

THE SOFT OPTION.

**THE LEGACY OF MORTON FELDMAN'S MUSIC IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC
TRADITION IN THE UK AND NORTH AMERICA
SINCE THE 1960s.**

by

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ABSTRACT

Morton Feldman is one of the key experimental composers of the so-called New York School, informally presided over by John Cage in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The purpose of this study is to explore his legacy for other composers in this category who were either younger contemporaries of Feldman or who started to compose considerably later, and, furthermore, to test a hypothesis that Feldman has been a decisive point of reference for music experimentalists. First there is an account of what experimental music is and an attempt at its definition – at least, in the world of ‘classical’ music – according to writers on the subject. At the same time, Feldman’s inclusion in the experimental music scene is assessed and confirmed, again with reference to the available literature. This is followed by a description of Feldman’s output from around 1950 up till his death in 1987, and its evolution. A qualitative survey is then undertaken to gauge the opinions of nineteen experimental composers on Feldman’s importance and influence, both generally and personally. For certain reasons explained here, these composers are all based in the UK and North America. The dissertation ends with a comparative framework wherein the music of these composers is examined alongside that of Feldman, where this is deemed appropriate. The findings of both the survey and the analysis that follows do indeed show that Feldman’s approach to composition has been a source of inspiration for many experimentalists, although, at the same time, no single composer seems to have succumbed to mere imitation of Feldman’s style. Feldman, then, remains an independent voice, even if there are two aspects of his work that have clearly had a major impact – his penchant for low dynamics and the general air of restraint that pervades his music.

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2015 I reviewed two concerts mainly consisting of the music of Swiss composer Jürg Frey for the *Huddersfield Examiner* as part of the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival that year.¹ As someone who has long been interested in the music of Morton Feldman (1926–87), I was struck by how similar features of Frey’s work are to various musical characteristics frequently associated with the American composer: low dynamics, often sustained throughout an entire work, a fondness for repetitive gestures that seem somehow arbitrary, an apparently through-composed structure based on spontaneity as opposed to any underlying structure, and an overall atmosphere of hushed restraint.² Frey is probably the best known member of the composer community ‘Wandelweiser’,³ an association of composers based mainly in Europe and North America, who generally write music that has much in common with these descriptors. All of these composers are associated with the ‘experimental tradition’, a term I shall endeavour to define more closely hereinafter.

Then, in Bristol, a couple of years later, I attended a concert of the music of Eliane Radigue, played by Dominic Lash (double bass), Nate Wooley (trumpet) and Rhodri Davies (harp), musicians connected with the experimental music scene in the UK/United States. All the music was very quiet and had an almost mystical quality to it (Radigue is a practising Buddhist). As with the experience the listener sometimes has with Feldman, it was as if sometimes very little was happening, though at the same time the music seemed to draw its audience in, making them work at it, as it were, but at the same time inducing a feeling of intense calm. It has to be said at this point that there seems to be no documented direct link between Radigue’s music and that of Feldman, though it appears that she felt some affinity with the American minimalists in the early 1970s, and knew the composer Robert Ashley.⁴

Another important event was hearing and reviewing works by the Canadian Linda Catlin Smith, whose name was passed to me by one of my early contacts in this research exercise, Mark Hannesson, himself a member of the Wandelweiser group. Again, this was at Huddersfield, and again the apparent debt to Feldman was unmistakable (and later openly acknowledged by Smith herself).⁵

Most, if not all, of these composers are generally regarded as being part of the experimental school.⁶ But that is a wide category, and not all experimental music is quiet, slow and meditative. And what is experimental music anyway, and is Feldman an experimental composer? Various other questions also presented themselves, more germane to this specific survey.

¹ Despite its name, the Festival, at least in recent years, has tended to focus very much on experimental, rather than other areas of, contemporary music: (post-)serialism, minimalism, etc. These are not ignored; but they are less visible in the programmes of events.

² My review of one of the concerts and that of two other critics can be seen on the website of the Canadian-based string quartet Quatuor Bozzini at: <https://quatuorbozzini.ca/en/evenements/34968/>.

³ <https://www.wandelweiser.de/>

⁴ There is some information on Radigue here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89liane_Radigue.

⁵ The review in question can be read here: <https://www.examiner.co.uk/whats-on/review-linda-catlin-smith-huddersfield-13930845>.

⁶ I use the term ‘school’ here freely. Some of the composers commonly associated with experimentalism would probably balk at being labelled ‘experimental’. Robert Ashley, for example, is on record as rejecting the term (see Gottschalk, p 5).

For example, what was all this tranquil music trying to say and what did it have to do with Feldman, if anything? Had Feldman left a legacy for the experimental music movement, and, if so, was it acknowledged, or was it all just coincidence? Or, alternatively, had Feldman just started a ball rolling that had been picked up by certain composers, improvisers and other musicians to symbolise a stance – be it political, philosophical, musical, or as a reaction or response to the times we live in?

To answer these questions and address the theme of this essay – the legacy of Morton Feldman’s music in the context of the experimental music tradition (here restricted to music in the UK, Canada and the USA) – it was necessary, as previously suggested, to find answers to a number of questions:

1. What is ‘experimental’ music?
2. Is Morton Feldman an experimentalist, or at least part of what has become known as the experimental tradition in music?⁷
3. Who are the experimental composers post-Feldman or even contemporary with him (again, in the geographical areas selected)?
4. Has Feldman exerted an influence on them and, if that is the case, what is its nature?

This dissertation attempts to investigate these topics in a number of ways. Firstly, in chapter 1, a survey of the extant literature on experimental music is undertaken, to see to what extent authors have proposed a definition of experimental music and identified Feldman’s music as a component of the experimental tradition. An attempt is then made to investigate Feldman’s originality as a composer and present indications of his influence on other composers. Chapter 1 also sets out to identify some of the experimentalists themselves. There follows in chapter 2 an account of Feldman’s compositional output and a description of its evolution. Next, in chapter 3, some of the provisional conclusions arrived at are ‘tested’ by means of a qualitative analysis of Feldman’s influence, based on face-to-face and emailed interviews with 19 composers identified as being likely candidates for inclusion in the experimental music movement.⁸ All are based in North America and the UK. A detailed rationale for the restricted choice of geographical area is given, but it might be briefly mentioned here that it is generally agreed that the experimental music scene had its beginnings in the work of John Cage in New York in the 1940s and 1950s. Later, the British composer Cornelius Cardew introduced many of the works of Cage’s circle (mainly Earle Brown, Christian Wolff and Feldman) and others doing pioneering compositional work (Terry Riley in California and La Monte Young in New York) to young composers working in the UK. This group, comprising, among others, Michael Parsons and John White, started what came to be recognised as an experimental music scene in this country, one that – possible ‘gaps’ in time notwithstanding – continues until this day (Menestres, interview question 2). The important contribution also made by Canadian composers made it expedient that this group also be reckoned with in the context of this survey. On the other hand, the sheer abundance of what is categorised, loosely or otherwise, as experimental music worldwide made it necessary, in practical terms, to limit the scope of the exercise.

⁷ It is necessary to recognise a difference between experimental music, as such, and music by composers who experiment, something it might be argued that all composers worth their salt do!

⁸ The identification process is described in chapter 3.

The study ends with a close examination (in chapter 4) of the music of the composers featured and a comparison of approaches, techniques and style with Feldman. Inferences are then drawn.

CHAPTER 1

THEORIES OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC. MORTON FELDMAN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE 'EXPERIMENTAL TRADITION'. LITERATURE REVIEW. FELDMAN'S LEGACY. WHO ARE THE EXPERIMENTAL COMPOSERS?

1.1 Introduction

Just what the hell is the experimental tradition? (Morton Feldman, 1976)

The title of this dissertation is 'The legacy of Morton Feldman's music in the context of the experimental music tradition in the UK and North America since the 1960s'. Accordingly, it needs to be established what 'experimental music' and the 'experimental tradition' might mean. At the same time, the question of whether Morton Feldman is to be considered part of this tradition has to be examined. If he is so regarded, acknowledgement of his originality and influence on those who are assumed to be experimental composers would then need to be identified. Such composers may include both his (near) contemporaries and those that followed in his wake. Some attempt is made here to establish who the experimental composers are, wherever in the world they are based. Ultimately, though, and for the sake of this survey, the relevant composers focused on live in North America and the UK, the reasons for which have already been touched upon, but are explained again both in this chapter briefly and in chapter 3 in greater detail.

To discover views on these questions, the first line of enquiry is the extant literature. This body of writing, by musicians, composers and journalists in the main, would thus be one source for determining whether Feldman is part of the experimental music scene. It might also throw light on whether Feldman has exerted any direct or indirect influence on certain composers, especially those connected with the experimental movement. If 'influence' is too strong a word, the literature might at least reveal whether some sort of debt is acknowledged by the composers themselves or indicated by anyone else who seems qualified to make such an observation.

The guiding question in this section is whether anyone has had anything compelling to say about Feldman's music or musical style that could be relevant to this survey. The chapter divides into a description of the sources themselves, references in the literature to experimental music and Feldman's associations with it, Feldman's possible legacy, and an identification of the composers concerned with a brief rationale for their inclusion. Finally, a general conclusion regarding the findings is drawn.

'Experimental music' has actually become an umbrella phrase for a wide range of music, some of it based on pop and jazz, some on free improvisation, some on electroacoustics. This project, however, restricts itself to what might be called 'classical' experimental music, whose authors are 'composers' who presumably work in an academic setting, and who tend to produce scores, for themselves and others to interpret. The scores may be notated musically, text-based or in some other format, such as a list of instructions. The category may include electronic works.

1.2 The sources

The sources consist of books, articles and CD liner notes. It might be pointed out at this stage that there is a surprising dearth of material generally on Feldman himself, apart, that is, from his own writings and transcripts of the talks he gave, this despite his apparent status as 'great

composer'. Thomas DeLio states that Feldman was 'one of the most original composers of the twentieth century' (p xv), and the writer, poet and critic Frank O'Hara, whose poetry Feldman set to music and to whom Feldman dedicated a work (*For Frank O'Hara*, 1973), wrote that Feldman was 'in the front rank of the advanced musical art of our time' (Friedman, p 213). The American music critic Kyle Gann, is clearly enthusiastic: 'Morton Feldmann [is] ... quite possibly the greatest composer of the late 20th century' (1996). In another piece (2003), Gann also asserts that Feldman's music appeals across 'stylistic boundaries' – that it is respected among the serialists, the minimalists, electronic composers and even DJs. Yet, there is no book on Feldman that covers both a biography and a comprehensive description of his output in the English language. There *is* good coverage of Feldman in German,⁹ but there is no English translation of this monograph.

The books examined fall into three categories: those on more general (contemporary) music history, those specifically on experimental music, and those which are about Feldman in particular, including collections of the composer's writings with analyses of some of his works. Some of the books deal with certain works by Feldman, but by no means all. There was inevitably some degree of overlap between the three. They were chosen on the basis of their apparent relevance and – to some extent – their celebrity, though the list cannot be thought to be at all exhaustive: it includes only sources in English. The books on more general aspects of music were chosen because they contained a reference to experimental music or Morton Feldman, or both, in them.

The books consulted were (in no particular order):

1. **(Contemporary) music history and surveys**

- a. *Four Musical Minimalists* by Keith Potter.
- b. *Music in a New Found Land* by Wilfrid Mellers.
- c. *Modern Music and After* by Paul Griffiths.
- d. *The Rest is Noise* by Alex Ross.
- e. *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, edited by Steven Johnson.
- f. *Canadian Composers Series: Another Timbre*, edited by Simon Reynell.

2. **Experimental music**

- a. *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* by Michael Nyman.
- b. *Experimental Music since 1970* by Jennie Gottschalk.
- c. *Cornelius Cardew: A Reader*, edited by Edwin Prévost.
- d. *Cornelius Cardew: A Life Unfinished* by John Tilbury.
- e. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*, edited by James Saunders.

3. **Feldman-specific**

- a. *The Music of Morton Feldman*, edited by Thomas DeLio.
- b. *Give my Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, edited by B. H. Friedman.
- c. *Composing Ambiguity: The Early Music of Morton Feldman* by Alistair Noble.

⁹ *Neither: Die Musik Morton Feldmans* by Sebastian Claren.

d. *The Graph Music of Morton Feldman* by David Cline.

The articles were mainly sourced from Chris Villars's Morton Feldman website, which at the date of writing hosts no fewer than 200 texts relating to the composer and his music.¹⁰ The texts referenced here generally come with the text number on the site or quote the original source, or do both. One or two additional articles were obtained from the University of Birmingham library, though virtually all those kept there are also to be found on the Villars website. This site, furthermore, contains a wealth of information on Feldman generally, and includes a catalogue of works, a discography, a list of forthcoming performances, photographs and a great deal else, much of it indispensable to the Feldman scholar as well as a handy reference for anyone interested in the composer.

The liner notes explored were those accompanying most of this writer's collection of 50 or so Feldman recordings as well as CDs of the works of composers where there was at least a chance that Feldman's name might be mentioned. These composers included some of those interviewed/corresponded with in connection with this research and other members of the Wandelweiser community, a collection of experimental composers based in various countries (see Introduction).

As will be seen, the general conclusion drawn from a perusal of all this material is that there is indeed such a phenomenon as experimental music and that Morton Feldman is generally assumed to be part of the experimental music movement that started in the post-1945 period in New York City with Cage and his circle (which also included Christian Wolff and Earle Brown). There is widespread acknowledgement of his general importance and originality, though comparatively little mention of his influence on other composers, references to whom are sporadic and either tend to pertain to just one or two aspects of his music or are very general. Thus, there are references dotted about the literature to Feldman's approach to composition that suggest he is a forerunner in certain areas, but there is no comprehensive account of Feldman's legacy for later experimentalists.

More positively, there is an attempt in some of the writings to define experimental music, or at least describe what it actually entails. By matching these accounts with the characteristics of Feldman's music, it is possible to make deductions with respect to his inclusion in the group of experimental composers. There were, furthermore, actual declarations to the effect that Morton Feldman was to be so included.

1.3 Definitions and descriptions of experimental music and Feldman's apparent inclusion in the group of experimental composers

Obviously, the word 'experimental' could be applied to a vast number of composers. Moreover, American composers who pre-date Cage, such as Nancarrow, Partch, and even Ives, produced works or parts of works that relied on approaches that are mirrored in some of the 'experiments' that we associate with later movements. However, it is generally assumed that there was a New York School of experimentalists consisting essentially of Cage, Feldman, Brown and Wolff and writing non-conformist music around 1950, and that this roughly marks the start of the 'tradition'. And, indeed, a difference must be pointed up between the 'experimental tradition'

¹⁰ <http://www.cnvill.net/mfhome.htm>.

and making musical experiments: Feldman experimented with notation,¹¹ for example, but that would not necessarily categorise him as one of the experimentalists in the framework used here.

With respect to definitions of experimental music, Gottschalk, for example, has this to say:

Experimental music is ... a position – of openness, of inquiry, of uncertainty, of discovery. (p 1)

Though admitting that any one definition of experimental music *per se* would be a challenge to arrive at, she lists what she describes as five ‘conceptual arcs’ as recurring characteristics of this genre: indeterminacy, change, experience, research and non-subjectivity (Gottschalk, p 1). Of these, indeterminacy has long remained a key feature of experimental music:

An experimental action is one the outcome of which is not foreseen.¹²

In the same article from which this famous quotation is taken, Cage endeavours to explain why his experimentalism differs from that of his American forbears, though he does concede that some of the musical devices employed by Henry Cowell (1897–1965) run close to the techniques of the new wave.

In Gottschalk’s terminology, ‘change’ seems to allude to alterations in people’s experience of music, and she quotes the composer Christian Wolff on this subject:

The music ... suggests a way of organizing your thinking, your attitude to the world ... (Gottschalk, p 2)

‘Non-subjectivity’ has to do with the composer withdrawing from the music, with the focus more on sound for sound’s sake. ‘Experience’ seems to link to non-subjectivity – letting the music do its work on the listener, performance, ambience, etc. ‘Research’ relates to trying things out to see if they ‘work’.

Gottschalk’s book (*Experimental Music since 1970*) quoted here appears to have been well received,¹³ not least, one suspects, because such an endeavour was probably long overdue. There have been some glowing reviews, despite a general absence in the book of evaluation of composers and works by the author and there being almost no extracts from scores. Moreover, perhaps surprisingly, given the lack of uniformity of opinion regarding what experimental music is exactly, no one for now seems to be arguing with her list of five experimental music descriptors. Here they seem to work as a kind of anchor, but that is not to say that they are all-embracing, and the replies to the question ‘What do you consider to be experimental music?’ that I asked 19 composers, as described in chapter 3 and the responses to which are appended here, show a range of views on the subject, some expressed by composers very well established in this musical field.

Feldman seems to belong in this group of experimentalists almost by default in Gottschalk’s book (there are various passages devoted to the man and his music). This same default status regarding Feldman, which has asserted itself over the years, also seems to have been accepted by Nyman, in what is likely to have been the first full account of the state of experimental music worldwide (though mainly covering North America and the UK), *Experimental Music:*

¹¹ See Warnaby, J. for mentions of Feldman’s notational experiments. See also Nyman (p 53), who states that Feldman is the first composer “to put into practice what Cage called music “which is indeterminate with respect to its performance”, and the first to use non-representational graphic notation.’

¹² Cage, p 69.

¹³ Email correspondence with the author dated December 2017.

Cage and Beyond, which first appeared in 1974, some 40 years before Gottschalk's survey. Nyman mentions that, at least at that time, Feldman had 'professed independence of both experimental and avant-garde standpoints' (p 1); nevertheless, Nyman later endeavours to make the case for seeing Feldman as a major contributor to the experimental music cause, someone who 'kept himself untainted by European think and write systems – more so than the other three composers (Cage, Wolff and Brown)' (p 52).

Chapter 1 of Nyman's book attempts a definition of experimental music, both in terms of the music itself and non-musical considerations, such as concept, philosophy and ethics. He lists five processes, for example, that have to do with indeterminacy, though he admits they do not cover every eventuality:

...any attempt to classify a phenomenon as unclassifiable and (often) elusive as experimental music must be partial... (p 4)

The processes Nyman mentions are chance, people processes (where performers progress at their own pace), contextual processes (where players act in response to unpredictable circumstances), repetition and the use of electronics. He then goes on to talk about more extraneous matters, such as overall duration (which can be, and sometimes must be, flexible), the personal approach and experience of the performer (probably not corresponding to the 'experience' category cited by Gottschalk), games, the focus on silence, the role of the player as listener, and various other matters not directly linked to compositional procedure.

The interesting, even perhaps sceptical observation to be made here is that, although the name Morton Feldman features frequently in Nyman's account, the composer himself fits into very few of these categories.¹⁴ Feldman had no time for chance procedures (see chapter 2) and only appeared to write one electronic piece. Arguably, too, the category of 'contextual processes' might be ruled out, as Feldman's scores tend not to be restricted by dependence on circumstances and the actions of the performers. Two musical approaches that do apply are 'people processes' (referred to in some cases as racecourse scoring) and repetition, though neither in the sense of systems music, nor minimalism as it has come to develop, nor phasing, the technique frequently employed by Steve Reich, for example. The other relevant descriptor here is the focus on silence, brief passages of which feature frequently in Feldman's scores.

An apparent shift in historical perspective over the last few decades also casts into doubt the inclusion in Nyman's book both of electronic music and the minimalist composers. Electronic music has a low profile in the oeuvre of the composers considered in this survey, and the minimalists are now excluded from the genre of experimental music.

Crucially, however, Nyman's account also omits mention of the work of Kagel, Stockhausen and Xenakis, for instance, not to speak of Haubenstock-Ramati (1919–94), whose *Konstellationen* of 1971 relies on the performers interpreting coloured etchings, and is therefore comparable to some degree with the early UK experimentalist Cornelius Cardew's iconic graphic score *Treatise*. The conclusion might be that, as with other musical movements, the passage of time has shown that experimental music refers more to an approach or attitude

¹⁴ The remark might be made (and possibly has) that, despite his early experiments with indeterminacy, in particular with pitch (in the *Projection* series of pieces, for example), Feldman is not to be casually bracketed with the other figures in his New York circle, nor indeed with any of his other contemporaries. Whereas experimental composers, past and present, might very well be largely represented by Nyman's categories, these categories fall short where it applies to Feldman.

than a sound world. Michael Nyman's book continues to be a valuable work of reference and the developments that have taken place in experimental music since it was written are certainly no cause to pour scorn on his somewhat arbitrary inclusions and exclusions. (The other point to make here is that Nyman tends to focus on musical movements that began in the USA and the UK, suggesting that, at least at this point in time, there was something like geographical exclusion at work in the examination of the experimental music culture.)

Furthermore, the differentiation that Nyman makes between experimental music and what goes by the dubious title 'avant-garde', which he uses to label such composers as Stockhausen, for instance, has been challenged since his book first appeared. Virginia Anderson (p 159) makes mention of this and quotes comments by prominent figures in the world of experimental music, including James Saunders and Christopher Fox, that point to the bogus nature of this distinction. It is certainly a moot point: what could be more 'avant-garde' than Cage's famously silent 4'33"? And yet some of the interviews conducted for this project revealed that a perception of the distinction is still held. This, despite the fact that Feldman's graph works, for example, have – superficially at least – many of the hallmarks of the *sound* of the 'conventional' avant-garde of the time, with their rapidly changing levels of dynamics, virtual lack of any discernible melodic shape, irregular pacing and atonal harmonies. Boulez may have pooh-pooed some of the compositional stances adopted by the likes of Cage and Feldman, but either side always appeared to be interested in what the other was doing. Feldman famously decried Boulez's interest in how a piece was made (see, for example, Bernard, p 178), but much of Feldman's oeuvre is structured and organised, whether relatively freely, as in the graph pieces, or sometimes more closely, as in the main bulk of his output, and, in particular, the later works. The 'hostility' between the two camps is made much of in some of the literature but over time the differences – in compositional approach, but more patently in terms of sound world – seem to have become less compelling.

There is one area, however, where the experimentalists and the (post-)serialist composers seem divided. Anderson in her essay raises the topic of the early (British) experimentalists' 'respect' for earlier composers, with a mention, for example, of Gavin Bryars' liking for Mahler and Wolf (Bryars' own music would indeed seem to owe something to the late Romantics), and John White's interest in Alkan and Scriabin. (Brahms is off the agenda, as far as one can tell, because of his too learned developmental devices). Feldman is on record as being a fan of Sibelius, and this might be reflected in the often low-key mood of the music and their occasionally similar thoughts on orchestration. Howard Skempton claims a debt to Britten (one that is sometimes very palpable). There may, on the other hand, be an atmosphere of general antagonism towards Schoenberg among the experimentalists (often shared by the other camp, as it happens), though Webern is an acknowledged antecedent of the group. A sceptic might remark that this all smacks of subjective tastes, but the interesting (and perhaps ironic) point here is that the serialists seemed bent on breaking with the past, whilst the experimentalists imply that they are fairly happy to embrace it.

Nyman's comments in his book regarding Feldman's music do not entirely overlap with what Gottschalk sees as constituting the essential elements of experimentalism. But both writers concur with regard to one possible Feldman characteristic. Nyman suggests that Feldman wrote instinctively, rather than adhering to any rigorous process. He also refers to the (extremely) indeterminate nature of the composer's early works (e.g. the two series of graph pieces known as *Projections* and *Intersections*) (p 53). In addition, he touches on the non-subjective element

in the music: ‘each note is heard ... as a separate, isolated timbre’, and goes on to explain that this is true of both Feldman’s highly indeterminate works (the graph pieces, for example) and his more conventionally written compositions of the period. (The *Intermission* group of works, all written in the 1950s, are all ‘fully’ notated, though the series is interspersed with the appearance of the *Projection* and, later, the *Intersection* pieces.)

The instinctive, intuitive nature of Feldman’s compositional process is taken up by Gottschalk (p. 134), who mentions a trait the composer sometimes referred to himself, albeit obliquely: ‘the foregrounding of concentration over calculation’. The important point to make here is that this general lack of rigour in the compositional approach is by and large a very discernible characteristic of experimental music generally. (See some of the composers’ comments in the appended tapescripts and written survey responses.)

The books by Michael Nyman and Jennie Gottschalk are the only two surveys of experimental music produced as a continuous volume by one author, rather than a collection of essays, such as the enterprising *Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*, edited by James Saunders. They are therefore now standard references, though they display differences. Whereas Nyman’s is a survey of schools and movements, and has a historical perspective, Gottschalk’s book tends to be structured around concepts: it is certainly not a chronological account. Nor are any judgments made in the latter publication. Another striking difference is that, as mentioned previously, Nyman includes coverage of the minimalists, and though it might be argued that Terry Riley, for example, was doing experiments in notation that in some ways resemble some of Feldman’s approaches to scoring,¹⁵ minimalism no longer seems to be regarded as part of the experimental music scene, and Gottschalk ignores it.

However Gottschalk’s five ‘arcs’ are to be interpreted, Feldman does seem to fit into the framework in several areas. With regard to the ‘experience’ of the players and the audience, Mellers has the following to say (specifically of *Piece for Four Pianos*).

The players must enter a state of trance in order to play the music slowly and quietly enough; and the performers’ trance induces in the audience something very like hypnosis. (p 190).

Mellers also concludes that Feldman’s music works as a ‘a more healthy tranquilizer for our nervous distresses than the common drugs of the market’ (p 192): Gottschalk’s category of ‘change’ would seem to extend to the real world of medications and cures for our personal ills. Alex Ross (2008, p 486) brings this notion of change into a more political realm: ‘All of his (Feldman’s) music was a silent protest, cutting loose from the ghost-ridden European world.’¹⁶

¹⁵ A case in point is the so-called ‘racecourse form’ construction, where the players begin at the same time, but move at their own pace. The result is some sort of flexible canon, and is first discerned in Feldman in his *Piece for Four Pianos* of 1957, where each player reads from precisely the same score. Terry Riley’s ground-breaking *In C* seems to have taken its cue from this idea, although if this is a case of adapting another composer’s design, it seems doubtful. My email to Riley on the subject was not replied to. Racecourse form was used extensively later by the Scratch Orchestra and in pieces by Cardew and Michael Parsons (both co-founders), among others (confirmed on the basis of email correspondence with Michael Parsons 8.8.2018 and Howard Skempton 8.8.2018). As previously mentioned, Nyman’s term for this notational device is ‘people processes’ (Nyman, p 6).

¹⁶ Feldman was Jewish and was by all accounts deeply affected by the deeds of the Nazis in the Second World War. In his article ‘American Sublime’, Alex Ross (2006) relates the ‘ghost-ridden’ view to an incident when Feldman was in Germany and was asked why he did not move there, as his music had been fairly well received in that country. He replied that ‘they’ were still ‘screaming from under the pavements!’

On the issue of instinct, mentioned earlier, Griffiths also points to Feldman's 'unaided intuition' and lack of an ideology (p 278). Here he connects this non-subjective stance with a general lack of 'rhetoric', a common descriptor of Feldman's music that several of the composers consulted in this survey emphasise and a phenomenon that is frequently identified in discussions of experimental music. 'Lack of rhetoric' here probably means an avoidance of musical devices that would have an obvious dramatic impact on the listener – sudden contrasts in dynamics for an emotional effect, for instance. This avoidance of showiness in Feldman's music is linked in part to his apparent distrust of virtuosity (see Holzaepfel, p 159), though, especially in the later works, his notation is far from simple. This general theme is picked up by the pianist John Tilbury when he talks about Cardew's understated performances of Feldman's piano music, 'in which all redundant cultural baggage had been jettisoned' (p 145).

The issue of virtuosity is addressed by the composer Michael Parsons, writing about the music of Howard Skempton in 1980 (p 6), 'which stands in sharp contrast to dominant avant-garde tendencies'. The remark is relevant to Feldman, as Skempton openly admits to being influenced enormously by him (see *ibid.* p 3 and later in this chapter). Parsons also unequivocally states here that Skempton is part of the 'experimental tradition', and thus would appear to forge a link between him and Feldman.

In the area of indeterminacy, Brett Boutwell mentions that the series of pieces written in the 1950s entitled *Projections* 'would help launch a vast repertory of experimental music... described in later years with marked terms such as "indeterminate", "aleatoric" and "improvisatory"'.¹⁷ Feldman's later scores tend to be very precisely notated, but his earlier output of the 1950s and 1960s can be indeterminate with respect to duration or even pitch, though never as to instrumentation or choice of voices. Furthermore, there is a whole world of experimental music partly or wholly involved with improvisation, but Feldman does not relate to this scene.¹⁸ Even his graph pieces, with their non-notated pitches and other freedoms, are strictly controlled with respect to other parameters, and the notion of entirely unexpected outcomes is vehemently pre-empted.

There are inevitably descriptions of experimental music in the literature that do not make any mention of Feldman, though in many cases they apply very closely to that composer's style. Two such examples of this are to be found in James Saunders' essay 'Fourteen Musicians' in the Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music, which has a section on the composer Laurence Crane. In an interview between Saunders and Crane, the latter mentions Howard Skempton's indication of the difference between experimental and mainstream composers, that the former work with 'material', while the latter speak of their 'ideas' (p 244). Crane then goes on to describe his frustration with the 'big emotional statements' that many composers try to make (p. 249). Both a general reticence regarding underlying processes and philosophies as well as an abhorrence of drama are traits of experimental music that are readily associated with Morton Feldman's oeuvre (see chapter 2), and Feldman himself is on record as being loath to make use of compositional systems, established or otherwise, or dwell on the subject of notational approaches.

¹⁷ The quotation is contained in Boutwell, p 457-482, although the document no longer seems to be available.

¹⁸ Paccione, M and Paccione P.: see list of references).

Thus, there is ample literary evidence that Morton Feldman should be included among the composers of experimental music and is in fact an established figure in the experimental music tradition.

... he (Feldman) fits in rather well with ... the American 'experimental' tradition. (DeLio p 14).

The views expressed in the writings examined here are given additional weight by the responses of the composers interviewed and described in chapter 3, virtually all of whom take the view that Feldman is highly representative of the movement (the responses in full are appended). Moreover, some of the more typical traits of experimentalism are visible in the selection of Feldman works and scores referred to and quoted in chapter 4, with its closer analysis of the music.

Others who are unequivocal about Feldman's inclusion in the group include the American music critic John Rockwell, who in 1987 wrote an obituary on Feldman in the *New York Times*. It is headed *Morton Feldman Dies at 61; An Experimental Composer,* and starts with the words 'Morton Feldman, one of the century's most important experimental composers...'. In an article, Kurt Ozment, of Bilkent University, discusses in some depth the notion of the 'experimental tradition', and somehow implies that Feldman considered he was part of it, despite any protests to the contrary he may have expressed.¹⁹

These remarks and findings are based on the books listed earlier and a number of articles; however, none of the liner notes consulted were forthcoming with respect to descriptions of what experimental music entails or the matter of whether Feldman is an experimentalist. Further on in this chapter, general conclusions are drawn regarding any hard and fast definition of experimental music, the musical and other notions that are possibly or commonly associated with it, and the viability of including Feldman in the group of experimental music composers.

1.4 Feldman's originality and possible influence.

It is probably useful to discuss the musical ideas of Feldman that may be regarded as originating with him alongside the evidence of his legacy for other composers, experimentalists or otherwise, on whom he apparently exerted an influence. Accordingly, it may not be an entirely bogus proposition that original ideas in a composer's oeuvre, if picked up, used and expanded on by others, are a marker of that composer's influence. Nevertheless, the two – originality and influence – do not always go hand in hand, obviously, and there is little comment in the sources consulted with respect to explicit compositional techniques that were possibly launched by Feldman and deliberately imitated by other composers afterwards.²⁰

Another point to make here is that it was not necessary at this stage to check for influences on composers based in North America and the UK alone; that is solely the author's geographical category, the rationale for which is explained in some depth in chapter 3, which examines the opinions of experimental composers regarding Feldman's legacy for them personally and in general. Nor do I rely in this chapter solely on the words of the composers interviewed for this

¹⁹ P 5.

²⁰ There are several notational features of Feldman's that are apparently 'original', such as his use of 'sustained' grace notes (see Noble, p 116), fermatas written over an empty stave, and stemless noteheads (as in *Last Pieces* of 1959), devices that may well have been taken up by other composers later (see interview with Tim Parkinson, Appendix IX), though there seems to be no mention of them in the literature.

project, based as they are in these geographical regions, but extend the examination to a whole range of composers – mainly experimental, though not necessarily.

I have divided recognition in the literature of Feldman's originality and possible influence into three areas for examination: compositional approaches (notation, pitch organisation, etc.), sound world (dynamics, pacing, etc.) and attitude (sound for sound's sake, breaking with tradition and theorising, etc.). Admittedly, the categorisation is somewhat artificial, as the three divisions to some extent overlap. Hopefully, though, it is a valid approach, and not just a convenient one.

a. Compositional approaches

It is very evident that Feldman was a pioneer of indeterminacy²¹ and produced notational solutions that freed up various musical parameters 'the outcome of which is not foreseen', to quote Cage again. As Nyman maintains, Feldman was probably the first composer to write highly indeterminate works and to use graphic notation based on numbers and signs rather than musical markings. Cline points out that Feldman's early graph pieces 'seem to have been the very first instrumental works in modern musical history in which pitches were specified imprecisely' (p 3) and that had 'affected the music of Earle Brown' (p 1), though they 'may not ... have been the first indeterminate works from a New York School composer' (p 317), Cline suggesting, albeit with some hesitance, that Christian Wolff may have got there first.

Gottschalk (pp 139–40) quotes from Feldman talking about the use of a graph or 'grid' and the notion of an 'ongoing ictus', and she then goes on to mention Feldman's *Crippled Symmetry* (1983), where the three parts are assigned varying meters and rhythmic values 'that flicker'. This 'flickering' effect seems very akin to the surface textures of the music of Bryn Harrison (presently Reader in Composition at the University of Huddersfield), a composer who openly acknowledges a debt to Feldman.²² Harrison's link to Feldman is also made much of by Saunders (p 223), where he states that his music:

... is (one) in which little happens and there is no sense of direction, even though it displays a constant, intricate motion.

The lack of dynamic action, a feeling of disorientation, intricacy, and, at the same time, a sense of moving forward are features that could well be ascribed to much of Feldman's music, especially the later works (see chapter 2). Feldman's 'flat surfaces' are alluded to fairly frequently in the literature, and somehow relate to his passion for abstract expressionist art.²³

These features could also apply to the 'racecourse' scores, reference to which has been made, where players start together (though not necessarily on cue) and continue at their own pace, either reading from the same or from different parts. The effect is vaguely canonic, though not in any mathematically precise way, and produces an almost dream-like sound world of resonance. Such works include *Piece for Four Pianos* and *Two Pianos*, both from 1957, where the performers read from the same score, and the *Durations* series, which comprise separate instrumental parts. Potter (p 6) describes the effect as 'a freely unravelling multiple canon suggestive of a free kind of phasing', which Steve Reich was 'aware quite early on of', though

²¹ Saxer, p 14.

²² See liner notes to *shifting light*, on CeReNem sample disc *Bryn Harrison*.

²³ For example, Nils Vigeland (1992, p 5) discusses the subject. For a longer account of the subject of surfaces in painting and his own music, see *Between Categories*, written by Feldman himself, in Friedman, pp 83 - 89.

‘only much later ... did he see the full significance of Feldman’. Michael Parsons, and other composers associated with the Scratch Orchestra, for example, have made use of the device.²⁴

Another approach to indeterminacy is found in Feldman’s *Intermission 6* (1953), for one or two pianos, his only work in mobile form (Noble p 114), and contemporary with the first scores of Earle Brown utilising that format. Ross, moreover, sees Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI* as an ‘obvious imitation’ of the open form experiments of the two Americans (2008, p 457). Nevertheless, Feldman did not write any subsequent scores in mobile form, as Noble points out, most likely for intellectual reasons, though personal considerations with respect to his relationship with Brown may have played a part.

There are other (general) acknowledgements of the influence of Feldman as regards notational approaches sporadically appearing in the literature and elsewhere. For example, the Canadian experimental composer Marc Sabat (1965–) mentions his ‘encounter with Feldman’s enharmonic notation’ (Rendell, p 93), and having been inspired by ‘particularly the proportions in approaching rhythm’.²⁵ More remarks on Feldman’s rhythmic notation can be found later in this chapter and in chapter 2.

There is precious little in the literature surveyed regarding other musically specific aspects of Feldman’s compositional approaches or methods. Noble (p 27) speaks of his ‘deployment of the 12-tone aggregate as an entity in itself rather than as the basis of extended development’, a loose pointer to the fact that Feldman’s music is intensely chromatic and almost constantly dissonant. Furthermore, his serial, though not strictly 12-tone, tendencies are the subject of an in-depth analysis by Steven Johnson in his essay on Jasper Johns and Feldman (pp 217-247). Both writers seem at odds with the frequently expressed view that Feldman had no working method and composed purely intuitively.²⁶ Whatever the case, Feldman’s pitch choices might seem unsystematic and more concerned with sound for sound’s sake than meaningful inter-relationships, and therein lies his legacy for the experimental music scene, with its liberal acceptance of progressions of pitches and chords that have no diatonic, tonal or dodecaphonic points of reference. This apparent arbitrariness of pitch selection in all likelihood contributes to the objective of avoidance of rhetoric, as referred to earlier. Feldman’s scores may contain octaves or major thirds, but they do not relate to any tonal progression, and seem to be present solely as a gesture of sonic exploration. Kevin Volans (p 10) equates this freedom from any references as a ‘desire for abstraction’, making him (Feldman) ‘strictly modernist, given post-modernism’s promiscuous appropriation of styles and meanings’.²⁷ Cardew, in the early 1960s, had also spoken of Feldman’s aversion to tonal/atonal/serial systems and, interestingly, suggested that there was no equality between the twelve notes of the scale in Feldman’s music. All this notwithstanding, there appears to be scant recognition in the literature of Feldman’s influence in this area, even though it *is* acknowledged by many of the composers interviewed for this dissertation project (see chapter 3).

²⁴ Email correspondence with Parsons 8.8.2018.

²⁵ Email correspondence with Sabat 20.8.2017.

²⁶ Noble (inter alia, pp 7-8) is particularly adamant that the music is ‘carefully organised, planned and designed’ and readily lends itself to close analysis.

²⁷ Volans’s distinction may well extend to a contextualisation of the experimental music scene, as opposed to post-modernist composition, with its seeming array of ideas and what might be interpreted as ‘gimmicks’. In this connection, and as previously mentioned, Laurence Crane speaks of ‘big emotional statements’, anathema to the experimentalists.

On the matter of rhythm, except for some specific analyses of durational relationships, (for example, in Ames's investigation of *Piano* [1977] in DeLio [pp 105–10]), there is relatively little in the literature consulted on Feldman's often highly complex rhythmic notations, sometimes so daunting that at first glance they seem virtually unplayable. Volans (p 11) raises the subject of interpreting Feldman's curious reworkings of the same rhythms notated slightly differently, explaining that these subtle differences are an invitation to the performers to approach the material in different ways. He refers to this as 'touch', and makes the observation that Feldman is probably 'the first composer ... to compose "touch" into the score'. Feldman often worked with professionals and virtuosi, such as David Tudor, and, although his music fights shy of showmanship, it is often challenging to play. He is furthermore often seen as a composer who deliberately sets up problems of interpretation for performers, leaving them to discover a workable solution. In his paper, Gann (2008) speaks of Feldman controlling the player's thought through his complicated notations, and even exclaims: 'it flouts every professional orthodoxy of notating music'. Howard Skempton, at one time Feldman's editor, even mentions a case where the overlapping tempi and cross-rhythms of one of Feldman's pieces simply do not add up (see Appendix XII²⁸).

It is a matter of speculation as to whether other experimental composers have found inspiration in this interest of Feldman's in rhythmic complexity and subtleties of rhythmic phrasing. Indeed, a perusal by the writer of several dozen scores of experimental music shows little in the way of such overt complexity, experimentalists tending to exhibit an aversion to it (Bryn Harrison and Christopher Fox may be exceptions). There may, of course, be practical reasons not to call on performers of later experimental music to demonstrate high-level instrumental and vocal skills, such as a lack of the resources needed to engage 'virtuosic' musicians, perhaps due to a dearth of regular support from sponsors, who might well prefer to go with music that is 'safer' in terms of financial return. Again, there is little specific reference to Feldman's ideas being picked up by others in this area.

One other outstanding trait of Feldman's compositional approach is the appeal of the extended piece, several of his later works taking several hours to perform. *For Philip Guston* (1984), for example, can last well over four hours, and the recording available on YouTube of *For Christian Wolff* (1986), played by Eberhard Blum on flute and Nils Vigeland on piano and celeste, has a duration of almost three and a half hours. This rather eccentric attitude to timing is discussed by Gottschalk (pp 135–6), who points to a link between what she calls 'Feldman's sustained interest in the temporal canvas' and (once again) the Wandelweiser community. She quotes from the US composer Michael Pisaro (1961–):

They (the members of the community) are not 'telling time' but creating a space in which the listener can find his or her own time.

Gottschalk then mentions several works by Pisaro that are very long, including *entre-moments*, lasting five hours, as well as works by Wandelweiser co-founder and Dutch composer Antoine Beuger (1955–), sections of which than can continue for up to nine hours. It may be relevant to attribute these approaches directly to Feldman, though the American 'minimalist' La Monte Young (1935–) is a veteran of the long piece too (his *Well-Tuned Piano* of 1964 has seen performances lasting five to six hours), and, indeed, Young's pioneering musical experiments

²⁸ The work in question is *Spring of Chosroes* (1977).

have accorded him not only cult status but true adulation. Meanwhile, Gann (2008, p 8) quips that ‘luckily, not many young composers have imitated Feldman in the area of length’.

Finally, Feldman used what he described as his ‘allover’ approach to composition, as Cline, and indeed Feldman himself, describe it, treating the composition in the making as a sort of canvas to be daubed and worked on in a patently more random way than the conventional left-to-right practice of notating music. His great love of the American abstract painters, particularly Philip Guston, and the comment by his co-experimentalist Christian Wolff that Feldman used to put graph paper (in this particular instance) on the wall and treat the sheets like paintings, lend this theory weight.²⁹ However, whether this method has been adopted by composers following in his wake is a matter for conjecture.

b. Sound world

I especially felt drawn to his (Feldman’s) sound world and to the pacing of his work. (Linda Catlin Smith, in Reynell, p 20)

Feldman’s music is characterised by his fondness for low dynamics, slow pace, rhythmic complexity (particularly in the late works) and his penchant for repetition. All these aspects of his sound world are mentioned in various places in the literature examined. With the exception of rhythm, which has already been remarked upon in the context of Volans’s views on the subject (at least with respect to Feldman’s rhythmic complexities, particularly, though not only, in later works), these traits are examined here, the first two being combined for the sake of convenience.

Although it is something of an exaggeration, Cornelius Cardew (1936–81), speaking in the 1960s, famously stated that ‘almost all Feldman’s music is slow and soft’ (Tilbury, p 143). In the same broadcast for Cologne Radio he refers to the ‘infamous softness and slowness of his music’ (p 144). Kyle Gann points to Feldman’s radical ideas concerning low dynamics and his use of the instruction ‘as soft as possible’ written at the beginning of a score, with no other dynamic markings in the work (2008, p 4). This call for one dynamic level Gann regards as Feldman’s trademark and suggests that ‘Feldman had marked off *pianissimo* as his territory’ (p 5).³⁰ Interestingly, Gann then speaks of Feldman’s influence on other composers, specifically in the area of paring down aspects of composition – pitch selection, timbral range, etc. – though those he mentions are more associated with the minimalist, as opposed to experimental, school.

The British composer Howard Skempton (1947–) openly recognises his debt to Feldman, not least in the area of low dynamics and slow pace, in ‘Conditions of Immediacy: Howard Skempton in Interview’ (Fallas pp 15–16). In it, he talks about his early work *A Humming Song* (1967), saying that it is very ‘Feldmanesque’, and that ‘at the top I put “As slowly and quietly as possible”, which I would have borrowed directly from Feldman’. He goes on to say this: ‘the slowness and quietness of the music ... owed everything to Feldman’. Indeed, it is in this area – music that is slow, quiet, meditative, anything but brash – that Feldman would seem to have had a major influence on the experimental music movement. For example, a total of 13

²⁹ Allman, p 2.

³⁰ Feldman seems, at least occasionally, to have been modest concerning the extent of his influence. ‘I certainly have not influenced anybody, unless – I was told I invented the *pianissimo*.’ (1982, p 6). However, it is with characteristic inconsistency that Feldman (1980, p 20) asserts that he ‘influenced Cage’, which, at least as regards notational practices and strategies for musical indeterminacy, he undoubtedly did!

of the 19 composers interviewed for this research suggested that these particular qualities of Feldman's music had inspired or influenced them. Moreover, in an interview, Nils Vigeland (2018, p 6) provides an amusing anecdote: while studying under Feldman at the University at Buffalo in the 1960s, he and his fellow students put on a concert of their own works. They apparently embraced a variety of styles, but all the pieces were quiet!

Something else very noticeable in Feldman's music is his enthusiasm for repetition, which takes various forms. Sometimes it is a matter of the precise reiteration of a motif, chord or note, as in *Extensions 3* (1952) for piano, which has an eight measure-long section featuring 16 iterations of a triple octave F sharp denoted as a dotted quaver. Such uniform, exactly repeated gestures are very much a hallmark of the music of Swiss composer Jürg Frey (1953–), probably the best known and most widely performed of the Wandelweiser group. His *Klavierstück 2* (2001) features a passage where a perfect fourth notated as a crotchet and given a tempo of $\text{♩} = 63$ is sounded a total of 468 times in succession, suggesting that he may have moved on from Feldman in this department! William Robin proposes that this section of Frey's piece is 'not ... the quasi-serenity of Morton Feldman' and that 'the repetition is a kind of silence' (see list of references). Nevertheless, the debt to Feldman is unmistakable.³¹

Feldman's liking for motivic repetition is also touched on by John Tilbury when he describes a piano piece of Cardew's (one of the *Winter Potatoes*), which contains a short, repeated phrase (p 273). Tilbury says it is reminiscent of 'early' Feldman, though in fact, as shown in the following chapter, this is a gesture he made use of frequently throughout his composing life. Similarly, Gottschalk (p 142), quoting Christian Wolff, makes mention of Feldman's use of 'loops', though it needs to be stressed that his methods are not the systemic phasings of the minimalist school of Riley and Reich, for example, despite Johnson's comment that 'he embraced repetition to such a degree that the listener must unavoidably link his ... style with the minimalist methods of the 1960s' (p 218), a statement that is surely highly misleading.³²

On the matter of repetition, Griffith has this to say:

Feldman's repetitions also differ from most in his creation of a symmetry 'crippled' by asymmetry, whether from 'slight gradations of tempo' ... or from rhythmic notations that look exact but will inevitably be performed a touch inexactly (p 281)

This is probably more to the point and is very much in line with Volans's remark on Feldman's rhythmic notations mentioned previously; i.e. the music often repeats itself but not entirely precisely.

Repetition as a musical device is a hallmark of Feldman's music (see chapter 2), and one that relates closely to the compositional styles of many experimental composers (see chapter 4). There is little or nothing in the literature, however, that focuses closely on the matter.

³¹ In email correspondence (now lost) with Frey he denies being significantly inspired by Feldman's music, incredibly since much of his output is slow-paced and quiet, features a good deal of repetition, tends towards understatement and incorporates the use of free durations – classic Feldman characteristics all.

³² Morton Feldman is occasionally regarded by critics as a 'minimalist', which may indeed serve to describe his tendency towards reduction (in the areas of timbre and dynamics, for example). It would be wrong, however, to bracket him with the 'minimalist' school of composers.

c. Attitude

To echo Wolff's comments on the role of attitude in the world of experimental music, the general perspective of the experimental composer appears distinct from that in other schools. In the 1950s and early 1960s, for example, this perspective would have involved a dramatic break with the past, and Feldman's innovative notions regarding the compositional approaches and sound world that characterise his music strongly suggest that he was venturing something new.³³ Cardew declared:

I see Feldman as the first composer to break free from the dogma and dreary theorizing that has enshrouded new music for so long (Prévost, p 48)

However, Feldman's influence on the music of Cardew is far from apparent: it is probably more a philosophical approach that inspires him, and there are many experimental composers who may well take their cue from Feldman (and the other composers of the New York School) as regards the snubbing of convention, but whose music sounds little like theirs.³⁴ Indeed, Swedish pianist and composer Mats Persson makes the following comment: 'Feldman's influence upon colleagues and pupils has never been of the kind that has led him to building a "school" – there is no Feldman style; his music is far too individual and original' (see list of references).

Furthermore, with Feldman and his innovative stance, it was in all probability more a question of dispensing with any obvious compositional method or system and, instead, pursuing a quest for sound for sound's sake (more on this point in chapter 2). Kyle Gann opines that 'Feldman reintroduced intuition into the compositional discourse' (2008, p 8). It may well be in this area that more than one composer has been led to declare an admiration for Feldman and an avowal of his general influence. Laurence Crane, for example, states:

In other ways my early world was informed by my interest in Erik Satie, also by John Cage, Morton Feldman and perhaps by some of Skempton's fellow experimentalists, Gavin Bryars and John White (Crane, p 2)

The last quotation points up two matters of interest: a respect for the work of Satie, who seemed bent on breaking with musical conventions and whom Cage much admired, and a reference to the way in which the experimentalists may have influenced one another over the decades.

Some of the literature examined, then, suggests that in all three divisions – approach to compositional technique, sound world and attitude – Feldman has shown originality and has been an inspiration for others. This seems especially true with regard to his exploration of low dynamics and slow pace.

There are other remarks to be found on Feldman's general legacy. Christian Wolff states (humorously, it is suggested): 'In Europe he (Feldman) has had a tremendous influence ... there are these young Swiss composers ... all writing post-Feldman music' (Patterson, p 73). The flautist Ebergard Blum has this to say: 'I performed Feldman's music wherever I could, and observed how the interest in it grew and how young composers made it the point of departure for their own work' (Blum, p 2). Noble (p 10) also talks of Feldman's 'wide

³³ This despite what has already been said here regarding later experimentalists' fondness for, and references to, composers from the past.

³⁴ Gavin Bryars is probably a good example.

influence’, though his comment relates specifically to the graphic scores and their impact on composers in subsequent decades.

1.5 Who are the experimentalists?

This survey restricts itself to experimental composers, rather than improvisors and performers. As stated previously, the majority will be what might be called ‘classical’ experimental composers, and not those associated with the world of jazz or pop (see chapter 3 for a general comment on the present scale of the experimental music phenomenon). It is furthermore reasonable to suppose that the composers identified in the literature specifically on experimental music are all relevant names (except, perhaps, for the minimalists mentioned in Nyman’s book) and that Morton Feldman is to be included in this group. The group consists of a very large number of composers worldwide, however, and there are far too many to reckon with here.

The arguments for the selection of North America and the UK as areas for focus in this project are set out in detail in chapter 3, which is a qualitative survey based on the views of 19 composers presently resident in one of those areas. In the case of the UK, there is a distinctly traceable line of development in experimental music, starting with Cardew (who was almost solely responsible for introducing the music of Feldman and other American experimentalists to the country), continuing with his contemporaries, most of whom were associated with the Scratch Orchestra (Christopher Hobbs and Michael Parsons, for example), and followed up by the likes of Tim Parkinson and Christopher Fox, who are ‘amongst the inheritors of the British experimental tradition’ (Saunders, p 222). Some of these British composers have almost become household names in the world of classical music – Howard Skempton and Gavin Bryars, for example. In Canada and the USA, a few of the relevant names are connected with Wandelweiser (Mark Hanneison and Michael Pisaro, for instance), which pretty much lends weight to their experimental credentials. Pisaro, Christian Wolff (inevitably) and Jennie Gottschalk are familiar names from the United States (the latter may be better known for her writings), though the reputations of the Canadians are probably less widespread outside North America (with the possible exception of Linda Catlin Smith). All these composers (apart from Cardew, who died in a road incident in 1981), plus others, were interviewed for this survey.

Many another composer in the period under scrutiny (from around 1950 to the present day) has obviously ‘experimented’, but, for one reason or another, tends to be excluded from the experimental group and the literature on experimental music. There may be several reasons for this. Stockhausen, for example, does not ‘fit in’ because he is an ‘ideas man’: nearly every new work is a project and often appears to set out to examine a concept. The same may be true of Xenakis. Ligeti, who sometimes sounds like Feldman, is too mathematical: his intricate canonic devices are the sort of thing the experimentalists avoid and even abhor. Boulez and Nono (the latter to a lesser extent, perhaps, particularly later on) are too rooted in the post-serialist world: 12-tone composition and the experimental tradition are natural enemies, or at least that is how things used to be. The minimalists are not included because they are interested in formalised processes. Some composers are left out because they ‘tick the wrong boxes’ – Takemitsu is a painter of scenes, Birtwistle is too emotional, Ferneyhough is too complicated, and so on. Ultimately, as is shown in the responses to the questionnaire in chapter 3, the litmus test is whether a composer him/herself declares allegiance to the experimental music scene: virtually

all the composers surveyed here do so, as do many of the others referred to in this project – except, perhaps, for Feldman himself!

1.6 Conclusion

This does not pretend to be an exhaustive survey of the literature on experimental music or Morton Feldman. It is nevertheless fairly comprehensive, inasmuch as what was available in print and on line, and relevant to the project, was fully exploited. It also needs to be stated that some features of Feldman's music (for example, repetition and low dynamics) have been emphasised here, and some virtually ignored. Chapter 2 of the dissertation, however, examines Feldman's output and contribution in rather more depth. The purpose is to identify certain musical traits and, ultimately, a connection between the music of Feldman and the experimental composers contemporary with him, or who came later. This is undertaken by presenting the views of the interviewees in chapter 3 (19 experimental composers currently based in North America and the UK), and, following on from that, conducting an examination of some of the outstanding features of Feldman's music in comparison with that of these other composers, sometimes with reference to scores (chapter 4).

The conclusion from the literature review is that there is indeed such a phenomenon as experimental music, despite the fact that definitions, descriptions and views regarding it vary. Experimental music would seem to cover a range of associations – both musical and non-musical – but is hard to define precisely. It is perhaps more an attitude – a 'position' – than a sound. It is a position of exploration, where convention is bypassed in a quest for something less certain. It may also have ethical, spiritual, and even political connotations, though it endeavours simultaneously to avoid drama/rhetoric. Furthermore, experimental music probably relies more on the instinct of its composers rather than any rigorous compositional procedure.

Experimental music would seem to constitute a distinct musical genre, though, as with other genres, it covers a lot of ground. It is, moreover, sometimes associated with approaches that lie outside the purely musical, including a quest for some sort of engagement on the part of the listener.

The literature surveyed would furthermore suggest that Morton Feldman is an experimental composer (though he himself may have had something to say about this!). The writings consulted either imply or directly state that he has exerted an influence or at least inspired a large number of composers associated with the experimental music movement, even if his music remains – generally speaking – immediately identifiable. On the other hand, some of the literary evidence is less than compelling with regard to Feldman's precise contribution in certain areas – approaches to rhythm and pitch organisation, for instance – to the musical styles of later experimentalists.

All the same, it appears that no one has provided any thorough account of Feldman's legacy for the experimentalists either generally or in any one geographical region. Kyle Gann in his paper 'In Dispraise of Efficiency: Morton Feldman' (2008), does provide a list of four areas where Feldman's contribution has been influential: low dynamics, the sheer length of some of his works, his intuitive approach and his scorn for professionalism (typified by his often ambiguous scoring), but the survey is hardly comprehensive, and Gann mentions no names other than that of Morton Feldman himself. It is the aim of this project to provide a somewhat

fuller account and show that Feldman's music has exerted influence on the experimental music scene, in this case, in the specific geographical regions selected.

CHAPTER 2

MORTON FELDMAN: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY. A SURVEY OF THE WORKS. FELDMAN AND TIME.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a survey of Morton Feldman's output and a description of many aspects of his compositional style. The oeuvre is divided, perhaps slightly arbitrarily, into five periods. Except as regards the first (pre-early) period, the division is broadly based on the notion that Feldman's development may be seen as an endeavour to write ever more extended works through the deployment of certain structural strategies, culminating with some of the longest pieces of uninterrupted music ever written. The description of the works is intended to provide a context for a later, closer analysis of his possible links to later experimental composers, and specifically those surveyed in this project and interviewed for the purpose, as dealt with in chapter 3. This later analysis will be the focus of chapter 4. The goal of the brief biography of Feldman and of some comments on his personality in this present chapter is to cast some light on his position as a composer and what in all likelihood is his originality and uniqueness.

