OTHER MINDS 20
MARCH 6, 7, & 8, 2015
SF JAZZ CENTER  SAN FRANCISCO

A FESTIVAL OF UNEXPECTED NEW MUSIC
INSIDE: STILLS HERE A PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF OTHER MINDS AT TWENTY
In the early summer of 1986 I found myself at the Ideas Festival in Telluride, Colorado. How I got there was a strange story that, in retrospect, augured the birth of the Other Minds Festival.

It’s no exaggeration to say that if there had been no catastrophic nuclear accident at Chernobyl, near Kiev in the Ukraine, there might never have been an organization called Other Minds. Actually, I was in Tasmania when I heard the news of the dangerous radiation leaks. With my artist wife Carol Law, I was on a 30-day concert tour of Australia, and we were about to wind things up and continue on to Western Europe to give other scheduled performances, when we learned that there was heavy pollution blowing westward from the USSR. The French government was assuring its citizens that the milk in Eastern France was safe to drink there. There were 33 nuclear plants in that country and the government didn’t want to spread panic. But the Australian press, not as invested in the nuclear industry, was bluntly stating the truth—danger was on the horizon and the reactor might even melt down in coming weeks with devastating effect.

We had rented out our home in the East Bay for months ahead but felt compelled to cancel Europe. Taking advantage of the free months ahead, we set off on a motor trip through the American southwest with no plans whatsoever other than to camp out, visit the spectacular national parks, and record ambient sounds for future composing projects.

When we got to Colorado, we contacted our old friends Pamela Zoline and John Lifton in Telluride. They were in the midst of producing their annual Ideas Festival and we attended this exciting event. The gathering, then in its second year, operated on an unusual model. The object was to bring together 20 articulate guest speakers from the Left and Right, like writer Edward Abbey and politician Newt Gingrich, in a private conference, enabling them to locate common ground between them without being observed by press or public. The intention was to discourage grandstanding and the assertion of unsupportable talking points, moving toward that fine Quaker concept of consensus. After a week in private deliberation, the public was invited to a public conference to hear the featured guests in panels and lectures. These talks were indisputably enriched by the camaraderie the previous meetings had fostered.

Lifton, himself a pioneer of computer music composing, and his artist-writer wife Zoline, ran the Telluride Institute, fostering many artistic projects, particularly with the participation of native Americans. Their collaborator in the Ideas Festival, John Naisbitt, author of Megatrends 2000, was well-connected to movers and shakers across disciplines nationally and had provided the access to such compelling and contradictory voices as Shirley Williams, Tom Hayden, Al Gore, Lee Atwater, and Amory Lovins. The festival was both ingenious and inspirational. And the landscape, exquisitely beautiful and situated at the heady elevation of nearly 9000 feet, took one’s breath away, literally. There was something about meeting in this environment that released the human capacity to connect.

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When the festival concluded, Lifton confided to me how much he missed his composer friends from London. We started to discuss how the model of the Ideas Festival could apply to a conference for composers. As most music festivals don’t allow time for each composer to meet and discuss their work, Lifton suggested a Composer-to-Composer festival.

FINDINGS FROM COMPOSERS:

“I can’t think of a time where I have been so stimulated and encouraged in my musical pursuits. Thank you so very much for this experience that I will never forget and that will so positively influence my career.”

—JOAN JEANRENAUD

participant to get to know other composers, with the resulting jealous factionalism, we decided to launch a new annual event organized around this promising model. Two years later, in the Summer of 1988, our first Composer-to-Composer Festival took place, and the following three years we continued with seed funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, in recognition of the quality and diversity of our panelists and our goal of spreading an understanding of the work of living composers. In 1988 our distinguished guests included: Terry Riley, Lou Harrison, Laurie Spiegel, Peter Sculthorpe, Brian Eno, Sarah Hopkins, Kyle Gann, Paul de Marinis, and others. The private sessions generated intense discussions among the participants, and it was clear that the time given to just talking shop and enjoying the rarified Telluride scenery bonded the participants in a way that gave normally-isolated artists an infusion of new commitment to their careers. The public concerts and panels were held over several days and nights at the jewel box Sheridan Opera House built in 1913 as a burlesque theatre on the main street of town. It was filled to capacity for every event, with many audience members trawling...
out of town. And the town’s cafes were filled with audience members who could interact with their favorite composer during lunch time.

