I, John Lane, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Musical Arts

in Percussion

It is entitled:


Student Signature: John Lane

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee Chair: Allen Otte, MM

8/18/2010

A doctoral document submitted to the Division of Graduate Studies and Research of the University of Cincinnati

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

in the Performance Studies Division of the College-Conservatory of Music

by

John Lane

March 22, 2010

B.M., Stephen F. Austin State University, 2002

M.M., University of North Texas, 2004

Project Advisor: Allen Otte
Abstract

The history of purely American musical traditions—those not influenced by European ideals—has been largely unexplored by composers. One of the few composers to have created a new music in the search for a uniquely American identity is Peter Garland. Unlike the Euro-centric approach of George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, or William Grant Still, Garland attempts to create an American identity in music by utilizing the actual resonances—both physical and psychological—of indigenous cultures.

The intent of this document is to shed light on Native American influences in the percussion music of Peter Garland and their realization through the most conscientious and sympathetic of performance practices. Three of Garland’s compositions will be analyzed in relation to their abstracted resonances and indigenous percussive influences: *Three Songs of Mad Coyote* (1973), *Hummingbird Songs* (1974–6), and *Nana and Victorio* (1991). Performance practice in Garland’s music is drastically enhanced by an examination and knowledge of the indigenous music and resulting sound universe from which he draws inspiration. In many cases, instruments must be fashioned or found that have the same or similar resonances as the indigenous instruments. Performance practice issues to be addressed include instrument building and selection, choreography and set-up, and acceptable variations in performance strategies or instrument substitutions.
# Table of Contents

I. Chapter I: Peter Garland: Biographical Information ........................................... 1

II. Chapter II: Aesthetics .......................................................................................... 8

   a. Introduction ....................................................................................................... 8

   b. Culture/History ............................................................................................... 10

   c. Geography ....................................................................................................... 13

   d. The Body/Individual ......................................................................................... 16

   e. Appropriation .................................................................................................... 17

   f. Abstracted Resonance ...................................................................................... 19

III. Chapter III: Performance Practice in *Three Songs of Mad Coyote* (1973) ........ 22


V. Chapter V: Performance Practice in *Nana and Victorio* (1991) ....................... 43

VI. Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 62

VII. Bibliography ...................................................................................................... 63

VIII. Appendix: An Interview with Peter Garland ................................................... 69
Chapter I: Peter Garland: Biographical Information

According to composer and historian Kyle Gann, Peter Garland “is an avatar of an experimental American tradition; a musicologist of the underground; an ethnomusicologist; a composer of mesmerizing music; and in many ways, the musical conscience of my generation.”

Peter Garland was born in Portland, Maine in 1952. His interest in music of the world began at an early and impressionable age. During his last year of high school he was able to completely devote his time to studying music: “… my first music teacher (aside from piano teachers) was an ethnomusicologist; so instead of Helmholtz, he had me, at the age of sixteen, reading Curt Sachs; plus essays from a classic book appropriately entitled The Anthropology of Music…”

“So, I had Mozart and Stravinsky in the morning, and Curt Sachs/pow-wow music in the afternoon… The former made only a slight impression, but the latter certainly stuck!”

In the fall of 1969 Garland took a few courses at Columbia, one of which was a voluntary course on electronic music taught by Vladimir Ussachevsky. Guest speakers in the class included Mario Davidovsky and Milton Babbit. One activity of the class was the analysis of electronic music and their scores in a serial manner. While studying a piece by Stockhausen, Garland was unsettled by what he perceived of as an overly academic approach to the music: “All I heard were sounds. I wasn’t hearing analysis…” At this time, Garland had also been introduced to Source magazine, writings of Gary Snyder, the Grateful Dead, and the improvisation movement in California. Turning his gaze ever westward, he found a more sympathetic and interesting

---

3Peter Garland to John Lane 5 November 2007.
4Garland, Lecture at Sam Houston State University, April 2009.
artistic/cultural environment at the California Institute for the Arts (referred to hereafter as Cal Arts): “The early 70’s was the time of the “back to the land” phase of the waning hippy scene, and the vibe at Cal Arts certainly reflected that. Reading Gary Snyder’s Earth House Hold had partly inspired my move out west…” Garland spent these formative years studying with James Tenney and Harold Budd as part of the inaugural class of Cal Arts students in the early 1970s. It was a remarkably fertile period at Cal Arts, one that inspired a generation of creative composers including Garland’s well-known classmate John Luther Adams. His first percussion compositions date from this early period: Apple Blossom (1972), Three Strange Angels (1972–3), Three Songs of Mad Coyote (1973), Obstacles of Sleep (1973), and Hummingbird Songs (1974–6).

Garland’s study at Cal Arts was seminal in his development as a creative person and his future creative life. He cites it often in letters and writings and remembers it as a time of great inspiration and exploration. The unique student-teacher relationship and the unorthodox approach to music education at Cal Arts were among the reasons for the stimulating experience. Ingram Marshall recalls the first year of Cal Arts:

The first year of Cal Arts, 1970–71, was a confusing and magical time. The February earthquake did its part in creating such an aura. There began to develop a sense of community. There was a great deal of mutual respect between those “teaching” and those “learning.” There was an interaction between artists in different disciplines… the spirit of the first year came close to the original concept of the Institute as a community of artists.6

It is the individuals and personalities that give any institution life. One of the larger-than-life personalities to grace the halls of Cal Arts was James Tenney. Tenney had arrived from New York City in 1970 and had great enthusiasm for teaching American music, championing works

---

by Ives, Ruggles, Varèse, and Rudhyar. He imparted the importance of this American tradition to his students, a notion that will be expanded on later in the discussion. Tenney also believed that pursuing and sharing his own work played a role in learning: “The idea that an artist can teach best by simply continuing to do his or her own work and making the process of creation available has not been completely unworkable and altruistic concept at Cal Arts.”

Originally Garland’s piano teacher, Tenney taught in the context of a masterclass situation with a few student pianists. Garland received hands-on analysis: “We played music and talked about it; that was as valuable as any composition lesson.”

Garland also clearly remembers his first composition lessons with Harold Budd: “My assignment after my first lesson with Harold Budd was not some text by Walter Piston or Paul Hindemith, but rather… *Zen in the Art of Archery!*”

The composition lessons with Budd and Tenney, however influential, were not his only inspiration. Classes in American poetics, anthropology, performance art and video (video technology was still new and a relatively unexplored technology), and Asian music provided a rich context for the study of music. The freedom and anarchy at Cal Arts permitted students to develop a broad appreciation of the other arts. His literature teacher Clayton Eshleman, with his course on American poetics, was especially influential. Eshleman introduced Garland to a broad American poetic tradition that sprang up after the second World War and exposed him to poets from the Black Mountain College scene in the late 1940’s. Inspiration and instruction came from a variety of places outside the walls of academia as well, which continues to be a pattern in his creative life. “Other teachers have included a Javanese shadow puppet master, a Purépecha

---

7Ibid., 56.
8Garland, Lecture at Sam Houston State University, April 2009.
Indian maskmaker in Michoacán, a Pitjantjajara elder and singer in Australia, and a legendary jarocho singer and tambourine virtuoso in Veracruz.”

From 1971 to 1991, Garland may be best remembered as the sole editor and publisher of *Soundings*, a journal and small press dedicated to printing scores from and writings about early American experimental composers and works/writings by a younger generation. Composers featured in *Soundings* included Paul Bowles, Conlon Nancarrow, Lou Harrison, Dane Rudhyar, Henry Cowell, and James Tenney along with a younger generation: John Luther Adams, Michael Byron, Louis Vierk, and Guy Klucevsek, among others. *Soundings* was a realization of James Tenney’s vision of “an embodiment of… a multi-generational tradition, alive in the present and extending into the future…” Ingram Marshall reflects on Garland’s work with *Soundings*: “One of Jim Tenney’s students, Peter Garland, was sufficiently fired up about the neglected tradition of American music to start a publication called *Soundings*, whose emphasis would be on this tradition and on younger American composers. The first issue, which arose out of a workshop given by Dick Higgins of the Something Else Press, was partly financed by the school; but Peter has published the remaining nine issues independently. *Soundings* has had a remarkable but brief history… I personally think of *Soundings* as one of the more remarkable babes to spring out of those early Cal Arts years.” *Soundings* follows the tradition of similar publications, for example Henry Cowell’s *New Music Quarterly, Modern Music* — both of which sprang up in the 1920’s — as well as the more contemporary *SOURCE* magazine.

Through *Soundings Press*, Garland also published collections of musicological/ethnomusicological essays and books on American and Latin American music and composers,

---


In *Soundings*, Garland published and edited a unique collection of Jaime de Angulo’s work, *Jaime de Angulo: The Music of the Indians of Northern California* (1988). Jaime de Angulo was a California writer who had a profound impact on Garland in the mid-1970s. He was a creative writer and ethnologist whose main investigative focus was based in indigenous cultures of Northern California. It was this focus on an indigenous culture, rather than on an Anglo-European model, that inspired Garland, allowed him the “permission” to be influenced by non-traditional sources. The relationship between de Angulo and Garland is similar to John Cage’s relationship with Thoreau.

Some of his most formative experiences were the times spent living in Indian villages in Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, from July 1975 to spring of 1976; and Tocuaro, Michoacan, first from December 1977 until March of 1979, then again from January until April 1980. From 1980–91 Garland lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which also abounded with Native cultures. These years had a profound impact on his own creative work and philosophy about the role of music and the musician: living in the Indian villages in Mexico — not just visiting or studying them as an outsider or academic — gave him an insight and perspective few Western composers or scholars have had. He continued to define a uniquely American musical tradition, outside of an established Euro-centric view of art music. The musical landscape of the Americas engendered the possibility for a larger shared tradition that existed outside of artificial political borders or nation-states.
The late 1970s brought about a turn to tonality, a turn from the raucous sounds of sirens and piano clusters in his earlier work. The first work in his newly tonal style was *Dreaming of Immortality in a Thatched Cottage* for voices, harpsichord, and angklung. His String Quartet No. 1, “In Praise of Poor Scholars,” was written in 1986 and is the epitome of his tonal style. Kyle Gann describes his style:

…melodies of limited range, sometimes only four or three or even two pitches, energized by rhythmic surprise and variations in contrapuntal combination. Often the music takes place completely in the major scale, and the harmonies are mostly triadic, though any given triad is likely to be contradicted by an ambiguating pitch in another voice. You could call it minimalism without the repetition, although Garland likes to say, “I feel influenced by American modernism from the 20’s, not the 50’s and 60’s.”

*Soundings* collapsed due to financial hardships and the shrinking availability of grant funding in the late 1980s, so Garland embarked on the first of two self-imposed exiles. Because he was not affiliated with academia and had no connections with European funding or other sources of income, he felt leaving the United States was the only option. From 1991 to 1995 Garland traveled extensively, taking advantage of lecture opportunities that he had turned down while working full-time on *Soundings*. During this time he spent time in Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Vanuatu, Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Morocco, Japan and Turkey. The travels and subsequent encounters with the music in these regions are documented in his unpublished travel journal, distributed through Frog Peak Publications, *Gone Walkabout: Essays 1991–1995*. From 1997 to 2005, Garland lived in Puebla, Veracruz, and Oaxaca, Mexico. This second exile, a return to Mexico, was once again spent immersed in exploration of colorful indigenous culture, with an emphasis on music and fiesta celebrations. Thus, for long periods of time he was again actually living in the Indian villages of Mexico, something he was unable to do in the United States. This allowed him unprecedented access to

---

the music and culture of these locales. The mammoth four-volume *Field Work: The Mexican Journals* (also distributed by Frog Peak Publications) is an unpublished field and travel journal from these later years.

He has also been an outspoken advocate for independent composers, those few surviving outside of academia, and often rails against conservative politics. Since 2005, Garland has led a relatively quiet, yet active, creative life in rural Maine, the place of his birth: “I live in Maine largely because here there still is a culture (with its history and traditions)—unlike the homogenization that has made the rest of the US (with certain exceptions) so homogenized and bland.”

His most recent works have been premiered at the 2006 Spoleto Festival and in New York City performances by the Downtown Ensemble.

---

14 Garland to John Lane, 8 January 2008.
15 Over the course of the last year, I have been in correspondence with Garland via letters, phone calls, and in-person lectures/interviews. In addition to information regarding his music, I have also learned a great deal about his life as a creative person living outside of academia. In our first correspondence he said, “I don’t quite know where to start. I feel somewhat like Lou Harrison, when I first wrote him in the fall of ’71—when he was just about the same age I am now—’I was delighted to receive your letter. I was beginning to think the avant-garde had forgotten about me!’” These correspondences have given me unprecedented access to Garland’s vision of the works analyzed in this document, providing further insight into Garland’s creative process and aesthetics. In April 2009 I hosted Garland for the 47th Annual Contemporary Music Festival held on the campus of Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. As part of the festival, I performed along with students and other professional musicians, the entire repertory of Garland’s percussion music. With the composer on site during the rehearsals, I was again able to have close personal contact as he relayed his vision for these works.
Chapter II: Aesthetics

Introduction

Generations of American composers have posed the question: What is American music? Kyle Gann states,

Before 1492, the land that now comprises the United States was occupied only by the people Columbus misidentified as “Indians.” Thus, it could be said that the only indigenously American music is the vocal chanting (usually with drums or rattles) of the American Indians. Today that music is taught, however, as part of the field of ethnomusicology, rather than a shared tradition.16

Garland questions the very definition of what it means to be American: “…is there anymore, after almost 500 years of conquest and occupation, anything left American, that is, something that has its roots here and not from Europeans or their children?”17

Many American composers in the last thirty years have sought an “otherness” in world musical cultures that helps enrich or change their own conception of musical language. Garland points out that the entire world is now open to composers: “World music ceases to be exotic or peripheral; it becomes the heart of a search for a re-casting of values.”18 Technology acts as the catalyst for a new way of perceiving world music:

No one has had as much access to information, both cultural and technical/technological (ranging from the musical bow to the computer), as we do. As a composer this has taken over my interest, and has put my sense of new music in a larger focus (and not so temporally mono-directional: Leonin sounds pretty “new” to me, in that way that the creative imperatives of the present constantly redefine the historical past). …For me though, it is this Pandora’s box of geographical and musical diversity that has given me

18Ibid., vii.
more new ways of thinking about and hearing music than so-called “new music” has. …So that is it: we have the whole world as knowledge, influence.\textsuperscript{19}

With this perspective, Garland suggests a new attitude towards composition, a perspective in which techniques of Western classical tradition seem more and more exhausted. The idea that globalization can begin at home in the United States is reflected strongly in \textit{Nana and Victorio}.