2.2 Biography

Morton Feldman (1926–87) was born in New York City. He studied with Wallingford Riegger and Stefan Wolpe, whose atonality was to have an influence on Feldman throughout his career. He was also an admirer of Edgar Varèse, whose interest in 'organised' sound and its projection through space were to shape some aspects of Feldman's compositional thinking. Nevertheless, Feldman's was an independent voice and, rather than opting for continued scholarly training, he worked in his family business for quite some time before taking up academic posts (his last was as Edgar Varèse Professor of Music at SUNY, Buffalo). Once established, he composed frequently on the basis of commissions.

In the early 1950s he was associated with what came to be known as the New York School, a group of composers often now alluded to as 'experimentalists', as opposed to the, mainly, European avant-garde (post -) serialists, and certainly those composers still concerned with tonality. Their mentor³⁵ was ostensibly John Cage, though Feldman's music probably lay outside much of the field of interest of the group and took its cue more from abstract expressionist art and the work of such painters as Mark Rothko and Philip Guston, and, later, the intricate patterns of oriental rugs. These non-musical stimuli are commented on from time to time throughout this study.

Morton Feldman was well-known for his sense of humour.³⁶ All the same, he was equally aware of his worth as a composer and apparently not fazed by some of the deprecating comments made, for example by Pierre Boulez, regarding the Cageian group in general.³⁷ But he could be waspish, sarcastic and even vindictive, and these well documented aspects of his

³⁵ In an email from Christian Wolff dated 16.1.2020 he suggests that a better word might be 'facilitator'.

³⁶The pianist and composer Frank Denyer, who worked closely with Feldman at times, relates a story about a performance, at which he was present, of Feldman's mammoth *Second String Quartet*, which lasts up to six hours. Afterwards, apparently, Feldman came on the stage smiling radiantly and asked the audience if they would like to hear it again! Christian Wolff also remarks on Feldman's good humour (see Wolff's written responses to the survey described in chapter 3, Appendix XXI).

³⁷ Boulez once famously referred to the activities of Cage as those of a 'performing monkey'.

character, together with his substantial build, seem almost to belie the fragile, understated tenor of his sound world. He was opposed to intellectualism and trusted more in instinct, and would launch scathing attacks on composers like Stockhausen, who tended to embrace what were to him a bombastic style and a system-conscious approach. As stated, his individualism also sets him apart from the other experimentalists in his New York group, and this independence could well partly account for the diversity of later experimental music and explain why it is so hard to narrow down. (There *are* some very early works that are very much in the experimental tradition of Cage and Wolff, exhibiting sometimes a sort of playfulness, some theatrical gestures, patterns of precise repetition, etc., e.g. *Dance Suite* of 1963).

2.3 General features of Feldman's music

The following is an outline description of a number of characteristics of Morton Feldman's music, most of which mainly feature in his output from 1950 until his death in 1987. Some of the ideas expressed here are necessarily subjective: a somewhat closer technical analysis will be attempted in chapter 4 in the context of more formal comparisons of Feldman's music with other experimental composers.

a. Feldman for melody and pitch

Melody – tunes in the conventional sense – are absent from Feldman's music (there is one, exceptionally, in *Rothko Chapel*). In fact, so seemingly irrelevant to Feldman's sound world are conventional melodies that were one to make an appearance it might even give the impression of being an unwanted intruder (the tune in *Rothko Chapel* is to my ears perplexing).

However, in many of Feldman's works there are melodic gestures – fragments of melody that may (or may not) reappear, possibly transposed, occasionally in another register, and sometimes repeated once, several times, or over and over again. Nevertheless, they are not motif-like: they have no ulterior significance, but are more likely to be horizontal workings-out of Feldman's essentially vertical focus of interest – his music is very much about sonority.

Thus, these melodic fragments may be iterated, or they may even change linearly, but they are certainly not the basis of a musical exposition, as, say, in the music of the minimalists (Riley, Glass, etc.). In the early works they are slight, subtle, hard to pin down, or are entirely absent. In the later works they become a very apparent Feldman trait.

b. Feldman for harmony

Feldman's approach to harmony is not one of harmonic progression – either diatonically or serially – and cannot be construed as either tonal or particularly atonal (though Noble [p 27] argues that Feldman employs the whole 12-tone chromatic range, which seems to be true both in the early and the later works). Major thirds, minor sixths and even octaves appear alongside tone clusters and more translucent discords, frustrating any notion of a commitment to one or another approach to harmony. Indeed, the term 'sonority' would probably apply better, since 'harmony' carries with it implications that are probably irrelevant to an understanding of Feldman's music. The listener is invited to 'hear' a sound, not relate it particularly to what has gone before; nor need there be any anticipation of what is to come. The relationship between one chord and the next is what I would call 'vitality inconclusive'.

Normal harmonic connotations play no part in this. For example, octaves do not have the dramatic significance they might in the music of Liszt, say, nor the sumptuous feel they assume in Puccini: they are more an invitation to consider the eighth as a sound source in its own right. If harmonic (sonoric) sequences seem random, however, there is often continuity: repeated notes, repeated chords, retrograde procedures, or the reappearance of chords in inverted positions; and sometimes there is re-alignment of pitches in chords, making for a static texture with an underlying dynamism, which is a crucial attribute of the composer's music.

The question arises as to whether it is all an arbitrary process. Feldman would have relied on a proposition about whether something 'worked' or not to support his solutions.³⁸ As far as the listener is concerned, however, the extent to which the music succeeds is determined by the aesthetic value he/she ascribes to it and it might well be felt that there is some inconsistency in this area when Feldman's output is surveyed as a whole. Certain passages in *String Quartet No. 2*, for example, to my ears sound ineffectual and even mundane. On the other hand, the continued non-relationship between sonorities in *String Quartet No. 1*, for example, just seems 'right', to echo the composer's words. They seem satisfying, subjective a judgement though that may be, and satisfaction would surely have been the composer's aim.

Terrence Paynter (p 1) is not alone in seeing in Feldman the kind of stasis and 'linear discontinuity' that result from working in this way as 'superficial characteristics'. He speaks of the existence of evidence that 'exposes underlying linear processes that articulate form'. The instinctive approach that Feldman appeals to in his writings and talks and is emulated in the work of some of the experimentalists that came after him (as evidenced in some of the tapescripts and written survey responses appended) is sometimes very much at odds with the propositions of musicologists and others offering analyses of his music.

c. Feldman for rhythm and tempo

Feldman's music cannot be reliably described as wildly rhythmic, but there is no denying its rhythmic interest, rooted as it is in the significance of durations. This rhythmic interest is manifested through a variety of applications: complete rhythmic indeterminacy (durations free), as in *Last Pieces* for piano and in *Two Pianos*, semi-controlled indeterminacy (as in the early graph pieces), and tightly controlled durations (as in many of the later works), where the irregularities of duration are composed precisely. In the last case, it is as if he is writing the 'randomness' in.

But if his music is not patently rhythmic, Feldman is certainly interested in pulse and tempo. Most of his works, including the graph pieces, are meticulously timed, with metronome markings, written instructions (typically including the word 'slow'), and often bar lines and time signatures. This sets him slightly apart from his peers, Cage, Brown and Wolff, whose music is often indeterminate in terms of rhythmic outcome.

d. Feldman for dynamics

I was told I invented the pianissimo. (Morton Feldman, 1982).

Feldman's music is mainly soft (*pppppp* is recorded), and it is in this area that he may be most influential (though he takes his cue in this from Webern and even Schoenberg [op. 19, for example], one assumes). The quietness of his sound world is, again, an invitation: this time to

³⁸ 'My definition of composition is: the right note in the right place with the right instrument!' (1984a p 160).

listen intently to the music, even though it might occasionally end up being beyond aural perception.³⁹ Players are called upon to exercise minute controls regarding dynamics. Sometimes the seemingly impossible is demanded, though Feldman would possibly just see this as a challenge to be resolved in one way or another (a very common feature of his scores with respect to other musical parameters also, for example intervallic stretches on the keyboard which are humanly impossible).⁴⁰

The sudden fortissimo notes, chords or passages that sometimes, though infrequently, occur in the music are not to be taken as attempts at Beethovenian dynamic contrast, nor do they have any rhetorical load. They are merely there, though there is one notable exception: in *For Frank O'Hara* (1973) there is an *fff* towards the end, apparently in memory of the writer's dramatic death that resulted from being hit by a jeep in 1966.

The soft dynamics with which Morton Feldman is much associated has been espoused by many composers since (e.g. probably all in the Wandelweiser community). Whether there are extra-musical motives for this, though, is a matter for contemplation.

e. Feldman for instrumentation/voice choices

Along with sonority, instrumentation (and sometimes choice of voice[s]) is a key element in Feldman's music. This is reflected in the titles of some of the works, which tend to describe the forces and make them a key focus of attention (for instance, *Piano*, rather than 'Piece for piano'; *Cello and Orchestra*, rather than 'Cello concerto'). Apparently, it is the essence of the instruments themselves that should engage our attention. This is fundamental to an understanding of the earliest series of 'graph' pieces, each of which is entitled 'Projection'. In *Projection 1* for solo cello, for example, the parameter of (precise) pitch is totally undetermined, and that of rhythm pretty much so. Without these distractions, we are left with the cello itself as a sound source in terms of register (determined), attack, timbre (determined) and dynamics (non-specific but determined slightly by the other instructions, for example pizzicato).

The work entitled *Piano* (1977) investigates more the possibilities of that instrument as a sound source, with its explorations of register and overlapping sonorities, and not so much a medium for conveying a 'piece of music'.

Instrumentation in Morton Feldman is closely connected with an interest in timbre, and the influence of Webern is very apparent. There is also timbral closeness, the sort of sonic ambiguity that can be found, for example, in *For Christian Wolff* (1986), where the three instruments (flute, piano and celesta) often play in the same register with the same or similar material. The boundaries between the instrumental colours become blurred, something which again fits in with the lack of rhetoric and avoidance of dramatic contrast one associates with both Feldman and experimental music generally. What is more, the instruments and vocal parts in his scores are given equal weight, and instruments that might assume a more 'background' role in another composer's work (those in the percussion section, say, or the double basses) are sometimes very prominent in Feldman.

³⁹ Several scores – that of *Numbers* (1964) is one – carry the instruction that the dynamics should be low, but 'audible'!

⁴⁰ Another anecdote from Frank Denyer: the pianist once contacted Feldman asking him to explain what the difference was between a filled and an 'open' grace note, to which the composer replied 'Don't be pedantic!'

f. Feldman for form/structure

Feldman eschews the grandiose traditional forms (symphony, concerto, etc.), other parameters such as instrumentation and dynamic effect, as previously touched upon, seeming to take priority.

There is a gradual move throughout Feldman's compositional career away from shorter works lasting a few minutes to pieces that can last a very long time indeed (e.g. the two string quartets, and *For Philip Guston*, which all have long timespans without a break).

This presents problems. How can anyone be expected to sit through such a work, short of taking along a picnic (this has been known), or sit at home wading through several CDs covering the space of a third or more of the waking day?

Feldman glues together his material in a way that becomes familiar in his middle period and late works. For example, with chords, there is literal restatement, revoicing, register shift, deletion, addition, transposition (though infrequent) and pitch replacement (see Ames pp 115–19). Feneyrou (p 3) calls these changes 'variants'. Or there are recurrent episodic statements, including simple melodic patterns (Ames p 121) and oscillation (ibid. p 124). All this makes for a sense of typically Feldmanesque 'dynamic stasis', as hinted at above in section b. Nor is there any sense of a start and an end (see the note on *Clarinet and String Quartet* later in this chapter).

Another conceit that Feldman employs in the earlier works is the extended ending, where the same material simply repeats over and over as if the piece has been left dangling in the air. Examples can be found in *Two Instruments* (1958), where the players perform out of sync (see later comments on 'racecourse' scoring), and *Intermission 5* (1952) (see Ex. 1 on page 80). The effect is doleful, mesmerising.

g. Feldman for notation

Except in the case of some earlier works, Feldman's scores are 'written out': they are precisely notated and leave little to chance. Feldman apparently abhorred chance methods in musical composition, but, as stated, he did write a number of pieces indeterminate in terms of pitch in the earlier part of his career (the graph works) and a good deal of music a little later that is indeterminate with respect to duration. Sometimes other parameters, such as dynamics and tempo, are left to the player(s) to choose, though there has emerged a clearly evident performance convention with Feldman that ensures a slightly understated, calm approach on the whole.

In the area of notation, he was an innovator. As mentioned in chapter 1, Feldman was probably the first composer to write highly indeterminate works and to use graphic notation based on numbers and signs rather than musical markings, with imprecise pitch specifications. This relates to graphic scores from both the early and middle period, such as the *Projection* series (1950–1) and *Atlantis* (1959) for chamber orchestra. He is also the first composer to employ 'racecourse' notation, where players work independently either from the same score (*Two Pianos* [1957]) or from their own parts (*The Swallows of Salangan* [1961], for small orchestra and chorus). The racecourse scores involve the use of stemless pitches, which, inevitably, are of undetermined duration, although these also often appear in the non-race course format, as in *Piano Piece (to Philip Guston)* of 1963, for example. The graphs and these other notational

devices were later abandoned and are not to be found in the later middle period or late period works.

But even the later works are highly original in terms of how they look on paper. The scores, moreover, are frequently riddled with rhythmic complexity, due to precise and sometimes downright finicky notation. This complexity stems from various compositional devices, including: the simultaneous presentation of different time signatures across an ensemble, the super-imposition of differing time structures (as in *Piano*, see Ex. 2 on page 81), and the juxtaposition of precisely metred scoring with passages where durations are free. Another somewhat frustrating characteristic of the notation is the accidental spelling of pitches (C flat where B would surely do, for example), though Frank Denyer (in a private conversation with the author) stressed Feldman's concern with the visual appearance of the scores, opting for what, to him at least, 'looked good', an attitude that appeared to override other notational considerations, at least some of the time.⁴¹

Feldman did not employ space-time notation in the strictest sense, though the graph works are sometimes slightly indeterminate as regards the entry of sounds in space. Space-time notation, a device adopted by some experimentalists, is where sonorities are placed proportionately across a staff with no bar lines, giving the performer a degree of freedom as regards their entry.⁴²

h. Feldman for linguistics

Morton Feldman's scores normally use English as the language of (worded) instruction (typically 'extremely soft', for example in *Vertical Thoughts V* [1963]), although traditional Italianate abbreviations – *p*, *f*, etc. – are common. This, in my view, has semiotic significance: the composers of the New York School of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s are divorcing themselves from both the past and from the contemporary avant-garde. Not only is their language English, but *allegro*, *adagio*, *dolce*, etc. carry with them connotations that are by and large alien to the experimental movement. (The French had already moved on this – compare Debussy, Satie and, later, Boulez. So, of course, had the Germans and Austrians). The English instructions in Feldman are typically prosaic: 'Very soft. The conductor determines the duration (extremely slow) of each chord', in *Christian Wolff in Cambridge* (1963); or 'Slow... Fast ... Very slow... Very fast', the tempo indications for each of the movements of *Last Pieces* (1959) in sequence. Once again with Feldman, instructions are an invitation to consider what is required of an interpretation of a given piece. 'Slow' is not 'lento': 'slow' is slow. And 'quiet' is quiet.

The issue of linguistics was discussed with the composers interviewed but was largely dismissed as being barely significant. In many cases, the phenomenon seemed not to have occurred to them. My opinion obviously differs.

⁴¹ Denyer maintains that Feldman was not interested in chromatics, and that if he wrote a B followed by a C flat for, say, a stringed instrument, it would not have any effect on the sound produced. Obviously, this is a debatable point. Michael Parsons (see Appendix X) also has something to say about this.

⁴² Also known as 'proportionate spacing' (Gould, pp 629–40), space-time was a notational device employed by Cage (in *Piano Music 3*, for example) and David Bedford, among others. In an email exchange with the author, Howard Skempton notes that it seemed to have its heyday in the 1960s. In another such exchange with Michael Parsons, that composer states that he too has used the method. So has the author.

i. Feldman for mood

Morton Feldman is hardly a household name among lovers of classical music and, one supposes, in many other musical circles, but he obviously has a following, if the online comments on YouTube regarding his music, for example, are anything to go by.⁴³ Some appear to be drawn to his restrained sound world, though his apparent reputation as a composer of quiet and ‘beautiful’ music is probably a bit too generalised. Quite apart from the fact that some of his music is loud (in most cases for short, sporadic episodes, though not always), Feldman is hardly ‘easy listening’. Some works incorporate decidedly edgy or nervy episodes (*Orchestra* of 1976 and *Patterns in a Chromatic Field* of 1981), while some make ponderous, even gloomy utterances, such as *Violin and Orchestra* of 1979, which contains passages that sound like Holstian dirges. Nevertheless, there is generally a contemplative feel to much of Feldman’s output, and, as Wilfrid Mellers (see chapter 1) and others have pointed out, the music would seem to serve as a sort of tonic, a cure for – or at least a temporary release from – the ills of the world and the anxieties that they engender.

Some of this sense of gentleness derives from the fact that, although the harmonies are almost all highly dissonant, their sheer persistence, together with a typically quiet soundscape, rarely have a grating effect. The quietness and tranquillity of Feldman’s music are also the result of his performance instructions, i.e. that dynamics should be low or extremely low and that pacing, when free, should be slow. Furthermore, his scores are often marked with a metronomic proposal that ensures this slow pace. And, as has been mentioned already, there is a lack of drama in his music, with no strident rhythmic gestures, but instead what has been described as a ‘flat’ surface.

In addition, his instructions ensure a general lack of attack (this is often even specified) and a concern for touch (see Volans’s comment in chapter 1).

As discussed later on in this dissertation, it may well be in this area of serenity, quietness, restraint and contemplation that Morton Feldman has exerted greatest influence on later experimentalist composers.

2.4 The division of the output into periods

There are five discernible periods: pre-early, early, middle, pre-late and late (this slightly goes against James Fulkerson’s division (pp 16-17). My groupings with respect to the last four are frankly somewhat arbitrary, and it has proven useful here to base them primarily on the length of the works (short/shortish, medium-long, [quite] long and very long, though there is a degree of overlap). The partial rationale for this is that the oeuvre may be viewed, as previously stated, as a gradual response to the challenge of writing extended music. In the first (‘early’) period, the works are often miniature in scope. In the middle period (divided here into two subperiods), Feldman adopts methods for extending the argument, such as racecourse scoring. These middle period works may be several minutes long or more. Following a transitional phase, in the final period (and as described above under section f), he lays down subtly changing motivic patterns (‘variants’) that reappear in no particular order but allow the composer to manipulate the

⁴³ A performance of *Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello* (1987), which lasts around 75 minutes, at City, University of London on 26 April 2019 sold out.

structure of the piece, making for a longer work (lasting anything between 30 minutes and six hours of continuous music, episodes of silence notwithstanding).

The following is a brief examination of these periods with short descriptions of some of the works, referring occasionally to some of the features of the music described earlier. A few works in each period seem out of sequence in terms of their characteristics: *Piano Piece 1964*, in the middle period, for example, is similar in approach to the early period works. Apart from a Grove entry that is a fairly substantial review of Feldman's life and output, this is probably a rather more all-embracing survey of Feldman's work, and may well be the first of its kind.⁴⁴

a. Pre-early period (up to 1949)

This period may be generally ignored here, as most of the music is neither published nor recorded. It seems likely that much of it might fall into the slightly dubious category of early dabblings. *Journey to the End of Night* (1947) is recorded, and it shows the influence of Wolpe and the serialists. It shares little in terms of sound and style with 'classic' Feldman. The score for *Illusions* (1949), for piano, looks vaguely Webernian, though the music has its own character. *Only* (1947) is a simple melody for solo voice that utilises mainly stepwise intervals and repeated motifs, two characteristics of Feldman's burgeoning style. All three works are currently on disc.

b. Early period (1950–6)

This period sees the creation of both graphically and conventionally notated compositions. A few graph works come later but consideration of them can be omitted for the sake of space. The graph works are distinct from the main thrust of Feldman's compositional endeavour and seem to have largely fallen by the wayside in terms of public performances (there are none listed in the 'Forthcoming Performances' on the Chris Villars website at the time of writing (8.1.2020), for example.) The works include the *Projection* (1950–1) and *Intersection* (1951–3) pieces. The scores consist of boxes in a grid structure containing markings and/or numbers. Pitch is always left to the player to determine, but some other parameters, such as register, are specified.

Although Cage said of the notated works of this period that they were Feldman writing out the results of the graph pieces (inter alia, Johnson, p 30), that is probably a dubious remark as the two sets of works sound nothing like each other. The notated works at the time tend to be miniatures, with fairly sparse scoring, atonal harmonies, and Webernian gestures.⁴⁵ Dynamics are low and the pace is slow. Durations, meter and tempi are precisely specified on the whole. Nothing is developed in any traditional fashion and there is a general sense of fleetingness, reminiscent of Schoenberg's *Six Little Piano Pieces*, op. 19. The series of piano works entitled *Intermission* (1950–3) and the works for various instruments called *Extensions* (1951–3) belong to this period.

⁴⁴ Another point of possible interest is how prolific Feldman is: Moerchen (p 2) points out that the trio *For Philip Guston* alone lasts the equivalent of all of Mozart's piano concertos, or all the compositions of Pierre Boulez put together.

⁴⁵ See Boutwell, p 470 for characteristics of Webern's music that Feldman would adopt in the early 1950s (if that document is still available). In fact, these would stay with him throughout his compositional career. See also Feneyrou, p 2.

The brevity of the (notated) works certainly does not count against them: they often have a magical kind of transience that, again, recalls Webern. But from this point on Feldman tends to adopt certain strategies for creating longer, not to say more substantial, items.

c. First middle period (1957–69)

The period 1957–60 sees the start of experiments with duration. From here on in this chapter, the approximate duration of many of the works will frequently be given to allow the reader to appreciate the notion of a gradual evolution in Feldman's work towards extended composition. Here are some examples of the works.

- *Piece for Four Pianos* (1957), at just over 6 minutes, is the start of a period when the pieces are extended through the use of sustained sonorities and also racecourse scoring with respect to some of them (e.g. this work and *Two Pianos*). With these particular pieces, players work from the same score and sometimes, as in this case, the same part. These practices were later abandoned. See Ex. 3 on page 82 for the start of *Piece for Four Pianos* as an example of racecourse scoring (with, inevitably, stemless pitches, as the durations are free), together with the performance instructions.

There are some other works in this period that incorporate stemless pitched sonorities, indicating the avoidance of fixed duration, but which are not of the racecourse type. In many such cases, though not all, Feldman proposes a metronomic range. An example is *Last Pieces* of 1959 (although there are no metronomic proposals here).

Other racecourse works from this period:

- *Durations 1-5* (1960–1). These works last between 3 and 13 minutes roughly.
- *The Swallows of Salangan* (1961), 8 minutes.
- *Two Pieces for Clarinet and String Quartet* (1961), 5 minutes.
- *Intervals* (1961).
- *For Franz Kline* (1962), 5 minutes.
- *The O'Hara Songs* 1962, 7 minutes.

Of the ensemble pieces from 1963 to 1969, there are fade/performer-determined (see below) and conductor-determined items. Obviously, neither are racecourse types.

The following works' progress is determined on the fade principle (each sound enters as the previous one begins to fade). However, the scores also incorporate some simultaneities.

- *Vertical Thoughts 1* (1963) is scored for two pianos whose entries are marked, albeit slightly loosely (i.e. determined to some extent by the performer). A broken line indicates a sequential entry and a vertical line a simultaneous sound. Obviously, a conductor is dispensed with, the players relying on nods and other gestures, as in any chamber ensemble.
- *Vertical Thoughts 2* and *3* (both written in 1963).
- *De Kooning* (1963), 14 minutes.
- *Rabbi Akiba* (1963).

- *Chorus and Instruments I* (1963). This includes conductor-determined sections for the chorus, the fade technique not being a realistic option for voices.
- *Four instruments* (1965), 20 minutes. Many of the sounds are connected with broken lines in the same way as with the previous works but are not actually wholly reliant on the fade mechanism.
- *Two pieces for three pianos* (1966), 17 minutes. Bizarrely, in the first piece, the fade technique only applies to pianos 1 and 2, with the part for piano 3 being precisely written with metronome marks! Furthermore, pianos 1 and 2 move independently, so in fact this is racecourse scoring. In the second piece, however, the fade mechanism across all three instruments is resumed.

The following are conductor-determined, meaning the entry of sonorities is in response to the conductor's gesture:

- *Christian Wolff in Cambridge* (1963). This is a fairly short work for mixed choir in which the absence of any text contributes to its other-worldly atmosphere (the piece is normally hummed).
- *Numbers* (1964), lasting some 12 minutes. One single note or chord simply follows on from the next, a clear invitation simply to hear the sounds, one assumes. This is a similar structure to the slow movements of *Last Pieces*.
- *Chorus and Instruments II* (1967) (some of the score is precisely notated in terms of measurements, so the conductor here would function as an 'aid', as in traditional classical music).
- *First Principles* (1966/7) (although the instructions and notation are a little ambiguous and the need for a conductor is unclear).
- *False Relationships and the Extended Ending* (1968) (although the notation is a little ambiguous and suggests that a conductor is needed in some areas but not all).⁴⁶

The period also includes some graph pieces, including *The King of Denmark* (1964), for solo percussion.

d. Second middle period (1969–78)

This period sees a return to the early days of fixed beats, regular bar lines, and conventional notation. The stemless notation has now gone and these works do not depend on free sustaining and near-fade cues but are 'written out' fully. They are generally longer than the earlier works and it is probably true to say that there is greater focus on timbre (as opposed to pitch). Most are marked with low dynamics, though the given convention would in any case appear to be 'quiet'. Here are some examples.

- *On Time and the Instrumental Factor* (1969), 9 minutes. The notation comes with bar lines and is rhythmically precise, but the overall sound is one of flow, blur and colour, as entries and exits overlap. Material is repeated.

⁴⁶ In an email, James Fulkerson, a veteran performer of, and commentator on, Feldman, suggests that *False Relationships and the Extended Ending* does not call for a conductor, this despite the existence of the Cri American Master recording of the work, which has Feldman himself conducting! Fulkerson, however, explains that the group he is associated with, The Barton Workshop, rehearsed 'a lot'.

- *Madame Press died Last Week at Ninety* (1970). The music consists of a repeated melodic motif on flutes almost without a break for four minutes, with instrumental colourings. There are bar lines and precise measurements.
- The *Viola in My Life* pieces I-IV (1970–1) are mini concerto-like works (a trend that was to be continued) with patent melodic gestures (in II, III and IV).⁴⁷ There is also a degree of musical drama achieved through contrast, crescendo and diminuendo, and some semblance of development – features that are usually anathema to Feldman’s style. Number IV is particularly rhapsodic, with some loud dynamics. It also revisits the melody in number II, so this is indeed a suite of pieces that belong together, based on musical content, unheard of in the rest of the oeuvre it would seem. There are also constantly changing time signatures, something that will feature in much of the rest of Feldman’s output. There are, furthermore, repeated, often slightly nervy, rhythmic patterns (in number I) that can also be found in some of the early period and later works. In addition, and crucially, there are repeated elements that are ‘glued together’ to form an overall, extended structure. The scores have bar lines and precise measurements.

The following works from this period share many of the same sort of characteristics as those mentioned in the *Viola in My Life* section above.

- *Three Clarinets, Cello and Piano* (1971).
- *I met Heine on the Rue Fürstenberg* (1971), 11 minutes.
- *Rothko Chapel* (1971), 23 minutes. This piece, unusually, ends with an extended melody, which appears out of the blue. The music also incorporates a plodding passage that recalls Holst. It may not be too farfetched either to suggest that the piece features choral writing that sound both like the English composer and Ligeti: a distant, sometimes eerie sound.
- *Chorus and orchestra I* (1971).
- *Cello and orchestra* (1972), 18 minutes. This is the first of a series of longer pieces for solo instrument and orchestra. They are not, however, concertos, as there is no sense of dialogue or contrast between soloist and orchestra, nor any reliance on demonstrations of virtuosity or showiness (though the solo parts are often very demanding). In this piece, the cello ‘melody’, where anything like one exists, is mainly stepwise, a feature of Feldman’s music that becomes more and more common. Sometimes the cello seems to take a back seat.

There are other traits of this series of works that will become hallmarks: dense orchestral clusters that sound like noise (possibly showing the influence of Varèse), timbral closeness, and precisely and imprecisely repeated phrases on one note. They also explore short bursts of loudness, though in what appears to be an arbitrary fashion, rather than anything that smacks of a dynamic between the solo player and the orchestra. Furthermore, as noted previously, there is a move towards extended overall duration now, and this piece last about 18 minutes in one continuous movement.

⁴⁷ Experimental music is often somehow connected with the emancipation of the melody, in contrast with the other avant-garde movements. This may well start with Cage, but is a phenomenon with later composers too. Feldman’s music may court melodic gesture, but tunes as such are virtually unknown.

The other pieces in this group are *Piano and Orchestra* (1975), *Oboe and Orchestra* (1976), *Flute and Orchestra* (1978), and *Violin and Orchestra* (1979). Many of the features of *Cello and Orchestra* obtain. It is convenient here to ignore strict overall chronology momentarily and discuss three of them now.

In *Piano and Orchestra*, the solo pianist mainly has two recurring patterns: iteration of a single note or chord, and two-chord oscillations. The scoring is pared down dramatically. There is a part for another pianist, which has a kind of echoing role. Only in one brief section do the two pianos play together, with simultaneous and slightly overlapping chord clusters, making for typically Feldmanesque timbral closeness. The occurrence of fairly dense clusters between the two instruments in the same register anticipate *Piano* of 1977.

Flute and Orchestra prefigures some of the musical characteristics associated with Feldman's late period. They include:

- 1) long overall duration (more than 30 minutes without a break)
- 2) more complex and agile lines for the soloist and in some orchestral parts, though they seem almost 'purposely' tuneless
- 3) fast repeated patterns and 'scurrying' melodic lines
- 4) 'nervy' rhythmic patterns, some of which contribute to the impression that the orchestra/instruments are delivering noise (cf. *Patterns in a Chromatic Field* of 1981)
- 5) shimmering and flickering orchestral textures (cf. *Coptic Light* of 1985; and the note on the 'flickering' phenomenon in chapter 1)
- 6) fairly frequent use of repeat signs – means to extend the work
- 7) Some 'Holstian' orchestral textures⁴⁸

Again, the solo flute part makes use of stepwise procedures, though there is now a greater preponderance of intervallic leaps (mainly sevenths and ninths). Quite a lot of the solo flute material gets repeated, occasionally with variation (e. g. with transposed pitch). And, rare in Feldman, the solo writing at the end of the piece mirrors that at the start.

Violin and Orchestra has many of these characteristics too, including, very noticeably, the stepwise melodic patterns. The dense, 'noisy' patterns in this work often come in the form of lengthy repetitions of just one chord – like a dirge. More noticeable now is another Feldman feature, though: motivic patterns that reappear on an apparently random basis, sometimes the same and sometimes as variants, and sometimes separate and sometimes overlapping. These give the work an overall structure (though this has little to do with beginning, middle and end, ABA, exposition/development/recapitulation or anything else that conventionally attests to formal construction). It is an all-over approach, like the daubing of paint on a canvas, rather than working from left to right, as in traditional musical composition. The reappearances (literal or revamped) are not according to any rational plan, and this, together with its length of about

⁴⁸ Indeed, there are several features of Holst's style which the listener to Feldman might well be reminded of. For example, *Egdon Heath* of 1927 has asymmetric structures, prevalent low dynamics, the sort of oscillating chordal movements that Feldman is fond of, 'plodding' episodes and a general sense of edginess. This may of course just be fanciful thinking on the author's part: it is hard to believe that Feldman was ever a fan of Holst, even if that remains uncertain. Nevertheless, one is occasionally reminded of other musical figures when listening to any one composer, and an influence of Sibelius on Feldman is a likelier possibility, given that Feldman is on record as indicating a fondness for the music of the Finnish composer. Indeed, Chris Villars sees a close thematic connection between the third movement of Sibelius's Fourth Symphony and Feldman's *Five Pianos* (Villars, p 1).

50 minutes without a break, makes *Violin and Orchestra* a likelier candidate perhaps for Feldman's pre-late period.

Ex. 4(i, ii and iii) on pages 83, 84 and 85 presents pages 20–22 of the score, showing an example of a construction strategy employed by Feldman for extending the argument. Here are three motivic patterns: doleful, hesitant stepwise movements on solo violin (here marked 'a'), a passage of dense chords on two pianos ('b'), and a strident series of regular beats on the solo violin, accompanied by percussion instruments and then strings ('c'). Patterns 'a' and 'b' then immediately combine in modified form ('a' [2], 'b' [2]), with 'c' returning a little later on page 22 ('c' [2]) in truncated form.

This construction technique is described in an insightful way by John Story in a CD review of the much longer *String Quartet No. 2* (see list of references).

Modules are presented, varied, discarded to be taken up again, perhaps an hour later, in a continuing mosaic of sound that recalls the experience of examining Feldman's beloved oriental rugs at a close range. His ability to glue this together to make a genuinely continuous whole is one of the many remarkable things about the late music and there is no music I know of that explores more thoroughly the process of memory.

The use of the word 'glue' is used elsewhere by commentators on Morton Feldman's music.⁴⁹ Another associated image is that of the abstract painter, as it were adding strokes, figures and colour to a canvas in a way that seems 'right'.

Furthermore, *Violin and Orchestra* two-thirds of the way through sounds as if it is taking a dying breath, but the piece is by no means over. There is no start or finish with late Feldman (and this work is now being bracketed with the late period works). At the very end, new material is suddenly added (as with Mozart occasionally!) but this is not in the style of a coda. It is a ploy. The listener may think he is being led off on a new path, but then the piece abruptly ends.

The following works from the same period show a brief return to indeterminate durations and racecourse format.

- *Five pianos* (1972), 36 minutes. Each piano part incorporates hummed notes.⁵⁰
- *Pianos and voices* (1972), 18 minutes.

These are the last works to be notated in this way.

Here are some other works from this second middle period.

- *Trio for Flutes* (1972) belongs to a series of mainly shorter works for spare forces which are conventionally notated but which feature rhythmic irregularities, achieved by means

⁴⁹ This of course has nothing to do with Henry Cowell's remark (according to John Cage) that the early works of the New York school were exercises in 'getting rid of glue', by which he meant that these composers were interested in distilling sounds for their own sake rather than writing stretches of music whose sense of continuity depended on conventional devices – melody, variation, development, recapitulation, etc. See Nicholls, p 21.

⁵⁰ This is several years after Howard Skempton's *A Humming Song* (1967), which calls for the solo pianist to hum a selection of the notes, though Skempton, in an email sent the author on 26.2.2018, remains modestly quiet on the subject of any influence on Feldman.

of slurring, overlapping entries or fairly rapidly changing or alternating time signatures. The flute trio is an exercise in overlapping minor seconds (mainly), presented either in a stepwise sequence or vertically.

- *Voices and cello* (1973) shares this approach to rhythmic interplay, although the entries are more ‘spaced out’ and the durations longer. Again, there is a preponderance of overlapping minor seconds (in the voice parts) which makes for an eerie Ligetian texture. But towards the end of the piece these are joined more and more by tritone relationships. (The tritone is also a noticeable element in the flute part early on in *For Frank O’Hara* from this period).
- *Voice and instruments II* (1974) continues this approach, with seconds, sevenths and tritones, interspersed with short periods of silence.
- In *Instruments II* (1975), although the rhythmic overlapping is still apparent, the writing is even more fragmented, and there is, in addition, slightly more focus on vertical sound and repeated patterning, the piece lasting some 18 minutes.
- In *Four Instruments* (1975), most of the entries are vertically aligned, the rhythmic irregularities being mainly based on changing time signatures and slurring across bar lines. The role of silence is very apparent.
- Also to be included in this group is *Voice, Violin and Piano* of 1976. The writing is still sparser, and there is something of a return in the spacing of sounds to the notated piano (and other) pieces of the 1950s. There is still no angularity here, however, something that is rare in Feldman anyway (apart from in the pre-early period), *Intermission IV* for piano of 1956 being an exception perhaps.

For Frank O’Hara (1973) and *Instruments I* (1974) are works where the percussion instruments are given an equal role (nothing entirely new in Feldman; cf. *Vertical Thoughts V* (1963) and *The King of Denmark*, both of which are, in the first case, almost entirely, and in the second, entirely scored for percussion instruments). From this point on the percussion instruments in many of the composer’s scores take anything but a backseat.

e. Pre-late period (1972–9)

Across this same period there is a group of works lasting about 15–30 minutes that bear the typical features of the mature Feldman style and seem to prefigure the late works. In this respect, they stand alongside the works for solo instrument with orchestra mentioned previously.

They include *String Quartet and Orchestra* (1973) (sparse soundscapes and timbral closeness), *Elemental Procedures* (1976) (repeated melodic gestures based on semi-tonal steps for soprano, and some harmonically complex writing for choir), and *Orchestra* (1976), which, admittedly, contains little in the way of the motivic gestures of the last period and rather seems to be an exercise in orchestral timbre, almost to the exclusion of anything else. Having said that, the patterns that do appear in *Orchestra* seem to relate in embryonic form to those which will become characteristic of the late pieces (legato stirrings around three or four semitone intervals irregularly repeated and variously accelerated and retarded; ‘edgy’, repeated, off-the-beat, brief chordal outbursts [these also feature in *Elemental Procedures*]; and a descending ‘theme’ in semitones, a common feature in Feldman generally and evident, for example, towards the end of *Spring of Chosroes* and in *Why Patterns*, both included here in this group).

Other works in this section include the following.

- *Instruments I* (1974) consists of episodes of differing material that recur, and in this way the piece foreshadows elements of the late period. There is also much repetition of single notes, recalling Varèse's *Deserts* in a way, though again the entries tend to be 'spaced out' and the dynamics are inevitably lower. Quirkily, there is one passage where the flautist and oboist are called on – yet again! - to hum.
- *Neither* (1977) is a 50 minute-long 'opera'. Dirge-like passages of thudding chords anticipate *Violin and Orchestra* and *Piano*, for example. These are often march-like and ominous-sounding. There are overlapping layers of sound that again recall Ligeti. Four/five-note 'stirring' movements on tonal and semi-tonal intervals and contrary-wise glissandi over a limited range contribute to a static effect with, nevertheless, internal dynamism. Complex, rhythmically asymmetric patterns are other features of the work. Some of these characteristics are illustrated in combination on p. 34 of the score (see Ex. 5 on page 86). Some material is repeated directly (with repeat signs) and some returns in varied form. There are sometimes fast-changing and differing time signatures applied simultaneously. The percussion section is very prominent.
- *Piano* (1977) also contains much material that is repeated. Coherence is also achieved through superimposition (or what Ames calls 'layering') (see Ex. 2): here some of the material is from other parts of the piece, either presented verbatim or re-worked. The ensuing durational complexities also create an echoing effect that recalls the racecourse pieces of earlier. The end section is very repetitive and static, and in this regard also looks back to the earlier work.
- *Spring of Chosroes* (1977) begins with a nervy, jagged passage that soon thins out into a somewhat static soundscape. The feeling of dislocation is driven by constantly changing time signatures. Much of this work consists of very sparse textures, with repeated single and chordal sonorities interspersed with pauses/silences. It somehow looks forward to some of the Wandelweiser compositions in this respect. The material repeats but there is comparatively little actual motivic recurrence. There is, however, rhythmic recurrence of a sort.

Terrence Paynter has undertaken a formal analysis of the work and counts a total of 16 modules, all based on the iteration of specific patterns and whose interconnectedness determines its overall structure and provides a basis for extended form. He explains this and what he means by patterns and modules in some detail. Modules may be 'constructed so as to create a new system, to adapt to an existing system or to be unsystematic'.⁵¹ This is a way for Feldman to avoid 'structures of pre-compositional logic'.⁵² Feldman is thus now writing longer pieces of music without resorting to conventional structures (exposition and development, etc.). On the other hand, he is not averse to other mechanisms of extension, such as retrograde and inverted statement and cross-registral pitch organisation in repeated, yet variant, patterns. *Spring of Chosroes* lasts just 17 minutes, but it and the other works in this group set the stage for Feldman's notoriously long works that largely populate his late period.

⁵¹ Paynter, p 54.

⁵² Ibid, p 54.

- The notational imagery of *Why Patterns* (1978) anticipates similar procedures in *Crippled Symmetry* (1983), discussed later. The time signatures for each of the three players in *Why Patterns* are out of sync. Any recurrence of patterns in the individual parts is obscured by the unpredictability of their temporal alignment across the score. The instrumentation (flute, glockenspiel and piano), meanwhile, also looks forward to *For Philip Guston* (1984) (flute, piano and percussion) and *For Christian Wolff* (1986) (flute and piano/celesta), not merely on account of the similar choice of instruments but also because they highlight an aspect of Feldman's music that seems significant, namely, that he is interested in the process of 'blurring', be it in the case of timbre and register, as in these works, or in other parameters throughout the oeuvre, including pitch and rhythm.⁵³ This trait seems to correlate with the notion of the avoidance of drama or rhetoric and, crucially, contrast. Besides, there are no main players on the stage and nothing – or at least no one – to draw special attention to. Everything is equal in the art of the understated. Furthermore, a lot of the more complex writing in the score of *Why Patterns* is given to the glockenspiel, possibly the least immediately audible or prominent of the instruments. The other point to note is that the piano part in all four works mentioned here is written, either entirely or almost entirely, on a single staff.

f. Late period (1979–87)

The late works of Feldman are generally characterised by their modular structure, i.e. patterns that recur and vary but do not develop in any orthodox sense. This means to extend the music in time resulted in the creation of works that span very long periods of continuous and (mainly) unambiguously notated music. In some respects, this penchant for length for its own sake, determined precisely in this way, is probably unheard of among other composers.⁵⁴ The works of long duration, however, appear to have cast off their notoriety and potential as a gruelling experience for the listener. Indeed, the section 'Forthcoming Performances' of Feldman's work on the Villars site accessed on 10 March 2019 seemed to bear this out. The list of 28 programmes to include at least one work by Feldman at venues in North America, Europe and Singapore for the next year or so included 10 works that normally run for more than an hour, and there were two performances listed of *For Philip Guston*, which takes around four hours and forty minutes to play, plus one of the second string quartet, which can six hours or more.

The phenomenon of the 'long' piece would appear to have shored up Feldman's reputation to such an extent that promoters, if not relying on their evident popularity exactly, hardly seem to balk at programming them. More hypothetically, Feldman might not be such a hallowed name in experimental/contemporary music were it not for the substantial nature of this set of late period works.

⁵³ Another point to raise here is that the piano works of Morton Feldman frequently require the pedal to be held down for much or all of the time. A half-pedal operation is normally the preferred option.

⁵⁴ Composers such as Cage and La Monte Young have written works which can last for hours or days, or which in theory may even never end, but they are not notated in such a way that determines their timeframe. And at least Wagner split his operas up into acts!

Not all the works in this period are particularly long, however, so I here present them in two lists: a selection of the ‘long’ works⁵⁵ (all works lasting 40 minutes on average or more) and a selection of the other late works.

- *String Quartet No. 1* (1979) lasts one and a half hours or so. The patterns again recur but now the listener is on a much longer journey. The scenery is varied but similar landscapes are regularly revisited, although they have changed slightly. Some patterns look so subtle and complex on paper that they give the impression they might have been produced through chance operations, though with Feldman this is unlikely. They are, according to most accounts, thought out with precision. One example is the passage of nervily repeated A flats across all parts within an astonishingly detailed framework of rhythmic cross-relationships reproduced in Ex. 6 on page 87. Towards the end of the quartet there is another extension device that Feldman employs with greater regularity in the late works – segments of one or more bars (but usually one) which are repeated according to an overhead instruction (2 x s, 7 x s, etc.⁵⁶).
- *Trio* (1980) (piano, violin, cello) lasts up to two hours. The ‘journey’ is longer, and there is greater use of the multiple repetition mechanism alluded to in the previous paragraph, making the ‘landscape’ slightly less varied. This endows the work with a satisfying sense of homogeneity.

The Feldman sound is often described by both critics and listeners as ‘beautiful’, for example in YouTube comments, though this has always struck the author as surprising.⁵⁷ In all probability, and given that it is a subjective matter anyway, it is difficult to pinpoint emotional categories much of the time with regard to Feldman’s music: it is rarely dramatic, sad, joyous, triumphant (never!), gloomy (sometimes perhaps). It is often intriguing, even startling, but hardly sentimental. Despite the outward show of scorn the New York School demonstrates for the serialist avant-garde, Feldman is still a modernist: he deals with dissonance and the full – or nearly full – chromatic range, and does not really anticipate the gentler, warmer sounds of some of the experimentalists that came after him (one thinks of Linda Catlin Smith, for instance). There *is* sometimes a touch of menace: for example, in systems 3 and 4 on page 49 of the score of *Trio* (see Ex. 7 on page 88). Here ghostly, high register stepwise movements on the stringed instruments are interspersed with abrupt and rapid leaps between two close harmony/dissonant chords in the piano part, both common patterns throughout the oeuvre, as it happens. This is, furthermore, an example of Feldman’s finicky notation, as the violin and cello parts seem to be playing in unison, though the spelling in terms of accidentals is different, suggesting some sort of chromatic disambiguation, though the composer always seems to remain silent on that subject! Interestingly, at the end of *Trio* there is an appearance of a melodic pattern that Feldman would make use of in *For Philip Guston* (which starts with it and returns to it throughout). The intervallic progression of the four-note pattern in question is a descending major fourth, followed by an upward semitone step and then a rise of a perfect fifth.

⁵⁵ Again, these works, it should be pointed out, are not divided into movements or sections with a break. They are presented as continuous music, with only relatively brief periods of silence.

⁵⁶ I.e. play twice, seven times, etc.

⁵⁷ Having said that, and on a personal note, the start of *For Philip Guston* always engages me, with its strange beauty. Perhaps, with Feldman, ‘profoundly satisfying’ is closer to the truth than ‘beautiful’.

- *The Turfan Fragments* (1980), as its title suggests, is comprised of a series of short sections. The mood is somewhat more agitated than one normally encounters in late Feldman.
- At 80 minutes or so, *Patterns in a Chromatic Field* (1981), for cello and piano, exhibits passages of slowly stated broken chord shapes and single-note iterations. These, together with some very static sections, are in sharp contrast with the jagged and sprightly figurations in the piano at the start of the piece and which recur in both instruments at intervals throughout. The brusqueness of the contrast is unusual in Feldman, but all these patterns in general are typical of him across the oeuvre, though it is the longer works that tend to make greater use of them.
- *Triadic Memories* (1981) (80 minutes approximately) is for piano solo. Its rhythmic interlocking lines on three staves in parts of the work recall Reich and the minimalists. The high register iterations sometimes sound like church bells in the way that they ‘ring’ slightly out of sync. Interestingly, there are no tempo markings in the piece, though Frank Denyer points out that MM = 63, or thereabouts, had by then assumed default status in Feldman’s music.⁵⁸
- *For John Cage* (1982), for violin and piano, has the piano part again written on a single stave. The appearance of a lot of precisely iterated material using the multiple repeat signal alluded to before is reflected in what is a comparatively slim score in terms of page numbers – just 34 in a work lasting 70 minutes or so.
- *Crippled Symmetry*, written in 1983, for flute, percussion (glockenspiel and vibraphone) and piano + celesta, gets its title from Feldman’s own description of potentially symmetric shapes being purposely distorted when they reappear, making for slight and subtle changes rather than exact iterations. In this case the asymmetry partly stems from the non-alignment of parts, which are notated with different time signatures for much of the time. There is a varied four-note pattern which is mainly prominent early on in the piece and which is similar in its figuration to the four-note ‘melody’ in *For Philip Guston* already mentioned, though the intervals are different. The work lasts about 90 minutes. The last 20 minutes or so are characterised by persistent one-note iterations on various pitches on the flute and the percussion instruments, with the keyboard parts restricted mainly to isolated semi-staccato punctuations. Meanwhile, there has been a move towards greater and then full vertical alignment in 3/4 time.
- *String Quartet No. 2* (1983) has the notorious duration of between five and six hours (generally). It is on the grid pattern (see under *Clarinet and String Quartet* below) and there are many incidences of multiple repeat patterns (see Ex. 8 on page 89 showing page 39 of the score). Many of the bars in the work are repeated at least once. Whether the material warrants such a long time span is a matter of debate. The music is stretched out intentionally,⁵⁹ the pace is excruciatingly slow, and much of the content seems uninspired and appears to take its cue by and large from other earlier compositions. Cage, for one, is on record as someone who complained about the length of some of Feldman’s works (see the Parsons tapescript, Appendix X).

⁵⁸ Email conversation 14. 3. 2019.

⁵⁹ Feldman himself confesses to the limited range of material resources in his long pieces: ‘I find as the piece gets longer, there has to be less material’ (1984b, p 15).

- *Clarinet and String Quartet* (1983) is much shorter at around 40 minutes. The layout of the score, like many other of the late works, is a format where the page is neatly divided up into regular-size bars, with varying time signatures (same for all parts). The ensuing grid is filled with material as required, and it runs uniformly from page to page. The technique is described in more detail by Hall (p 7), and is one that characterises many of the scores from this late period as well as some earlier pieces. James Saunders (see Appendix XI) mentions that Feldman possibly started a composition and ditched the first few pages, once the piece ‘had got started’. Another possibly apocryphal story is that once a page was turned, he would not go back to review what he had written. This, together with the fact that he worked in pen (as Feldman himself stated), support the composer’s contention on record that concentration was of the utmost importance, both in terms of memorising and implementing material. Again, the image is that of someone daubing or adding detail to a canvas – perhaps one on a wall, in the way Christian Wolff describes (see chapter 1). When this particular piece starts, we get the distinct impression that we are interrupting something. In a way beginnings and ends are irrelevant with Feldman, as previously noted.
- *For Philip Guston*, which appeared the following year, runs for about four and a half hours. Scored for flute, percussion and piano, it also features the grid pattern, with the piano part (doubling celesta) written on one staff. The time signatures indicated are aligned or non-aligned vertically, though the non-alignments ‘add up’, at least within series of systems (see Ex. 9 on page 90, showing the first two systems on page 65 of the score for an example of Feldman’s approach to symmetric/asymmetric time signature structures). One assumes that the fact that the different time signatures ‘work out’ by the time the end of the second system is reached means the same will be true of the next two, and so on, though, with Feldman, the patterns are just as likely to change. The recurrent four-note pattern that starts the piece is the one quoted at the end of *Trio*, as mentioned already. The piece works better than *String Quartet No. 2* because the recurrent material is more varied and intricate. *For Philip Guston* is a ‘popular’ piece, and was the fifth most frequently performed of the long works over the period 10 September 1999 - 14 August 2017 in the performances section of the Villars website. The music often consists of dense chord clusters played in the same register and producing similar sounding timbres at a constantly low dynamic. These conjure up an aural image of something like gentle rainfall. Raoul Moerchen (p 12) points out that the work is bipartite in structure, the second half being something like a reworking of the first.⁶⁰
- *For Bunita Marcus* (1985). For piano solo, this piece lasts about one hour and twenty minutes. It starts with a repetitive working of just three pitch classes (C sharp, D and E flat), joined very gradually by others across several minutes of playing time. What is fascinating is the notation: much of the music could be played with one hand, but the composer’s insistence on staff-related precision, even when the notes in both the right hand and the left hand are very close, adjacent or even iterative, challenge the player’s technique in endeavouring to make the music sound as if it is indeed in two parts. The overall melancholy mood of the piece vaguely anticipates Feldman’s last piano work, *Palais de Mari* of 1986.

⁶⁰ Moerchen also suggests that this two-part structure is unique in the output, though this is debatable. Cline, for example, uses the term ‘midpoint’ with reference to the layout of *Projection 3* (Cline, pp 173, 175).

- *Piano and String Quartet* (1985) runs for 80 minutes or so. The piano part is again written on one staff, mainly in the high register. The quartet serves as a kind of bedrock for the piano's broken chords and arpeggios. The piano part might to some ears come across as bland and even irritating, though the string writing in the last sixth of the piece is very expressive. The harmonies are still dissonant but are often 'close', warm, almost bluesy, and somehow 'American'.⁶¹
- *For Christian Wolff* of 1986 is one of the four mega-works of the last period, lasting about three hours and twenty minutes. It is scored for flute, piano and celesta. It is a very static piece: the first five minutes or so are given over to a constant reshuffling of just three pitch classes (G, A flat and G flat), with three more (A, F and E) being introduced over the next three minutes. The general pared down nature of the opening is something that more or less permeates the piece, and the notation becomes even sparser in later sections. The timbral closeness of the three instruments makes some passages sound something like an old-fashioned music box. Example 10 on page 91 shows motivic patterns on pages 39 (systems 1 and 2, here marked 'a'), 48 (system 5, marked 'b') and 52 (system 4 marked 'c'). This a clear example of the use of typical Feldman restatements and 'variants', as previously discussed, and again to use Feneyrou's term. A bit like meditation, this music is either mesmerising or tedious: the listener must decide.
- *Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello* (1987) is Feldman's last work and is around 75 minutes long. The shorter duration compared with *For Christian Wolff* together with the lush, again sometimes bluesy chord clusters that are now wider in range (the piano part is restored to the two-staff format) both contribute to what is probably greater ease of listening.

The other 'long' works from this period are:

- *Three Voices* (1982), 52 minutes, for female voice accompanied by two pre-recorded tracks, or for three voices.
- *Violin and String Quartet* (1985), two hours or more. This is the fourth of the 'mega-works' alluded to.
- *Samuel Beckett, Words and Music* (1987), about 40 minutes or possibly longer. It is scored for speakers and a small ensemble.
- *For Samuel Beckett* (1987), 45 minutes or so, and written for a large ensemble (but see the comment for *Coptic Light* below).

The shorter works in the late period include pieces for special occasions, such as *For Aaron Copland* (1981) for violin solo, written to celebrate that composer's 80th birthday, *A Very Short Trumpet Piece* (1986), commissioned by Universal Edition for an album of pieces for the instrument that they were compiling, and the solo work *Palais de Mari* (1986), about 23 minutes long and commissioned by the pianist Bunita Marcus. Other works include *Coptic Light* (1985), lasting just 30 minutes, and about which Feldman, according to Moerchen (p 3),

⁶¹ The nod in the direction of consonance on the part of Feldman is picked up in liner notes by Ivan Ilić (see the list of references). These softer harmonies that the composer employs – often in the late works, for example – may possibly have had an influence on other experimental composers, not least Howard Skempton and Laurence Crane. The notion of what constitutes an 'American' sound is open to question as a credible one of course.

said that he did not want to listen to an orchestral work going on for three hours! *Bass Clarinet and Percussion* (1981) echoes the sombre soundscape of many of the late long works, but its minimal forces and barely audible passages seem better suited to its timeframe of around 22 minutes. *For Stefan Wolpe* (1986) is scored for chorus (the choral writing recalls the ethereal sound of *Christian Wolff in Cambridge*) and two vibraphones. However, the vocal and instrumental parts never merge, except by way of reverberation, something of an eccentricity even by Feldman standards! The piece is around 30 minutes long.

2.5 Conclusion

Morton Feldman was not only an important innovator: his musical style is altogether unique. Other composers, mainly in the experimental category, have taken elements of his compositional approach – a focus on low dynamics, organic structures that eschew traditional methods, avoidance of drama, and so on – but no one sounds quite like him. Moreover, it is probably true that few, if any, have been driven by a desire to produce very long works of music based on his methods of precise and varied restatement, as described in this chapter. Nevertheless, his output, evolving, as it does, from shortish, sparsely scored works appearing in the 1950s, through a period where notions of extension in time are examined, and culminating in the lengthy and sometimes mega-long works of the last ten or so years of his life, seems to have attracted profound admiration and exerted significant influence. What I here call Feldman’s legacy is examined in chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation. Chapter 3 presents, in the main, the views of 19 composers concerning Feldman’s music and how it has affected them. Then in chapter 4, in which comparisons are made between their music and that of Feldman, a closer analysis of that effect is attempted.

Appendix I gives a list of Feldman’s compositions in chronological order, adapted, with his permission, from that on the Villars website.

CHAPTER 3

QUALITATIVE SURVEY OF MORTON FELDMAN'S INFLUENCE ON THE EXPERIMENTAL SCENE IN THE SELECTED GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS.

3.1 Explanation and purpose of the survey

In order to test Feldman's possible influence on the experimental music scene in the selected geographical areas, North America and the UK, two approaches suggested themselves. One was a close analysis of the music of at least some of the composers chosen for this study as representatives of the experimental music scene in its various manifestations in a comparison with the music of Feldman. The other was an opinion-gathering exercise among the same composers, taking the form of a questionnaire that could be responded to either orally (in the form of an interview) or in writing (by email). The analysis is the substance of chapter 4. The present chapter concerns itself with the survey and its findings. The questionnaire used was in three sections and in the same format for either response option (oral or written). It is reproduced here as Appendix II.⁶²

One purpose of the survey questionnaire was to establish, in the view of the composers asked, whether there has indeed been any 'experimental tradition' in music in the relevant country, Canada, the USA or the UK, and whether that tradition - or scene - has continued to exist. The next objective was to confirm that the respondents felt that they themselves were associated with that tradition. Another important aim was to discover whether or not the composers acknowledged a concrete debt to Feldman in their compositional approach, be it direct or indirect, and, if so, discuss the various musical and non-musical phenomena associated with Feldman and his oeuvre and reaffirm, or otherwise, the existence of similar attitudes, stances and strategies in the work of the respondents. The survey would also include an additional third section focusing mainly on aspects of the life, experience and output of the composers concerned.