By the end of the week, the featured artists truly did not want to leave Southwestern Colorado, and it was clear that the private-plus-public meetings format was a runaway success. The seeds of the future Other Minds Festival had been planted.

The following year in Colorado, 1989, we brought John Cage and Conlon Nancarrow, whom I interviewed together onstage before the most rapt audience I can remember. In 1990, with Jesse Helms attacking the NEA and calling for an end to funding artists, the assembled group issued a proclamation re-asserting the rights of artists to voice dissent. One of our number, Laurie Anderson, placed a call to UPI, and the next day headlines around the country, in newspapers large and small, proclaimed, “Telluride Composers Denounce Helms.” That same year, Henry Brant wrote one of his “instant compositions,” and a vigorous performance of his partially improvised Elevation 8750 was played by the assembled guest composers and a local Telluride choral ensemble. The final year I was involved (1991), we enjoyed the company of Alan Hovhaness, Zakir Hussain, and Louis Andriessen, among others.

Although these were wonderful experiences for all involved, by 1990 we came to accept that there was no natural audience for experimental music in Southwestern Colorado. We found ourselves unable to raise the necessary funds to continue on the grand scale we’d established.

After four years of producing Composer-to-Composer, and after serving 23 years as Music Director of KPFA Radio in Berkeley, and my wife Carol Law, were offered the positions of co-directors at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program in the remotest area of Woodside, California, 40 minutes south of San Francisco.

When I announced on KPFA’s air that I was leaving the station at the end of November 1992, I received a telephone call from legendary San Francisco art gallerist and film producer Jim Newman who was one of our most generous listener-sponsors. “I really rely on your programs to let me know what’s happening in music, Charles. Is there anything I can do to keep you connected to music in San Francisco?”

I told Jim about my work with Composer-to-Composer. Although that project couldn’t continue in Telluride, we discussed how the concept could be relocated to Northern California since now there would be an ideal, scenic meeting site for the private composer sessions—the 600-acre Djerassi Program ranch—and a variety of performance venues in San Francisco from which to choose for our public concerts.

During the cold winter months, the Djerassi Program was on hiatus, so it could house the guest composers and provide space for meetings in its spacious studios. Under Carol and my leadership, the Djerassi Program Board of Directors agreed to be the principal co-sponsor for the private composer residencies of this new festival.

Jim agreed to contribute the seed funding for the festival each year (which he generously has continued to do for two decades) and I was fortunate in meeting Baraka Sele, the performance program director of the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, about to open its doors in November 1993. That month, as part of the complex’s grand opening, the first Other Minds Festival took place, with a cast of artists that comprised Conlon Nancarrow, Trimpin, Philip Glass, Foday Musa Sanka, and others.
Meredith Monk, Julia Wolfe, Robert Ashley, for others in America, different pathways Buckner and Jai Uttal. Anything for granted.

Our focus, though a broad one, was to sup-animates Other Minds. This, in a nutshell, exemplifies the spirit that I thought of as the American Experimental work of Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, John Cage, Lou Harrison, Harry Partch, and others who had broken with the strictly European archive of recorded interviews and con-certs—radiOM.org—the panels, concerts and other proceedings of the Other Minds Festival, both on video and via audio re-cordings, reaches 50 times more than the 1000-1500 people who attend our concerts in person.

By good fortune, our opening festival, produced on a shoestring, inspired others to come forward with funding to continue. First among our foundation supporters was the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, whose program officer, Melanie Beene, met with us at Jim Neeuman’s home and made a com-mitment that solidified our base of support. Mind you, we had only an undependable staff of one, along with Jim and myself virtu-ously, but we had high hopes and altruistic dreams.

