice president of the Eastern Long Island Audubon Society, were interviewed by Cailin Riley for Salzman’s *Southampton Press* obituary.

“Eric Salzman was like a great mountain range with numerous huge peaks, all daunting to scale,” said world-renowned naturalist Carl Safina. “He had summited them all.”

Mr Safina spoke of Mr. Salzman’s mastery of both musical composition and birding, and his extensive knowledge of the natural world, likening him to a “mythic giant.”

“But unlike many mythic giants, he was genuinely warm and delightful in sharing,” Mr. Safina continued. “His knowledge and abilities impressed, but his warmth and generosity of spirit was what I think of most when I think of Eric.”

… [Eileen] Schwinn called Mr. Salzman a mentor and said his talents in the field of birding were exceptional. “He could ID birds by one or two call notes, which is pretty remarkable.”

Salzman was, for several years, book review editor for the American Birding Association’s newsletter and magazine and served on the board of the South Fork Natural History Museum. He led bird walks for the museum, as well as for the Brooklyn Bird Club, the Eastern Long Island Audubon Society, and the Linnaean Society.

Environmental advocacy was an endeavor that he shared with his wife, Lorna. She was hired as the regional representative of Friends of the Earth by David Brower and she held various positions with American Birds magazine, Food & Water Inc., and the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection. She was also a prominent member of the NY Green Party, which she founded with Kirkpatrick Sale.

Any visitor to the Salzman’s Long Island Home in Quogue, would be taken on nature excursions around the natural habitats of the area. One such visitor was Michael
Chanan, a documentary filmmaker and Professor of Film & Video at England’s Roehampton University, who made a film for the BBC – ‘The Politics of Music’ (1972) – featuring behind-the-scenes footage of Salzman and Boulez at London’s Roundhouse for the English premiere of *Foxes and Hedghogs*. A year later, he was in the United States and was invited to the Salzman home. While the stories that Eric Salzman frequently told about the house’s many visitors (Pierre Boulez and Luciano Berio among them) are too numerous for this document, Chanan published a recollection that reflects not only the “naturalist” Salzman, but also the warmth and good humor for which Salzman was known among his friends and colleagues:

I got off the train from New York at one of those American stations that isn’t a station but just a rural stop without a platform. I was expecting to find him waiting for me but there was only a solitary car with a strange object sitting on the front passenger seat, with roughly the size and appearance, at first sight, of a human brain. As I stood looking at it, a voice came from behind me. ‘That’s our dinner’. There, holding another one, was Eric. It turned out that John Cage wasn’t the only mycophagist composer on the East Coast, for that is what it was – a beautiful large pink mushroom. And very delicious too.

One day we went on a trip to visit his cousin… Our first stop on arriving was a large pond near the entrance full of frogs in season, where Eric drew up the car, turned off the engine, opened the windows, and we sat and listened to the wonderful mesmerizing noise of their mass croaking.

There was also an evening with friends when we all got very stoned and played cultural quiz games, and Eric congratulated me on my knowledge of American culture, and I said it was perfectly normal for a Britisher of my generation. Then, putting a disk on the hi-fi, Eric introduced me to an example of Americana I didn’t know: the hilarious psychedelic Goon Show-like art of Firesign Theatre.5

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The Center for Contemporary Opera

Salzman’s last official institutional role was with the Center for Contemporary Opera in New York City, for which he served on the Artistic Committee from 2000 until 2008 (with Hadassah Markson, Michael Dellaira, and founder Richard Marshall), as Artistic Director from 2008 until 2012, and as Composer-in-Residence from 2012 until his death in 2017. He had met Marshall during a post-AMTF period when he was trying to start a similar organization dedicated to New Music Theater in New York City. Marshall suggested instead that Salzman join CCO, which to Salzman was a sort of compromise, since much of the work they were producing was contemporary opera in the grand opera tradition; tonal, lyrical operas with lush orchestrations and based on historical themes, such as Robert Ward’s Puccini-esque Abelard and Heloise and Dominick Argento’s Christopher Sly. Nonetheless, under Marshall’s leadership Salzman’s experimental monodrama, La prière du loup, (originally commissioned and performed in 1997 by Un Théâtre pour la Musique / Scène National de Quimper, the regional outpost of the French National Theater) was given a CCO performance in a new English translation at the 2003 Festival of the Hamptons, starring Rinde Eckert. CCO published a magazine called New Music Connoisseur, but Salzman’s hope that CCO would produce more small-scale innovative New Music Theater, even in workshop form, was unsuccessful until Marshall stepped down.

When Richard Marshall retired, James Schaeffer was recruited (by Michael Dellaira) from his position as Director of Long Leaf Opera in Raleigh. Shaeffer had not only been a faithful reader of Stereo Review from his high school days, but had used Salzman’s Twentieth Century Music in his college music studies. Their first in-person
encounter occurred in New York City in 2007 when Schaeffer met with the Center for Contemporary Opera board of directors. One of his early moves as General Director, was to name Salzman Artistic Director. His roles, which were to have included repertoire selection, casting and artistic supervision, were significantly hamstrung by major funding difficulties. Shaeffer was limited in what he could produce, to pieces for which he could acquire funding. The result was that Schaeffer himself ended up fulfilling many of the duties that would normally have fallen to the Artistic Director. Because of this, Salzman agreed in 2012 to change his title to Composer-in-Residence.

Three of Salzman’s works that had European premieres, *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz* (1995-97), *La prière du loup* (1997), and *Cassandra* (2001), all had their American premieres through CCO in 2007, 2003 and 2016, respectively. *Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors* had two CCO workshops – at the Flea Theater 2012, and at the Faison Firehouse Theater in 2015 (produced by the author under the auspices of CCO). CCO also produced a Salzman theatrical creation called *Accord/Discord*, which was an evening length assemblage of earlier works: *Accord* for Bill Schimmel, Salzman’s Brecht Songs from a Canadian theatrical production of Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Szechuan*, and tango arrangements. CCO took *Accord/Discord* on a tour of Latvia, where the show’s Latvian-American soprano was well-known. The 2016 performance of *Cassandra* (a monodrama written specifically for contemporary music specialist Kristin Norderval that will be discussed in the next section) was titled *CCO Presents: Eric Salzman & Friends*, and also featured a large selection of Salzman’s art songs sung by the author (a tenor) and soprano, Jessica Fishenfeld.

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6 The author’s interview with Jim Schaeffer (16 October, 2018). Recorded.
One important way that the Center for Contemporary Opera and the American Music Theater Festival differ is that CCO invested in the development of new works, rather than just performance. In fact, Schaeffer started the development series largely because it was less expensive to produce than fully staged operas. Though he was never able to fully engage in the responsibilities of Artistic Director, Salzman was able to use his role with CCO to continue to advocate for (and support composers of) New Music Theater. He was an important and active participant in CCO activities, yet because his role as Artistic Director never fully materialized, it is not especially relevant to list the important works that were premiered and developed during his years of affiliation. Richard Marshall self-published a book called *Center for Contemporary Opera: Thirty Years and Counting*, a mix of anecdotal reminiscence, some history and Marshall’s own photography, but a scholarly study (or complete, well-referenced list of developed works) of CCO has yet to be undertaken.

**Later Works**

After Salzman’s relationships with Michael Sahl and the American Music Theater Festival ended, he arrived at a compositional phase that was markedly different from earlier periods. Beginning in the mid-1990s, Salzman created some of his finest and most personal works – works that had divested themselves of the need to be aggressively radical or even socially relevant. These works achieved little of the broad attention of his earlier works and ironically they met with more consistent praise, from both critics and audiences. This was partly because the music world, and the world in general, had changed quite substantially. Many of the exuberant artistic “movements” of the century had lost steam, groups had disbanded, and it was now “everyone for themselves” – an
apotheosis of post modernism – in a commercial world where the classical arts were struggling to maintain a foothold. This seems to have been liberating, if bittersweet, for an artist like Salzman who had spent decades trying to “prove” the merits and validity of electicism, non-conformity and individual artistic freedom. Now that he no longer had anything to prove, his work was able to relax into the freedom that he had earned, fought for, and no longer had to defend. The works became noticeably more poetic, and while they still contained a broad palette of musical styles, they achieved a more organic synthesis. Noticeably, they no longer referenced Rock and Folk music or used tape effects, but intermingled the free atonality of the younger Salzman with jazz, tango, spoken word and extended vocal techniques, not for their own sake but applied to coherent dramatic text.

Other than Variations on a Sacred Harp Tune, which was commissioned by Igor Kipnis in 1982, Salzman’s compositional output between 1979 and 1997, according to his self-prepared works lists, included only a minor tape piece based on birdsong (with optional piano in which the piano imitates bird calls), a piece of conducted group improvisation for unspecified ensemble (vocalists and/or instrumentalists) and a mixed media piece for the National Opera Institute. Of all of this material, only the harpsichord score and the optional piano part from the tape piece are extant. Besides the Variations Salzman himself did not consider these important works, nor were they ever mentioned in interviews or conversation. This dearth of output was partly the result of Salzman’s busyness with AMFT, Musical Quarterly, Stereo Review and other activities. Yet it seems also to be a fact that after a busy period of composition between 1968 and 1982, the end of Quog and the collaboration with Michael Sahl, Salzman had lost momentum.
To say nothing about Salzman’s possible emotional reaction to such enormous changes, the fact of securing funding for theatrical productions was a major commitment, and producing in New York City was increasingly expensive.

It was fortuitous when, in 1995, writer/director Valeria Vasilevski approached Salzman with a project that she had already begun, based on the incoherent rambling of Dutch Schultz on his deathbed, which were written down by a police stenographer after Schultz (born Arthur Flegenheimer) had been gunned down in 1935. Vasilevski had funding for the piece and had begun to work with another composer which did not move forward for unspecified reasons. When Vasilevski brought the idea to Salzman, he found it immensely appealing and with Vasilevski’s funding, a performance seemed assured. Through Vasilevski and Kirk Nurock (whom Salzman had known since at least 1973, when Lukas Foss and the Brooklyn Philharmonia presented the six-hour “Festival of Modern Combos” that included Quog and Nurock’s “Natural Sound Workshop”) Salzman was put in touch with multi-disciplinary vocalist/composer Theo Bleckmann, whose fame had not yet exploded on the New York Scene.

With a score that combined strict modern notation, graphic notation and structured improvisation, Salzman, Bleckmann and Vasilevski created a brilliant, innovative and even ethereal piece for Bleckmann, soprano, male vocal quartet (a sort of contemporary barbershop quartet) and chamber ensemble. Under Salzman’s supervision, Bleckmann used extended techniques and a vast array of colors as the text required.

Bleckmann discussed the piece with the author:

“The score was written out pretty thoroughly as a contemporary music piece and then there were sections in the piece that were improvised where he drew a graphic score or just described what was going on. But basically it was up to me to make sounds that we agreed upon. The vibe, the atmosphere of the piece, the
dynamic levels were agreed upon before, but then I improvised. The vocal extended techniques were my choices, but the rest was written out.

There is a future and a place for this kind of music. But it’s not a big audience. The other thing that makes this kind of production or music very tricky is that it stands and falls with the performer. This was written for me and with me in mind. So it has specific skills and vocal things. Aside from myself and maybe a few other people, who can do these vocal skills and roller skate and be athletic wobble around on a gurney... and, and, and. These things are very specific to me, which makes the production and performance, to me, more exciting. It’s more like a rock and roll show, where that person only can do this. But its for a small, selective, appreciative audience. The thing that pushed me was the complexity of the music, within the context of singing and dancing and skating and acting. That was challenging. There were twelve-tone rows in it, and it was a major challenge. It’s wild.