The choice of North America (the USA and Canada) and the UK as the geographical area of scrutiny was arrived at on the basis of various considerations. One was necessarily that of close focus. The experimental music scene is vast and far-reaching, globally diffuse, and aesthetically diverse, and the notion of what experimental music represents is clearly open to numerous interpretations.⁶³ What is more, experimental music crosses traditional musical borders such as classical, pop and jazz, and appears to blur divisions even within those fields. An example might be the mix of drone music with rock, drone actually having its roots in the music of composers like La Monte Young, who is probably more closely associated with a classical background rather than any other.

⁶² Section 3 of the questionnaire is excluded from Appendix II as it is composer-specific.

⁶³ The list of groups on Facebook devoted to experimental music of one kind or another, including free improvisation, may serve as an illustration of this. Here are just some (the figure in brackets denotes the number of worldwide members as at May 2020): Obscure Electronic Music from the Past (4,600+), Les amis de Morton Feldman (495), the Tokyo Improvisors Orchestra (468), Experimental Music Japan (10,000+), the Cheltenham Improvisors Orchestra (146), Free Improvisation and Experimental Music Resource (24,000+), Wandelweiser (574), London Free Improvisation (2,000+), Electronic, Ambient and Experimental Music (32,000+), experimental music/other (9,000+), Contemporary / Experimental / Graphic Music Notation and Engraving (4,000+), Worldwide Experimental Music Group (9,000+), the Morton Feldman Appreciation Group (a relatively new addition) (45).

The sheer complexity of the experimental music scene, then, made it necessary to narrow the scope of the survey. Composers or artists connected with anything that loosely mimicked jazz or adhered to some of the more ostensible features of pop/rock (harmonic patterning, the presence of a ‘beat’) were rejected.⁶⁴ The study would be confined to the ‘classical’ spectrum, albeit in acceptance of the possibly controversial nature of that term.

Another consideration, though, was the historical link in the domain of Cageian experimentalism between North America (New York mainly) and the UK (London in particular), which was brought about almost singlehandedly by Cornelius Cardew in the 1960s. This resulted in the birth of an experimental music scene in the UK that ran parallel with similar developments in the United States, one which, despite experiencing something of a lull around the 1990s,⁶⁵ still exists, having expanded its geographical presence to include Canada. Cardew’s crucial role in all this was in fact predicted by Morton Feldman (see Nyman, p 115).

It may seem churlish to exclude other regions from the exercise on the basis of this alone. There were, after all, contributions to the experimental music scene from Japan in the 1960s, the work of composer Toshi Ichyanagi being a case in point. Furthermore, the Wandelweiser community, headquartered in Germany, has exerted enormous influence in music-making that takes its cue from the work of John Cage and Christian Wolff. Social media and internet searches reveal a wealth of experimental music activity in Asia, Australasia and South America, as well as elsewhere in Europe, including Russia. However, aside from the probable need for a narrower focus, there were practical considerations here. It is much harder to access the details of what is going on in some other parts of the world, not least because of language problems.⁶⁶

Another point to be made here is that many of these other global experimental music scenes and communities sprang up much later (Wandelweiser was founded in 1992), and are somehow chronologically disassociated with what has sometimes been called the New York School, a hub of experimentalists based in that city in the 1950s and 1960s under the loose mentorship of John Cage, and which basically comprised Christian Wolff, Earl Brown, and Feldman himself, plus a kindred set of composers working with new approaches to music, including La Monte Young and Terry Jennings. This movement is generally taken to characterise the start of the experimental tradition.⁶⁷

From the historical perspective, therefore, and for reasons of practicality, North America and the UK seemed a justifiable area of geographical focus. The English composer and performer, Cornelius Cardew, provides a vital link between the New York phenomenon of the 1960s and what ensued in the UK as a crucial development in the experimental music scene, including the founding of the Scratch Orchestra by that composer together with Michael Parsons and Howard Skempton.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the main language of all three countries is English (though

⁶⁴ Charlie Ulyatt may be an exception here. See his profile (section 4.18 of this chapter). His inclusion was partly based on a wish to ‘test’ Feldman’s influence outside the purely ‘classical’ sphere.

⁶⁵ See Appendix X : response by Michael Parsons to question 1.

⁶⁶ Being a frequent visitor to Japan (26 visits in the past 20 years) and a member of the Facebook group Experimental Music Japan, I have attempted to find out what might have been on during one of my visits, but to little avail. The English language is still often a barrier in Japan, in my experience.

⁶⁷ Obviously, the whole notion of what constitutes the ‘experimental’ in music is a vague one, as discussed in chapter 1.

⁶⁸ The creation of the Scratch Orchestra by this trio of its future members alone has nevertheless been contested. See Tilbury, pp 359-60.

one Canadian respondent has French as his first language), which made communications on either side unambiguous, at least linguistically. In addition, the experimental tradition apparently continues to thrive (though hardly in any grand commercial sense) in Canada, the USA and the UK, and it is to be inferred from the results of the interview conducted that there is a mutual awareness of the work that has gone on in the field in all three.

The admittedly somewhat spurious argument that exclusion from the survey might apply to movements that ‘came later’ would also apply to Canada, but Canada’s candidature in the exercise is supported by a number of factors. One is its presumably close cultural connection with the two other countries, at least in terms of history and language. Another is its association with a number of earlier composer misfits, if that is a fair term to use, including Ann Southam (1937-2010), whose output ranges from electroacoustic works to post-minimalism based on the fiddle music of Nova Scotia.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Czech composer Rudolf Komorous (b. 1931), whose music seems to be unaligned with any major musical movement, joined the University of Victoria (British Columbia) in 1971, where he tutored some of those who were to become champions of the Canadian experimental scene, including Linda Catlin Smith (b. 1957) and Martin Arnold (b. 1959). Indeed, Smith is something of a unifying force, geographically speaking. Hers is a familiar name in modern music circles in the UK: she was a featured composer at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in 2017. She also had a piece performed at the London Proms in 2019. She is, besides, a much-lauded personality in Canadian musical life generally. Based now in Toronto, she is nevertheless American by birth.

One more point might be made to support this geographical grouping of North America and the UK. Arguably, both regions were somewhat divorced from the post-War avant-garde movement that sprung up in mainland Europe, championed by such figures as Boulez, Nono, Maderna, Stockhausen, Pousseur and Berio. Admittedly, both Cage and Brown had been associated with it, but the very spirit of experimentalism lay in the well documented scorn it came to feel for the rigorous mathematical procedures involved in the composition of 12-tone music and total serialism.⁷⁰ True, both regions did have such composers working more or less strictly in the idiom: in the USA, for example, there was Stefan Wolpe and Wallingford Riegger (who were both Feldman’s teachers), and Britain had Humphrey Searle, among others. None of them are avant-garde celebrities on a par with the likes of Stockhausen, however, and this may have had something to do with the steady growth – and even acceptance – of experimental music in America and the UK from that time on, and particularly in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷¹

3.2 The questionnaire structure

The finalised version of the questionnaire is attached (Appendix II). Section 3 is different for each composer, but otherwise the questionnaire’s format and the content of the questions are the same for all the composers consulted, though the odd question was sometimes skipped, where the topic had already been covered, for example.

⁶⁹ See Reynell, p 5.

⁷⁰ See, for example, the mention in Johnson (p 51) of Feldman’s apparent criticism of Boulez and his ‘penchant for mathematics’. Nevertheless, it needs to be recognised that there was a good deal of reciprocal influence and interest between, in particular, Cage and Boulez (ibid, p 49).

⁷¹ Since then, the ‘clash’ between experimentalism and the more formal avant-garde would appear to have faded, and even become irrelevant, or at least of scanty interest. This point has been made elsewhere in this dissertation.

As previously described, the questionnaire consisted of three sections: ‘The experimental music tradition’ (questions 1-6), ‘Feldman’s legacy for the respondent personally’ (questions 7-20), and ‘Composer-specific questions’ (additional questions).

The first part of the questionnaire dwells on the notion of experimental music: what it is, its profile in the countries concerned, and whether or not the respondents associated themselves with the movement. There were additional questions relating to its humorous aspect, if any, and whether the composers thought it was in any way elitist. The purpose of the additional questions was to expand the general discussion on experimental music, and, indeed, a read-through of the appended responses would be rewarded with a variety of interesting takes on its different aspects and associations.

The second section of the questionnaire focuses on the work of Morton Feldman and, mainly, the extent to which the respondent feels he or she acknowledges an influence of Feldman’s music or at least a debt to that composer. The first question in this section, number 7, asks about this possible debt, and is accompanied by a footnote explaining that if the answer is ‘No’, that whole section can be excluded, with the exception of question 12, which calls on respondents to describe what they think is unique or original about their music, if anything. It echoes the content of the previous question, which enquires about the possible originality or uniqueness of Feldman’s output.⁷²

Section 2 is the crucial part of the survey: it sets out to discover to what extent respondents have modelled their oeuvre on the compositional approaches associated with Feldman’s music, and therefore serves to demonstrate the overall validity of the hypothesis that the thesis rests on. Section 1, on the other hand, as it were sets the scene: it provides an introduction and context for the main thrust of the exercise. Section 3 has a number of functions: it examines the respondent’s output within the framework of Feldman’s influence or otherwise; it is a conscious gesture of interest in the composer’s work; and it is a space for the composers concerned to speak freely about the topics raised and to include other items for discussion not necessarily related to the composer’s output. The author’s objective here was to use anything that might crop up here for purposes related to this whole project.

3.3 Composer selection criteria

The criteria applying to the composer selection procedure were:

- a. Their assumed association with the experimental music movement/tradition/approach
- b. The geographical area in which they were based
- c. Their age and gender
- d. Their accessibility and willingness or otherwise to take part in the research

The applicability of these criteria to the individual respondents is at least hinted at in the separate section on the composer profiles.

a. Assumed association with experimental music

Various considerations underpinned the choice of composers to be consulted. One was, inevitably, their association with the experimental tradition, as it is Feldman’s legacy for that movement that is the subject of study. Differentiating the potentially relevant composers from

⁷² Of course, there might be arguments for asking the question numbered 12 in part 3 rather than part 2.

those connected with other musical movements, schools, traditions or scenes relied on a number of strategies: use of previous knowledge, personal reference and online research.

For example, the choice of Howard Skempton was based on my personal knowledge of him as a fellow-student of music at the University of West London, as it is now known, during the early days of the Scratch Orchestra, and on the pursuit of an interest in his music on my part ever since. Other composers in the category of former awareness would include Michael Parsons, Gavin Bryars and Christopher Hobbs, in the UK, and, for example, Christian Wolff and Michael Pisaro in the USA. All these composers are firmly connected with the experimental movement, and this is well documented.⁷³

In one or two cases I was personally referred to other composers who might be suitable candidates for the survey. This is what occurred in connection with Linda Catlin Smith, whose name I was given by another Canadian composer.

Rather more arbitrary, though at the same time fairly focused, online research, via Google for example, produced further potential respondents. One resource was the Wandelweiser website, where I cross-referenced composers listed as being part of that community with their country of residence. In this way, I was able to contact such composers as Mark Hanneison in Canada and Sam Sfirri in the United States. Googling key words such as 'experimental music' brought me into contact with Emma-Kate Matthews in the UK and Jordan Nobles in Canada, for example, and Facebook networking resulted in communications with Charlie Ulyatt (UK).

The websites of these composers and other internet data on them allowed me to make certain assumptions regarding their credentials as experimental composers (and often performers) and prepared the ground for an initial contact.

When researching the music of these composers prior to making contact, it was difficult not to be swayed by the instant similarities I discerned from time to time between their music and Feldman's when deciding whether to include them in the survey (websites often contained audio samples of pieces, and some contained scores). The trigger for the study as a whole had been a realisation on my part that so much experimental music possessed musical attributes that have become very closely associated with Feldman, in particular low dynamics and a general sense of understatement. Nevertheless, this by no means applies to all experimental music seemingly couched within the framework of the classical music tradition. The general aim was to keep an open mind and settle for a balanced result, one where some respondents might acknowledge an indebtedness to Feldman, while a good number of others might deny any influence. However, the results turned out very differently in this respect (most respondents paid homage to Feldman and said that he had been a guiding light).

b. Geography

The geographical delimitation for the study is explained in section 1. It was easy to check the contact details for each composer.

⁷³ See *inter alia* Nyman, for entries on Parsons, Bryars, Hobbs and Wolff; see Gottschalk, for entries on Parsons, Hobbs, Wolff and Pisaro; and see Griffiths, for entries on Bryars and Wolff (all indexed).

c. Age and gender

An effort was made to ensure that the age range of the composers consulted was such that it would take account not just of the ‘old school’ of those who began working in the 1960s – or even earlier with respect to Christian Wolff – but also those who were now middle-aged or even younger. One reason for this was that it might be too readily assumed that the Cardew ‘school’ in the UK (Hobbs, Parsons, etc.), starting out in the field in the 1960s as it did, and being closer in time to Feldman’s work and influence (Morton Feldman died in 1987), would be more sympathetic to the idea of Feldman’s importance, and this would therefore give a misleading picture of the scope of Feldman’s impact on the experimental movement as a whole. In other words, it was important too to gauge to what extent younger composers had consciously recognised a link – however tentative – between Feldman’s work and their own. It would also be an interesting area of investigation to explore to what degree a younger generation of composers would concede that their musical endeavours owed something to the New York school generally. If not, might it be the case that they saw what they did as an entirely separate musical undertaking or as something individual to them?

A substantial number of female composers responded to initial enquiries by email as to whether they would be interested in contributing to the survey. In the end, unfortunately, some of them dropped out, meaning that the gender distribution of respondents was fairly heavily weighted in favour of men. Of the 19 composers consulted, four are women.

d. Accessibility and willingness

When the process for contacting the individual composers began, it was difficult to predict what might be regarded as a significant or useful number of respondents and whether or not the final figure would depend on the general reaction to that initial contact. Furthermore, some potential composers were eliminated early on simply because they were hard or impossible to reach, their websites, for example, not providing any email address. I communicated with the rest by email. Some did not reply. In the case of some female composers, I imagined there may have been suspicion or wariness on their part communicating with a complete (male) stranger.

It is an agreeable thought, however, that the vast majority were both reachable and did reply, though a few doubted their suitability. This may have been due to the wording of my email, which generally ran as follows:

Hello ----. I am doing a research project on experimental music (with a focus on Morton Feldman) for the University of Birmingham in the UK. The geographical area of interest is North America and the UK (for one reason or another). I am interviewing a number of composers for the project. Would you at all be interested in responding to a questionnaire of about 20 questions?

The obvious drawback with the wording was the mention, unavoidable as it was, of the name Morton Feldman, as this might have the effect of ‘leading’ the recipients of the message, in the sense that some immediately confessed to an admiration for the composer and his music, and often an admission of a clear influence. Others, on the other hand, doubted their credentials for taking part, since they did not see any musical connection between themselves and Feldman (even though I had not really mentioned the subject). From the perspective of the study, neither standpoint was particularly useful, and some of the follow-up emails I then sent attempted to address misunderstandings. It was gratifying to know that some of these people were devotees

of Feldman, but the degree to which the composer thought his or her music was *not* Feldmanesque was one aspect of the basis for the survey, not a barrier to participation in it.

As described later in the section of this chapter devoted to the findings of the study, although a few respondents saw little or no correspondence between their music and that of Feldman's, the majority did. This and the fact that even one or two of a minority group not acknowledging any connection ended up answering at least some of the questions in section 2 somehow seemed to give the hypothesis regarding Feldman's legacy some credibility.

The survey thus covered a broad base of respondents in terms of age and experience, but also musical style and aesthetic, all of whom at the outset were apparently in the category of experimental music composer. The overall validity of the investigation was therefore promising.

3.4 The respondents

The survey took place over a period of seven months, from July 2017 until January 2018. Whether or not the respondents would be communicated with face-to-face or simply in writing depended on various practical circumstances, including their location, my personal travel plans, and their willingness to meet in person. In the end, roughly half of them were interviewed, the rest completing the questionnaire in writing. The composer Linda Catlin Smith was interviewed, but the recording was unusable, and she completed the survey at a later date in writing. All the transcripts of the interviews and the written responses are appended.

As the process went on, it became evident that 20 respondents would be the optimum total. This would probably allow for a good range of opinion, incorporate a sufficient spread of ages and genders and provide a satisfying round number. Besides, any more would have resulted in a more laborious exercise than was desirable. Because, however, one dropped out at a time I thought it best to finalise numbers, the end total was 19. They break down as follows in terms of age group, gender and country or residence.

Table 1

Respondents to the questionnaire by age group⁷⁴ and gender

Under 45		45-60		61 or over	
Male=3	Female=3	Male=6	Female=0	Male=6	Female=1

Table 2

Respondents by country of residence⁷⁵

UK	USA	Canada
9	5	5

What follows is these composers' profiles, briefly describing their backgrounds, compositional input and any other details of special interest. The description includes a mention of the relevant

⁷⁴ Age on the date the responses were received.

⁷⁵ The apparent weighting in favour of the UK is mainly due to the practical consideration that the author is based in that country himself.

survey format (interview or written responses), the degree of completeness of the questionnaire on their part, and, in the case of the personal interviews, their date and location. The profiles are in alphabetical order of last name. Of the 19, 10 were interviewed face-to-face.

a. *Olivia Block*

According to her website, Olivia Block (b. 1970) is a media artist and composer. She is based in Chicago, USA. Apart from experimentalism, her musical roots are in the electroacoustic movement and post-rock improvisation (her own words). She has a number of commercial recordings of her music to her credit and her work has been well received in the - mainly American – media.

She completed a written response to all three parts of the questionnaire. In section 3 she mentioned an influence of Charles Ives.

b. *Daniel Brandes*

Daniel Brandes (b. 1985) is based in Victoria, B.C., Canada. He is a member of the Wandelweiser experimental music community, whose music and that by others features in his monthly concert series ‘A Place to Listen’, which is concerned with the concept of ‘immersed’ listening.⁷⁶ His music is often semi-improvisatory and appears to be concerned with spiritual considerations.

He gave answers to all sections of the questionnaire in a personal interview in Victoria on 24 September 2017.

c. *Gavin Bryars*

Gavin Bryars was born in Goole in the UK in 1943. He is of course a household name in the experimental music scene. He rose to fame in in the 1970s after Brian Eno launched recordings of his *Sinking of the Titanic* (1969) and *Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1971) on the Obscure Records Label. Bryars started his musical career as a jazz bass player, but then later worked with Cage.

He was interviewed personally at his home in Billesdon, Leicestershire, on 12 January 2018. He had things to say in response to all three sections of the survey.

d. *Isaiah Ceccarelli*

Isaiah Ceccarelli (b. 1978) is based near Montreal, Canada. He is loosely associated with the Wandelweiser community. He is a drummer and composer who has written pieces for the Bozzini Quartet and the London Contemporary Orchestra Soloists. He acknowledges some influence of early music in his compositional processes.

He responded to the survey in writing, completing all three parts.

⁷⁶ This venture is presumably connected with the concept of ‘deep listening’ developed by Pauline Oliveros (1932-2016), a key figure of the post-War American experimental music scene.

e. Christopher Fox

Born in York, UK, in 1955, Christopher Fox is a familiar name in the world of music generally, and not exclusively the experimental music scene. He is also the editor of *Tempo* magazine, an online publication dedicated to new music.

In his written response to all three sections of the questionnaire, he suggested that it was not advisable to ‘generalise from any one “experimental” composer’ when contemplating the history of experimental music”. This is probably a useful comment in the context of this dissertation.

f. Jennie Gottschalk

Jennie Gottschalk (b. 1978) is a Boston, USA-based composer, perhaps best known in the wider context for her book *Experimental Music Since 1970*, seen by many as a sequel to Nyman’s book of 1974, which was the first full-scale account documenting the experimental movement. Both books are referred to frequently in chapter 1.

She gave a written response to the survey. However, although in section 2 on Feldman’s legacy for the respondent personally she mentioned an interest in that composer’s music, she was loath to acknowledge an influence. As a consequence, one or two questions in this section were passed over as seemingly irrelevant.

She also mentioned (in part 3) that she hoped her book would ‘generate a more lively dialogue about what experimental music is’. There is, indeed, scope for more full-length written accounts of the subject, including a comprehensive book on Feldman himself.

g. Mark Hannesson

Mark Hannesson (b. 1968) teaches at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. He is also connected with the Wandelweiser community. He began his compositional career in the area of electroacoustic music.

He responded fully to all sections of the survey in a face-to-face interview on 16 September 2017 in Edmonton. During the course of part 3 of the interview, the issue of ‘pop’ experimental music was touched on. This was of interest to me, as a disambiguation between this and what might tentatively be called the ‘classical’ experimental school was crucial to the concepts and definitions underpinning the whole thesis.

h. Christopher Hobbs

Born in 1950, Christopher Hobbs was one of the original members of the Scratch Orchestra and a pupil of Cornelius Cardew. The ensemble did pioneering work in the field of ‘improvisation rites’ (as opposed to free improvisation), with non-musicians participating on an equal footing with the classically trained.

Hobbs was one of the first composers in the UK to use mathematical patterns in musical composition that are generally known as ‘systems’. This was discussed at some length in our interview, which was conducted at De Montfort University in Leicester, where Hobbs currently

teaches. All three sections of the survey were addressed, the meeting taking place on 7 December 2017.

i. Emma-Kate Matthews

Emma-Kate Matthews was born in 1986, making her the youngest of the composers consulted. She teaches at the Bartlett School of Architecture in London and writes site-specific music that takes account of a building's acoustics.

Although an avowed musical experimentalist, she confessed to knowing relatively little about Feldman and his music, and so section 2 was skipped (though she was nevertheless tempted to give it a go, and, indeed, we did refer back to one or two questions in part 2 towards the end of the interview). This was a face-to-face meeting at her place of work on 23 January 2018.

j. Jordan Nobles

Winner of many awards, Jordan Nobles (b. 1969) is based in North Vancouver, Canada. His music has a scintillating quality and he is a popular musical figure in his home country.

He was interviewed personally on 16 September 2017 in Edmonton, Alberta, and responded to all parts of the questionnaire. He made the interesting comment that he attempted to 'sugar-coat dissonance... to bring the dissonance in quite quietly'. This notion was echoed by at least one other composer in the group (Michael Parsons) in respect, this time, of Feldman's music, which is dissonant though it does not generally grate.

k. Tim Parkinson

Tim Parkinson (b. 1973) was interviewed in his home in London on 24 January 2018. He answered all parts of the questionnaire. In part 3 some of the discussion focused on the concert series 'Music We'd Like to Hear', which he co-founded in 2005. These are programmes of composed – rather than improvised – experimental music put on at regular intervals in a church in the City of London.

During the discussion, Parkinson pointed to the significance of Debussy and Satie in the development of static sound – a key area of interest in much of the experimental music scene, and, debatably, a hallmark of Feldman's style.

l. Michael Parsons

Michael Parsons was born in 1938 and helped to establish the Scratch Orchestra in the late 1960s. He has partnered the composer Howard Skempton in a number of compositional and performance projects and is very closely associated with the UK experimental school.

Parsons was interviewed in his home in London on 31 October 2017, giving very carefully considered answers to all the questions asked, having been sent the questionnaire in advance. Like Bryars too in his interview, he spoke much about art and the importance of art schools in the development of experimental music in the UK.

m. Michael Pisaro

Michael Pisaro (b. 1961) is a well-established name in the American experimental music movement. He currently teaches at the California Institute of the Arts. He is also a member of the Wandelweiser community.

Pisaro submitted written answers to the questionnaire. He only provided responses to some of the questions in section 2, and the answers he did give suggested that, though Feldman was of interest, his influence was not overly great (see section 5 of this Chapter: Findings). The responses to two out of the three questions asked in section 3 of the questionnaire referred me to other writings of his.

n. James Saunders

James Saunders (b. 1972) was interviewed on the campus of Bath Spa University (UK), where he teaches. His music is often in ‘open’ format (undetermined forces, etc.) and explores group behaviour, owing something to the composer Christian Wolff, as he confirmed.

He answered all three sections, but balked at trying to define, or even describe, the term experimental music, one that he said ‘has so much baggage’.

o. Sam Sfirri

Sam Sfirri (b. 1987) is another Wandelweiser community-associated composer. He is based in South Carolina, USA. He has an interest in the work of Samuel Beckett, as did Feldman, who worked on the opera *Neither* with the writer.

Sfirri provided written answers to all three parts of the questionnaire. Some are obscure: for example, he seems to claim that his music never actually starts (if I understand him right). Two of the three scores of his music in my possession – intriguing to peruse though they are – are hard, or virtually impossible, to interpret.

p. Howard Skempton

A familiar name in the world of contemporary music, and someone with firm roots in the English experimental tradition, Howard Skempton (b. 1947) was a pupil of Cardew and a co-founder of the Scratch Orchestra.

He was interviewed in his home in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, UK on 28 July 2017. He gave comprehensive answers to all sections of the questionnaire and related more than one fascinating anecdote based on his personal acquaintance with Feldman.

q. Linda Catlin Smith

Linda Catlin Smith was born in 1957 in New York City, but has long been a resident of Toronto, Canada. She is something of a celebrity in the Canadian experimental music scene and, as mentioned, was a featured composer at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in 2017.

She completed a written set of answers to the questionnaire, though seeming modesty kept her responses in section 3 brief.

r. Charlie Ulyatt

In contrast, for example, to Smith and Skempton, Charlie Ulyatt (b. 1959) is a relative unknown. He is a guitarist/cellist who posts recordings of his improvisations on that instrument on the internet. His music is not written down. One presumes that he is not classically trained, though his music seemed interesting enough to include him in the study. The fact that he seemed to veer toward the ‘pop experimental’ category suggested that he might prove to be an outsider in the survey, though in his written replies he was loath to define categories, or even

pinpoint exactly what he thought experimental music was. It was partly due to this and the fact that he had heard little of Feldman's music that his responses were patchy (not that this detracted in any way from the exercise).

s. Christian Wolff

Christian Wolff is a pioneer of experimental music and was one of the New York School of composers, a contemporary of both Cage and Feldman, though considerably younger than either. Born in 1934, Wolff seems an unlikely candidate for a survey tracing Feldman's 'legacy', but in his responses it transpired that Feldman was a partial influence, and given Wolff's legendary status in the field, his inclusion surely provides this study with something approaching glamour!

In his written replies, he ignored section 1 and focused on responses to just three questions in section 2. Nevertheless, he gave full answers to my questions in part 3. He added a footnote about Feldman, describing much that is already well documented, but somehow giving it enhanced credibility, he being there at the time, as it were.

3.5 Findings

What follows is a synopsis of the findings of the survey with regard to sections 1 and 2. As mentioned before, section 3 had to do with personal aspects of the relevant composer's work and experience. The responses in this section together with those to the rather less crucial questions put in sections 1 and 2 (as differentiated below) were of interest beyond the immediate scope of this particular project and might be used elsewhere in this essay to cast light on other aspects of experimental music as a phenomenon, and Morton Feldman as part of that phenomenon. For example, question 5 in section 1 asks the question: 'Is experimental music funny?' The theme of this question relates to the notion of audaciousness in the experimental music tradition, something that may well partially have its roots in at least some of Feldman's works: for instance, notational ambiguities and very long overall durations. However, these questions and their answers are not central to the exploration of Feldman's legacy for the experimental movement and, for now, they are discarded.

3.5.1 Section 1 of the questionnaire: The experimental music tradition

Of the six questions asked in section 1, it is the first four that are crucial. First of all, it was necessary both to establish the (continuing) existence of an experimental music tradition in the relevant country (USA, Canada, UK) and to confirm that the composers concerned considered themselves to be directly involved in that tradition (questions 1 and 2). To provide greater justification for this discourse, it was also relevant to ask the composers to try and define experimental music, or at least describe what they saw as some of its tenets (question 3). Finally, it was expedient to discover whether the respondents considered Morton Feldman to have been part of the experimental tradition in order further to discuss the extent of his influence on the 'classical' experimental music movement, to use the term I am coining here.

It was assumed that all participants would claim some connection with an experimental scene that was still continuing in the country in which they were based. As for a definition of experimental music, that was something that was likely to elicit a whole range of responses, though a hard and fast solution was probably an ambitious objective. The prediction,

furthermore, was that those composers who were familiar with the work of Feldman would acknowledge that he had been part of that scene.

Table 3 gives a summary of the responses to these crucial/key questions.

Table 3 Summarised results of the crucial elements of section 1 on the experimental tradition

Composer	Existence of an experimental scene (q.1)	This composer part of it? (q.2)	Morton Feldman part of it? (q.4)	Volunteered a definition/description? (q.3)
Block	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Brandes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (description)
Bryars	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (description)
Ceccarelli	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (description)*
Fox	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (definition)
Gottschalk	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes (description)
Hannesson	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (description)
Hobbs	Yes (inferred)	Yes	Yes	Yes (definition)
Matthews	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (definition)
Nobles	Yes	Yes (inferred)	Yes	Yes (definition)
Parkinson	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes (description)
Parsons	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (description)
Pisaro	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (definition)
Saunders	Yes*	Yes*	Yes	No
Sfirri	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes (definition)
Skempton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (description)
Smith	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Yes (definition)
Ulyatt	Yes*	(unanswered)	(unanswered)	Yes (definition)
Wolff	(unanswered)	(unanswered)	(unanswered)	(unanswered)
Total positive responses out of 19	18	17	17	16

* Qualified answer

Eighteen of the nineteen respondents acknowledged the existence of an experimental music tradition/scene in their country and seventeen were of the opinion that they were part of it. Seventeen thought Morton Feldman had contributed to the movement. Sixteen gave a definition of experimental music or a description of what they thought it entailed.

Some of the answers were qualified: the respondents might approach the question from a certain angle, for example. The appended transcripts and written responses may be examined for more detail. One or two were unanswered. In the case of Hannesson and Nobles, the question of whether there had been an experimental tradition was initially misunderstood – owing no doubt to the slightly ambiguous wording – but as the conversation developed, it became clear that I was not probing the existence of a uniquely Canadian tradition/movement.

Because of the real nature of conversation and the haphazard course it can take, in the interviews the results have been occasionally inferred.

Although, as predicted, there was little unanimity on a definition/description of experimental music, some of the responses to the question ‘What do you consider to be experimental music?’ were remarkably comparable. Thus:

For me it is an approach to music-making that ... always tries to begin from first principles, taking nothing for granted. (Christopher Fox)

I think experimental music ...takes risks. It is not afraid to break boundaries and ... people's expectations. (Emma-Kate Matthews)

Experimental music...is in some way new, or in which the composer is investigating the art form in some way. (Linda Catlin Smith)

Michael Parsons and Daniel Brandes referred to John Cage's definition: 'an experimental action ...is simply an action the outcome of which is not foreseen':

So that brings in indeterminacy. (Michael Parsons)

This approach was echoed by Sam Sfirri:

The acceptance of unforeseen outcomes...

Christopher Hobbs, interestingly, contrasted it with the mainly Germanic/Austrian tradition of the avant-garde, taking its lead from Wagner and, later, Schoenberg, Boulez and Stockhausen.

Historically, I would say experimental music is the other side of avant-garde music... That is to say, the tradition which is associated with Cage.

3.5.2 Section 2 of the questionnaire: Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

Questions 7-20 of section 2 of the questionnaire relate directly to Feldman. The first question is crucial: 'Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to Morton Feldman?' How the interview proceeded from there depended very much on the answer to this question. Those who dismissed any such influence would go directly to section 3 (although perhaps via question 12 in section 2), as would any respondents who were relatively unfamiliar with Feldman's work (indicated here as the 'not applicable' (N/A) responses).

Table 4 gives a breakdown of the responses to question 7, specifying whether the influence/debt is acknowledged unambiguously, partially or not at all/not applicable.

Table 4 Breakdown of responses to question 7

Composer	Unambiguous acknowledgement	Partial acknowledgement	No acknowledgement
Block	✓		
Brandes		✓	
Bryars	✓		
Ceccarelli	✓		
Fox	✓		
Gottschalk			✓
Hannesson	✓		
Hobbs	✓		
Matthews			✓ (N/A)
Nobles	✓ (inferred)		
Parkinson	✓		
Parsons	✓		
Pisaro		✓	
Saunders	✓		
Sfirri		✓	
Skempton	✓		

Smith	✓		
Ulyatt			✓ (N/A)
Wolff		✓	
Total out of 19	12	4	3

Out of the 19 respondents, 16 acknowledged an influence of, or a debt to, Morton Feldman. This acknowledgement was unambiguous on the part of 12 of these.

Some were nothing less than enthusiastic, albeit perhaps jokingly, in their avowal of this:

I think I should be sending his estate a little bit of money... (Mark Hannesson)

I think it would be disingenuous... not to acknowledge Feldman's continuing importance. (Howard Skempton)

Four composers gave a slightly more guarded response. Michael Pisaro, for example, felt the influence was more connected with the musical tradition Feldman is associated than with Feldman directly. Daniel Brandes baulked at the use of the word 'debt'. Christian Wolff pointed out that he 'grew up' with Feldman's music in the 1950s, and that his music had influenced him, but then, apparently, he had been affected by much other music, some of it negatively.

Regarding the other three, it has to be said that there was no actual outright denial of Feldman's influence in the case of two of them. Emma-Kate Matthews acknowledged some sort of debt to the origins of the experimental 'scene', in which Feldman was a key actor, though not one to him 'explicitly'. Jennie Gottschalk said that Feldman's music interested her but that she was 'not exploring the same kind of issues that he did.'

Charlie Ulyatt thought it was unlikely that there was any influence as he had heard little of Feldman's work. He was the only respondent to emphasise the absence of any debt whatsoever to Feldman.

In the case of Matthews, she thought that Feldman had not been a crucial influence and the rest of the section was therefore skipped, including, mistakenly, question 12, which asks the respondents to say what they consider is unique about their music.

With the exception of Matthews, then, some or – in most cases – all the questions in section 2 regarding specific traits of Feldman's approach and aesthetic were tackled. The topics in this section are wide-ranging, but in terms of pinpointing direct compositional influences, it is useful, as with section 1, to quote here some key questions. These will serve as the basis for closer scrutiny of the work of these composers in conjunction with that of Feldman's output that is the subject matter of chapter 4.

The other key questions, following on from question 7, are:

Question 9: (If yes), which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

Question 14: Feldman’s music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

Question 15 (which is a continuation of question 9 in a way, but is probably crucial to any Feldman study): Feldman’s music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

Question 17 (again, something of a development of question 9): Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be ‘counted’, or unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff). Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to Morton Feldman’s work, your own, and composition in general?

Again, it needs to be pointed out that the other questions and answers were of interest and hopefully relevant, given that the data generated may have been made use of elsewhere in this essay.

With the exception of question 17, these are closed questions and a synopsis of the responses to the first three of them is given in Table 5.

Table 5 Responses to questions 9, 14 and 15

Composer	9a	9b	9c	9d	9e	9f	9g	9h	14	15
Block				✓		✓	✓			✓
Brandes								✓ (sense of touch)	✓*	✓
Bryars		✓				✓			✓	✓
Ceccarelli			✓			✓				
Fox	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓*	✓*		✓
Gottschalk									✓*	✓*
Hannesson		✓*						✓ (the idea of subjective time)	✓	✓*
Hobbs							✓		✓	✓
Matthews										
Nobles								✓ (an interest in attack and decay)	✓	✓
Parkinson									✓*	
Parsons					✓			✓ (the importance of the sound for its own sake, continuity and disconnectedness)	✓	
Pisaro				✓*						
Saunders								✓ (overall duration)	✓	✓*
Sfirri			✓				✓			✓*
Skempton		✓				✓		✓ (the concern for sound, colour, lack of rhetoric), focus on pitch	✓	✓ (inferred)
Smith				✓	✓	✓		✓ (pacing, mood)		✓
Ulyatt										
Wolff		✓ (inferred)								✓
Total	1	5	3	4	3	6	4	8	10	13

* Qualified answer

The results show that every musical parameter proposed and other aspects of Feldman's musical approach highlighted here met with at least one positive response.

One of the features of Feldman's style is his penchant for low dynamics and a generally unhurried pace, so it is significant that 13 of the 19 recognised these phenomena as aspects of their style too, although it should be pointed out that the responses might point to either both or just one. Again, the reader has access to the transcripts and written answers for greater detail (Appendices III-XX). Ten of the respondents confirmed an interest in the notion of stasis as it related to their music, something that might be associated with Feldman (though the point is a moot one perhaps and Christopher Fox disagreed with the association: 'I think Feldman's music is always in motion').

Some composers gave qualified answers to some of the questions. Fox ticked all the musical parameters (including h) in question 9, adding the comment 'All of those, for a while, but maybe not any longer'. Gottschalk declared an inability on her part to generalise with respect to question 15, and did not answer question 9 (the response to question 7 being negative).

As the table shows, quite a number of respondents suggested additional musical parameters for consideration (question 9 h).

Other points of possible interest include the following:

- Ulyatt acknowledged an interest in low dynamics, but says this owes nothing to Feldman.
- Parkinson admitted to an influence of Feldman ('Yes, hugely'), although nothing very specific in this area emerged in the interview except, perhaps, with regard to question 14.
- Pisaro and Wolff did not answer questions 14 and 15. Wolff did not answer question 9 either, though in section 3 of the questionnaire he mentions being impressed by Feldman's use of octaves, anathema to the serialist composers of the time.
- Sfirri gave a qualified answer to question 15: 'Some things are fairly quiet or slow... but only to make for an appropriate background'.
- Saunders is of the opinion that soft dynamics is somehow related to past trends, and that much contemporary experimental music is noisy.

During the interview discussion as it related to section 2 and not necessarily to the questions coming under closer scrutiny here, several composers pointed to the concept of 'sound for sound's sake', proposing that Feldman's music is representative of this approach and stating that this was one of the features of Feldman's music that drew them to him in the first place.

Feldman went straight to sound, in the same way that Rothko and Guston, in his earlier work, went directly to the canvas and the quality of colour, texture and paint on the surface. So it's that sort of cutting out the rhetoric which surrounds the narrative and the rhetorical and narrative qualities which most people talk about when they talk about a painting. (Michael Parsons)

When discussing the same issue of sound as its own entity, the point Parsons makes here concerning lack of rhetoric was made too by Howard Skempton:

He (Feldman) said the sound was the experience ... so... it's the concern with sound, and colour ...the quietness of it. The lack of rhetoric. All these things that I would say about experimental music in general as well. There's a lack of rhetoric.

Gavin Bryars relates a fascinating anecdote relating to the time he visited Feldman in his New York flat. While Bryars was making coffee, Feldman was composing at the piano. Apparently, the older composer was working almost randomly.

There was no connection from one to another (referring to Feldman's markings on the manuscript paper) ... There were just simply these sounds that he heard.

The idea of disconnection and an absence of formal musical links within a structure in Feldman's music was also something that had attracted the attention of Christopher Hobbs.

...he doesn't use a system. He's using an empirical means of composing the music. He composes the chords that he likes to hear. But then he frees them up, if you like. He doesn't, as I said before, tell a story with them – so the chords are not connected in the way a jazz sequence might be, for example...

Hobbs too mentions the importance of the actual sound of the music. It is interesting that these aspects of Feldman's music are picked up by this particular group of composers, all of whom represent the 'older' generation of UK experimentalists, firmly associated with Cardew and the Scratch Orchestra (less so perhaps in the case of Bryars). This essential break with traditional structure, piloted by Cage and explored by Feldman, was obviously something that had had a striking impact on the musical thinking of many of the main actors in the UK experimental music scene of the late 1960s or thereabouts.

Question 17 relates to Feldman's occasional notational ambiguity and produced a range of comments. The purpose of the question was to see to what extent the notational approaches used by the composers questioned matched with Feldman's in any way.

Block, Brandes and Bryars all see Feldman's notation as sometimes posing a challenge.

...he's sort of testing the limits... (Bryars)

Block states that the *pppppp* instruction is making 'a point of emphasis'.

Fox and Saunders point out that notation is never precise anyway.

All notation is ambiguous to some extent... (Fox)

Notation is a meeting point... there's always ambiguity... (Saunders)

On the other hand, Hobbs, Nobles, Parsons and Skempton all seem to advocate clarity in musical notation – performer-friendliness, as Parsons puts it. These composers have seemingly not been too impressed by Feldman's - or Cage's - sometimes quirky notation. However, Hannesson mentioned being initially both shocked and fascinated by Feldman's score of *Last Pieces* (1959), a suite of four movements where each note head is stemless, rendering every duration free, relative to the tempo marking in each piece. Whether or not this notational solution originated with Feldman, writing tailless pitches would appear to have become an accepted device, and perhaps not just among those of the experimental persuasion.⁷⁷

3.6 Conclusion

The qualitative survey was one option for testing the hypothesis that Morton Feldman has exerted a considerable influence on composers, past and present, involved in the experimental music scene. It seemed essential, first of all, to establish that such a scene existed, and that,

⁷⁷ Skempton certainly employs it, particularly in his earlier works.

secondly, the composers chosen – on the basis of their assumed association with the experimental movement - saw themselves as being likely candidates for research into experimental music, if not Feldman himself. The justification for the ensuing discourses would be enhanced if the respondents themselves could provide a definition of experimental music, something that proved immensely difficult but which yielded some interesting observations.

There were various reasons for restricting the geographical scope of the survey to the UK, Canada and the USA, some historical and some merely practical.

Hopefully, most or all of the questions and the content of the replies will have served some purpose in the overall context of the discussion, but it seemed relevant and helpful here to extract some key examples for special focus. Here is a summary of the findings:

- virtually all the respondents agreed that there was/had been an experimental music tradition/scene in their country, and even globally, and they regarded themselves as being involved in it
- everyone bar two, who did not answer the question, said they thought Feldman had been integral to that tradition
- a total of 16 out of the 19 composers were able to offer something like a definition or a description of experimental music
- an overwhelming majority of the respondents (16 out of 19) acknowledged either an unambiguous or a partial influence of, or at least a debt to, Morton Feldman in connection with their compositional output
- all the musical parameters proposed in the questionnaire (melody, harmony, instrumentation, etc. in question 9) were relevant to that influence, though this varied for different composers, and others were added by the respondents themselves
- just 10 out of the 19 reacted positively to the proposition that Feldman's sound world related to a fondness for stasis, suggesting that either this possible aspect of his music, suggested as it was by me, was slightly less compelling, or that it was irrelevant to some of the composers' approaches to working
- a total of 13 stated that low dynamics or a slow pace – two classic features of Feldman's music in general – were aspects of a compositional approach that they had been drawn to, with Feldman very much in mind, it would appear.

Given that the next chapter will involve an analysis of scores, in addition to anything else, it seemed a valid option to discuss some issues relating to Feldman's notational practices, ambiguous as they are sometimes (question 17). In this particular context, there was also occasional discussion of graph notation, chance operations and other aspects of notation, all of which are remarked upon elsewhere in this essay. Another subject considered was whether Feldman used any systematic approach to writing music. The issue may or may not throw light on the compositional tendencies of the composers included in the study.

The matter of how any of these assumed/proposed influences of Feldman's music play out now comes under closer scrutiny in chapter 4 through comparisons of some of his output with some of the composers represented here (the selection process is explained in the chapter).

CHAPTER 4

CLOSER ANALYSIS OF THE MUSIC OF THE COMPOSERS SELECTED FOR THE SURVEY, AND ITS COMPARISON WITH THE MUSIC OF MORTON FELDMAN, BOTH FROM THE AURAL ASPECT AND ON PAPER.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines in greater detail the extent to which the music of Morton Feldman has had an impact on the compositional approach of the nineteen composers represented here. The composers' music is described either fairly briefly or at greater length, depending on the supposed degree of that impact and, in some cases, there is closer scrutiny with reference to extracts from scores.

A new field of enquiry is being opened up here, one which will hopefully pinpoint the extent of Feldman's legacy for the experimental composers discussed. There have been constraints in terms of time and space as regards any thorough exploration of the work of these composers. This is partly also due to the fact that the scores of some are hard to come by (they may not even be published in many cases), and only some of the music is recorded.

The structure of the chapter is primarily based on the responses set out in Table 4 in chapter 3 to the question, 'Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to Morton Feldman?' To facilitate referencing, the table, with very slight modifications, is replicated here:

Table 4 Breakdown of responses to question 7

Composer	Unambiguous acknowledgement	Partial acknowledgement	No acknowledgement
Block	✓		
Brandes		✓	
Bryars	✓		
Ceccarelli	✓		
Fox	✓		
Gottschalk			✓
Hannesson	✓		
Hobbs	✓		
Matthews			✓
Nobles	✓		
Parkinson	✓		
Parsons	✓		
Pisaro		✓	
Saunders	✓		
Sfirri		✓	
Skempton	✓		
Smith	✓		
Ulyatt			✓
Wolff		✓	
Total out of 19	12	4	3

The thinking here is as follows. The acknowledgement of a debt to Feldman or otherwise (unambiguous, partial or non-existent), on the part of the composers concerned, ties in very closely with my own views on the matter. For the sake of convenience, the composers and their music are dealt with here in sequence and according to a rough ranking system based on these

three categories of acknowledgement. Following a short discussion of the first group ('no acknowledgement'), the four figures in the 'partial acknowledgement' category are briefly considered. The third group of twelve are then processed at greater length, moving in a direction that tentatively goes from those who in all likelihood have a very general connection with Feldman to those with a far clearer link.

Where it is pertinent to do so, the reader is invited to examine (extracts from) scores, both of music by Feldman and some of the composers presented here. Once again, it needs to be emphasised, however, that space does not allow for any in-depth analysis of the music referred to. Where comparisons have been made between these figures and their music and Feldman, these views are personal, and the musical illustrations serve to reinforce them in a general way. It would in any case seem inappropriate, if not churlish, to suggest that any of these well-established musical figures might have purposely and fully adopted Feldman's style.

Thus, and to put it crudely perhaps, I have ordered discussion of the composers and their music in relation to Feldman from generally less to more Feldmanesque. As mentioned, there is a fair bit of subjective reasoning involved here, despite the more formal approach to analysis in this chapter. Nevertheless, there are some useful inferences to be drawn regarding Feldman's influence on the experimental scene both as it is represented by the composers described here and generally, and these are the subject of the chapter's conclusion.

4.2 The groups

4.2.1 The 'no acknowledgement' group

Although the three composers included in this section concede no debt to Feldman (in the case of two he was virtually an unknown quantity), they all seem worthy of comment, given their musical proclivities in the context of the experimental music world.

Ulyatt

Charlie Ulyatt's music is mainly improvised and not notated. It is slightly outside the classical camp, then. A lot of the music is quiet and meditative, as previously reported in chapter 3, but this is no tribute to Feldman, it appears. The similarity (perhaps superficial) to the music of some of the Wandelweiser associates allows one to assume that Ulyatt is one of many composers who tend to dwell in the territory of the quiet and the understated.

Matthews

Despite her relevant unawareness of Feldman's output, some of Emma-Kate Matthews' works end up resembling Feldman in terms of their meditative quality and notational practices. Matthews acknowledges the influence of the experimental scene as a whole (many of her pieces, for example, are in the form of sound installations that vary with the immediate indoor environment), but the Feldman spectre has somehow also made its presence felt.

Gottschalk

Jennie Gottschalk often employs a limited range of pitches that creates stasis, or, as she prefers to describe it, a more focused effect in terms of other musical parameters. This is something that Feldman tends not to do, at least in the earlier works; instead he often makes use, as has been mentioned, of the full chromatic range (later works feature passages where a limited range of pitches is employed, but these tend to be transitory and by no means structurally

fundamental). Like Matthews, Gottschalk tends towards a gentle and slow-paced, rather than a brash and dramatic environment and, again like Matthews, some of her scores are in the same way vaguely Feldmanesque, as regards, say, the spacing of sounds (recalling his second middle period; see Ex. 11(i), (ii) and (iii) on pages 92, 93 and 94, showing the starts of works by all three composers). Admittedly, the similarities are not altogether compelling, but the general approach bears comparison.

4.2.2 The ‘partial acknowledgement’ group

The four composers included in this section suggested that Feldman was not a major influence on their work, although his status in the experimental genre seemed to go unquestioned.

Brandes

Daniel Brandes senses a connection with Feldman as regards a fondness for low dynamics (though he was writing quiet pieces before he was introduced to Feldman’s music), and particularly relates to the phenomenon of the sense of touch, a subject that was broached with respect to Feldman earlier on here. He has in general moved away from precise scoring, thus disassociating himself from Feldman’s ‘intuitive attitude’ to pitch choice. Nevertheless, the piece *somewhere and somewhen* employs racecourse notation in its last section, a practice first attributed to Feldman, as discussed. There is little else in his music that is particularly reminiscent of Morton Feldman.

Pisaro

Michael Pisaro uses highly descriptive titles: *A mist is a collection of points*, *Descending Series*, *A Drum acted upon by Friction, Gravity and Electricity*, and so on (compare Saunders), in contrast to Feldman’s more perfunctory, ‘musical’ titles (stating the forces, for example). *Mist* (2014) has a section with stemless pitches and space-time notation with spacings that become gradually more densely packed and a soundscape rather reminiscent of the two fast sections of Feldman’s *Last Pieces*. Unlike Feldman in general, Pisaro employs electronics (inter alia, amplification and sine tones), and allows for a good deal of freedom in performance – working to texts and sets of instructions, for example. Others have commented on some sort of indebtedness to Feldman (e.g. Olewnick in his review of Philip Thomas’s recording of works by Pisaro: see list of references). Pisaro’s acknowledgement of Feldman is more one that relates to the experimental movement overall, but he mentions musical form and Feldman’s long works as points of interest. Some of Pisaro’s compositions are actually very long indeed (see chapter 1).

Sfirri

Sam Sfirri uses text scoring quite frequently, but he also points to a possible influence from Feldman in the area of notation. Even so, the scores I have to hand (e.g. *Octet* of 2011) are frankly baffling in terms of how they are to be interpreted (though Sfirri is hardly alone here) and do not resemble on paper anything that Feldman ever wrote. None of the works I have listened to (in part) – *Rota Fortunae* (2019), *Skylark Quartet, Live in Tokyo* (2019), and *beckett pieces* (2011), among others – sound like Feldman as regards virtually any musical parameter whatsoever, except, perhaps, for the fact that his music is again often quiet and meditative.

Wolff

It may be a slightly bogus exercise to justify Feldman's influence on Christian Wolff, as they are to some degree contemporary and wrote music in the 1950s and 1960s that contributed to a general establishment of a movement (with Cage and Brown). Wolff's stylistic palette is a broad one and very little of it seems to emulate the Feldman 'sound'.

4.2.3 The 'unambiguous acknowledgement' group

All these composers stated that Feldman's music had had an impact on their own. This section is structured in such a way that those composers whose music seems less connected to Feldman are considered earlier on, and then attention is given to those who take their cue from Feldman more plainly. It needs to be added, however, that the sequencing is not based on an exhaustive reading of their oeuvres (as mentioned, not all their scores are readily available, for example, and they are not all well represented on disc). Hopefully, the content for each composer will provide some support for the methodology.

Saunders

James Saunders is interested in overall duration, but, intriguingly, wrote a series of fully notated pieces which are all very short – in response to Feldman's late long works! Nevertheless, the influence of Feldman, though recognised by Saunders, is notional rather than musically apparent. Much of his work follows in the footsteps of Wolff in terms of its communal set-up and (semi-) improvisatory demands.

Block

Low dynamics and 'blurred' patterning are both self-confessed acknowledgements of Feldman's influence on Olivia Block. In other respects, her output generally seems far removed from Feldman's world, as Block associates herself more with the concepts that typically go with the work of performance/sound artists, and she uses electronics liberally (nearly all Feldman is acoustic). Some of her pieces (*Karren: Opening Night*, *Lazarus*) are conventionally notated and have a beauty all their own. *Opening Night*, for example, with its lush and intricate textures, is reminiscent of some of Feldman's orchestral pieces, such as *Coptic Light*. Other works recall some of the work of the Wandelweiser community composers (quiet and static sonic environments with electronics).

Hobbs

The music of Christopher Hobbs appears to be in a range of styles, few of which are particularly reminiscent of Feldman, although, he, like Parsons, venerates Feldman as someone who lets 'the sounds be themselves',⁷⁸ and one presumes that his compositional attitude is not opposed to this way of thinking. His *Sudoku 82*, in its version for solo piano, is a mainly quiet, slow-paced work that has a mellow, laid-back, serene sound. Despite its tranquil mood, it differs from anything that might be labelled Feldmanesque, not least because it, like much post-Feldman experimental music, explores consonance to a far greater degree than anything in the

⁷⁸ See Appendix VI.

American composer's oeuvre (the same can be said for much of the work of Skempton and Catlin Smith, among others, both of whose work is described later in this chapter). Hobbs is also closely associated with composing based on the use of randomly generated numbers and mathematically determined patterning – systems, whether closed or open – which, in this particular instance, probably aligns him to some degree with the minimalists.⁷⁹ This all contrasts strongly with Feldman's approach to writing music. Something else that distinguishes Hobbs's from most of Feldman's output is a fondness for the less controlled aspects of experimental music (as exemplified by La Monte Young and Cage) and his reliance on chance operations and other more formalised procedures to determine the outcome of his scores, one example being the piano work *L'Auteur se retire*, where music by Schubert is 'reorganised' according to a preordained system.

Bryars

In terms of style, Gavin Bryars is hard to pin down. He sees an influence from Feldman in the area of harmony,⁸⁰ although his penchant for consonance and his music's veering towards tonality are both at odds with Feldman's insistent dissonance/non-tonality. He is much closer to Feldman in the broader framework of low dynamics and generating a sustained air of calm, a placid environment where, in his case, melancholy also plays a role, though that is something that in all likelihood sets him apart from the rather more amotional Feldman. Bryars is a double bass player and has a fondness for low registers (he seems to avoid violins altogether), and it may not be too fanciful to suggest that sometimes this 'sunken' feeling in his work parallels to some degree the more ponderous sections of Feldman's orchestral writing.⁸¹ (Bryars' *The Sinking of the Titanic* is a famous piece that fits this description). With Bryars there is often little or no contrast in mood throughout a given work, to an extent that goes beyond Feldman, who from time to time makes room for loud blasts of sound, sudden rhythmic scurries and unexpected silences, all of which features have been remarked upon here. Another point of comparison with Feldman, though, is the static quality of Bryars' longer pieces, which, as he puts it, 'don't get anywhere'.⁸² The same could be said, though not in any disparaging sense, of Feldman's long compositions.

Fox

Christopher Fox's music is varied in style and does not draw on Feldman in any comprehensive way. Nevertheless, in his own words, he sees an influence in all musical parameters, at least at one time or another, and there are some features of his music that recall Feldman unambiguously.

On perhaps what is a more superficial note, the scores of his piano works *L'ascenseur* (2010–12) and *Thermogenesis* (2005) bear a striking resemblance, in terms of their notation, to the Feldman works *For John Cage*, in particular, and *Patterns in a Chromatic Field*, to some degree. Example 12(i) and (ii) on pages 95 and 96 presents the opening of each of the first of the two works mentioned for each composer. One is struck by the similar approaches to scoring,

⁷⁹ It is a point of interest that Christopher Hobbs organised the first public performance in the UK of Riley's seminal work *In C*.

⁸⁰ See Appendix IV.

⁸¹ See the remark on *Violin and Orchestra* in chapter 2.

⁸² See Appendix IV.

and the Fox piece has other attributes he shares with Feldman generally. The notational (and general musical) features in common are the following.