Garland sees a musical richness in the Americas as foreign to our own Euro-centric musical values as any of the other more “exotic” musical cultures: “For me, ethnomusicology always began in my own backyard, at home—because frankly I don’t think there is any culture more ‘exotic’ or foreign to our own sensibilities than the Native American. When you are at a Kachina dance at Hopi or Zuñi, you could just as well be in Tibet or Bali, as far as the ‘otherness’ goes.”\textsuperscript{20}

To illustrate the “otherness” that comes from applying resonances of America’s indigenous music, Garland provides an amusing anecdote about rehearsing his piece, \textit{The Conquest of Mexico}, at Cal Arts with his Santa Fe ensemble in 1985:

The instruments consisted of two large Pueblo drums (conceptually derived from the Aztec \textit{huehuetl}, still used in present day chirimia groups in Puebla), a two pitched wooden log drum (based on the Aztec \textit{teponaztle}, still played by the Maya of the Yucatan peninsula, where it is known as a \textit{tunkul}), a rasp (the Aztec \textit{omichicahuaztli}), and a wooden slap stick (which in my conception was meant to emulate a gunshot…) A Ghanaian percussion ensemble director was watching/listening to us, and sent a student over to ask us what country this music was from! We paused, at a loss for words, until our slap stick player said, “Tell him, umh… New Mexico!” and we all nodded and smiled in agreement…\textsuperscript{21}

Garland also concedes that “globalization” is not a new phenomenon. He claims the creation and development of the Western percussion ensemble is proof:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Garland, “Henry Cowell,” 35.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Globalization is as old as civilization: older than capitalism or consumerism, or the euphemism of “free trade.” History is replete with the migrations (voluntary or forced) of peoples; and archaeology continues to expand our awareness of how mobile and far-reaching were the exchanges of goods and ideas. Our rich musical diversity is another product of globalization; and reflects centuries -- if not millennia -- of influences and cross-pollination. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the world of percussion. A genealogical tracing of various instruments' origins -- or multiple origins -- is proof enough of this. The percussion ensemble, as it evolved in Euro-American art music in the 20th century is a unique hybrid that owes its very existence to globalization.  

Throughout Garland’s life, music, and writings there is a deep-seeded and profound search to understand and uncover a true American identity, not solely an exploration or creation of a musical language/landscape. James Tenney, in his enlightened introduction to Garland’s book *Americas*, observes that for Garland, “it is first necessary to understand America—or the Americas—before any insight is possible regarding American music.”  

Garland’s experience of the Americas led to a re-casting of values—both in his personal life and in his professional/creative life—of three distinct areas: Culture/History, Geography, and The Body/Individual. When preparing Garland’s music for performance, they serve as powerful contexts. When analyzing his work, they provide a strong framework.

**Culture/History**

Garland’s re-evaluation of values involves looking deeply into American culture and history. In his estimation the Americas are a multitude of cultures, each having their own histories that extend well beyond the advent of European culture on the continent: “I realized that

---

22 Garland to John Lane, 23 June 2009.
history was not about governments or nation-states, but rather about culture and the human presence on the land...”

In a 1973 letter to Allen Otte, he briefly defines his position:

For one thing I sense my music becoming less and less European, and as importantly, American/European—in this latter category all those people, Ives Ruggles, Varèse, Cage, become “Europeans”...It’s an expanded tradition I’m working out of—an American one, to be sure, and one that includes all those names... but one in which I’m trying to reach back to roots, to go back deeper to what American really is. I mean, are you going to start at 1900 with people who are all European descended and who write for European instruments, and call that the beginnings of American music?

One point I should make clear: “American” or “European” in themselves have no meaning... It’s not a question of nationalism, because all that is politics. Rather, it’s a concern with the local, finding out where you are and who you are, and plunging as deeply as you can into that. Ultimately, after stripping away the layers, there’s nothing but you, the single person (though not, god forbid, in the old romantic notion of the individual), the “naked” self, as some people say. To me, there can be nothing else, no “art” or “music,” or “culture,” just us and the energy we project; what we do with ourselves...

Historical/cultural examination manifests itself in several ways. First, Garland supports a re-valuing of folk and/or “primitive” music of the continent—valued as an alternative to hypercomplexity or “high art” (i.e. European traditions/value systems): “… the architecture of our music has become overly complex, to the point where structure has taken over/usurped the function of content—so it has become an imperative to seek out newer (or older), simpler and more efficient structures.” Garland suggests that ensemble textures of Western music have reached a point of saturation: “…the orchestra, opera; and in popular music [there are] questions of amplification and spectacle… Where does one go after something like Mahler’s ‘Symphony of a Thousand’?”

A “primitive” simplicity is arrived at through this value system: music does not have to be complex or grandiose in texture to be powerful on an intellectual, emotional, or physical level.

---

27 Ibid.
James Tenney impressed upon his students his concept of an American historical tradition of composers, which he identified as the American Experimental Tradition. Tenney was a leading proponent of the movement, helping to organize the Tone Roads concert series promoting music by Carl Ruggles, John Cage, Edgard Varèse, Christian Wolff, and Morton Feldman. Garland subscribes to an alternate history of art music in America, one that revolves around the experimental composers. While a continuation of this lineage was strongly promoted by Tenney, Garland has reservations about classifying himself an anointed successor in the experimental tradition. The influences of that tradition, however, are clearly evident in his work.

The movement away from a hypercomplex Euro-centric model towards a folk or primitive model has precedent in the American Experimental Tradition. The influence on Indonesian gamelan on Lou Harrison’s music and his use of ancient/medieval forms such as the Jhala, can be seen in this light, as can the return to the simplicity of song forms, such as in Henry Cowell’s *Hymn and Fuguing Tunes*.

In his percussion music Garland adheres strongly to the musical language of the experimental composers, one that includes noise/noise instruments and “non-referential continuity,” virtually rendering harmony and melody secondary concerns. Kyle Gann states, “Some of Garland’s early music—notably *The Three Strange Angels* and *Three Songs of Mad Coyote* (both 1973) for piano, bass drum, bull roarers, tom-toms—roars with the booming piano clusters and the wail of sirens, minimalist in its limitation of materials but inspired by the raucous sound world of Varèse.”

His affinity for percussion is a shared connection with the experimental composers: “Not until the percussion music that sprang up in this country in the 1930’s did Western (European)

---

28Ibid.
music have any feeling for percussive/rhythmic music for its own sake—it had always been cast in a supporting role.”\textsuperscript{30} Compositions such as Amadeo Roldan’s Ritmicas No. 5 and No. 6 (1930), Varèse’s Ionisation (1931), and Henry Cowell’s Ostinato Pianissimo (1934), along with the first percussion works of John Cage and Lou Harrison, had a strong impact on Garland’s own interest and aesthetics in writing for percussion.

When we objectively view the last century of American music, the experimental composers appear to be a loose organization. Garland’s reticence to acknowledge or name himself as a current incarnation of the tradition has more to do with his personality than it does with the evidence.

History will ultimately assign these… movements to the “experimental” tradition… But that is because this “tradition” is not one in a narrow sense at all. “Free-Thinking” might be its sole unifying trademark. One does not have to “swear allegiance” to a small, well-defined group of “masters”… One “belongs” to the American experimental tradition by “not belonging.”\textsuperscript{31} In his own estimation, to strongly adhere to a tradition would be considered a limitation: “A present-day composer can no longer let himself be limited, if only in terms of knowledge, to a single musical tradition.”\textsuperscript{32}

I think by examining his choice of instrumentation, the simplicity inherent in his musical language, his work with Soundings, and his fond writings about composers from this tradition—Henry Cowell, especially—one can identify his work as both a historian and composer as clearly belonging to this tradition.

Geography

One need only look at the landscape of America to see evidence of rich, ancient, and varied cultures:

\textsuperscript{30}Garland, Americas, 29. 
\textsuperscript{31}Garland, In Search of Silvestre Revueltas, 14. 
…the landscape here burns with meanings that have been forgotten or discarded; it is communicative, in a language and images that are real, and physically here and urgent, as any language, written or spoken, that man has invented. A language of matter, of landscape. A power of mass, space, curvature, hot and cold, of sounds rebounding through it all.³³

This cultural/historical resonance is experienced most vividly in the geography and landscapes of the American West—New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and California. Ancient Anasazi petroglyphs pecked into rock faces at Chaco Canyon, and over 20,000 such images at Three Rivers, New Mexico, represent evidence of a vast history present thousands of years before Columbus arrived on the continent. Garland found that he became more interested in cultural history as it related to geographic landscape. This led to a conception of America as a physical reality that extended beyond artificial political boundaries or nation-states.³⁴ Indeed, it was his need to experience the physical geography of the Americas that necessitated his living in some of the locales.

Garland’s notion of an extended American geography was even more profoundly shaped by living in Mexico. Before he moved to Mexico, Garland’s brother had sent him writings by Edward Weston, the renowned photographer of California and Mexico. It was the journal of Weston’s experiences in Mexico with his companion Tina Modotti. Weston’s artistic vision, like Garland’s, was sharpened by his experiences in that time and place.

In Indian villages in Mexico Garland immersed himself in indigenous culture, something that was impossible to do in the more culturally mixed United States. This experience gave Garland a new definition of culture: “My basic view of culture is that it is not merely a question of “products”—i.e. the pieces you write (or poems or paintings, etc.), or the concerts you present. But rather, and most fundamentally it is the life you live, where you live it, and the deep

³⁴Tenney, foreward to Americas, iii.
reciprocity of place and people.”35 His decided animosity towards an academic life and decision to live in landscapes apart from centers of artistic activity, such as New York or Los Angeles, has allowed him to experience a “deeper, more culturally rooted sense of music.”36 As important as any other artistic choice, Garland’s profound connection to place and culture is fundamental to understanding his music.

Though Mexico is a next-door neighbor to the United States, Garland observes that the vast majority of its musical culture is unknown to musicians here (certainly unknown to percussionists). Experiencing the ritual and festive culture of indigenous cultures in Mexico was a powerful source of inspiration, in terms of his own music, but also in helping to provide the re-evaluation of a musician’s role in culture:

I had been aware of that culture through books and recordings, but I was amazed by its depth and sheer energy. In fact, I would devote the next thirty years of my life to studying it from an ethnomusicological viewpoint, something that has become a major portion of my life’s work… I have often claimed that instead of graduate school, I spent two years living in Indian villages, first in Oaxaca (Zapotec) and subsequently in Michoacán (Purépecha).37

Mexican indigenous cultures allowed Garland a greater realization of the interaction between music and the daily social/ritual lives of the people:

To these people, the concepts of avant-garde that I had been educated into seemed rather silly and precious, and elitist; divorced from real life and culture (what little culture apart from commercialism is left in the United States…). It appeared not only academic… but also as a product of a capitalist, consumer culture, where “art” is merely sold and appreciated in museums and culture palaces and elitist art galleries and universities—places I began to feel less and less comfortable (and welcome) in… here in Mexico, music was to be found in the streets, and in life itself… My Mixe Indian friends (a race famed for their music and composers) summed it up perfectly: “A pueblo without music is a dead pueblo;” and “We are born, we live and we die with music.” That gave me a new vision, not only of music, but of my life as a musician too.38

35 Garland to John Lane, 8 January 2008.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 24.
The Body/Individual

The final realization of Garland’s re-valuing of music deals with The Body/Individual. I believe through Garland’s music a performer may experience three identifiable states, none of which are necessarily mutually exclusive: music as physical experience, music as dance, and music as personal ritual. Music becomes an intensely personal experience for the performer: “All systems, musical or political, boil down to the single person, our own bodies as the principle field of action, on the private and collective levels. It is foolish to believe in a ‘reality’ outside our own physical and mental processes.”[^39] From a performer’s perspective it is this aspect of Garland’s re-casting of values that is most important to understand, an understanding that leads to a more sympathetic and open approach to performing and experiencing his music: “Perhaps, there is nothing else but our bodies, and the natural rhythms and joys we feel through them, and the appreciation of our mental faculties is not separable from this total response. MUSIC IS A PHYSICAL PHENOMENON, neither conceptual, nor purely aural.”[^40]

Watching and studying Native American music and ritual played a major role in revealing these ideals for Garland. His music allows performers to experience a kind of physicality and ritual through performance that can lead to an enhanced state of consciousness and awareness. It is an undeniable fact that these elements are inherent in his very conception of musical composition and need to be understood in order for a sympathetic performance to take place.