The thing is, Eric was really loving, very playful and very ‘game.’ If I would suggest something really crazy, his face would just light up and he’d say, ‘yes, let’s do it!’, and he’d be giggling and laughing. He was very excitable when there was something wild and crazy. He had a sort of ‘Rock and Roll’ in him. He did not shy away from crazy or weird or just implausible or playful. There was a certain sense of rebellion in him within this piece that he would always enjoy. And I enjoyed seeing him light up like that.”

Vasilevski brought the piece to the attention of Dutch (coincidental) producer Michiel van Westering, who organized a small tour across the Netherlands which was directed by Vasilevski. In 2001, Victoria Bond conducted a concert version at her Cutting Edge festival with Bleckman, and also led a different cast (starring German singer Dirk Weiler) in a fully staged production as CCO’s contribution to Symphony Space’s 13-hour Wall-to-Wall Opera Festival in 2007. That production was directed by American Opera Projects founder, Grethe Barrett Holby.

Partly by economic necessity Salzman had developed a lean chamber ensemble sound that was a modern extension of the aesthetic used in Kurt Weill’s Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, using keyboard/synthesizer, a few strings and various percussion (such as vibraphone and drums), and occasionally a soloistic instrument (brass or

7 The author’s interview with Theo Bleckmann (1 October, 2018).
accordion). On his website, under works and productions, Salzman’s description of *The True Last Words of Dutch Schultz* is as follows:

The instrumentation includes a mistuned violin, tuba, keyboards, percussion and a Foley table of acoustic sound effects of the type used in early radio and film. We also hear the voice of the late William Burroughs, a self-described literary outlaw, himself obsessed with death, darkness and Dutch.

Sonically speaking, *La Prière du Loup* (*Wolfman’s Prayer*) could be an extension of *Last Words of Dutch Schultz*. Two of Salzman’s other late scores *La Bonne Âme du Se-Tchouan* and *Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors* are variations on the aesthetic. The works are tonal, but in a unique way that often eschews functional harmony. There is a classical three-layered texture in the ensemble: bass line, middle chordal texture, and solo vocal/instrumental on top.

The chord progressions made heavy, sometimes exclusive use of ambiguous, unstable harmonies of three or four notes. In addition to diminished sonorities in open voicings, he used various combinations of harmonies that created non-functional tonal effects, such as larger six-note chords with tritones, thirds and fourths stacked in symmetrical structures. Chords might pulse in a regular rhythm (like jazz “comping”) or be sustained. While Salzman’s works in earlier periods often sounded quite diverse, the use of these techniques in his later pieces give them the sound of having been written by a single composer with a clear, concentrated voice. One advantage of this ambiguous harmonic language is that it is easy to transition out of it in order to quote other styles (jazz, barbershop, tango, blues) without much difficulty of key center; and it is similarly easy to transition back. In fact, by making the unstable harmony the default quality, the more tonal moments can be carefully inserted (as in Wagner’s music) to enormous
theatrical effect. These “true” tonal moments (often referencing another musical style) might coincide with a joke or an emotion, but succeed in disarming the listener by dint of relieving the instability.

Under the middle harmony would be a bass line moving in regular rhythm (straight quarter notes, eights, half or whole notes – but in always regular rhythmic patterns – like a passacaglia or a jazz walking bass) alternating between stepwise motion and angular leaps. Completing the three part texture would be the solo part(s) in an angular shape like a slowed down “bebop” line often moving in leaps and unpredictable patterns of whole steps and half steps. By using harmonies that are not particularly dissonant but not particularly linked in harmonic tendency and regular “walking” rhythms, the music becomes a texture and the listener focuses in on the words and the expressive colors of tone production more than anything else. It makes for fascinating music theater.

Two particular exceptions to this, both in texture and harmonic structure, are the monodrama Cassandra for Kristin Norderval and the commission from The Western Wind, Jukebox in the Tavern of Love. Norderval knew Salzman, but their artistic relationship developed via The Conference on Small-scale Opera and New Music-Theatre (known later as NuOp), an annual meeting of directors, composers, librettists, and performers that took place in a different location around the world each year. Salzman was often involved with the festival and in 1999 he presented three scenes from a recent work in Abel Gance à New York, which was commissioned by Pauline Vaillancourt and Chants Libres in Montréal. Though the scenes were fully staged,
orchestrated (and beautifully recorded), the project fell through. Nonetheless, Norderval saw the scenes at NuOp and Salzman suggested possibly doing a piece with her.

Salzman had long had the idea of doing a piece on the myth of Cassandra (the Greek myth of a woman cursed with speaking true prophecies that would never be believed) and had begun to work on the piece with his daughter Eva (by that time a published poet and professor) and Valeria Vasilevski, who directed the piece. The work was developed in the first part of 2001, but influenced by the events of September 11, 2001 with political references added by Eva Salzman. Performed at NuOp in Oslo in 2001, Vienna in 2001 and at another festival in Düsseldorf in 2003, Cassandra’s US premiere did not occur until 2016 at ‘the cell’ in New York, as part of CCO’s Eric Salzman and Friends.

The work was built around Norderval’s specific abilities, and in it she speaks, sings, plays piano and controls sonic media (vocal processing, looping, sound effects, etc) through Max software patches. As in other pieces, many parts of the score (for example the piano part and melodic vocal material) were notated, but many aspects were open, and somewhat improvisatory. Norderval, herself a composer who also holds a DMA, had significant creative input – teaching Salzman what the technology could do, developing specific technological features for the performance, programming and executing Salzman’s ideas.

The contrast between Cassandra and Jukebox in the Tavern of Love and the fact that they were both written within the same period of Salzman’s career is a testament to the composer’s eclectism and his lack of adherence to a particular sonic identity. The only clues the two works come from the same composer are a handful of solo lines that
implement a specific way of setting text around consecutive minor thirds (or diminished). The way that Salzman set syllables around the diminished contour harmony becomes an identifiable musical signature heard clearly in *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz*, *Cassandra, Jukebox in the Tavern of Love* and *Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors*. *Jukebox*, however, sounds very unlike anything else in the Salzman oeuvre. Some of the reason for this has to two with the specifics of how the commission came about.

Bill Zukoff, the countertenor who had performed in *The Nude Paper Sermon* and was a founding member of Quog, had also been a founding member of The Western Wind Vocal Ensemble with baritone Elliot Levine in 1969. More than thirty years later Zukoff and Levine both ended up in the vocal ensemble for the concert performance of *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz* at Victoria Bond’s Cutting Edge Concerts at Greenwich House in 2001. Based on the vocal ensemble writing in that piece, Western Wind decided to commission a work from Salzman. They wanted a modern piece to accompany material from their standard repertoire. One such piece was Adriano Banchieri’s *Barca di Venetia per Padova*, a Renaissance madrigal comedy, which had been their repertoire since 1982 (when they performed it with William Bolcom’s *Satires for Madrigal Group*), which appealed to Salzman.

A condition of the commission was that in addition to singing in the ensemble, each member of Western Wind would have a solo that featured their abilities. This worked well with the Renaissance idea of a group of individual stories (as in the *Decameron* or *Canterbury Tales*). Salzman came up with a similar construct, enlisting once again the help of Valeria Vasilevski, who decided that she wanted to draw on materials from the performers’ real lives and a final plot was devised. A group of people
– a Catholic nun, an Orthodox Rabbi, a ConEd Utility worker, an Irish poet, and a Broadway dancer, take shelter from a rainstorm in a bar during a blackout. The bar is run by an Italian-American bartender and the six characters trade stories in an intercultural exchange, allowing for Salzman to write in a number of techniques and styles – all a capella, except for a section during which one of the singers plays guitar. The piece was a success for the Western Wind, who performed it in 2007 at the Flea Theater, in 2008 in Bargemusic and on a recording in 2009 with Meredith Monk’s Basket Rondo (also a Western Wind commission). The album, which was not released until 2014, was featured in Gramophone Magazine’s “Best of 2014,” was a WQXR Q2 Album of the Week and was reviewed in Opera News which noted Salzman’s “wealth of choral techniques; everything from plainchant and the musical style of Gesualdo through complex, canonic and fugal writing, through the squishy harmonies of early 1960s pop choral music,” and called the work “a very pleasant, diverting work and a virtuosic tour de force for the singers.”

Salzman’s final work, Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors, has a long history, though it was not completed until Salzman’s late seventies. It was further revised and expanded when he was eighty-two and on bi-weekly dialysis for kidney failure. It holds a unique place in all of his oeuvre as the only piece intended as an opera, albeit a chamber opera leaning toward new music theater, to be performed by opera singers. It began as an idea in the late 1970s or early 1980s when Salzman read a news article about a con-man in Los Angeles. Salzman applied for a “New American Works Producers Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1985 and was awarded $4,500 (over $10,000 in

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He told his wife’s cousin Edgar “Ned” Jackson about his idea for a music-theater work about such a person, and some time later Jackson sent him a massive piece of theatrical work. The story of what occurred next is best told in the required grant report that was submitted in 1988 after Salzman filed for an extension:

Working with a sketch or outline by Eric Salzman (see enclosed material), Ned Jackson completed an extensive poetic treatment of the theme. This treatment – referred to as the Draft Libretto in the accompanying material – was, however far too long and elaborate for musical setting; it needed substantial tightening, reorganization and rewriting for it to be workable in lyric or music-theater terms (musical setting of the words as well as long-range musico-dramatic form). Salzman began this work of revision and, at the same time, musical sketching and setting. This work proved more difficult than was initially anticipated. Salzman’s revisions became the subject of a difficult and extended process of dispute and negotiation about the treatment of text which eventually brought the development of the project to a standstill. An extension of the grant period was authorized.

The authors agreed on a reorganization of the first act… Salzman produced new draft outlines of the act, reworking the material into the forms of musical solos, ensembles and other numbers… No author of an artistic and poetic turn of mind likes to see his work rewritten by another but music-theater is a collaborative process and sometimes such rewriting is inevitable. Nevertheless this work proceeded slowly with the main difficulties being due to continuing disagreements… Jackson felt that his style and approach in the original text was misunderstood and that Salzman’s drastic rewrites completely altered the fundamental qualities of the original… An attempt was made to produce “compromise” texts through joint writing sessions but this did not prove to be feasible. Eventually, with the authors working separately, two quite different but parallel pieces began to develop and, without any way of resolving these difficulties and contradictions, the work again ground to a halt. It was, however, never formally left in the limbo to which, until recently, it was consigned by default. All of this history is documented in the enclosed typescripts and manuscripts.

The early phases in the development of this work have therefore come to a close and a decision will have to be made – to abandon the project or to move ahead in another way. The passage of time has softened some of the differences and both authors have agreed to rescue the collaboration in a new form. Both feel that, even in its present state, there is merit in the work and it is worthwhile to go ahead; it is hoped and anticipated that this new phase will produce a working libretto and score.”

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That is where the story ended until a coincidental turn of events brought Salzman’s unfinished version of the libretto out of the drawer over twenty years later. Under Jim Schaeffer’s leadership, the Center for Contemporary Opera began a series called “Prima le parole,” in which librettos are read by professional actors in front of an audience to find out how they stand up as theatrical works without music. According to Schaeffer and Salzman, a major libretto that had been scheduled for a reading fell through, and Salzman said, “I’ve got a libretto!” But he still had to cut it down to manageable proportions before the reading. Schaeffer called the event and libretto “A great success,” and Salzman recalled the audience “roaring” in their seats.

