

(12/7) TWO AMERICAN ORIGINALS:  
NANCARROW AND PARTCH

1. “Leftovers”: Aleatory
  - a. Warm up: Feldman, *Projections 2*
  - b. Christian Wolff, *Burdocks* (1970–71)
    - i. Politics. Writes, music “to stir up ... a sense of the political conditions in which we live and of how these might be changed, in the direction of democratic socialism.” Active communist still (? *c. 1997*)
    - ii. *Burdocks* for 1 or more orchestras of 5 or more players (1970–71): Indeterminate rules leaving much room to improvise. Allows the “dignity” of the performer.
    - iii. Philosophy of sound, number of pitches.
  - b. Expanding role for musical performers? Death of Improvisation?
  - c. Influence
    - i. Black Mountain College (1933–1957): Gropius, de Kooning, Buckminster Fuller
    - ii. Fluxus and Performance Art: Alison Knowles, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik
    - iii. Randomness as aesthetic: Lutosławski, Hovhaness
    - iv. Cage: *As Slow As Possible*
  - d. Discussion [performance?] of compositions.
    - i. Indeterminacy with respect to performance or with respect to composition.
2. Introduction: Music in the Quadrivium. Immeasurable quantity in proportion.
3. Harry Partch (1901–1974)
  - a. New pitch resources and new instruments to perform them.
  - b. Different approaches to Microtonality
    - i. Increasing ET (common in new complexity and post serial composition)
    - ii. Just intonation (Ben Johnson, Ezra Sims, La Monte Young, Partch)
  - c. Overtone series and overtone series of the harmonics.
  - d. Returning to Greek ideas of tuning.
  - e. Return to “Monophony”
  - f. How can the instruments of the past make music of the future?
  - g. Instruments at Montclair State University (New Jersey)

4. Conlon Nancarrow (1912–1997)

*This music is the greatest discovery since Webern and Ives — György Ligeti.*

*For me it was very interesting, because the rhythmical structure is really very well thought out. Unfortunately, the pitch vocabulary does not follow. — Pierre Boulez*

- a. Biography
- b. “Canons”: Studies for Player Piano [unknown dates mostly in the 50s; notated in the 60s]
- c. Convergence points
- d. Study 4 – pitch canon only (analysis from Kyle Gann, *The Music of Conlon Nanarrow*)
  - i. introduction (mm. 1–27): five ideas, mostly dealing with descending or ascending arithmetic sequences. For instance (m 1, 3, 5: have 9, 8, 7 ♪ notes)
  - ii. 3, 2, 1 ♪ notes each interrupted by ♪ (second system)
  - iii. 2, 3, 4, 3 ♪ notes (last system, first measure)
  - iv. Figures which begin toward the extremes of the piano and converge in the middle (top of hand written “p. 2” right hand side).
  - v. 51-tone row:  
 B C E♭ F B♭ D♭  
 B C E♭ F A♭ B B♭  
 B C E♭ F A♭ B G♯ E, etc.
  - vi. System 6 begins the first canon; begins again on system 11 (top of p. 4)
  - vii. System 16 (p. 5 bottom) begins a second canon in the bottom voice. Note that when the middle voice comes in, all ♪ are now ♪ and when the top voice comes in, they are now ♪, but the sixteenths stay the same.
- e. Canon 14
  - i. 5:4, plus P19 transposition.
  - ii. Convergence point, middle of p. 3
- f. Canon 21
  - i. Canon X – crossing tempos
  - ii. Bottom voice begins at 3.4 notes per second and speeds up at .117% per note. Finishes at 110 notes per second.
  - iii. Top voice begins at 36 notes per second and slows down at .179% to 2.3 per second.
  - iv. Proportional notation for the score – note that the ruler’s length stays the same, but meaning changes. At first it means 1/2 second (120 = 120bpm). By the end, the same length = 1/8 second
- g. Canon 25
  - i. synthesis – brings together isorhythm, canon, acceleration
  - ii. Idiomatic player piano music? “Zoom lens” for the quick glisses, arpeggios and other runs.
  - iii. Only piece of his to use a 12 tone row conventionally (that is, with inversions, retrogrades, transpositions), but frequent references to tonal harmony in the quick notes keep the work grounded in tonality.

## SOME NANCARROW CANON RATIOS

| Study | Canon/Tempo Ratio   |
|-------|---|
| 1     | 4:7   |
| 2a    | 3:5   |
| 5     | 5:7   |
| 9     | 3:4:5 (2:3, 5:8)  |
| 13    | 3:4:5   |
| 14    | 4:5 [ second voice = P19 (2 8ve + P5) higher ]  |
| 15    | 3:4   |
| 16    | 5:3   |
| 17    | 12:15:20  |
| 18    | 3:4   |
| 19    | 12:15:20 (Each line made up of a 4-part row in 4:5:6:7 canon)   |
| 21    | “Canon X”   |
| 22    | accel. by 1% : 1½% : 2¼%  |
| 24    | 14 : 15 : 16  |
| 26    | 1:1 [ <i>sic</i> ]  |
| 27    | accel. by 5%:6%:8%:11%  |
| 30    | a. 3:5, b. 4:5:7, c. 5:7, d. (9:10 inexact), e. (24:25:30 inexact) — prepared player piano                    |
| 31    | 21 : 24 : 25  |
| 32    | 5 : 6 : 7 : 8   |
| 33    | $\sqrt{2}:2$  |
| 34    | $(9:(4:5:6)) : (10:(4:5:6)) : (11:(4:5:6))$   |
| 36    | 17 : 18 : 19 : 20   |
| 37    | 150 : $160^{5/7}$ : $168^{3/4}$ : 180 : $187^{1/2}$ : 200 : 210 : 225 : 240 : 250 : $262^{1/2}$ : $281^{1/4}$ |
| 40    | $e/\pi$   |
| 41    | $[(1/\sqrt[3]{\pi})/\sqrt[13]{16}]/[(1/\sqrt{\pi})/\sqrt[2]{3}]$  |
| 43    | 24/25   |
| 48    | 60 : 61   |
| 49    | 4 : 5 : 6   |
| 50    | 3 : 5 : 7 (arr. of orchestral work)   |