[^40]: Ibid., 3–4.
Appropriation

Garland incorporates non-European elements without appropriating, misrepresenting, or disrespecting the original inspirations. He achieves this by utilizing resonances of various musical cultures that can be borrowed without “trespassing on the magic or uniqueness of the music,” i.e. neither borrowing melodies nor simply imitating indigenous music.\textsuperscript{41} He explains that, “the best we can do (and which [Henry Cowell and Lou Harrison] both did, and subsequent generations, to a greater or lesser extent) is to become musically multi-lingual— which is not the same as multi-cultural… One is invariably shaped by the culture one is born and educated into… At best we can acknowledge and celebrate our similarities and differences.”\textsuperscript{42}

The use of indigenous materials and/or instrumentation is not a new idea: “…each generation contributes to this ongoing dialogue between traditions. We have the well-known examples of Stravinsky, Bartok, and Revueltas from the first half of the twentieth century. At mid-century we have Cowell, Harrison, and Cage, with a more radical, or further developed approach, especially the latter two.”\textsuperscript{43} Garland mixes the indigenous elements uniquely, extending from his study of the above mentioned composers: “…the use of non-European musical ideas and materials is least effective and interesting when it is simply a case of appropriation or imitation; and that it is more exciting and profound when it involves a real shift of a composer’s musical language.”\textsuperscript{44}

Many American percussionists can discuss at length the percussive traditions and histories of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Indonesia and in some cases explain how they have impacted or developed our current instruments and art. However, when it actually comes to

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 14.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 19.
Native American music (in the broadest sense) and the variety of instruments in these cultures, most of us draw a total blank: “There is a plethora of Native American instruments, and to this day it surprises me that American musicians are so unaware of American percussive traditions and their sonic wealth. From water drums to peyote rattles, to Pueblo drums that are as finely made (and richly tonal) as Chinese ones; or the bullroarer, used by Cowell in his 1920’s piece *Ensemble*…”45

Indigenous musical resonances create a distinct sonic landscape in Garland’s music. To prove that paying attention to these resonances causes shifts in compositional language, he points to the development of percussive traditions in the American Experimental Tradition: “Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the development of the US percussion ensemble tradition in the 1930’s (and parallel with that, the evolution of Harry Partch’s work). This was probably the first ‘alternative music scene’ within the content of Euro-American art music… This percussion music was WAY beyond Stravinsky’s or Bartok’s uses of disjunct rhythms or expanded percussion sections within the orchestral context.”46

The use of non-Western percussion instruments as resonances represented a revolution or evolution in twentieth century musical language, so that a clave, for instance, need no longer have any association with its traditional usage. Amadeo Roldan contrasts the use of indigenous American instrumental resonances against with the use of European instruments:

> Indigenous instruments, both melodic and percussion, should be used, not in order to obtain an easy local color (something that I regard as not artistically serious), but with the purpose of widening their significance beyond the national boundaries. The sound of a banjo must not always bring jazz to our mind, nor should the rhythm of our guiro always recall a rumba. Those instruments of ours, speaking in a general and broad sense, are richer than the European ones from the standpoint of their sonority and rhythmic

value, and ought to be mingled with them and sometimes take their place… their richness of sonority and their rhythmic precision have no possible equivalent or substitute among European instruments… As American musicians, we are in possession of a melodic and rhythmic basis as rich and varied as that of the original European countries. Let us create a continental art, and by means of developing our own American instruments present to the artistic world an art that is genuinely American.47

Garland avoids merely appropriating the music from which he draws inspiration by advocating respect and reverence: “I ultimately came to the conclusion, one I still hold, that as much as I love and am moved by this music, the most respectful thing I could do was to leave it alone.”48 Garland also avoids provincialism by not using “tuneful melodies lifted from books in a library…”49 He finds Native American music to be the most sonically compelling American music, but curiously the least accessible to composers: “I have spent a lifetime studying the New Mexico Pueblos, the Zunis, Hopis, Navajos, Utes, Apaches, and Yaquis… As a composer, I quickly realized that this was a music that one could never ‘appropriate.’ The heart and soul of this music are distinct from ours (my own) and inviolable…”50 Garland creates a distinction by abstracting the qualities he found so compelling in Native American music.

Abstracted Resonance

Abstracted resonance is a term I use to denote the phenomenon of resonances from different cultural musics applied in an entirely new context: a literal re-contextualization of sound. However, the term is expanded in this study and, in the broadest sense, incorporates textual references (i.e. the poetry of Edward Dorn in Nana and Victorio), instrumentation,

48 Ibid., p. 20.
49 Ibid.
philosophical concepts, literary ideals or figurative language projected in the music, and the aura of ritual. Abstracted resonance is a term plucked directly from Garland’s own writing: “I admired the booming resonance of pow-wow drumming—just the resonance as such, without making any attempt at borrowing the unique vocal styles or melodic characteristics. That kind of abstracted resonance appears in *Three Songs of Mad Coyote*… four drummers and eight sticks playing tom-toms in unison. The key was resonance—something I learned from Cowell…”

One aspect of abstracted resonance is a projection of textual ideas or images. Garland is intimately connected to words, not only because of his own abilities as an author of engaging prose, but through a love of literature and especially the language of poetry. So strong is the connection to the written word that his musical language can be analyzed “as a form of speech or discourse.” “… Poetry, more than the physical sciences or any other art form, has influenced my sense of musical language, and hence form… always trying to understand the language of music; while poets are constantly searching for the music of language.” Textual projection—analyzed as abstracted resonance—will be discussed at length in the discussion of *Nana and Victorio*.

Garland draws connections between composers and poets in a kind of linear historical framework, for instance pointing to Ezra Pound in poetry as being a counterpart to Henry Cowell in music. Like Cowell, Garland believes modernism in literature began largely with Pound. He explains Pound’s work as a translator of the poetries of Asia and ancient Europe: “with Pound the study and knowledge of world poetries became an integral part of modern poetics. The same

---

53 Ibid., 28–9.
can be said of Cowell, with his promotion of the musics of the world’s peoples.”

William Carlos Williams is a poet who achieved a distinctive American tone that Garland describes as “embedded in an American vernacular voice.” A few other poets are mentioned as inspirational: Lew Welch, Philip Whalen, and Gary Snyder. Garland believes these poets “bring down poetry off its lofty pedestal of aestheticism and return it to the streets, and a concrete here-and-now sense of Nature and spirituality…”

Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid., 30.
Garland’s skill as a composer has been largely underrepresented in the world of critical studies and analysis. Other than reviews of his recorded works, a few excellent writings by Kyle Gann, and his own publications, there have not been any major studies of his music. Perhaps this is due to its surface simplicity and/or unusual instrumentation; Garland has remarked to me of a transparency in *Three Songs of Mad Coyote*.\(^{57}\) There is a need for sympathetic, intentional, and informed performers who pay attention to this issue of transparency and clarity. Written in 1973 within a milieu of hyper complex percussion music (graphic notation, computers, mathematics, virtuosity, large instrumentations, etc…), *Three Songs* stands out for its simplicity, which is a key ingredient in its psychological, emotional, and physical power. The simplicity of the music is on the surface; it is not simple music.

Transparency and simplicity are reflections of a creative life spent primarily outside of academia, which requires a kind of risk taking. Perhaps this is what gives Garland’s concept of simplicity a sense of integrity: it wasn’t a technique learned in a textbook. “Creativity for me is about discovery, pushing in to the unknown, discovering the unknown in yourself… awkwardness and vulnerability are always a part of that search.”\(^{58}\)

Garland’s music must be juxtaposed against the current trends in the performance of new music. It is accurate to say that many solo performers active in new music today have a certain insistence on negotiating dauntingly complex music, promoting a perhaps antiquated—not to mention Euro-centric—ideal of the instrumental virtuoso. Their insistence is what keeps complexity and this kind of virtuosity alive and is, thus, one of the reasons Garland’s music has

---

\(^{57}\) Informal interview by author with Peter Garland, April 16, 2009.  
received few and mostly poor performances: “These people will see little opportunity for self-validation on Garland’s pages.” Garland’s music requires a new virtuosity: transparency and consciousness—not the ability to play thousands of notes from memory or moves one’s hands across an instrument at immense speeds. What appears to be simplicity proves to be a unique vessel for a most profound or moving musical experience for a sympathetic performer.

*Three Songs* exists conceptually as a part of a larger work, *Three Pieces for Percussion*—which includes *Three Strange Angels* and *Obstacles of Sleep*. Garland intended the works to be performed as a complete cycle, though each work is perfectly suitable as a stand-alone piece without the others. However, *Three Songs* acts as an extension or expansion of *Three Strange Angels*, sharing much the same instrumentation and, in the case of the piano, doubling that instrumentation. While pairing the pieces or performing the entire cycle is to better realize the composer’s original intentions, this study will deal only with *Three Songs*.

The three movements of *Three Songs* utilize a quartet of players performing bass drums, tom-toms, piano (full keyboard clusters), bullroarers, and a lion’s roar. It was written in 1973 for the Blackearth Percussion Group, who premiered it on September 29, 1973 at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana in the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. It was first recorded—with several of his percussion works—and released under the title, *Border Crossing*, by the University of New Mexico. These recordings have now been reissued, along with additional material, on Tzadik Records.

Several abstracted resonances appearing in *Three Songs* are drawn largely from Garland’s experiences of pow-wow drumming, and include physicality (aural as well as muscular), the “aura” of ritual, and simplicity. In addition to pow-wow drumming, the use of the

---

bullroarer as an ancient cultural reference and Henry Cowell’s piano clusters play significant roles as abstracted resonances.

There is a physicality to pow-wow drumming that cannot be appreciated by listening to a recording because one of the dimensions of abstracted resonance is the aura of ritual, something that must be captured in the performance of each movement of *Three Songs*. Typically, there are upwards of six to nine players sitting around a large calf-skin (or elk/deer-skin) pow-wow drum, pounding with all their might and singing incredibly powerful and soaring call-and-response-style melodies. The sound of a live performance can be felt viscerally in the gut. Garland captures this kind of physicality in his description of a pueblo drummer in New Mexico: “He was thin and ancient, accompanying a chorus of over a hundred singers; and yet he was striking that drum with a BOOM! that could be heard almost all the way to Albuquerque.”60 The sensation for a performer as well as the audience is something that is impossible to analyze, but is a crucial element to the experience.

I use the word “sympathetic” often to describe a performer who is actively paying attention to the ideals and philosophy behind the music. Garland sometimes speaks of a “conscious” performer, in regards to the Native American musical ideals being borrowed, but also in regards to words and ideas. Each movement of *Three Songs* is based on Nez Percé tribal visions/myths of Coyote: “Be conscious of the poems—they are, after all, there, and they do convey exactly the spirit of the three movements. Also, when you perform and rehearse the piece, be conscious of both musics, the white and Indian—this tries to come out of both. And, if

---

you can, listen to American Indian music—there it becomes quite evident that technique means much more than (or completely transcends) how fast your hands move on an instrument.”

The first song consists of a single line played in unison with the instructions to play, “As loud as possible!” Certainly, for both audience member and performer, the assault to the senses from the sheer volume evokes a physical and emotional response. This effect is abstracted/expanded from pow-wow performance—something that typically occurs outdoors—and captured through the use of modern concert instruments in a concert hall setting. Unison drumming as loud as possible on contemporary concert percussion instruments creates an absolute wall of sound that reverberates through the entire body. Both player and audience are able to respond physically to the terrifying and exciting sonic event on stage. A more representative example of abstracted resonance is hard to find.

There are a few key elements to consider in creation of a performance sympathetic to the ideals of pow-wow drumming. An appropriate performance practice for the first movement is to have the performers as close in proximity as possible, either in a tight circle or semi-circle facing the audience. A modification that Garland has approved and supports is instrument substitution, though this is not indicated in the score. In order to add more volume, resonance, and intensity to the aural experience of this communal drumming (like pow-wow drumming), the substitution of one or more of the players performing on bass drums instead of tom-toms (either one for each hand or a single drum played with both sticks) is acceptable. Concert toms (single or double headed) of at least 14”–16” and concert bass drums are the intended instruments, unlike the Native American tom-toms called for in Nana and Victorio. Garland encourages experimentation

---

with the sizes of the drums, but advises a loud and ringing resonance as the most important element of this movement.

The “aura” of ritual is an element that is difficult to explain or express. Allen Otte, in a discussion of this subject, remarked, “What the performers perform is the ritual—the audiences are not so much concert hall listeners as eavesdropping on-lookers.” There is, I think, a distinct difference between ritual and performance. Anyone who has attended a Native American ritual dance as opposed to a performance event, such as a public pow-wow contest, can attest to this. In ritual there is no concern for an audience—the effect or intended result of the activity would be the same with or without observers. Rituals exist for the benefit of the participants, for specific social, practical, or spiritual purposes (invocation of rain, fertility, etc…), not for audience entertainment. A performance event is disconnected, except perhaps superficially, from any ritual purpose—pageantry is simply entertainment.

Garland recently wrote an essay on the topics of music, mysticism and spirituality. Three factors he identifies in the essay as essential to the experience of mystical phenomenon are the religious or ritual context in which music takes place—a framework of beliefs and specific cultural underpinning; the larger “sense of place”—cultural, historical, or geographical; and finally a subjective factor: “one’s own receptivity and state of awareness.”63 The latter is sometimes conditioned by the first two factors, sometimes also aided by drugs or sleep deprivation in certain ritual contexts.

Garland states that he has never experienced mysticism in concert music.64 “Music as “product” or as a commodified activity does not lend itself to this, in my opinion. All of these

---

64 Ibid., 3.
deep experiences have taken place in the context of community—be it religious or social—and the musical expressions have been validated by their place in a fabric of inter-connected beliefs and activities.”

While many musicians and audience members experience a profound spiritual connection with concert music—and its function in Western society certainly has the transformative goals that Art always hopes to contribute—we have long since lost any likelihood that such an intention could achieve the same ends that a true ritual means to deliver in the historical cultures that have most interested Garland.

What happens in Garland’s music is an evocation of the “aura” of ritual, not ritual itself: “I have seen some events that were indeed performances as much or more than they were rituals, but what transforms them were the shared beliefs that created a certain ‘gravitas’ of the moment, taking it beyond mere spectacle.”

When performers act consciously upon this ideal, if they can tap into this conceptual element, the transparency and “simplicity” of this music disappears, as they transform it into just such a ritual-like experience.

Bullroarers, used in the second movement, introduce another abstracted resonance. The second movement of Three Songs consists of two bullroarer parts played against an interjecting lion’s roar. (The lion’s roar and its references to animal sound will be examined in a later chapter.) Research on bullroarers exists in thousands of writings and a complete ethnomusicological study of the instrument is too vast a topic for the purposes of this study. The Bullroarer is found in prehistoric cultures worldwide, such as Australian Aboriginal culture, Native American peoples (Apache and Navajo), Papua New Guinea, and others. Each culture

---

65 Ibid.  
66 Ibid.
had its own name and practice associated with the instrument, each also developing independently. The resonance of the instrument recalls a global human musical experience.\textsuperscript{67}

Henry Cowell used the bullroarer, which he called a “thunder stick,” in his work\textit{Ensemble} in the 1920s. The work combines a string quartet with a single bullroarer. Cowell’s usage here is similar to Garland’s, but does not draw solely on the transparent sound of the bullroarer. One cannot deny the sonic power that the spare bullroarers have in Garland’s work as reference to a most primitive instrumental sound, as opposed to Cowell’s juxtaposition of the ancient instrument against something as “Western-High-Art” as the string quartet. Clearly Cowell wields a huge influence on Garland, and one that will continue to be analyzed throughout this study.

Bethe Hagens commented on her experience with a bullroarer in this way:

The intensity of the bullroarer’s emotional call was not something I could have anticipated… Bullroarers are so widespread—indeed they have been found across human history for at least 30,000 years… that as I… swung the instruments, I felt a familiarity arise in me and I began to experience them as an echo of global human consciousness.\textsuperscript{68}

A sympathetic performer can experience a similar feeling in the second movement of\textit{Three Songs}. At this moment the work refuses to acknowledge itself as Western “concert” music; it could easily be an ancient ritual—from some exotic and unnamed culture—re-enacted on stage in the presence of an audience.