- Rapidly changing time signatures
- Repeat and multi-repeat patterns
- The rhythmic complexity resulting from bracketed groupings within time signatures⁸³
- Fairly precise metronome tempo markings
- Accidentals individually marked (no key signatures)
- A closeness of pitches in either part/hand
- Step-like pitch sequencing
- By the end of the second system the Fox piece has achieved the full chromatic
- The sustaining pedal is held down throughout

Parsons

Like Hobbs, Michael Parsons has pursued a diverse style of composition and is quite clear about his avoidance of any consistent approach or development over the long term, with each new piece representing a fresh undertaking, as it were. By contrast, with Feldman there is patent evidence of an evolutionary history, as demonstrated in chapter 2. Parsons's music often features harmonic randomness, free tempi, and a sense of stasis, all of which place him in the Feldman camp, albeit perhaps not squarely. Furthermore, there is no insistence on low dynamics, for example (they are often free). Some of the works that are reminiscent of Feldman are:

- *Dispersal* (1999), which audibly conjures up some of Feldman's graph works, and is indeed based on diagrammatic notation.
- *Concertante I* (2014), which, as the title implies, is a sort of 'question and answer' exercise between the piano and other forces that somehow recalls Feldman's *Piano and String Quartet*.
- *Piano Piece September (2001)*, a truly Feldmanesque piano piece, to look at on paper at least, and which bears a striking resemblance, for instance, to at least one of the movements of *Last Pieces*, both notationally and even audibly (see Ex. 13(i) and (ii) on pages 97 and 98). The comparison is made all the more robust by the fact that Parsons's piece can be played in a second version with two players interpreting the same score in combination, although they are free as to where they start. The extra dynamic this achieves reflects the two faster movements of *Last Pieces*, where the durations are free and, in the case of one of them, free for each hand, producing the same sort of intriguing 'fudge' and a sense of 'stagger' in the music. However, a key difference between this work and Feldman is that Parsons uses space-time notation, which Feldman avoids.

The last-mentioned work here is one of a set that includes *Piano Piece May 2003*, which Harris (p 166) points to as an example of the importance Feldman has for Michael Parsons.

Nevertheless, in other works the music of Parsons has characteristics that are absent in Feldman: a penchant for intricate cross-rhythms that bear a resemblance to the minimalists, a fondness for 'academic' or more old-fashioned titles (canon, bagatelle, barcarolle, etc.),

⁸³ These include nested tuplets. This complicated patterning is reminiscent of the work of Ferneyhough and others, though the insistent repetition of passages in the Fox pieces and in the equivalent Feldman works set them apart from the 'irrational notation' of the so-called new complexity.

elements of tonality (*Second Bagatelle*, 1990, *Fifth Bagatelle*, 2011) and a clear interest in melody (*Highland Variations*, 1972).

Ceccarelli

According to Isaiah Ceccarelli, Morton Feldman has had an overall aesthetic effect on him as a composer, and that is fairly apparent in the music, with its air of tenderness and its quiet dynamics. There the comparison probably ends, however, except perhaps as regards the static quality in Ceccarelli, which is vaguely Feldmanesque but far more patent. Younger experimentalists frequently seem to exaggerate the qualities of earlier composers such as Feldman, and this observation applies here and also in the sections on Parkinson and Hannesson. On the other hand, Feldman is not the only composer to write music that evokes a sense of stasis, and Ceccarelli's apparent predilection for long, sustained sounds and drones probably owes more to the work of such pioneers as La Monte Young and Terry Riley.

As with Feldman, most of Ceccarelli's music is fully written out, though he sometimes opts for more 'open' formatting.

Parkinson

In mood and on paper, Tim Parkinson's *piano piece 2007* in parts recalls both Feldman's early piano music and aspects of his later work. The piece seems representative of Parkinson in general (it has elements in common with *piano piece 2006*, *orchestra piece* [2007], *septet* [2007] and *violin and piano piece* [2009], for example), and will serve here as one example of the composer's work to examine for the purposes of this exercise.

Like Bryars, Parkinson says he hears the sound he wants and then writes it, in his case, at least, later accepting or rejecting it. As with Feldman, there is little sense of continuity. Indeed, a random glance at, say, page 3 of the score reveals a series of gestures that seems to be an intended exercise in musical non-sequitur (see Ex. 14 on page 99). Some of this patterning relates to what comes earlier and/or later, and some does not.

Not all the music in this piece is akin to the Feldman style by any means, but there are at least two other passages that deploy compositional techniques one readily associates with him. Pages 14 to 15 cover a section that displays a series of iterative and subtly changing chords. Feldman's restatement and 'variants' approach, discussed in some detail in chapter 2, is here transferred to an updated environment in which the older composer's shadow seems to lurk (page 14 of the score is replicated here in Ex. 15 on page 100).

Secondly, the whole last section of *piano piece 2007* (see Ex. 16[i] and [ii] on pages 101 and 102) comprises a repeated pattern that bears comparison with the end of Feldman's *Intermission V* (the 'extended ending', as described in section f of chapter 2; also see Ex. 1), as well as other works by him. Once again, the patterning in the Parkinson piece is made more extreme (i.e. far more repetitive), in line, perhaps, with more recent trends in new music.

One final point can be made regarding Parkinson's music, though it is a purely subjective one. As with Feldman, sometimes, looking at the score may result in bemusement at what could be taken as triteness. Examples of this in Parkinson's case are motivic repetitions and up-and-down scalar movement, both of which appear on paper to constitute not much more than a banal exercise. Mysteriously, however, in the aural context, these gestures evoke – in the

author, at least – nothing less than a sense of fascination and the impression that something truly original has emerged from starkly restricted input.

Hannesson

Mark Hannesson's tranquil, meditative music owes a good deal to Feldman in terms of atmosphere. On the other hand, his occasional interest in electronic sound and in the abstractionism that characterises much of the Wandelweiser output, with its sustained, almost immobile soundscapes, set him rather apart from the Feldman camp, in these areas at least.

Much of Hannesson's output is loose in form, open in terms of instrumentation, and indeterminate with regard to outcome. Indeterminacy apart, these traits are not readily identifiable in Feldman's catalogue, but there are some aspects of the Canadian's music where the debt to Feldman is clear and, moreover, personally acknowledged by him. The piano piece *memory sustained* (2014) illustrates the connection well in certain respects. The score consists of four pages of a sequence of stemless pitches, a system of notation that Hannesson adopts from Feldman's *Last Pieces*.⁸⁴ In our interview Hannesson stated that he was influenced by Feldman in the area of harmony. That may not be immediately apparent here, but what is noteworthy is his use of ten different pitch-classes all within the first three systems of what is a sparsely marked score: not quite the full chromatic but clearly echoing a prevalent Feldman *modus operandi* (Ex. 17 on page 103 gives the complete first page of the score in question). Hannesson also shows that he is not averse to the inclusion of octaves, be they presented vertically or sequentially, and other consonantal chords, free of any tonal 'baggage'. This is also likely to be due to the Feldman influence, at least as far as octaves are concerned. But there are also clear differences between the two works: *memory sustained* is notated in space-time, which Feldman, as has been mentioned, rejected. Another crucial difference is the fact that Hannesson's piece has a linear flow that is missing from *Last Pieces*: a generalisation perhaps, but Feldman's music frequently seems far more concerned with the vertical aspect.

Furthermore, as in the Parkinson work considered previously, this Hannesson piece seems to 'take Feldman further'. It is as if those composers who borrow from Feldman and admit to being somehow indebted to him emulate his approach by going to greater extremes.⁸⁵ The landscape of *memory sustained* is altogether bleaker and more protracted than *Last Pieces* and Feldman as a whole, both aurally and visually, although this hardly detracts from the music's attractiveness.⁸⁶

The recorded version of Hannesson's piece is played by Roger Admiral on Edition Wandelweiser Records. It lasts 19 minutes. The other work on the disc is *the angel's game* (2014), lasting 48 minutes. It, too, is a slow-moving, quiet and gentle work. Apparently, the player was instructed to play all the music slightly faster than the composer had originally proposed, for technical reasons. Both works were therefore conceived as pieces lasting quite a bit longer. A certain fascination with the sheer length of some late Feldman is something that Mark Hannesson alludes to in the interview with him.

⁸⁴ See Appendix V.

⁸⁵ Jordan Nobles makes the same point in the interview with him. See Appendix VIII.

⁸⁶ Another instance of going beyond the Feldman palette of musical gestures is sustained levels of quietness. The music of Hannesson, Brandes, and Bryars, for example, tends to be quiet and restful *throughout*, while many of Feldman's scores, particularly from the earlier periods, not infrequently incorporate moments of brashness, noisy rumblings, sudden exclamations and the odd raspberry.

Skempton

The music of Howard Skempton uses some of Morton Feldman's compositional ideas as a starting point, but Skempton has turned them into something very much his own. Moreover, the picture is complicated by the realisation that Skempton has more recently perhaps gone beyond the parameters of what is normally associated with the experimental tradition.

Feldman's spartan piano scores from the 1950s, with their focus on pitch almost as an exclusive exercise, certainly seem to have worked their way into Howard Skempton's imagination, as he is also very prepared to concede.⁸⁷ Yet in the British composer's earliest music, he, like some others surveyed here, takes things further, if not to extremes. A compelling example of this is *September Song* (1968), a short piano piece (just 16 bars long), which utilises only three pitches, and which always appear in the same register. These are notated without stems, and their sequencing is the result of chance operations. The instruction at the head of the score reads: 'As slowly and quietly as possible'. The dramatically limited pitch range and use of chance methods are not modelled on Feldman in any way, but the overall soundscape – meditative, stark, slightly perplexing – as well, of course, as the playing instructions, all seem to constitute nothing less than a homage to the American.

Mention has been made more than once of Feldman's use of 'variants', slight changes in the scoring that establish dynamic flow in the midst of apparent 'motionlessness'. Skempton adopts this technique in a number of ways. For example, in the early work *First of All* (1968), for two melodicas, a basic set of six pitched chordal events is explored in a series of fifteen strictly sequential presentations, but with their recurrences and dynamic levels determined aleatorically (Ex. 18(i) and (ii) on pages 104 and 105 gives the complete score with instructions). Thus, whereas Feldman repeats ideas, either precisely or in varied form, over a long timeframe, Skempton, who is essentially a miniaturist, economises on material, making it work to the maximum. *September Song*, with its very restricted range of pitches, is, again, a good example of this. But even in his longer works – *Lento* (1994), for instance, which is in one movement lasting around 14 minutes – Skempton appears loath to overburden his music in terms of its core content. In the piece much of the music is repeated verbatim or in varied form.

Another example of this kind of restriction is *Piano Piece 1969*, where seven chords of imprecise duration are presented in random order (chance-determined), again over the space of 16 bars (32 soundings). The music is to be played 'Very slowly and quietly', and in this respect the general atmosphere is close to Feldman, although squeezing such a narrow range of material into what is a relatively brief space of time is unknown in Feldman. Durations are left free, but Skempton appears tacitly to prompt the player to sound the chords off the 'beat', as they are, in his words, 'jazzy'. This, he says, he takes from Feldman, who '[writes] the swing into the music' by means of such devices as placing a grace note just before the bar line.⁸⁸

This phenomenon warrants further investigation. Example 19 on page 106 attempts to draw a parallel between the two composers as regards what Skempton sees as an element of 'swing' that sometimes occurs in their music, in this case in his *Piano Piece 1969* and the Feldman work *Piano Piece (1964)*. The latter is – typically – precisely notated (in the main), but

⁸⁷ See Appendix XII.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

bizarrely written (for the time, at least), and in a way that might suggest an interpretation that incorporates a degree of lilt, despite the long pauses, silences and isolated sounds. Skempton's piece develops this suggestion, dramatically simplifying the scoring: according to him, the (jazzy or bluesy) character of the chords in some way determines when they are sounded, and the inference is that equal durations are not on the agenda. Instead, the music should 'swing', albeit very slowly indeed. The examples here give the first two systems of each work.

Feldman's apparent 'motionless' world has close ties with Skempton's music. It has, for example, transferred itself to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (2015), for baritone and small ensemble, his stunning setting of Coleridge's poem. Christopher Fox rejects the idea that Feldman's music is static,⁸⁹ and in this work by Skempton there is indeed a sense of continual momentum, like the gentle rocking of a ship. Nevertheless, this is cleverly set against a background of eerie stillness, achieved through subtle changes in instrumentation and texture, and the almost dogged reiteration of vocal melodies – at one point, of course, in the context of what must be some of the most famous lines in English poetry. Significantly, dynamics are kept low, a norm in the composer's output.

There are other traits of Skempton's work that invite comparisons with Feldman. One of the more obvious points of contact is the serene mood of Skempton's music, partly achieved by quiet dynamic markings and the implication of a call for touch in performance that is at once tender and un sentimental.

Another is Skempton's interest in orchestral colour, which he hints at in the interview. The large ensemble piece *Only the Sound Remains* (2010), besides anything else, is an exploration of tone colour, and even includes some elements of Feldman's penchant for what here is referred to as 'timbral closeness' (see chapter 2). On page 18 of Skempton's score, for instance, there is a brief passage where the piano and glockenspiel play in unison: the two sounds blend, making it hard to distinguish between them (see Ex. 20 on page 107). Another example of this kind of 'closeness' in the scoring appears on page 38, where harp, guitar and piano (all instruments that rely on the striking of strings) echo one another, this time in parameters additional to that of timbre: pitch and rhythm (see Ex. 21 on page 108). Admittedly, these episodes are veritably fleeting compared to equivalent passages in Feldman, which can be much longer, but there is a striking resemblance in approach.

Only the Sound Remains also partly relies on canonic patterns. Mention has been made earlier of Feldman's 'racecourse' constructions and their resulting canon-like effect. Feldman's racecourse structure is not precise in any way, of course: it is, inter alia, a device for extending the musical argument. However, whether or not Skempton's obvious fondness for canon, exemplified in works such as *Catch* (2001), *Tendrils* (2004) and *Moving On* (2016), all for string quartet, derives from Feldman is, frankly, an unanswered question.

As previously mentioned with regard to Feldman, Skempton's music shows an aversion to virtuosity, something he also shares with many of the other figures of experimental music (which is not to say their music is easy to play). In this regard it may be useful to compare score extracts from concerto-like works for piano and orchestra by both composers: Feldman's *Piano*

⁸⁹ See Appendix XV. Skempton himself says that Feldman 'doesn't hang about' (Appendix XII).

and *Orchestra* and Skempton's boldly entitled *Piano Concerto* (2016).⁹⁰ The first two pages of Skempton's score present the piano part as little more than a sequence of long-held chords, mainly sharing the harmonic material of different sections of the orchestra at different times and interspersed with the occasional arpeggio flourish (itself a Feldman characteristic) (see Ex. 22(i) and (ii) on pages 109 and 110). The soloist almost assumes a background role, and even the last eight bars of the movement, given over as they are to solo piano, seem little more than an embellishment of what has come before (Ex. 22(iii) on page 111 shows the last complete page of the concerto's first movement). This downbeat reappraisal of the 'normal' role of soloist is readily comparable with the stance adopted by Feldman in the work cited here. Example 22(iv) and (v) on pages 112 and 113 shows the first two pages of *Piano and Orchestra*. The minimal and generally unassuming nature of the piano part is reflected in the hushed repetition of single notes, the odd chord, and whole bars of silence, hardly conjuring up the grandiose nature of the opening of a concerto (not that Feldman gives it that title anyway, of course). It is more as if the piano has been invited along to a quiet orchestral soirée, where it is allowed to make a small contribution but not become the life and soul.⁹¹ The piano has a more pronounced role to play later in the Skempton piece, though, again, there is little sense of bravura or that the instrument should be in any sort of a superior position.

If Skempton's early output is a reflection of Feldman's supposed quest for letting the sounds be themselves (the harmonies, like Feldman's, tend to be dissonant, though less consistently so), rather more recently his music, including the *Piano Concerto*, with its hints of Arnold and Ravel, has developed to incorporate melodies, consonance, the use of triads, and tonality.⁹² Indeed, this emancipation of the consonance, as it were, and a new interest in melody are now familiar features of much of the new music (observable in the work of Bryars, Parsons, Lawrence Crane and Kevin Volans, for instance), and reveal something of a departure from the old school of experimentalists, Feldman included. Skempton's *Lento* and various other of his works even dare to occupy such previously alien territory as dramatic contrast and a degree of rhetoric/discursivity in the musical argument. However, the sheer unconventionality of procedures in these works may well argue for their inclusion in the experimental scene after all: for all its jauntiness and catchy melodies, Skempton's *Piano Concerto* is so structurally odd it would be a challenge to place it elsewhere.⁹³

Nobles

In his interview, Jordan Nobles describes his keen interest in Feldman, and, indeed, his *Chronostasis* (2013/rev. 2015), for piano, vibraphone and marimba, is dedicated to Feldman and comes with a programme note which reads: 'No doubt his music (Feldman's) has influenced mine in many ways'. A glance at the score (see Ex. 23 on page 114 reveals traits of Feldman (late period, in particular) and at least one approach that is different. The piece is scored for three pitched percussion instruments that give it a sense of timbral closeness, especially as much of the piano part is written in the upper registers. The writing for the piano and vibraphone often consists of rhythmic groupings that are out of synch with one another and

⁹⁰ Actually, it would be difficult to imagine anything fitting in more unconventionally with the general notion of the piano concerto than this, John Cage's contribution being a possible exception.

⁹¹ Indeed, the score calls for an orchestral piano part, thus doing even more to obfuscate the soloist's role as such, as well as making for an element of timbral closeness in places.

⁹² Three of the four movements of Skempton's choral piece *Rise up, my love* (2005) are clearly in B major.

⁹³ Skempton says that he enjoys mixing the familiar with the strange (see Appendix XII).

whose complexity tends to suggest that the performers need to ‘feel it’ rather than deliver a precise rendering. This indeterminate quality is heightened by the fact that the piano sustain pedal is held down throughout, creating a blurry, rather dreamlike ambience. The work mainly consists of a sequence of events spaced over five pages with what are essentially pauses between them (the vibraphone and piano parts are generally left to reverberate/vibrate while the marimba in the main continues with the tremolo figure with which it began each event. This gives the impression of a series of what are almost vertical statements. The dynamics are low throughout, and the mood is calm and composed. This sense of fragility is reminiscent of Feldman, but the other characteristics mentioned here are also found throughout the Feldman oeuvre and, more especially, perhaps, in his later offerings.

However, there is a key difference between the Nobles piece and Feldman’s way of working. In *Chronostasis* Nobles employs pitch groups which he tends to share across the instrumentation. System 2 in Ex. 23 presents the following pitch groupings for bars 29–32. The degree of pitch overlap between the instruments is very noticeable.

Bar 29

Vibraphone: G, C, B, Ab

Piano: G, C, Ab

Four pitch classes

Bar 30

Vibraphone: F, A, Ab (notated as G#)

Piano: A, Ab (notated as G#), C#, E

Five pitch classes

Bar 31

Vibraphone: C#, Bb, A

Piano: Gb, Bb, D

Marimba: Gb, Bb, D

Five pitch classes

Bar 32

Vibraphone: B, D, F#

Piano: Gb, Bb, D

Marimba: Gb, Bb, D

Five pitch classes

This same technique is found throughout, and is continually varied with no direct repetition of material. It is one that is not associated with Feldman, who instead manifestly relies, again more in the later works, on verbatim, or at least varied, repetition – to an extent, indeed, that is sometimes mesmerising. Jumbling pitches across the instrumentation to achieve a kind of ‘pitch identification’ is not a feature of the American’s music.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Something like it is sometimes found in Wolff, e.g. in his *For Piano I*, though here it is in terms of register rather than instrumentation.

This fondness for pitch unity may be a dividing line between the experimentalists generally. Skempton, for example, seems drawn to it in some works, while Parsons appears not to deploy any such method. The technique clearly brings a reassuring sense of overall integration within a work, but this would be an alien procedure in Feldman, who tends to progress far less transparently.

Nobles's piece *Periods* (2008), for small ensemble, shows the kind of restraint with respect to scoring that is typical of Feldman, in his middle period, for example. The piece begins in an atmosphere of tranquillity, with long held notes and reiterated pitches progressing quietly. But there is a definite momentum to the work, something of a 4/4 beat, and it seems to 'blossom' in a wealth of quietly dramatic gestures that recall Skempton in some way. Again, both composers appear to take Feldman as a starting point (albeit one of several) to create something entirely individual. As mentioned in chapter 3, Nobles is a successful composer in Canada, and it is not hard to see his appeal. Like Skempton, he is rooted in aspects of the experimentalist tradition, but at the same time he accomplishes a kind of populist style that, one supposes, can reach out to large audiences. Having said that, Nobles does not seem to have exploited the more conventional tools that Skempton sometimes employs – melody and drama, for example – and is possibly closer to Feldman than the British composer, in some aspects at least.

Nobles's music also has a North American feel to it. The jazz chords and general bluesiness of *Black, Red and Black* (2012), for solo piano, recall the works of Terry Jennings, a somewhat neglected pioneer of experimental music, championed to a degree by Cardew in the 1960s. The chord and note durations in the Nobles piece are free, as in early Feldman, though there is some space-time direction too (see Ex. 24 on page 115 for the entire score). The link between Feldman and jazz is not a clear one, but mention has already been made here of Feldman's 'American' sound.

Catlin Smith

The music of Jennings is recalled in the piano work *Bloom* (1996) by Linda Catlin Smith, with its long-held chords and step-like motifs that travel in the direction of fully blown melody, without quite making the whole journey. These are not wholly Feldmanesque techniques, but the air of calm and the dynamic markings (just *pp* and *ppp*) are a patent acknowledgement of Feldman's influence. Indeed, if one composer stands out in this group as the most obviously indebted to Morton Feldman, it is Catlin Smith.

In her replies to the questionnaire she mentions various musical parameters in which Feldman's music might have a presence. Some of these are investigated here.

Morning Glory (2007) is a work for a small ensemble lasting 13 minutes, and it bears more than a few of the hallmarks of the Feldman style. The piece begins with a series of varied workings on solo piano of two juxtaposed 'jazz' chords, B minor 7th and C major 7th (see Ex. 25[i] on page 116). This mesmeric reiteration of patterns opening the piece recalls Feldman in gesture, if not harmonically – again, it is the emphasis on repeated pitches or chords, seemingly for its own sake. When the rest of the group enter (see Ex. 25[ii]), several things take place inviting comment. While the piano part in the main goes on the way it started, the flute and clarinet embark on a meandering motif that hovers step-wise in semitones and whole tones, using pitches that should sound harshly dissonant against the piano riff (F#, F natural, G natural and G#), but do not jar, thanks, in part, to the low dynamics and sustained pedalling. Instead,

an atmosphere of otherworldliness prevails. Meanwhile, the strings (violin and cello) play muted fourths that are harmonically independent of what is happening elsewhere. By bar 24, ten pitch classes of the full chromatic range have been presented. The vibraphone tends to repeat, and thus echo, the piano figurations in the same register, making for timbral closeness. The flute/clarinet motif develops into something more linear and flowing and is joined now by the violin playing in unison, but it is not long before the whole texture becomes blurred – the notes are the same, but they appear out of synch across the instrumentation, and the writing is now exceedingly rhythmically complex (though, again, the quietness of the piece belies any sense of melodrama). Later on, unpitched percussion instruments have a prominent role, for a while sharing a passage with pizzicato strings (more timbral vagueness here), and eventually having a solo function. As suggested, everything mentioned here is very characteristic too of Feldman, as described more fully in chapter 2. It is, moreover, probably not too far-fetched to say that, apart from its bluesy edge, *Morning Glory* shares something in mood and technique with the music of Skempton.⁹⁵

Both *Gondola* (2007) for string quartet and *Piano Quintet* (2014) share some of the features of *Morning Glory*, including the continued reworking of material in the evolution of a structure and a predominantly restful atmosphere, both à la Feldman.⁹⁶ However, the Canadian composer's toolkit of compositional techniques and modes of expression is extensive, even if much of her work still subtly conveys a 'Catlin Smith sound'. *Dirt Road* (2006), for example, a work in 15 sections for violin and percussion, explores an array of moods and gestures (melodic, rhythmic, timbral, etc.), whereas the listener is never quite distracted from a prevailing sensation of loneliness (as reflected in the title). Part 7 presents a series of chords regularly spaced in the vibraphone part against a 'beat' on the bass drum, with the violin entering across the beat with long sustained single notes in a low register. The look of the score and the whole atmosphere reference Feldman, though the musical content – except, perhaps, for tempo and dynamics – is anything but normal Feldman style: the vibraphone chords are not particularly dissonant (there is a general avoidance of clusters), the bass drum entries are for the most part regular, and there is no 'staggering' of the rhythmic infrastructure. Example 26 on page 118 gives the first page of part 7 of *Dirt Road*.

As with the other composers described here, Catlin Smith has developed her own style and way of doing things. She has also gained international fame (her recent work *Nuages*, for orchestra, had its premiere at the London Proms in 2019), this despite her not appearing to have made any concessions to populism, her music being totally rooted in the experimental tradition. She was not a pupil of Feldman's, but she attended his talks and her earlier work in particular would seem to owe much to him.

⁹⁵ One example of this might be a liking for reiterated triads in arrhythmic groupings.

⁹⁶ Another interesting point of comparison with Feldman in *Piano Quintet* is how the piano writing is unintegrated throughout with the material for the string parts. Quite apart from the very obvious impression one gets that the piano should not stand out as having a 'solo' role, it is not as if it even provides any sort of commentary. This 'separation of powers' in the instrumentation is something that has been noted with respect to Feldman, and is evident in such works as his *Piano and String Quartet* and *Violin and String Quartet*, where, in both, the material given to the individual instruments cited in the respective titles and that for the rest of the group is rarely, if ever, shared. Admittedly, in *Piano and String Quartet* there is a degree of complementarity between piano and strings, but the non-integration of parts in general is something readily noted in Feldman, even if the practice may not be exclusive to him.

A particularly striking example of this is the string quartet work *Clay* (1979). Isolated utterances interspersed with sustained notes with overlaps between instruments, longish periods of silence within parts and sometimes briefly overall, a lack of in-your-face drama, partly achieved by an abundance of pizzicato; a time signature of 3/8 with a metronome tempo indication, piano/pianissimo the dominant dynamic markings, verbatim pitch repetitions, and a vaguely spartan look to the scoring (incorporating something of a tribute to Webern) all immediately recall Feldman, though, again, there are clear differences in technique. Example 27(i) on page 119 gives the first page of the score, for comparison with a one-page excerpt from Feldman's *Three Pieces for String Quartet* (see Ex. 27[ii]).

To be fair, this is no mere emulation of the music of Morton Feldman. Catlin Smith has, as it were, reconsidered the situation and approached things from another angle. On the other hand, Feldman's piece dates from 1956, twenty years before *Clay* was written in 1976 and the year of his *First String Quartet*. The older composer had clearly moved on!

Both extracts include at least one example of either an unattached or a 'redundant' grace note (one appearing, for example, just before the end of the measure but continuing into the next measure by means of a slur). Feldman's innovative grace notes, more or less unique to him and touched on briefly in chapter 2, are a familiar sight to all his interpreters, and their use in the Catlin piece here described drives home the notion that she was indeed in awe of his work (as she has implied she was).

All the same, Linda Catlin Smith's fondness for grace notes seems to have evolved into a notational practice that is all her own. In the piano piece *The Underfolding* (2001), for instance, she calls for the use of 8th, 16th and 32nd grace notes that 'denote three levels of quickness', as the score instructions read. Grace notes consisting of fairly full chords adorn her piano scores and parts quite frequently, giving the music a dreamy, reverberant quality. Again, they are very characteristic of their creator and contribute to the overall aesthetic attractiveness of Catlin Smith's work.

4.3 Conclusion

The extent of Morton Feldman's influence on the composers considered here ranges widely, from the non-existent to the fairly obvious. This conclusion is based on both what the people consulted had to say themselves about the matter but also, more particularly in this chapter, through an examination of some of the music itself. Composers employ some of Feldman's techniques and relate to his general mindset to varying degrees.

The following deductions can be reached as a result of the analysis.

- Some of the composers consulted take their cue from Feldman as regards their approach to writing music, but others seem to have taken different paths.
- Some of the composers who appear close to Feldman have emulated his style to a degree but have taken things further, as discussed.
- The seemingly intuitive approach to writing and allowing the sounds to speak for themselves are important starting points for many, even though these features may not be exclusive to Feldman.

- Feldman's fondness for restraint, low dynamics, and an altogether unruffled atmosphere is very evidently reflected in the work of most of the figures examined here. This is by far the most consistent aspect of his apparent legacy.

CONCLUSION

Morton Feldman's music appears to be gaining popularity generally, but he is also highly regarded in the musical world, more particularly, perhaps, among those directly or indirectly associated with experimental music. Although he was a member of the New York School of experimentalists active mainly in the 1950s and 1960s, much of his work remains distinct from the others in various ways and as described here. He was, furthermore, a great innovator as a composer and a pioneer of indeterminate music, indeterminacy being one of the hallmarks of the experimental style (in both the past and the present), and the one single factor that Cage isolated when attempting to define this kind of music.

Feldman has probably been a source of inspiration for many composers who came later, and not just those included in the survey conducted as part of this project. This is borne out to some extent by the literature, both on Feldman and on the experimental tradition generally. Nevertheless, far from emulating his style closely, these composers have tended to pursue their own compositional paths. The admiration that they have voiced for Feldman is often more connected with his lack of any strict systematic approach to writing music, the avoidance of musical rhetoric and drama, and his exploration of the notion of letting the sounds speak for themselves, all of which are also common characteristics of experimental music. The qualitative study conducted and referred to in chapter 3 of this dissertation reveals the scope of that admiration, albeit among a restricted number of respondents. It is nevertheless nothing short of uncanny to see the extent to which so many of these composers have opted for an overall approach for which Feldman was almost solely responsible: the creation of pieces of music that are entirely, or mainly, quiet (sometimes very quiet indeed!), apparently for the sake of quietness.

Whether the soft option is an unconscious reaction to the times we live in is a matter of conjecture. Furthermore, and as one interviewee in this study remarked,⁹⁷ not all experimental music is tranquil and restrained. All the same, Feldman's music and the music it has influenced may well be a fitting response to the 'noisy' world.

His clear credentials as an experimentalist notwithstanding, Feldman adheres to a number of compositional conventions. Most of his scores are precisely notated, and there is a very apparent development in his output in terms of overall time and length. He employed a variety of devices to create longer pieces, partly, one assumes, to meet the demands of his emerging status as a classical composer working with established performers. His works for soloist and orchestra/ensemble, while not pretending to be contexts for showmanship and virtuosity, nevertheless set up a conventional musical environment that many other experimental composers would in all likelihood see as undesirable, perhaps daunting.

The correlation in this essay between the responses of the composers interviewed and the findings in the analyses of their works and Feldman's is inevitably somewhat bitty. The endeavour was never one to conduct an exhaustive study of Feldman's influence on each of the 19 composers and, indeed, the experimental scene generally, since such a mammoth undertaking would have been beyond the scope of the dissertation. Furthermore, there are some features of Feldman's music that others have apparently opted not to adopt: the use of 'variants' to extend the argument (Catlin Smith may be an exception), excessively long overall duration

⁹⁷ James Saunders.

(Pisaro's long pieces possibly have their roots elsewhere), and the box-like graphic notation of some of the earlier works (possibly because they do not portray the composer in his true light).

All the same, the survey does indicate that many of Feldman's ideas and compositional devices have been picked up, and, in some cases, the influence is very evident indeed. Hopefully, the extracts from scores presented here will have helped the reader identify some aspects of that impact.

Despite the numerous writings on Feldman, until now there has been no attempt at a comprehensive survey of his influence on other composers associated with experimental music. This account should serve to rectify that situation to a degree, though the absence of any complete biography and description of his output in English suggests that this too is something that needs to be addressed. It is to be hoped that much of the material presented here might provide a source of reference for such a venture, one which, indeed, this author may decide in the near future to undertake.

Finally, the story goes that Feldman was approached by a young woman in the street in the 1960s proclaiming that he was New York's (or the American) Schubert. His was hardly a well-known face in musical circles at the time, so the story may be apocryphal. Today the incident, true or false, probably goes hand in hand with the general recognition that Feldman has earned over the decades as one of the 'great' composers. His huge output, new ideas and creativity mean that his celebrity as a composer in the future is very likely assured. Hopefully, too, it has been demonstrated here that his legacy for the experimental music scene, both in the UK and North America, and even globally, is a very real one.

MUSIC EXAMPLES

The image shows three systems of musical notation for piano. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. The first system is numbered 55, the second 62, and the third 67. The music is in 3/4 time and features a simple harmonic progression with quarter and eighth notes. The first system has three measures, the second has four measures, and the third has four measures. The notation is clear and legible.

Ex. 1 FELDMAN

THE LAST 18 BARS OF
INTERMISSION 5

The image shows three systems of musical notation for piano. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. The first system has a treble staff with a 7/16 time signature and a bass staff with a 3/8 time signature. The second system has a treble staff with a 5/16 time signature and a bass staff with a 3/8 time signature. The third system has a treble staff with a 2/4 time signature and a bass staff with a 5/8 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs.

Ex.2 FELDMAN

SUPER-IMPOSED
SCORING IN
PIANO (1977)

The performer is called upon to interpret the three systems simultaneously, while noting the varied time signatures across them. Note, too, that the time signatures only 'add up' in the context of the whole page (i.e. six systems on page 25 of the score).



Ex. 3 FELDMAN

THE FIRST TWO SYSTEMS
OF PIECE FOR FOUR
PIANOS

Performance instructions:
'The first sound with all pianos
simultaneously. Durations for each
sound are chosen by the performer.
All beats are slow and not
necessarily equal. Dynamics are low
with a minimum of attack. Grace
notes should not be played too
quickly. Numbers between sounds
are equal to silent beats.'

The image shows a page of a musical score for 'Ex. 4(i) FELDMAN VIOLON AND ORCHESTRA, p 20'. The score is written for a solo violon and a full orchestra. The instruments listed on the left are:

- HP. 1 (Harp 1)
- HP. 2 (Harp 2)
- PF. 1 (Piano 1)
- PF. 2 (Piano 2)
- SOLO VI. (Solo Violon)
- GLOCK. (Glockenspiel)
- Perc. (Percussion)
- SOLO VI. (Solo Violon - second system)
- VLA. (Viola)
- VC. (Violin)
- CB. (Cello)

The score contains various musical notations and markings:

- Dynamics:** *ppp* (pianississimo) and *pppp* (pianissimissimo) are used throughout.
- Articulation:** *acc.* (accents) are present in the piano parts.
- Performance Markings:** Letters 'a', 'b', and 'c' are written below the staves, often with arrows pointing to specific musical phrases or patterns.
- Other markings:** *rit.* (ritardando) and *rit.* (ritardando) are used in the solo violon part.

Ex. 4(i) FELDMAN VIOLON AND ORCHESTRA, p 20 PATTERNS MARKED a, b AND c

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a violin and orchestra. The score is organized into systems. The top system includes staves for Violin I (V1), Violin II (V2), Violoncello I (C1), Violoncello II (C2), and Double Bass (B). Below this, there are staves for woodwinds, including Flute (Fl), Clarinet (Cl), Bassoon (Bs), and Saxophone (Sax). The score contains complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings such as 'more' and 'pizz' (pizzicato). There are also some handwritten annotations and arrows pointing to specific parts of the score.

Ex. 4(ii) FELDMAN VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA, p 21 PATTERNS MARKED a(2) AND b(2)

CL. (p)

B. CL. (p)

E. HN. (p)

BN. (p)

HN. (p)

TRP. (p)

TBN. (p)

B. TBN. (p)

SOLO VN.

VIA.

VC.

CB. (p)

c(2)

Ex. 4(iii) FELDMAN

VIOLIN AND
ORCHESTRA, p 22

PATTERN MARKED c(2)

55

FL (ACO)
 OB.
 CL.
 HN.
 TRP.
 TBN.
 1.
 HP
 2.
 VIB.
 Perc.
 snare
 tom
 cym.
 tri.
 C.
 D.B.

Ex.5 FELDMAN
 NEITHER, p 34

- Examples of:
- contrary-wise glissandi on strings (cellos)
 - 'stirring' movements around four/five notes on vibraphone
 - complex patterns in the wind and brass sections

Ex. 6 FELDMAN

STRING QUARTET NO. 1,
pp 19-20

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves. Each staff begins with a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. There are also some rests and dynamic markings like *mp* (mezzo-piano) interspersed throughout the system.

The second system of the musical score consists of four staves. It continues the musical material from the first system, with *pizz.* markings and dynamic indications like *mp* and *mf* (mezzo-forte) visible. The notation is dense with rhythmic patterns.

The third system of the musical score consists of four staves. The *pizz.* markings are prominent, and the dynamics fluctuate between *mp* and *mf*. The rhythmic complexity remains high, with many beamed notes.

The fourth system of the musical score consists of four staves. This system features a variety of dynamic markings, including *mp*, *mf*, and *f* (forte). The *pizz.* markings continue to be used throughout the system.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a piano trio, consisting of two systems of staves. Each system includes a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass line. The notation is dense, featuring complex textures with many notes and rests. Above the staves, there are various markings, including '2X5', '3X5', and '4X5', which likely refer to specific fingering or articulation techniques. Pedaling instructions are present, with 'ped →' at the beginning of the first system and 'no ped.' at the end of the second system. The overall appearance is that of a working manuscript or a score with specific performance instructions.

Ex. 7 FELDMAN MOMENTS OF EERIENESS AND
EXAMPLES OF FUSSY SCORING IN TRIO

The image displays a page of musical notation for a string quartet. It consists of three systems of four staves each, representing the four instruments. The notation is dense with various rhythmic and melodic patterns. Key markings include 'pizz' (pizzicato) and 'arco' (arco). The first system shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The second system continues this complexity with similar rhythmic structures. The third system features a more regular, repeating rhythmic pattern, with 'pizz' and 'arco' markings indicating changes in playing technique. The overall texture is highly rhythmic and intricate.

Ex. 8 FELDMAN MULTIPLE REPEAT PATTERNS IN
STRING QUARTET NO. 2

The image shows two systems of musical notation. Each system consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'ALTO', the middle 'CH.', and the bottom 'PF.'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The time signatures for the three instruments in each system are not aligned, illustrating the concept of 'non-aligned time signatures' mentioned in the caption.

Ex. 9 FELDMAN

FROM: FOR PHILIP
GUSTON

The non-aligned time signatures across the three instruments 'add up', so that some degree of synchronisation is ultimately achieved.

The image displays three systems of handwritten musical notation, labeled 'a', 'b', and 'c'. Each system consists of two staves. System 'a' shows a dense sequence of notes and rests across eight measures. Systems 'b' and 'c' show a more sparse notation, with notes and rests appearing in a structured, repetitive pattern across their respective measures. The notation is characteristic of Christian Wolff's style, featuring complex rhythmic structures and often including rests.

Ex.10 FELDMAN FOR CHRISTIAN WOLFF: RESTATEMENTS AND 'VARIANTS' ON SUCCESSIVE PAGES OF THE SCORE (MARKED a, b AND c)

$\text{♩} = 63 \text{ ca.}$

Clarinet

Voice

Violoncello

Contrabass

8

15

con sord.

pizz.

arco

Ex. 11(i) FELDMAN
 THE START OF VOICE AND
 INSTRUMENTS 2 (1974)

The image displays a musical score for two piccolos and piano. The top system consists of two staves, both labeled 'piccolo', with dynamic markings *ff*, *pp*, *p*, *f*, *mf*, and *mp*. The middle system is a grand staff with piano accompaniment, featuring dynamic markings *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, and *ff*. The bottom system is another grand staff with piano accompaniment, featuring dynamic markings *pp* and *ff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic hairpins.

Ex. 11(iii) GOTTSCHALK
THE START OF ENCLOSED IV,
FOR TWO PICCOLOS (2007)

$\text{♩} = 88$ ($\text{♩} = 132$)

f

hold nothing until through

x5

x5

x5

x5

x5

x5

x5

Ex. 12(i) FOX
 THE START OF L'ASCENSEUR,
 FOR PIANO (2010-2)

♩ = 63 - 66
 sord.
 (leather mute)

Violin

Piano

(PPP)

1/2 ♩ →

3 x

4 x

5 x

6 x

7 x

6 x

5 x

Ex. 12(ii) FELDMAN
 THE START OF
 FOR JOHN CAGE (1982)



Ex. 13(i) PARSONS

THE START OF PIANO PIECE
SEPTEMBER 2001, PART 1

Slow. Soft. Durations are free.

Ex. 13(ii) FELDMAN
THE FIRST MOVEMENT
OF LAST PIECES, FOR
PIANO (1959)



Ex. 14 PARKINSON

APPARENTLY NONSEQUENTIAL
PATTERNING IN PIANO PIECE 2007

♩ = 100

CLASSICAL MUSIC IS DIVIDED INTO THESE PERIODS:

1. RENAISSANCE (1400-1600)
2. BAROQUE (1600-1750)
3. CLASSICAL (1750-1825)
4. ROMANTIC (1825-1900)
5. EARLY 20th CENTURY (1900-1945)
6. MODERNISM (1945-1975)
7. POSTMODERNISM (1975-PRESENT)

Ex. 15 PARKINSON

THE FELDMANESQUE RESTATEMENT
AND 'VARIANTS' APPROACH IN
PIANO PIECE 2007

Ex. 16(i) PARKINSON

THE FELDMANESQUE
'EXTENDED ENDING' TO
PIANO PIECE 2007, p 22

Ex. 16(ii) PARKINSON

PIANO PIECE 2007:

CONTINUATION OF Ex. 16(i), p 23

quiet, slow and calm

ppp

molto pedal, lots of sustain

pp

Ex. 17 HANNESSON
THE FIRST PAGE OF
MEMORY SUSTAINED

a

b

c

d

e

f

DYNAMICS

p	<f>
<f>	p

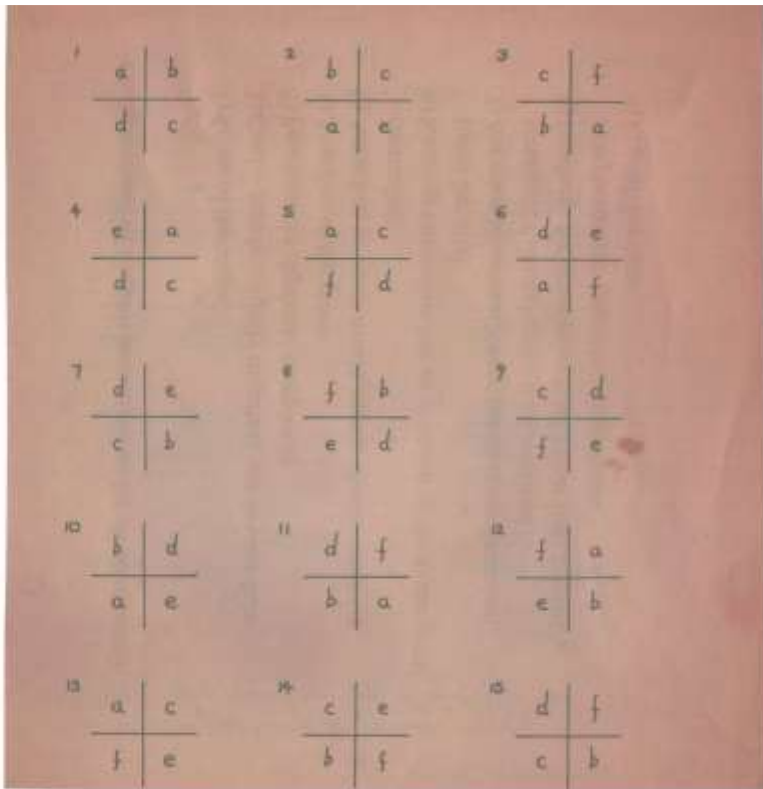
Dynamics are free

Each player should select one letter in each group.
The groups should be played in the order indicated.

C. Skempton 1955

Ex. 18(i) SKEMPTON

FIRST OF ALL, FOR TWO
SOPRANO MELODICAS, p 1



Ex. 18(ii) SKEMPTON

FIRST OF ALL, p 2

Piano Piece (1964)

Morton Feldman

Extremely soft

$\text{♩} = 42-76$

8va

8va

Piano Piece 1969

HOWARD SKEMPTON

Very slowly and quietly

8va

Ex. 19 FELDMAN; SKEMPTON

145

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. in B

Bsn.

Hn. in F

Tpt. (C)

Tbn.

Perc. Glockenspiel *mp*

Harp

Pno.

Vla.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vc.

Db.

Ex. 20 SKEMPTON

'TIMBRAL CLOSENESS'
 (GLOCKENSPIEL AND PIANO)
 IN ONLY THE SOUND REMAINS

307 (Mar.)

The image shows two systems of musical notation for measures 307-309. The first system (measures 307-308) includes staves for Percussion (Perc.), Harp (Hp.), Guitar (Gtr.), Piano (Pno.), and Viola (Via.). The second system (measures 308-309) includes staves for Percussion (Perc.), Harp (Hp.), Guitar (Gtr.), Piano (Pno.), and Viola (Via.). The score is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The Percussion part consists of sustained chords. The Harp part features a melodic line with grace notes. The Guitar part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Piano part has a melodic line with grace notes. The Viola part has a melodic line with grace notes.

Ex. 21 SKEMPTON

TIMBRAL, RHYTHMIC AND PITCH
'CLOSENESS' (PIANO, GUITAR AND
HARP) IN ONLY THE SOUND
REMAINS

Andante ♩ = 74

Flutes 1, 2

Oboes 1, 2

Clarinets in Bb 1, 2

Bassoons 1, 2

Horns in F 1, 2

Trumpets in C 1, 2

Trombones 1, 2, 3

Solo Piano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

Andante ♩ = 74

div. unit.

EX. 22(i) SKEMPTON

THE START OF PIANO CONCERTO

The image displays a page of a musical score for a piano concerto. The score is arranged in a system of staves, each labeled with an instrument. From top to bottom, the staves are: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. (Bb)), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn in F (Hn. (F)), Trumpet in C (C Tpt.), Solo Piano (Solo Pno.), Violin I (Vin. I), Violin II (Vin. II), Viola (Via.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The music is written in a common time signature. The piano part features complex textures with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The strings play a rhythmic accompaniment with some 'div.' (divisi) and 'unis' (unison) markings. The woodwinds have melodic lines with some slurs and accents. The score is numbered '5' at the beginning of the first staff.

EX: 22(ii) SKEMPTON PIANO CONCERTO:
CONTINUATION OF Ex. 22(i)

Ex. 22(iii) SKEMPTON PIANO CONCERTO: THE END OF THE FIRST MOVEMENT

♩ = 100 extremely quiet, without the feeling of a beat

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation. At the top, there is a tempo and dynamic instruction: "♩ = 100 extremely quiet, without the feeling of a beat". The score is organized into systems of staves. The first system includes woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone) and strings. The second system continues with woodwinds and strings. The third system includes woodwinds, strings, and a piano part. The piano part has a complex rhythmic pattern with numbers 3, 5, 3, 2, 8, 5, 7, 2 written above it. The fourth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The fifth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The sixth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The seventh system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The eighth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The ninth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The tenth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The eleventh system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The twelfth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The thirteenth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The fourteenth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The fifteenth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The sixteenth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The seventeenth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The eighteenth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The nineteenth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The twentieth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The twenty-first system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The twenty-second system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The twenty-third system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano. The twenty-fourth system includes woodwinds, strings, and piano.

Ex. 22(iv) FELDMAN THE START OF PIANO AND ORCHESTRA (1975)

Ex. 22(v) FELDMAN PIANO AND ORCHESTRA:
CONTINUATION OF Ex. 22(iv)

The image displays a musical score for three systems, numbered 25, 29, and 33. Each system consists of four staves: Violin (Vn), Viola (Vla), Piano (Pno), and Cello/Double Bass (Vcl/Db). The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and dynamic markings. The score is presented in a clean, professional layout with clear staff lines and notes.

Ex. 23 NOBLES

FROM: CHRONOSTASIS

Adagio, performer can play each chord solid or arpeggiate up or down at will

pp

hold sustain pedal down throughout

10" 20"

30" 40"

50" 1'00"

1'10" 1'20"

1'30" 1'40"

1'50" 2'00" (Repeat Optional)

Ex. 24 NOBLES BLACK, RED AND BLACK

*calmly, freely
quietly cantabile*
♩ = 52

Flute
Clarinet in Bb
Vibraphone
Piano
Violin
Violoncello

rit.
p

rit.
*gradually release pedal
maintaining 4th finger*

f

Fl.
Cl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vc.

Segue in C

Ex. 25(i) SMITH THE START OF MORNING GLORY

19

Fl.

Cl.

Vib.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

soft yawn

pp

P

ff

Pedal each chord, l.v.

A \downarrow -48

21

Fl.

Cl.

Vib.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

pp

pp

A \downarrow -48

Ex. 25(ii) SMITH CONTINUATION OF Ex. 25(i)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for three instruments: guitar, bass, and piano. The score is organized into five systems, each with two staves. The top staff of each system is for guitar, the middle for bass, and the bottom for piano. The guitar part starts with a treble clef and a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 66$. The bass part uses a bass clef. The piano part uses a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The notation includes various chords, melodic lines, and rests. There are some handwritten annotations and corrections throughout the score.

Ex. 26 SMITH

FROM: DIRT ROAD

Handwritten musical score for the first system, measures 1-4. The instruments are Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 3/8. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 72$. Dynamics include f , pp , p , and fz .

Handwritten musical score for the second system, measures 5-8. The instruments are Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. Dynamics include p , f , and pp .

Handwritten musical score for the third system, measures 9-12. The instruments are Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. Dynamics include f , p , and pp .

Ex. 27(i) SMITH THE START OF CLAY (1976)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a string quartet, consisting of three systems of four staves each. The notation is in treble and bass clefs. The first system includes various rhythmic markings such as '7' and '7/4'. The second system features a 'trill' marking above a note in the bass staff. The third system includes 'trill' markings above notes in the second, third, and fourth staves. The score is written in ink on a light-colored paper.

Ex. 27(ii) FELDMAN FROM: THREE PIECES FOR STRING QUARTET (1956)

Appendix I

Morton Feldman: list of works

YEAR AND TITLE	SCORED FOR:
19?? [Composition]	Horn, Celesta, String Quartet
19?? Dear Merce	Piano
19?? Intermission on John's Preparation	Piano
194? I Loved You Once	Voice, String Quartet
194? [Composition]	Piano
1943 Dirge: In Memory of Thomas Wolfe	String Orchestra
1943 Jubilee	String Orchestra
1943 Night	String Orchestra
1943 First Piano Sonata [To Bela Bartok]	Piano
1944 Preludio	Piano
1945 Sonata for Violin and Piano	Violin, Piano
1945 Self Portrait	Piano
1945 [Composition]	String Orchestra
1946 Sonatina for Cello and Piano	Cello, Piano
1947 Only	Solo Voice
1947 Journey to the End of the Night	Soprano, Flute, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon
1948 Two Pieces [For Danny Stern]	Cello, Piano
1949 Episode	Orchestra
1949 String Quartet II [in two movements]	String Quartet
1949 Lost Love	Voice, Piano
1949 Illusions	Piano
195? For Cynthia	Piano
1950 Three Dances	Piano
1950 Projection 1	Cello
1950 Two Intermissions	Piano
1950 Trio for Two Pianos and Cello [to the	

memory of Anton Webern]	2 Pianos, Cello
1950 Piece for Violin and Piano	Violin, Piano
1951 Nature Pieces	Piano
1951 Four Songs to e. e. cummings	Soprano, Piano, Cello
1951 Intermission 3	Piano
1951 Projection 2	Flute, Trumpet, Piano, Violin, Cello
1951 Projection 3	2 Pianos
1951 Projection 4	Violin, Piano
1951 Projection 5	3 Flutes, Trumpet, 2 Pianos, 3 Cellos
1951 Intersection 1	Large Orchestra
1951 Three Ghostlike Songs and Interlude	Voice, Trombone, Viola, Piano
1951 Structures	String Quartet
1951 Composition [8 little pieces]	Cello, Piano
1951 Variations	Piano
1951 Music for the film 'Jackson Pollock'	2 Cellos
1951 Marginal Intersection	Large Orchestra
1951 Intersection 2	Piano
1951 Extensions 1	Violin, Piano
1952 Intermission 4	Piano
1952 Intermission 5	Piano
1952 Extensions 3	Piano
1952 Piano Piece 1952	Piano
1953 Intersection for Magnetic Tape	Eight Track Tape
1953 Intersection +	Piano
1953 Extensions 5	2 Cellos
1953 Intersection 3	Piano
1953 Extensions 4	3 Pianos
1953 Intermission 6	1 or 2 Pianos
1953 Intersection 4	Cello
1953 Fourteen Instruments	Chamber Ensemble

1953 Eleven Instruments	Chamber Ensemble
1954 Figure of Memory [For Merle Marsicano] (Hymovitz reconstruction)	Piano
1954 Music for the film 'Sculpture by Lipton' (Thomas transcription)	Piano
1954 [Composition]	Flute, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Piano, Cello
1954 Three Pieces for Piano	Piano
1954 Two Pieces for Two Pianos	2 Pianos
1955 Piano Piece 1955	Piano
1955 An Exquisite Line [For Abby and Bob Friedman]	Solo Voice
1956 Piano Piece 1956 A	Piano
1956 Piano Piece 1956 B	Piano
1956 Three Pieces for String Quartet	String Quartet
1956 Two Pieces for Six Instruments	Flute, Alto-Flute, Horn, Trumpet, Violin, Cello
1957 Piece for 4 Pianos	4 Pianos
1957 Piano Three Hands	Piano
1957 Two Pianos	2 Pianos
1958 Instrumental Music	Chamber Ensemble
1958 Work for Two Pianists	2 Pianos
1958 Piano Four Hands	Piano
1958 Two Instruments	Horn, Cello
1958 Ixion	Chamber Ensemble
1959 Last Pieces	Piano
1959 Atlantis	Chamber Ensemble (2 versions)
1960 Arr. of Josquin Desprez 'Tu Pauperum Refugium'	Chamber Ensemble
1960 Something Wild in the City: Mary Ann's Theme	Horn, Celesta, String Quartet
1960 Montage 2 on the Theme of	

'Something Wild'	Jazz Ensemble
1960 Montage 3 on the Theme of 'Something Wild'	Jazz Ensemble
1960 Music for the film 'The Sin of Jesus'	Flute, Horn, Trumpet, Cello
1960 Ixion [Version for 2 pianos of Ixion (1958)]	2 Pianos
1960 Durations 2	Cello, Piano
1960 Piece for Seven Instruments	Flute, Alto Flute, Trumpet, Horn, Trombone, Violin, Cello
1960 Wind [For Naomi Newman]	Voice, Piano
1960 Durations 1	Alto Flute, Piano, Violin, Cello
1960 The Swallows of Salangan	Chorus, Chamber Ensemble
1961 Durations 3	Violin, Tuba, Piano
1961 Durations 4	Vibraphone, Violin, Cello
1961 ...Out of 'Last Pieces'	Orchestra
1961 Two Pieces for Clarinet and String Quartet	Clarinet, String Quartet
1961 Durations 5	Horn, Vibraphone, Harp, Piano/Celesta, Violin, Cello
1961 Intervals	Bass-baritone, Trombone, Percussion, Vibraphone, Cello
1961 The Straits of Magellan	Flute, Horn, Trumpet, Harp, Elec. Guitar, Piano, Double Bass
1962 Structures	Orchestra
1962 Followe Thy Faire Sunne	Voice, Tubular Bells
1962 For Franz Kline	Soprano, Horn, Chimes, Piano, Violin, Cello
1962 The O'Hara Songs	Bass-baritone, Chimes, Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello
1963 Dance Suite [For Merle Marsicano]	Percussion, Piano/Celesta
1963 Christian Wolff in Cambridge	Chorus a capella
1963 Music for the film	

‘Room Down Under’	Flute, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Percussion, Double Bass
1963 Piano Piece (to Philip Guston)	Piano EP
1963 De Kooning	Horn, Percussion, Piano, Violin, Cello
1963 Vertical Thoughts 1	2 Pianos
1963 Vertical Thoughts 2	Violin, Piano
1963 Vertical Thoughts 3	Soprano, Chamber Ensemble
1963 Vertical Thoughts 4	Piano
1963 Vertical Thoughts 5	Soprano, Tuba, Percussion, Celesta, Violin
1963 Rabbi Akiba	Soprano, Chamber Ensemble
1963 Chorus and Instruments	Chorus, Chamber Ensemble
1964 Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country	Trumpet
1964 Piano Piece (1964)	Piano
1964 The King of Denmark	Percussion
1964 Numbers	Chamber Ensemble
1965 Four Instruments	Chimes, Piano, Violin, Cello
1966 Music for the film ‘Time of the Locust’	Percussion
1966 The Possibility of a New Work for Electric Guitar (Josel transcription)	Electric Guitar
1966 Two Pieces for Three Pianos	3 Pianos
1967 Chorus and Instruments 2	Chorus, Tuba, Chimes
1967 In Search of an Orchestration	Orchestra
1967 First Principles	Chamber Ensemble
1968 False Relationships and the Extended Ending	Trombone, 3 Pianos, Chimes, Violin, Cello
1968 Music for the film ‘American Samoa: Paradise Lost?’	Flute, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Harp, Vibraphone, Piano, Cello
1969 Between Categories	2 Pianos, 2 Chimes, 2 Violins, 2 Cellos

1969 On Time and the Instrumental Factor	Orchestra
1970 [Composition]	Clarinet, Voice, Cello, Double Bass
1970 Madame Press Died Last Week at Ninety	Chamber Ensemble
1970 The Viola in My Life 1	Viola, Flute, Violin, Cello, Piano, Percussion
1970 The Viola in My Life 2	Viola, Flute, Clarinet, Percussion, Celesta, Violin
1970 The Viola in My Life 3	Viola, Piano
1971 The Viola in My Life 4	Viola, Orchestra
1971 Three Clarinets, Cello and Piano	3 Clarinets, Cello, Piano
1971 I Met Heine on the Rue Fürstenberg	Chamber Ensemble
1971 Rothko Chapel	Viola, Percussion, Celesta, Soprano, Alto, Chorus
1971 Chorus and Orchestra 1	Soprano, Chorus, Orchestra
1972 Cello and Orchestra	Cello, Orchestra
1972 Five Pianos	5 Pianos, one with Celesta (performers also hum)
1972 Pianos and Voices	5 Sopranos, 5 Pianos
1972 Trio for Flutes	3 Flutes
1972 For Stockhausen, Cage, Stravinsky and Mary Sprinson	Cello, Piano
1972 Half a Minute It's All I've Time For	Clarinet, Trombone, Piano, Cello
1972 Voices and Instruments 1	Chamber Ensemble, Chorus
1972 Chorus and Orchestra 2	Chorus, Orchestra
1972 Voice and Instruments 1	Soprano, Orchestra
1972 Voices and Instruments 2	3 Voices, Flute, 2 Cellos, Double Bass
1973 For Frank O'Hara	Flute, Clarinet, Percussion, Piano, Violin, Cello
1973 String Quartet and Orchestra	String Quartet, Orchestra
1973 Voices and Cello	2 Female Voices, Cello
1974 Voice and Instruments 2	Female Voice, Clarinet, Cello, Double Bass
1974 Instruments 1	Alto Flute, Oboe, Trombone, Celesta, Percussion
1975 Piano and Orchestra	Piano, Orchestra

1975 Instruments 2	Chamber Ensemble
1975 Four Instruments	Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello
1976 Oboe and Orchestra	Oboe, Orchestra
1976 Voice, Violin and Piano	Female Voice, Violin, Piano
1976 Orchestra	Orchestra
1976 Elemental Procedures	Soprano, Chorus, Orchestra
1976 Routine Investigations	Oboe, Trumpet, Piano, Viola, Cello, Double Bass
1977 Neither (Opera in One Act)	Soprano, Orchestra
1977 Piano	Piano
1977 Instruments 3	Flute, Oboe, Percussion
1977 Spring of Chosroes	Violin, Piano
1978 Flute and Orchestra	Flute, Orchestra
1978 Why Patterns?	Flute, Piano, Percussion
1979 Violin and Orchestra	Violin, Orchestra
1979 String Quartet No. 1	String Quartet
1980 Trio	Violin, Cello, Piano
1980 The Turfan Fragments	Orchestra
1980 Principal Sound	Organ
1980 Instrumental version of John Cage <i>Cheap Imitation</i> for Aki Takahashi	Flute, Piano, Glockenspiel
1981 Patterns in a Chromatic Field	Cello, Piano
1981 Triadic Memories	Piano
1981 Bass Clarinet and Percussion	Bass Clarinet, Cymbals, Gongs
1981 For Aaron Copland	Violin
1982 For John Cage	Violin, Piano
1982 Three Voices	Soprano, Tape (or 3 Sopranos)
1983 Crippled Symmetry	Flute, Piano, Percussion
1983 String Quartet No. 2	String Quartet
1983 Clarinet and String Quartet	Clarinet, String Quartet
1983 Orch. of Bunita Marcus <i>Merry</i>	

<i>Christmas Mrs. Whiting</i>	Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Harp, Percussion
1984 [Composition]	Violin
1984 For Philip Guston	Flute, Piano, Percussion
1984 Arr. of Weill/Brecht <i>Alabama Song</i>	2 Sax, Trumpet, Trombone, Marimba, Piano, Bass, Voice
1985 For Bunita Marcus	Piano
1985 Violin and String Quartet	Violin, String Quartet
1985 Piano and String Quartet	Piano, String Quartet
1985 Coptic Light	Orchestra
1986 A Very Short Trumpet Piece	Trumpet
1986 For Christian Wolff	Flute, Piano/Celesta
1986 For Stefan Wolpe	Chorus, 2 Vibraphones
1986 Palais de Mari	Piano
1987 Samuel Beckett, Words and Music	2 Flutes, Vibraphone, Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello
1987 For Samuel Beckett	Chamber Ensemble
1987 Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello	Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello

The above list includes all Feldman's published works plus those unpublished works for which a manuscript is known to exist. There are many other unpublished works for which only sketches exist. These are not included above.