After the success of the event, Schaeffer suggested that CCO perform the opera in their atelier series, to which Salzman replied, “Great! All I have to do is write the music, now!” But now he had motivation to move forward. A successful workshop of the opera was presented by CCO with piano at The Flea theater in 2012, with plans for a full production at a later date. The author met Salzman in 2013 and began working as an assistant on archival projects. CCO, overwhelmed with financial and scheduling obligations at the time suggested that another expanded workshop with chamber orchestration would be possible in 2014, if all of the details of production were handled privately. Thus the author of this paper supervised the production of a workshop starring Vale Rideout, directed by Andrew Eggert and conducted by Metropolitan Opera conductor Steven Crawford at Harlem’s Faison Firehouse Theater.\(^{10}\) When CCO’s financial woes put this workshop in danger of falling through, the chamber orchestration was reduced to accordion, piano and electronics. Again, the piece was a success, but its

\(^{10}\) “Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors at the Faison Firehouse Theater,” *Harlem World Magazine* (8 March 2014).
future remained unsure since not enough funding could be secured for a full production. At the author’s suggestion, Salzman agreed to add two new scenes to better feature the female leads, with the plan of raising money for a studio recording of the work (an open offer from Labor Records’ Heiner Stadler would allow for distribution through Naxos).

In 2016, shortly after the US premiere of Cassandra Victoria Bond was again looking for a new work to do in concert form on her Cutting Edge Concert series at Symphony Space in 2017. When Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors was suggested, it quickly became apparent that a staged production with the new scenes and chamber orchestra was called for, if it could be financed. The piece was bumped to the following season and a small-scale production was planned in which the composer asked the author himself to sing the title role and oversee the production. The new scenes were finished and orchestrated and a co-producer, Gramercy Opera, was brought on board to help see the production through. While funding remained the biggest obstacle, it was agreed that a concert version with the chamber orchestration would be offered as a contingency plan.

It was in the height of production planning that Salzman died of cardiac arrest associated with dialysis in his Brooklyn home on November 12, 2017. In spite of his advanced age, the event came without warning. In an ironic twist of fate, the outpouring of financial support that resulted from his death (publicized by Norman Lebrecht’s Slipped Disc and in a featured New York Times obituary), made the full production of Big Jim & The Small-Time Investors possible five months later. Opera News would call Big Jim “truly a fine piece of post-modern creative work,” and the libretto (credited solely to Jackson by the producers in an act of artistic diplomacy) was widely praised.
The best description of the opera comes from the program notes created by the author and Victoria Bond:

*Big Jim & The Small-time Investors* is a Music-Theater Opera about a con man who persuades investors to put money into an interactive virtual reality scheme that induces people to believe they are living out their dreams and fantasies. Big Jim King is a California con artist who has disappeared with the money that the Small-time Investors have entrusted to him for the creation of his interactive “reality” fantasy. But the promise that people will be able to live out their dreams and fantasies in cyberspace is an empty one and after the huge initial excitement, the scheme falls to pieces. The investors break into Jim’s palatial home to find him and demand their money back but nothing is left except a video explaining why he had to do what he did.

His rise to fame and power as a kind of dot com televangelist are shown in a series of flashbacks in which the electronic media that he exploits are also employed to tell his story: his rise from obscurity, his ability to make people believe that they can realize their fantasies, his spectacular marriage to a beauty queen, his dabbling in politics, his downfall and disappearance and, yes, reappearance in yet another transformation.

Until the very last moment, Big Jim himself appears only on screen or as a live hologram but all the other characters are live. Instead of a conventional opera house or theater, the production is envisaged as taking place in Big Jim’s now empty mansion and the audience itself mingles with the performers. We are all small-time investors trying to understand who Big Jim was, what he did and how we were taken in.

Salzman, always embracing the new, often spoke with excitement about the possibility of doing a production where Jim King appears in real-time holographic projection on stage – though the technology is not yet ready. The very question of technology and how music theater interacts with the technological world was a preoccupation of Salzman. In fact, the opera has much in it that reflects Salzman’s own personal experiences. For example, after the death of Big Jim’s mother, he has the idea of opening a virtual reality club in which investors can act out their virtual fantasies under strobe lights. When the club opens, the wild liberation results in a Dionysian riot where the investors burn the club to the ground under a thumping pre-recorded electronic disco track complete with *Nude Paper Sermon*-style sonic graffiti. One is immediately
reminded of the Electric Circus, that temple of ecstatic freedom, where someone set off a
bomb in 1971, injuring seventeen people and hastening its closure. No doubt with the
fiery lighting scheme intended for the scene, Salzman would not have missed a
connection with Wagner’s immolation of Valhalla at the end of Götterdämmerung.

The music largely follows the three-layered model described earlier pertaining to
The Last Words of Dutch Schultz and Wolfman’s Prayer, though the aural landscape is
more replete and the vocal writing much more intensely dramatic. The piece is scored for
string quartet, accordion, keyboard/synthesizer, percussion and electronics. John
Hohmann writing for Schmopera, described the music succinctly: “Big Jim travels in the
avant-garde with atonal music that is comfortably braced with myriad rhythms including
jazz, tango, and more than a touch of lounge. The composition makes the use of far-flung
arioso and choral cacophony sound natural, indeed inevitable.”11 Harry Rolnick of The
Classical Music Network described the intense vocal effects:

Jim has a tough job competing with the raucous protestors (some with
baseball bats!) but he works into his part with a tenor which can build into a
shriek, exhortation and a fairly sympathetic duet with Mother…

Then we have Jim’s friend, manager (and as we learn, in the final line),
one of his victims, Stan, more the actor and reciter (and a frequent substitute for
Greek chorus)… [Kim], the winner of the beauty contest for the hand Big Jim
himself, and a five-minute cameo from the Big Time Church Pastor, who gives
marriage sings the marriage vows [to Jim and Kim] with leers, prurient singing –
the the typical American con-man who hides his culpability with a robe and a
church and greasy smile.

Yet the whole cast deserves plaudits here, for this was a work which never
lost its sting. True, the sting was never fatal: Mr. Salzman was more Mark Twain

11 John Hohmann, “Big Jim and the Small-Time Investors: A Story Often Told”
Schmopera (April 13, 2018) https://www.schmopera.com/big-jim-and-the-smalltime-
investors-a-story-often-told/. Accessed 20 October, 2019
than Ambrose Bierce or H.L. Menken. Instead he presented a contemporary rake/roué, with music just clever enough to fit the very clever scenario.\textsuperscript{12}

The story of the con-man, the willingly deluded public and the questions that encircle these motifs, are the stuff of every age. At the end of \textit{Big Jim}, the main character appears in person, destitute, and introduces himself to his wife as someone new, also named “Jim,” only to be taken in by her – thus recommencing the cycle. Jim’s manager/assistant Stan, an enabler in the tradition of Da Ponte’s Leporello, watches from a distance and wonders if Kim realizes it’s the same Jim who deserted her and crushed the dreams of the Small-Time Investors. Already a septuagenarian when he reworked the libretto for \textit{Big Jim}, Salzman had seen many fads and technologies come and go. So, too, had he lived through many musical movements and knew most of their protagonists personally.

\textbf{Epilogue:}
\textbf{The New Music Theater: Seeing the Voice, Hearing the Body}

Salzman often grappled with a concise, coherent answer to the question of what, exactly, New Music Theater is. Because any meaningful conversation about it would be largely dependent on the depth of knowledge of the interlocutor, and because the breadth of Salzman’s knowledge was almost certain to be the greater, a necessary step in advocating for the concept of New Music Theater was to level the playing field by

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compiling and sharing his knowledge. The book he created with Austrian
writer/director/composer Thomas Desi, *The New Music Theater: Seeing the Voice,
Hearing the Body*, is a history of the concept of New Music Theater and also an
encyclopedia of its major creators and their works.

In the book he describes the evolution of the term “music theater” as “coinage
taken from the Germanic *Musiktheater,*” to the English application reflecting “small-
scale sung theater in the Brecht or Brech/Weill tradition,” to it’s appropriation for
“almost any kind of serious musical theater.” To Salzman, however, New Music Theater
excluded traditional opera, operetta and Broadway musicals. The best definition he gives
of New Music Theater in book with Desi, is:

...The wide and evolving territory that lies between opera and the musical. Music
theater is theater that is music-driven (i.e. decisively linked to musical timing and
organization) where, at the very least, music language, vocalization, and physical
movement exist, interact, or stand side by side in some kind of equality but
performed by different performers and in a different social ambiance than works
normally categorized as operas (performed by opera singers in opera houses) or
musicals (performed by theater singers in “legitimate” theaters). 13

Now that this definition is over ten years old, it seems likely that Salzman would
be fascinated by many of the changes taking place in both the musical and the opera. On
Site Opera makes it their mission to bring opera to “different social ambiances,” as do
Opera On Tap and Heartbeat Opera. Works like Laura Kaminsky’s 75-minute opera *As
One*, a small-scale work performed with no intermission featuring two singers
representing one transgender character, has had twenty productions since it was written in

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13 Eric Salzman and Thomas Desi, *The New Music Theater: Seeing the Voice, Hearing
2014, making it the most performed new opera in North America. Other cross-genre works are springing up with surprising regularity outside the traditional opera house.

One of Salzman’s most compelling essays on contemporary music, new music theater and, to a large extent his own career, was published in the Yale School of Drama’s *Theater* in 2009. Salzman was at his most reflective, having only recently published the major new music theater retrospective, and was now in what would be the last decade of his life. Entitled, *Speaking in Tongues, or Why Should Eclectic Be a Bad Word?*, the essay encompasses the main themes to which he dedicated his musical life, considers his own contributions to the field and defends his eclecticism as a deliberate credo. Here, Salzman is again evoking those questions from our Introduction, “whence music?” and “whither music?” He returns to the analogy of foxes and hedgehogs, arguing that it is the distance of time that makes composers seem more stylistically consistent than they were perceived in their own eras. He asserts that Handel, Gluck, Mozart, Wagner, Puccini, Stravinsky, and Gershwin, were all “criticized in one way or another for their refusal to adhere to a single manner” and he expresses hope for a multi-voiced musical future.14

It is essential to his way of thinking that Salzman speaks of the future of music in terms of voice. As I noted in the introduction, “The Voice” and its singular position at the origin of all music, had been the subject of thorough examination in Salzman’s book. In the 2009 essay (Appendix 1) he borrows a somewhat different concept – voice adaption as a social phenomenon – from an essay by Zadie Smith. Published in *The New York

Smith’s essay considers the dangerous social implications of voice adaptation in culture, citing literature from the Shakespearean oeuvre, Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, the poetry of Frank O’Hara, and focusing finally on Barak Obama’s racially significant presidential campaign. She holds up Shakespeare’s commitment to “speaking simultaneous truths” as a fundamental human concept; seen as a potential asset in our poets and as a critical defect in our leaders. In his own essay Salzman appropriates – and uses as a defense – Smith’s examination of the ways in which the social concepts of identity, clarity, competence and authenticity are confusingly mingled with those of singularity, duplicity and equivocation.

To speak in multiple voices means to risk being accused of inauthenticity and self-consciousness (the latter accusation was hurled at Salzman more than once). It requires equal parts audacity and humility as well as a finely-tuned ear; all attributes Salzman possessed. Yet in the fraying musical order of the middle of the twentieth century, authenticity was a crucial imprimatur, necessary in maintaining a following. Salzman was willing to forgo the comforts of this kind of identity in order to preserve his agency and to nurture a scholarly detachment more suited his own abounding curiosity. Says Smith, “To live variously cannot simply be a gift, endowed by an accident of birth; it has to be a continual effort, continually renewed.” She follows this in her next paragraph with the statement, “flexibility is a choice, always open to all of us.”

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conviction that if his voice was loud enough, clever enough and sustained long enough, it might accumulate enough energy to bend the world to his vision.