The resonance of an instrument transcends its surface simplicity. Perhaps more than any other moment in all of Garland’s music, time and attention must be paid to the transparency of sound and action. Familiarity with the bullroarer is an absolute necessity and the element that


\textsuperscript{68}Ibid.
many past performances have lacked. Performers must take care to learn their instrument, as each will be unique.

Sounding a bullroarer is a simple matter of swinging a small piece of wood that has been attached to a string through a hole at the extreme end of the wood. The knot must be sufficient to resist the centrifugal force of the instrument as it swings or a dangerous projectile may be created. Some performers may choose to add a swivel between the string and the wood, like those commonly used in fishing tackle. Percussionists often overlook the nuances of playing a bullroarer: though on the surface seems it appears to be such a simple instrument, careless technique leads to the inability to control the bullroarer in performance.

The technique of starting and stopping the sound silently is necessary and does not require hours of practice. Decisions need to be made on the technique of starting and stopping the bullroarers. I’ve found that keeping the instrument swinging—gently back and forth—after the sounding has occurred, allows the bullroarer to easily begin spinning again for the next entrance. A recommended staging is to elevate the bullroarer performers on platforms or move them to the very front of the stage in order to allow a larger range of motion for the instrument.

There are hundreds of types and variations of bullroarers. Performers are encouraged to experiment with many shapes, sizes, and densities of wood; each element will create slight variations in sound. I have found that filing the wood down to a point at the tip, and then filing the sides to sharp edges creates the best spin.

Bullroarers naturally create dynamic oscillations—a rising and falling sound is most common. Garland notates this with wavy lines, a representation that is purely visual. In performance, the lion’s roar player will determines the pace/timing of the movement.
The final sonic building block introduced in the third song — the piano clusters — can be traced more directly to the American Experimental Tradition than any other element in *Three Songs*. Cowell was the model for so much of Garland’s professional life—his creation of *Soundings* owes a large debt to Cowell’s *New Music Quarterly* as a way to collect and disseminate scores and articles by individuals sympathetic to the aesthetic and philosophical positions defined by the journal. As a composer, Cowell is known as one of the first innovators in extended techniques for the piano — most notably, the use of clusters, usually played with the fist or forearms. So here was another element for Garland to expand and “amplify,” clusters that could now encompass the entire piano range. Special boards must be constructed to cover the entire white notes of the keyboard. Typically, these are 2x4 or 1x4 boards that have been cut to the correct length. Foam pipe insulation added to edge of the board helps protect the keys of the piano.

The giant piano clusters, an abstracted resonance, are Garland’s stroke of genius. Allen Otte remarked on this use of the piano as: “perhaps the most interesting example of them all because it admits that this is Western concert hall music (the presence of two grand pianos) without having anything to do with actually referencing the historical sound of the piano, yet neither does this grandest of all resonances have any direct connection to the Native American sound world.” The abstraction goes much deeper than simply an expansion of a technique by Henry Cowell; the two large pianos on stage, in fact, act as a visual and aural identification of the most unique abstraction.

The psychological impact is similar to John Cage’s use of the piano in *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*. *The Wonderful Widow* is a composition for pianist and vocalist. The

---

69 Allen Otte, Interview with Author, Huntsville, TX, November 2008.
pianist, a role preferably filled by a percussionist, is asked to rap with fingers and knuckles on
the closed lid of the piano and slap the underside of the keyboard. The vocal line, which is to be
sung very softly without vibrato, is from James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*. In Cage’s work, the
traditional 19th century art song with piano accompaniment is frustrated by a pianist performing
on a closed piano lid and a vocalist singing somewhat inexpressively with no vibrato. Cage could
have used a block of wood or a drum, but instead indicates the part be performed on a piano. The
psychological suggestion of this action—piano as noise instrument, piano as psychology—finds
resonance in Garland’s use of piano in *Three Songs*. 
Chapter IV: Performance Practice in *Hummingbird Songs* (1974–6)

*Hummingbird Songs* consists of ten short songs for rasps, handclaps, blowing through cupped hands, dijeridu, vocalized birdcalls, slit drums, and whistling. Garland provides some insight to his influences in the score: “The *Hummingbird Songs* constitute my entire musical output from 1974 through the spring of 1976, during which time I was living near Berkeley, California; Brunswick, Maine; and in Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca. I was much under the influence of Harry Partch during this period, and was writing mostly percussion music with strong audible references to indigenous American sources. In the *Hummingbird Songs*, for instance, the use of the rasp came to me from the Yaqui deer dance music; and the various birdcall sounds and ocarinas were inspired by recordings of Amazonian Indian bird and animal calls (along with real birds where I was living). Animal magic…”

Simplicity in Garland’s music can lead to a sense of complacency among performers, after all, there is not a lot of “music” to work with in his scores. Garland remarks, “… notation-wise it’s one of my simplest pieces, which has consistently received the most excruciatingly awful performances. Because in this piece the music is just as much about the SOUND as it is about the notes; and if one gets the notes right but the sound wrong, the piece is a total failure; indeed it’s laughable (to my own embarrassment)”

Garland is adamant that percussionists pay attention to the sounds in these pieces: “I have NEVER been satisfied with most (of the few) performances of my *Hummingbird Songs*. The percussionists never get the SOUND right.”

---

72Garland to John Lane, 7 December 2007.
Problems in the realization of *Hummingbird Songs* have been in choosing/making the instruments and knowing how to play them.

The investigation of three distinct textural parents — analyzed here for their abstracted resonances — reveals the exacting sonic standards that Garland demands. The abstracted resonances in *Hummingbird Songs*—partly stated by the composer in the score (see above)—come from the following: the Yaqui Deer Dance, the Ute Bear Dance, and the animal/bird calls of Amazonian Basin Indians (Mato Grosso).

The Yaqui are Cahitan-speaking people of southern Sonora, Mexico. Their first contact with Jesuit missionaries was in 1533, which began a mostly poor relationship with the Spanish occupiers. The Yaquis, at least in the early years, resisted Spanish and Mexican intrusion into their lands. Hostile relations ensued with the Mexican government after the War of Independence. The root of that hostility was the belief by the Mexicans that the Yaquis were taxable land-holding citizens, which was something the Yaquis could not comprehend. Around 1880, the Yaquis began to migrate northward into what is now southern Arizona; their best-known village was Pascua, once the outskirts of modern-day Tucson.\(^73\)

The Yaquis’ interaction with their occupiers, and specifically with their Spanish-Catholic religion, created a fascinating intermingling of ritual practices. This is true of many of the Pueblo cultures of New Mexico, whose feast days mostly correspond to the Catholic feast calendar. Despite the absorption of many Christian observances/beliefs, they maintain unique religious observances. “The Yaqui remember no native supernatural beings, ‘but legend and memory

remind them of the belief, similar to that of other Indians in the Southwest, that special power was obtainable from the natural world of forests, mountains, caves, and from dreams.”

Arts and crafts of all kinds, from wood-carving and oratory to singing, music, and dance, flourished in the Yaqui culture, all serving religious purposes. Religion serves as the primary medium for connecting art and culture in Yaqui life. In order to understand context for the music, one must understand the nature of the fiesta, or feast, which features this music. This examination relates to the later discussion of the Ute ritual as well.

Fiestas occur at various times during the year, with many of the most important feasts occurring on Holy Days of the Catholic church calendar. Lent and Holy Week represent a particularly active time. Yaqui fiestas will typically begin around sundown and last until at least dawn of the following day. Many Yaqui fiestas will feature a deer dancer, who “occupies a very ancient part of the Yaqui universe, the seyewailo or flower world. When he dances, he is said to become the spirit of the deer. While not dancing he remains silent and aloof. He is dignified, representing the deer at all times.”

Three musicians usually accompany the deer dancer: two play rasps and one plays a water drum. As with most Native American rituals, musicians sing songs; sometimes they also play small whistles. The deer dancer is described in Bertha Dutton’s book, American Indians of the Southwest:

> With a brisk shake of his gourds and his belt of deer-hoof rattles, the Deer dancer makes his entrance. His headdress is a stuffed deer head tipped with red ribbons which symbolize flowers. A red ribbon between the antlers is tied in the form of a cross. The deer songs to which he dances are treasured poetry from the past, reminiscent of the forest home of the deer, of flowers, clouds, rain, and wild

---

74 Ibid.
creatures. The three Deer singers play native instruments of water drum and swift-moving raspers. The songs and dances were originally hunting rituals.\textsuperscript{76}

As with many Native American ritual dances, aspects of the performance are representative and filled with meaning. In the case of the deer dance, the rasps represent the deer’s breathing; the water drum evokes the deer’s heartbeat, while texts are “filled with the images of the dawn, of flowers, of enchantment and beauty.”\textsuperscript{77}

Rasping is found in its most aggressive and vigorous form in the Ute bear dance. The Ute, unlike the mostly agrarian Yaqui, were originally a hunting/gathering society. Ute Indians are the only extant tribe dwelling today in organized groups in the state of Colorado. Their people once claimed a huge swath of land extending to half of the current state, two-thirds of Utah, and parts of Northern New Mexico; eventually they ceded most of their lands to the United States government to be used by settlers for agriculture, mining, and railroads.\textsuperscript{78}

Only two traditional rituals are still alive and practiced in Ute culture: the bear dance (which is a rite of spring) and the sun dance. “Veneration of the bear, in one form or another, tinges many of the Ute ceremonies. The bear is regarded as the wisest of animals and the bravest of all except the mountain lion… Feeling that the bears are fully aware of the relationship existing between themselves and the Ute, their ceremony of the bear dance assists in strengthening this friendship.”\textsuperscript{79} The ceremony is usually held in the spring, typically in March, as the bears are recovering and re-appearing after their winter hibernation.

The origins of the ceremony are unknown, but Edward Bent Box, Sr. relayed a legend about the origin in a charming story:

\textsuperscript{76}Dutton, \textit{American Indians of the Southwest}, 228.
\textsuperscript{77}Griffith and Nuss, “The Yaquis,” liner notes.
\textsuperscript{78}Dutton, \textit{American Indians of the Southwest}, 145–6.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., 153.
Two young men who were hunting saw a female bear doing what looked like a dance. The bear would walk up to a tree, scratch at the bark, back away and repeat the steps. They watched for a while and then returned home. That night, one of the young men had a dream in which the bear came to him and offered to teach him the dance. After she had done so, she instructed him to teach this dance to his people, and to repeat the dance every spring. The songs and dance shows respect for the spirit of the bear and in showing respect to the bear spirit the people become strong.\(^{80}\)

It is important to understand the importance of the bear dance presentation and the lengths to which the Ute go to in preparation for the dance. First, an enclosure, or "a-vik-wok-et" (cave of sticks), is built. The enclosure ranges from one hundred to one hundred fifty feet in diameter, with walls of timbers and pine boughs built up to a height of seven feet. Obviously, this structure represents the bear’s cave. The opening faces south or southeast and is open on top.\(^{81}\)

Once a location for the musicians is selected inside the structure, a hole is dug, over which is placed a box or drum with an open bottom. The musicians stand or sit with their moraches ("singing sticks"), or rasps, against the box. The rasps are essentially large notched sticks made from bone or pine. When rubbed, they make a heavy rasping sound, which the box or drum amplifies heavily. At times, upward of twenty players may be performing on such rasps. The sound resonates inside the little cave and, "is thought to be transformed into thunder, which arouses the sleeping bears in their mountain caves."\(^{82}\)

The most important textural influence for *Hummingbird Songs* is the “muscular” rasping from both the Yaqui and Ute traditions. Understanding that a rasp is not a guiro is an important sound consideration. A percussionist might readily choose a guiro for a rasp, but substitution is

---


\(^{82}\)Ibid.
not appropriate in this case. Garland further confuses the issue by calling for a “guiro” in the score in several places. It is unclear why he has done this, as on numerous occasions he expressed to me that a “scratchy” guiro is completely unacceptable. It is clear that he intends a rasp like those found in the Ute and Yaqui dances.

Garland describes the sound of the rasping in the bear dance as “muscular.” The performers in *Hummingbird Songs* must create a rasp similar to the Yaqui or Ute morache in order to achieve a “muscular” rasping sound. Rasps are easily constructed using bamboo, or solid wood (pine or oak dowels). Notches are gouged in the wood, around a half to three-quarters of an inch apart. I have found that the deeper the gouge and the wider the spacing, the lower the pitch of the rasping. The performer should experiment with varying depths and spacing to achieve the loudest, most “muscular” rasping possible. The scraping implement could be a wood dowel, a metal dowel, or a metal-pronged comb. A large box should also be constructed as a resonating chamber. I found that a large plywood box works perfectly well and clearly amplifies the rasp to the proper volume, which is essentially as loud as possible.

*Music from Mato Grosso, Brazil*, is a set of recordings by Edward M. Weyer, Jr. released on Folkways records in 1955. This recording represents the final—and most intriguing—textural parent for Garland as he was writing *Hummingbird Songs*. “Mato Grosso” literally translates from Portuguese as “Thick Forest” which perfectly describes the Brazilian wilderness from which the music comes. Harry Tschopik, Jr. writes in the liner notes of the original Folkways recording:

> In the present century this obscure Brazilian wilderness, situated almost in the geographical center of the South American continent, gained worldwide interest with the disappearance of Colonel Fawcett and his party in 1926. Even today, though it may be reached by plane from Rio de Janeiro in less than a day, Mato Grosso is only just
becoming known to the civilized world. Recordings are mostly of native peoples living along the upper Xingû River. Some of the performers on the recording are from extremely primitive and long untouched cultures: for example, the Chavante Indians were only successfully/peacefully contacted by white men in 1946. The ethnology of this region is clearly too large a subject matter for this study, but is a fascinating subject, one still being studied systematically by ethnologists to the present time.