Last Updated: 27 August 2019

Appendix II

The questionnaire for the 19 composers surveyed.⁹⁸

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK/USA/Canada? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?
2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.
3. What do you consider to be experimental music?
4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?
5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.
6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)
8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?
9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

a. melody/melodic gesture	b. harmony
c. instrumentation/vocalisation	d. form/structure
e. rhythm and tempo	f. dynamics
g. notation	h. other; what?

⁹⁸ This is the 'bare bones' questionnaire of 20 questions. It excludes section 3, which is composer-specific.

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?
11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?
12. Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.
13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.
14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?
15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?
16. (If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?
17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty stave). Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?
18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?
If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?
19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.
All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.
Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?
20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

Appendices III – XXI contain the responses of the 19 composers consulted for the purpose of this dissertation. The questions are also included for ease of reading. Appendices I–X are the tapescripts of the one face-to-face interviews, and Appendices XI–XIX are the written responses to the same questions. All feature a third section, which is composer-specific. All are in alphabetical order of name of composer for each section. The layout and formatting are slightly different for each set, again, hopefully, for ease of reading.

Appendix III: Daniel Brandes

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Daniel Brandes. Victoria, B.C. 24.9.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Question 1

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in Canada? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it some way been revived?

D: Sure. Those are kind of distinctly different questions. As far as a Canadian experimental music tradition in Canada. I think it depends on whether or not you are referring to something distinctly Canadian, with a kind of Canadian origin. That I'm not sure. I do think that the American experimental tradition of Cage and Wolff, Feldman, Earle Brown – that certainly has had a resounding impact on composers the world over, and certainly in Canada it's no different. As far as the experimental music scene erm, certainly I think – whether or not it has a specific national identity - I don't know about that. I think it's like most kinds of musical communities, it varies from place to place.

S: So you think the experimental scene itself varies from community to community?

D: I think so. If you look in Victoria, for example, with the series that my wife Laura and I do, *A Place to Listen*, which presents a lot of music in and around the Wandelweiser community - that's also part of the idea of that series was to have a place where that kind of music could be presented on a regular basis. And I think that ought to become a big part of the musical fabric in some way of the city.

(More on venues and arts communities in Canada)

Question 2

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

D: Well, sure. I mean I see my work as being somehow certainly part of the experimental tradition. Especially with it being in some way associated with, or part of, or within the Wandelweiser community. So I'm an active artist in the western Canadian community, so ...

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

D: Mm. That's a big question. That's a difficult one. And I don't think there's an easy and entire answer to that, so I'll have to talk my way into it for a couple of minutes. You know, I

still think, to a degree, there's something in Cage's idea that an experimental action is an action where the outcome is unforeseen.

S: Are you saying that you advocate that opinion, or do you think it's outdated?

D: No, I think that there may be still something to that to a degree, though I don't think that's a kind of required aspect – let's put it that way. And I ...

S: You think it *is* a required aspect...?

D: I don't think it is. But I think there's still a trace of that.

S: OK.

D: And I think there's still something true in that. I really appreciate something Christian Wolff said in a lecture in 2014 or so; he was in London. He was talking about this very idea of what *is* experimental music today. It's a kind of changing barometer. And this was something that kind of articulated something in me I had been thinking about in relation to my own work, and the work of my close friends. If there's anything that would be experimental in music today it would be something in the music - something in the way it is written, performed, presented - models for change. Something in it about challenging the status quo.

S: There's a duality of opinions. The one is the Cage thing. Experimental music has something in it which makes it indeterminate. Or, on the other hand, it's music which goes against what a lot of people expect from music.

D: Sure. I think there can also be - it's interesting. I've had this conversation with Antoine Beuger. For him, he's becoming less and less interested in how there is something subversive, and more interested in how these pieces (?) affirm something.

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

D: Erm (pauses) yeah. I think especially when you look at those early works from the 50s and 60s - the first indeterminate pieces and that kind of notation that he's experimenting with. It made an indelible impact. I think it's interesting to look possibly at the decade afterwards, ... purposeful... almost a separation from Cage and Cage's work. And this is where it becomes interesting and a little bit ambiguous to a degree, because if you look at the later pieces, they become really rigorously notated...

S: Yes.

D: There's nothing unforeseen...There's something in his method of composing where the unforeseen happens.

S: If we go with the other idea of experimental music, that it's not what is normally associated with... it doesn't have much to do with popular music, it doesn't have much to do with other kinds of classical music, including serialism. It doesn't have much to do with jazz or folk music, or what have you. Technically speaking, it doesn't go where that other music goes, so the late Feldman works, you know? Do they develop; or do they *not* develop?

D: Sure. And, of course, the very long pieces...his idea of allowing a piece to die a natural death. So the works becoming two, three, four, five, six hours long. It's a kind of deep dive into a very important parameter of music, that I don't think had had that kind of deep dive before, you know. It's interesting. I don't know about Feldman's relationship with the experimental tradition is curious, because at the same time with Feldman, you have this decidedly - almost self-consciously - an outsider's stance. With the academic establishment? And yet, to a degree, a desire to be very much part of it. You know, he wanted that university post - he named it after a historical composer. And he lectured at Darmstadt.

S: His later works were composed for - or he had in mind - certain quite famous players.

D: Yeah. So there's also a desire to be accepted by the establishment at the same time. But that somehow differs from the music itself.

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

D: (pauses) I mean it's *possible* for it to be funny. I don't think it's by nature funny. I don't think it's by nature *anything at all*. I think it depends on the composers, the performers and the audience. And what transpires.

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

D: So talk to me about what you mean by elitist?

S: That it does not care too much if it's not popular? Don't care about lots of people turning up to the gigs?

D: I think this is in no way an elitist standpoint. I think you can create a kind of music with an understanding that it's not going to be hugely popular. It might not have a huge audience. That doesn't mean it's elitist. The series that we do here in Victoria, *A Place to Listen*; by no means does it have huge audiences. And it's amazing to me the number of regular listeners who come that have no background whatsoever with contemporary music or experimental music, or even any of this jargon to begin with. And so I don't think that this is an elitist standpoint; just because something is kind of small, or decidedly outside the status quo, it doesn't mean it's being elitist, right? Cos an elitist attitude would be to say, 'This is not for you.' Right?

S: Mm I play with an improvisation group in Cheltenham. And people who turn up for gigs... as you say, we get 40 to 50 people - the same people and they may or may not have a background in music. So there is an audience.

(More on the subject of elitism vs populism)

D: I think it is really important here to decouple, is experimental music elitist and is an experimental music scene, or culture, elitist? Cos these are different. Cos there's the music

itself, and then there is the community around that music. So I don't think that there's anything necessarily implicitly elitist in the music. Anyone could find a place in that music. But it's a matter of how we present that music, right? Then, maybe it could become elitist; maybe not. That's a matter of the *people* involved. Which is different from the music itself. So it's important to draw a line there, right?

S: I have to say that in the UK there are hubs – venues -which are doing quite well putting on alternative musics, you know. Experimental music or concerts of Feldman or Cage or Wolff, or improvisation concerts or semi-jazz concerts. All in the same venues, and they're doing very well. It just struck me that perhaps people are tiring of the alternatives, the traditional classical music concerts, ...and the pop music industry. Is that the same here, do you think?

D: Erm...sorry, what is the question exactly? Do you think that there's a kind of growing trend toward experimental music? I really don't know. I do sense that something is happening. Michael Pisaro I remember posting on Facebook a couple of years ago how there seemed to be a kind of unprecedented renaissance now in experimental music...

S: Well, I was sort of saying that.

D: And in so many different places around the world. Yeah, I do have a sense that, for example [] Jürg Frey... lots of recording coming out...composers in residence at Huddersfield...big reviews...

S: And the concerts get filled up.

D: Oh yes. Yeah, there does seem to be something happening...

(More on this and the role of the internet in spreading news about experimental music, etc.)

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

Questions 7, 8 and 9

Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

D: A debt, no. An influence? I don't know. It's interesting – in my early 20s I was quite obsessed with Feldman.

S: How old are you?

D: I am in my 30s now. So 10 years ago, when I was a student. I don't know. My music currently - with the exception of the fact that it's quiet – and more or less sparse in surface level ways, there's a kind of connection. Something I do sense a connection with Feldman, that I think has been there for a long time, and I think this is true through those pieces in the 50s to the very late pieces in the early 80s, is that there is this sense of touch that is really important in Feldman's music.

S: What do you mean by that?

D: That it's not just about a soft dynamic. That it's actually about a sense of touch, of how you play the tones...and also a touch compositionally, ... He writes about this. It was one of the things he took from his first piano teacher – this idea of the sensitivity of touch.

S: You mean an avoidance of attack?

D: No. It's too ... it's more mysterious. I can remember ...my master's piece was probably the last piece – this would be in 2010 - that was fully notated: rhythm, dynamics...and somehow you could change all the notes in the piece, and it would be the same piece. It's much more about the sense of touch. And I suppose that's something that ... there's maybe a connection there to Feldman as well, but where Feldman and I really differ is - for him there was always this staunchly dour abstraction: the sounds are the sounds themselves. For me, more and more I'm notating pieces less and less - that do not have to do with specific pitches or even specific instrumental timbres, but rather a way of relating to each other as players and listeners: the actions of quietly tending to tone down melodies, words. And I think that that's a real parting.

S: So to some extent but not overwhelmingly?

D: No. Feldman's music was some of the music that I really fell in love with. As a young composer, so the interesting thing is that before I'd even heard of Feldman I was already writing very quiet music. And then when I discovered Feldman's music, it was really quite impactful on me, and so I think certainly traces of that stay with you.

S: OK.

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? Do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

D: I use the English language because that's the language that I speak and read. My scores – well, you've seen some of my scores - that do have notated pitches never use traditional Italian expression markings or even dynamic markings. They tend to be a single page, or a two-page...performance notes, which are in English and which outline the performance practice...

S: This question is perhaps not totally clearly expressed. It's a semiotic value that Feldman scores have that...I remember the first time I saw a Feldman score, which was probably about 1969, what struck me, apart from the notation, was that it said 'slow', 'fast', 'loud'. And that really struck me. It's like Debussy writes 'lent' instead of 'adagio'. And I thought, not only is

this an English-speaking world, but it kind of had another aspect to it. Like 'slow' is not really 'adagio'.

D: No. Terms like 'adagio', 'allegro', 'presto' – these terms come out of the common [] and refer to a particular type of performance (?) but even then, talk about 'allegro'; are we talking about French Baroque music? are we talking about (Classical music?) and the performance practices from those regions and time periods. They're slippery terms, especially when you start to write music that is otherwise...to the music of the Classical tradition, right? So of course composers will begin, perhaps, 'Very Slowly' - makes more sense than 'Largo'.

(Theme continues)

I think that with the Wandelweiser composers 'quiet' has something to do with a decibel level, but also something to do with a way of being. To quietly go about something. To be humble and amiable.

S: OK. That's good.

Question 11

In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree?

D: Sure.

(Question 11)

If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

D: I mean, certainly the extremely soft dynamic markings. And exclusively throughout. So never the need to have a kind of juxtaposition of dynamics. I don't know if it's unique to Feldman, but I think it's associated with Feldman and possibly unique to Feldman at the time - instruments sounding so expansive. You play a violin softly...no vibrato...it has a fragility, a brittleness. It really differs from the typical, classical tone production. I don't know if you find that really before Feldman, but you see it after Feldman. So that's interesting. Feldman's sound world - again it goes back to this sense of touch - with harmony, with timing, with duration. In the same way that you look at a Rothko painting, and you know it's a Rothko painting. You don't ever mistake it for a Jackson Pollock painting. I don't know if I've ever mistaken Morton Feldman for Cage or for Wolff. Morton Feldman for anyone else, for that matter.

S: Although I think Jürg Frey has something of Feldman in him.

D: Sure, except that with Jürg Frey you also have these minor triads and first inversions, and [] dyads and that are totally unlike Feldman.

S: That's true. Feldman uses octaves of course.

D: But there's somehow a similarity in Jürg's sound world at times in Feldman's sound world.

S: Actually, it's funny, isn't it? Because the more you listen to Feldman the more it belies what we think about it. You know, we think of it as quiet, but actually quite a lot of it is quite loud.

D: (chuckles). It's true.

S: And so on and so forth.

D: The second string quartet - these chords at the beginning are very soft, but the density of the stackings are very rich...

S: I've just read a book on Feldman - and he says in the introduction to it that Feldman's music is known for this, that and the other, and is often described, in liner notes for example, as typical Feldman - soft, quiet, beautiful, relaxed, and so on - and he says 'No, I find it quite edgy'. Quite disturbing. Some very Schoenbergian chords, you know.

D: Oh yeah. And because they are so abstract, and so much of the sound of the sound itself that I think people easily - they're porous in that way you can read into them. You know, in *For Bunita Marcus* there's this moment with a high C on the piano repeated like 12 times? And one of my professors ... said it was like the most existential moment - like you're trapped in this.... And for me it was like being immersed in this beautiful, delicate, high range of the piano. It is just a high C played 12 times. It's ambivalent. (laughs) We can't decide whether it's relaxing or edgy or anything else for that matter. I do think that any time things move away from a kind of tonal centre, and kind of being beautiful in an obvious way... (trails off)

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

D: To be completely honest, these are qualities I have not really considered, and I don't know if it's even possible for a composer to speculate on those things.

S: Yeah, OK. Fine, good.

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

D: Yes. And I think that's true for every artist.

S: So you're influenced - or thoughtful about - poetry? or painting? or cinema?

D: Sure. I think so much about being an artist is being a human being. The things that we take in has something to do with...I mean, you have a poet like Anita Barrows [] Especially my pieces lately that incorporate texts... a lot of writers have had a profound impact on the music that I write. And how I think about both being a musician and also about being a human being.

Question 14

Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis.

Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

D: For Feldman's music, I think that it's true. I think that is actually one of the...qualities of Feldman's music is that it was not teleological. That was a pretty radical idea I think he introduced. For my own music, the pieces become more and more open as far as how they unfold. It's hard to say, though certainly the pieces I would hope don't ever necessarily try to go anywhere or do anything [] being together for a while and you kind of explore what transpires over that time.

S: The idea of not going anywhere in particular - do you think that relates to serialism? Webern, for example?

D: I don't think so. It's hard to say. With serialism, of course, as a listener it's hard to get a sense of a teleological arc; it's not like (?) that we are returning to in an obvious way. The advent of serialism was so that these composers can start to create longer-form pieces cos [] it's not really possible – the pieces were relatively short, right? So you still have this kind of construction of different sections and contrasting things. There's a certain kind of teleology to that. It's not in an obvious tonic-dominant-tonic way.

S: But I was thinking that some of the late serialist works – erm you might play things in a different order. Because it kind of didn't matter.

D: Sure, like some of Boulez's modular piano pieces? I think that there's a difference between not being concerned with going anywhere and (pauses)...

S: ... and the more meditative stance?

D: Yeah. I think what Feldman was up to was somehow distinct from what the serialists were doing with form. I think part of that has to do with Feldman's process, while writing a relationship with the material. As opposed to trying to construct something - kind of aiding something as it grows. There is a distinct difference there.

S: OK. Thank you for that.

Question 15

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

S: We've talked about this already, but we can talk about it again for a moment.

D: Soft dynamics and relatively slow pace? OK. Though in a different way. But yeah.

Question 16

(If yes in 14 and 15) why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

D: Yes. There are a few things. Somehow, I've always been drawn to quiet sounds. It's just like home. But also I think there's a political side certainly, I think. We live in a world that more and more would ask us not to listen too deeply or look too closely.

S: I like that. That's very good. (laughs)

D: And so I think to create a musical practice that is about tending to something quiet and not spectacular for a while maybe nourishes something that we are learning to neglect. Like the part of us that need quiet. I think in addition to political, there's also may be something...Antoine once described politics in a really important way for me. 'How do we relate to each other?' If you have two or more people, you have politics. And so I think that there's something in my music that I hope would be a way of relating to each other through the act of playing...So there's something about the pieces being quiet...about being both indeterminate but more about being entrusted to the players? That would be somehow all above that.

S: By the way, the title of my thesis is probably going to be The Soft Option.

D: The Soft Option?

Question 17

Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

D: Or grace notes not attached to other notes! (laughs) There's a lot there. That's a big question. Notation is such a huge concern for composers, of course. I think with some of the things that you mentioned – so, you know, with Feldman, something like *pppppp*? Well, what is this really about? This is a way of communicating: 'I really mean it!' I really mean go to that threshold and that...soft as you can play.

S: But people don't, do they? On recordings at least.

D: No. Well! Of course, it's impossible. There's really nothing past even maybe *pp*. Maybe *ppp*. Once you get...What's the difference between *ppp* and *pppp*? I think anytime you are giving four, five, six (*ps*) – it's really a matter of communicating to the player: 'I really mean it. I really mean go to that place.' With some of the chords – I don't know, that's hard to say. He was a pianist, so I doubt it was a mistake. But what he could be communicating I'm really not sure. Other than 'Find a solution. I want this confluence of tones.' I think one would hope that composers notate their music in such a way that it would invite the players more deeply into performing the music. In other words, communicate something about what's really at stake here, to the players. And especially with Feldman, anytime that you are going into that kind of

deep dive to a particular parameter, you are going to call for notational things that are out of the ordinary. But giving a player a player flack for not playing *pppppp*, that's going too far! (laughs) You can only make that *so* soft.

S: Yeah, but if you listen to recordings of the piano music, for example, dynamic markings are really often not respected. For example, I was looking at a piece not long ago and he marks just one chord *f*. And because it's just the one, the recordings I've heard just thrash it out. *fff!*

D: Right.

S: So there you have that juxtaposition of dynamic markings - that rhetorical thing - which Feldman didn't want. As far as I can see.

D: And yet, in a predominantly 'piano' and softer sound world *f* is an extreme. I know it's not *sforzando* or *fortissimo*, but 'forte' will come across as quite an extreme eruption.

Question 18

Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

S: Maybe this is irrelevant, but we'll see.

D: Not chance determined, but indeterminate certainly. It's been three years since I notated a pitch, for example. It's been four years since I even specified an instrument. Modelled on Feldman? No.

S: No. OK. It seems unlikely...

D: At the same time, those early Feldman pieces were - with the numbers and the time cells - some of those first indeterminate scores - they kind of broke everything open. So I suppose, to a degree anyone writing indeterminate music - in some way, it comes out of Feldman. But there've been so many composers and so many models have come out of that that for me to trace it back directly to Feldman, I would say no.

S: Yes, to some extent it depends how far back you go.

D: But not consciously, though. I would say that.

Question 19

In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

D: If audacity is a willingness to go there, then yes. If that's what we're talking about with audacity. Then absolutely. I remember having a conversation about this with Antoine, when we worked together for the first time in 2012. The first time that he wrote a piece that had 20 minutes of silence in it. The decision had to be made. Do I really go there? And I think, whether it's harder for critics, I don't think that's a concern you can have – the concern is really about the music. Like really about what that piece of music needs: it kind of comes to life. If audacity is what you want to call it, certainly.

S: Yeah. I'm calling it 'audaciousness' rather than 'audacity', which - I suppose they mean more or less the same – but 'audacity' suggests a kind of aggressiveness.

D: Right.

S: A stance. And 'audaciousness' almost a kind of comical one, perhaps.

D: So what do you mean by 'audaciousness'?

S; Well, I mean, erm... (pauses) ... it's 'audacity' without the aggression.

D: Yeah! Cos I don't think it's necessarily about drawing a line in the sand and throwing down the gauntlet...

S: No, no.

D: It's about - yeah, a willingness to go there.

S: One of my examples was *Variations* for piano – I don't know if you know it – it's very early. And it starts with these 18 bars of rest. And if you gave that to a music student, you know, weaned on Beethoven and Liszt, then they're going to say 'What's that? That's not music!' (chuckles) That's what I really mean, you know.

D: Sure.

Question 20

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

D: You'd have to ask Feldman. He wrote about it a whole lot.

S: Well, no, he usually chose not to talk about how he composed.

D: Well, he gave a lot of lectures for someone who chose not to talk about his music. I mean I know he didn't write specifically [] he kept a kind of shroud around that. Erm, I don't know. I don't think that's possible to really answer; it would just be conjecture. There would seem to be at the very least a kind of balancing act between determinism and indeterminism in his writing. That's maybe related to his interest in abstract painting. There seems to be a sense of being in control? Having a particular sound world in mind. A particular kind of material. And a certain amount just being in a relationship with that material ... call that automatic writing or intuitive writing... It would seem to make a pretty strong case – but how does it work?

S: For me, this is perhaps the *most* interesting question. Cos people are wholly divided on this issue. Some people, who knew Feldman quite well, and have pored over his scores, have said to me that Feldman is purely intuitive. And there are whole books now on Feldman's music, where they'll find processes and organisation in *anything*, you know?

D: Yeah, but I mean things can be arrived at intuitively. You know, Linda Smith had to give a talk about theory and composition. Theory is something that we have, to talk about music that already exists. I don't know. For me, it would really just be conjecture.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Daniel Brandes

Question 21

A Place for Love and Grief to Dwell seems to be a political statement. Is that true and is experimental music a political reaction in part do you think?

D: I think, like I said before, to a degree I think a lot of my pieces are ways of relating to each other. And so, of course, there's something political there, right? That particular piece and the texts that were chosen for it - I wrote that piece in the summer of 2014. And it was at the height of - things were coming to a head with Israel and Palestine at that time. There was a tremendous amount of violence that summer. And there was also a tremendous amount of violence in the language people were using to talk about what was happening there. Either pro-Israel or pro-Palestine. The other people are crazy kind-of-thing. And I think I needed to make a piece that offered a different way - that would be a 'place for love and grief to dwell'.

Question 22

The piece *Book of Songs* seems to have a spiritual dimension. Is that true? You also speak of a new type of folk music?

D: With *Book of Songs* each one is - the words are a small thread of text from Edmond Jabès - from either *The Book of Questions* or *The Book of Dialogues*, and with Jabès there's - he's writing about Jewishness and God - and is it possible to have a relationship with God? But without ever saying any of these things directly. And I think that there's a tremendous spiritual quality to those texts...A kind of folk music? You're referring to a specific quote from me?

S: Yes, I think so, but I can't remember where I read it.

D: I often think of the Wandelweiser community in general as being like a folk music community.

S: It's funny this because I don't really know much about folk music. Nor do I care for it. But Howard Skempton said exactly the same thing. It's quite interesting - these conversations have led to some odd kind of coincidences of opinion.

Question 23

What is your link to Wandelweiser and what is the significance of that organisation, would you say?

D: It's not an organisation. I mean Edition Wandelweiser is an organisation, right? But Wandelweiser itself is just a community. It's not even an approach to composition, a composition school... It's just a community of composers...

S: It's not an approach to composition?

D: No. Not at all. It's just a community of composers who somehow are interested in each other's work and perform each other's work.

S: Are you saying that people may become part of that community whatever the style they're composing in?

D: Erm... *whatever* the style? I don't know. I think that it's telling that there's no (?) on the Wandelweiser [label?]. If there is any kind of shared approach or thinking about composition and sound in the music itself – But it's not a way of composing by any means. The variety – the differences between composers, between pieces, is too rich for it to be a way of composing.

S: You mean it's too diverse?

D: Yeah. It's wildly diverse. One gets past the general softness of it...these kind of surface qualities in the music...but the diversity in the composers in the pieces is quite wild. And for me it's a community where myself and my music have found a home. I'm really excited and passionate about what so many of my friends and colleagues in that community are up to, and it's been a great opportunity to have pieces done in different places. By really wonderful musicians. It's a very supportive community that I'm happy to be part of.

Question 24

The piece *Froberger*, for whistling pianist, reminds me of A Humming Song by Howard Skempton. Do you know that work?

D: No.

S: OK. It's one of the first pieces he ever wrote.

D: How interesting.

S: It's basically a piano piece. As far as I remember In the three-note chords, the central note – something around Middle C usually – will be hummed by the performer too. So when I heard your piece, I immediately thought of that piece. But you didn't know about...

D: I'll have to look up that piece. I actually don't know a whole lot of Howard's music.

S: OK. It may be on YouTube; I am not sure. But it's an uncanny resemblance. It doesn't sound similar, but the notion is...

D: Right. The kind of blending (?) of...

Question 25

There is so much scope for interpretation and ordering of material in some of your music, e.g. *with our shadows*, it is almost as if the music takes a back seat and there is something that takes precedence. In other words, you write out a lot of music – but it doesn't really get played. Can you comment on that?

D: More and more my pieces are entrusted to the players. And this act of trust is something that really moves me, and I'm really inspired. *with our shadows* ...you have the one melody... that was an interesting piece, and that opened up things for me in a way; that was the first piece where I wrote this page-long melody. You may only play a few tones of it. The idea of it not really being like a melody that's played top to bottom but some material to be inhabited for a while - to discover and rediscover. More and more it comes down to the fact of trust that I find to be really inspiring.

S: Feldman said that one of the reasons why he lost faith in the graph pieces was, when he didn't have David Tudor to play at least the piano pieces – people mucked it up.

D: Sure, OK. Yeah, that's always a risk. When you write any kind of open score. Where certain parameters are left indeterminate, there's a risk that a player will do something that you don't really like. But I think you have to let those things go if you are going to make that kind of music (laughs).

S: Do you depend on people who empathise with your music?

D: Sure. And I find the notion that someone who doesn't empathise with his playing it to be kind of peculiar, right? Why would you choose to play it if it wasn't somehow like: 'This is something that I want to enter into'.

S: Well, I think that's true, but also if you suddenly gave a piece of yours to the London Philharmonic Orchestra, they might actually decide to play around a bit perhaps, as a kind of - well, they did that. They did that with Feldman and Cage anyway, didn't they? In the early days, you know. As a kind of protest against this music that doesn't have melodies.

D: Sure. And Glenn Gould had to record all of Mozart's piano sonatas simply to prove the point that he didn't think Mozart knew how to compose a piano sonata.

(more on this, and also the question of trust in indeterminate music)

S: It's as if, though, your scores – the ones I refer to – where you can pick and choose what bits you want are kind of the opposite of the Beuger thing – the 20 minutes' silence – you might call it under-writing – and these works of yours seem to be over-written in a way. Because you've written lots of notes but people can just take bits as they wish. So isn't that a waste of your labour?

D: No. I don't think so. Especially the piece *with our shadows* – a tremendous amount of thought went into those chords, the melody - every performance of it, even though they differ totally from performance to performance – they're still some threads that connect them all. It has something to do with the material that the performers inhabit together. And I think too - I don't know. I never really thought too much about this, but you know. I ask the performers to do quite a lot of work (laughs)

S: OK.

END

Appendix IV: Gavin Bryars

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Gavin Bryars. Billesdon, Leicestershire. 12.1. 2018.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Questions 1 and 2

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it some way been revived?

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

G: Well, there certainly has been an experimental tradition in the UK, which started, from my perspective, probably when Cardew came back from having worked with Stockhausen in the early 60s, and John Tilbury came back from Warsaw, where he'd been studying some of the time. And in Warsaw there was a kind of experimental scene, and in Cardew's case, of course, he'd met Cage. When he was working with Stockhausen he'd played with David Tudor and Cage. And I guess he saw that there was a way other than the European avant-garde, which is what he was working in at that time as Stockhausen's assistant. He also encountered some of the early music of La Monte Young. And when he came back, he started to proselytize this new music, and he wrote articles in the Musical Times about La Monte Young - which is not the most obvious place - and various other places, and performed. And so with things like AMM they put some of into practice, albeit by improvisation. And so by '66/'67, you had that kind of activity going on, which was attractive to a lot of people. It was attractive to me. I'd given up playing jazz and free improvisation by then, and I was starting to find my way, or think about what I might do as a composer. I'd met Cage in '66. I went to America and worked with Cage in '68. So I was aware of what was going on with Cardew and that world. And the performances they gave. I remember an AMM performance at the Commonwealth Institute, and also a piece for four pianos at the Commonwealth Institute.... this was probably '67 or early '68. So I knew that music. When I came back from America I worked with John Tilbury. And John and I worked as a kind of duo for a couple of years, which led me into that experimental scene here, surrounding him, like Christopher Hobbs, Howard Skempton, who was around in London by that time, and Michael Parsons, and others. And was a kind of a community, which eventually became the basis of the Scratch. So that was going on in the late '60s, and that came principally, to my mind, from a combination of Cage, people like Cardew, and Fluxus. Through La Monte Young but also through people like George Brecht, who was living in London at that time. ...that whole area of performance activity, which was not obviously music, but it was derived from Cage's work. Especially from the kind of classes he'd given in 1958 in New York. And so there was quite a strong climate of that developing, which was entirely outside any official or establishment support or control or encouragement. It was entirely highly independent of it, so we didn't get Arts Council grants, commissions, and so

on. But there was a collective spirit, which was very strong, and grew. And I was part of that, as were others.

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

G: I think it's more to do with an attitude than a style or even an aesthetic. Certainly, it was a form of music which didn't seek to exert the kind of control over the outcome of musical action, in the way that classical music did...where the composer would write a score and someone would perform it note for note, and as exactly as possible, or the degree of extreme control exercised by the European avant-garde, where the parameters of control got more and more tight...so eventually a performance was either right or wrong: it wasn't necessarily good or bad. I think it's diametrically opposed to that. So it's a kind of looseness. And that comes about partly, I think, because a lot of the artistic connections, here at least - less so in America - were with the fine art colleges.

S: Yes.

G: The kind of places where we were able to work were often fine art colleges, where there was this liberal, outgoing approach. An inclusive approach.

S: More so than music colleges...?

G: The music colleges wouldn't employ us. And Cardew did teach at the Academy, but nobody else was employed at a music college or a university. It was the art colleges which were open, because they had this approach where they felt that having someone working in a parallel artistic activity in contact with them and their students, in which aesthetic questions could be raised, and the possible artistic outcomes. I remember... at first, I was teaching in Portsmouth. John Tilbury was teaching in Kingston; Cardew at some time at Maidstone later. Tom Phillips was the academic librarian at Wolverhampton. Victor Schonfeld was somewhere in north London. They were all working in art colleges. And we were not viewed as marginal. I mean there was an area, for example, at Portsmouth called Complementary Studies, where art students were supposed to follow courses in things other than their visual art work. There was that aspect to it, but at the same time we were encouraged to take an active part in studio discussions. So I would do tutorials with students. Principally those who were involved in events, making things that were time-based, like film, installations, performances, and so on. But also at the same time talking with painters and sculptors as well about *their* work. In the case of some sculptors, they started to move into interesting, multi-dimensional work. And so there was this exchange of ideas. And what I found was, when you were talking with fine artists, as distinct from musicians, you generally talked about art. About ideas about art. With musicians, they were more concerned about technical questions. And money. You know: how are you managing? Are you getting enough work?

S: Not...aesthetic questions.

G: The aesthetic questions came in the art world. Historically too, of course, there was a strong connection with the art world in New York: certainly, between people like Steve Reich and the

whole visible art movement. There was that kinship between them. Which was outside the concert world.

S: Were the music colleges not interested because they thought people should be pursuing the serialist style?

G: I think the music colleges were mostly interested in turning out performers. I mean, composition was always a very minor activity. There were always very few composers in the music colleges. The majority would be pianists, string players, and so on. And, of course, the ethos of the music colleges is governed by those composers who taught there. So you generally found much older composers, who'd held onto their jobs for many years. They'd been teaching, say, at the Royal College for 30 years. At that time that probably meant that they had studied in the 1930s. Which didn't make them terribly adventurous.

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

G: Oh yes, certainly. I mean I knew of Feldman first, probably through reading about Cage and reading Cage's book – *Silence*, for example. That was my first encounter with Cage. But when I was working as a young musician in the early 60s, I used to use my earnings as a bass player to buy scores by Cage, Feldman, Christian Wolff, Earle Brown... on Friday I'd turn up at Wilson Peck in Sheffield and there were all these Peters Editions scores with my name on them. And when I came in they always knew this was for me – no one else was buying it.

S: And they were expensive, too.

G: Expensive, and badly produced.

S: Yeah. And I used to go down Wardour Street and get my Feldman scores – this was in the late 60s and 70s - and they'd be terribly dear.

G: Yes, extremely expensive. And they were always done from the composers' manuscripts.

(More on this subject)

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

G: It can be. It can be peculiar. In a sense it's out of the ordinary. And it also quite frequently produces rather unexpected results. And quite quirky results. I think it can actually be hilarious. [] At the same time, it can also be profoundly moving. Which people tend to forget. You know, there are moments of great beauty and extraordinary thought at the same time. So it can be all those things. You'll probably find more funny music in experimental music than you would in the hard core classical, and certainly the avant-garde. I think if anyone's trying to be funny in the avant-garde, they're just trying to be clever.

S: (chuckles) That's a good answer.

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

G: I think one of the things about experimental music is that it probably *wasn't* elitist. Certainly in England. Because, through things like the Scratch, and through notations which didn't involve conventional music notations, it meant that many people who otherwise wouldn't have become composers, were able to become composers. For example, if you look at the text-based pieces of Christian Wolff, La Monte Young, George Brecht and others, with simple instructions and suggestions, or little poetic games are set up, they are there to stimulate the imagination. They are notations, but not in the conventional sense. It did mean that quite a lot of people who couldn't actually write music note for note, could produce ideas which could be realised in musical performance. And so that meant that that kind of eliteness – you know, the special technical knowledge that composers have - wasn't always essential for someone in the experimental world. Obviously if you *can* write music, you have another weapon to your armoury, but it didn't preclude people. So in that sense it was probably less elitist than other forms of music.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

Questions 7 and 8

Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

G: Both. I would say I am indebted to Feldman on many levels. Not just musical. But also I admire Feldman's work. Especially the earliest work. Since I first encountered it. Probably the first time I heard anything by Feldman was on the radio, around 1965. There was a tour, and I remember particularly a piece for violin, piano and tuba (*Durations 3*). One of the *Durations* pieces, I think. In which you have these pitches which are *not* related, and deliberately *not* consonant, because of the dissonances, but the dissonances were sort of modified because they played extremely quietly. And I loved the combination: the violin often played high harmonics, the tuba low pedal notes, and the piano playing clusters or widely spread chords. And that was a time when I was actually working in jazz and free improvisation, and I loved this sort of non-consequential form of harmony, which... I was experimenting with these sorts of ideas of getting away from the harmonic base of jazz, and finding another way to do freer forms. One of the ways was to do it through various textures, but the other way was by finding some non-referential harmony. Which didn't really sound like you were playing a show tune. I heard that piece of Feldman's and I was already starting to acquire these things, and I started buying more Feldman. And they were mostly the pieces for either solo piano, multiple pianos, piano three hands – those kinds of pieces. Some ensemble pieces like *De Kooning*. I used to study those and probably my very earliest pieces, which I think are happily lost - although I was rather

disturbed to find that someone has found some of them - anyway, they are very strongly related to the idea of Feldman.

S: OK. It's interesting you should say that, because the three Scratch Orchestra guys I've interviewed, have said the same as you. They tend to prefer the earlier works. In a way you grew up with them, I suppose.

G: Well, there *is* that. And what they tended to do was confirm that one wasn't put on a limb, that there were other people interested in similar things. So it was reassuring on one level. But at the same time, I find that the way in which these pieces have isolated moments – they don't have continuous melodies. So, for example, when you get a piece like *Rothko Chapel*, or *The Viola in my Life*, these actually have meter. And they have a flow, rather like an adagio in a classical piece. In those...pointillistic moments in time, and there's almost no reason for them to go on for any particular length of time. They could go on for a very long time; there's no obvious start or stop. And I remember hearing another piece of Feldman's in Berlin in 1972, which was played by Cage, Cardew, Fred Rzewski and...one other person. And Feldman was in the room, and Feldman and Cage had a bit of a tiff, and - it was one of those pieces – I think it was probably *called* *Four Pianos (Piece for Four Pianos)*, where everyone has the same material, and you just move through it at your own pace. And I remember...gradually people ended, and Cage was left playing alone.

S: I read about this.

G: He was only about a third of the way through the piece. And he went on and on and on. And Feldman was seething. He (Cage) was obeying the rules, but he was being a little vindictive. And also sort of ...

S: Trying to show that the piece didn't work?

G: No. He could see the implications of this. And said: 'I am not going to play your game.' The game is, of course, that you generally try and stay together. Like Terry Riley's *In C*, where you keep within the same period, you know.

S: Yes. It's a question of listening to what the other people are doing, as well as just doing your own thing.

G: In theory, you don't listen to what other people are doing, but you should be aware that you are in the same ambience. And of course the sound world that they were in didn't change: you don't evolve through a richer or sparser...there's no sense of evolution in the harmonies, so you could be anywhere. It's only when everyone else stops that you realised, if you knew the score, Cage was still on page 1.

Question 9

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |

g. notation

h. other; what?

G: Probably two would be harmony and dynamics, I would say. Harmony because when I was playing jazz, we were interested in harmony that was tonal, but in extended ways. So lots of so-called wrong notes in there to spice them, and in a way it was almost as if you'd taken an avant-garde piece, say, like the Webern piano piece – the *Variations* – but then you make it into a Feldman piece, by making it extremely slowly and playing it extremely quietly. In fact, John Tilbury once talked about the Webern *Piano Variations* as being like displaced octaves. Ninths and sevenths would be octaves, but they're not. They sort of distort the octave. And Feldman does that all the time. You get these minor ninths, major sevenths, and augmented fourths somewhere in the middle, and I love that. And also the fact that you would get time to relish the sonority. And one of the things that I did love in jazz was playing very slow tempos. Where each harmonic moment has time to make its presence felt. I hear that in the music of Bill Evans, for example, who I admired a lot. And when I played in the trio, one of the things we'd do was to play a lot of Bill Evans' music. It's that sense of just allowing each sonority to have its time; and Feldman did that. And that's one of the things I love especially.

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? Do you see any significance in this?

G: No. I use Italian. For a lot of musical terms, and very rarely will I use an English one. And only because the Italian would be so pedantic. But I (wouldn't) do like Grainger, who put everything into English, and avoided all kinds of Latin-type things. So *ritenuto* was 'linger' and *molto ritenuto* was 'linger longingly'. Those kind of things. Or 'louden lots'. But that's Grainger. If I did that, I would be mimicking Grainger. No, I use Italian words.

(More on this)

Question 11

In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

G: I think it's unique for *all* time.

S: It's still unique.

G: Still unique, yeah. I see Feldman... and especially, that earlier period, up to, say, the mid-70s perhaps, as being rather like abstract expressionist paintings, where you made marks on canvas without any intention – without any aim...to form a picture or a systemic pattern. A degree of improvisation, and it's down simply empirically, step by step. I visited Feldman in New York two or three times.

S: You went to his flat?

G: In Lexington Avenue, yeah.

S: Was he welcoming?

G: Yes, very. He showed me what he was doing. He was doing *In Search of an Orchestration* (?) and that was on his piano. He worked on it while I was making some coffee. I saw him at work, and he would sit at the piano, and he'd squint at the score, and he'd do something like that (indicates a writing movement with a gesture), and then stop. And he'd do another one, and there was no connection from one to another. They were just simply these sounds that he heard. And in the room, he had paintings by Rothko, Philip Guston – all those great American abstract painters. Who seemed to me to be entirely part of the Feldman aesthetic. Jackson Pollock!

S: Had you heard of those painters?

G: Yeah. I knew those painters because, of course, I knew the fine art world quite well, and I knew that work. Cage was friendly with artists, but he wouldn't have shared an aesthetic with someone like Rothko. Whereas, Feldman did. In a way he was doing it step by step, with no sense of purpose or pathway; in a way, because of that, you find that Feldman's pieces are more like pictures. And you experience a state of affairs. You don't go from A to B: where you end is more or less where you started from.

S: An overall thing.

G: Yeah. Like a picture and a frame. And that's like Feldman's music seems to be.

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

G: No, I couldn't possibly say. (laughter) I write music the way I hear it, and that's my bad luck, and occasionally good luck. I've always trusted my ear, and also my instincts. I've worked with many people, and all these people had an effect (?) at some point: Feldman, Cage, Arvo Pärt and all those people. And John Adams - a close friend - in the early 70s. I am friends with Reich and Glass – all those people, I know them well. So I rubbed shoulders with them, but I don't think in any way - in fact, if anything, I try to avoid being too much like them. Because there's a sort of easy, fashionable way of writing music, which I try to avoid. Which is one reason why I am not nearly as successful as they are, in one sense, but I'm probably far happier.

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

G: Oh yes. Partly because of teaching in an art school... I mean I didn't teach in a musical environment until 1978, at the Leicester Polytechnic, and I was in the fine art department. We were asked to put together a proposal for a degree in the performing arts. I basically wrote the music component of that. Then I became Head of Music, and I moved away from teaching in

the fine art department. But up till that time, I was in Portsmouth for a couple of years. I moved to Leicester in 1970. And Michael Parsons took over my job in Portsmouth.

S: Didn't you start the Portsmouth Sinfonia?

G: Yeah. That was in the last year I was in Portsmouth. So I was in that fine art world, and most of my friends were fine artists. My first wife was a sculptor. When I was at university I was in the philosophy department and worked as a jazz musician. All my friends – especially girlfriends - were from the art school. They were far more interesting people – far more lively. Better dancers, usually. But they also just had a broader outlook, you know.

S: You mean than the young people in the music...?

G: Well, I think more than university students in general.

(More on this)

Question 14

Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

G: Oh yes. There are pieces that I've done, and there are things where I try to achieve that. I mean there are pieces which are static in the sense that they may move forward, but they don't get anywhere. Things like *The Sinking of the Titanic* and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*, which are not time-specific. In the case of *Jesus' Blood*, for example, its duration depends on physical factors.

S: I listened to *Jesus' Blood* coming up in the car.

(more on this piece)

G: *The Titanic* also has stasis; it doesn't really evolve. And I've been involved with performances that do involve very long durations. I remember once at The Roundhouse, there was a performance happening on the main floor, and on the balcony above four of us played the percussion parts of Cage's *Atlas Eclipticalis*, which lasted ten and a half hours. I'm used to that. I mean, I have performed Satie's *Vexations*...

S: Yeah, so have I. But I only had a slot.

G: Well Chris Hobbs and I did the whole thing together.

(more on this)

I am very fond of extremely long-duration pieces, and I found through playing pieces like *Vexations* that I now have no sense of boredom.

S: What about the very long Feldman works?

G: Fine. I don't have a problem with them. I haven't attended many of them, but I don't have a problem with them at all.

S: I don't know if you know – I only found out yesterday – at the Aldeburgh Festival, no less, they're playing *For Philip Guston*, and they're doing a five-hour performance. And it starts at 4.30 in the morning.

G: Well, I'm doing a *Jesus' Blood* in 2019, which will be at the Tate Modern, and it's going to last 12 or 13 hours. Through the night.

S: The score allows for that?

G: Completely. The score has no sense of duration in terms of the length of the performance. It's as long as you want it, and, as I was saying earlier, the original performances were entirely conditioned by the fact that the first recording was just one side of a vinyl. It was 24 minutes.

S: The 'Obscure' thing... (Obscure Label project created by Brian Eno)

G: The 'Obscure'... then the one on Point; the CD was 75 minutes.

(More on this)

Question 15

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

G: Yeah. Though people often think of my work as slow, but in fact there are things which are incredibly fast. Of course, if you are writing an opera – and I'm writing my fifth opera at the moment – you have to go with the dramaturgy, and in the second act, for example, of *Doctor Ox's Experiment*, it's very fast all the way through. And there is one piece which I wrote called *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo*, which is uniformly fast and loud all the way through. [] I did a version for eight pianos, sixteen hands, in Estonia recently. That was the Estonian Piano Orchestra.

S: Oh, how interesting!

Question 16

(If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

G: No. I like things to take their time. To make whatever point they're making. I find that, in a way, with slower music the listener is able to keep pace with the music much more comfortably, and without pressure, than if you are listening to extremely fast and disjunct music. With some of that music, you have to go back and try again, and eventually you may never get it, but it imposes things on the listener. In the case of slower music, you have a chance at least of being at the composer's face. I find that listening to Mahler's slow movements; you can almost predict – even if you didn't know the work – what the next note was going to be, because it was long enough for you to think 'What will he choose next?' And you're usually pretty close to being right.

Question 17

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

G: Well, I think that, in Feldman's case, he's sort of testing the limits. I remember John Tilbury demonstrating how to play Feldman's extremely low dynamics. And on the piano it's very hard. There's a point at which - you pass a certain point where (the piano?) decision has been made. And he was demonstrating how you would put the key part of the way down, just to the point where it would make contact, and then you'd touch it. So you wouldn't start from the top: you'd start half-way down. So it meant that, even if you did it with an accent, it couldn't be loud. There's a piece by Ichiyanagi which involves making musical actions as slow as possible. And one of the things that John demonstrated was how to make a piano note really slow. ...you almost get to the bottom before you get anything. But in a sense, you can't play a piano note slowly. You can play at a slow tempo, but a single note - once it sounds, it sounds. But the gesture of slowness is something ... and that's what I find in Feldman's music. By doing things like those six p's and those kind of things - it has almost like a zen quality - a kind of koan - setting a question to which there is no logical answer. It has that sort of zen sense. Feldman was not involved with zen - Cage was more - but, er...

S: Koan? Yes, it's one of those zen questions...

G: Yes. I studied zen Buddhism at the London Buddhism Centre (The Buddhist Society in Victoria, London).

(More on this)

Question 18

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

G: No. I haven't really... there are some very, very early things.... Really just first attempts, where I did use some chance operations. But they were naïve. There were indeterminate pieces, in the sense that... some of the text-notated pieces, that I did with the Experimental Music Catalogue, where I set up a situation within which there some sort of event will develop, and I can't be sure of the outcome of that. And that in a sense is one of Cage's definitions of 'experimental' - to set up something where you cannot be certain of the outcome. *The Titanic* is indeterminate in many ways. There are a lot of materials that I put together, but initially I couldn't always say what exactly was going to happen. But now it's much more kind of organised.

S: It seems that Feldman didn't use those techniques, anyway.

G: No. Cage used it systematically, and there are neo-Cage people who still do that... and still write music for prepared piano, and so on.

S: Who are they?

G: Well, exactly, we don't know who they are, because often you find at a small American composer, there'd be a composer there who's written a piece for prepared piano, and you think, well, why? It's a nice instrument, but for me it's inextricably linked to Cage, and even if you do it as a kind of percussion colour, you can't get away from the fact that it sounds like a prepared piano. I write a lot for percussion but I wouldn't use a prepared piano.

Question 19

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

G: Oh, I think it's very important. The idea of risk-taking is quite vital to that. I mean experimental composers have generally not stayed on safe ground. They've not pursued some sort of stylistic path. Whereas, you get someone like, say, Philip Glass, who has one thing, and he'll do many more of those same kinds of things. Like Stravinsky: he doesn't have 23 operas; he has operas written 23 times. That's said of Vivaldi's concertos. In the case of experimental music, I think that you are constantly finding - setting up new problems for yourself. It's almost like you create a problem, and then you try and solve it. And in that sense there is real risk-taking. And that seems to be part of it. If you are working entirely safely, and you're completely sure of where things are going, then you may well be a perfectly decent composer, but you are not working in an experimental way.

S: OK, thanks; that's good.

Question 20

Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

G: I think he wrote intuitively. I can see no sense of a method. He has preferences; and the preferences are what gives his ear pleasure. It's entirely pragmatic, or entirely intuitive: he will put together, say, three notes in the left hand and a couple in the right hand, and he might move one another way... until he gets the sound he wants. He probably knows what he would prefer. But it's a slightly hit and miss method.

S: Yes.

G: And I think the more he goes on, the greater confidence he gets. In the sense that there is a kind of coherence - of these dissonances. So you wouldn't find a major triad in Feldman. In fact, Feldman always protested when... he had these pieces where there were numbers in boxes.

S: *Intersections* and stuff.

G: Yes. He sometimes puts three notes and if someone played a triad...he wouldn't like that even though legally, of course, you can.

S: Yes, of course. Most people I've spoken to agree with you about that. However, there are three books on the market which go to town to show that he *did* have a method. I don't know if you know them - well, you probably know the old one: DeLio: The Music of Morton Feldman. It's a compilation of essays, where they analyse some of his works. And there's another book on the market called The Graph Music of Morton Feldman. And there's another book on the market called Composing Ambiguity. And in all these works they analyse in great detail some of Feldman's works. Not just the graph pieces, but other works too. There's also another essay I've read which analyses *For Philip Guston*, the very long piece. And he compares it to a painting technique. So they set out to prove that he *did* have a method. What's your reaction to that?

G: Well, I haven't read any of those books, but I can't imagine myself *ever* reading any of those books. The things I've read of Feldman are collections of his essays, etc. ... which is more interesting. And the music! I think it would be perfectly possible for anyone to find a pattern in anything. If you wanted to. If you are really looking for a pattern, you will create a matrix which fits. It doesn't mean it was put there by the person who did it. In my own mind, I am pretty certain that Feldman had no method. He may well have occasionally borrowed things from previous compositions; but that's probably only because that's the way he'd hear things.

S: Obviously, composing completely intuitively seems a sort of contradiction in terms. It seems to me that he did have preferences, as you suggested. Like he likes to use the total chromatic. And if you work through any of his pieces, you'll probably cover the twelve notes, fairly soon...

G: Yeah.

S: ... but, erm...

G: But they're not done in a serial way.

S: No, no.

G: And there are things he avoids: unisons, bare fifths, triads.

S: Yes.

G: And you probably won't find any bare fourths. Occasionally, there may be the odd one, but only in context.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Gavin Bryars

Question 21

Has the fame of *Jesus Blood* and *Titanic* overshadowed people's knowledge and fondness of your other work?

G: Er... possibly. I mean, those are the things I'm best known for. That's because they achieved a certain kind of cult status. The Obscure ones kind of set up a cult thing. And when they reissued *Jesus' Blood* and *Titanic*, that reinforced that. Those pieces are extremely old, and are probably my earliest acknowledged pieces. And people do tend to know those. And I still do perform them.

(More on the subject of these pieces and mixing them with more recent pieces in programmes)

And in the case of those two pieces, they have a kind of striking immediacy, which probably some of my other pieces wouldn't have.

(More on this subject)

I don't think that in purely musical circles they cloud the perception of what else I've done, because otherwise why would I be writing my fifth opera or my 25th ballet... my eighth book of madrigals. If I was really completely stuck on those I would do sequels.

(More on this)

Though in reality, people always imagine I must have done rather well out of *Jesus' Blood*. But in fact, I haven't earned a penny in royalties for that; I am still minus £49,000 on *Jesus' Blood* from that 1993 recording. Well, I will get the royalties when it is broadcasted, but in terms of sales, no. And I will never recover it.

S: Good heavens!

I think there is a Gavin Bryars sound, which I can detect. I was listening to a YouTube thing of – I think it was the Cello Concerto. And I heard this kind of sinking feeling that I heard in *Titanic*. As if the whole thing is going under water! And that to me is perhaps one descriptor of your sound. I don't know what your reaction is to that...

G: Well, I do enjoy low sonorities. That's a personal taste. I'm a bass player. My mother was an amateur cellist (?), and my two eldest daughters are cellists. My son is a bass player. My third daughter plays the viola. My ensemble doesn't have violins in it. My first opera had no violins in the orchestra. And so I do favour the lower sonorities – very much. I do write for high instruments, where they're needed, but my natural inclination is towards the lower registers.

Question 22

Are you the new tonality? If it is not you, who do you think it is? Are you, at least, the 'new consonance', along with Michael Nyman, for example?

G: I don't think so. I mean I think there's a lot of consonant music going on all over the place. People think a lot of the new tonality or the new simplicity, or whatever... seeing it, perhaps,

as a reaction against the new complexity. But it's really to do with the fact that I write music the way my ear hears it, and my ear tells me how I would like to hear it. In contrast that with, say, some composers within the avant-garde, who write music not necessarily from what their ear tells them, but from a series of, if you like, logic questions, which lead (?) them towards... I remember once....30 odd years ago, I was in Japan on a British Council trip, along with Simon Holt. We were there to do two concerts – one in Tokyo, one in Yokohama – and the concerts were... each of us curated a concert. I curated one in which I conducted the Japanese Chamber Orchestra (?). The music was mine and John White's. Simon Holt did some pieces of his. And selected others. And I remember I didn't know Simon at the time, but we found each other company for a couple of weeks in Japan, and we found we got on famously. He was writing music which was – it's not the new complexity but it was avant-garde, which was very subtle – very beautifully written. But it was certainly not tonal. And he said to me that he knew that I loved the music of Richard Strauss. And he said 'I can hear Richard Strauss in you, Gavin Bryars. *I* love the music of Richard Strauss, but *I* daren't put Richard Strauss into *my* music, because that wouldn't be acceptable to the people who were playing it.' You can't have those kind of tonal references, because, even though he loves it, he's obliged... because the world of music in which he lives and works expects something else.

