

## Endangered Species

**Endangered Species** is a space, a container which holds my sound archive in little vials of distilled essences. An archive of distillations culled from years of listening to everything from the mumbled sounds in dreams to threatening roars of nature gone mad, from the near absolute stillness of an Italian Ferragosto to the din accompanying a Balinese funeral, Cicadas having sex to mating Bisons, human howling wolfmen, broken fog-horns, Meuzzin calling from Mosques. A life, my life and yours – of listening to the contours, textures, densities and durations of every imaginable audible thing on this planet – hearing it as one incomprehensible infinite musical work, predictable as it is unpredictable, loving as it is imminently dangerous, blind deaf indifferent and visionary at the same time. My, yes me, My music My Oh My Oy Vey's Mir this indifferent uneducated democracy of symphonic immensity which surrounds us all the time which never goes to sleep or dies – this imponderable weightless sonic poetry – the property of no one and everyone - I can't take it any more - like the air on which it travels the same that sustains all living things – this air is my music, simple as that!

Having collected these for over 40 years, they now reappear as elemental bits of digital samples – ordered and layered by the 10's, 100's and 1000's as a giant world-instrument which – mapped to an ordinary 88 key Midi keyboard in numerous groups – enables me, like a living musical instrument, to spontaneously play the entire world from my fingertips, recreating and reconfiguring new worlds from moment to moment, day to day occasion to occasion at each act of performance, each Act of Providence, each act of plowing and turning the soil.

The **Endangered Species** are stories told in a language I have invented about people, places, songs, things, events, machines, musics, animals, rooms, skies, airs and dreams...each performance is a new story told with the same old sounds, thrown like a muralist painting

"al fresco" newly configured each time and in each moment with the unknowable duration of one's own creative energy. As if, in fact,

I were simply telling my own story, with the sounds of its worn pages, or our story with its endless cycles of sadness and joy and its inexorable pursuit of unity.

**Endangered Species**, I'm outta here.



## **Alvin Curran**

Biography

Since 1965 I have had an active self-made career as a composer/performer in the American experimental music tradition. This was not easy. It began with a fortuitous bang when I co-founded the group MUSICA ELETTRONICA VIVA with Frederic Rzewski and Richard Teitelbaum in Rome, in 1965. The MEV experience (over 200 concerts and commercial recordings) was my main focus between 1966 and 1971 and continues to this day (APOGEE, 2005; MEV40, 2008). In the early 70's I began creating a poetic series of solo-performance works for synthesizer, voice, taped environmental sounds and found objects (SONGS AND VIEWS FROM THE MAGNETIC GARDEN, CANTI ILLUMINATI...) which were performed all over Europe and the U.S. and consolidated my commitment to a life in music.

In seeking out new musical spaces in the late 1970's and early 80's I began to develop a series of concert events to be given on lakes and rivers, in parks and quarries (RITI MARITTIMI, TUFO MUTO...), which have evolved into large scale musical choreographic works such as OH BRASS ON THE GRASS ALAS for 300 amateur brass-band musicians, at the 2006 Donaueschingen Festival, and BEAMS. In the 80's I extended this concept to include whole countries (musical geographies) by creating simultaneous radio concerts with live musicians in multiple countries (A PIECE FOR PEACE, CRYSTAL PSALMS). These directions were further distilled through the use of digital samplers, midi-grand pianos, and computers into performance pieces such as ELECTRIC RAGS, ENDANGERED SPECIES, TRANSDADEXPRESS, and SHOFAR – an appropriate synthesis between the concert hall, acoustic instruments, keyboards, and the sounds of the whole world – and into radio works such as ERAT VERBUM, UN ALTRO FERRAGOSTO, I DREAMT JOHN CAGE YODELING AT THE ZURICH HAUPTBAHNHOF, ON THE ROADS, and the MARITIME RITES series created for NPR in 1984 using the sounds of the entire Eastern seaboard and now re-released by New World Records. I also created a series of striking sound installations in collaboration with visual artists (MAGIC CARPET, FLOOR PLAN, LAND IM KLANG...) which pointed the way to solo installation works including THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, TOTO DONAUESCHINGEN, EVERYBODY DREAMS THEIR OWN MUSIC, and GARDENING WITH JOHN.