The track of particular relevance to this examination of Garland’s music is a recording of two men doing extremely accurate animal and birdcall imitations. The liner notes provide the common English, Brazilian, and scientific names of the animals in question. On the recording they occur in the following order:

A. A quail-like bird, Urú (Odontophorus capueira)
B. Poor-me-One, Urutão (Nyctibius grandis)
C. Saki monkey, Macaco cuxiu (Chiripotes sp.)
D. Spider monkey, Macao preto (Ateles sp.)
E. Giant otter, Ariranha (Pteronura brasiliensis)
F. Cebus monkey, Macaco prego (Cebus niger)
G. Sclater’s Curassow, Mutum (Crax fasciolata)
H. Jaguar, Onca (Felis onza)
I. Trumpeter, Jacami (Psophia viridis)

---

84 Ibid.
It is fascinating and eerie to hear the accuracy of their impressions. Clearly, they have spent much time listening and learning to imitate the sounds around them, a skill which is also required for the accurate performance of birdcalls in *Hummingbird Songs*.

In many ancient cultures, religious beliefs tend towards animism, the veneration of animal spirits. Ceremonies paying homage to animals, like the Yaqui and Ute ceremonies, are created in order to perpetuate the tribe, give praise for the abundance of food, or a variety of other reasons. Gary Snyder, an author Garland cites often as a profound influence, writes about primitive man’s relationship to animals:

> By civilized times, hunting was a sport of kings. The early Chinese emperors had vast fenced hunting reserves; peasants were not allowed to shoot deer. Millennia of experience, the proud knowledges of hunting magic—animal habits—and the skills of wild plant and herb gathering were all but scrubbed away… Man is a beautiful animal. We know this because other animals admire and love us. Almost all animals are beautiful and Paleolithic hunters were deeply moved by it. To hunt means to use your body and senses to the fullest: to strain your consciousness to feel what the deer are thinking today, this moment; to sit still and let your self go into the birds and wind while waiting by a game trail. Hunting magic is designed to bring the game to you—the creature who has heard your song, witnessed your sincerity, and out of compassion comes within your range. Hunting magic is not only aimed at bringing beasts to their death, but to assist in their birth—to promote their fertility. Thus the great Iberian cave paintings are not of hunting alone—but of animals mating and giving birth… People of primitive cultures appreciate animals as other people off on various trips. Snakes move without limbs, and are like free penises. Birds fly, sing, and dance; they gather food for their babies; they disappear for months and then come back… We all know what primitive cultures don’t have. What they *do* have is this knowledge of connection and responsibility that amounts to a spiritual ascesis for the whole community. Monks of Christianity or Buddhism, “leaving the world” (which means the games of society), are trying, in a decadent way, to achieve what whole primitive communities—men, women, and children—live by daily; and with more wholeness.  

As in the *Mato Grosso* recording, some cultures have even developed advanced techniques for imitating animal sounds. This is done as a way to identify with and venerate the animal spirits, in addition to being of assistance in game calling for hunting.

---

Performers of *Hummingbird Songs* should emulate the seriousness with which the men on the recording mimic the animal sounds. Garland calls for the imitation of a crow and mourning dove in several movements. The whistling in Song #6 is intended as an abstraction of the call of a particular duck in Maine, called a whistler by locals (Song #6 is subtitled “Whistler’s Song”). He also calls for blowing through cupped hands, which is a technique traditionally used in game calling. It is too easy—and past performances have shown this to be true—for performers to dismiss Garland’s birdcalls as novelty and not practice them. But the sympathetic performer will take this charge with the utmost seriousness, cultivating imitative sounds to the best of his/her ability. There is no shortage of freely available field recordings of crows and mourning doves on the Internet, so it is relatively simple for a performer to do some quick research and have all the sound resources necessary to cultivate a good imitation of these two birds. Birdcall sounds of the crow and mourning dove are found in songs #5, #7, and #10.

Song #7 consists entirely of birdcalls. It must be performed with the utmost sincerity in order to be successful. The audience may find this quite amusing, which is perfectly acceptable, but the performers must maintain their composure at all costs. After all, Garland did not intend this to be novelty or comedy. The end result should be evocative of the *Mato Grosso* recording—veneration of animals through their imitation.

No rhythms are notated in this song (see below). Performers are to allow their eyes to follow the score at a steady pace, heeding the order of attacks and the spaces in-between. Once a pace has been set, dynamics may be added.
Blowing through cupped hands is a more difficult technique to master. I have found that certain people display a natural aptitude, while others take some time to develop the right sound (or even make a sound). In addition to being used in indigenous cultures, from time to time the sound has appeared in popular or folk music in America. The performer Ben Brenner touts himself as a cupped hands virtuoso, even having appeared on David Letterman’s late night talk show in the 1980’s. His performance there, while clearly a novelty, is a helpful aid in seeing/hearing the technique.
Essentially, the best tone is accomplished by clasping the hands together, as if clapping with the palms, and aligning the thumbs to create a “mouthpiece,” which the performer blows down and into. If done properly, the sound result should be a hollow sounding whistle, an ocarina-like tone. By adjusting the air cavity in the cupped hands, one can raise or lower the pitch. The air cavity created by the palms has to be as airtight as possible. This technique is crucial as it is implemented throughout the piece: Songs #3, #4, and #8 consist entirely of blowing through cupped hands; Song #10 also uses the sound, accompanied by birdcall sound, clapping, and rasping. There are also a few creative options for realization: while the piece is definitively conceived as a quartet, parts may be doubled, sections may be repeated, and selected movements may be played without the entire cycle (in which case the sequence is not fixed).
Chapter V: Performance Practice in *Nana and Victorio*

*Nana and Victorio* is perhaps the most powerful of these pieces in observing all the categories of abstracted resonance while drawing upon Garland’s re-casting of values: Geography, History/Culture, and the Body/Individual. *Nana and Victorio* was commissioned in 1991 by the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe, funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

Completely fed up with U. S.’s conservative policies of the 1980’s — including the invasions of Granada, Panama, and the creation of the Contras — Garland began reading and researching the history of South America, Mexico, and the American Southwest: “I came up with this idea of wanting to do a theater piece where Billy the Kid, Pancho Villa, and Geronimo all came back (along with a cast of others, like Cabeza de Vaca and the San Patricios), and settled the scores, to ‘clean up the landscape,’ as Dorn writes.”

That specific project never came to a reality, but from his research came topics for two pieces: *Four Pieces for Revolutionary America* (for two violins and harp) and *Nana and Victorio*.

In terms of History/Culture, *Nana and Victorio* is a striking example of Garland’s unique conception of globalization:

*Nana and Victorio* starts from the premise that multi-culturalism starts at home. In a country whose cultural and political origins are founded on migration(s), slavery and genocide, this fact has often been ignored or suppressed. This has been especially the case in terms of the original Americans, the ones who came here millennia ago. For many more recently transplanted Americans (a matter of mere centuries) this culture remains truly “exotic.” So: Nana & Victorio may be described as a case of “Think locally, act globally.”

---

86 Garland to John Lane, 8 January 2008.
87 Garland to John Lane, 23 June 2009.
The piece calls for Native American drums, peyote rattle, and water drum. Instrument choice is crucial for a sympathetic performance of the piece, and whenever possible the performer should use traditionally-made Native American drums. Sometimes the substitution of drums is a necessity; in this case I would recommend Chinese drums or other natural skin drums, rather than concert toms.

The search for Native American drums is not necessarily a difficult one, but the variety and quality vary. An ideal starting place is to explore the work of artisans in Native American communities, especially the Pueblo cultures of New Mexico, is a good place to start. Cochiti Pueblo is known amongst all the Pueblo cultures of New Mexico as having the finest drum artisans. In fact, the drum is the official seal of Cochiti Pueblo, evidence of their pride in this art form. Taos, New Mexico also boasts excellent drum artisans—some are independent artisans not affiliated with the Pueblo.

Drums at Cochiti are still made in a traditional manner with techniques passed down over many generations of artisans. Fire and natural processes of expansion and decay (including wood eating ants) help to hollow logs of various diameters. Eventually modern tools, such as chainsaws, are used to help clean out the trunks of the logs. Natural skins of deer, elk, and cowhide are stretched over the logs to create the finished drum. In some cases, the skin and wood of the drums are painted in bright colors.
Types of rattles within indigenous cultures of the Americas are varied and numerous. While a peyote rattle is requested in the score, the performer is encouraged to research indigenous rattle types and explore a variety of rattle sounds. In my realization I chose not to use a peyote rattle, but did audition several during my preparation. The peyote rattles I found had a sound too thin to balance/blend with the fullness of the toms. In the end, and through much deliberation, I chose a large gourd rattle of unknown Mexican origin and a pod rattle for the second movement. Garland personally approved of my rattle choices and was especially happy with the choice of the pod rattle for the second movement.
The final instrument consideration is the water drum. Similar to the bullroarer, water drums are found in musical cultures throughout the world. Garland encountered them in West African (Mali) and Native American (Yaqui) music. In both Mali and Yaqui usage, the instrument consists of a halved gourd floating in water, struck by a hard stick. In “The Incorrigibles,” the third movement, Garland asks that the water drum and the lowest tom be as close in pitch as possible and sometimes writes a fortissimo dynamic for the gourd. In “Dress for War,” the water drum is required to interact tonally with the drums.

The performer should experiment with many types of water drum constructions to arrive at the most tonal and stable instrument. Through experimentation, I found that a large wooden bowl (bamboo or other wood) is both sturdy enough to withstand the loud dynamic and low enough in pitch to approximate the lowest drum of my set-up. A traditional gourd water drum may also be used, but gourds are typically much more fragile. Performers choosing this option should take care not to crack the gourd while playing louder dynamics.

Once the drum choice has been made, the next step is getting the most resonant water container. The container should be wide enough so the sides of the bowl/gourd do not hit the sides of the container. Resonance will be improved if the container is either elevated from the surface or suspended in some way. Simply elevating the container with three to four rubber feet, found in any hardware store, is sufficient to greatly improve the resonance. Also, filling the container with as much water as possible helps create a bigger/fuller tone.

Once the container is chosen, floating the bowl/gourd presents its own set of problems. Some drifting of the bowl/gourd is inevitable, but it should not be a constant source of extraneous sound. Garland recommended using tape to secure the water drum in such a way that it floats directly in the middle of the container. I found this method to produce a slightly muffled
tone from the drum. Gluing a number of small cork squares to the interior rim of the bowl/gourd proved to be the best solution for maximum buoyancy, while maintaining good resonance.

Finally, one must produce the fullest tone from this instrument by meticulous mallet selection. In the case of using a wooden bowl, heavy mallets—for instance, a soft and heavy yarn marimba mallet—are preferable in order to coax the lowest/fullest tone from the drum. Blending tone with the Native American toms is essential. Most of the Native American toms sound best when struck with a leather mallet, but this is typically too lightweight for the water drum. In many cases, it is not advisable to use the same mallets on both the toms and water drum.

_Nana and Victorio_ represents Garland’s most powerful connection to date with poetry. Gary Snyder discusses the idea of a muse: “The voice of inspiration as an “other” has long been known in the West as the Muse. Widely speaking, the muse is anything that touches you and moves you…”

For Garland, the literary arts, poetry in particular, are clearly muses. Snyder goes on to define poetry:

> “Poetry” is the skilled and inspired use of the voice and language to embody rare and powerful states of mind that are in immediate origin personal to the singer, but at deep levels common to all who listen… Poetry, it should not have to be said, is not writing or books. Nonliterate cultures, with their traditional training methods of hearing and reciting, carry thousands of poems—death, war, love, dream, work, and spirit power songs—through time.

Garland’s own skill as a writer and his love of great poetry is mirrored in his work as a composer: his music is literary and intuitive. Garland admits to this strong influence of the poetic art on his music: “… poetry more than the physical sciences or any other art form, has influenced my sense of musical language, and hence form… [while composers are] always trying to understand the language of music; … poets are constantly searching for the music of

---

88 Snyder, _The Gary Snyder Reader_, 57.
89 Ibid., 52–7.
language. The kind of analysis inherent in this study—namely, the analytical concept of abstracted resonances—is one of literary forms/plans and textual projections/reflections, which reflects at least that part of his creative process.

Three writers were a directly influenced the conception of this piece: Jaime De Angulo, Eduardo Galeano, and Edward Dorn. Jaime de Angulo was a model for Garland. De Angulo’s work is based solely on indigenous American sources/influences, which provided Garland with the notion that he could work from indigenous/primitive musical materials, rather than be subservient to an Anglo-European model. Eduardo Galeano’s *Memory of Fire*—a massive three-volume narrative history of the Americas—provided an alternative view of history, one that shed light on some of the darker sides of European conquest of the New World all the way through the turbulent 1980s. The book, from beginning to end, is told from the perspective of the Native Americans. Through the narrative the reader experiences the struggles and atrocities that remain mostly untold or unknown in a Western portrayal of history.

The most important writer influencing Garland’s conception of the piece is Edward Dorn; his are the poems on which the movements are based. Dorn was one of the writers to emerge from Black Mountain College, first attending the school in the autumn of 1950. Charles Olson, who became another important source of inspiration for Garland, was Dorn’s teacher at Black Mountain College. Dorn held several positions in academia, including positions at the University of Idaho, the University of Essex, and the University of Colorado in Boulder, ultimately spending a great deal of time traveling in the American West, Mexico, and Europe.

Dorn’s poetry—especially his later work—is marked by cynicism and a surgical wit. His late writing became increasingly critical of the United States and its conservative politics, for

---

instance the scathing collection of short observations, *Abhorrences* (1990). Many of his works deal directly with Native American socio-political issues: *The Shoshoneans: The People of the Basin Plateau* (1965) and *Recollections of Gran Apachería* (1974) are two collections displaying an ongoing investigation in this area. In both works he is concerned with the “otherness” of Indian cultures and either the struggle with/or indifference of the United States Government.

Each movement of *Nana and Victorio* is preceded and inspired by selected poems from Edward Dorn’s *Recollections of Gran Apachería*. Gran Apachería was the Spanish name for an area extending from western Texas west to modern-day Arizona and north to Colorado. Dorn’s texts present what he calls a “situational analysis” of the Apache during this period.  

91 Each poem provides figurative images and descriptions of important figures—centering on the western Apache chiefs Nana and Victorio—and events in Apache history. Nana and Victorio fought against the United States Government from roughly 1880 to 1890. Westward expansion of white men pushed the Apache from their land holdings and devastated their game. “Striving to hold their ancestral lands, their ways of life, and in fact, their very lives brought forth fierce emotions of the Apache… They were the most dreaded warriors of the Southwest.”