As an artist Salzman belonged enthusiastically to his times. Considering Salzman’s career accomplishments and his connection to the musical goings-on of the century, it is sobering to realize how fragile history and memory can be. Despite the more than 800 results from a search of “Eric Salzman music” in The New York Times archive between 1957 and 2019, that newspaper’s staff needed to be reminded of Salzman’s career accomplishments before they were sufficiently convinced that he merited an editorial obituary. Once they looked into his life, a rather impressive 1300-word obituary was forthcoming. The great classical music surge of the 1950s and 60s passed; the electricity of the New York avant garde music scene passed; the boom associated with the age of the music album (LP, cassette, CD) passed; and awareness of Salzman’s integral participation in these movements was already waning in the later decades of his life. Yet it was the century’s enormous technological advancements themselves that made the quixotic vision of changing the world through art so believable to artists of those times. Young composers, urged on by Babbit, Boulez, Cage, Stockhausen and the like, motivated by the vast economic potential of records, television and film, wrote and acted as though the quality of the future of life in America rested in the outcomes of the artistic battles they were fighting.

Salzman was different from some of his colleagues in his sanguine enthusiasm for each new development and technology, just as he spoke excitedly, frankly and without bitterness or undue nostalgia about the past. As a historian, Salzman could step back and be objective, while others may have been more wistful. In an elegiac portrait of her
mother for *The Gettysburg Review*, called “My Multimedia Mother; Recollections from a Counter-Cultural Childhood,” Alexis Lathem discusses her mother’s work in the 1980s.

However, by this time, the magical alchemy of the late 1960s, which gave birth to the psychedelic light show, electronic chessboars, stereopticons, TV bras, and underwater concerts, had lost its power. The same critic who had reviewed the Electric Ear concerts so generously for the *New York Times*, Donal Henahan, and who wrote “Multi-Media’s Mother of Them All,” would write:

“Suddenly it all rushes back, the dizziness of the 60s…. Oh, my, yes. It was the time of composing with brainwave feedback, fiber-optic systems, strobe lights, Day-Glo, 16 channel tape, shuffling feet, toy pianos, analog computers, the earth’s magnetic field, astrological charts… All that happened of course, long ago in a far country to which we would never want to return.”

My multimedia mother who a decade and a half or so later, when the midsummer’s night dream had passed, was no longer needed, nor, it seemed, even relevant. “More and more,” John Cage says in *Empty Words*,

“a concern with personal feelings of individuals, even the enlightenment of individuals, will be seen in the larger context of society. We know how to suffer or control our emotions. If not, advice is available. There is a cure for tragedy. The path to self-knowledge has been mapped out by psychiatry, by oriental philosophy, mythology, occult thought, anthroposophy, and astrology. We know all we need to know about Oedipus, Prometheus, and Hamlet. What we are learning is how to be convivial. ‘Here comes Everybody.’”

Salzman himself was not overly nostalgic about the past, nor anxious about the future. He looked forward to “everybody” showing up to participate in the arts. In fact, in his acceptance address for the Sang Prize, he had called for just that kind of grass-roots participation in the arts. As the fever pitch of the 60s and 70s subsided, he had transitioned with enthusiasm into being much more of a producer than a composer in the 80s and early 90s, feeling that his essential core mission had not changed. He remained enthusiastic about the latest developments in theater technology until the end of his life, imagining that a future production of *Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors* would make

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use of a real holographic projector so that the eponymous character could move around the stage and interact with the rest of the cast without actually being there.

Salzman had remained in the collaborative creative mindset of earlier times. Once during a meeting with the author about a possible small-scale production of *Big Jim & the Small-Time Investors* in 2014, he suggested that I reach out to Francesca Zambello or Tina Landau as possible choices to direct. The former is now Artistic Director at Washington National Opera and General Director of the Glimmerglass Festival, while the latter is a major Broadway director. Salzman remembered working with each early in their careers when they were in need of opportunities, and his suggestion to reach out to them reflected imperviousness to the effects of time. I was in a position to explain that both women had long ago graduated from the kind of low-budget avant-garde projects that we were discussing, and which have become increasingly difficult to stitch together as free or low-cost performance spaces in New York City have ceased to exist. If Salzman displayed any grief at being relegated to the sidelines of an industry in which he once held more important roles, he covered it gracefully with anecdotes and replaced it with enthusiasm for mentoring and befriending young artists who expressed an interest in carrying forward his vision for New Music Theater.

What Salzman and his generation could not have foreseen was the effect that the arrival of “everybody” would have on the meaning of music in society, and on the funding of arts and artists in the twenty-first century. With so much variety and quantity of content emerging constantly on digital platforms, concepts of quality, social merit and abstract terms like “avant-garde” are as subjective as ever. The challenge of capturing the meaningful attention of eyes and ears has evolved and is inseparable from the challenge
of getting funding for arts projects. Salzman’s colleagues Westergaard and Bolcom each went into academia, which sustained them in a socially renewing environment. Salzman, who had largely preserved his agency and autonomy, maintained only an unstable affiliation as Composer-in-Residence with the Center for Contemporary Opera, since that organization’s financial obligations precluded major projects with artists who did not carry major social or economic capital. Even the relative success of Western Wind’s 2014 album featuring the music of Salzman and Meredith Monk, though highlighted by Gramophone and Fanfare magazines as well as WQXR radio, produced no perceivable change in Salzman’s reputation.

Looking back at the list of roughly 150 promising young composers, none older than 35 when they were listed by The New York Times in 1957, Salzman is probably better remembered than most, including his friends Ramiro Cortés and Salvatore Martirano. While other names on the list are famous in the classical music world, what makes Salzman an ideal example for understanding the classical music scene of the mid twentieth century, is that he was squarely in the middle of that world rather than sitting astride it. John Ashbery, the avant-garde poet whose texts Salzman used for Foxes and Hedghogs and The Nude Paper Sermon, died two months before Salzman. In his late period poem, “Episode,” this fellow elder statesman for mid-century avant-gardism captures Salzman’s entire lifespan from the 30s to the present, most importantly reflecting on their place in history and on the role of music in the era. It was published in 2009, the same year as Salzman’s own reflective article on eclecticism:

In old days, when they tried to figure out how to write the sweetest melodies, they fell on a bed, chewed the pillow. A moon rankled in the crevices of a shutter. In 1935
the skirts were long and flared slightly, suitably. Hats shaded part of the face. Lipstick was fudgy and encouraging. There was music in the names of the years. 1937 was welcoming too, though one bit one’s lip preparing for the pain that was sure to come.

“That must be awful.” I was hoping you could imagine it. Yet I will be articulate again and articulate what we knew anyway of what the lurching moon had taught us, seeking music where there’s something dumb being said.

And if it comes back to being alone at the starting gate, so be it. We hadn’t wanted this fuss, these extras. We were calm under an appearance of turmoil, and so we remain even today, an unwanted inspiration to those who come immediately after as well as those who came before, lots of them, stretching back into times of discussion. I told you so, we can handle it, hand on the stick shift headed into a billboard labeled Tomorrow, the adventures of new music, melismas shrouding the past and the passing days.17

Because Salzman, like Ashbery in the poem above, made an effort to understand and constantly reposition himself relative to the past and future, his work serves as a reference for how composers and artists of his milieu saw themselves. He represents, as much or more than any other figure, the totality of his particular milieu because he lived so variously within it. Salzman often ended his correspondence, “Excelsior!” which was a characteristic way of avoiding or counteracting an ending by advancing the energy forward and upward. It is my hope that this paper, in addition to chronicling Salzman’s multifaceted past, has the same invigorating effect on his enduring legacy.

Not long ago, at a presentation in Vienna, a student asked me if it bothered me when my work was characterized as “eclectic.” “Why should it?” I replied. “It is eclectic.”

The question wasn’t meant to be negative; the student who asked it was writing a thesis on the music of Leonard Bernstein. But the implication was that eclectic was a sharp arrow in the critical quiver that, if accurately aimed, could be fatal. The notion that artists should have a particular and singular personal manner — definable, limited, possibly ideological, consciously or intellectually perpetrated by the creator or (preferably) generated by the social circumstances of history, time, and place — is a modern one largely derived from art historians, who invented the idea of historical style. Initially, style or manner belonged to national schools (Italianate, Chinoiserie, African American) with real or imagined national or even racial characters.

Later, the idea was adopted by critics and historians to designate periods of cultural history (baroque, neoclassical, impressionist). A more recent version of this trope has leaked out from art history to become a series of categories or critical nostrums about contemporary art and artists. The central thesis is that great artists have recognizable, personal styles. Since most of the old moist applications have withered away, critics of the more abstract visual and performance arts are often reduced to a few dry generalities of taste. Within this limited vocabulary, the notion of style — a recognizable manner, often reduced to a few simple ways of going about business such as a few Mark Rothko–like color fields or Philip Guston brushstrokes — makes up a good part of what is left. The idea of style is also closely linked to the other two standards now commonly applied to the nonrepresentational arts: originality and authenticity. Modern art — in particular, the abstract arts (visual art, classical music, and modern dance) — is said to be about identifiable style and voice. Issues of content are left to the verbal or popular arts (novels, theater, song lyrics, and the movies).

We have the idea that our notion of style always existed, but this is doubtful. Many, if not most, of the historical icons of Western culture, even (or especially) in such abstract arts as music and dance, were extremely conscious about national styles and also about popular and folk music, particularly when it came from the extremes and edges of European society. They were much less obviously concerned with creating a unified personal manner. The idea that the stylistic unity of Mozart’s music welled up from the subconscious working of the mind and ear of a childlike genius is a complete romantic myth and has nothing to do with his real musical landscape or how his contemporaries perceived his music.

Mozart was a highly eclectic composer who absorbed and reused all the musical styles and voices of his time; it is only the effect of time and distance that
makes his work seem unified and reduced to a postrococo or classical style. When Joseph II famously said to Mozart, “Too many notes,” it is generally assumed that the emperor was referring to music too complex for his tone-deaf ears. But Joseph was well trained in music and had a good ear. It was, no doubt, the interweaving of multiple musical elements that gave him trouble; a purveyor of a purely Italian style like Salieri was more to his taste than a master of mix-and-match like Mozart. Mozart’s mastery of many voices and styles and his ability to interweave them makes him the greatest opera composer of his time — or, perhaps, of any time — but the same talents are found in his concert and religious music.

Mozart was not a unique case. As the titles of Bach’s works tell us, he consciously wrote in several different manners including the German, Italian, French, and English. Haydn, Mozart, and other contemporaries also included Spanish, Gypsy, and Turkish elements in the mix. Also baroque counterpoint (Bach was beginning to be rediscovered) and several varieties of folk music (German, Austrian, Anglo-Irish, etc.). This tendency to mix and match styles is particularly evident in theater music and opera and hence appears often in theatrical composers like Handel, Gluck, Mozart, Wagner, Puccini, Stravinsky, and Gershwin, all of whom were criticized in one way or another for their refusal to adhere to a single manner. To choose an example from another age and another art form, who is more eclectic than George Balanchine?

In an article in the New York Review of Books titled “Speaking in Tongues” (February 26, 2009), Zadie Smith writes about the ability to speak in voices. Her starting point is her own experience in consciously learning and adopting the speech of an educated member of English society and the parallels she recognizes in Barack Obama’s ability to transcend the street by negotiating the class markers of speech in America.

Not coincidentally, both she and Obama have been accused of inauthenticity and self-consciousness — being “not black enough” — in large part because they left behind the sound of the street in adopting their new mode of speaking, but also because of the complex intellectual process that enables them to hear and adopt different voices and different points of view. The criticism has obvious class as well as political and artistic implications. I can remember my mother correcting my own speech to this same end (so I didn’t sound so Noo Yawk). Only later in life did I realize that she must have done the same thing to move from the Yiddish theater, where she was brought up, into the high-class pre–Marlon Brando speech of the uptown theater that she aspired to as an actress, writer, and director.