S: Yes. I can understand it.

G: Yeah. And in a way, ironically, people say: 'The people who are writing tonally – aren't they sort of pandering to people's taste?' Well, it's more the reverse. People who are not writing tonally are pandering to a market which they believe they have to occupy.

Question 23

Do you think that your music, that of Nyman and that of Skempton, is just 'too accessible', given the experimental music background?

G: Complicated question. I think that also there are three different things. I think Nyman is different from me and from Howard. Nyman, I think, is somewhat simplistic in his music. I think he's rather crude in his composition. Michael's an old friend, but I don't get on with him musically at all. Howard is more subtle. And Howard is essentially someone who writes on a small scale. In a way that's one of the reasons which perhaps has inhibited some of his development. If he had felt like writing, say, an opera or larger-scale works... you know, a piece like *Lento*, it's for a big orchestra, but it's like one musical gesture that goes on for about 12 minutes. I conducted it in Australia. They are approachable and they're not difficult to listen to. But they're not doing that because of that reason. They're not trying to be easy to listen to. I remember when Brian Eno started the Obscure label, by then he'd become quite well known as a rock musician.

S: Yeah.

G: Before that, as an art student, he'd gone to the kind of concerts ... like with John Tilbury at the Purcell Room, and Cardew and all those things ... He used to go to those, and he felt he had a debt to that music. And he felt there was a whole area of that music which he felt that if people heard it, it wasn't actually so terrifying. The idea of new music was a frightening thing; the reality often could be quite pleasant. That's why he decided on Obscure to try and locate

those things which come from that experimental world. Which actually have a pleasant appearance, as it were.

There's one other thing I should mention about Feldman. Which is completely incidental. That is that when I knew Feldman in New York in 1968, I'd gone out to America to work - I found myself working with Cage in Illinois. And my aunt had bought me a plane ticket, and it was an open return. They don't exist these days. But because I was coming back in the summer, the price of the ticket was higher, even though I'd paid for the ticket. I was coming back in high season. And so I found myself short and couldn't... pay for the flight. Feldman offered to give me the money. Without my asking. It was just an act of generosity. Out of his own goodwill. I was immensely touched by that. It was something like \$120, which was actually quite a lot. As it happened, in the end my brother in England managed to wire the money through. But Feldman was prepared to stump up that money for me. I would have paid him back, but he wasn't asking for that. But I was very touched that he would do that. On the basis of quite a slight acquaintance. We'd met two or three times. We spent time in each other's company. But we were not friends. Not in that sense of 'Can you lend me a fiver?' sort of thing. It was like with Cage. When I was working in Illinois, I was there on a tourist visa. So I wasn't allowed to work. Gradually my funds started to run out, and I had this project with these dancers to complete. And I had to go to Chicago to renew my visa. Cage knew this, and knew that, in order for me to complete the work I was doing, I needed to get some money. So he hired me, with his personal money, to work on this project.

(more on this)

And I am still touched by those gestures.

S: That's a good story.

END

Appendix V: Mark Hannesson

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise]) an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Mark Hannesson. Edmonton, Alberta. 16.9.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Question 1

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in Canada? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

M: That's a very difficult question to answer yes or no to. Because, as a Canadian, we are taught to believe that we lag behind... that our musical tradition is always 50 years behind. I think there is a conservative element to music in Canada. If I were to point a finger at where there is an experimental tradition...I would point in two directions. That would be to Montreal, where there's a strong tradition of electro-acoustic music. You'll find there is a huge number of composers who take that art form extremely seriously... although it can be argued that that art form itself is becoming dated. That fixed electronic music, especially, that they focus on so much in Montreal. So that would be one tradition that I think is really... The second, I would think, is more of a west coast kind of attitude? It's so geographically distant from everything, that I think there's been something of an experimental tradition in places like Vancouver. Not so much Edmonton.

S: And Victoria, presumably.

M: Only because... and I'm going to be embarrassed that you're recording this because, for the life of me, I can't think of his name. He's a professor at the University of Victoria.

S: Yeah, from Europe. What's his name? Er...He's originally Czech, isn't he?

M: Oh, I know who you mean.

(Neither of us can remember this composer's name.)

M: No, that's not who I'm thinking of. (laughter)

S: I see.

M: He [unknown name] (has influenced?) composers like Daniel Brandes and Alex Chen. And he [the mystery composer] is probably the reason there's an experimental tradition in Victoria. However, Vancouver has a huge population...it's very racially mixed, and I think that makes for an interesting music... Although... a lot of improvisation goes on there. Electronics. More variety. It has more to do with circuit bending and things like that. Composers like Giorgio Magnanensi would be at the centre of this... doing some interesting things. He's been active in bringing in really interesting artists who... which has really stimulated the composers who live there. But the rest of Canada is lagging.

S: And Edmonton no.

M: No, you would not think of Edmonton as a hotbed for experimental...

S: So you would think Vancouver/Victoria ... and Montreal/Toronto?

M: No; definitely not Toronto. Although there are interesting people doing interesting things, er, no. Toronto... all the organisations are very separate from one another, and so there's been no real surge. The university is almost entirely focused on orchestral music, so it's very traditional. There's been no leadership.

S: I think, probably, this is a problem in all countries, including the USA – certainly Britain. Germany and Switzerland are pretty good for new music, modern music, avant-garde music, and that kind of thing. But, of course, the majority of people don't want to hear it. They want to listen to Mendelsohn. And that's part of the reason I stopped being a music journalist in my spare time – apart from Huddersfield. I just kept hearing the same old Mozart and Haydn string quartets in concerts... and, you know, it's a dumbed-down society in Britain now, it really is. They won't even play the Beethoven late string quartets – they'll play one.

(Laughter)

One of them – it's got a catchy tune. Nobody plays the Grosse Fuge – maybe because they can't. They think it's Berg.

M: Well, I was at the Symphony (Hall?) here last night and in saying what I saw it makes it sound like Edmonton's really cool. But it's not. Xenakis's *Jalons* and John Adams's *Harmonielehre*. But it's because we have a brand new conductor, who's 24 years old. And this was a cheap seat - 20 dollars a ticket - a late-night concert and it was his debut. So everyone was wearing jeans in the audience. And he was apologetic for the Xenakis. You know, it's very daring and things, 'You won't like it – but don't leave!' You know, that sort of...

S: It was much better in the old days, you know. I used to go to concerts like this in the 60s, and they'd play Xenakis and people would boo and throw things, but it was much better then, because, you know...

M: I really wanted to go to this concert last night because I wanted to see this 24-year old conductor. And I wanted to support this movement: these two pieces written in the 80s. He apologised for the Xenakis and the Adams... to my way of thinking, it's not even a strong Adams piece.

S: I'll be perfectly frank. I think John Adams is a dreadful composer, and how he can be mentioned in the same breath as Terry Riley I do not know.

(Laughter)

But there we are.

M: I think this piece apparently happened after his writer's block.

S: It's a famous piece, isn't it?

M: It's a very famous piece.

S: I don't think I've heard it.

M: It's in three movements. In symphonic form. With quotations of Mahler and Bruckner in it. You know, it's based on Wagner, the entire idea. So, to me, it's a step back.

S: Yeah. Absolutely. It's a step back.

Question 2

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

M: I think I'm becoming part of it. Actually, now I'm thinking about those composers in Canada who are part of that tradition outside those centres. I was thinking of it geographically. You mentioned Linda Catlin Smith. I think she's immensely important in this country. Martin Arnold as well.

S: If I'm right, he's got three gigs in Victoria when I'm there.

M: Oh! I've never met him before.

S: I didn't know him. Is he Canadian?

M: He's Canadian. And they are both in Ontario... they teach. It's impossible to have an academic position as a composer and be experimental. You must be out of the Boulezian school. Because it's so easy to prove quality. How do you evaluate the quality of a piece of music that is a list of dead children? [Reference to his text piece *Undeclared*]. That piece took me six months to write. It was one of the most difficult pieces of music I have ever written in my life. It doesn't have a single note. It's just a story taken out of the news. And then a list of names. I think it is my most important work...

S: OK!

M: My bosses at the university [the one MH works at in Edmonton] have no idea how to approach that. And that's very common in the academic system here. Academic...

S: Yes, sure.

M: So those two. Catlin Smith...She was also in Victoria for a while.

S: And she's American, isn't she? But she lives in Toronto.

M: As far as I am concerned, she's as Canadian as maple leaves.

S: She is from New York originally, I think.

M: I don't know where she comes from, to be quite honest. She's been here for so long. She's part of the Canadian Composers' [] Another Timbre. And it's really beautiful to see the success in our small world. That she's finally gone international...

S: What is that?

M: Another Timbre? It's a record label in London. Or Cambridge – in that neck of the woods. Experimental music of today. For me, it's probably the most important label on the planet for experimental music.

(Talk about Martin Arnold)

We have mutual friends who play his music on a regular basis.

S: When I see Daniel in Victoria, I'll ask him, because we might go together to one of the concerts [Martin Arnold].

[We didn't, as it turned out]

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

(Laughter)

M: Thank you very much for that! When we had a get-to-know-one-another conversation, we talked a bit about Boulez/Stockhausen being one avenue. And Cage being another – Cage and Cardew. I really see that as what is happening in the early 1950s... between the total serialists and the New York School of composers. And I think the major defining moment for that was Cage and Feldman - not just a moment but a period of time – when they went to Darmstadt, and really brought those ideas to Europe and brought it to the home of avant-garde music. And I see that kind of traditionally notated post-Renaissance direction of music as being of Boulez, Stockhausen, Brian Ferneyhough, and the new complexity composers. It's academic... composers today. Here in North America, especially. Major focus - some of it on postmodern composition. A lot of it has still strong undercurrents of serialism.

S: What do you mean by postmodern music?

M: Er, people like Michael Tourke. John Adams I would consider to be a postmodernist.

S: Do you mean people who have kind of ... to me... well, everyone seems to have a different idea about what it means... To me, it's those composers who seem to want to write acceptable avant-garde music. Like Birtwistle.

M: Oh really? You see I would consider him to be part of that avant-garde, kind of school, carefully notated, kind of complex... not serialised, of course.

S: No.

M: It's more interesting than that.

S: He's very popular in Britain. Another composer I really dislike – I am sorry but I am going to upset everybody – but, I don't care – is Mahler. And because, to me Mahler – they all sound like: now here's a bit for bassoon, and now here's a bit for percussion. And Birtwistle sounds a bit like that to me. Here's what we can do in the brass section. It's a bit like that Benjamin Britten thing, the *Young People's Guide to the Orchestra*. It always sounds as if they are playing to the audience, which, of course...

M: Here in Canada we look to Europe and go, 'Aw! It's so much better.' I think that might be a British attitude to orchestral music... Birtwistle is the furthest from popularity.

S: Oh really?

M: No one knows him. My daughter takes piano lessons. I walked into the home of her piano teacher, and I saw a Birtwistle poster and I lost my mind... I had never heard another person in Canada mention Harrison Birtwistle.

S: Oh really?

M: ... it's far too difficult for here. So what I consider to be postmodern would be those composers that take from - the Pop Art equivalent in music? - pop and jazz and maybe a little appropriation and quotations....so I would think postmodern composers are quite often [] post-minimalism. Post-minimalism, I think...

S: You mean like New Age stuff?

M: No. No, not that gentle ambient kind of stuff. Michael Tourke would be an example, which is... Mark-Anthony Turnage...

S: Yeah! I'm with you there. In Cheltenham we have a music festival every summer – the Cheltenham Music Festival. And it's getting worse and worse. I mean, I go to less and less. But there was a string quartet concert - I think they played one of his. I was bored stiff.

(Laughter)

But what annoys me about it – I am very opinionated – is it's neither one thing nor t'other. The audiences want to like modern music, so they're being given something that they can sort of like. Do you know what I mean?

M: Yeah, yeah.

S: Johnathan Dove; do you know that name?

M: No.

S: We probably know different names, you know... It's like... They sprinkle festivals with such composers just to show that 'We have got a bit of modern music to get on with'... So I am going to carry on a bit.

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

M: Definitely. Absolutely.

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

M: I have never in my life thought to approach experimental music and put the term 'funny' along with it, but I suppose it is. I mean, we mentioned – and we giggled about it – La Monte Young. You know, those pieces are as experimental as it can possibly get.

S: I think it's like Buddhism, you know. Buddhism is very funny.

M: It can be.

(Laughter)

My mother-in-law is Buddhist, and I try and giggle at Buddhism and I get in trouble for it.

[Back to the subject] I think it is, you see; as soon as you say ‘funny’ I immediately equate (?) it in terms of art... I think Duchamp, and I think how upsetting he was because of his sense of humour. In my opinion, the Fountain was purely a joke. I mean, submitting that to the [?] Show ... They said he was part of the Board of Directors, who had come to the agreement that any piece of art could be a part of the show if the artist paid five dollars. The definition of an art work would be an artist’s art. So he ran off to a local hardware store and bought a urinal. And he bought it not based on how beautiful a urinal it was, but on how repulsive an object it was. He signed it with a pseudonym, and put the date on it – he did all the things you do - and then submitted it. Of course, they took it back and smashed it to pieces. He got super-upset and quit the entire show. But I don’t think he actually meant to start conceptual art there; I think he meant to make a really funny joke.

S: I can’t remember where it was, but we have this concert series called the Proms, which you know. And I think they did 4’33’. And everybody smiled. And because it’s such a famous piece, it’s become, not risible, but a piece that people can smile at. Probably... the original score is 0’00’, wasn’t it?

M: It was composed as rests. I didn’t answer your question, I don’t think, about whether experimental music is funny. I think it’s deadly serious, only because of the danger that it faces in a neo-liberal world, where metrics and value need to be assigned to things. And I think experimental music ... we were talking about the difficulty in the university system in assessing my work and other composers’ work. Then it’s even more complicated when you start talking about consumerism and capitalism, and record sales and CD sales and the like. Because, I think a lot of this music stands outside that. How would you determine the import of those works by La Monte Young? I think in our world right now there’s a real danger that that kind of art won’t be lost but will be diminished.

S: Well, I’m glad you said that, because it leads very smoothly to the next question.

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt’s anti-populist stance in his article ‘Who cares if you listen?’.)

M: I think it’s such a tough issue...whether popularity equates success. I certainly think that’s not true... system in university that evaluates my success. My entire wage is determined by the number of performances my pieces receive, and not just how many performances, but by whom, in what hall, seen by how many people... Horrible entity for my superiors at the university, because it’s a boutique publisher. Antoine (Beuger, the person who ‘runs’ Wandelweiser), I’m sure, gives away far more of our scores and recordings... When I say I think this, I know it, and I support it. He gives away more of our music than is ever sold. And that’s the whole idea, and that’s one of the reasons why I love him so much. It is not against - it runs aside- that sort of neo-liberal metrics system. But I also have my other foot firmly in the

one where I am constantly assessing my peers and they are assessing me. Our success is based on market conditions.

S: But do your superiors and the people that pay your wages not realise that experimental music and improvisation - let's put them together for a moment – is on the up again? Certainly in Britain. You know, there's a place called Café Oto...

M: Yes, of course.

S: ... and not only does it have some of the standard improvisors, the big names, they'll put on a whole thing of... er, Christian Wolff pieces, you know.

M: I'm not really worried for the health of experimental music. I think, experimental music will survive because of its very critical aspirations, which are *not* neo-liberal, and because it's so capable of operating with so little to help it. It has no difficulty surviving because it needs so little to survive. And there are enough people still in the world. This book I was reading on the bus over here... on experimental music... is full of very interesting figures. And every one of them is experimental and doing really vibrant things. It's obvious that experimental music is an art form. However, I think that there are also other types of music that a lot of people in the real world look at as music... and growing and bigger audiences is something that I force (??) on people. I see my students come in: usually, their greatest desire is to write a sonata in the style of Mozart.

S: Oh... (laughs)

M: Yeah. I've just finished my first full week of teaching this term. And I've been on a sabbatical for a year. So I'd lost touch with a lot of the students while I was on the sabbatical. Now I'm back, and so my little crock of students that I'm teaching... I just decided that I would do a little experiment, and ask them if they could name a single living composer who didn't work at the University of Alberta. And I had *one*, OK? It's shocking...

S: The thing is, you know, Mozart has already done that. He made a fairly good job of it.

(Laughter)

Actually, I can't stand his piano sonatas. I think they're dreadful. But I do think his piano concertos are wonderful, because they're operatic...

M: I really believe that art follows culture. And what happens in society.

S: Really?

M: So I think that Boulez was Boulez because he was in Paris in 1945.

S: You mean after the War.

M: After the War. The impact of the Germans being in Paris during the War on a young, proud man, who had an angry side anyway, I think... there's only a number of things he could do artistically after that. I think that Cage, living in New York...

S: It's interesting that you should say that because I think that's why he was half pissed off when Cage and Feldman went over... These casual Americans, who never had their territory invaded, except for Hawaii...

[More talk about World War II, plus the Cold War and 9/11 and their impact on art]

I often ask my students: what are the things that have an impact on your life? That should have an impact on your art. So when I think of Feldman, I don't think of Feldman... of his music today. There's nothing almost in the world that I would have loved more to be able to sit down and have a coffee with Morton Feldman. I think that would just be one of the greatest experiences.

S: You saw him?

M: No, I never saw Feldman.

S: I saw him once. He gave a talk in London and played; and that's all. And I agree with you. I saw him about '77. ... He looked like a gangster, with really bad clothes.

(Laughter)

(More talk about Feldman's persona)

M: You read the interviews with Feldman; you think it's a conversation on equal terms.

S: Yes, I do get a bit fed up reading his interviews, because not only does he dominate, but he keeps changing the subject. And I'd just rather read about him than read the interviews.

M: But they are the most important thing about them. They really are. The way that he discusses things...

S: Oh, right. The next section *is* about Feldman, so let's get on with this one.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

Question 7

Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

M: I think I should be sending his estate a little bit of money - if I could ever make any money off my actual music...

S: Howard said something ... that it would be totally disingenuous of me to deny...

(Laughter)

M: I was doing my undergraduates' degree ... in rural Manitoba. And there I had been racking my brains trying to (remember?) the person who introduced Feldman to me. He was a contractor instructor who came regularly. And he was playing Feldman's *Last Pieces*. And, because he was young, he was very open to sharing his experience in (comparing?) these scores. And I can remember seeing the score and - I was a jazz musician at the time. Training as a trumpet player. But I'd become interested in composition. When I say interested - it was a burning passion. Without any of the background that a composer should perhaps have. And I saw that score - which is the one without stems.

S: Yeah. I know. Funnily enough, I think it was the first score *I* ever saw. I mean - maybe because it's the first one that was fully engraved.

M: OK.

S: Before they were – I don't know what the technical word is for...

M: Manuscripts.

S: Yeah. I thought it was a work of art.

M: To me it was the most absurd thing I had ever seen. I had exactly the same attitude that I pooh-pooh now. That... 'How can he get away with something like that?' But one second after having that kind of flinch reaction... This man was really approaching revolution in my opinion. He was really thinking about every application - every parameter that Feldman had left not in the score, but is there. So thinking about the history of playing Feldman... piano literature, and approaching what was missing from that score... and how it should be approached. What it means to play that sonority on the piano. How that sonority will sound, and therefore how long that sonority should exist for.

S: That's very interesting; and when I... what you've just said, I've read people saying similar things, and I am reminded of Chopin. Because when you play a piece of Chopin sometimes there's not much indication as to how it should be played. But because of the way he writes (and I think he's a good composer!), because of the history and everything, you know how to get into it, don't you? It's you know: 'Play me like this!'. And Feldman's similar.

M: He's a better composer for allowing the performer to make choices. The only failure Feldman would have would be if the performer did not take the proper care. And I walked away with that. I photocopied the score. In a 19-year old undergraduate way. I still have those copies, because they were so important to me. They still float around with me. Even though I *have* real copies of Morton Feldman pieces now.

S: Yes. Can you play *Last Pieces*?

M: No! I can play the slow ones! I have a recording of Dante Boon playing *Last Pieces*. And Feldman's important for him. Dante, Anastassis Philippakopoulos (Wandelweiser composers) and myself are very close friends.

Questions 8 and 9

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

M: His notation of those *Last Pieces*. The graph pieces, I played with, as an undergrad. I really believe that the score should visibly represent what the music will sound like. That enhances the entire situation. So the graph pieces for me were too cold. It looked too much like a math... But his later works, especially *Last Pieces*... I adopted that notation. So many of my written-out pieces just use note heads.

S: So there's notation. Is there anything else? Things like harmony, or anything like that? (indicating the parameters in question 9).

M: Wandelweiser... Jürg (Frey) is my hero, who uses harmony in Wandelweiser, and certainly Michael Pisaro pieces – Michael is amazing. But I feel like for most of the Wandelweiser composers harmony isn't as important as it is to me. And I think those small harmonic units that function, but don't function traditionally – I think that I owe something to Feldman for that attitude towards how harmony.... but not directly.

S: Do you mean like playing octaves and triads, but they don't have any diatonic sense.

M: Right. Exactly. It's not that I've studied Feldman and I'm using the same sonorities as he is using, but rather I feel he allows the composer to use those. And if I go back to those composers who are influential as regards their usage of harmonic materials, Feldman is certainly the beginning of that for me... the composer who it springs out of. I have to say too that one of the overriding concerns for me comes out of Feldman... comes out of reading Feldman and reading the interviews. And I pore over his interviews, hoping that one day I'll find something I missed on first reading. With regard to his attitude towards form and scale. I find that that Bergson's (French philosopher) attitude to time... where time is subjective...

[Some talk about the nature of time]

That idea of subjective time; that time is in the eye of the beholder. I get that out of Feldman. I think that his very long pieces have a sense that at a certain period of time, whether it's 45 minutes or whatever, structure or form ceases to exist and becomes scale. That idea that the materials are not part of the larger scaffolding, but rather groups of relationships perhaps... that there's no beginning and no end. I love that idea in his work. And it's a leading-off point in my own work.

S: So are you a fan of the long, late pieces, over the other pieces? You know, the middle pieces, *Durations* and so on? And the early works.

M: Well, my favourite work of Feldman would be *Palais de Mari*. That's my favourite of all the pieces.

S: Yes, it's one of my favourites.

M: But I do love the long pieces as well. I love the experience that you get from the long pieces.

S: I don't know. I like to think that I'm not a traditionalist but there's something about the long pieces that are really satisfying in a kind of very conservative way. I played *For Philip Guston* the other day at home, and it's on four CDs and I had to have a break between them because I've got one wife and the cats and the neighbours coming in and so and so ...it lasted all day. And I thought, you know, this is so nice! This music is just so nice.

M: Yeah.

S: And my cats really like Feldman. They curl up...

(Laughter)

M: I'm just a music snob.

S: I think that's good.

M: I love discussing this with Antoine Beuger, because a lot of the Wandelweiser attitude is that Wandelweiser's music can exist as background. And so they're very (happy?) with audience members coming and going in concerts. I hate that. When I listen to music, I listen to music the way I watch great films.

S: Yes. Oh, very well put I think! And another thing, which is sort of related to that, which I don't really like much is when you get scores by Christian Wolff or Cage saying between one and 25 players and you can play half of it or you don't play any of it. I can't quite get that. With a film, you have to play all of it.

M: It's true. Wandelweiser has adopted that Cage/Wolff attitude towards forces and orderings. I think I do understand that aspect and I think it almost takes a composer to truly understand that when you're relying on your friends to play your music - which so often happens in the experimental world, where you can't write a piece for tuba, clarinet, cello and violin, because the chances of ever getting that group together are ... you write up to four players ...

S: Yeah, I understand that.

M: ...and there is a certain aspect of wonderful surprise that comes from those sorts of things.

S: I think there are limits. I mean, honestly, for up to five players... I understand that kind of thing. But I've got an album of Cage, you know, and it's *Winter Music*, *Water Music*, this music and that, and you can play it all together or not at all, or...

M: I think they were playing with the idea of structure at the time.

S: And I think it's a nice thing to go along to, especially if you've got a hip flask with you. Whereas, with Feldman, as I say, he's more a traditionalist in a way... it appeals to... I think that may be part of the reason why he's done so well. He also died, which helps your career. One thinks of Joy Division. I used to see them in London: they were my favourite band. Nobody knew who they were and then the guy kills himself, and suddenly they are in the Indie charts for ten years.

(Talk continues about cult tastes)]

M: I look at Jürg Frey and all the success that he's having. He's very much alive, and I think that things might be turning round, and Harrison Birtwistle is still alive, and enjoying in your country huge success.

S: Yes. Jürg Frey is a composer I like very much. Very, very much indeed. And, in a way, although it's Feldmanesque - although he says it isn't - I wouldn't want to compare it but sometimes I almost prefer it to Feldman. Sometimes there's a beauty in it. You know, there's an interesting thing - I think it is in Noble's book on Feldman - the bland stuff describing Feldman, that it's quiet, and it's beautiful. And he says that sometimes Feldman is quite

aggressive and unnerving, and that... There's a piece called - it's for violin and piano - *Spring of Chosroes* - do you know that piece?

M: No.

S: It's a very edgy thing for violin and piano. It starts like some chimpanzee scratching his back. (Imitates the sound). And then it calms down a bit and becomes warm... becomes kind of traditionally Feldmanesque. But there is an edginess, whereas Frey's music is really kind of beautiful.

(Laughter)

M: It really is. What I love, though, is, with Jürg's music, if you look at his entire catalogue, it's immensely challenging.

S: In what ways?

M: Conceptionally challenging? His text scores are really on the very cutting edge of experimental music. He's a very thoughtful, intelligent man who writes intelligently and intellectually, and at the same time it's so starkly beautiful. And he's the nicest man in the entire world.

S: Yeah, I have met him. I met him in Huddersfield, actually. Just for a few seconds, really, cos I was covering a couple of his concerts. And I just sort of said hello.

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

M: I'm sure that...

S: Does 'slow' mean the same as 'adagio'?

M: No. And yes. It's absolutely exactly the same. My guess with Feldman is what we were talking about earlier. That 1950s, you know, Boulez coming out of Paris in the 40s after World War II... Italian must have ... not being from the 50s I can't speak... but Italian must have come with a bunch of baggage. Post-Mussolini. Those Fascists. I imagine that there was a lot of tension in the musical world at that time. I can only imagine it; I can read about it but it's not the same thing.

S: Well, I think in the case of Boulez, he'd taken his cue from Debussy, who had started using French rather than Italian anyway. So he uses 'lent' instead of 'adagio'.

M: Which I think is more acceptable than English in the world of music. Which is a more mundane language...

S: I studied linguistics, which is why I asked the question. And in linguistics there's a thing called semiotics, and I don't really understand what it means. But it's how words are like signs? So this is another thing, looking at *Last Pieces*, I noticed immediately it said 'slow', 'fast', very

quiet'. And I thought: he's using English there. Is it because he's from New York? And doesn't know any Italian? (joke). I thought it was an attitude, anyway.

M: Very early in my training as a composer, I had a teacher whose first language wasn't English. And he looked at me and said: why are you using all this Italian when you don't speak a word of it? Your performers all living in Brandon, Manitoba. Why are you writing that?

S: Yes, but it's a question of connotation; and that's what I *really* mean. You see, Feldman's 'slow' is not Mahler Adagio. It may be the same tempo, but there's something else going on.

M: I strongly believe that there's a semiotic meaning to all of those musical terms. And that they've taken on much more baggage...

S: OK, that's great. I knew you use English to...

M: I do use English. Although I'm beginning to have titles in French now. But that's acrimonious...

S: Maybe you're allowed to because you're Canadian. This is a bilingual country.

M: It's my excuse. My children are bilingual.

S: So they speak French.

M: They speak French. They go to school where it's in French.

S: Yeah, I just thought it was Quebec. But it seems like it's everywhere.

M: There are pockets, certainly. I thought it was important for my children.

S: You should learn one of those Indian languages – Lakota or something.

(Talk continues about languages)

Question 11

In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

M: I think he was (unique). However, I know Cage always cites Satie. I think that Satie's influence is more obvious in Feldman than it is in Cage. Except perhaps the [?]. But I don't recall Feldman ever naming Satie as an influence. I'm not a Feldman expert. But I have read lots of what has been written. But I don't recall a strong influence of Satie.

S: There's a lot mentioning Satie in this connection, but I've never really seen it. I know Cage really liked Satie, and I always have the feeling that that's why we all have to like him, I suppose. Some Satie is very nice, but I think some of it is quite wishy-washy stuff. I played in *Vexations*. We did it over - was it 14 hours? ... you know, like a rota. But I just had a slot.

(More talk on the same subject)

It was like driving through Alberta.

M: So do I think he's a unique force? I definitely do. And I think that Satie influence is undoubtedly there, because we know he was important to Cage, and Cage shared influences with those around him. But I still think that, especially in that day and age, Feldman is such a unique voice. And such a vanguard composer. The idea that Feldman at Darmstadt... that's the most extraordinary thing. You know I think he had the right personality to be a composer on the vanguard. I still feel sorry for Cage, because I think he was a sensitive human being, who was probably hurt when the Bernstein episode happened. And the New York Philharmonic ruined his piece.

S: What was that?

M: They played *Atlas eclipticalis*. They made horrible noises... They just made a mockery of the piece...

S: (recalling) Yes...

(Talk on this subject continues)

M: I think Feldman had the right personality to go to Darmstadt. And he could absorb that sort of stuff and found it perhaps intellectually interesting.

S: When I was at University, I used to spend every lunch hour with Howard Skempton... you know, we'd drive people away. And Cardew would come in and do stuff. John Tilbury often came in and played. And one day he played *Volo Solo*, which is a Cardew piece. A wonderful piece. And Howard insisted on playing this LaMonte Young – I think it was that one where it's just an open fifth. And he played it for hours with a saxophonist. And in those days, you know, it was all - we were all hippies, and I had hair down here – but people would actually sit there and listen to it... and they genuinely thought they were learning something. You know. And this has come back, where I live at least. We have a group of people – anything up to about a hundred – who regularly come to the gigs, and they will sit there and – I don't know if they are enjoying themselves – but they think they are learning something. This is not pop music, classical music - this is something. So perhaps those days are returning.

(some talk about people's reaction to avant-garde art)

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

M: No... In 2014 I became a member of Wandelweiser the... and the most recent member of Wandelweiser is... the composers who are labelled Wandelweiser are geographically diffuse.

S: And there's not one in the UK, I don't think.

M: No, there isn't. The Wandelweiser composers – that's just publishing. This is something that Antoine really believes strongly. And the rest of us agree with, but less strongly. For him, it's a very important point. Wandelweiser composers are published by Wandelweiser. Wandelweiser, though, is much greater than that group of 20 composers. It's a huge, diverse network, of which there are a huge number of performers and composers who are British actually, who are friends of Wandelweiser. So Wandelweiser is a group of friends. And then

there's the record label, which publishes works by all sorts of other composers. And then there's the larger network of influence that is much, much greater and more diffuse. I suspect (there are) Japanese composers and many British composers and performers. There are people in Russia - a really strong Wandelweiser community in Russia and Spain, although there are no Russian or Spanish composers in Wandelweiser. And that social network is what is Wandelweiser. So Wandelweiser was important to me long before I became a Wandelweiser composer in 2014. But what had happened was – I was going through a tenure period at university. And I was being turned down for tenure for aesthetic reasons. Because of the type of music I write. It didn't appeal to experts here. So what they do on a tenure here in Canada is they send your scores and all of your work to a panel of anonymous experts. And they write back with comments on it. They looked at this music and said – “there's no notes in these pieces!” In other cases, “There's notes but no stems!” He didn't even bother writing durations. What kind of a composer ignores rhythm? You're only half a composer then.

S: This was recently?

M: Very recently. So I took on the University and I won my case. Which is the good news. But, emotionally, it was a very difficult time. And I felt very isolated in that experience. So I wrote to Antoine, and I knew that Antoine had been training... he takes young composers in... Of course, I am not a young composer. And I wrote to him, and I said: 'I don't want lessons. I feel very comfortable with what I do. What I feel uncomfortable with is how everyone else looks at it. I feel like I'm losing the...'

S: So what did he say?

M: I only went for a week.

SL To Dusseldorf.

M: To Haan. And we just sat at his table. Get up at eight in the morning, and we wouldn't move.

(Continues to speak about his sessions with Antoine Beuger)

My point is to find something that no one else has done. So that if ever they become something, then it's totally unique. That'd be wonderful.

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

M: Not to that degree. However, ... Agnes Martin is the greatest thing... And her attitude towards art is one of the most beautiful things in the whole world. That idea of taking yourself entirely out of the world. I love the fact that she would sit on her little uncomfortable wooden chair in her studio with her eyes closed. For days at a time, waiting for the painting to materialise in her mind's eye. And then she would jot down a little sketch of it. And then from that postage size-sketch she would make these amazing pieces. I just find that a beautiful way of working. She was a beautiful figure... But I saw my first De Kooning live. I didn't even

know I was a fan of De Kooning until I saw one. I knew I loved Rothko, and I knew how important Rothko's art has been to me. I saw my first Rothko just this year, and it was in the same room in Amsterdam as the De Kooning, and I couldn't stop looking at the De Kooning. And that really disrupted me in a way.

S: When I was much younger there used to be a Rothko gallery in one of the art galleries in London, and I used to go and sit in it. There's one in Houston now, I think. The Chapel. I barely knew who he was, but I always loved it. My favourite is Robert Ryman. You know? The guy who does all the white paintings. There's not any racial slur intended; it's just that I just like looking at these white paintings.

(Laughter)

M: The Barnett Newman- type paintings are too aggressive for me. That huge mass of a single colour I find ... it intrudes on me too much.

(More talk about art)

Question 14

Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

S: It doesn't go anywhere. It's come from serialism. Like Webern; you can play it back to front; indeed, it's sometimes composed back to front.

(laughter)

M: I don't agree with the Webern. But I love tangential conversations, even more than Feldman. But I think Feldman, and the idea of stasis, was probably important to Feldman. I think it opened a door to the idea of stasis in music, but I don't think his music was the end (?) of that conversation.

S: So is it relevant to your music?

M: Yeah. Very much so. In the directions that I aim that so often veer away from art (?). I think a lot of my music reacts through fear. So I will have an idea for a piece, and then I'll temper it, because I'm too scared to actually see it through the way it needs to be. Because I am sure of becoming less scared.

S: Is that because you're embarrassed about the outcome?

M: I'm not embarrassed. I think I'm so terrified that people won't love me. I think there's a deep need to be liked in my personality.

S: The way I look at it is...I have written music myself – you could call it experimental music – and I started writing it at college - I was only a boy then – I was 20, 21. And I kept thinking this is no good, you know. And since that time I've heard such terrible music that now I just write what I want... it's no worse than some of the other stuff.

M: That's where my contact with Antoine has been important, because what I was looking for with these composers who seemed to be writing music that they ... actually do that. And I think

I'm making attempts all the time to try and write music for myself. And I don't know if that is the purpose of art: we should be reaching out. I still question that in my own mind.

I mean, Feldman's idea of stasis, though, is something that I strive towards personally. And I see other composers striving towards that. And I think British composer Ryoko Akama is making huge strides. She's a Japanese composer living in the UK. A lot of her work is text-based. It approaches that idea of stasis. I think Antoine Berger is another composer who's achieved it mainly...

(Mark describes a performance of one of Beuger's conceptual works in New York involving Michael Parsons)

S: OK. What I really meant about Webern is that, you know, with diatonic music you have a beginning, a middle, and then you return... and then with serialism, you've got this music which didn't have a home note. And didn't have a home to go to.

M: Right.

S: And that kind of developed into minimalism and then what Feldman was doing. Although it can be very rhythmic and dynamic, it stays there in a way.

M: The artificial conception, though, that tonal music has a beginning, a middle and an end to me always seemed very false. It is like: I say my music has a beginning, middle and end; therefore, it has a beginning, middle and end. It's really hard to prove, unless you buy into the idea of a tonal centre. If you say that I am going to question the whole idea of common practice: resolution and tonality. And the home key that gives the sense that it's returning to something, but you don't buy... you know, just because a composer says it's in C Major, you don't buy that C major is the home. I think it does open up that whole question of whether it's returned to *anything*. I tend to question that, mostly because when I go and see a piece like the Adams last night... You know it starts in E flat - I think it's like 196 repetitions of an E flat major chord, and it ends in E flat. So a very, very traditional kind of symphonic piece. But if you say... well, *he* says there's a return...but don't buy into that.

S: I understand what you mean. Perhaps you mean this. And this is a thing I said to somebody recently. If I play a piece of music which... you take a D Major chord, and I play it 240 times, and I call it *Autumn in Edmonton*, that piece is not in D Major.

(Laughter)

M: But even if you were to go five, five, five, five, five for 20 minutes - it still isn't in the tonic key either. Because now if you play the full chord, after that, to me it's always potentially open. Except the composer and hearers have decided that...

S: I came to music the wrong way round. I mean, I liked Schoenberg before I liked Beethoven. (Actually, I still don't like Beethoven that much). I had to go backwards. And I've always had trouble with keys.

M: We tend to trust all those hundreds of years of experts who say that whatever key a piece is in is its home. I am distrustful of that statement. I think Webern can make more arguments for the beginning, middle and end of a piece than Beethoven could.

S: Do you? OK. Well, that's very interesting. I'll have to dwell on that.

M: Maybe it's because I was originally an electro-acoustic composer. And then I went to jazz music, as an instrumentalist. And then I came to classical composition.

S: What do you mean by electro-acoustic music exactly?

M: Sort of fixed electronic music. So for me it was sculptured. I was working with sound.

S: But you could read music.

M: I was able to read music. Not when I first became an electronic composer. At that time I was 14 years old.

(More about Mark's and Spencer's early musical education)

Question 15

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

M: Yes. However, if you go back far enough into my output, I was playing noise music. So the electronic music that I did became very loud, very aggressive.

(more about noise music)

Noise music is something I teach – the culture of noise music - to my students.

S: Are your students Canadian or do they come from all over the world?

M: Most of our graduates are actually from all over the world.

S: They're Chinese.

M: No. South America seems to be a pretty common base (?) for a lot of my students. We certainly do have students who are Chinese. Edmonton is so isolated that we have a lot of [] as well. But for some reason, we do get ... from South America.

(More on this subject)

Question 16

(If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

M: Soft music is easier to listen to. It's like walking through a gallery. I don't like Barnett Newman, because he gets in my face. And I feel the same way about a lot of music that I listen to. That noise music is too aggressive for my taste. Once I experienced it at its pinnacle... it was too intimidating. And I realised that at the end of the experience I had had the experience, but I hadn't heard the music. So by reducing the volume to very quiet... it's much easier to focus on events as sound. But I think that that *is* a political gesture. I think that there's an extremity? that makes it more vanguard. The politics of art - not a political movement, anti-neo-liberal, no. Silence and quiet. I am strongly against market forces, having an influence on

the world the way they do. I really do believe in a sharing []. I am not sure, myself, if my music should be played quietly... exhibits that.

S: We all seem to be speaking the same sort of language. People, like you and me, who engage with his kind of thing. Because, you know, it's a noisy old world out there. The pop music industry is a kind of eternally brash thing. It has nothing much to do with music. It's a kind of regurgitation of stuff... like hamburgers! And it seems to me that there's a kind of...it is a reaction against...

M: You're being political if you are quiet and contemplate... It's funny, because I can relate to Feldman as a human being, in that I have a really hard time not talking all the time. But my music is much quieter.

S: OK, that's good. Howard is the same. He's terribly garrulous – he'll talk and talk – and then, you know, he plays a piece of music and (imitates quiet and slow music).

(More talk about chattiness)

Question 17

Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

M: Well, for me, *Last Pieces* was the pinnacle of that; where he didn't write durations, but left it to the performer. I think that was a really early influence. I think *pppppp* - what it's saying is something. I don't think there's any difference between *pppppp* and *ppppp*, but I think *pppppp* is something – not concrete – but something to just try to attain.

But I think in those pieces, by not writing in durations, he leaves it to the performer; and that has been... I mean Cage allows a great deal of indeterminacy. That whole aspect of indeterminacy... Feldman's graph pieces are great examples of leaving it to the performer. It only works if the performer is serious, and true to what they're after – it is a real collaboration. As soon as the performer takes it lightly, it can destroy the piece. But I've found that really, really important...

S: Feldman acknowledged that problem with the graph pieces, didn't he? He discovered that ... because he wrote them mainly, well the piano works... mainly for David Tudor, who knew what he wanted. But to give it to somebody else, you know, could be dangerous.

M: It's dangerous in the best ways possible. I talked to Antoine about this too. I won't say even where or for what instrument it was, but the performer taking one of his pieces and just not understanding the nature of that work. Playing it thinking they've done a wonderful job and looking at Antoine... "What do you think?" And him not knowing what to say.

S: It's a bit like playing the *Pathétique* sonata as a rag time.

M: During my tenure battle, there was a very highly esteemed professor on campus who had taken one of my scores. The piece is supposed to be a minimum of 15 minutes. And you can play it up to 30 minutes. When Dante played it, it took him 22 minutes. Another leading... composer played it in 25 minutes. This man took my score and handed it to a friend. And he played it in three minutes. Then he said to me in a very antagonistic way: "You say it's supposed to take 15 minutes, but it only took three minutes. You obviously don't even know your own music." I think that's a great example of a performer destroying a piece of music because of its indeterminate nature. I think that it's a wonderful thing that it's dangerous. I actually think it's the greatest thing in the world if my piece can be so wrongly interpreted. It's the strength of the piece. But it's also exclusive, and speaks to a certain elitism in the work as well.

S: OK. Good.

Question 18

Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

M: Well, so many of my works, especially my piano works. But now my ensemble works – my recent string quartet has no indication of time (?), other than ...

S: OK, I already knew the answer to that.

M: Yeah!

S: But I need evidence of the obvious.

M: Right. Feldman's *Durations* are so influential on me. I have piano pieces of 60 or 70 minutes in length. If it weren't for Feldman, I wouldn't have undertaken that. Because the chance of a performance is so slim. It's on that CD (indicates his CD gift to Spencer). He had to play those pieces a little quickly...

(Explains the recording technology problems for such long pieces)

Question 19

In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

M: Oh, it's the most important thing. Feldman is the great model for it. His personality. But also that music. The fact that people who were being taken seriously in musical... Boulez's second piano sonata - I love that piece. I absolutely love that piece. And then the fact that Feldman was doing what he was doing, Skempton was doing what he was doing – these were really audacious human beings. To say 'I'm not just going to be audacious with regard to what the populace at the time were wanting to listen to, which was very different'... Boulez was audacious in that he was.... but then the establishment in music. At Darmstadt they could all get together: Nono, Boulez, Stockhausen – this is the only music that counts. But then you've got Cage and Feldman and Wolff, who were doing something completely different from that. And I think, personally, that, in reading the Boulez-Cage letters, I think Boulez was freaked out by how avant-garde Cage really was. I think Boulez was much more conservative... and I think that's an audacious statement really. And I think that Cage recognised that Feldman was not just a confidant and a friend, another player in that world, but someone who was audacious at another level entirely.

S: Yes. OK. That's good.

Question 20

Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

M: I think both. I don't think there's a composer on the planet who's purely intuitive - it's impossible.

S: It has been said.

M: I know. But I don't agree!

(Laughter)

M: (humorously) You know. Who am I? I am an extremely minor figure in the local...

(some chat about the opinions of composers in interviews with them)

I don't think you can sit down at a piano and play something purely intuitively. I was a jazz musician, who left jazz very frustrated with the idiomatic nature of jazz and composition. Which isn't anything new in this world. Certainly... not the people which you hang out with and know are totally [] I just left. As a composer, we like to think that what we are doing is without idiom. But it's false. Feldman is talking about sitting down at his own piano – the one he grew up with? And what he's really talking about is he was comfortable with his idiom.

S: Yes, but Feldman – perhaps all composers are like this – but he was notoriously reticent about explaining how he composed.

M: Oh yes. Absolutely. I keep my method totally and almost entirely secret. I will tell people exactly what my music was about, and nine times out of ten it's a bold face lie.

S: OK. I've written pieces, and when I look at them again I can't remember how I wrote them. But I know I used a method, and often it was with a pack of cards.

M: OK.

S: With a reduced scale. The cards don't determine everything. The usual thing. But I'm glad that I've forgotten how I did it, because I don't want to be reminded of it. I just want to play the piece.

M: Yeah. Morton Feldman was a composer at the time of Cage and Boulez, so total serialism was a method... how you wrote notes on the page... that was really important to him.

S: Oh yes.

M: I think he'd likely set himself a target. []. I don't know if he had a method in the way Cage had a method. But I think we speak of method today, in 2017, (differently?) than what they meant in '55. Method meant something very rigid. And I think a lot of composers are less rigid now. It could be Feldman's influence, but I actually think that it's just that serialism ran its course. No one wants to roll dice because Cage already did it...

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Mark Hannesson

Question 21

You write a lot of electronic music. Is this part of the alternative, more pop-like 'experimental' music scene?

S: Try not to smirk.

(Chuckles)

M: No.

S: Do you know what I'm talking about?

M: Yes. I know *exactly* what you're talking about.

S: Because I don't really know what that is.

M: I teach a lot of those students. I get DJs who come, who are interested in studying with me, because they want to...

S: Are you on Facebook?

M: Yeah.

S: I run a Facebook group called 'Experimental Music'. Look it up.

(Some humorous chat about Facebook)

And I explain what it's about, as you're supposed to, you know. And I get all these – they're obviously young chaps. And call this experimental music: it's got a regular beat and it's tonal – it's just got funny noises on it (laughs).

M: I am the funny noise guy. I started as an electro-acoustic composer and electronic music was always very important to me. But I was just let loose on all that technology. And then it's always been a part of my repertoire - so it plays roles in my music. Now and again, I will make

an electronic piece or there'll be an electronic component. I just wrote a piece for Antoine Beuger.

S: Really?

M: It has an electronic component to it. But the electronics are simple. I use Max, which is programming language for music. I don't see the reason not to use it. It's in the style of Antoine – so it's one of pieces that you are building a culture around the piece and once the culture is invented, then you present the price (prize?) that's within that culture.

S: Oh, this is too ... above my head. I don't really get electronic music.

(M talks more about electronics in music)

Question 22

The piece *Dust of Silence*, for example, seems hardly there at all. It is very Wandelweiser. Is there a supra-musical message or intent here?

M: In that piece? I wrote that piece in a period when I was using nothing but my children as material.

S: Oh. And how does that work?

M: I was enamoured with the sounds that my children made. And their voices. So electronic works were where the whole material was based entirely on my children. And I think I probably told people at the time that that piece came out something (??) quite different. But again, I think that's obfuscation ... a lot of my pieces I feel are really personal, and I don't necessarily want to share that. That piece was released in Russia, I think on [], a really cool Russian record label...

(Further description of this Russian label)

Question 23

What is your link to Wandelweiser and what is the significance of that organisation, would you say?

M: I think Michael Pisaro in what he's written about Wandelweiser is a group of people who look out for each other's interests. I think Wandelweiser is a really wonderful organisation in the world that's almost a perfect social network – in that central component that then extends outward. You had the Cage New York School: they all lived within a few blocks; they were friends. All of these artistic movements [] over hundreds of years that were geographically placed.

(More talk about social media, and the localisation of schools, organisations, etc.)

(?) Johnson, in his book, talks about the Wandelweiser record label as being an antidote to neo-liberalism, because it's so hard to buy a Wandelweiser CD. It's not a part of that big capitalist society. I love the fact that, if you write to Antoine, or go to one of the concerts, he'll give you

as much as you buy. So if you buy you're supporting the entire group. No one becomes rich off of Wandelweiser. I like that.

S: Yes, he replied to my email, and I'll probably go over there sometime.

M: You should go in the summer during the festival that they have there.

S: What month is that?

M: This coming year he's doing it over two weeks... end of July and... in August.

S: In 2018?

M: Every year there's a series of concerts.

Question 24

of shadows. The score is intriguing. I played it with the first four staves in the bass clef and, the next four in the treble, and the last in the bass again. This, of course, introduced a sense of rhetoric. What is the compositional logic in leaving the choice of clef free?

M: You know, this piece was a bit of an experiment for me. It's an early piece, actually. This is the first piece where I did away with all of those parameters of music that I felt were not important. And I think that in many ways it was a monstrous failure for me. I think that in getting rid of the clefs in writing this piece, I finished this piece - In my catalogue, it doesn't show up.

S: I thought it was great.

M: Well thank you. I'll send you some more recent works. One of the problems I had with it was I didn't want it to have a clef because I liked that idea.

S: OK. But actually, although I like the piece very much, it doesn't work entirely, because one is hooked on a choice of clef almost intuitively. In fact, you should play this (Indicating the score?) with a treble clef, but I think it would defeat (??) the purpose. The chord sequence in the bass clef produces a lot of, kind of, stodgy chords, but I thought it was good, you know. In a way

M: I look back at the piece and I thought any clef. Does it actually say bass or treble or does it say any clef?

S: Any clef.

M: Any clef. ... tenor clef or alto clef.

S: No, well I can't read tenor clef.

END

Appendix VI: Christopher Hobbs

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Christopher Hobbs. Leicester. 7.12. 2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Question 1

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

C: Well, I think for that all you have to do is read the Nyman book and Tilbury's biography of Cardew.

S: Yes. Both of which I have.

C: Absolutely. So you don't actually need to ask the question.

S: No. But I am asking questions I kind of already know the answer to.

C: Well, I can't really add anything to what those excellent people do.

S: Right.

Question 2

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

C: Once again, if you read both books, you'll find ...very much so, yes.

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

C: (pauses) Historically, I would say experimental music is the other side of avant-garde music. So 'avant-garde' as evinced by the school which goes Wagner – Schoenberg – to Stockhausen – to Boulez. Then through to the new serialists and new complexity composers. That is to say, the tradition which is associated with Cage ...the west coast of America rather than the east coast (?)...with influences from the East rather than from Europe. Rather than Western European art music. And then moving down from Cage through to, obviously, Wolff, Feldman, and then through to a slightly later generation - Earle Brown, of course – Lucier, and those associated composers and the jump – in this country, obviously – to Cardew.

S: And what are the oriental influences or sources or...?

C: I can't add to what Cage has said about Eastern thought. Or people like the early minimalists, going off to study in Africa or in India...the philosophy of Eastern thought as opposed to Western thought.

S: OK.

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition? (This question was not asked as the matter had already been touched on).

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

C: English experimental music has a great deal of humour in it, yes. Certainly, if you look at the work of John White, you'll find there's a lot of humour in it. And I think the humour is not only attached to the music itself – in fact, it's not always attached to the music itself - but it's attached to the way of making music. The fact that the group that I was in with John White, the Promenade Theatre Orchestra, played toy pianos and reed organs, while Steve Reich was using [] and big loudspeakers. And we would tend to use battery-driven machines rather thanso there is a humorous element there. And the humour goes through to the titles very often.

S: Yes.

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

C: It's elitist in that for quite a lot of experimental music it's necessary to be able to read music. That can be seen as an elitist stance. Though there's plenty of experimental music which is graphic, as in the case of Cardew's *Treatise*, or verbal, as in the case of the '1960s' compositions by La Monte Young. Or, indeed, a lot of my early pieces which were verbal. So to that extent, yes, it is probably elitist. And one could say that experimental music is - as was decried by Cardew in 'Stockhausen Serves Imperialism' – the whole notion of experimentalism is elitist.

S: Yes.

C: As opposed to something which stems from the proletariat.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

Question 7

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

C: Oh yes. Certainly. In a few pieces...erm. And I would have to say that I was influenced by La Monte Young and Cage before I was influenced by Feldman. But! Having said that – here's the anecdote – the first piece of experimental music that I wrote was in February 1965, which was the result of seeing a piece of Feldman's in *The Musical Times*. It was one of the early pieces, where you had high, middle and low (register), and the numbers...

S: *Intersection*, or...?

C: One of the *Intersections*. Probably. And I was a junior exhibitor at Trinity College at the time – I was 14. And I wrote a piece for woodwind quartet (because they were four instruments we had available: flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon), using some sort of serialisation, I think, to determine the numbers, and which graphs they were in. And, of course I expected it to sound very avant-garde, let us say, erm...notes all over the place - and I had my comeuppance when putting the music in front of the flute player. One of the boxes was, I think, medium register: 12 (indicating the number of pitches to be played), and he played a perfect chromatic scale (chuckles)...

S: Ah! And Feldman touches on that possibility, doesn't he? That people will kind of muck it up. And, in a way, this destroys the whole project.

C: at a conference I played two versions of one of the *Intersections*, one of which was played by Frank Denyer in the style you'd imagine, so it sounded like Stockhausen, and then I did my own version using entirely jazz chords.... well, Feldman doesn't say you *can't* make it sound jazzy... so is it wrong if you do?

S: Howard (Skempton) thinks Feldman *is* jazz, but...

(laughter)

C: Yeah...whether Feldman thought himself as jazz is another matter...

S: I would have thought he probably didn't, but I think, especially if you're *not* from America - there's a kind of bluesy Americanness to Feldman's music...

C: Mm.

S: ...which isn't the same as, for example, Howard's or Cardew's music...

C: Absolutely not. No, it is an American thing, certainly. I mean, a tradition which Cage would be very much against. Cage was very much against jazz, of course.

S: Yes.

C: But, I mean, for different reasons.

Question 8

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

S: I mean, you mentioned the graph scores. Is there anything else?

C: Well, not the scores, so much. The actual sound of the music is the – letting the sounds be themselves. Once again, as we touched on the Eastern influence – that is to say, that you don't have a story to tell – or you aren't imposing the composer's will on the listener, as Schoenberg or Stockhausen do, for example. But simply letting the sounds drift separated by silences, and those, I think, are very beautiful. I have a piece called *Sudoku 82*, which is a British release by Cold Blue. Which is for eight pianos. On the recording it's one piano overdubbed; and I've got a solo version of it. That is cocktail piano licks taken from GarageBand software, and slowed down from around 122-124 bpm to 20 bpm. And then these extremely slow-moving licks are juxtaposed and repeated, so it's impossible to tell that they *are* cocktail piano [] and that's actually quite close to Feldman in many ways.

S: I've heard one of your *Sudoku* pieces on YouTube for piano. I'm not sure if you're playing it or ...

C: Yes, that would be it. No, that would be the company recording. Yes, he's over-dubbed.

S: OK.

Question 9

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

C: No, probably not. And certainly not duration.... The extreme length of his later works is something which I've never really gone into.

S: Right. Yes. I've just bought Michael Parsons's double album, and it's the opposite. You know, lots of tiny pieces...

C: That's right!

S: Very nice and very learned titles, which is quite refreshing. *Concertante*, and things...

C: Yes.

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

C: Generally speaking, I use English. Simply, as I tell my students all the time, 'andante' has ceased to mean anything. A Bruckner 'adagio' is very different from a Bach 'adagio'. And, nowadays anyway, none of my students use it - they all use bpm. And, of course, our generation

thought in terms of eighths. And twelfths. Crotchet 60, 66, crotchet 72, 84, 92, 96 - in the way the old-fashioned metronome was... And certainly - I don't know if you were brought up like that - but I could always identify what 88 was. Or what 96 or 102 was. Because, essentially, it's using your watch - how many beats there are in five seconds. My students, of course, don't do that, so we get crotchet = 101. So I think that that seems very odd. Why don't you use 100 or 102? [] And you can be exact like that. I always do tell them, though, that it's useful to have some words - to tell the performer what mood they might need to play the piece in. At least 'andante' does tell you something. 'Allegretto' does tell you something. But it's more to do with a way of approaching music. You play 'allegretto' in a different way from 'moderato' on the piano. But in terms of tempo, it doesn't tell you a great deal at all.

S: It just struck me when I first saw a Feldman score, which I think must have been *Last Pieces*, because I think it was the first engraved score. And it struck me: 'slow', 'fast', 'very slow', 'quiet'. Not 'adagio' or 'lent'.

C: No. Indeed. Well, of course, the great experimenter of expression marks in English is Percy Grainger.

S: Really?

C: Very much so! He purposely set out not to use Italian.

S: Oh! I didn't know...

C: So, rather than use 'crescendo', he puts 'louden' or 'louden lots'. And a 'tremolo' isn't a 'tremolo' - it's a 'woggle'. And all his expression marks are in English.

S: Oh, that's very interesting. He was quite an eccentric man.

C: Yes, it all came down to his idea of 'blue-eyed English'...

S: I thought he was a New Zealander, wasn't he?