An overriding theme in Dorn’s *Recollections* is the “otherness” of the Indian culture. “Dorn practices a recognition of difference rather than a romantic identification… even as he is sympathetic.”  

Dorn, like Garland, comes to understand the distance between the culture of the Native American and the Anglo-European American; he “does not share in the attempt by certain

---


of his contemporaries to recreate Indian cultural expressions. “The “otherness” is presented in a series of Apache portraits “through metaphor and by relating historical incidents.”

My experience of abstracted resonance in Nana and Victorio is found in Dorn’s figurative language projected through the music: musical phrases reflecting the words and stories they tell. In order to make a vivid connection between the text and music, I decided to speak each movement’s poem. Based on my experience in performing the work this way, and the overwhelmingly positive audience responses to this version, I find the texts to be inseparable from the music. Garland, however, feels that, “There is no direct, literal relationship of the music and the texts of the poems… The relationship is more of a vague, emotional/expressive one. More to do with the poem titles actually, than the texts…” While Garland states that, “knowing the texts is not really necessary (to assume that they are, severely diminishes the autonomy of the music),” reading the poems directly focuses a first-time listener’s (especially a listener with no socio-political-historical context for what is being depicted) attention on the connections and amplifications of each movement, adding a poignancy and gravitas to the subject. Those who perform the work with no reference to the texts may dispute the fact that I have found such strong connections. I do not believe that the texts take anything away from the music itself, the craft of the composition, or that the music could not stand on its own without the texts. To a certain point, Garland’s music defies analysis: “I always think of a certain ‘poetic’ aspect to my music — but that cannot be analyzed (I view music analysis as a kind of forensic science — only performable on entities that are dead). Analysis can only go so (not very…) far…”

---

94 Ibid.
95 Ibid., 109.
96 Garland, email to author, 18 July 2010.
97 Garland, email to author, 18 July 2010.
My experience of the texts, thus my commitment to speaking them, provides context, depth, and a sympathetic interpretation that would not exist without knowing (hearing) the stories in performance. At first, Garland was skeptical about having the texts read in performance, but after hearing my interpretation, he gave his consent: “…since you read them really well (most people wouldn’t)… it’s fine with me.” An overly dramatic reading of the texts must be avoided; rather, pacing and tone should be of primary concern.

The first and most problematic movement to realize is “Victorio—Meditation on Thunder.” Garland notes this movement is intended for “diligent! percussionists.” Garland asks the performer to begin playing as fast and loud as possible on one drum, while the other drum is played slowly and as soft as possible. Through a constant diminuendo and deceleration on the low drum and a crescendo and acceleration on the high drum, the two drums cross in a long phasing cycle. The tempos and dynamics meet in the middle briefly, playing at the same dynamic and tempo, before continuing on their cycle. The only way to completely and accurately realize the music as written is to use a recording and play against it, performing only one of the two parts.

Using a recording introduces a kind of artifice into the live performance. It feels like a non-organic realization and does not fit with the rest of the piece. The only commercial recording of the piece by William Winant uses the recording method. Playing with a recording allows for a much slower phasing process, which is in line with the composer’s intentions: it is physically impossible to keep up the speed and dynamic called for in the score for any significant length of time any other way. The recording method is an excellent solution if one is making a studio

---

98 Ibid.
recording of the work. Because of my interest in a more organic live performance, the use of a recording can be avoided by a couple of other methods of realization.

When I spoke to Garland about playing the movement without the aid of a recording, he remarked, “Are you kidding? Isn’t that impossible?...” Later in the discussion he conceded, “Lou Harrison always thought that *Fugue* would be impossible to play, but it has become a standard in the percussion repertory...” Garland’s original conception of the movement is impossible to play, at least convincingly, live by one person; it requires a certain freedom on the performer’s behalf to creatively/sympathetically realize it. Performers are given this interpretive license by the indication that the “notation is visual only, and arbitrary… more symbolic than literal… as steadily and gradually as possible.”

The solution to the problem of not using a recording requires developing a more “organic” process, using one of two methods: a) an alternating hand method and b) a single hand method. The alternating method takes the suggestion provided by the composer—posed more as a question in the score—of using two hands to play the faster moments of the cycle. The problems inherent with this method are two-fold: 1) It is very difficult to develop a loud/fast alternating series while reaching over to the other drum for a very soft attack; 2) More significantly, the point at which it becomes necessary to switch to single hands playing each drum produces a noticeable shift, both visually and aurally. The benefit of this method, however, is that the performer is able to extend the amount of time and speed of the bookend parts of the cycle. The method I use is the single hand method, where the low drum is played with the left hand (starting loud and slowing down with decrescendo) and the high drum is played with the right hand (starting softly with acceleration and crescendo).

---

100Ibid.
The single hand method is an intuitive process. Garland expresses the process in the score through polyrhythmic relationships. One should note that neither hand is static: both hands are progressing at the same time. Learning how the hands are interdependently related (in the case of the more familiar polyrhythmic checkpoints) is a key element in realizing the “independent” effect.

Percussionists generally have some facility with polyrhythmic relationships (i.e. how it “feels” to play two strokes against three), so they make good reference points along the way. I begin with a 12:1 (left hand to right hand) ratio. I intuitively speed up and crescendo the right hand, while slowing down with a diminuendo in the left, all the while passing through several polyrhythmic checkpoints. The performer should avoid lingering too long on any one polyrhythm: the object is to make the transitions between them seamless and organic. The checkpoints I have found to be most helpful in realizing a version starting at 12:1 are as follows:

\[9:1 — 8:1 — 6:1 — 4:1 — 3:1\]
\[
\begin{array}{c}
(8:2) \\
(6:2)
\end{array}
\]

(NOTE: Even though the right hand numbers remain the same, the tempo relationship is changing in relation to the left hand’s deceleration.) From this point, I navigate through a series of more recognizable polyrhythmic patterns:

\[5:3 — 6:3 — 6:4 — 4:3 — 5:4\]
\[
\begin{array}{c}
(2:1) \\
(3:2)
\end{array}
\]

Once I reach the 5:4, I am able to intuitively bring the hands into unison. After holding the unison briefly I reverse the process, navigating the same polyrhythmic path. Gradually morphing in and out of each checkpoint is a critical aspect of the performance, with the ultimate goal being a seemingly independent progression of each hand through the process. Performed in this fashion, the movement should take between three and four minutes.
This method creates, in my estimation, a more organic flow in which there is no visual or aural shift; it retains a smooth and constant organic process. The only drawback with this method is the length of time it is possible to sustain the effort, which is necessarily shorter on the faster bookend parts. Those moments have to be truncated to a realistic physical capacity. However, the benefits of a smooth and organic phase shift far outweigh the physical limitation.

The abstracted resonance in this movement is a reflection, through Dorn’s text, on the Body/Individual. Clearly, the process that one must undergo to play this movement is one of extreme attention to the capabilities of one’s own body and technique: music as a physical experience. For me, the movement is a meditation on the death of Victorio, a search to find a personal meaning in, and identification with, Dorn’s text:

There is a season of gold
before the energy of a people
comes to its ritual close
and this is a metaphor not satisfied
by the mines

There is no call
to mourn the death of Victorio
he was spared the trivial meanness
of imprisonment and slavery
No principles generated
by a moral quandary in time…

Yet his taste for death
is the bitterness we find on the tongue
when we consider La Gran Apachería

He is the most dreaded
The most terrible
The most famous ¹⁰¹

In “Dress for War” the key sonic elements are the tonality of the drums with the water drum, and the choice of rattles. Garland clearly indicates his intentions: “water drum should be

¹⁰¹Dorn, Recollections, 7.
lower pitched than the tom-toms—it should be as resonant as possible.”

Heeding my advice earlier in the discussion — suspending the water drum with as much water as possible — will help make the drum resonant. There are no dynamics in this movement, but rather the instruction that “this piece is as much about pitch as rhythm—all instruments should be soft, but very resonant.”

Garland calls for a “peyote” rattle throughout. As discussed earlier, the peyote rattles I found seemed too thin and didn’t blend well with the drums; this is especially true with the second movement. I decided upon a rattle that could blend with the hushed tones of the skin drums, one that sounded darker. In the end, a Poinciana seed pod rattle (as used commonly in John Cage’s music) blended best and Garland was pleased with this result. His concern is always that percussionists pay attention to choosing the right sounds for his scores, whether or not they end up using the exact instrument he indicates. He once remarked, “choosing rattles is like wine tasting.”

“Dress for War” is a description of an Apache warrior prepared for battle:

“Tallow shampoo so the hair is sleek & obedient
Vermillion for the face and Blue micaceous stone
    whose dust glitters weirdly
From a conejo deer an inch wide band of blood
    from ear to ear
Copperore for green stripes
The best army field glasses
    with which to sweep Hades

The most absolute of the predatory tribes
Apache policy was to extirpate
Every trace of civilization
From their province

---

102 Garland, Nana and Victorio.
103 Ibid.
104 Dorn, Recollections, 9.
This text speaks of, what is certainly, an exacting preparation for battle: specific paints and preparations to the face/body. I encountered similar ritual-like preparations in advance of a ceremonial dance in the Mescalero Apache Reservation. While obviously not preparations for true war, faces and bodies were painted in a ritualistic manner, very slowly and deliberately. In my experience, the music reflects that same sense of a quiet and ritualistic preparation.

“The Incorrigibles—Bounty Time” is perhaps the most interesting movement in projecting images from the text, in some cases quite literally. The text from Dorn’s “Bounty Time” is as follows:

When Victorio was killed accidentally by a breed named Mauricio in Chihuahua the smug governor of that province awarded the killer 3000 silver pesos and a nickel-plated rifle which several years later another Apache was to grab from the hands of the bearer and blow a close range hole in the stomach of same this was not the importance of Victorios death

For at this point Victorios sister assumed joint command with Nana, then 80, of the Incorrigibles who flew back to Tejas to clean up the landscape

The first and most obvious textual projection is the series of isolated $sfz$ blows in the low tom-tom at the beginning of the piece, which occur in the same rhythmic series throughout:

Example 1: Quarter note series in “The Incorrigibles—Bounty Time”

The attacks are accompanied by a very soft broken pattern of eighth notes, triplets, and sixteenths in the water drum. Connecting the attacks to a literary projection is easily deduced,

\[\text{---}\]

\(^{105}\text{Ibid., 10.}\)
and hinted at in the score: “Fifteen warriors rode with Nana when he crossed the Rio Grande… and entered New Mexico in July of 1881.”

Garland is quoting Dan Thrapp from his book on the Apache, *The Conquest of Apachería*. The sixteen isolated attacks in the tom-tom represent the fifteen warriors, plus Nana. This series is then repeated in the water drum in measure 21, with the tom-tom doing the accompanying in almost exact replication. Finally, beginning in measure 41, the quarter note series is played softly in unison between the tom-tom and the water drum. (see Example 2)

Example 2: Occurrence of quarter note series in “The Incorrigibles—Bounty Time”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>1–10</th>
<th>21–32</th>
<th>41–End</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom-tom</td>
<td>Series (f)</td>
<td>Accompaniment–A(^1) (p)</td>
<td>Series (p)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Drum</td>
<td>Accompaniment–A (p)</td>
<td>Quarter note series (f)</td>
<td>Series (p)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, the text speaks of a rifle that changes hands, represented in the music on two levels: first in the low tom-tom, then the water drum. The pitches of the two instruments should be nearly indistinguishable. The subtle difference in tone color represents the rifle in the hands of different individuals, while the exchange of the music between the hands clearly stands for the exchange of the rifle fire between Mauricio and the Apache.

The fourth movement, “Geronimo,” is more abstractly poetic. Still, several meanings and connections can be inferred from the text and from what is known of Geronimo’s character:

We call his mother Juana  
She had him near Tulerosa  
Rocket Country still  
Notorious through his opposition  
To Alien authority  
And by Systematic

---

106 Garland, *Nana and Victorio*. 

57
And Sensational advertising
His Pleasures were widely known
As Depredations
Among the Invader

Eyes like two bits of obsidian
With a light behind them.  

Geronimo was one of the most famous and fierce of the Western Apache. The restlessness of Geronimo’s character is reflected in the relentlessness of the movement. Pauses occur between the three phrases representing, in my poetic reading of it, periodic disappearances of Geronimo: hiding out in the mountains awaiting the next move, but always continuing to an inevitable end.

In this movement, an exploration of one’s physicality (Body/Individual) again comes to the forefront. If the tempo of 88 beats per minute is heeded, the hand playing the drum can become quite fatigued by the end of the movement. There should be no heavy accents in the drum part, and the rhythm should not waiver but should be as consistent as possible, creating a “drone-like resonance.” This is a further reflection of Geronimo’s relentless character. In this moment, the player actually experiences a physical sensation of determined and persistent energy.

Dorn speaks of Geronimo as having “Eyes like two bits of obsidian / With a light behind them.” For me, Geronimo’s gaze is poetically represented by relentless maraca rhythms piercing through a drone-like cloud of drumming, while the word “Systematic” is represented by the methodical, if not slightly irregular, rhythmic series in the rattle part.

---

108 Garland, *Nana and Victorio*.
109 Ibid.
“Nanay (rock ’n roll)” is yet another physically demanding movement, a physicality that is reminiscent of pow-wow drumming; the entirety of the movement is an intense fortissimo pounding. Garland’s conception of “music as dance” figures prominently in this movement as well. The text describes Nanay (another spelling of Nana) in old age with two distinct sides:

Great hardness in old age
He can be imagined
Straight from the flaking slopes

A strong face
Marked with intelligence
Courage
And good nature, but
With an understratum
Of cruelty and vindictiveness

He has received many wounds, muchas gracias amigos
In his countless fights
With the whites, muchas gracias amigos

In each ear it was his pleasure
To wear a huge gold watchchain

The right hand and left had are divided in the score—each with its own time signature—a sonic abstraction demonstrating the two sides of Nana’s personality. Setting up the drums in line, paired as in the score, further enhances the visual effect by allowing the hands to be moving parallel to the audience:

Example 3: Suggested drum arrangement for Nana and Victorio

---

110Dorn, Recollections, 14.
This set-up facilitates a clear visual representation of the hands, which in turn relays a kind of dance, reflecting Garland’s “music as dance” aesthetic.

Dorn aptly paints the poignant end of the Apache struggle in “Nana and Victorio,” as Nana crawls away wounded across the Rio Grande. Garland reflects on this poem as his last movement. Literary analysis sheds some light on the meaning in this poem, which essentially encapsulates the socio-political content of Garland’s work as well.