The connections between class, speech, diction, “voice” (in the various meanings of the word), style, and authenticity are very well brought out in Smith’s article, which starts from social and political concerns (outside of the inner city, a black politician cannot get elected in a white majority society if he sounds too “street” and therefore too threatening). But her concerns are as much about art and literature as about politics.

A writer, particularly a writer of novelistic or theatrical fiction, obviously has to be concerned with voice — who is speaking and how — as well as with the larger artistic language of the work as a whole. And her ear, like Obama’s, is
tuned to more than one way of speaking. Is that a defect or a virtue? Ms. Smith argues that it is a rare and unrecognized talent in a politician as well as a great virtue in a poet. She cites Obama’s perfect pitch in his memoirs of the various voices of the characters in his life. She also quotes the New York poet Frank O’Hara, but her prime examples come not from a contemporary poet or novelist, but from a British poet and playwright by the name of William Shakespeare.

Is a good ear and the ability to speak in various voices and tongues a virtue or a defect in a poet, a novelist, or a playwright? A painter, choreographer, or composer? The emergence of style and its separated-at-birth twins, authenticity and originality, are well established in the modern critical vocabulary as essential criteria for modern art, particularly of the nonrepresentational sort. Closely associated with this is the antiintellectual stance taken by many American critics who allow themselves an intellectual point of view but prefer their artists and their art to be funky and instinctive. This was characteristic of the large body of writing that we might call the “pazz and jop” school of music criticism as pioneered by the Village Voice. John Rockwell, in his All-American Music, an influential book that celebrates the wide range of American music, goes out of his way to state that one of his recurrent themes is that “an excessive self-consciousness can rob a composer’s music of its vitality.” A wide-ranging, self-conscious, and intellectual point of view is permitted to the critic but not to the composer. The invention of musical minimalism is usually credited to the mystical justintonation drones of La Monte Young and of Terry Riley’s In C, a Cageian or Fluxus-inspired effort that brought the key of C major back into vogue. But it might just as well be credited to Morton Feldman, a composer who was close to Cage but also to the New York abstract expressionist painters. Feldman, who was a large man both physically and intellectually, was a brilliant intellectual who spoke in a loud and noticeably Noo Yawk voice about everything under the sun. But he created a New York–school music that was completely the opposite: small and delicate to the extreme, entirely lacking in impulse or attack and without intellectual control, development, variation, tonality, or rhythm. The minimalism of Terry Riley, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and John Adams that followed was quite different, based on the return of tonality and rhythm and on the principles of repetition and (generally tiny and gradual) variation. The notes in Feldman’s music are like the brushstrokes in an abstract expressionist painting; they are not part of a process or a predetermined form but are simply the essence of the object itself, set down purely as manifestations of the individuality of the artist and providing the subject matter of the work.

In the late 1960s, in the face of the on-rush of minimalism in its early and rather pure forms, I wrote a large-scale, theatrical concert piece for voices and chamber orchestra, setting portions of an epic poem by John Ashbery (a friend and colleague of O’Hara’s) that incorporates fragments of an old boy’s adventure story. Ashbery, like Feldman, had many connections to the New York art scene, but his book-length poem Europe seemed to me the opposite of Feldman and the tonal minimalists in its ability to synthesize multiple voices yet avoid cacophony (closer perhaps to a Robert Rauschenberg combine than to a Guston or Rothko painting). I considered calling the work Europe and America but eventually
settled on Foxes and Hedgehogs, a title that comes from a fragment of the Greek poet Archilochus which states (in its entirety) that “the fox knows many things but the hedgehog knows only one big thing.” This quote was most famously used in Isaiah Berlin’s essay about Tolstoy, to describe the antithesis between two kinds of artists and writers. The hedgehogs are those whose work and worldview can be defined by a big idea or by ideology, artistic and otherwise (and by extension, characterized by a unified style and voice). The foxes are those whose work and worldview is wide-ranging, multivoiced, eclectic. Foxes and Hedgehogs is a concert piece that was set up as a dramatic form or a series of dialectical oppositions in which stylistic coherence and opposing styles would clash in both a consciously intellectual and dramatic manner. After about three-quarters of an hour of contrast and conflict, the perhaps inevitable culmination is an uproar that then dies down, leaving the softspoken words the breath as the last audible, comprehensible moment. At the premiere, in the silence between the hushed end of the piece and the delayed audience realization that the piece was over, a loud boo could be heard. It came from Feldman, the creator of perhaps the most comprehensive and successful form of quiet, painterly musical minimalism in the twentieth century. It was exactly the perfect response from the appropriate person.

Although Foxes and Hedgehogs and some similar works were often performed in the 1960s and 1970s, it was minimalism that carried the day and that continues to dominate new music performance in this country and, increasingly, abroad. My notion was that, just as the conflict between neoclassicism and dodecophony had dominated the musical dialectics of the earlier part of the century, and serialism versus aleatory or chance music was the postwar dialectic, so the late twentieth century was going to be dominated by the clash between minimalism and whatever its multivoice opposite might be. Just as clearly, it seemed to me that the place where this drama was going to play out had to be the theater — specifically the small downtown or out-of-town stages where the age-old connections between music and theater were not completely broken or totally ossified, where some sort of conflict or dialectic principle was at home, where abstract form was a lesser concern, where the door was still open to the street and one could still hear other voices and tongues. Theater by its nature seems to involve something beyond the artist’s “I-me-me”: that is, speaking in other voices, consciously putting characters and voices up there. To this end, I organized a music-theater company that functioned for a little more than a decade in the improvisational manner of the theater and dance ensembles of the period.

Later I founded and artistic-directed a music-theater festival and created a series of eclectic music-theater works in various collaborations and forms. Although these works were mostly small in scale (compared to Foxes and Hedgehogs and The Nude Paper Sermon), they were poststyle in the way that they incorporated the eclectic multivoice idea, often consciously (pace John Rockwell) recycling ideas from the near and distant past as well as multiple voices of the present.

It has always seemed to me obvious that the breakup of the old connections between music and theater (in popular music as well as in opera) and the domination of abstraction in the performing arts of the last century were
closely connected. The obvious need was to try to recreate the idea of music-theater outside the precincts of the opera house (too expensive, too ossified) and the Broadway theater (too expensive, too ossified). Although a lot of contemporary theater, dance, and performance art is highly music-dependent, this has to be a theater that is music-driven or, at the very least, in which music plays a role equal to physical movement, visual arts, language, and dramaturgy. Although not all forms of performance art are multivoiced, eclecticism is always at home in a theatrical context, particularly in those forms of theater that concern themselves with conflict and in which the door is open, at least a crack, to the street.

This has not been an easy task. Aside from a few large-scale festivals, some now moribund, there has never been a music-theater theater, and large opera houses and Broadway theaters did not wither away (as some of us hoped) but continue to dominate music-theater. A collection of early recordings placed in a vault underneath the Paris Opera in the early years of the twentieth century was recently opened, revealing that melomanes of 1908 were listening to the same things as the melomanes of 2008.

Insofar as new work has penetrated those hallowed halls, much of it belongs to the minimalists or the revivalists. Indeed, in the clash of musical foxes and hedgehogs that took place in the last quarter of the last century, there is no doubt that it was the hedgehogs and the nonintellectuals that prevailed.

Maybe that’s about to change. Obama-style change is, to a great degree, antiideological and multivoiced. Zadie Smith’s “Speaking in Tongues” suggests that the connection between the social and political evolutions of recent times and the artistic movements of the age on the other, may be closer than we think. I certainly hope she’s right.

— Eric Salzman
Appendix 2

WORKS PRODUCED BY ERIC SALZMAN
AMERICAN MUSIC THEATER FESTIVAL 1983-1994

1983
An Evening With Stephen Sondheim and Friends
presented by Steven Sondheim
with Phyllis Newman, Chris Groenendahl
directed by Paul Lazarus

1984
Strike Up the Band (first performance of original since 1927)
by George & Ira Gershwin
original version restored and edited by Eric Salzman
directed by Frank Corsaro
music direction by Maurice Peress
cast included Bill Irwin, David Carroll

“Officially the festival opened in 1984 with Strike Up the Band, a version that I put together from the original 1927 version, with a couple of songs from the later version. It was directed by Frank Corsaro with Music direction by Maurice Peres. The comic role which was originally performed by a very famous comic whose name I can’t remember was done in our production by Bill Erwin, another big name that’s gone on to do big things. But Ira Gershwin was alive at this time and his personal secretary at the time was Michael Feinstein. And Michael, I don’t remember how I knew him, but Michael got us a lot of material, a lot of songs, some of which had disappeared in the meantime. And I took a couple of things from the later version that I couldn’t leave out. One of the more famous songs was from the later version. Soon. That was a big splash for the opening, but it didn’t go on… everybody wants to move stuff on… Every theater in the country that does musicals wants to have A Chorus Line, to pay the bills.”

Mrs Farmer’s Daughter
by Jack Eric Williams
George Ferencz, stage director
also performed at Pepsico Summerfare

“A piece based on Frances Farmer, the actress, who was boycotted and lost her career because she was a leftist in Hollywood and was called by the House Unamerican Activities Committee. This piece, the music was by a big guy – a big rotund guy – Jack Eric Williams I think his name was. VERY talented. More of a theater piece than an opera, but very well done. And Sharon Scruggs played Mrs. Farmer. The original director I had was a Brechtian director who was very well-known for directing Brecht. He lived in the Heights near us. And he did a brilliant job – the conceptual job – of the piece, and I had to fire him because he wouldn’t show to rehearsals, or he’d come late, completely drunk. And the cast was in rebellion and it’s not
easy to fire these guys. Then O’Horgan came in. Actually what happened is he – like O’Horgan – was an Ellen Stewart protégé from LaMama and I called Ellen and I told her what was going on. She said, don’t make a move, I’m getting on the next train. She came down and escorted him out of the theater. That’s the true story. So in a way she fired him.”

The Emperor Jones (premiere; co-produced with Pepsico Summerfare)
- musical setting of Eugene O’Neill
- music by Coleridge Taylor Perkinson
- starring Cleavon Little
- directed and choreographed by Donald McKayle
- with Kevin O’Connor and members of the Alvin Ailey Dance Company
- also performed at Pepsico Summerfare

Trio (premiere)
- by Noa Ain
- directed by Hilary Blecher
- designed by Maya Lin
- with Novella Nelson and Karla Burns
- also performed at Carnegie Hall and elsewhere

1985
The Golden Land
- original musical based on Yiddish theater songs
- by Zalman Mlotek and Moishe Rosenfeld
- directed by Jacques Levy
- musical direction by Zalman Mlotek
- with Bruce Adler, the Golden Land Klezmer Band
- widely performed including 9-month run at the Second Avenue Theatre, NYC, produced by Sherwin Goldman

X, The Life and Times of Malcolm X (premiere; developed by AMTF)
- text by Thulani Davis; music by Anthony Davis
- directed by Rhoda Levine
- musical direction by Peter Aaronson
- with Avery Brooks
- afterwards performed at the New York City Opera

“The star who played Malcom X was Avery Brooks, the actor. Who turned out had perfect pitch and could learn Anthony’s Score perfectly. Also Thomas Young was a major performer. That production went on, almost in tact, except expanded and with some cast changes, to the New York City Opera. Famously Beverly Sills came down and said, I want to do this piece, but only if it’s the world premiere. I said, but we just did it. She said, I have to tell my funders that this is the world premiere. Unfortunately for her John Rockwell had seen our production. It’s exactly the same production, except they exploded it for the stage. It’s a pretty brilliant piece.”
Seehear
by George Coates; designed by Jerome Serlin; music by Paul Drescher
with Rinde Eckert and the George Coates Ensemble
also performed in San Francisco and on tour

Mowgli
after Kipling's "Jungle Book"
by C. J. Ellis and Tom O'Horgan
music by Kirk Nurock
directed by Tom O'Horgan
afterwards performed on Theatre Row, New York
“Another project that should have gone on but didn’t. Kirk Nurock is a very good composer with a jazz background who is somewhat neglected, I would say.”