C: He was Australian. He was also very racist, if that's to be said - on the debit side. Very much so. He was very anti-Semitic. Certainly. As - it has to be said - a lot of his generation were. That doesn't excuse it, and he became more racist as he went on in life. But, on top of that, there is this rather endearing quality of expressing everything in English. Come what may. Even the most obvious expressions, so: 'at a walking speed'...

S: For 'andante'.

C: For 'andante'.

S: OK.

Question 11

In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

C: Well, I think the things we've already said ... what is unique about him I think is that he controls the sounds in that he doesn't use a system. He's using an empirical means of composing the music. He composes the chords that he likes to hear. But then he frees them up, if you like. He doesn't, as I said before, tell a story with them – so the chords are not connected in the way a jazz sequence might be, for example – And the other unique thing is the physical way he constructed the music, which is very abstract expressionist: the idea of putting the scores on the wall and putting notes where he thinks they look right!

S: Yes.

C: Which is fairly unique, I think. I don't know any other composer who has worked like that. It's a very abstract expressionist/Pollock way of constructing music. Very unique.

S: OK. Thank you.

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

C: I was one of the first people to use systems in music. In the way that it's used in literature, for example. I was also probably the first – according to Dave Smith, I was the first person to write a piece of minimal(ist?) music in this country. In 1965. But that was very influenced by La Monte, of course. But I think the use of musical systems in order to construct music was a fairly new thing, then.

S: That pre-empts a question (21) that is in part 3, so I'll ask it now. What is systems or systemic music? Is it different from minimalist music?

C: It can be. It's music where the structure is stated by a pre-determined mathematical structure. A number structure, for example. I didn't invent it. One of the first examples I know of is a chorus sung by three frogs. In the novel *Watt* by Samuel Beckett. And in that, the central character, Watt, hears three frogs: one going 'Kraak!' every four beats, one 'Krek!' every five beats, among 'Krik!' every eight beats. There are three, five and eight. He notates it on the page: you get ...

(Explains Beckett's process in more detail)

That's what I would call a closed system. So Beckett got there first! In 1952. And, once again, whenever I do my experimental music lecture at whatever university, I always get the students to do that chorus live. I'll say: "I bet you didn't come to university to study music realising you were going to perform a work by Samuel Beckett!"

S: Yes. So this is not the same thing as what Reich does, then, in *his* music?

C: It's nearer to what Glass does in *his*, but Glass's structures tend to be open. Rather than closed: they can go on forever, in other words. You know, in the earlier pieces like *Music in Similar Motion*, he's using additive numbers...

(Explains more about this)

So some of my systemic pieces are closed systems; some of them are open systems. And they can be either covert or overt, by which I mean an overt system is one that the audience can probably pick up on. Realise what's happening.

(Illustrates this by clapping the beat)

A covert system is one that the audience can't hear - serialism is an obvious example.

S: Right.

C: You can't hear the system in Berg's *Lyric Suite*. It's hidden. Berg knows where it is; but the performers probably don't, or can't be bothered, and the audience certainly wouldn't be able to follow it.

S: You certainly won't hear it in *Le Marteau sans maître*...

C: Absolutely not. No.

S: Although you'll hear it in some of the Schoenberg.

C: Yes. And in some Webern.

S: Yes. I'm sorry... what do you actually mean by a closed system in this context?

C: A closed system is one like the Beckett piece which I've just described to you, where after a set number of beats you return to the beginning.

S: OK. That's what I thought.

C: An open system can go on forever. You can go on adding numbers until the end of time. But a closed system has its own circuitry, if you like.

S: Is it right that you arranged the first performance of *In C* in the UK?

C: That's right.

S: That is true?

C: It is true.

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

C: Well, once again...getting back to systems. I said that I was one of the first – along with John White – to apply systems to music. But in England and in Europe there was a tradition of systemic visual art – practised by such people as Jeffrey Steele, who made very complex systems. Graphically. And we were working with them, mostly at Portsmouth – because he was teaching at Portsmouth – and John and I went down to Portsmouth in the late 60s. And I think the relationship between our work and the systemic visual artists was very similar to that between Cage and Rauschenberg. You know, Rauschenberg's white paintings predated *4'33'*. But of course, *4'33''* is the music equivalent of Rauschenberg's white paintings. So the kind

of systems that were being used by the systemic artists group in Britain were parallel to the sort of systems that I was doing in music.

S: Does painting anticipate music throughout the ages?

C: I have no idea.

Question 14

Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

C: Yes. In quite a lot of pieces it is. I mean the all the *Sudoku* pieces have this kind of feeling of, if you like, stasis or at least of... in the end, everything being the same. Like stars in the universe in other words.

S: Of course, I don't mean stagnation.

C: Absolutely not. No, but the feeling that things are always the same but always different. Which I think is very true of Feldman's music.

S: Yes.

Question 15

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

C: Quite often, yes. Not entirely, but certainly the gentle dynamics, a tendency to slow tempi, ...which is probably why I like Satie so much.

S: Yes, I know you're keen on Satie. We did *Vexations* at Cheltenham last year. I think it was an all-nighter. I was on for a slot in the afternoon. It's a... vexatious little thing (chuckles)...

C: It's very difficult to perform properly.

Question 16

(If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

C: Probably. Probably spiritual, in the sense of contemplative. Yes. And, once again, the point about the *Sudoku* pieces – and there are 136 of them – there are a great many of these pieces – but they're all determined by number systems. I choose the sound world, but the details, when things happen, and how they interact, are chosen by random numbers. Which is a way of getting rid of my personality, though I determine *how long* a piece is going to be, and where the sounds come from, mostly from GarageBand loops, or licks, and I can decide approximately what I'm going to do with the sounds, but then the actual details are worked out by random means. Once

again, as I said, to take myself out of it, which is another contemplative and anti-Western European art music stance.

Question 17

Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *ppppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

C: It's not something that *I've* ever used, but again, obviously, it turns up in Cardew a great deal. Something like *Autumn '60*, which has ambiguities; and obviously in Cage, where the chance operations in a piece like *Music of Changes* led him into producing material which couldn't be played. You have to make the choice as to what to play, because it's physically impossible to do it, as you said. And the 'Ten Thousand Pieces' ('Things?'), as it's been called, which includes things like *27' 10.554" for a percussionist*, and the piano pieces where every single note has its own attack plotted graphically, which is humanly impossible – you just can't do it; you have to approximate it. But tipping over the scale here, into the non-experimental camp: that strikes me as being very similar to the sort thing you find in new complexity scores. Brian Ferneyhough, for example, where he notates 7 in the time of 5 in the time of 3, each note with a different dynamic, something that cannot be played. And you think: why doesn't he just write it out in space-time notation and have done with it? But the reason he does it is because he wants the performer ... he wants this electricity...the notation to [] difficulty of performance and that difficulty to communicate to the audience. In space-time notation everything is much more relaxed. And in fact, Ferneyhough himself tolerates much more leeway in performance than his scores would tend to suggest. As long as the spirit of the work is right, he's actually not too worried whether the notes are right or not.

S: Do you like that kind of music?

C: No. Not at all.

Question 18

Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

C: Obviously, yes. We talked about that. Some of them do use recognisable musical material. One of the better-known pieces is called *The Remorseless Lamb*, which is a piano duet version of *Sheep May Safely Graze*, where each bar is juxtaposed by chance, and the whole thing is the length of 64-page manuscript book, so it takes about 48 minutes to perform. And every bar is by Bach: there's nothing of me in it. I wrote a similar series of pieces called *L'auteur se retire - The Composer Withdraws* – where I took an example of a composer's work, let's say a piece

by Schubert, and take all the musical letters of his name out of the piece, so S-C-H-U-B-E-R-T, so no E flats, no Cs, no B naturals...and you play what is left.

(More on this)

S: I wrote a piece a bit like that once. It was like ‘All my favourite things’ and it was bits of, erm, Bach, and even Stockhausen, all piano music on a score – and you prepare a tape to play against it and you just improvise from the score against the tape. It’s a kind of acknowledgement of music that you like, and ... sort of not doing it right.

Question 19

In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF’s music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars’ rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly “with all beats equal”, the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be ‘hardly there’ at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that ‘this is not music’, ‘anyone could do that’, etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

C: I’m not sure whether ‘audacity’ is necessarily... I would say ‘playfulness’... yes, certainly. One *could* say that having 171 notes is playful, in the same way that, erm...

S: I’m trying to distinguish between ‘audaciousness’ and ‘audacity’, so I am not using the word ‘audacity’ in a sense of, like, ‘rudeness’, but ‘audaciousness’ in the sense of an ‘How on earth should I be able to get away with that!’ idea. You know, a bit like Feldman writing note heads with no stems for the first time.

C: Yeah, and I think it’s a feature of experimental music, and I’m thinking of a piece like John White’s *Machine* for cello and tuba, which in its entirety can last upwards of eight hours, and where one of the parts, at least, is just an ascending and descending scale. It’s played very, very slowly; the two parts work independently and were composed pretty well independently and by different systems. And, yes, there’s an audacity to that – sitting listening to tuba and cello playing for eight hours. And very, very slowly indeed. But I would say that that turns over to playfulness in the sense that it is not meant to be offensive. I think there’s a difference between playfulness and offensiveness – and perhaps ‘audacity’ can combine both of those. But I would certainly say it was playful, though that’s a personal opinion.

S: Mm. All right.

Question 20

Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

C: As far as I'm aware, unless something crept in that I don't know about, everything was intuitive. From what I've read. But I'm not a Feldman scholar. I have to say that my impression was that everything he did was intuitive.

S: There are two books on the market which go to town on analysing Feldman scores.

C: Mm.

S: And they try to persuade the reader very strongly that there are systems afoot, you know.

C: I've no idea. My impression was that it was intuitive, but I may have just inherited that idea from what I've read elsewhere.

S: OK. That's fine, because that's a crucial question, and I'm getting very different opinions about that. So that's quite interesting for me.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Christopher Hobbs

Question 21

What is systemic music? Is it different from minimalist music?

(Skipped because already covered)

Question 22

What is one of your more persistent memories of the Scratch Orchestra?

C: (pauses) Probably the very early concerts, I think. The Town Hall concerts.

S: In Ealing?

C: Well, there were three. But Ealing was one of them, yes. Not only because I designed it, but because the sound world was so very, very different from anything that any of us had experienced before, I think. Not a specific memory, but I think the difference between an iron core of rehearsed people dissolving into fuzzier and fuzzier edges...the people who hadn't shown up to rehearse or who just came along for the gig. A few extremities of the circle, if you like. And a hard core of members in the middle... So no piece of music was ever heard exactly as the composer had intended it, because there was always something else going on, that created its own environment. So I think that was rather a special kind of...

S: Are we talking now about composed pieces rather than improvisations?

C: I think so, yes. Though... we didn't improvise in the Scratch Orchestra. There were improvisation rites; that is to say, verbal instructions on pictures, or something, which would encourage improvisation. But everybody would be having the same thought. So it's not like the sort of improvisation we have tonight. It would be more like, you know, somebody saying OK! look at that Mondrian up there (indicates the painting on the wall)... we're going to improvise around that Mondrian. That would be more a Scratch Orchestra kind of thing.

S: Yes. I understand.

C: So that's a difference really... so one has some sort of hard centre... that everybody relates to.

S: There is a big difference, because some of the Cheltenham guys and I went to a village in Herefordshire, and I'd set it up, and we took scores. We took a Stockhausen text piece... and we did four works: an Ichiyanagi piece, and so on. And that was it – it was a different set-up from, you know, just bashing around as we do on a Saturday afternoon. For some people it's quite challenging, even though it's only a question of looking at a graph or a picture, or something. Or looking at a text, you know. It's different from what they're used to sometimes.

C: Yes. The other experimental composer that you should talk to, if you haven't already, is Gavin Bryars.

(provides contact details)

Question 23

How does the Experimental Music Catalogue project compare now to how it was when you started it in 1968?

C: It's a bit different in that it's web-based. Obviously, technology's moved on. We're moving away from selling scores... Though we manage some Cardew scores, for example. We don't publish them, but we distribute them, which is what the Experimental Music Catalogue always did do. Things are slightly chaotic at the moment, because we are moving to a different server. So for the next few days it's going to be quite static: I'm not sure how much it is going to be available. But It's still there. It's still running.

S: Yes.

Question 24

What is the *Sudoku* series of pieces?

C: The thing that unites them almost completely is that they're all composed on a computer using GarageBand software. Without exception. The early ones did use numbers that were in hexadecimal stoker grids. But I quickly ran out of hexadecimal sudokus to use, so then I just used random number generators.

(Continues to explain the maths)

Question 25

Your output is diverse in nature. What is your response to that?

C: Yes. There's lots of empirical music. There's a lot of piano duet pieces. I wrote an operetta on a text by W. S. Gilbert. A lot of theatre music. [] The *Sudoku* stuff, yes. Conventional

empirical pieces for conventional musical ensembles. Two string quartets, one of which is 17 one-minute pieces for string quartet.

S: What do you mean by empirical?

C: Freely written. Free choice. Romantic. Writing down the notes you want to hear.

S: Yes. And through-composed music? Or not necessarily? I mean, does it develop?

C: Some of it, yeah. The piano music, more than the non-piano music. Apart from the one *Sudoku* piece, most of the piano music I have written is through-composed.

S: Right. Thank you very much.

END

Appendix VII: Emma-Kate Matthews

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Emma-Kate Matthews. 23 January 2018. London

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Questions 1 and 2

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

E-K: I think, in the context of my work... because I've come to composition, not through formal music training, but an interest in spatial practice and architecture; and music was always something that I'd done in my life, but I never pursued it formally... I just arrived at the set of ideas through...

S: Can you read music?

S-K: Yes, I can.

S: So you're classically trained to some extent?

E-K: Yes. But not to university degree level. So I think there are elements of the experimental music culture that I've not been exposed to, because I haven't gone through that process. But my understanding of it is that that scene definitely very much exists.

S: And you've been part of it?

E-K: Yes. I am involved in a number of projects with fellow musicians and sound artists, all of whom are interested in experimental practice and pushing the known limits of music and sound/spatial art.

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

E-K: I think experimental music is music that takes risks. It's not afraid to break boundaries and break people's expectations.

S: Good. Fine.

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

E-K: I'm not hugely familiar with his work. I certainly know of him, and I would definitely classify him as one of the experimental composers. I acknowledge that he has directly influenced a number of my key (influences?).

S: OK.

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

E-K: Humorous? (laughs)

S: Or weird...

E-K: I suppose it is humorous, in the sense of it being strange because some experimental music... Or at least the outcome of experimental music projects is often something unexpected, which challenges the way you listen to it. And some people would even question whether some of it is music itself.

S: Right, OK. We're doing very well. [Time constraints]

(Laughter)

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

E-K: That's a very interesting question. Actually, I think a lot of people perceive experimental music as inaccessible. So, for instance, people I know, such as family members and friends, question what I do. I think, in the first instance, before I explain it to them... I feel it needs explaining, which is a problem perhaps. But also, before I explain some of the ideas behind the music to people, they feel that it's not for them. They feel that I'm doing this for me. Not for them to listen to. Which perhaps I am!

S: OK. Well, that's a good, interesting answer. Thank you very much.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

Question 7

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

E-K: Maybe not him explicitly, but certainly I feel like my music, and the way that I think about music, is directly influenced by the scene that he is part of; which, I would say, is the experimental music scene.

S: OK. Because you've answered that question that way, we can skip the whole section on Feldman. Would you feel happy if we left this part out?

E-K: Yeah, and maybe we can return to it at the end if there's time.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Emma-Kate Matthews

Question 21

How do you compose?

E-K: I think the way I compose is perhaps slightly non-standard for most composers, in that I start with the space that the music is going to be performed in. So rather than having an idea and then imposing it onto a space, I look at a specific performance space. Primarily, the acoustic qualities of that space, in both an experiential way, but also more of a scientific way. I use those two types of understanding in parallel. I then hypothesise how the music might 'behave' in the space through drawing and digital simulation. My recent compositions are called *Device 001*, *Device 002*. I very much see the music as a device. In one sense it's expressing an idea about the space, which is based on my understanding of that space. But it also helps me to understand the acoustic response of that space.

S: Why is it called 'Device' then?

E-K: Because I'm trying to treat the performance as the piece, not the piece as it sort of exists on paper or a recording, but the actual performance of the piece.

S: So... this kind of derives from some other 'old timers' in the experimental world, like John Cage and Pauline Oliveros. Do you know her?

E-K: Yes.

S: And Christian Wolff, of course. Who, by the way, is on board in this project.

(Conversation continues about Wolff)

So... your take on it may be original, but it does have some history, doesn't it? It's not anything I know about, buildings. I'm really interested in buildings, but I don't know anything about architecture or acoustics. I'm very much a musician who just likes looking at scores!

(Laughter)

E-K: But I think – to respond to that – one of the people that I'm very influenced by is Alvin Lucier, who I suppose may be more of a sound artist than explicitly a musician. But he's done a couple of pieces that I find really exciting. One of them is *I am Sitting in a Room*.

(More on this)

S: So all this performance and acoustic stuff... This was something that Feldman really wasn't interested in. Feldman was quite old-fashioned in a way; you know, he wrote scores and said 'Go and play them'. And he'd sit down and listen, and complain!

(Laughter)

Actually, this may be interesting in another way, because it's interesting to hear about *your* stuff.

Do you think that experimental music is audacious?

E-K: You mean, in the sense that it is indulgent?

S: Well, in the case of Feldman, he wrote one piece of music which has 18 bars' rest to start with.

E-K: (chuckles) Right.

(Some talk about La Monte Young)

Yes, but maybe necessarily so. It sort of pushes boundaries in ways that maybe more conventional music doesn't.

S: Yes.

E-K: And I think you have to have examples of things at the edges. The things at the edge of musical practice – whatever form that takes – so that it sort of creates a spectrum, in a sense. I actually enjoy some of the extremes that happen in experimental music.

Question 22

Dorsal Falls. The piece is described as site-specific? What does that mean? Can it be played elsewhere but in the church in Shoreditch?

S: Well, you've already told me you take a space and build from there. But do you actually notate the music?

E-K: I have two types of sketch books essentially. One is this one here, which tends to be drawings of spaces and things, and then I keep a parallel notebook, which is my manuscript paper. But I also use Sibelius (software) to notate pieces which I give to musicians (for clarity). So one of the things that I did with this piece, *Dorsal Falls* (indicates a drawing?), is that I went directly into the space. I had the luxury of being able to spend a lot of time in this building, because... I 3D scanned it, which takes a lot of time and requires getting into all the nooks and crannies.

S: This is in Shoreditch?

E-K: Yeah, that's right.

S: When I was your age nobody ever went to Shoreditch! I heard a bit of it... I think the second half is available. It's a really lovely piece. It sounded very beautiful, but I don't know how it works.

E-K: One of the things that I did for the methodology, or part of it, was... I was looking at the reflective sound in the first couple of reflections, to see if you put a singer here, and a violinist here, at which point in the space would you start to hear the two distinct notes as one, so it starts to become a harmony, rather than a melody?

S: But how does the score fit in?

E-K: With this one, there are actually elements of the score, which are improvised. This version of the score (indicates a score) is maybe slightly misleading...

S: Is this a realisation, then?

E-K: This is more a notation of what happened in the first instance – when we first went into the space and rehearsed it. There were no bar lines. And there was no time signature. Through repeat rehearsals it became necessary to give a bit more instruction in order to achieve more precision with the piece. Some of the improvised parts weren't quite working how I wanted them to, so I ended up making the score more and more rigid with just a few pockets of improvisation.

S: So you gave some instructions, and then you notated what happened?

(More on this)

The interesting thing is that this looks like a Feldman score.

E-K: In what way?

S: Because it's kind of laid out with long durations... And, also, there are lots of pauses. And the semitonal movements - a lot of his music moves in semitones. It doesn't leap like Webern. It will create those dissonances – those minor ninths and major sevenths.

E-K: With the pauses, that was deliberate – to be able to understand the acoustic response of the space without just filling it with sound all of the time.

(More on this and the subject of the unsettling quality of E-K's music and much experimental music in any case)

E-K: This is something I've been trying to look at in my most recent project. My last piece, called *2 Device 002*, is a duet for violin and cello. I have the score here. (They look at it). First of all, I performed it at the Royal Academy of Art library, which is a very dry space acoustically. It's full of books. It's got a flat ceiling. It's covered in carpet... and lots of wood furniture. It's a very unforgiving acoustic. And I performed the same piece a week later at the Sagrada Família in Barcelona, which is the unfinished Gaudi building. And that space has a twelve second reverberation time. So what I was trying to question here is, when you play the same piece in two different spaces, is the way it is musically perceived still the same piece? And I would argue, having done that test, that it's not the same piece.

S: OK.

(More on this)

(looking at the score) How did you write it? Is it written empirically? Did you just write what you felt, or is there some process? Some sort of scale, or a reduced series of pitch classes, or what?

E-K: It's a bit of both, I think. I don't want to disappoint you, but I don't really have a rigid or reliable system for writing the actual music. In a way I sort of let it happen. I almost deliberately don't have a set of rules.

(S compares this with the situation with Feldman)

END

Appendix VIII: Jordan Nobles

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Jordan Nobles. Edmonton, Alberta. 16.9.2017

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Question 1

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in Canada? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

J: I would say no. You might get different answers from different composers. If someone thinks there is, then there must be. But in my experience, I have not noticed there to be one. It's always been: we borrow from here, we borrow from the States. Maybe the composer's interested in minimalism... or the German serialism, or English Gavin Bryars. We borrow from... I can have a bunch of friends, and we are all interested in different musics, from different places in the world. That's kind of what Canada is. It's not got its own thriving scene that's different from anybody else's.

S: Mark (Hannesson) said the same thing. More or less. I was a bit taken aback, because I was amazed to see how much stuff there was in Canada. He sort of said yeah... it's kind of second-hand.

J: Our inspirations come from elsewhere.

S: Well, I'm thinking of Rudolf Komorous, in Victoria, who seems to have set up a kind of tradition.

J: I don't think it works very well. I mean, there might be a group in Victoria that follows him. Christopher Butterfield – these people who studied with him. But I don't see what is different that they're doing.

S: OK, it's for people like us to try and figure it out, I think.

J: And also my experience has been internet. I started studying, and one of the first things I ever did was, in my university, try and figure out how this internet thing works, so I could read up about Morton Feldman. And my first experiences were the internet.

(Some talk about online research)

Question 2

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way. (Question not specifically asked).

S: But are you an experimental composer?

J: I would say yes.

S: That's good!

(Laughter)

J: Because I want to do something different than what I've done before. Now I've been doing it for 25 years, or something like that, so there's stuff that I hardly know – that's going to work. Not entirely an experiment, but I - every time I sit down to write a piece, it has to be new and different.

S: OK.

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

J: Something arranged in a format or in a way that's strange and different than you've ever heard before.

S: Yeah.

J: Now that doesn't mean I am going to push a piano down the stairs, and go 'That's experimental music'. Cos that was a scene that happened, and that's kind of done, and if I pushed a piano down the stairs the I am mimicking...

S: LaMonte Young, or someone.

J: Yeah. Or – I don't know what Fluxus is exactly, but...

S: No, I don't know either.

J: But that kind of thing. The piano down the stairs has been done, so what else is there? What's new? What's the next... and I need to know because I have to write a piece tomorrow! What can I do to the piano that no one's done yet.

S: But there is – and this sounds like a contradiction in terms – an experimental music tradition, as it's known. And I would say, for example, if you wrote a piece with a tune, which is not harmonised in any conventional way, nor is it repeated, nor is it developed, that might be experimental music.

J: Erm, there's a Henry Brant piece, which is just Gregorian Chant, and it's performed by flutes, and the flutes are just spread around the room. And so they get out of synch with each other – on purpose. Because they don't try and fit together – there's no one conducting. And they drift apart. And suddenly it's gorgeous; and it's new. But it's just Gregorian Chant.

S: Has he composed the Gregorian Chant, or...?

J: I think he went and got one. I have the score, actually. But whether he did or not, it doesn't matter: the way it develops is that they all start together, and so you hear it as a Gregorian Chant, and then it...

S: ... disintegrates...

J: ... disintegrates...beautiful.

S: Because the other thing is people have different ideas about what experimental music means. We sort of all know what it means in a way – it's like any other concept, I suppose – but, you know, John Cage's idea - it's been kind of ignored now, because - I think Cage said that experimental music was music where you didn't know what was going to happen. Or words to that effect. And it's not that anymore, is it?

J: No. It is a little bit to me - because I'm starting to do things where each performance is unique. But I know what it's going to sound like. It'll differ... And that Henry Brant piece that I was talking about - they're going to drift out of synch differently every single time. But it's always going to sound like that. And that's not, I think, what Cage was talking about. Cage wanted to hear something that he'd never heard before, because it came out of chance.

S: Yeah. But if someone was sitting here, who only likes Mendelssohn and Schumann, and hates anything to do with avant-garde music or experimental music, they might say, well, you could say the same of any composer... that's what interpretation means. You don't know how it's going to fall out exactly.

J: But! You can sing along. And you can say they took *that* differently and, you know... That's the thing with pop music; it's a bunch of cover bands, right? And playing that Beethoven symphony again, yeah, I've heard it. I like it. It's a good one but...

S: Well, you know, pop music - it began with Haydn, and it hasn't changed since!

(Chuckles)

It goes diddy dee – then it goes into a middle 8 – and then the diddy dee comes back.

(More laughter)

S: Does that experimental music tradition continue to exist?

J: Definitely, there's experimenting going on. Sorry, when you said is there an experimental scene, I took that to mean do we have a unique school?

S: No, I didn't mean that. I meant is Canada part of the experimental scene? That's what I really meant.

J: Oh, then I guess I mean yes.

S: It's funny, cos Mark gave the same answer as you did, more or less, and then I realised that the wording of the question may need to be changed. I didn't mean there was anything unique to Canada. I meant that certain composers in Canada, the States and the UK, and in, for example, central Europe, and, well, many other countries too perhaps that are thinking along similar lines. They're different from the Ferneyhoughs and the Birtwistles - it's a different scene altogether.

J: Yeah, we do have our Ferneyhough composers...

S: Oh, I am sure you do!

J: There's one in Edmonton. I don't know him that well, but he's a Ferneyhough acolyte, or at least I would call him that.

S: Mark was saying if you compose like Ferneyhough at the university, they love it, but if you compose like Wandelweiser composers they don't like it.

J: I can imagine.

(Some more talk on this subject)

S: Are you a full-time composer or do you have another job?

J: I run an organisation... in Vancouver and I get paid to do admin stuff. I often do copy work and so on. I do not teach. So I'm kind of a full-time composer, except I don't get paid enough to do that. There's no one in Canada... pretty hard. This year I might be a full-time composer. I've won awards this year, so...

S: Yes, you're doing very well, aren't you?

J: This is my peak year. You're interviewing me at the highwater mark of my entire career.

S: Well, I really like fame and hobnobbing.

(Laughter)

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

J: Well, it's part of the American experimental tradition. It's part of the New York School, right? But I don't think there are a lot of people here in Canada writing Morton Feldman kind of music. I think Linda (Catlin Smith) and Rodney Sharman and I sometimes tend to sound a little bit like Morton Feldman. But I don't see a lot of other people doing that.

S: I am going to see Daniel Brandes.

J: Daniel Brandes in Victoria.

S: And these people (i.e. Wandelweiser composers) also acknowledge some kind of debt to Feldman.

J: I think they take it even farther than Feldman, like as far as the quiet, as far as the stillness, as far as the time between notes... and I'm probably different to that style, without knowing them... but they certainly take Feldman to an extreme.

S: OK. That's good.

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

J: (laughs). No.

S: It's serious.

J: We're serious, dammit. Although if it was funny, that would be great. If someone wrote a funny piece... but you wouldn't take it seriously, would you?

S: We were talking about 4'33'' this morning (interview with Mark Hanneison), which they played at the Proms in London, and because it's such a famous work, people are comfortable with it and were sat there smiling.

J: Cage wrote that... a joy of participating. I've written pieces where the audience is supposed to hum a tune – 'Here's a note, everybody hum it.' And so they're humming it, while this stuff happens, but they're participating in it. And that's rare for audiences. And Cage... well maybe the smiling is the stupidest thing ever. It's an odd thing to do at the Proms, though.

S: I wrote that question because, obviously, there's no answer to it. Like there's no answer to most things. But it kind of generates some good ideas. And you said no, which is a good answer.

J: I said no, because if you made a funny piece, they would laugh – they would like it – but they wouldn't think it was serious. We're trying to be serious; even overly serious.

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?')

J: It wasn't his title choice. That was the publisher's title.

S: Oh, OK!

J: That title has got him in so much trouble. At least that is what I read.

S: That's interesting because Howard Skempton said to me that article has been misconstrued over time.

J: Yeah, I think so. But I read the article, and I think it's more about, er, we're conducting science here. It's not important if you are listening to music - we're conducting science. We're trying to find experimental music and we're going to get a new style for music out of the experiments that we're doing.

S: I'm interested in this, because the word 'populist' has taken on fresh meaning in politics in the last year or two. You know, we're leaving the European Union and half the population, including myself, have been devastated by this. And the other half are talking about populism, you know, à la Trump.

J: Yeah.

(more talk on this subject)

S: So if only three people come to an experimental music concert, that's OK.

J: But not entirely OK to the funders!

S: No. This is the problem.

J: But in Canada we do pretty well with government funding.

S: OK. That could change.

J: That could change. If we got a populist government...

S: So you've got a liberal government...

J: We've got a liberal government nationally. We have provincial governments...

(More on Canadian politics and the possible meaning of populism)

So experimental music *is* elitist, yes. And if you can write pieces that are experimental, but also popular, then you are going to do good. Because people want...

S: Howard has trodden this very successful path, because he gets loads of commissions, and his albums sell really well, and yet he's still an experimentalist. And he declares himself to be one.

J: Feldman's popular too, isn't he?

S: He is. Feldman's dead. You die and you get popular.

J: (laughs) I will try that then!

S: No, before Feldman died, there was an interest, but now he's *really* popular.

J: Do you think, if he was alive he would not be this popular?

S: Er, possibly... of course, it's very hard to say. He would still have been writing music...

J: And he'd be now on Twitter! That's just a weird thought.

S: Yeah, he'd be worse than Trump!

J: We would now suddenly know what he is thinking. Let alone what his writings are about. Although there are interviews with him and there are lectures of his on YouTube. But he's not a personality we have to deal with. We don't have to worry about his views on this or that. So we just look at his works, right? That's interesting. But I still think he'd be popular – I think he would be. Unless he was known to be a jerk. Or something like that. I think he would be a popular composer.

S: Did you ever see him?

J: No. I was going to. I did actually go to the festival at Buffalo because of him. But he was already gone at that point. I actually got excited about him and his music probably around the time he died.

(More talk on seeing Feldman and Cage in the flesh)

Cage was influential to me as well. And I don't know why – I'm not that old.

S: How old are you?

J: I'm 47. When I was studying music, it felt like I was being taught serialism. And I did poorly in one thing, because I didn't do a 12-tone piece. I took all the rules they gave me about 12-tone music, and made something pretty. It took me a lot of figuring out, but I made something that was according to the rules, but it was different and I got in trouble for it. And Cage and

Feldman came along, and I went oh! I can do anything. I'm allowed to be quiet. I don't have to be noisy. I can be quiet and sparse. Or I can be experimental in these new kinds of ways. And that became important to me, and I stopped taking lessons. I don't actually want to know what you guys think about my music anymore. I still want lessons from people, but I want them to tell me about *their* music and how they made it.

S: Yes.

J: But don't talk about my music, because I'll do that. Don't try and change my path anymore. And I stopped studying with teachers. It was Morton Feldman's fault.

S: Jolly good.

Question 7

Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

J: Yes. I can expand on that...

Question 8

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

J: It was dissonant yet didn't sound like all the other dissonant music I was told to listen to.

S: Oh that's a good answer! (laughs) I am sorry to sound condescending! But that's a very good answer. Because it *is* dissonant – it's *highly* dissonant – but it doesn't sound like Boulez or Stockhausen or... even Webern, does it?

J: Well, those composers – Boulez and Stockhausen at least – were like 'Here's a bunch of noises!' Here's a sound world - oh! it's gone. And here's a loud crashing, clanging, and you're on the edge all the time.

S: Yeah.

J: With Feldman it's like 'Here's a little cluster. Then we'll spread it out. And now we do it again. And now we do this.' There's a world you can get into. And relax even – I'm not saying it's New Age – just all these little things, and they can be difficult listening for people now knowing what... but they're... But it was not a total world. Except – it had a pitch set to it. But it was a world you can inhabit – you can sit in and relax.

S: And also, right, octaves and triads are also welcome. This is the fascinating thing also.

J: Yeah, but they also sounded dissonant when they came in.

S: Well, that's right, because they're not working diatonically. They're just there.

J: There's no functional ... this is not a five-one...

Question 9

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

J: After listening to a lot of Feldman that I could get my hands on in my music there was a lot more attack/decay. Tones that fade out... I think I discovered Feldman and pushed the pedal down on the piano, and I haven't let it up since. I think every piece I have ever written has been...

S: Full pedal or half?

J: Pedal all the way down. All the way down, always.

S: Some of Feldman's stuff calls for half-pedal.

J: Which means the decay is a bit quicker.

S: Yeah.

J: Like *Stones under Water*. It goes through lots of different tonalities. But they're related to each other as they're drifting. That has nothing to do with Feldman, other than *that* (indicates something in the score?). I'm sure I got that from...

S: I wonder if he got that from Debussy? We won't go down that avenue!

J: I was actually at one point in school - it wasn't me, it was someone else - he was getting a masterclass, and the composition teacher said 'Why is everybody suddenly using pedal all the time?' They didn't ask me... but I've been thinking about that answer for years. I'll give you my answer. My thought of it was making the note - this is way-off topic maybe - it's like a violent act... it's a string and it's quiet, and suddenly you hit it with this hammer and make it scream. It's like suddenly there was this vibration, and that was a violent act, which... But to me you've created this vibration, and if you let it live, it never dies. There are still notes that I can hear ringing. It fades out past your point of hearing, like it's just moved away - it's still alive somewhere. The damper pedal to me kills things - it kills the chord. (Jordan means releasing it.)

(More on this subject of piano pedals)

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

J: Mostly I use English.

S: I wondered why he – and not only him – used English. Because to me, ‘slow’ sends out a different message from ‘adagio’. Because of the connotations, perhaps.

J: And ‘adagio’ also means something else. It means you are connecting it to all the other ‘adagios’ out there. I’m writing pieces for English players - but if I was writing it for a French ensemble – this ensemble have asked me to write a piece or – and I know they are going to premiere it, I still write it in English. I don’t write it in French – I don’t know French. I write it in English, cos that is what *I* mean. I mean ‘slow’ or ‘slow down here’. I do say ‘accelerando’ because that’s such a musical term that – if I said ‘speed up gradually’, that just seems like more work...

S: No one would ever say ‘speed up gradually’, would they? They’d just put ‘accel’.

J: Yeah. I am speaking to people... Maybe it’s a break from tradition. Maybe it’s ‘This is *our* music now’. I mean...

S: That’s what Howard Skempton said. He said it may have been just a notional thing, like ‘this is American music now’.

J: Yeah. I am not writing a fugue. If I was writing a fugue, I would say ‘andante’. I’ve been doing copy work for a composer who’s Chinese – writing for an English ensemble. And he’s using Italian phrases. Like outlandish Italian phrases – use as much Italian as you can! To make it look like he’s writing a symphony for Mozart. And I’m like...” You don’t speak Italian. *They* don’t speak Italian. You speak Chinese. Just write what you mean.” Because I know, during rehearsals someone is going to say: “What *is* (indicates an Italian term)? I am going to have to check the spelling because I haven’t used these words since school. When I want it to be dark and scary, I will say ‘dark and scary’. I wouldn’t do that (joke). But I might use something poetic. But I would use something that I speak. And I think that I got permission to do that from Cage and Feldman, and all those guys. Because why write it in Italian?

S: OK, so that’s a good answer.

Question 11

In the interviewer’s (my) view, Feldman’s sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

J: I would say that is the case. Now, it does predate my knowledge. I wasn’t on the scene. I was a young composer going “What’s out there?” Right? [] I wasn’t privy to what happened before him. I know what happened, but I wasn’t at the scene. It wasn’t new to me. More than anything, cos everything was new to me. But I would think, because I latched onto it so well, that he must have been unique to the world then. Because to me he was so popular [] walk into a music store and buy Morton Feldman... and I did that often. Right? You could always just go and get a new one. And that was 20 years ago. When did he die?

S: 1987, wasn’t it?

J: 1987. I graduated from high school in ‘87. So I started studying (music) in college in ‘88 and ‘89. And I probably did not discover him until 1990. So he had already passed away. I would

look at the scores and say “This is neat”. I wrote a piece once - I was very excited about it – and I went into the library at my university and found that Morton Feldman had written that already – or that idea. I think it was *Four Pianos*...

S: Everybody reading from the same score...

J: Everybody reading from the same score in their own speed. I think I called my piece *Page 2*, because it was the second piece of music I wrote. Moving through all the different keys very quickly, so you weren't really centred in a key. So I did that, and then I discovered a week later that Morton Feldman had done... So I was really upset! Cos obviously he had done it, and it was published, and it was in my university. He was way ahead of me! It's upsetting to go, “Oh! Someone else did that 20 years ago!” Or 15 or whatever. But I still like that piece; I still like that idea. And in a way, the Gregorian Chant, it's the same thing. Everybody play this, but in your own time.

S: Yes, I like that idea too. Because, apart from anything else, it's kind of economical, isn't it? By getting maximum output... as opposed to, you know, the complexity composers, where...they write very complicated lines, and I wonder how many times I have to listen to it before I can actually hear it.

J: To me, that whole thing... it was *Parallel 1* not *Page 2*. (Plays a recording)

S: Is this it?

J: This is it. You can hear the same note here four times, right?

(They talk over the piece)

S: Of course, you've got to get four pianos, haven't you?

J: Well, you can record it four times in a studio.

S: OK. And it doesn't sound anything like Morton Feldman, actually.

J: No. My harmonic language often was – I was trying to find my own harmonic language. This comes from his sound world, but not his techniques for using harmony.

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

J: Pandiatonicism. I revolve through all 12 keys. Very often. I might start in A minor, a traditional A minor, but it only lasts in A minor for a second or two. Then it's in a neighbouring key, wherever it's going... this way round... in a circle of fifths. And basically I just move out of (?) the key – not functionally – not like a five-one or some other progression, but just around the circle of fifths.

S: Is that what happens in *Stones under Water*?

J: It happens in 80% of my pieces. But yes, it happens in *Stones under Water*. Maybe if you analysed it, you would find that it moves through all 12 keys. It does have a switch – it goes into an augmented chord, and then it changes.

S: Can you play this? (Indicates the score of *Stones under Water*)

J: Ah, no.

S: It's too difficult.

J: I don't play piano.

S: Oh, I do. And it's too difficult for me. I can play it up till about here, and then... of course, if I practised it. But I don't practise; I just sight-read.

J: One of my favourite things to do now is also to continuously accelerate.

S: So this is quite an original idea too, isn't it?

J: The constant acceleration – where did I get that? Carter's metric modulations?

S: What is that?

J: A metric modulation is when you play in eighth notes, and then you start playing triplets, and then you pretend that triplets *are* eighth notes, and then suddenly you're in that tempo.

S: So it's like a gear change or something.

J: It's like a tempo change based on a pattern - the tempo you were on.

(Jordan demonstrates)

S: People often say to me that music and mathematics are closely connected, and I never got that, because I am quite musical and bad at maths, but when I hear things like that, I realise... and I compose myself, and I am always losing the thread of things, because you've got to have a mathematical head.

J: Yes. I mean I am sure there are ways of composing music that don't use – that don't think about math at all, but it helps. And this is a certain amount of bars from a quarter note equals 60; after x amount of bars it becomes quarter note equals 120. Then I metrically modulate, and suddenly it's a quarter note equals 120 as soon as you arrive here (indicating the score)...

(Continues to explain this aspect of the piece)

S: So do you have instant access to a proficient pianist?

J: No.

S: You haven't got a David Tudor who can play that?

J: No. Nowadays – and Morton Feldman wouldn't have this – I can program with notation software. So that's how I decided how fast I could let it go.

(Continues to explain how he uses notation software)

(Conversation continues about how composers might use software or the piano to compose at and others not)

(Talk about writing for amateur musicians vs proficient musicians)

S: People have written for the forces available to them, I think. And also different composers are good at different things: Verdi writes for the voice – it’s a truism. Chopin wrote great piano music and he couldn’t write anything else!

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

J: Because *of* Feldman. He’d write a piece called, OK, *For Franz Kline* – is that right?

S: *For Franz Kline* or *De Kooning* or...

J: Yeah, I discovered these artists, these abstract painters, because of Feldman. And I’ve written pieces... I didn’t know anything about abstract painting until I took a class, but... Who are these people he’s dedicating things to?

S: Can you relate your music to art or poetry or...?

J: Er... not poetry, but art. Yeah. And I don’t see how his is right into it, but he says it... so I guess...

S: There are a lot of theorists have tried to explain how it is, but I have to say it’s a bit beyond me. I don’t have a very good eye for art. I like abstract painting very much, but I don’t connect it particularly to Feldman. But, apparently, it’s of major importance.

J: To him, yes. And the rugs. The way I would connect to mine is I am not trying to tell a story. I am not trying to paint a picture. I am mostly not trying to tell a narrative in any way. It’s abstract. Even if I name it after a bridge, or something. The piece isn’t going to look like a bridge. I’m creating something that’s abstract. That’s beautiful, if you like it. If you don’t... then probably not. And it exists but it’s not trying to be something specific. I couldn’t paint a sunset. I couldn’t create a landscape painting in music. Cos I don’t write that way. The abstraction is sort of an excuse to say, OK, what comes out comes out. I’m trying to create something strange and beautiful – that’s always the goal. I want it to be awesome and something that you connect with, but I want it to be something that you’ve never heard before. And I don’t always succeed. Sometimes it’s not beautiful, and sometimes it’s not strange enough. It’s easy to be beautiful, and it’s easy to be strange. But to get them both...

S: OK. All right.

Question 14

Feldman’s music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

J: Oh, very much so. I even have a piece called *Stasis*. It’s also a joke phrase that I use with a friend of mine, who knows Feldman’s music well. Doesn’t write like him, but his music was ‘Get where you’re going and stay there’. I don’t like music that’s... here and here and here... Elliott Carter’s little thing here. And then it moves from thing to thing. Like you’re having a

conversation with someone and they can't finish the sentence. And one of the things I like about Feldman is 'This is where this piece is. And it's three hours. Come back! We're still here! We're still doing this.'

S: Yeah. (laughs)

J: And it's changing.

S: Sometimes it's lovely! Do you know the piece *For Philip Guston*? It lasts about four and a half hours.

J: I don't think I've heard it all. (laughs)

S: Well, I've got it on four CDs. Before I came away, I played it, and it took all day, cos after each CD I had to have a break. There was the wife and the cats to see to, and things were going on, you know. In the end I thought this is really quite wonderful. It was like drinking a long gin and tonic. And it lasted all day!

J: I read a book with friends of mine once... we all liked this book. And what are we going to do today? Let's read the book. Out loud to each other.

S: What was the book?

J: Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*. Each chapter's got these weird things come at you differently. Each chapter starts like a new book, and eventually... it's a conspiracy in the book. But, anyway, we spent eight hours – everybody would read a chapter and pass it along. And that suddenly became something really important to me, because I'll never forget that day. Cos I sat in something that required an effort. Now I have had many days when I don't remember what I did that day. But I always remember *that* day. And you remember the day you sat down to listen to the Feldman.

S: Yes. And the older you get – because I am 20 years older than you – the days become more precious. And music is to do with time. And you get older, and somehow the way you fill your time becomes more and more important. When I was 20, you know, the weeks would go by and I hadn't done anything. Now every day I have to do something.

J: I'm like that now too. I spent my entire summer just trying to make money and do stuff that I don't really want to do. Because I want to write music, and play with my kids. And I didn't get enough of those two things. I was quite angry at the amount of work I was given by other people. Because I didn't spend my time making memories. Or write music, which is like making a memory.

S: But, in a way you're lucky, and so am I, because I'm doing musicology now, and you're doing composition. Most people spend their whole lives doing something they don't want to do.

(More on this subject)

Question 15

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

J: I love low dynamics. Oh I don't write... *Stones under Water* gets loud at the end, because that was the idea of the piece. [] I like slow and I like quiet. You could write any crazy, hard, dissonant, difficult-to-listen-to chord – then play it quietly. It's beautiful.

S: And it takes on a new shape.

Question 16

(If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

J: I think that a lot of pop music today is all loud. All the rock music you listen to is... it's all there. And I'm not aggressive. I'm not angry. I'm a Canadian boy, and I haven't been through a war.

S: So your quietness is a sort of hippyish quietness, then.

J: A reaction to all the loud around me.

S: OK, the noisy world.

J: Yeah, the noisy loud world.

S: And the McDonalds hamburgers, and transistor radios...

J: Yeah. The Pepsi generation and all that... You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to write a quiet chord. And that's what I want to bring into the world... is something soft and strange. I'm not clamouring for attention. I'm not on a hilltop screaming my views. Come and listen if you want.

S: What struck me was there were so many composers who have adopted this attitude. And it *has come* from Feldman. And for whatever reason, and that was what I was trying to get at. You know, why is this? My thesis is going to be called 'The Soft Option'.

J: Oh good, good.

S: And why are people writing this quiet stuff? I was in Huddersfield a couple of years ago – the contemporary music festival, you know – Have you been there by the way?

J: I've never...

S: It's the ugliest, ghastliest city in the world.

(Laughter)

It has one of the best music festivals.

J: ... people in Huddersfield don't give a damn about the festival.

S: No, they don't even know it's on. I go up there once a year and I write a few articles for the local rag. So I get to see the concerts free.

(More talk about HCMF and Stockhausen's visit)

J: I mean you see it in their music, tough, that... I mean, I don't know if they're aggressive guys, but there's this ego, and aggression, and yelling... at me, the listener. Feldman would seem like the type of guy that would do that – but he's not.

S: That's right. He belies his look, doesn't he?

(More talk about Huddersfield and the seemingly new-found fondness for soft music among many music students)

J: Linda Catlin Smith - her music and her are the same. She's a soft and quiet voice. Not very tall. Soft and quiet.

S: Yes, I'm going to meet her in Huddersfield.

J: Yes. I think she's quite articulate... come across that way, but her music and her actually fit. And that's rare.

(More talk on the subject of how personas do not necessarily match their creations)

I regret – and I didn't notice till talking to you – every loud note I've written.

S: Oh yes! That's a nice thing to say. And what I've found talking to composers in the experimental music scene, that they are garrulous.

(This theme continues)

Question 17

Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

J: That is where I differ from him. Especially in *For Bunita Marcus*?

S: The piano piece?

J: Yeah. There are all these time signatures. How do I count that? It's super soft and quiet it's sparse, and yet it's written... if I was to try and play it, I don't think I could count it. And so I thought I want my music to sound similar – soft, quiet, sparse - but I don't want the performer to be...

S: The performer either has to count quickly or feel it.

J: Yes, and it's like... Why would you write it like that? Why did you do that? What is the reason that... because he did it on purpose. He wanted them to experience a certain thing. And

so it comes out of the music. I love the piece, but to listen to, not to read. I always found that puzzling. I don't know why he...

S: OK, erm, I can give you an answer, which you can take or leave... Howard Skempton said – and I tend to agree with him – that it's all about rhythm. That Feldman's music is all about rhythm. And the reason why he sets up these very, very weird time signatures, which are always changing and interchanging and so on, is that, over a pulse, it sets up a nervy rhythm that pervades all his music.

J: A nervy rhythm. See, now, that's why I look at Howard Skempton's music, and it's like notes with no - well, it looks a lot more easy to play!

S: It is!

J: And I took more from Howard Skempton - but actually I want to sound like Feldman but I want it to look like Feldman sounds.

S: This (*Stones under Water?*) looks like a Skempton score, except that it wouldn't speed up, I don't think. But it looks fairly similar. In some respects. And I think it's along the lines of what you've just been saying. And it's straightforward.

J: And this one looks a little more Feldmany.

S: The one you sent me (indicating *Chronostasis*).

J: Yeah.

S: That has these cross-rhythms, doesn't it?

J: Yeah. But because I started to get people playing things the way I didn't want them to, so those cross-rhythms – I'm not really interested if they are done right. It's just a sprinkle of them.

S: I don't think that Feldman was interested either. Because it's humanly impossible anyway. And who cares? I mean, probably only Boulez could think that way.

(Some jokey talk about Boulez; also Ferneyhough, Carter and complexity)

J: Those composers are for me nothing. Other than I like notation.

S: Yes, *I* do.

Question 18

Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

J: Well, we talked about the four pianos piece.

S: Yeah.

J: It's a steady aleatoric. But... to me, aleatoricism is – here's a note, here's another note [] and any options are possible, right? But no, I want my music to sound like this. And it's just the rhythm generally that is aleatoric. Or variable. I have written a lot of pieces where the musicians have 10 or 20 cells.

S: So mobile form.

J: Very mobile. And each of them has a different one. They decide when to do... I'll play this now. I'll play that one next. And I know what these notes are: I know how they are all going to work, so the piece itself I've imagined that's what it's going to sound like, but it's always different. Every single time. And that is a semi-aleatoric...

S: Yes. So it's not chaotic.

J: It's not chaotic, and it's not a sudden noise that isn't expected. It's get where you are going and stay there – it's this little sound world that...

S: Is that because you're cultivating a style? So that you know what your music sounds like? Because, for example, if you think of Cage and Christian Wolff pieces, it's very hard to say... you can say, for example, I like Sibelius, and I don't like Liszt. You can say I like Feldman. But can you actually say I like or dislike composers like Cage? because...

J: You don't know what it sounds like!

S: Yeah. I mean some of it is written down, but...

J: I mean I might have liked that moment. I like his ideas. I am not interested in Cage's music: I just like his ideas.

S: I think everybody would have to agree with that. I mean there are the *Imaginary Landscape* pieces for radio - I think that's a tremendously good idea, but I've got a recording of it...

(Laughter)

(More on this)

J: I don't want to listen to a piece of music and not know it's mine.

(Subject of the 'problem' of largely chance-based music continues)

S: Well, the next question follows on quite nicely from that.

Question 19

In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations for piano* begins with 18 bars' rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

J: I don't know about 18 bars of silence at the beginning of the piece. I went to a composer's recital and she had one 45-minute piece, and I don't think there were 45 notes in it. A solo piano piece.

S: By whom?

J: Her name is Marcy (?) She doesn't write a lot. Despite the fact that she could easily produce a lot more material than that. (laughs) It doesn't take a lot to notate that. It was like Morton Feldman, but slowed down. It was very much a Wandelweiser piece – she never knew what Wandelweiser was, and neither did I at the time. This is 12, 15 years ago. And it was audacious, but it upset people. It was OK. It was just a different experience. It's like – there's a note, and it fades out... and then there's another 20 seconds before the next note. So this is the kind of sound world we're in. I don't know if experimental music is served well by audacious things, because I think we lose a lot of people. We lose a lot of audience and journalists. I like cool ideas, and Cage's ideas, like the radio thing. I'm sure people would walk into the room and go 'What the hell! Is this a piece of music?' So if we can catch them and the curious mind – great. But audaciousness doesn't serve us well. It's fun, though.

S: OK, that's a good answer. And that's a different answer from what some other people have said.

J: Well, I'm not trying to be loved.

S: No, obviously, I'm not going to be able to write up a good thesis if everybody says the same thing. It's just that if everybody says 75% the same thing, I've got something!

J: Let's argue about that a bit – the audacious thing.

S: OK.

J: Because I never thought it that way. What's that 18 bars of rests...?

S: It's a very early work. You might not know it. *Variations* for piano. And the score has 18 bars' rest...

J: ...at the beginning. And if someone were to play that nowadays, they'd sit down. And there's probably a five minutes of silence...

S: Yes, and you wouldn't really know whether they were getting prepared for it or ...whatever...

J: ... or they'd forgotten the piece and were having a breakdown (laughs).

S: The only excuse for it would be if Feldman was throwing a die or something like that, to see what would come up bar by bar, and nothing came up for 18 bars. But he said that he never did that.

J: I don't think he would do that.

S: No.

J: I think he wanted to elicit either reverence for the piece: ear cleaning, 'Get ready, the piece is coming!'. Because the first note has more way more impact... so he was either trying to still the room – still the audience – before the note, or experience the sounds. Or he was trying to

annoy them. But likely he probably wasn't trying to annoy them. But the result could be that he annoyed the audience. And if you irritate someone, then they're not going to like the []. Right and I don't want to be like the guy... I want to write music people like.

S: It's a bit of a tightrope, isn't it?

J: Yeah. I want them to go 'What a neat idea! What an interesting way that composer did that: I've never heard something like that before. But I don't want them to think: what an asshole! Why did I have to wait for 47 minutes before the next note? Unless it's... I had a friend in Moncton, New Brunswick, who had a piece, which is six minutes looped. So that the performer plays a bunch of notes, but it's going through speakers, so that everything he plays - after six minutes you hear it again. So for 90 minutes everything is recorded: you hear it again and again and again. So by the end of it - 90 minutes - it's 15 times repeated. It's a big, long loop, right? And it's quite neat. So at the end you are listening to an orchestra of that one person. You're listening to 15 tracks - 15 layers of what that person was playing. But for the first six minutes there's silence. (In the) second six minutes there's one note. (In the) third six minutes there are two notes.

S: Six minutes?!

J: Minutes. So after 18 minutes, you've heard three notes - oh I guess you've heard the first one again.

S: This rings a bell.

J: And if you can wait the 90 minutes you have heard an exponential series of notes.

S: ...you've got your money's worth of notes.

(More on this piece)

Question 20

J: I think he wrote intuitively. He doesn't (?) have things that reoccur, but it may just be a chord. 'Oh I liked it; I'll do it again.' It seems intuitive. It seems almost stream of consciousness to me. Like here's a thing; here's another thing. There's no reason to remember what happened an hour ago. It's because we're somewhere else now.

S: This is the most contentious issue in Feldman study. Because Howard Skempton and you agree completely. Many other composers or musicologists completely disagree. And I've read two books recently and both have said the opposite. That all Feldman's music is analysable, and that he worked very closely to systems. Of course, he never said that...

J: But can they show you the system?

S: They can; but it's fairly bogus.

J: (laughs) So it's like they've come up with a system based on what...

S: I have composed music myself, so I'm a bit on your side as well. But I'm also a music critic and I'm trying to become a proper musicologist. So I'm into analysis, and I've written an analysis of a Feldman piece myself. My heart isn't completely in it, but this piece is so bare -

it's a one-page piece by Feldman called *Intermission IV*. He rejected it for publication, but it's been dug up. So I am not against analyses per se, but people just read so much...

J: You think that maybe he writes... that Howard and I are right – I like that - that he wrote intuitively, but of course because it's coming out of his mind, there are going to be patterns and similarities between this and this, or things will reoccur, just because he's writing that one piece. So they come along, and they try to fit an analysis over the top of it, and they can point to that chord reoccurring, and this is that pattern again, just like there is... a recapitulation of...

S: Yes. You can say certain things about Feldman's style. For example, he writes the total chromatic. He doesn't write serial music, but he writes 12-note music. In other words, he'll go – let's say 20 bars, 25 bars – and he'll have done the 12 notes. And then in the next 20 bars you'll get the 12 notes again. But within the 20 bars, he'll hit on two or three subsets, and then maybe one note, and that's the major note. And he'll finish the piece, just playing that note with that other subset. And that's the Feldman style, and that's what he does. And that's undeniable. And even Feldman, if he were sitting here, he'd sort of - he couldn't deny that. But some of the stuff people write is... And these books have been well reviewed, you know. It's just outstanding what they can see in a work.

J: [] numerology. You know, here's a bunch of numbers, and we can make a system around something that exists...

S: Yes.

J: ...that the composer didn't intend; didn't even wish for. I learnt music that I composed by teachers telling me 'This is what this person was doing, and this was what... Even if that person was like: 'No don't! Don't look at it that way.'

S: The word 'numerology' has been used by these very writers. Playing with numbers, you know.

(More on this subject in music generally)

J: There was an article, which was a joke, that 12-tone and serialist music coming out of Germany - like Webern and Schoenberg – was actually CIA messages...

(Laughter, and more on this)

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Jordan Nobles

Question 21

I hear in some of your music fragments of melody across quasi-tonal structures against more chromatic/blurry patterns.

What is your reaction to that remark?

J: That sounds cool. I just like it that someone's listening! There are a lot of fragments, for sure. And I don't know what blurry chromaticism is, but I know how my music comes about. Obviously.

S: Well, blurry-chromatic means, kind of gently dissonant, I think.