What can one say about Jim Neeuman other than that Other Minds never would have come into being without his dogged hard work and guidance. Our visionary co-founder, whose life already had been devoted to major dreams. As American maverick composer Ben John-ston, who turned 88 on March 15th, told me by phone from rural Wisconsin in January, “We set out to present their work in evenings that were full of variety with wildly varying styles. If one thing wasn’t to your liking, the next thing likely could be.

As I look back over our 20 years of gath-erings and realize that now many of our participants no longer are living, it seems that the Other Minds festival has captured a snapshot of music history not yet fully codified. But I’m gratified that much of what is taken for granted in new music today—everywhere one turns—is a continuum of the American Experimental Tradition and that Other Minds has played a significant role in its vigorous development and survival.

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Each year New Music America, as it came to be called subsequently, moved from one city to the next, stopping in Minneapolis in 1980, San Francisco in 1989 (highlighted by Nancar-row’s first appearance outside Mexico since 1947), Chicago in 1992, and so forth. To fur-ther publicize these events, I co-hosted live radio broadcasts over the revolutionary new WQXR satellite broadcasting system. Thus, in 1986, 1988 and 1989 (Los Angeles), audiences in regions that were unfamiliar with new mu-sic were suddenly and dramatically exposed to this work that doesn’t require theoretical analysis to enjoy.

By the time of the final festival in Montréal in June, 1999, we were confident that the Other Minds Festival had captured a snapshot of music history not yet fully codified. But I’m gratified that much of what is taken for granted in new music today—everywhere one turns—it is an extension of the pathways laid out by the continuum of the American Experimental Tradition. And that Other Minds has played an important role in its vigorous development and survival.

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January 23, 1993
An Evening With György Ligeti
Planet Vollar Bandorf performs the American premiere of Études for Piano, Books 1 & 2, hosted by Charles Amirkhanian, with spoken introduction and talk by the composer. January 29, 1993; Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley (in collaboration with Cal Performances).

November 4–7, 1993
Other Minds Festival 1
See complete list of composers for each OM Festival listed on pages 96–97) Veritas Buena Center for the Arts (grand opening), San Francisco.

November 12, 1994
Pandit Pran Nath & Terry Riley
First Unitarian Church, San Francisco.

1995
Other Minds Website Launch
Co-founder Jim Newman designs and launches the Other Minds website, one of the earliest new music Internet resources. (See complete list of composers for each OM Festival listed on pages 96–97.)

Other Minds Festival 2
Pandit Pran Nath & Terry Riley (with spoken introduction and talk by the composer). January 29, 1993; Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley (in collaboration with Cal Performances).

March 30–31, April 1, 1996
Other Minds 2
YBCA, San Francisco.

December 10, 1996
Henry Kaiser, Lukas Ligeti, Mya Masaoka
Japanese, Pier 9, San Francisco.

February 15, 1997
Double Exposure
Eleanor Albert & Thomas Bowles, two pianos
cowell Theater at Fort Mason, San Francisco.

November 7, 1998
Opus 45; Number 4 Marathon
YBCA Forum, San Francisco.
26 composers in collaboration with Common Sense Composers Collective.

March 25–27, 1999
Other Minds 5
Cowell Theater at Fort Mason.

April 18, 1999
New Offices in The Fog Building
Other Minds establishes its offices in a former casket factory on 333 Valencia Street, Suite 303, in San Francisco, a decade before the gentrification of its now-hip neighborhood.
Staff pictured above: Mai Hatta, John Birdman, Jennifer Shyu, Debra Pughe.

February 11, 1999
Boxed Piano Ensembles
Project Artuart, San Francisco.
Stephen Scott directing ensembles from CalArts and Texas State University.

March 16–19, 2000
Other Minds 6
Carl piston, Director
Project Artuart.

June 10, 2000
Sirens, Doorbells, Propellers
Archaic and The Birth of American Musical Modernism
San Francisco Public Library
Panel with Paul Lehrman, Benjamin Lewis, David Rakison, moderated by Charles Amirkhanian.