The Gospel at Colonnus
by Lee Breuer after Sophocles
music by Bob Telson
directed by Lee Breuer
widely performed (including BAM, in Europe and on Broadway)

1986
The Juniper Tree (premiere production, co-produced with American Repertory Theatre)
by Arthur Yorinks from a Grimm Brothers fairy tale
music by Philip Glass and Robert Moran
directed André Serban
also performed at the American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge

Queenie Pie (premiere; production developed by AMTF)
"street opera" by Duke Ellington
book by Duke Ellington and George S. Wolfe
lyrics by George David Weiss and George S. Wolfe
directed by Robert Kalfin
music direction by Maurice Peress
choreography and musical staging by Garth Fagan
designed by Romare Bearden
afterwards performed at the Kennedy Center, Washington, DC

Slow Fire (premiere of revised version)
by Rinde Eckert and Paul Dresher
directed by Richard E.T. White
with Rinde Eckert, Fides Kruger and the Rinde Eckert Ensemble
widely performed on tour

The Transposed Heads (premiere of musical version commissioned by AMTF)
Let Freedom Sing! (premiere; commissioned by AMTF)
by David Crane and Marta Kaufman
directed by Paul Lazarus
music direction by Michael Skloff

Stauf (premiere of new version)
by Michael Sahl and Eric Salzman after the Faust legend
directed by Rhoda Levine; musical direction by Arthur Greene
with Thomas Young, Patty Holly
also performed at Cubiculo, New York City

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (premiere)
by Mordecai Richler and David Spencer after Mordecai Richler's book
music by Alan Menken
directed by Austin Pendleton
musical direction by Eric Stern
with Lonnie Price

Nodiho (American premiere)
created and directed by Dokolo Nazabididi Ya Bilengo
with Dance Theatre troupe from Zaire

The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat (American premiere)
by Christopher Rawlence and Michael Nyman based on Oliver Sachs
music by Michael Nyman
directed by Michael Morris
subsequently performed at Lincoln Center Serious Fun and elsewhere

Revelation in the Courthouse Park (first professional performance)
by Harry Partch
directed by Jiri Zizka
musical direction by Danlee Mitchell
with Obba Babbatunde and the Harry Partch Ensemble
subsequently performed at Lincoln Center with Avery Brooks
recording produced and directed by Eric Salzman

“The director was a Czech director who was working in Philadelphia who was working at the Wilma Theater and the choreographer was George Faison. Anyway, that one was fun. It’s the Bacchae of Euripides set by Harry Partch in a small town in America. It alternates the Greek text with the modern situation. And the instruments are all Partch inventions, so you have to have the original instruments. Now there are copies, but at that time there were none, so they
had to be brought from California. We had people from all over the country coming to see it. It was a legendary piece, but nobody had ever seen it. The only production it had ever had was an amateur production that Partch himself put together when he was at the University of Illinois. Some of the players had worked with Partch before he died and we had all these crazy instruments. But what we had was a courtyard of the original building that was used by the Philadelphia School of the Arts. It’s now a university. It was like a Greek temple and there was this courtyard with big steps coming down. It was a really site-specific production.”

1988

*The Warrior Ant*

by Lee Breuer  
music by Bob Telson  
subsequently performed at the Spoleto Festival and BAM

*1000 Airplanes on the Roof* (premiere; co-produced with Berlin and Vienna Festivals)  
by David Henry Hwang and Philip Glass  
directed by Philip Glass  
with the Philip Glass Ensemble  
widely toured in Europe, North America and Australia and recorded

1989

*Betsy Brown* (premiere)  
by Ntosake Shange and Emily after Ntoshake Shange's book  
music by Baikida Carroll  
directed by Emily Mann  
musical direction by Daryl Waters  
subsequently performed at the McCarter Theater, Princeton

*Dangerous Games: Two Tango Pieces* (premiere)  
by Graziella Daniele with lyrics by William Finn  
music by Astor Piazzola  
directed and choreographed by Graziella Daniele  
musical direction by Jim Lewis

*Power Failure* (premiere)  
by Rinde Eckert and Paul Dresher  
music by Paul Dresher  
directed by Tom O'Horgan  
with Rinde Eckert and the Paul Dresher Ensemble  
subsequently toured and recorded
**1990**

*Casino Paradise* (premiere; commissioned by AMTF)
  by Arnold Weinstein  
  music by William Bolcom  
  directed by David Alden  
  with Tim Nolan  
  subsequently performed at the Ballroom, NYC, and recorded under the direction of Eric Salzman

“That was a piece that was better and more interesting than its fate. It did not go on, though it was done in couple of forms.”

*Hydrogen Jukebox* (premiere; co-produced with the Spoleto Festival)
  texts by Allen Ginsburg  
  music by Philip Glass  
  design by Jerome Serlin  
  directed and choreographed by Ann Carlson  
  also performed at Spoleto and BAM  
  toured in America and Europe and recorded

*Praise House* (coproduced with Spoleto Festival and BAM)
  by Laurie Carlos and Urban Bush Women  
  directed and choreographed by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar  
  performed by Laurie Carlos and Urban Bush Women  
  widely performed on tour by Urban Bush Women

*Love Life* (first performances since Broadway production of 1948)
  by Alan Jay Lerner  
  music by Kurt Weill  
  adapted by Thomas Babe and Eric Salzman  
  directed by Barry Harmon  
  choreographed by Chris Chadman  
  music director: Robert Kapilow

“We hired a playwright named Thomas Babe to redo it. His name was Thomas Babe, who turned out to be another alcoholic, but that’s another story. And we made some changes, I thought, for the better. But it was basically a restoration of the original Alan Jay Lerner / Kurt Weill piece, which was you know, a very unusual, original piece. It’s that piece which a lot of people credit, including Sondheim, with having inspired the concept musical. And a lot of work that was done after that can be traced back. But nobody knew about Love Life because it opened during a recording strike. So the recording was never made of the original. And it was also in competition with something else on Broadway. *Love Life* will be done because it’s Kurt Weill and Alan J. Lerner. It’s also Kurt Weill’s most original American piece. Closer in some ways to his European pieces. And it’s about an American Family, but that lives through history
– through different ages of American history. It’s interesting. It’s personal but it has a sort of political, economic overtones.”

1991

*Frida* (premiere; commissioned by AMTF based on the life of Frida Kahlo)
- by Hilary Blecher and Migdalia Cruz
- music by Robert Xavier Rodriguez
- puppetry by Barbara Pollitt and Steve Kaplin
- directed by Hilary Blecher
- musical direction by Rick Cordoba
- with Helen Schneider
- performed on tour and by Houston Grand Opera (with Angelina Reaux)

“*Frida* was a commission by us. The project was brought to us by Hilary Blecher who was a South African director. And we looked for a Hispanic composer who could set English and found Rodriguez. The original Frida that we had was a sensational singer named Helen Schneider, who had a big career in Europe doing American Musicals. She did *Sunset Boulevard* in German. She was great as Frida. She didn’t really have an operatic voice, and the composer didn’t want her. He wanted Angelina Reaux, the woman who did it at Houston Opera. He wanted her to do it, and I just felt that we should do theatrical casting. We didn’t do opera casting, which is based on other things.”

*Steel* (co-produced with American Repertory Theatre)
- by Derek Wolcott
- music by Galt McDermott
- directed by Derek Wolcott and David Wheeler

“There’s a story that goes with this. I have the privilege of being one of the few people you’ll ever meet who fired a Nobel Prize winner. Derek directed the piece. And Derek was a wonderful writer and his piece was about the invention of steel drums in Trinidad. He was from St. Lucia, but essentially from Trinidad. It was a wonderful piece. He insisted that he wanted Galt McDermott to write the music. I said, ‘Galt McDermott!!! What do you want *Hair* rock music for, for your steel drum piece. Let’s get a Trinidadian composer.’ And I went and I found this guy who had just won this big festival in Trinidad and all that. And he was in Brooklyn, because they all went to Brooklyn in the winter season to perform and so on. And I had this young guy, blah blah blah. It turned out that Galt McDermott was, first of all, a tight friend of Derek – they had grown up together or gone to school together or something. But Galt McDermott was born and raised in Jamaica. His father was a Canadian diplomat in Jamaica and he knew Jamaican music inside and out. He was an extremely good musician – people sort of make fun of *Hair* – but Galt McDermott is a very fine musician. And he knew a bunch of styles, so he could make a theatrical version of it, moving from jazz to reggae to steel drum music, that made the piece work. Made the piece into something special. So that premiered (because it was a co-production) in Cambridge. And Derek directed and there were all these problems, so I got another director who was an associate at ART, which Derek accepted. And I said, ‘Derek go back to your room and do revisions.’ When I think of it now, it was hilarious.
And he did it. He went and made the revisions. And I found a director who he trusted, or someone close to him in Cambridge. Because Derek was teaching at Harvard or MIT. Anyway, it worked out quite well. But the piece didn’t have as much of a life as I thought it should have. But that’s show-biz. It wasn’t the only one.”

*Atlas* (premiere production; coproduced with Houston Grand Opera)

- by Meredith Monk based on the story of Alexandra Daniels
- music direction by Wayne Hankin
- subsequently performed by BAM and recorded

“This was a biggie. Well we tried hard to get co-productions going. For obvious reasons – share the expenses, widen the audience, give pieces a life, and so-on. But basically no opera company in America was interested except David Gockley at Houston. It was an interesting piece. And, of course, it was recorded and performed elsewhere. We had a big time to convince Meredith to do the lead role. Because it was a piece based on a real-life story of a woman, who I think went to Tibet dressed as a man. Meredith was a friend of Daniel Nagrin. And she was around during all of the *Peloponnesian War* stuff. We used to gather and have something to eat. Either stopping off somewhere, or going back to the studio. And she was around a lot. There were other people, but notably Meredith. And we became quite friendly at that time. So, I’ve had very good relations with Meredith over the years, and had known her long before this. But she had never written an opera. She was making the transition from being a quote [sic] “choreographer” to being a composer. At that point she was better known in the dance world than she was in the music world. And the music world did not accept her for a long time, because she didn’t have really standard musical training. And also, when Atlas came up, there was the issue of the orchestration. And she brought in someone to do the orchestration. She did not do them herself. She was not that well equipped to do. Vocal stuff, of course, she was fabulous, but anyway. So that was another big deal in 1991.”

*A Musical Tribute to Leonard Bernstein*

- New York Festival of Song
- Michael Barrett and Steve Blier, directors

*Banjo Dancing*

- by Steven Wade and Milton Kramer
- directed by Milton Kramer
- performed by Steven Wade

**1992**

*Herringbone*

- by Tom Cone and Ellen Fitzhugh
- music by Skip Kennon
- directed by Kenneth Elliot

*Amphigorey* (premiere)

- written and designed by Edward Gorey
music by Peter Golub
directed and choreographed by Daniel Levans

Tania (premiere; commissioned by AMTF)
by Michael John La Chiusa and Anthony Davis after the Patti Hearst story
music by Anthony Davis
directed by Christopher Alden
designed by Paul Steinberg

1993
Bobos (premiere)
by Ed Shockley
music by James McBride
directed and choreographed by Bertin Rowser
hip-hop choreography by Monica Johnson

“The only piece we did which was pure Philadelphia. It was a piece about the ghetto in Philadelphia who gets the wrong sneakers and is made fun of, and then gets involved with, becomes a drug mule in order to get the money to get a good pair of sneakers. And the script was by a very good Philadelphia writer who was married to one of the Urban Bush Women. He’s a major figure. But what interesting is the music. The music was by James McBride. James McBride was a composer and sax player whose fame has become as a writer. His father is black, his mother is Jewish. And he’s written several books including one called The Color of Water, but at that point he was more of a musician than a writer. And it’s a very amusing piece. And that piece was also optioned for Broadway. It was a huge success at the festival and we had to extend it. And we had special tickets for kids from the urban neighborhoods. It was great. They would fill the theater and they would shout at the performers, ‘Don’t do that!!”