Throughout these electric-years Elliott Carter's lessons – along with Cage's, Feldman's, and Scelsi's – continued to exert their influence; I have steadfastly remained a composer of "notes on paper." Among my chamber works: FOR CORNELIUS and the INNER CITIES cycle, recorded by several pianists; the trios SCHTYX and MAY I NOW; the string quartet VSTO; the saxophone quartet ELECTRIC RAGS II; the percussion quartet THEME PARK; the chamber violin concerto PITTURA FRESCA; IN HORA MORTIS for chamber orchestra; MUSIC IS NOT MUSIC for chorus SATB on texts by John Cage; MALAPROMPTUS for cello and piano; BRUTE BEAT BRUT BRUIT, for flutes, clarinets, piano, violin, cello, percussion, and rapper.

Some major performers of my work: Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, Alter Ego, Arditti Quartet, Ars Ludi, Bang on a Can Allstars, Bruce Brubaker, EAR Unit, Eve Egoyan, Ensemble Modern, Fred Frith, Group 180, Frankie Hi NRG, Joan Jeanrenaud, Kronos Quartet, Joan Labarbara, MAE Ensemble, Ivar Mikhashoff, Ursula Oppens, Paul Dresner Ensemble, Relâche Ensemble, Rova Sax Quartet, Frederic Rzewski, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Chamber Players, Soldier Quartet, Kathy Supove, Aki Takahashi, Daan Vandewalle, and William Winant. I have had fruitful collaborations with artists such as Umberto Bignardi, Trisha Brown, Rudy Burckhardt, Jacob Burckhardt, Yoshiko Chuma, Clark Coolidge, Willem de Ridder, Theo Eshetu, Pietro Fortuna, Achim Freyer, Wanda Golonka, Melissa Gould, Pierre-Alain Hubert, Margy Jenkins, Joan Jonas, Kristin Jones, Nancy Karp, Paul Klerr, Lucia Latour, The Living Theatre, Roberto Masotti, Annabella Miscuglio, Meme Perlini, Edith Schloss, Ira Schneider, Ulli Sigg, Claudia Von Alemann, and June Watanabe.

My music has been a presence in major festivals and new music venues from The Kitchen to New Music America, from de Ijsbreker to the Venice Biennale, from Taktlos to Angelica to Freie Musik Produktion.

Recent highlights: BOLETUS EDULIS for 250 musicians and commuter train on the 30th anniversary of Cage's train (Bologna, May 2008); Maritime Rites Tate, with the London Symphony Orchestra brass ensemble and improvising soloists, on the Thames River (September 2007); WEIL ERDE IN MEINEM KÖRPER WAR in Frankfurt (April 2008); the installation SHIN FAR SHOFAR at the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco (2008-9); feature billing at the 2007 spring festival of the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague and at the 2008 Americans Festival in Groningen. Active projects in 2009 include commissions from Deutschlandradio Kultur, Fondazione Volume, and the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival; GRIDJAM with artist Jack Ox; and THE ALVIN CURRAN FAKEBOOK.

During the 1970's I taught at the National Academy of Theater Arts in Rome, and from 1991 through 2006 I was the Milhaud Professor of Composition at Mills College. I now teach privately in Rome and during invited residencies at institutions such as Oberlin College. I have published numerous articles on music, on my own music, and on other artists, several of which were featured at the New York Times website in March 2007.

Some prizes and awards: Beams Prize, BMI award (1963), National Endowment for the Arts (1977, 1983), NPR Satellite Distribution Project Award (1983-4), DAAD (1963-4, 1986-7), Ars Acoustica International Prize (Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 1989), Prix Italia (special award 1988), Premio Novecento (city of Pisa 1993), Leonardo Award for Excellence (1995), Hass Family Award (San Francisco 1997), Fromm Foundation (Harvard, 1998), Meet the Composer (assisting many concerts over the years), interviewed by the Yale Oral History American Music project (category: "Major Figures in American Music"), Guggenheim Foundation (2004), Ars Electronica (2004), Phonurgia Nova (2005), Experimental Music Studio (Freiburg residencies 2006, 2007).