June 11, 2000
American Mavericks Festival
Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

June 12–15, 2001
Henry Brant: Ice Field—Spatial Narratives For Large & Small Orchestra Groups
San Francisco Symphony under Michael Tilson Thomas. The music was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2002.

March 7–9, 2002
Other Minds 8
Palace of Fine Arts Theater, San Francisco.

California Symphony & Gamelan Sekar Jaya perform studio recording of Ball Symphony, jointly composed by José Evangelista and Miya Masaoka.

December 12, 2004
Ball Symphony
Knuth Hall, San Francisco State University.

February 15, 2004
Music To The Air (Outside Davies Street Theater, San Francisco)

December 2, 2003
Music Is The Air I Breathe
Pandit Pran Nath & Terry Riley (with spoken introduction and talk by the composer). January 29, 1993; Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley (in collaboration with Cal Performances).

February 15, 2004
In the Frame:vi
San Francisco Symphony under Michael Tilson Thomas. The music was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2002.

March 7–9, 2002
Other Minds 8
Palace of Fine Arts Theater, San Francisco.

Or Call 626-356-3000.

March 19–20, 2001
Other Minds 7
Cowell Theater, Fort Mason, San Francisco.

Other Minds Festival 3
Pandit Pran Nath & Terry Riley (with spoken introduction and talk by the composer). January 29, 1993; Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley (in collaboration with Cal Performances).

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February 24, 2007  A New Music Séance The radio program, heard weekly, is launched by producer Richard Friedman on KALW-FM Radio in San Francisco. As of this writing (February 2015), over 425 different programs have been broadcast, mostly featuring recent commercial releases of non-commercial new music. Most still are available to stream at http://otherminds.org/mfom.

May 14, 2007  Summoning the specters of musical forbears, channeling the spirits of their successors.” The first of three day-long candlelit marathons of maverick music (2005-2008), bringing together composers from the past with those of today in chamber music for piano and for violin-piano. Sarah Cahill, piano solo; Kate Steinberg & Eva Maria Zimmermann, violin and piano. Curated by Charles Amirkhanian. World premiere of music by Lee Oskamist.

March 6, 2006  Kanbar Auditorium. Jewish Community Center of San Francisco.

February 24, 2007  A New Music Séance San Francisco

May 14, 2007  San Francisco

March 6, 2006  San Francisco

February 24, 2007  San Francisco

May 14, 2007  San Francisco
At the opening of the futuristic new concert complex Harpa and the Nordic Music Days Festival in Reykjavik, April 14, 2013

Music for 100 electric guitars, Law, lead a group of 15 followers
Calefax Reed Quintet performed by composer Rhys
through the natural wonders
Chatham and a volunteer corps

March 10, 2011
Composers Fellowship Concert
Music for piano four-hands, including a revival of "Harold Shapiro's Sonata (D48)," composed by Leonard Bernstein & Shapiro to perform, Eva-Maria Zimmerman & Keseke Naka- gochi piano.

March 15, 2011
All-Haitianex Centennial Celebration First Congregational Church, Berkeley

Jahan Arzruni, piano.

October 10-11, 2011
Other Minds New Music
Tour Of Iceland

September 2012
Other Minds Staff
Peter Esmonde, Richard Friedman, OA, Cynthia Mei, Achimone Cardwell, Michael Strauss

September 27 & 29, 2010
Ivory, San Francisco

March 13, 2011
March 2, 2011
March 6-7-8, 2015
Other Minds 16
Karbar Auditorium, JCCSF

Other Minds 17
San Francisco

Other Minds 18
San Francisco

Other Minds 19
SFJAZZ Center, San Francisco

Other Minds 20
SFJAZZ Center, San Francisco

February 27, 2014

March 3-5, 2011
Other Minds 16
Karbar Auditorium, JCCSF

Other Minds 17
San Francisco

Other Minds 18
San Francisco

Other Minds 19
SFJAZZ Center, San Francisco

Other Minds 20
SFJAZZ Center, San Francisco

February 28, March 1-2, 2013
Other Minds 18
JCCSF

February 4-10, 2012
Craneway Pavilion, Richmond, CA

November 24-4, 2012
Nancarrow At 100
A Centennial Celebration
UC Berkeley Museum of Art, Pacific Film Archive, Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley


November 7, 2013
A Secret Rose
Granaway Pavilion, Richmond, CA

Music for 100 electric guitars, performed by composer Rhys Chatham and a volunteer corps

February 27, 2014

October 10, 2014
Morris Feldman
For Barbara Stoklosa
San Francisco

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March 3, 2011
Composers Fellowship Concert
Menil Gallery, San Francisco

Winners of a young composers’ competition Nicholas Chawe, Lisa Coons, Ben Hjertmann, and Zhibute Mokhpath had their work performed one day before OM 16 and spent a day at the Djerassi Program with the featured guest composers. Produced by Adam Fong.

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As a child, I looked forward to The Christian Science Monitor’s daily arrival in our mailbox. My interest in photography grew as I followed images from around the world by their chief photographer, Gordon Converse. That one could travel near and far recording decisive moments resonated with my dreams for the future. Converse made a strong impression on me when he said, “If I have succeeded as a photographer, it is because I have gone to the work with an open heart.”

I come from a family of artists. With a cartoonist father and a painter for a mother, making images was part of daily life. During college I studied the writing and works of Paul Klee, especially The Thinking Eye. Later the lives and photographs of Sumner Matteson, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Robert Frank drew me further into ‘documentary-style’ photography, inspiring me to pay close attention to what is mysterious and good.

In 1988, although it seemed a departure from almost everything photographic I had done before, Pamela Lifton-Zoline proposed that I document a gathering of composers during the first Composer-to-Composer Festival in Telluride. I am truly grateful to Pamela for opening the door to that opportunity. It initiated a collaborative friendship with Charles Amirkhanian that continues today, now twenty-seven years later in the celebration of this twentieth Other Minds Festival. Thanks to Charles, for decades I’ve had the artistic license and resources to create a visual record of composers and musicians gathering together to better understand and nurture each other’s work.

In the role I’ve happily played across these annual episodes, I’ve found perhaps the best thing, a photographer can find, an ongoing project that as Rilke wrote of a dear old habit, came and stayed and never gave notice.

John Fago johnfago.com

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THOUGHTS FROM COMPOSERS:

“Other Minds, both as a convocation of contemporary composers from many places in the world, as a roundtable, and in its publicly presented concerts, is a splendidly varied, stimulating, and beautiful thing. Intense admirations and friendships can form in its course and surely every artist finds a new shine in his spirit from these assemblies and concerts. May it thrive!”
—Lou Harrison (August 1, 1996)
OM 2 (1995)

Pianola performer Rex Lawson speaking. (l to r) Ashot Zograbian, William Copley, Calliope Tho-poulos, Frances White, Lew Hennies, Tony Emile, and Peter Ziegler, in the Composer’s Studio.

OM 3 (1996)

Front: Charles Shere, George Lewis, LaMonte Young, Morton Subotnick, Charles Amirkhanian, Peter Landecki, Son Nhe- man, Noble Mauro, Cecil Wilson, Kit Dring, Jozef Petko, David Peterson, Miriam Clark, Fredricka Ramos and Henry Kaiser.

Hafez Modirzadeh describes the moment when ever-curious Henry Brant picked up the karna while the former was playing soprano sax: “Henry sounding ‘COME HOME!’ to every one of us, realizing love beyond all shape and shadow of form.”

The late jazz reed playing great Sam Rivers shares a laugh with Jim Newman, who until very recently continued to perform on his baritone sax.

Errollyn Wallen, António Pinho Vargas, and Mary Ellen Childs.

OM 7 (2001) Andrew Hill, jazz pianist and composer, signing one of his classic LPs.
OM 7 (2001)
front (l to r): Glen Velez, Alvin Curran, Charles Amirkhanian.