Dorn’s interpretation of “otherness” in Apache culture is best presented in this poem:

Along this spine of dragoon mountains
the pains in Nanas bit off leg
a wound inflicted by the vicious teeth
of the Alien Church, their thin line
moves north then south
across the rio bravo del norte
the winde driving the wild fire of their loyalties
and in the cruel vista
I can see the Obdurate Jewell
of all they wanted, shining
without a single facet
upon our time
and yet the radiance marks everything
as we unweave this corrupted cloth

Paul Dresman describes this “otherness” as,

…their tenacity, even when terribly wounded; their opposition to white cultural institutions such as the Christian church; their union with native geography; and their distance from ourselves in time… Dorn uses archaic English spelling (winde, Jewell) to suggest the arcane realm of the Apaches, as opposed to the modernity of their conquerors and ourselves… The “Obdurate Jewell” is the land that cannot be separated from the Apache identity; the “Jewell” no longer shines since the Apaches were overwhelmed and their land divided by the conquerors. Yet the “radiance” of their realm marks everything about this clash, this ultimate corruption by historical forces… Dorn has been able to understand the American Indian more deeply perhaps than any recent writer, scholarly or poetic, who is not himself an Indian… Dorn makes marginal figures, as they resist

---

external authority with an indivisible spirit of self, land, and history, morally central to the inner life of American culture. Garland’s work, and especially *Nana and Victorio*, is sympathetic to this ideal.

The music reflects a persistent struggle through a repeating quarter note ostinato in the water drum. Though it is interrupted several times, it remains incessant to the end of the movement. The movement ends with a brief restatement of the primary thematic materials.

The most important word here reflected/projected by gesture is, “unweave.” Dorn says that we are to “unweave this corrupted cloth.” The percussionist very literally must swirl the rattles at various times throughout the movement, a kind-of physical unweaving. In performance, after speaking the incredibly moving words of Dorn, proceeding to play this movement without also reflecting on the psychological impact of the words is nearly impossible. The performer’s reflective state may allow an audience to consider the plight of the Apache as well, conveying a need for perspective on their impossible and heroic struggle.

---

Conclusion

Garland’s music is a spiritual vessel in the hands of an informed musician. Performed sympathetically, his music can have a visceral and transformative effect on the performer, and therefore the audience. The works discussed in this study—besides being challenging and stimulating pieces with important performance considerations—offer a performer the opportunity to connect with a larger consciousness, with larger concerns, responsibilities, and issues.

It is music rooted in the land of America and its percussive traditions; it is music that enlivens significant issues, rather than isolating performers in an ivory tower of “high art” or “academia.” Plumbing the depths of the darkest areas of American history, Garland is not afraid to ask us to do the same. He also reminds Americans that we need look no further than our own backyard to discover cultures as rich and vibrant as any “exotic” culture of the world.
Bibliography


to John Lane, January 8, 2008. Private collection.
to John Lane, April 15, 2008. Private collection.
to John Lane, June 3, 2008. Private collection.
to John Lane, August 29, 2008. Private collection.
to John Lane, October 2, 2008. Private collection.
to John Lane, January 6, 2009. Private collection.


Lekson, Stephen H. Nana’s Raid: Apache Warfare in Southern New Mexico, 1881. El Paso:


Appendix

An Interview with Peter Garland
by John Lane
Winnegance, Maine
August 2009

Lane: You’ve been reticent to announce a direct connection of your work to the American Experimental Tradition. However, Soundings is seemingly a realization of James Tenney’s vision of “an embodiment of... a multi-generational tradition, alive in the present and extending into the future...”114 Kyle Gann states the following: “Some of Garland’s early music—notably The Three Strange Angels and Three Songs of Mad Coyote (both 1973) for piano, bass drum, bull roarers, tom-toms—roars with the booming piano clusters and the wail of sirens, minimalist in its limitation of materials but inspired by the raucous soundworld of Varèse.”115 We’ve discussed the fact that you are more and more weary of an association for yourself. I also remember you saying you were influenced more by the early modernism of the 1920’s, than by anything in the 50’s – 60’s. From your perspective, what is your relationship to this (so called) “tradition?”

Garland: I got a lot of that American Experimental Tradition idea from Tenney, and to some degree from Lou Harrison. My reticence has to do mostly with an unease about using it as a self-promoting label, or a marketing strategy. I think there’s long been a political schism in American music, and there continues to be one. So perhaps rather than musical style, it defines a musical-political affiliation—and, unfortunately, we’re a very small minority. And if there is such a tradition in musical terms, it has multiple branches by now. I certainly feel connected to Harrison and Cage—and from them to Henry Cowell. But I was also a student of Harold Budd—so where does he fit in? Though my music bears little resemblance to theirs, I love the music of Partch, Varèse, Nancarrow and Ruggles. There’s no contradiction there: one of Varèse’s favorite composers was... Satie! Hey! my mentors (Cage and Harrison) were students of Arnold Schoenberg! So he’s in my family tree too...

Lane: You’ve also written and spoken fondly of Harry Partch. What kind of impact did he have on you as a young composer?

Garland: I love his music! With all its (and his) warts and flaws. I was never much interested in his tuning theories—I simply don’t have much of an ear for that. The same could be said about his instruments—I’m a lousy carpenter, so I didn’t go in that direction either. As a person, his intensity was very compelling. So was his life story—people like Partch and Harrison were so independent and full of life, a reminder of an earlier era in American culture, the 1930’s–1950’s. And a total contrast to a generation of coat-and-tie university composition professors. There was also an aura of solitude and loneliness about Partch that I, as a young man, felt was almost frightening—though I think I understand a little more about that now, having gone through some of that myself. For a while Partch’s music convinced me that the European tradition was dead and the orchestra etc. a dinosaur. But Lou Harrison’s music provided a model for a reconciliation

114 Peter Garland, “Remembering James Tenney”

Lane: *I read recently that some musicians believe that the legacy of John Cage is “fragile” in America. Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

Garland: I completely disagree. That reflects the academic (anti-Cage) attitude that he is more of an “idea” person than a composer. And, actually, hardly anyone worked/works the same way Cage did. He was a catalyst for and part of broader cultural changes that encompassed many other artistic disciplines, which is why his “influence” was so profound. But his “legacy” is solid: an extensive catalog of beautiful music, some of the defining pieces of the 20th century, that will easily stand the test of time. The same cannot be said of most of his critics, academic or otherwise.

Lane: *Clearly your experiences with Mexican culture and indigenous native cultures in the Americas have been transformative and documented eloquently. Of the musical traditions you’ve studied, which do you feel has been the most directly influential on your own creative work?*

Garland: As I’ve said, my first composition and theory teacher in my senior year in high school, was an ethnomusicologist whose specialty was (still is) Native American musics. So I got that right from the start. My first year at Cal Arts (fall of 1970) I joined the Javanese gamelan, but regretfully had to withdraw in the spring of 1971. Cal Arts also had a strong program in Indian music, both Hindustani and Carnatic; and I fondly recall attending a bi-weekly lecture course given by Ravi Shankar. Seeing my first all-night Javanese shadow puppet play in the spring of 1972 at Cal Arts was a life-changing experience. So Indonesian (especially Javanese) and Indian musics have remained personal favorites. Cal Arts also had a regular world music concert series, so I was lucky to be exposed to a wide variety of music and dance. I’ve always preferred Asian dance styles to Western (so called) “modern dance” or ballet. My partner from 1976 to 1991, Susan Ohori, was also a pioneer (for our generation) world music radio broadcaster; so an encyclopedic interest in that has remained a constant throughout my life. Obviously, my encounters with traditional Mexican musics have had the most profound impact on me; but all these other influences helped prepare me for that.

Lane: *Throughout your life and work there is a deep-seated and profound search to understand and uncover a true or authentic America—outside of any nation-state borders—*not only through the exploration or creation of a musical language/landscape. James Tenney, in his enlightened introduction to your book *Americas*, states that, for you, “it is first necessary to understand America—or the Americas—before any insight is possible regarding American music.” According to Tenney, that search for experiences of the Americas led to a re-valuing—both in your personal and professional/creative life—of three distinct ideals: Culture/History, Geography, and The Body/Individual. Throughout Americas you explored each of those areas, but that was many years ago. Perhaps your perspective has shifted or changed in some way? Or perhaps those ideals have seeded themselves into your life and work in a deeper way? Can you discuss the ways in which those specific ideals are manifest in your work and life now?*
Garland: My *Americas* book was more like a series of questions (about American music and culture) rather than answers. It was as if I was setting out a life investigative agenda, and answered those questions—at least for myself. Plus America—the Americas—are changing, in ways that I don’t identify with very comfortably.

Lane: *Why do you choose to live and work in Maine?*

Garland: Well, when we pondered returning to the US in 2005, I came up with 8 states in this country I could tolerate living in, all in the Southwest or West coast, and Maine. Though I was born in Maine, that was not the reason I came back, other than a certain convenience (we could stay with my sister, while we looked for a place). I left Maine in 1976 and stayed away for over 20 years; when I returned, for family visits, I was positively impressed. There’s a sense of place and local culture here, that hasn’t yet been totally steamrolled. There was also a certain fatigue, at the idea of starting over yet again completely from scratch in a new place. I also wanted a place where I could live quietly and devote myself to my work; and finally I wanted to maintain a certain distance from Babylon America (2005 was at the height of the Bush-Cheney years). We gave serious thought to going back to NM; but after more than 7 years away, we opted to try for a fresh start. There’s one other aspect about Maine, in that the quality of life has always been more important to me than any career considerations. I’ve also thoroughly enjoyed the periods I’ve spent living in big cities. Since I’ve remained relatively marginal financially, there are a lot of nice places where I once lived that I can no longer afford to do so. For people like me there is a kind of constant retreat in the face of this. So that is another reason I ended up back in Maine.

Lane: *Kyle Gann wrote briefly about the simplicity in your music, that it wasn’t a technique learned in a classroom and therefore is arrived at more honestly. Can you talk about your conception of simplicity in music? And how that can be as powerful or interesting as any kind of hypercomplexity in music? We discussed briefly the concept of transparency in your music, specifically in Three Songs of Mad Coyote. Can you further define the concept of transparency and why/how performers should pay attention to this?*

Garland: I think the issues of simplicity and transparency are related and can be addressed together. I don’t think of my music as “simple”—it’s certainly not simple to compose, and some of my piano music, for instance, is quite difficult technically. And I have had to suffer through so many bad performances over the years, that my music is obviously not so simple as it seems (perhaps since it appears that way, it is often under-rehearsed). Quite frankly, my ideas are relatively simple—I don’t have complex ideas (though there’s a lot of complex music I like, especially that which tends towards greater transparency—the two qualities are not necessarily contradictory. I think of Ruggles, Varèse and Nancarrow in that way). Generally, I’d say the germs of my musical ideas are most often melodic—rather than harmonic or rhythmic, or based on concepts of formal structure. I am least interested in harmony as an engine of structure or development—that’s a real 18th–19th century holdover.

You also have to remember the era I grew up in. I came of age in the late 1960’s, when Minimalism had its big breakthrough. I bought those first Terry Riley-Steve Reich LP’s back in 1969, and my generation were their original fans (my teacher Tenney played in early ensembles of both Reich and Glass)—in the early 70’s, when the teachers of many a future “post-
minimalist” (most of whom were not even in music school yet) were still putting that music down. By the mid-70’s it was obvious that this music was having an enormous impact (which continues to this day, perhaps unfortunately so); so it was important for composers like myself to find and define our own musical space(s) in the face of this. Hence I (we) never jumped on any coat-tails or bandwagons like others did. For clarity and simplicity I also had the examples of Harrison, Cowell and early Cage. And in my case, the two years in the 1970’s that I spent living in Mexican Indian villages (which I sometimes refer to as my alternative graduate school) opened up the incredibly diverse world of Mexican traditional musics to me, and revealed that ideas of musical simplicity and repetition had not been “invented” in lower Manhattan, but had been present in the mountains of Mexico for centuries.

My time in Mexico and among traditional peoples for whom music was an essential and cherished part of their lives made me start to question the concept of avant-gardism. Some of this music I was hearing was pretty far-out and radical (to my ears), more so than much of the so-called (and more predictable) “avant-garde” music practiced in Europe and the US. It became clear to me (perhaps as id did too to Henry Cowell and Lou Harrison) what a “small pond” the world of the avant-garde really was; and that out there (here) in the real world, there was a much bigger “ocean” of music. And I realized that I would rather be a fish, however small but swimming in that larger ocean; than to be a “big fish” in any sort of small pond.

Finally, as a kind of unforeseen result of years living and working outside of the academic world (no offense to my teaching friends intended: I made attempts to get in, but was never able to; perhaps my fate was sealed by being among the early Cal Arts “crazies”) … Anyway, the real issues for me as a composer have never been strictly musical-technical, but rather human and emotional ones, of how to stay alive and persevere as a person in a society (and hostile musical-political environment) where it turned out to be so difficult to survive as a composer. I view my personal survival as more remarkable than my creativity—because I know how to do the latter, but I’ve had to constantly improvise and often stumble as far as the former goes.

So, ultimately, I view issues such as “simplicity” and “complexity” as not terribly relevant. It’s just music: my own, a musical language I have discovered and invented for myself, from the sum of influences and teachers I have been exposed to. Though fundamentally self-taught, I have perhaps had more “teachers” than most composers. When my music is accused of being “simple,” I am reminded of a comment Cage made to an irksome questioner who was challenging his chance methods and claiming that “anybody could do that.” Annoyed, Cage shot back, “Well, not many people are doing it, are they?!” I feel the same way.

As a postscript to this, I commented to Michael Byron recently that whenever I revise a passage in a piece, I always revise towards greater simplicity and clarity. He agreed (and his is a music which is both complex and transparent). Sometimes when I do this, I am almost shocked by my own simplicity—or perhaps more so by the knowledge of how much academic ire and scorn this is going to provoke. Sometimes I warn young composers that writing tonal and relatively simple music can be an easy way out for them. Composers like me faced this same issue 35 years ago, when I had to move beyond the very stripped down minimalism of my early pieces like Apple Blossom (1972) or The Days Run Away (1971). My personal musical language had to grow—and move beyond its influences. It’s taken a lot of guts to do that, and years of struggle (specifically I think of the years 1976–86 in that way), to arrive once again (especially with my String Quartet No. 1 in 1986) at a greater clarity, and finally—my own voice. It’s interesting that I get it from both the right and the left in American music—for the right, this music in in no way “classical” enough (they can tell right off that I’m a weirdo). For the left my
music is not “experimental” enough (not abstract, complex, or aesthetically aggressive enough; no “new” technologies or equipment). I think, in a way, it’s a signal honor—and I know that Lou Harrison (and John Cage) would have laughed uproariously and approved!