States of Independence (premiere; commissioned by AMTF)
by Tina Landau
music by Ricky Ian Gordon
directed by Tina Landau

Stories From the Nerve Bible (premiere; co-commissioned by AMTF)
created, directed and performed by Laurie Anderson

Sheila’s Day
Duma Nalovu
Mbongemi Ngema
performed at Crossroads Theatre in NJ & NYC (New Victory Theater)

1994
Floyd Collins (premiere; commissioned by AMTF)
by Tina Landau and Adam Guettel
music by Adam Guettel

The Mystery of Love
written, directed and performed by Sekou Sundiata

_Chippy: Diaries of a West Texas Hooker_ (premiere; commissioned by AMTF)
by Terry Allen and Jo Harvey Allen
music by Terry Allen, Butch Hancock and Joe Ely
with Jo Harvey Allen, Terry Allen, Butch Hancock and Joe Ely Schlemiel the First (premiere production; co-produced with American Repertory Theatre)
adapted from the Isaac Singer play by Robert Brustein
lyrics by Arnold Weinstein
directed and choreographed by David Gordon
music by Henkus Netzsky and Zalman Mlotek from traditional klezmer
performed by the Conservatory Klezmer Band
performed by the American Repertory Theatre and on pre-Broadway national tour

_Stephen Sondheim Awards_, given in recognition of new talent and innovative contributions to new music theater, were selected by Eric Salzman with Stephen Sondheim; winners include:

Noa Ain
Elliott Goldenthal
Ricki Ian Gordon
Adam Guettel
Michael John La Chiusa
Jonathan Larsen
James McBride and Ed Shockley
Appendix 3

AMERICAN MUSIC THEATER FESTIVAL ALUMNI

Steven Sondheim (composer, lyricist “An Evening with Stephen Sondheim and Friends”)
Paul Lazarus, director (stage director “An Evening with Stephen Sondheim and Friends”, “Let Freedom Sing”)
Gris Goenendahl (actor/singer “An Evening with Stephen Sondheim and Friends”)
Phyllis Newman (actor/singer “An Evening with Stephen Sondheim and Friends”)
Frank Corsaro (director “Strike Up the Band”)
Maurice Peress (conductor, music director, arranger “Strike Up the Band”, “Queenie Pie”)
Bill Irwin (actor, comic “Strike Up the Band”)
*David Carroll (actor/singer “Strike Up the Band”)
Kathryn Buffalo (actor/singer “Strike Up the Band”)
*Jack Eric Williams (author, composer, lyricist “Mrs Farmer’s Daughter”)
George Ferencz (stage director “Mrs Farmer’s Daughter”)
Sharon Scruggs (actor/singer “Mrs Farmer’s Daughter”)
Michael McCormick (actor/singer “Mrs Farmer’s Daughter”)
Donald McKayle (stage director/choreographer “The Emperor Jones”)
*Coleridge Taylor-Perkinson (composer, music director “The Emperor Jones”)
Cleavon Little (actor/singer “The “Emperor Jones”)
Kevin O’Connor (actor “The Emperor Jones”)
Noa Ain (composer “Trio”, Sondheim Award winner)
Hilary Blecher (stage director “Trio”; librettist, stage director “Frida”)
Maya Lin (designer “Trio”)
Novella Nelson (actor/singer “Trio”)
Karla Burns (actor/singer “Trio”)
Sherwin Goldman (co-producer “The Golden Land”)
Zalman Mlotek (arranger, music director “The Golden Land”)
Moishe Rosenfeld (writer “The Golden Land”)
Jacques Levy (stage director “The Golden Land”)
Bruce Adler (actor/singer “The Golden Land”)
Eleanor Raisa (actor/singer “The Golden Land”)
Avi ?????? (actor/singer “The Golden Land”)
Anthony Davis (composer “The Life and Times of Malcolm X”, “Tania”)
Thulani Davis (librettist “The Life and Times of Malcolm X”)
Rhoda Levine (stage director “The Life and Times of Malcolm X”, “Stauf”)
Peter Aaronson (conductor, music director “The Life and Times of Malcolm X”)
Avery Brooks (actor/singer “The Life and Times of Malcolm X”, “Revelation in the Courthouse Park” “Tania”)
Thomas Young (actor/singer “The Life and Times of Malcolm X”, “Stauf”)
Savion Glover (actor “The Life and Times of Malcolm X”)
George Coates (creator, director “Seehear”)
Paul Dresher (composer, music director “Seehear”, co-creator, composer “Slow Fire”, “Power Failure”)
Rinde Eckert (actor/singer “Seehear”; co-writer, actor/singer “Slow Fire”, “Power Failure”)
Jerome Serlin (designer “Seehear”, “Hydrogen Jukebox”, “1000 Airplanes on the Roof”)
Tom O’Horgan (stage director “Mowgli”, “Power Failure”)
Kirk Nurock (composer “Mowgli”)
C.J. Ellis (librettist “Mowgli”)

181
Lee Breuer (creator, stage director “Gospel at Colonus”, “The Warrior Ant”)

Bob Telson (composer “Gospel at Colonus”, “The Warrior Ant”)

Five Blind Boys (and other gospel performers) (“Gospel at Colonus”)

Arthur Yorinks (librettist “The Juniper Tree”)

Philip Glass (composer “The Juniper Tree”, “1000 Airplanes on the Roof”, “Hydrogen Jukebox”)

Robert Moran (co-composer “The Juniper Tree”)

André Serban (stage director “The Juniper Tree”)

George Wolfe (librettist, lyricist “Queenie Pie”)

George David Weiss (lyricist “Queenie Pie”)

Robert Kalfin (stage director “Queenie Pie”)

Garth Fagin (choregrapher “Queenie Pie”)

*Romare Bearden (stage designer “Queenie Pie”)

Constantine Kitsopoulos (conductor “Queenie Pie”)

Fides Kruger (actor/singer “Slow Fire”)

Paul Dresher ensemble (“Slow Fire”)

Julie Taymor (creator, stage director “Transposed Heads”)

Elliott Goldenthal (composer, “Transposed Heads”, Sondheim Award winner)

Sidney Goldfarb (adapter, librettist “Transposed Heads”)

Josh Rosenblum (pianist, music director “Transposed Heads”)

David Crane and Marta Kaufman (creators “Let Freedom Sing”)

Michael Skloff (pianist, music director “Let Freedom Sing”)

Eric Salzman (co-composer, co-librettist “Stauf”; adaptor “Strike Up the Band”, “Love Life”)

Michael Sahl (co-composer, co-librettist “Stauf”)

Patty Holly (actor/singer “Stauf”)

182
William Parry (actor/singer “Stauf”)
Mordichai Richler (writer “The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz”)
David Spencer (writer, lyricist “The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz”)
Alan Mencken (composer “The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz”)
Austin Pendleton (stage director “The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz”)
Eric Stern (musical director “The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz”)
Lonnie Price (actor/singer “The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz”)
Dokolo Nazabididi Ya Bilengo (creator/director “Nodiho”)
Oliver Sacks (creator “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat”)
Christopher Rawlence (co-writer “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat”)
Michael Morris (co-writer, stage director “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat”)
Michael Nyman (composer “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat”)
Marni Nixon (actor/singer “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat”)
Jiri Zizka (stage director “Revelation in the Courthouse Park”)
George Faisan (choreographer “Revelation in the Courthouse Park”)
Danlee Mitchell (music director “Revelation in the Courthouse Park”)
Obba Babatunde (actor/singer “Revelation in the Courthouse Park”)
David Henry Hwang (writer “1000 Airplanes on the Roof”)
Philip Glass Ensemble (musical ensemble “1000 Airplanes on the Roof”)
Ntosake Shange (creator, writer “Betsy Brown”)
Emily Mann (co-adaptor, stage director “Betsy Brown”)
Baikida Carroll (composer “Betsy Brown”)
Daryl Waters (pianist, music director “Betsy Brown”)
*Astor Piazzola (composer “ Dangerous Games”)
Graziella Daniele (creator, stage director, choreographer “Dangerous Games”)
William Finn (lyricist “Dangerous Games”)
Peggy Eisenhower (lighting “Dangerous Games”)
Jim Lewis (pianist, music director “Dangerous Games”)
Eduardo Machado (librettist “Bata” workshop)
Paquito de Rivera (composer, music director, “Bata” workshop)
John Dykers (actor/singer “Power Failure”, “Tania”)
Arnold Weinsten (librettist “Casino Paradise”, librettist/lyricist “Schlemiel the First”)
William Bolcom (composer “Casino Paradise”)
David Alden (stage director “Casino Paradise”)
Tim Nolan (actor/singer “Casino Paradise”)
Joan Morris (actor/singer “Casino Paradise”)
Allen Ginsberg (writer “Hydrogen Jukebox”)
Ann Carlson (director/choregrapher “Hydrogen Jukebox”)
Laurie Carlos (writer, actor/singer “Praise House”)
Jawole Willa Jo Zollar (director, choregrapher “Praise House”)
Urban Bush Women (performance ensemble “Praise House”)
*Thomas Babe (co-adaptor “Love Life”)
Barry Harmon (stage director “Love Life”)
Chris Chadman (choregrapher “Love Life”)
Robert Kapilow (conductor/music director “Love Life”)
Richard Muenz (actor/singer “Love Life”)
Debbie Shapiro (actor/singer “Love Life”)
Migdalia Cruz (lyricist “Frida”)
Robert Xavier Rodriguez (composer “Frida”)
Barbara Pollitt and Steve Kaplin (puppetry “Frida”)

184
Rick Cordoba (music director “Frida”)
Helen Schneider (actor/singer “Frida”)
Derek Wolcott (writer, lyricist, stage director “Steel”)
Galt McDermott (composer “Steel”)
David Wheeler (co-director “Steel”)
Meredith Monk (creator, writer, composer, performer “Atlas”)
Wayne Hankin (arranger, music director “Atlas”)
Michael Barrett (co-music director “A Tribute to Leonard Bernstein”)
Steve Blier (co-music director “A Tribute to Leonard Bernstein”)
Steven Wade (co-writer, performer “Banjo Dancing”)
Milton Kramer (co-writer, director “Banjo Dancing”)
Tom Cone (co-writer “Herringbone”)
Ellen Fitzhugh (co-writer “Herringbone”)
Skip Kennon (composer “Herringbone”)
Kenneth Elliot (stage director “Herringbone”)
B. D. Wong (actor/singer “Herringbone”)
*Edward Gorey (writer, designer “Amphigorey”)
Daniel Levans (director/choregrapher “Amphigorey”)
Peter Golub (composer “Amphigorey”)
Michael John La Chiusa (librettist “Tania”; Sondheim award winner)
Christopher Alden (stage director “Tania”)
Paul Steinberg (designer “Tania”)
Cindy Aaronson (actor/singer “Tania”)
Bill McClaghlin (music director “Tania”)
Ed Shockley (writer/lyricist “Bobos”; Sondheim Award winner)
James McBride (composer “Bobos”, Sondheim Award winner)
Bertin Rowser (director/choreographer “Bobos”)
Monica Johnson (director/choreographer “Bobos”)
Tina Landau (creator, librettist, stage director “States of Independence”, “Floyd Collins”)
Ricky Ian Gordon (composer “States of Independence”)
Laurie Anderson (creator/composer/performer “Stories From the Nerve Bible”)
Adam Guettel (lyricist/composer “Floyd Collins”)
Sekou Sundiata (writer, composer, performer “The Mystery of Love”)
Terry Allen (creator, co-writer, co-composer, performer “Chippy”)
Jo Harvey Allen (co-writer, performer “Chippy”)
Terry Allen (co-composer, performer “Chippy”)
Butch Hancock (co-composer, performer “Chippy”)
Joe Ely (co-composer, performer “Chippy”)
Robert Brustein (adaptor “Schlemiel the First”)
David Gordon (director, choreographer “Schlemiel the First”)
Henkus Netsky (musical adaptor and composer “Schlemiel the First”)
Zalman Mlotek (musical adaptor and composer “Schlemiel the First”)
Conservatory Klezmer Band (performers “Schlemel the First”)
*Jonathan Larsen (Sondheim Award winner)
Appendix 4