OM 8 (2002)
Houston is not that far from Havana. The distance between the hometowns of Pauline Oliveros (l.) and Tania León (r.) are bridged at the Djerassi ranch.
Lou Harrison. His final composition (commissioned by Other Minds) Scenes from Nek Chand was premiered by David Tanenbaum on March 7, 2002 at the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre. He succumbed on February 2, 2003. OM composer John Luther Adams wrote, “The mighty Sequoia has fallen.”
Inside the “Estaciones de Luz” site specific sculpture by Mark Reeves, back trio: Joan Jeanrenaud, Francis Dhomont, filmmaker and translator Hamlet Sarkissian. Down in the V-hole: Tigran Mansurian, Hanna Kulenty, Werner Durand, Keiko Harada, Amelia Cuni.

Armenian composer Tigran Mansurian’s emotional delivery is heard by Werner Durand (arms folded), Amirkhanian (with back to camera), Tigran Mansurian, Polka composer Hanna Kulenty (leaning in, right), and Polish composer Hanna Kulenty (leaning in, right) in the Djerassi composer’s studio.

Fred Frith rehearsing music for two hands and two feet.
Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe (1929–2014) who was scheduled to attend OM 20, passed away last August.
OM 13 (2007) The ironic signal to迪特·施内贝尔是德国作曲家。初到美国的他，左图，米切尔·雅维茨在后台提议上台合影，代表我们缺席的同事，他因病未能及时赶往加州。

OM 13 (2008) 本·约翰斯顿是长年与加州艺术学院合作的美国作曲家。他的早年工作与哈利·帕尔契证实了他对新音阶系统的热爱。

OM 14 (2009) 长期与加州艺术学院合作的作曲家本·约翰斯顿。
Polish wunderkind Paweł Mykietyn (right) gives rehearsal feedback to members of Del Sol String Quartet, Charlton Lee, Kate Stenberg, and Rick Shinozaki.

Balinese percussionists I Nyoman Suarsana and I Nyoman Suwida left behind their 80 degree homeland to perform with guitarist I Wayan Balawan.
Om 17 (2012)
Norwegian composer Simon Steen-Andersen’s eyeball projected live at the San Francisco Jewish Community Center’s Kallman Auditorium in performance with Scandinavian ensemble asamisimasa.

Om 18 (2013)
The recorders that year were Renaissance vintage, not 21st Century digital. L. to R. front: Sunleif Rasmussen, Michala Petri, Amirkhanian, Anna Petrini, Mattias Petersson; behind: Craig Taborn, Aaron Gervais, G. S. Sachdev, Jim Newman, Dohee Lee, Paula Matthusen.
Charles Hutchins, (pointing), describing his system of translating line drawing into music to Amirkhanian (l.) and Blaine Todd (r.) with Ryan Jobes (far left) keeping an eye on the projection screens.

Founded in 1993, Other Minds in San Francisco is a leading organization for new and experimental music in all its forms, devoted to championing the most original, eccentric and underrepresented creative voices in contemporary music. From festival concerts, film screenings, radio broadcasts and the commissioning of new works, to producing and releasing CDs, preserving thousands of interviews and concerts and distributing them free on the Internet, Other Minds has become one of the world’s major conservators of new music’s ecology.

For more information, visit www.otherminds.org

ABOUT OTHER MINDS

THOUGHTS FROM COMPOSERS:

“Hurrah for Other Minds! It’s delightful to see your programs. So rich and imaginative in mixing music from around the globe… I imagine Ives and Cowell are rejoicing in their musical heavens. Peering down on your rare Avant-garde festival… Other Minds shines out in the USA. There’s nothing like it.”

—JOHN DUFFY, COMPOSER & FOUNDER, MEET THE COMPOSER

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Program printed with generous support from Margaret Dorfman.
“No other city has an organization quite like Other Minds, catching all the things that would otherwise fall between the cracks” - Alex Ross of The New Yorker

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