Lane: I’m curious about your take on the “aura of ritual” in your music. In this document I write about experiencing this when playing, say, Three Songs of Mad Coyote or even some of the Hummingbird Songs. In a ritual there is little concern for the audience—the effect or intended result of the activity would be the same with or without the audience. Rituals exist for specific purposes (invocation of rain, fertility, etc...), not for the entertainment of an audience. Whereas a performance event is disconnected, except perhaps superficially, to any ritual purpose. Performance—or perhaps pageantry is a better word—is entertainment. I feel that what happens in your music is an evocation of the aura of ritual, not ritual itself. If the performers act consciously upon this, if they can tap into this conceptual element, the transparency and simplicity of the music disappears or transforms into a ritual-like event as powerful as any other experience in Western concert music. So, the question is: Do you conceive of your music as having this effect/function?

Garland: As far as ritual goes, I have witnessed quite a few, in multiple cultures. I have no illusions that I am composing anything other than concert music. Ritual depends on a social and cultural context and sets of shared beliefs that are completely absent in the world of the concert hall and the capitalist market system of music as a commodity, to be sold. I believe no one could aspire to qualities of the sacred in music; but since I do not subscribe to any organized religion, such a concept of sacred would be completely personal. I abhor facile New Age spirituality, and would never presume to imitate ritual, even when using instruments (such as conch shell horns and Japanese temple bells in my 2007 Smokey The Bear Sutra) associated with it. That piece was an interesting case, because the performer I wrote it for is a specialist in Buddhist chant. So I was toe-ing a fine line there—but the Gary Snyder text brought the piece home to America, and gave it a certain humorous and secular/social meaning. On the other hand, Lou Harrison’s wonderful setting of the Heart Sutra for chorus and American Gamelan is a work that moves me deeply. I think your question relates as much to performance practice as it does to composing. Watching Aki Takahashi perform my Walk in Beauty (1989)—which takes a certain Native American ritual as a kind of literary or aesthetic premise—is equally moving to me in a similarly spiritual way. But there’s no religion nor ritual per se: just music. Deep song, as they say in Andalucía…

Lane: I notice that when you notate for bullroarer in Three Songs of Mad Coyote, you draw a wavy line. Does this notation, in fact, indicate the dynamic oscillating of the bullroarer?

Garland: Oscillation is essential to bullroarers. I was recently sent a small book on the Burmese kyi-tzi, a triangle shaped flat bronze chime which spins when it is struck, causing (in the words of the author) “an ethereal oscillation.” Oscillation is mystery, dude! —the voice that emerges seemingly from nowhere. Which is why the bullroarer has always had an air of ritual and mystery associated with it.
Garland: To talk about an “alternative” history of American music, it’s perhaps easier to talk about the so-called “official” history of American music. Take the Pulitzer Prize: with only a few exceptions, it’s a virtual list of shame. Our official composers during the mid-20th century were figures like Hanson, Copland, Sessions, Barber, Harris, Bernstein; and later on people like Corigliano, Davidovsky, Druckman, Harbison, Martino, Perle, Rochberg, Schuller, Wuorinen, Zwilich, etc… Do you think these are or were our most significant composers? I don’t. It’s quite simple: the Emperor has no clothes. Partch once said to me, “there are two kinds of composers: those who should be remembered, and those who should be forgotten!” For me in the United States, the latter far outnumber the former. And what bothers me is not so much their music—but rather how they have absolutely plundered the grants and awards systems for themselves and their students over the years, to the detriment of much that is diverse, creative and original in American music.

The problem boils down to two fundamental facts. One is the widespread attitude that confuses technical competence with musical interest. Ninety percent of the world’s most uninteresting music is absolutely competent technically. The second point is that over my lifetime I have observed that classical musicians—even ones who specialize in supposedly “new” music—are the last folks to figure out anything. I guess that’s why so many of them spend so much energy trying to prove to the world and themselves that they are “hip.” Hipness is not about fashion statements, haircuts or clothing, or trying to prove your pop culture or “street” credibility. Hipness is about being real, and it’s very simple: you either are, or you are not. No amount of marketing can change that. And it’s not a question either of having your own unique “schtick,” or trying at all costs to be “original.” Again, Partch once wrote that originality in itself cannot be a goal—rather, just be yourself, and that will be original enough. (Maybe I owe a debt to Partch in my excoriating tone here; but we’re essentially talking about the same thing, a half century apart). And the shame is that most classical performers and conductors haven’t a clue about all this. We can thank our conservatories and music departments. It’s the biggest condemnation of our musical education system that it continues to spew out generations of composers who are technically competent, increasingly skilled in marketing themselves, some of whom are quite clever and calculating in adapting to musical fashions and styles—but who essentially have nothing deep or real to say. I am reminded of a statement poet Ed Dorn once made about Black Mountain College—that what was just as important as what he learned, was what he didn’t (all that stuff can be investigated later—along the way as you need it). Perhaps I can say that about my own Cal Arts schooling—that I was fortunate not to have been ruined by my education. I once wrote to Harold Budd that “you taught me absolutely nothing—and absolutely everything!” He took it for what it was: the highest compliment from a student.

Garland: I don’t talk about stuff like that. Anything that works. Some discipline and perseverance. A work ethic, but one that allows (as Stravinsky pointed out) for plenty of freedom and leisure time. A creative life is fundamentally erotic—of which capitalist wage slavery is the
absolute negation. By that I’m not talking about teaching in universities so much as all the dead-end minimum wage labor jobs I used to do…

Lane: Many of your pieces are drawn from or are reflections on poetry. Can you discuss your connection to words/poetry?

Garland: On a humorous level, some of us composers and poets occupy the same bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder as far as the arts go… But my relationship to poetry probably goes back to high school years, especially the fact that I took 5 ½ years of French (the ½ being the start of my freshman year at Columbia in 1969). So I was first into Baudelaire, Rimbaud (translated by Louise Varèse, whom I became friends with in the 1970’s), Lautréamont and the surrealists (Apple Blossom is based on a poem by Andrè Breton). From there it was not such a jump to American poetry, which first happened with Ginsberg and Snyder (I saw Ginsberg read and chant Blake at Columbia in the fall of ’69); and then continued and deepened when I arrived at Cal Arts the fall of 1970. Right from the start I took poetics courses with Clayton Eshleman. The first course was on translating César Vallejo, which partly introduced me to an idea of an “alternative” history: Neruda (whom I was already aware of) was the famous Latin American poet, whereas Vallejo back then was just emerging from obscurity, at least in this country. That partly led me (with encouragement from Budd and Tenney) to my investigations of Silvestre Revueltas, who had a similar relationship with Carlos Chávez, though perhaps more antagonistic and musical-political in their case. Eshleman also taught a course on American poetry/poetics that had a profound influence on me: introducing me to Pound and Olson, and many of the poets of the Black Mountain-San Francisco Renaissance-Beat/Hippy generations. Artists whom I continue to identify with culturally. The late 1950’s and early 1970’s were the height of the literary “small press” movement—which produced many beautiful books that I still own and cherish. Along with Eshleman’s course, he had a reading series where I was able to hear many poets read their works: Rexroth, Duncan, Cid Corman, Ginsberg, Dorn, Creeley, Bukowski, Robert Kelly, among others. So, if I majored in music, poetry was my minor at Cal Arts (along with video and performance art…). One of my best friends then, until his death in 2003, was a poet, Laurence Weisberg, who was something of a disciple of the great American Beat/surrealist poet Philip Lamantia (whom I was privileged to meet once—we talked about the Cora Indians in Mexico, among other things); and who also gave me a deeper understanding of the ongoing legacy of surrealism.

You know, I never had much interest in Mahler, Mozart or Bach… nor did my poet friends. We were into new music, rock’n roll (this is the late 60’s/early 70’s, mind you—the 1980’s crowd didn’t invent rock ’n roll-hip composers; we had already been there), and especially the Afro-American jazz tradition (Coltrane was an epiphany for me, like Stravinsky). And into world music, foreign travel (not “on tour,” but traveling—the beginning wave of low-budget travel, as the hippy scene dispersed in the early 70’s). The problem with classical musicians is that it is not very interesting talking to people whose life experience is limited to practice rooms and conservatories!

But, also in a way the poetry revolution in the US from the late 1940’s on provided a very strong aesthetic model for me. Where poetry, like music, suddenly blossomed into a plethora of diverse voices, no longer dependent on the European or academic canon of “high art.” This was a marvelous and relatively brief moment—amplified in more than one sense by the beginnings of 60’s psychedelic rock—where art and popular culture intersected (popular—I draw a strong
distinction between that and “pop,” which holds little interest for me, since it has more to do with marketing and ephemeral fame). All of a sudden, from the late 50’s to the late 60’s, the line between art and popular culture became blurred and porous (I think it did that too in the visual arts, especially the work of the West Coast assemblage artists like Connor, Herms, Kienholz, Berman and others, whom I intensely admire). These poets like Lew Welch and Snyder spoke in the language of everyday speech, instead of college professor rhetoric; our generational response to their work was very similar to that for the early musical minimalists. Culture was off its high art and academic pedestals—it was now possible for all of us to seek our own voices, in the here and now. Roll over, Beethoven—“Shall we go, you and I while we can, through the transitive nightfall of diamonds?”

Through the years, poets have continued to be my best friends (along with my composer friends—but I live relatively isolated now, and see them all too rarely). We just share the same wide-ranging interests. Curiously enough, that doesn’t seem to be the case with most visual artists (though I have one lifelong sculptor friend, the Bay Area artist Joe Slusky). They seem to live in a world that is more about money, defined by the art gallery scene, which I tend to avoid (or show up—after the openings!). Since I’ve only occasionally lived in big cities, I’m not around any kind of “scene.” Dancers and theater people need that to function; we composers are more flexible. All I need is a pen and paper (and in my case, access to a piano). So I’m more free to be on my own, and to roam—like poets. Not that poets have innate musical taste—I don’t know how many I’ve convinced to put away those Keith Jarrett or Van Morrison albums, and start paying attention to Partch, Ayler or Varèse!

Lane: You’ve identified Jaime de Angulo as someone who “gave you permission” to focus your work on indigenous/primitive musical cultures, rather than an Anglo-European model. Can you talk about how you found that connection and how it has translated into your creative work?

Garland: Well, it was not de Angulo who inspired me in that direction. In the fall of 1969 at Columbia, I read (on my own, not part of some curriculum!) Snyder’s Earth House Hold, which deals with many of those issues. It in fact contains a review of de Angulo’s Indian Tales, probably the first time I heard of him. In 1969 the paperback edition of Jerome Rothenberg’s pathbreaking anthology of ethnopoetics, Technicians of the Sacred, came out; followed by Shaking the Pumpkin in 1972 (devoted to North American Indians) and America A Prophecy in 1974, which juxtaposed ethnopoetics and modernism. So this was something very much in the air. My move out to California in 1970 exposed me to a whole new landscape (landscapes) and sets of cultural traditions and histories. In 1972 I saw a major show of Navajo rugs at the LA Country Museum, which had a profound impact on me. For an anthropology class at Cal Arts (on “the ethnology of color perception”), I attempted to write an essay drawing parallels between these Navajo rugs and music—that was years before Feldman wrote his essay about Turkish carpets. Unfortunately, I didn’t get far with my essay… In the early 70’s I traveled throughout California and the West coast; Michael Byron and I spent the summer of ’72 together in Vancouver, driving up the West coast (and back) from LA, then going around Vancouver Island and eventually as far north as the Yukon (where we had a car crash that easily could have killed the two of us, right then and there). Also I began to do a lot of hiking in these landscapes, especially the deserts (I lived in a cabin in the desert north of LA during 1972–3); and around Mt. Diablo in the Bay Area. A school I taught at for one year was at the base of Mt. Diablo State Park, and I hiked there constantly (and later, the Berkeley and Oakland hills in the mid-70’s).
Psychedelic drugs played a role in this too, opening me up to seeing the landscape and understanding its histories with indigenous eyes. That inevitably led me to Mexico and later to New Mexico.

As for de Angulo, his works began re-appearing in 1973–4, published by the very creative and influential Turtle Island Press, which also published books by geographer Carl Sauer, poet Ed Dorn, and writer Zora Neale Hurston, among others. De Angulo’s style was unique for its clarity and simplicity—and attracted the admiration of writers like Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. Cowell was a lifelong friend of his; Lou Harrison met him at his Big Sur ranch; and Henry Miller wrote about him. He was a major West coast cultural figure who to this day remains relatively unknown on the East coast or in Europe. He worked also as an anthropologist and linguist, so these fields intersected with his literary efforts—just as my years of ethnomusicological work have impacted my creative life. In the mid-1970’s I did a very specific research project on de Angulo’s work on California Indian music. I had brought together KPFA Radio producer Susan Ohori with Turtle Island publisher, (the late) Bob Callahan, which led to the rediscovery/revival of de Angulo’s 24 hours of radio tapes, the Old Time Stories, which had been languishing in the Pacifica vaults in LA for over a decade. I eventually published the results of my work via SOUNDINGS in 1988, which became something of a “cult classic” among many American poets, but seemingly had no impact at all among composers! Thus it is… There seems to be more “status” and respect involved, apparently, in studying Indonesian or Hindustani musics, with their complex musical systems, than researching the indigenous traditions of our own continent… Especially when you step outside of academic ethnomusicology, and allow this study to merge with your own creative life, both as a person and as a composer, as I’ve done (with a nod to Snyder, Kerouac, Bowles, de Angulo and others). As you know, I have four unpublished books concerning my Mexican Indian research. That was an investigation that spanned a good 30 years, and which I have more or less finished with. I’m devoting my final years to what I started out as: being a composer.

Lane: Percussion… What’s the future for percussion and/or percussion music in America?

Garland: I don’t see the future of percussion as being separate from that of music in general. The era of the percussion ensemble as being some kind of exotic hybrid is long over.