ERIC SALZMAN – SELECTED WORKS:

* = scores and/or recordings (audio or video) available

- **O Praise the Lord** – psalm for a capella chorus (SATB; 1954)*

- **Suite for Violin and Piano based on American Indian Themes** (1954)*
  1. Rain Dance
  2. **Ritual Song**
  3. Lullaby
  4. Dance Song

- **String Quartet** (1955) – in 3 movements*

- **Suite for Piano** (1955)*
  1. Prelude
  2. Scherzo
  3. Nocturne
  4. Rondo

- **Sonata for Flute and Piano** (1956)*
  Allegro
  Andante
  **Molto Allegro**

- **Night Dance** for woodwind quartet (Fl, Ob, Bb Cl, Bsn 1957)*; orchestral version (performed by the Minneapolis Symphony, Stanislaw Skowaczewski, cond.)*

- **“On the Beach at Night”** for voice and piano; text by Walt Whitman (1955-57)*

- **cummings set** for voice and piano (texts by e e cummings; 1958; orchestration, listed in 1962, not extant)*

  lady will you come with me
  my love
  cruelly love
  if i have made my lady
  come a little further
  if I love you
  all in green went my love riding
• **Partita for Violin or Viola** (1958)*
  I. Moderato
  II. Mosso
  III. Andante
  IV. Molto allegro
  V. Chaconne

• **Inventions for Orchestra** (1957-58) (Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, E.H., 2 Bb Cl, Bb Bcl, 2 Bsn, 4 Hn, 3 Bb Tpt, 3 Tbn, Tba, 3 Perc, Hp, Stgs)

• "**In Praise of the Owl and the Cuckoo**" for Soprano, Flute, Viola and Guitar*
  (texts by William Shakespeare from ‘Love’s Labor’s Lost’; 1963-64); performed by Susan Belling, Elsa Charleston (with Ralph Shapey), etc.

• **Larynx Music, Verses for Soprano, Guitar, and 4-track Tape** (1966-67; Finnadar recording; re-release on Wiretap album by Labor/Naxos 2012)*

• **Verses** for solo guitar (1967)*

• **Foxes and Hedgehogs, Verses and Cantos for 4 soloists, two instrumental groups with sound systems** (text by John Ashbery; premiere at New Image of Sound, NYC, Dennis Russell Davies, conducting the Julliard Ensemble, Nov. 30, 1967; other performances: Brooklyn Philharmonia/Lukas Foss; BBC Symphony/Pierre Boulez – with Philip Langridge, Mary Thomas, etc)*

• **Queens Collage**, an academic festival overture for tape (1968; Finnadar Recording; re-released on Wiretap album by Labor/Naxos 2012)*

• **The Peloponnesian War**, full-evening mime-dance-theater piece with dance/choreographer Daniel Nagrin (premiere SUNY/Brockport 1967; extensively toured 1967- ) *(video only)*

• **Wiretap**, tape piece with the voice of Daniel Nagrin (1968; Finnadar recording; re-released by Labor/Naxos 2012)*

• **Feedback**, a multi-media participatory environmental work for live performers, visuals and tape (with Stan Vanderbeek; premiere Syracuse U., 1968; widely toured including Instituto Torquato di Tella, Buenos Aires, with Marta Menujin, 1969; also video version for NY State Public Television Network 1969)*

• **The Nude Paper Sermon** for actor, Renaissance consort, chorus, and electronics (texts by Stephen Wade and John Ashbery; commissioned by Nonesuch Records, 1968; live/theater version widely toured 1969- ) Performances include opening of Hunter New Image of Sound (conducted by Dennis Russell Davies with the Julliard Ensemble 1969; Claremont Festival, Claremont California, conducted by Gary Berkson, July 28, 1973; re-released by Labor/Naxos 2012)

• **Can Man Survive?** environmental multi-media piece for the centennial of the American Museum of Natural History (1969-1971) *
• **Strophe/Antistrophe** for keyboard and tape (1969/71)

• **The 10 Qualities** and **3 Madrigals** for chorus (1970-1)*

• **Ecolog**, music theater for television with Jackie Cassen and Quog Music Theater for Artists Television Lab, WNET-NY (media piece; premiered on Channel 13, NY, 1971)* Live version premiered by Pierre Boulez at the New York Philharmonic Prospective Encounters, Loeb Student Center, New York University, 1977?

• **Helix** for voice, percussion, clarinet and guitar (Quog Music Theater; 1972; Finnadar recording; re-released by Labor/Naxos 2012)*

• **Voices**, an a capella radio opera (Quog Music Theater; 1972)*

• **Saying Something** (Quog Music Theater; 1972-3)

• **Biograffiti** (Quog Music Theater; 1972-3)

• **Lazarus**, a music drama of the 12th and late 20th centuries (Quog Music Theater; premiere, Washington Sq Church, 1973; directed by Steven Urkowitz; La Mama production directed by Lee Nagrin, 1974; European tour 1975, etc.) *

• **Fantasy on Lazarus**, for string orchestra (1974)*

• **The Conjurer**, music theater work (words & music with Michel Sahl) (premiere, Public Theater, N.Y., 1975; produced by Joe Papp, directed by Tom O'Horgan)*

• **Accord**, music theater for accordion solo (premiered and recorded by William Schimmel, N.Y., 1975; performed as part of **Accord/Discord** in N.Y. & on tour in Eastern Europe 2010)*

• **Stauf**, a music theater Faust (words & music with Michael Sahl) (premiere, Cubiculo, N.Y., 1976; revised version. American Music Theater Festival, Philadelphia, 1987, directed by Rhoda Levine)*

• **Civilization and Its Discontents**, a music theater comedy (words & music with Michael Sahl) (premiere, AMDA, NY 1977; European premiere and tour, Michiel van Westering Produkties,The Netherlands, 1997, directed by Valeria Vasilevski; also National Public Radio production and Nonesuch recording; various prizes including Prix Italia and Backstage award; score published by G. Schirmer; re-released by Labor/Naxos 2012).*

• **Noah**, music theater miracle play (words & music with Michael Sahl). (premiere, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn and Washington Square Methodist Church, winter/spring 1978; radio version WBAI, 1979)*

• **The Passion of Simple Simon** (words & music with Michael Sahl) (premiere, Theater for the New City, N.Y., 1979; National Public Radio version commissioned by WNYC-NY)*
• **Boxes**, music theater piece (music by Michael Sahl) (commission from KCRW, Santa Monica, CA – American Public Radio – 1982-83; Seagram Award; National Music Theater Network, Victory Theater, NY 1988)*

• *Variations on a Sacred Harp Hymn* for keyboard (harpsichord); commissioned and widely performed by Igor Kipnis, 1982-*) *

• **Big Jim & the Small-time Investors**, music theater piece (1980/2012); libretto by N. Jackson); workshop at The Flea, produced by the Center for Contemporary Opera, May, 2012

• **Toward a New American Opera**, mixed media piece for National Opera Institute (1985)

• **Birdwalk**, tape piece with optional keyboard; based on recorded bird songs (1986)*

• **Signals**, structure for conducted improvisation (any number of vocal or instrumental performers; 1988)*

• **The True Last Words of Dutch Schultz** (1995-97; with Valeria Vasilevski; première and tour, The Netherlands, Michiel van Westering Produkties, 1997-98; directed by Valeria Vasilevski); concert version at Cutting Edge, NYC, conducted by Victoria Bond; US staged premiere, Wall-to-Wall Opera 1607-2007, May 19, 2007, Symphony Space, NYC*

• **La Prière du Loup**; text by Michel Rostain (commissioned and premiered by the National Theater, Quimper, France, 1997; directed by Michel Rostain); U.S. premiere in English [“**Wolfman Prayer**”] performed by Rinde Eckert at the Festival of the Hamptons, Bridgehampton, NY July 2003*

• Scenes from **Abel Gance à New York**, commissioned by Chants Libres, Montréal, (workshop performance, NewOp Montreal, 1999; directed by Antoine Laprise)*

• **Cassandra** for solo performer, keyboard and electronics; for Kristin Norderval; text by Eva Salzman. Premiere, Ultima Festival, NewOp 10 Oslo, Norway, October, 2001; WUK Theatre, Vienna, Austria, November 2002 (directed by Valeria Vasilevski; in conjuction with NewOp11 and Wien Modern); Sechs Tage Opera, Duesseldorf, Germany, February 2003; the cell (presented by the Center for Contemporary Opera, directed by Kira Simring) * (also video)*

• Music for new French version of **The Good Woman of Szechuan** of Bertolt Brecht; Trident Theater, Québec, Canada, January-February, 2004; directed by Antoine Laprise.*

• **A William Meredith Bestiary**, songs for voice and piano on poems by William Meredith. Premiere by Janna Baty, soprano, Christopher Lyndon-Gee, piano, at the Varna Festival, Bulgaria, July, 2004

• **Jukebox in the Tavern of Love**, madrigal comedy commissioned by the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble; text by Valeria Vasilevski staged reading, Tenri Center, NYC, June 20, 2007*; first production, The Flea, 2008, the Western Wind (directed by Valeria Vasilevski); BargeMusic, July 2009. A recording is scheduled to be released by Labor Records/Naxos in 2013.
• **Le Système du Monde** or **The System of the World**, work-in-progress with Valeria Vasilevski.

• **Suite from The Last Words of Dutch Schultz** for violin, piano and percussion. First performed by Marc Levine at the Hamptons Arts Center 2010

• **Accord/Discord** including Brecht Songs, tango arrangements of Pugliese and Oscar Stroks; Center for Contemporary Opera production; Eastern European tour 2009/10


• **Strike Up the Band**, arrangement of the Gershwin/Kaufman musical for a production in Quimper, France and Paris

• **Big Jim & the Small-time Investors**, an opera about an L.A. con man who invents a kind of virtual reality machine and convinces investors that this is the next big thing. The work, which has a libretto by Ned Jackson written a number, had a reading at the N.Y. Society Library (“Prima la Parola”) in 2010 and a workshop produced by the Center for Contemporary Opera at the Flea Theater in March, 2012. It is scheduled for production by the Center in 2014.*

• **The House of Special Purpose** – libretto by Renzo Oliva – music not started.
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195
LINER NOTES


INTERVIEWS

Martin Hennessy “Re: Eric Salzman Dutch Schultz review” Received by Scott Joiner, 25 February 2019. Email Statement.
Lathem, Alexis. “Re: electric ear.” Received by Scott Joiner, 22 September 2019. Email Statement.
Salzman, Eric. Interview. By Scott Joiner. 12 June 2017
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Vandagriff, Rachel. “Re: Paul Fromm/Fromm Foundation article research request.” Received by Scott Joiner, 26 July 2019. Email Statement.