J: Yeah. There's an attempt, often, to sugar-coat dissonance – but that's not right – to compose dissonances that are super-quiet. But it's quite dissonant... and to bring the dissonances in quite quietly. So as not to alarm or upset anyone. Cos I'm Canadian! (laughs)

S: Are Canadians like that?

(More on this and the Canadian idea of courtesy)

And I like listening to Morton Feldman. I study other composers that I don't listen to. But mostly I'm listening to quiet music.

Question 22

Your work sounds New Age, but it is not corny. Nevertheless, there are elements of the minimalist style often associated with that genre.

Are you horrified by that remark?

J: Er, not the minimalism part but the New Age part. I know that New Age comment is coming. And I don't like New Age music. But I do fly close to it. I drift with my little wax wings a bit too close to the Sun. It is something that I am terrified of. The New Age label. And I got all these awards for my most New Ageist album...

S: OK. I think Philip Glass takes all the blame. Because, although he wrote some lovely music, and he's a very good opera composer in a way... you know, he wrote some right crap, I think. And, of course, all the film composers have copied it, you know. And that's kind of New Age, that stuff. You know, the film starts with a babbling brook, and you get (imitates the typical Glassian music)... and you think, 'Oh this is quiet good!', and then you realise, you know, this was composed by a computer – it must have been! (laughs).

J: Feldman flies over New Age without worrying because he's so dissonant. Whereas I am not as dissonant, but still quiet. So it's easy listening for some folks. And it flies too close to New Age quite a lot. And having said that, my next piece will be harder and harsher!

S: Like Varèse! (laughs)

Question 23

I would like to ask you some questions about certain of your pieces:

a. *Chronostasis*. There are very patent Feldmanesque procedures in the work. For example, complex rhythmic aggregates and the merging of timbres and registers. How did you determine pitch-classes and rhythmic groupings? And how did you decide on the instrumentation?

b. *Surface Tension*. I hear sustained sounds that overlap. The piece starts complex and furious and then seems to thin out. This is a Feldman trait also. Do you agree and can you explain the title?

c. *Grace*. The score reminds me of the score of *In C*. How do the separate sheets work? Is this too easy a compositional solution?

d. *Zappafrank*. What are your thoughts about Frank Zappa as a composer?

e. *Black Red and Black*, from *Museum Pieces*. This, to me, recalls Terry Jennings. Why has Jennings been forgotten (or so it seems)?

a.

S: I thought this was very adept writing. I'm not a great technician, but I thought this piece was... did you have a teacher?

J: I haven't had a teacher in 20 years. I didn't learn anything from my teachers.

S: This is very professional composition, I would say.

J: Thank you very much.

I'll tell you what the pitch-classes are. And you'll go: 'Oh! Why didn't I see that?'

S: Well, I didn't study it very well. Well, I didn't study it all, to be honest. I just thought it would be a good question to ask you.

J: Each chord is... in each system...

(Explains the piece; talks about transpositions of reduced scales [pitch sets], which imbue the piece with an internal logic as regards pitch? difficult to assess in transcription in the absence of the score)

S: How did you decide on the instrumentation?

J: Er, for that one I was asked to write a piece for string quartet, piano and marimba. Well, percussion, piano and strings. And I didn't like it, so I changed it. No, I was asked to write a piano trio! Sorry. And I changed the strings part to the marimba part.

(More on this)

This was my Morton Feldman piece. You know what I like about Feldman? I like the way [] and there's so much space before the next one that you almost forget where you were.

(More on possible versions of the piece in question; speaks of a forthcoming project for 18 electric guitars)

(Of the piece in question again)

I did that because it sounds like Feldman. Feldman made me do that.

b.

J: Um, I can. The title comes because it was a piece written for (a swimming pool). The concert was recorded in a swimming pool. And so I wanted a title that had to do with water. Surface tension is an important thing to me. I wrote a short story called 'Surface Tension' when I was...

S: OK. Because it's also the title of several works by Howard Skempton.

J: I didn't know that. I should know that. I like Howard's work.

(Explains the title)

S: OK. What about the thinning out thing?

J: That came from my friend Jocelyn (Morlock?). The idea of that. She wrote a piece – and I listened to her talk about it – and it was very pretty at one stage of the piece. And dissonant at the beginning. And difficult. And she says: I could have started with the pretty thing, but you haven't earned it yet.

S: Oh, that's very interesting.

J: So you start with something that's hard or difficult, and by the time you get to the pretty thing you've earned it, and it's better. If I start with pretty, then it's just pretty...

S: Yes. There are a lot of Feldman shorter works which start with complex chords and then thin out to repeated patterns.

(More on the piece in question)

J: So it starts actually atonal and then thins out all the way down to the C.

c.

(J): The reason *Grace* came about is cos they said: 'We want to do graphic scores. Can you write a piece that's graphic?' And I said: 'No, I can't. I don't do that.' I don't want to draw a picture and say: 'Make this music.'

S: So you wrote it out.

J: I wrote it out. Well, it's not written out that way...

(Explains the notational process)

S: That's why I wrote that it reminded me of *In C*, not because it sounds like it but because people are performing from the same score.

(More on this)

I am going to ask you a rude question. Do you think this is too easy a compositional solution?

J: Er, no. It's definitely... I just wrote 40 melodies based in the same key. I've given it to youth groups. Because it's easy to play. But some of my more simple ideas are my favourite pieces. So, no it's not too simple. But there is definitely a New Agey element to that piece.

S: I don't mean that the outcome is simple. I mean... as a solution. A compositional solution. You know, to make a piece of music...

J: My idea is if I can write a single note and a complex piece comes out of it, but my piece is simple - that's what I want. Like that Gregorian Chant thing.

S: What I was thinking of was... when I was at college, Howard Skempton introduced me to *In C*... he said there's this piece in C, you see... We sat down at the piano and... he told me what to play. And then I remember he said "The trouble is, it's too easy." By which he meant the solution. Howard then went on to write things that were even easier, so... but I can understand what he meant in a way.

J: I would never submit *Grace* to a composition competition. Cos they'd look at it and go...

S: ... it's too easy!

J: It's too easy. But I've taken eight months – ten months – and wrote a really complex piece of music, and I took a day and wrote *Grace*. And I like *Grace* better.

S: OK. That's lovely.

J: And I can put all the time in the world to do it, and make something complex, but it's not guaranteed to be a hundred times better.

(Expands on this point briefly)

(More on the score of *Grace*)

d.

J: I like Frank Zappa. He's funny. Funny and experimental. So...

S: He's wonderful, actually (laughs).

J: He makes me laugh. And I like him a lot. 'Zappafrank' is the name of an asteroid. The piece is called *Fragments*...

S: Zappafrank is the name of an asteroid?

J: It's the name of an asteroid. You see, the piece I wrote is called *Fragments*.

S: So it's got nothing to do with Frank Zappa?

J: It's got nothing to do with Frank Zappa.

S: Oh, I see. How disappointing (laughs).

J: Other than I like Frank Zappa. It's 25 little tiny piano pieces. Right? And they're not in any order. Because I was sort of thinking of asteroids – asteroids are fragments of a planet that never became a planet. Or broke apart. And they're not in any order. So this piece - you can play these pieces in any order. And I didn't want to call them: Piece no 1, Piece No 2... The performers will just put them in order, numerically or whatever, so I wanted to give them all a name. And so I named them all after asteroids. So I took a list of 50,000 asteroid titles...

(More on asteroid names)

(Plays Zappafrank recording)

(Talks about *Museum Pieces* and spatial relationships in music)

e.

S: Do you know the composer Terry Jennings?

J: No.

S: There's a composer called Terry Jennings, who's dead, but he was associated with the so-called New York School. Terry Jennings - you'll find a piece by him on YouTube. When I played through this (*Black, Red and Black*) – then I thought hah! Terry Jennings.

J: That's a Terry Jennings thing?

(Jordan may look him up!)

S: So are you completely happy working for brief periods within keys? I mean this is not the new tonality...

J: It's not the new tonality because it's not functional in any way.

S: I don't know what the new tonality is. Because everybody denies it in themselves, and erm...

J: It's tonal, but it's tonal in a weird way.

END

Appendix IX: Tim Parkinson

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK. North America and central Europe

Tim Parkinson. London. 24.1.2018.

Section 1 The experimental tradition

Question 1

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

T: Yeah, I suppose so. I mean, when I think of that experimental music tradition, or scene, in the UK, it makes me think of the people that gathered around Cardew and the Scratch Orchestra - Howard (Skempton), Michael Parsons, John White, and all those other people who... wherever they all are, you know.

S: Yes.

T: So I think of that, and tradition-wise I don't feel I can really qualify that from a personal point of view. Because tradition makes me think of something that's been carrying on for a long time, or something. I mean the Michael Nyman book was obviously an exciting thing to read at the time, but so were a lot of other things. I don't really think of them as traditions. I don't know. What is tradition? Something that's been passed on...

S: I've also used the word scene, as an alternative. Certainly, there's a dividing line between people like yourself and people like White, Skempton and Parsons. Parsons told me that he thought - and I agree with him - that it kind of went underground but more recently there's been a recurrence of interest in whatever experimental music is.

T: Sure. I kind of think of it as alternative music. Alternative to what's dished up as contemporary music by established...

S: So you don't really like the word 'experimental' for what's going on now?

T: I'm quite wary of these labels.

S: I agree with you wholeheartedly. In fact, the term 'experimental music' is becoming more and more meaningless as time goes on, it seems. Cage devised some definition of it, which doesn't hold true anymore, I don't think.

T: I think experimental music is just music. Because, as you say, there's so much of it, and it's all over the world. In my experience, it's (something) I am much more aware of than I am of... whatever is played at the Proms, or something.

(More on this subject)

Question 2

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

T: I suppose so. I can see that now. I mean, John White felt that experimental music was a historical category, referring to that late '60s / early '70s period. However, Michael Parsons also said to me that he thought of experimental music as a tabula rasa approach. Which I do feel much more close to. You know, this idea that you just start with no given thing... you start with the fundamentals and make a piece of music out of that, rather than accepting a whole bunch of historical... Rather than, say, adopting a sonata form, you think: 'Well, wait a minute. What am I actually doing from one minute to the next?' So it's an approach. I mean experimentalism I would say is a kind of an attitude to work.

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

S: You've answered it really. It's an attitude or an approach.

T: I think that if I were to find some point of difference between how I would work and (hesitates and chuckles) somebody else! my approach would be to question everything before even starting. Whereas other composers may just adopt a whole bunch of preconceptions and go along with it, and make music based on that. Which is fine, of course.

S: Do you know the music of Morton Feldman?

T: Yes. Very, very well.

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

T: I suppose from my last description of what I think experimentalism might be defined as, yes. I do, yeah. I mean the point is, to what extent it is viewed as an experiment. It isn't an experiment at all; it's a finished work of art. But it questions. That's very important.

S: I think, even though I am doing this, there are certainly bogus issues... I mean, Feldman and Cage are two complete opposites (chuckles).

T: Very much so yes!

S: I mean, Feldman wrote scores in the same way that Sibelius and Brahms did. And Cage and Wolff also did, but they also wrote a lot of stuff that Feldman would not have had anything much to do with.

T: Mm... But then again there's also a sort of non-adoption of certain construction attitudes... ideas of what a piece of music is, you know? They're questioning that, which is fantastic, I think. That was fundamental I think.

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

T: (laughs). It can be. I prefer to use the word 'revelatory'. Sometimes music makes me laugh, and the laughter is not because it's... it's a revelation rather than laughing at it because it's being ridiculous or silly, or out to make a joke, or something. Xenakis has often had that effect on me. It's the most fantastic, overwhelming maelstrom of noise, and I just laugh because it's wonderful!

S: Well, when Xenakis was played decades ago, it was actually quite funny!

T: Yes.

S: You didn't know whether to boo or laugh.

T: It's bold and outrageous, so that can provoke laughter. Sometimes it can be witty. We just did some pieces by Tom Johnson last year called *Predictables*, which are, arguably again, experimental music, because they use very predictable systems and structures, but it's far from being dry and academic. They're actually quite inventive and witty. It kind of provokes a smile. And, of course, Howard's music is very charming.

S: So you like the word 'revelatory' and Christopher Hobbs liked the word 'playful'.

T: Yes, that's a good one as well! It's not out to make a laugh, though.

(More on this)

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

T: I don't think it's elitist. At all. It depends... it's a massively wide category. I don't like that word, but I appreciate that you've used it. When we put these things on for 'Music we Like to Hear', the idea is it's there for anybody to appreciate it or not. And I don't really feel you need any special skills: people just have more experience of it or less. If you haven't heard a piece of music like that before, then you are going to find it quite weird. But if you've heard a thousand things like that before you are going to compare it to other pieces and other contexts for it. You may or may not like it, and that's absolutely fine. And everyone can have that, and it may make them feel one way or another. I don't think it needs any specialised knowledge beforehand. I just prefer to present something to somebody and say: 'What did you think of that?' I teach children, and I do it quite a lot with them.

S: I think the skills issue is crucial. That's what the Scratch Orchestra was based on: the welcoming of people with no musical skills. Well, I mean no traditional musical skills.

(More on this and T's teaching commitments)

T: So... it's not elitist; anyone can have it - it's there!

S: OK.

(Tim also mentions that the general inaccessibility of this music – in terms of scores, broadcasting, recordings, etc. – may in a sense make it elitist)

(Some chat about pop music)

Questions 7 and 8

Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

T: Yes. In my own music? Yes, hugely. I discovered Feldman's music... I remember hearing on the radio *Three Voices*, [] in the late '80s... I just remember thinking it felt like the first piece of music ever written, you know? Because it's so fundamental: it's just minor seconds, major seconds... using these tiny increments and building up this music from these tiny intervals. And not really going anywhere, thankfully; it doesn't develop. It just stays within that area. Extraordinarily weird sound. So I looked him up, and I loved all the titles that were just very blank, like *Piano and Orchestra*...

S: Yes, I like that about Feldman. There's a piece called *Piano*...

T: Yes, exactly. It made me wonder what sort of music that was. I had an image of what it might be in my head. It all came through the radio really: I knew about John Cage...it was just where you could hear it. And at the time I was interested in the music of Kevin Volans.

(More on this)

Question 9

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

T: Not at the moment; I don't think about that very much anymore. My favourite period of Feldman is the stuff from the '70s. Like *Cello and Orchestra*. I like it all, but...

S: So you prefer that to the earlier, experimental kind of work and the long, late works.

T: Yeah. I mean, I do like them all as well. *For Samuel Beckett* is a wonderful piece. The first string quartet is my favourite of those...

S: That's one of my favourite pieces.

T: I'm not *so* keen on the second string quartet.

(More on the practical difficulty of listening to Feldman's late, long pieces)

It's quite neurotic, the second string quartet (laughs)

S: I think that's interesting, because a lot of people glibly – especially music journalists – describe Feldman's music as soft and quiet – anything but! Some of it is very on edge. I don't know if you know *Patterns in a Chromatic Field*?

T: Yes. They're having a fight, aren't they?

S: And it's an ugly sound, but it's fascinating.

(More on this edginess in some of Feldman's music)

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

T: I just use English. Apart from 'p'.

S: Some of the composers I've spoken to use Italian. Prefer Italian. It's quite odd, isn't it?

T: It depends what the word means. 'Allegro' has a poetic meaning as well as just being fast. It has a nuance to it, which I find slightly meaningless to use myself.

Question 11

In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

T: Yes, I think so.

S: Can you give me an example?

T: *Piano Piece 1952*, if I remember it rightly, is the one where it is just one note after another...

S: Yeah...

T: Where did that come from? What...?

S: I really hate that piece.

(Laughter)

I think it's completely stupid.

T: It's fantastically banal!

S: But I've got two recordings. I've got one that lasts eight minutes, and I think the other one's by Tilbury... not sure... and that only lasts four minutes. And it's much better! First of all, it doesn't drag on, but there's a kind of lilt to it...

T: Oh, yeah, OK... But it's a proposal; that's very important.

S: Ok, that's good.

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

T: No, I can't. I'm not sufficiently objective to give you any clear statement on that at all.

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

T: Yes, very much so. Film, poetry, painting, sculpture, dance to an extent. Probably not – or less so – literature.

S: Do you write vocal pieces? I can't remember. T: I have done, yes. But I would say one of the key differences between what may be called experimental music and whatever's not is that a lot of whatever you might call mainstream music takes its cue from a literary tradition that was founded back in the Romantic time. The music tells a story, or has an emotional narrative. I find that incredibly restrictive, and to think about music in terms of an art form which has repercussions in the visual spectrum and in kinetic awareness, and in behaviour and in time - a sequence of events - that's profoundly more interesting and important to me. So the literary thing has never been to the fore. Music like a painting or a sculpture is more interesting...

S: OK. Thank you. Let's go on.

Question 14

Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

T: Erm... not a quest for it, but awareness and acceptance of it. That would have been an abomination in music, you know.

S: What do you mean? Sorry.

T: Well, music is supposed to go somewhere; to be interesting - you're not supposed to get bored.

S: I think it started with Schoenberg. And serialism. Because in a way, not returning to a home note was a kind of starting point for music that kind of stays in one place to some extent. Although Schoenberg's very traditional in a lot of ways, I know. Eventually, everything reached a point where there's a kind of stillness.

T: I would push it back to Debussy. Or even Satie. That suspended harmonic progression. There *is* no sense of progression; it's just nice chords floating about.

S: They must have been horrified by Debussy's music.

T: Yeah! It doesn't go anywhere!

S: All those jazz chords! It sounds like Bill Evans.

(Laughter)

P: And certainly, with early Schoenberg – the expressionist stuff – it doesn't resolve. It doesn't conclude. It is suspended. And that is lovely. But it's suspended rather than stasis... Yeah, I would say that Feldman is in a line of that, really.

(More on this)

Question 15

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

T: No. It's good to try other things as well, and see...

Question 16

(If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

(Question not asked as it was irrelevant)

Question 17

Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty stave).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

T: I've done *that* before: the fermata over an empty stave. That makes sense to me. Certain aspects of his technique, yeah. You look at it and think 'I can appreciate that. Let me see if can use it and whether it's relevant to me'. But I think that's only in terms of his rhythmic notation sometimes. To produce a certain effect... it puts you in a place several parts removed from what you're doing. So it creates the result that's intended.

S: Some composers tell me that they write music which is straightforward and unambiguous. And others have kind of left things open. But there's this John Cage piano piece – is it *Music of Changes*? You can barely read it.

T: Yes.

S: And you can't play it. And there's a piece by Xenakis called *Eonta* - I don't know if you know it...

T: Oh yeah.

S: Have you ever seen the score?

T: I don't think I have, no.

S: The piano part – it's like demi-semi quavers or something – at a terrific pace, and every note has a different dynamic marking! You can't do it!

T: Absolute nightmare, yeah. I was always inspired by Webern scores, and I see a huge connection with Feldman there. Like the Webern symphony, or something.

S: Mm.

T: And most of it is rests. And there's a semibreve in the bar, played by the horn, or something. And that aspect of notation - it's so minimal - it's just a circle in a square. It represents a sound and I just look at it and I think: what does that sound like? You know, there's all this orchestra, and there's only that happening at that moment. I see a big connection between Feldman's scores - certainly the earlier stuff – and Webern scores.

S: Yeah, I would agree.

T: I find that continually more energising than the intricacies of rhythmic notation in the later pieces.

S: Yes, I would agree, I think. There's a piano piece by Feldman – it's one of the *Intermissions* – and it's unlike the others. I think it's in 4/4 - as opposed to 3/8 and 3/16 alternating, or whatever – and it's really like Webern. It's like if Webern hadn't been shot by that American, it's what he would have done next.

T: I just find it profoundly mysterious, you know: when you see a score and see those symbols there, and you think 'What does that sound like?'

Question 18

Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

T: I have (used them) and...no, not consciously. Yes, chance procedures are a tool for asking questions and getting results, and then choosing whether or not you like those results. It's a great way to help you... focus on what you are trying to do. Indeterminacy – yes... in 1999 I wrote a piece for two pianos. I just wrote a large amount of material and decided to divide it up between the pianists, and they would play it simultaneously. So yes. That idea is not original, obviously. Where has that come from? It's just in the air, isn't it?

S: Yes. Actually, I don't think Feldman used any chance operations. I suppose you would say that all music is indeterminate. That's why we use the word 'interpretation', isn't it? Some play Chopin this way, and someone else plays it in a different way.

T: Yes. I agree, I think really. You know, once you start to investigate these words, they fall to pieces.

S: They do, yes. I find that more and more (laughs).

T: I find I don't really get hung up on them.

(More on this)

Question 19

In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

T: I think it's a fair description of a quality. Yes, definitely... of his music. I just come back to that thing of asking questions... you know, making a proposition. And some people get very uncomfortable and don't like it. When you are asking a question or pointing out the obvious... so yes, it can be. It's certainly very bold. I've heard Feldman played - *Extensions 3*, I think it is, for piano - I heard that in a conventional programme with, you know...

S: Schubert...

T: Exactly! Obviously, it was really lovely, but also what was fantastic is that the pianist played it from memory. And it really looked as if he was making it up. And it was wonderful. I've never really experienced that before. When you have the score in front of you, you can see that the person is following something, so you know everything's OK, because it's been planned that way. But just to see him play it like that, it felt fresh and new. And in the moment.

(More on this concert)

Question 20

Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

T: If 'method' is the right word, he certainly did have a way of doing things. He talks about it. For example, starting a piece and then cutting off the beginning. So you start in the middle. In the later works. I don't know whether that is true of the early works.

S: The other one I heard was that - in the later works, I think – he'd have a sheet, and then he's turn it over, and continue, and he wouldn't look back to see what he'd done before. Have you heard that one?

T: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Or that he would write music which wipes out the memory of the previous moment.

S: The question that I can't get my head around is the graph pieces. Which have those numbers in boxes – have you seen them?

T: Yes.

S: How did he arrive at those numbers? Unless he threw a die? Why did he choose those numbers? There's a whole book on all of Feldman's graph pieces – do you know it?

T: I've just heard about it, yes.

S: I wrote a review of it on Chris Villars's website. And my problem is that he spends a whole book analysing all the graph works. But he never asks the question, it seems to me. How did Feldman arrive at those numbers?

(More on this)

T: They're just densities, though, really, aren't they? *I'd* say. I feel that Feldman clearly thought about very (deeply?).

S: I think the word 'density' is quite important in this context.

(More on the subject of density and weight)

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Tim Parkinson

Question 21

How much of your music is traditionally notated?

T: Erm... most of it, I suppose.

S: Because I have been interviewing some Wandelweiser-associated composers. They send me their scores. I don't understand them.

(More on the subject of 'unreadable' scores)

T: I always just think of the sound. And whatever is the best way to get that across. Notation is an instruction. Traditional notation serves a purpose. It's got its limitations – traditional notation. Yes, if I am writing for the piano – at the keyboard – it just makes perfect sense.

Question 22

Tell me about the venture 'Music we'd like to Hear'.

S: Is James Saunders your partner in that?

T: No. It's me and John Lely and Markus Trunk. It's a concert series we set up in 2005. Each of us was doing individual concerts before that. And we decided to put on three concerts at the same time, and just give it a general umbrella. So that's how it began.

S: And where do the concerts take place?

T: There's a church in the City of London called St Anne and St Agnes. That's where it started. Now we are in St Mary at Hill, which is near the Monument. The venue is cheap and central.

(More on this)

S: Do you play composed music, or is it improvised?

T: It's all composed. I don't think we've had any completely improvised music.

Question 23

Listening to *Violin Piece (2006)* I get the feeling that melody is important to you. Are your melodies based on the regurgitation of a restricted series of pitch classes or are they more freely written?

T: (laughs) I can't remember with that piece how those melodies came about. But it's for violin, so you haven't got much choice! You have to do melodies. I think it was just an idea of drawing lines in that space. That's how it began.

S: I always ask myself: does this composer work empirically, or is there a covert system at work?

T: I don't think there's a system at work. That I can remember. It's making proposals to myself in the working process, and then choosing to accept them or change them. That's the way in. That piece was written for a fantastic series of concerts that Manfred Werder used to do in a gallery in Zurich. He would put on three or maybe four concerts on subsequent days. But in each programme there'd be only one piece. And it could literally have been anything: it could have been five minutes long, or six hours long, or something.

(More on this concert series)

Lots of things in that violin piece just go on for a long time. There's a lot of exploration in that piece. I'm a big fan of Cy Twombly. Line rather than melody, you know?

S: Yes... line rather than melody. Yes, I get that. OK. Thank you.

END

Appendix X: Michael Parsons

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Michael Parsons. London. 31.10. 2017

(Michael had been sent the questionnaire in advance)

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Question 1

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

M: Yes, well the experimental music tradition of the UK is largely thanks to Cardew in the 1960s, who introduced some of the ideas from America, especially the works of Cage and Feldman, Christian Wolff and others, and formed around him a group of people, who initially met at an experimental music class at Morley College, which is where I first met Howard (Skempton), Christopher Hobbs and most of the others. In 1968. That was the nucleus of what later became the Scratch Orchestra.

S: Yes.

M: So when one talks about English experimental music, it's usually that that's referred to historically.

S: Do you think that it went away and somehow came back again, or has it always been there?

M: Well, the composers and the improvisors who were involved in the 1960s continued working. And also, to some extent, diverged in different directions. Some of them are still around. I would say, probably, it sort of went underground for a while; and then, more recently I think, a younger generation of musicians has become interested in it again. So it sort of disappeared from the public view for a number of years, but now I think it's probably more well-known than it has been for quite a long time.

S: Yes. I get that impression too. Especially with the advent of clubs like Café Oto and various other ventures...

M: Yes. That's right. There's a general feeling that what was happening in the 1960s and '70s was more adventurous and more radical than what's happened in between. And a younger generation of experimenters - for want of a better word - has taken that as a starting-point.

Question 2

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

M: Yes, I think I *have* been a part of it. Initially, because of my working closely with Cornelius Cardew and being influenced by his ideas in the 1960s, and feeling that, somehow, there were things which were worth continuing after he abandoned it all and turned to politics.

S: Were you part of that?

M: No, not really. Well, I was interested in the discussions, but I never wanted to join the Party, as he did. And devote my life to the idea of a communist revolution. He sort of turned his back on experimental music.

S: This is not part of the question, but what is your opinion of those popularist pieces by Cardew? Chinese folk songs, etc. (chuckles)

M: Erm...difficult to say, really. The Irish ones are quite accessible, and interesting to play and enjoyable to listen to. But I think his ideas about the political efficacy of music are deluded.

S: Yes. So do I.

M: I don't think they have any relevance to current political movement or development.

S: I remember when it happened. The main thing that struck me was that you already have a very loud and very patent popular music industry, so where would this fit in? Who would go and listen to it?

M: Yes. It was a delusion, really, to think that that could have any political influence or credibility at that time. So I was a part of the early experimental music before he turned to politics, and then, not being particularly interested in his way of doing politics – not that I wasn't interested in the politics itself – but his particular way of using music politically I didn't feel was a useful thing to be doing. I thought there were ideas in experimental music which to me were more interesting; which I felt still deserved to be kept alive.

S: And what do you feel that you've done since then? In what way have you been involved since then?

M: Well, it's a long period. After the break-up of the Scratch Orchestra, I was involved with the London Musicians Collective for quite a few years, and then some of the same sorts of ideas which had been going on in the early Scratch Orchestra...

S: Can you tell me something about that? Because I don't know about them.

M: Well, the London Musicians Collective was formed in 1978 probably (1975?) by a group of improvisors. And some of them came out of art schools. David Toop is probably one of the...

S: Oh yes...

M: ...is one of the ones who's still around and known. Steve Beresford, Paul Burwell, who was one of the founders...They got together and created a sort of forum primarily for free improvisation. They had informal gatherings. Anyone could turn up and perform. They made a programme, and anyone who wanted to do something was welcome. So it had that very much open atmosphere, of not being selective and not having any hierarchical structure which determined what was acceptable and what was ...

S: So it took its cue from the Scratch Orchestra in that respect...

M: Well, it was similar. I'm not sure if they would actually have said it was a continuation of the Scratch Orchestra. Because, probably, they would have felt that their own inspiration was more autonomous, and more coming from different sources. But in spirit it was very similar to the Scratch Orchestra.

S: But did they use what I gingerly call non-musicians?

M: Oh yes! Very much so, yes. It was very open in that respect. And it had a lot in common with the Scratch Orchestra.

S: Do you still play with other people, or do you just compose?

M: I occasionally play, but mostly I am now a composer. Somebody asked me this recently, actually... for another interview. And I said: "Well, we keep in touch socially. With Howard, Hugh Shrapnel and Christopher Hobbs, and so on, so we know of each other's work. And sometimes we go to each other's concerts." But we don't normally work together very closely anymore.

S: And you've got the upcoming 'gig' at Huddersfield.

M: Yes. Well, that's a sort of one-off thing for the launch of this CD, which Apartment House have just recorded. It's going to be released in November. I've got a copy of it here if you want to look at it or listen to anything from it. Yes, I'm going up to Huddersfield to take part in that launch.

S: You'll just be in the audience?

M: Well, I'm going to play.

S: Your own work.

M: Yes. One piano piece with Philip Thomas.

(More about the CD)

Around about 2000/2001 I wrote a series of piano pieces which use a sort of time-space notation... rhythmically indeterminate. I can show you some scores, and I think those are probably relevant to Feldman.

S: When we come onto the third part, can we look at those scores?

M: Yes! OK. So... for me it's still very much a live tradition.

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

M: I thought for this it was actually quite useful to refer to Jennie Gottschalk's book. Because she does have some interesting definitions, none of which is exclusive or final. Ironically, Cage wrote an essay called 'Experimental Music: Doctrine', didn't he? I think he was using the word 'doctrine' in a slightly ironic sense.

S: I know there is the Cage definition - that experimental music is music where you're not quite sure how it's going to turn out... or words to that effect.

M: Well, he had an elegant way of putting it: he said "an experimental action ... is simply an action the outcome of which is not foreseen". So that brings in indeterminacy. I think indeterminacy is part of the definition. But the interesting thing about Jennie's book... in her introduction she identifies certain terms of definition, which are all parts of the definition of what she thinks of as experimental music. But not necessarily exclusively. And she identifies "indeterminacy", "change" – the idea that a work can change; the idea that the performance event is different from the notated score. And can be different each time. Another one is what she calls "non-subjectivity". That is not using music to express one's own feelings or thoughts, but rather treating it as an objective means of exploration into sound. So that relates to "research". And then she talks about "experience". The experience of the listener comes into it in a way which is different from the way that one listens to Classical music, for example.

S: Yes... I'm not interested in a definition of experimental music, but a description of it. Which I think is more useful. Because there are all kinds of other things, aren't there? That we associate with it. For example, lack of rhetoric is another phrase that's used.

M: Yes.

S: Or an avoidance of musical development in a piece... in the old-fashioned sense.

M: Yes; in the sense of taking a motif and exploring it as a sort of musical argument. To me, it's also a question of this idea that music is a language, which comes out of Classical music. The idea that music is almost like language, in the sense of a continuous narrative structure of some kind which links up with a grammar and syntax of its own. Getting away from that idea... Cage initially said that music is just sounds. And that it doesn't have to be used to express anything. Rejecting the linguistic analogy, saying that it's material which you study for its own sake. Not in order to say something.

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

M: Well yes. I think the answer is just a simple 'yes'.

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

M: Well, whether it's funny or not depends very much on who is listening to it or thinking about it. Some people might find it funny. Some people might find it entertaining or amusing. Or 'funny' in the sense of 'strange'. But I think that's more to do with the point of view of the listener coming to it, rather than being part of the music itself.

S: Although I do remember at Ealing (Ealing Technical College, now the University of West London), Howard arranged one or two concerts... some people did laugh. It was quite funny, actually – even Howard himself would have laughed.

M: Well, yes, there was a certain strangeness about it, which can take you by surprise, and that can make it...

S: I had a very interesting answer in Canada to this. One of the chaps (Jordan Louis) - he said: on the one hand, it may be funny, but on the other hand, he thought it was deadly serious. Perhaps in social and political terms. In that... perhaps he meant by that that it was not a money-spinner, and was a serious response to our neo-liberal society (this was actually what Mark Hannesson hinted at), where everything has a value... bums on seats and that kind of thing.

M: That's right, yes. It's very resistant to this idea that everything has to be turned into money and profit. On the whole, experimental composers resist that idea very strongly. Although a few have been successful (financially)...

S: Yes, well, Howard has done well.

M: Howard always used to say that he only became a composer because he couldn't do anything else (laughs).

S: Well, fair enough! I said to him, when I spoke to him recently in July: 'You know, you've trod a perfect path. Because you are still an experimentalist; you still write weird music, if you like, but people *love* it.' He's very, very popular.

M: Yes. He's done very well out of both aspects of that, I think. Yes, it's a funny word, 'funny'. It can be light-hearted; it can be amusing. It sort of debunks the deadly seriousness of the classical approach to music, where... it's, on the whole, not intellectually formidable or threatening in any way. It's not like Boulez, or Babbitt for that matter, where there's a huge amount of theory attached to it. It's direct experience of sound and refreshingly straightforward, and not tied up with theoretical concerns.

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?')

M: Well, I think it can be specialised. And specialism is sometimes identifying with elitism. But we need specialists to develop knowledge in particular directions. People don't talk about science being elitist. Anyone who has a particular interest and expertise in a subject... I think it's valuable for them to pursue that. So in that sense, it can be a specialist interest; it's not necessarily for everyone. But that doesn't necessarily make it elitist in a prejudicial sense. And in contrast with that idea of elitism - to go back to Cardew - for him, it was very much an inclusive way of allowing people to become involved without necessarily having that specialism.

S: Yes.

M: So there are two opposites at work there. There's the inclusiveness of Cardew's approach in the Scratch Orchestra, and the accessibility and popular element in Howard's music, which are not in the least elitist - in fact, quite the opposite. But on the other hand, there are specialist concerns in the work of Cage himself and composers like Alvin Lucier, and, I suppose, Feldman too. Pursuing a very specific interest of their own, which is never going to be hugely

popular. But I would prefer the word ‘specialised’, rather than using the word ‘elitist’, which has all sorts of social implications.

(More on the subject of the popularity of music, and ‘forming a community’, as Michael puts it)

Section 2 Feldman’s legacy for the respondent personally

Question 7

Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman’s music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

M: Yes; especially the early music, I would say. Which is the music I came across in the 1960s because of Cardew...

S: So you mean the early piano pieces?

M: Yes, the early piano pieces, particularly, and some of the *Durations* series, for example.

S: Do you like those better than the late works?

M: Yes, I do. I find the late works a little bit tiresome in terms of that extended length. They’re interesting... but I don’t feel inclined to go out of my way to...

S: It’s funny you should say that because I think I got the same impression from Howard.

M: John Tilbury’s recording of *For Philip Guston*, which takes up four CDs, I think...

S: Oh yes, it’s about four and a half hours long.

M: Well, I have been to a live performance of that, but I prefer it on CD, because then I can take my own time...

S: ... and have a break.

M: ... and have a break.

S: Yes, I’ve got it on CD, and I listened to it during the course of a day. Went off and had lunch and things.

M: That’s OK. It’s beautiful music...

S: I’m the opposite; I prefer the late pieces much, but I got a distinct impression Howard liked the early pieces better. Perhaps because you grew up with them, as it were.

M: Yes. They came along at a time when ...

S: And much of the writing about Feldman’s music is actually about the early works. There’s not much written about the later... there’s the odd article. There aren’t any books which cover most of the later works. Whereas, there’s a whole book on all the graph works, which are early works.

M: Well, the early works were, in a sense, conceptually more adventurous – more interesting. To me, anyway. Christian Wolff told me a story about Cage going to hear some of the later

Feldman works. And he complained about them. He said: “Why do they have to be so long?” (laughs). And Christian has this way of imitating Cage’s voice, which... a slightly whiney tone (imitates Cage).

(Laughter)

But I feel the same. Why do they have to be so long? Beautiful as they are. But, to me, the early works are the ones that really influenced my thinking about music.

S: Yes. OK. Yes, one of the guys I interviewed in Canada said the first score he saw was *Last Pieces*, and I think that was the first score I saw. And I think probably because it was the first properly engraved score, as far as I remember. Which Howard must have shown me. And that was it! It was love at first sight! The notation.

M: I love those pieces too. Well, I love the fact that they don’t use bar lines. Which really struck me at the time. I thought Yes! you can write music without pulse, without meter, without counting all the time...

S: ...and just note heads, no stems.

M: Yes, and that’s what I’ve been doing in these more recent pieces from 2000, 2001. I won’t say I went back, cos to me it was going forward in a way. Picking up things that I’d neglected in the meanwhile. Because when Cardew turned his back on experimental music, and denounced it as being a form of bourgeois individualism, it made it quite difficult for his associates to continue in that direction. It was sort of felt that one couldn’t do that anymore. Because he had such a sort of charismatic...

S: So people thought they had to write more entertaining works?

M: ...more accessible... even for those who were not directly involved in the politics, that still had an effect. It was only after his death, really, that I thought...

S: Which was in ‘81?

M: ’81, yeah. And then I thought, well, these ideas are worth keeping alive and reconsidering. So I began to use that time-space notation

(They discuss Cardew’s death – he was run over)

Questions 8 and 9

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman’s (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

M: Well (question number 8), to me, it was this direct experience of the quality of sound. Paying attention to sound itself, rather than in terms of abstract structure and the way sounds related to each other. The way most forms of traditional European music are to do with syntactic connections - ways of connecting up chords and melodies.

S: Do you think he got that from Cage, even though their musics don't sound the same?

M: I think Cage, as Feldman himself said, gave him permission to continue in the way that he was already thinking about. Cage recognised and confirmed this was a valid way of approaching music, but yes, certainly he would have been influenced by Cage. Cage was at least 10 or 15 years older, wasn't he? When they first met. Cage would certainly have been an influence. But Feldman took a direction of his own. And the sound of Feldman's music, of course, is very special.

S: Yes. And what about these particular aspects - techniques of musical composition...?

M: Well, to me, it was the flexible, unmeasured treatment of tempo and continuity. The fact that things didn't have to be connected in a linear way. And this again relates to what I was saying earlier about language. It doesn't have to be like language, in the sense that it's all connected up grammatically.

S: So Feldman sometimes just used to – we think, perhaps – treat a score as something that you could just daub and splash at and fill in... and not necessarily work left to right?

M: I think he did work across the page, but I think he tried to forget what he'd done. He tries to make each sound a fresh experience that's not dependent on memory and relating to what's gone immediately before. This is particularly for the early music.

S: There are longer pieces where he says – or somebody says – that he turned the page, and then carried on. And he wouldn't look back. Which is *very* interesting.

M: Yes, well it's much the same thing. He didn't want to make this kind of continuity: he wanted each moment to be fresh and unique. And listening in the present tense: not referring back to things that had gone before. So in that sense the analogy with language breaks down. As with Cage, using chance techniques to break up the continuity.

S: I've always had this problem with Feldman – well, more particularly with composers like Cage and, perhaps, Wolff – because, to me, it's a kind of contradiction in terms. Because if music is about time, it has a beginning, middle and end. And yet they're trying to say: well! No, it's not quite like that. That it's all right to have a series of non-sequiturs, if you like.

M: Mm.

S: Which is why, I suppose, some composers – the serialists, particularly – made these aleatoric scores, so you can play things in any order. So I've always thought that was... I mean, I *get* it. But somehow I *don't* get it.

M: Well, I think that it's not that they deny the fact that one does experience things in time continuously, but it's more that they don't want to impose a particular way of listening on the listener. They want the listener to experience it in their own way. They don't want to prescribe a particular way of listening. So they leave enough ambiguity and openness in the piece. To allow for different ways of listening.

S: May I ask you...? Not all Feldman's music is soft, I know, but he's known for his low dynamics. Have you pursued that?

M: No. That's an aspect of his music which I don't find is so relevant to me. We should also mention, in relation to question 9, notation. Because, as you say, the way it looks on the page. That to me was very influential. This absence of bar lines. But the softness aspect... that's something so specific to Feldman... Although I do like soft sounds and I do use very soft sounds, I don't exclusively use them.

S: It has been influential, hasn't it? There are lots of other composers who tend to write solely soft music...

M: (pauses) Yes.

S: In my group (of composers involved in Spencer's project), especially the North Americans, almost all their music is soft. And Wandelweiser is...

M: Yes. People like Michael Pisaro.

S: Yes, and Beuger. And that Romanian chap... can't remember his name (S is thinking of Radu Malfatti, who is actually Austrian).

M: Yes, well that's an aspect which, to me... I like a variety of dynamics. And I generally leave dynamics to the performer. But I do say use a range of dynamics. Don't try to keep it all at one level.

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

M: The Italian instructions tend to evoke the styles of Classical music.

S: There are connotations, aren't there? You know... when Feldman writes 'slow', 'fast', 'very slow', 'very fast', to me this is not 'presto' or 'adagio'. It has a different ring to it.

M: 'Adagio' means so much more than 'slow'. It means a certain type of expression and a certain type of phraseology. So it's a stylistic as well as a tempo indication. I tend to use English mostly.

S: You do?

M: Unless I particularly want to evoke a Classical feeling.

S: Is there any significance in using English, or is it just because it's the obvious choice?

M: It's just because it's practical.

Question 11

In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

M: Oh I do yes! (to the question 'Do you agree?') It's completely original and instantly recognisable. Partly because of this flexibility of tempo, and also because of the quality of intense listening. And the choice of particular kinds of chromatic combinations, which are not easily relatable to any form of traditional harmony. Using harmony coloristically I think is something that he... that is very special about Feldman.

S: So it's quite dissonant but it's not...

M: It would be dissonant if it were played loudly, but because it's played so softly and gently it loses the abrasive quality which one associates with dissonance. By being detached from the rhetoric of loudness and rhythmic momentum... takes away the rhythmic momentum, takes away the loudness, and you're left with just the sound itself.

S: Yes.

M: I'm definitely interested in that coloristic and non-functional use of harmony.

S: I know what you mean. You know, crudely put, it's dissonant but it doesn't *sound* dissonant. So it's quite clever, when you think about it.

M: Yes, it's a different way of using pitch which doesn't relate to traditional harmonic vocabulary and syntax.

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

M: It's not really for me to say (laughter). It's for someone else to decide if it's unique or original. In a way I don't care.

S: So you don't strive for originality.

M: I used to. When I was younger I was concerned with originality, as one tends to be as a young composer. But now I do whatever comes up, and I do all sorts...

S: I've spoken to composers who've said 'I invented something and then I found out later somebody else had already done it.'

M: Everything's been done by somebody now. It's hard to think of anything completely new. But no, I'm not particularly concerned about being consistent or original in any way. I just approach each new project as something new. In a way it relates to what I was saying about not joining up harmonically... I don't feel any compulsion to join up what I'm doing now with what I did before. I like each new thing to be a fresh start. So yes, there's inevitably a degree of diversity.

S: Yes. I get that impression, but we'll get onto that later if we can.

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

M: Well, I've worked quite closely with visual artists, partly from having been teaching in art schools during the 1970s and '80s. I came into contact with a lot of visual artists. And, particularly, a group of artists who were called the Systems Group, who were basically from the starting-point of a geometric, constructive approach to quite precisely measured... I wrote an article called 'Systems in Art and Music' in the 1970s, which described that relationship. I'm still in touch with some of those artists. It wasn't exactly a collaboration in the sense of working together on particular pieces. Howard and I used to perform in art galleries, in association with exhibitions of artists like Jeffrey Steele, David Saunders, Malcolm Hughes, Jean Spencer and others of that group. But, as with all groups, they diverged and went different ways...

S: What instrument do you play?

M: I'm a pianist, really. But I have played other instruments. Howard and I used to play percussion together – we had a percussion duo... drums, wood blocks and things. So I was interested in percussion. When I was teaching in art schools, all the students wanted to learn instruments, so... and they were completely uninhibited. They'd just pick up something and start making sounds with it, so I thought if *they* can do it, then *I* can do it. So I learnt – at a very rudimentary level – to play violin, and...

S: What is your take on Feldman's relationship with abstract art, as reflected in his composing? I mean, some writers go to town on this subject, and... I'm not very good at visual art myself. I know something about it, and I like going to art galleries, but I'm not intrigued by it. So I don't quite get it myself. Do you get some proper, patent connection?

M: Oh yes. I think it's to do with this immediacy of perception. That when you go and look at a painting by Rothko or de Kooning - or Jackson Pollock or any of those New York artists that Feldman was involved with – then you forget about narrative and representation: you just look at the quality of the surface, the paint, the colour, the viscosity of the paint, the absorbency of the canvas or paper or whatever it is. You get an immediate impression of materiality. Which is a form of direct perception. Of cutting out the intervening ideas.

S: So it's the equivalent of sounds for sounds' sake?

M: Yes. Feldman went straight to sound, in the same way that Rothko and Guston, in his earlier work, went directly to the canvas and the quality of colour, texture and paint on the surface. So it's that sort of cutting out the rhetoric which surrounds the narrative and the rhetorical and narrative qualities which most people talk about when they talk about a painting.

S: Yes.

Question 14

Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

S: Are you interested in creating... a kind of static feeling?

M: Well, I have been, in certain pieces. This relates to the long developmental quality of being concentrated on a particular limited area of sound. In 1977 I wrote a piece called *Fourths and Fifths*, for example, which is simply running through a cycle of fourths and fifths, and combining them in different ways, and it's cyclic: it comes back to the beginning and repeats, so it's potentially endless. Although in terms of actual performance, it's just a matter of going through it one and a half times (I think it is), so that there is a feeling of cycling (?), but it doesn't, er...

S: I used to have a cassette of some music by you and by Skempton - you wrote a piece for two tom-toms or something.

M: Yes, hand-held drums, yes.

(Some more talk about recordings and *Fourths and Fifths*)

Yes, in the sense of concentrating on a limited area of sound for quite a long time: that does create a feeling of not going anywhere, but simply being in the same place. Exploring aspects of the same place, but noticing different things as one goes along. So it's not a matter of moving around, but being in a place and deepening one's perception of that immediate sound world. So, yes, I'm interested in stasis in that sense. In some pieces; not necessarily all.

S: OK.

Question 15

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

S: I think we have already discussed that, haven't we? And slow tempi. You said they are not necessarily aspects of your output. So we can skip that question.

M: They're things I've touched on, but which I am not dedicated to.

S: I'm interested because, as I am trying to say in question 16, if you write static music, quiet music or meditative music, perhaps with low dynamics, there may be an ulterior motive here. It may be a reaction to Beethoven and Mozart. And the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Or, indeed, it may be spiritual, you know.

Question 16

(If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

S: There's an interest in Buddhism sometimes.

M: Yes, well like Pauline Oliveros, for example. Her sonic mediations are very much related to that sort of spiritual interest. But for me, no – when you say 'Are there external, non-musical

reasons?', I would say there are no external, non-musical reasons for the music I write. It's about music.

S: OK. Good.

Question 17

Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

M: Well, another aspect – another feature – of this is in some of the later works Feldman is inclined to write double flats and double sharps in a non-tonal context. I mean, a B double flat only makes sense as, for example, the sixth degree of D flat minor. If you're in D flat minor and you want a flattened sixth, then you write a B double flat. It relates to a particular type of tonal context, but if you're writing non-tonal music, then it doesn't really make any sense on the piano to write a B double flat, when you can easily write an A natural, which is the same note, in terms of sound. It may make a psychological difference in terms of string players, if they're thinking of flattening a B, and then flattening it some more...

S: Whereas on the piano you can't make your note...

M: No, it's just there. For string players, you could say that it might have an effect on the way they perform – the intonation – because string players don't necessarily play in equal temperament. They don't have fixed tuning. They can modify the tuning. They generally tend to listen to each other, in such a way as to approximate to just intonation intervals or deviations from just intonation. In that sense the double flat and double sharp notation might have an effect on the way they play. But Feldman himself is ambiguous about this. I think he just wanted to estrange the notation and get players to approach it in a fresh way. He didn't want them to fall into habitual patterns.

S: Yes. And there is a piece called *Piano*, which I expect you know, and if you see the score, at one point it's on six staves, divided into 5/4 and 3/8 and so on. It's impossible to count. But it's not impossible to feel it. Especially if you rehearse it.

M: Yes, I think he was aiming at a particular approach. It doesn't have to be absolutely rigorously exact in a mathematical sense. They're strategies for defamiliarising... They can be challenging and stimulating for performers. I've never tried to do that. I've always tried to be as clear as possible.

S: Yes, and Howard said the same. He said that you should make your scores very clear.

M: Yes, I try to be as performer-friendly as I can. Not to confuse the performer.

S: I was looking at *Music of Changes* (by John Cage), and I can't read it! I can't actually see what is notated.

M: It's very hard. Because he uses fractional notation, doesn't he? Things like three-tenths of a crotchet. And things which are not conventionally notatable. He notates them as fractions and then also the tempo indications are changing. So I think you just have to approximate – you just have to guess.

S: Well, it's like a lot of complex music anyway, isn't it? I was looking at a score by Xenakis. He wrote this piece called *Eonta*. Do you know it?

M: Yes. *Eonta*: piano and brass.

S: Trombones playing raspberries over the strings, if I remember. Well, I look at the score - unplayable!

M: Well, Boulez said that that work was impossible...

S: Even Boulez! Is that right?

M: There's a story – I don't know how authentic this is. I think Xenakis himself tells the story in one of his conversations. That he showed this work to Boulez. And Boulez said: "It won't work. You can't do this because it's too exhausting for the brass players." But he did agree to do it with a relay of alternative brass players. They could alternate.

S: Ah!

M: And then, later on Xenakis said - this was the first performance, which Boulez did – he found it was possible for brass players to do it.

(More on Xenakis, etc.)

But I think Feldman is trying to make you think more about it; it's not actually physically demanding in the same way. More conceptually demanding perhaps.

Question 18

Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

M: Well, there are, yes. Again in these pieces, which I've already mentioned, from 2000, 2001, and one of which I'm going to be playing in Huddersfield, with Philip Thomas. Which is a piece for two pianos, in which the two parts are not precisely coordinated. So the way they come together is partly chance-determined. But I would say these pieces relate more to Cage's work of the 1950s and '60s than to Feldman.

S: There are two things here, aren't there? I think. There's music which you write using chance procedures – a die or a pack of cards. I wrote a piece using a roulette wheel once. And then, on the other hand, there's music which you notate but you're not quite sure how it's going to come out. Because it depends on choices people make.

M: Yes, that's right. Well, I do both of those, sometimes in the same piece.

S: I think Feldman ... he didn't do...

M: I don't think he used chance in that way.

S: He didn't use chance procedures, although his pieces might be indeterminate – the graph pieces.

M: The indeterminacy is in the performance, I think, in Feldman's case, but not in the composition.

Question 19

In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations for piano* begins with 18 bars' rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

M: Yes, I think exploring to the limits and questioning conventions are part of experimental music. I don't necessarily think it's meant to be provocative in the sense of challenging audiences. Although it does that as well. But I think it's more conceptual, in the sense of challenging ideas about music. But in the case of those particular pieces, I think he was... it was around the same time as the Cage... there's a piece called *Waiting*, isn't there? which begins with a long silence.

S: Yes.

M: And then there's the *4'33''*. I think they very much relate to what Cage was doing with so-called silence at the time. And really saying to the audience that there are things to listen to, which, even if the performers are not doing anything, there's still something going on. Although I don't think Feldman ever spelled that out in a theoretical way, as Cage did. Cage wrote a lot about his ideas. But Feldman - I mean, he talked an awful lot about music, and he was well-known for his extempore lectures – but he didn't theorise in the way that Cage did. He more reminisced, and his ideas come over more in the form of anecdotes, and provocative exaggerations.

Question 20 (Michael did not have this question beforehand)

Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

M: Well, I've always thought of Feldman as working pretty well intuitively. If he had a system, I don't think he ever revealed it. He was very much against the idea of system in his... When he talks about music, he poured scorn on the idea of systems, didn't he? which he associated with Stockhausen. So, as far as we know, his whole approach to sound was intuitive.

S: But there are quite a lot of people who've made analyses of Feldman's music. There's a book called 'Composing Ambiguity' – do you know that one?

M: No.

S: By Alistair Nobles? In which he analyses five or six early Feldman scores. I think that's about 2008 or something – only guessing.

(M makes a note)

And there's another book called *The Graph Music of Morton Feldman*. Which is by somebody called David Cline. And that's quite recent.

M: No, I don't know either of those books.

S: That covers all the graph pieces. And then there's the famous one – the DeLio...?

M: Yes.

S: There are some analyses in there. Now, *Composing Ambiguity* analyses five or six pieces, and he gives all this evidence of a system. And the book on the graph pieces does a similar thing. As far as I am concerned... *Composing Ambiguity*... whatever Feldman wrote, he would have found a system for it. Do you see what I mean? He's one of those guys who'll find a system in anything.

M: The writer? Mm.

S: Nevertheless, some of the arguments are convincing. For example, Feldman would use the whole chromatic palette. And he would work towards that. And achieve the 12-tone range - not in a dodecaphonic way – but ultimately; and then he would restate it another way.

M: Yeah.

S: There is an underlying attitude to what he was doing.

M: That could be thought systematic in a very general sense. Using the full complement, and then changing to another arrangement. And, of course, in the later work it often hovers around a limited number of pitches for a longish time. And then it moves to another group of pitches. But I wouldn't necessarily call that systematic. That's more to do with defining areas of pitch, which are then... I think it's more intuitive, the way he moves from one area of pitch to another.

S: Certainly, he worked on the principle - if 'principle' you can call it – that 'this is good'/'this is not good'/'this is the right way'/'this is not quite the right way', you know. So intuitive ...

M: Yes, I think he felt intuitively when things were right for him.

S: Yeah. But how did he write the graph pieces? You should read that book if you have time. Actually, it's a tiresome book in a way. But he goes into great detail - I mean, numerologists would be delighted, you know – about how he arrived at all these numbers and squiggles. I would have thought: if you are going to write a graph piece, you would use chance methods. That seems the obvious way to do it. But he didn't do it that way. So one wonders: why did he write '14' in this box, and then '11' in the next. You know, why? Why did he choose those numbers? And neither of these writers arrive at an answer to that question.

M: Mm. Yes, well, I don't know. I've no inside knowledge of that. In a sense, you can use a system which is a sort of private affair, really. You can generate numbers which appear to be completely random, but using a kind of system of your own, which you don't necessarily have

to divulge. The main thing is to create a sufficient sense of change and variety, and not have the same things happening all the time. It amounts to chance, in the end, in a way. But... I don't know. What are the dates of those graph pieces? they would have been mid-50s...

S: Well, they're in two lots.

M: I think some of them are in the piano collection, aren't they? (reference to the Edition Peters publication).

(M looks at the score)

[Short break]

Yes, I'm looking at these *Intersection* pieces. And the numbers look pretty randomly distributed to me. Although one can pick up patterns, because most of them are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Sometimes 8 and 9 and 11. The number of pitches in each box. I mean, just reading from the top of this page: the first numbers are 6, 2, 3, 5, 4, 1. Which is 1-6 in a different order. So maybe there's a sort of permutational idea of distributing the numbers evenly but randomly. If you call that a system, but... I'd be a little bit sceptical about such kinds of analyses, because, as you say, I think you can prove anything with numerology.

S: (chuckles) Yes. It's quite funny, because this is my most interesting question. Because I'm getting conflicting views. This is the very thing. Some people are finding all kinds of systems, and some people are saying: no, no, he wrote stuff intuitively. Of course, there's some sort of template or framework or something... and this, I think, is going to throw up some interesting stuff for me. Not just the conflict of opinions, but it's quite interesting, isn't it? If you are studying any composer... why did he do it like that?

So, anyway, thank you for that.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Michael Parsons

Question 21

Your music, more so probably than that of Skempton and other composers I am interviewing, seems very diverse. The works are all 'new' music, to my ears, if I can use such a phrase, but there is no overall style that tells me that is the Parsons sound. The same could be said of Cage and Wolff, of course. Is that a fair comment?

M: Well, as I said before, for me each project is a new start. I don't feel obliged to relate it to anything I've done before. Cos I'm not really concerned about stylistic consistency in that sense. Which I think also is a concept derived from the way of classifying historical works. It's a criterion which is derived after the event – from historical ways of constructing the...

S: Yeah, I agree. But I would say that Howard's music has a style to it. And Feldman's music too.

M: Yes, generally speaking. My music is more diverse in that respect. But on the other hand, Philip Thomas, who plays on this new CD, and also wrote a (searches for a leaflet)...

(Some chat about the CD)

I actually thought it was going to be too diverse. I discussed this with Philip. I said: 'Well, there's too much here. It's too diverse. And I'd rather focus it more in one direction.' But Philip insisted it was OK. He sensed the continuity underlying the stylistic differences between pieces.

S: Are they all complete pieces? or some of them bits of a piece?

M: No, they're all complete pieces.

(More chat about Huddersfield)

(reading the leaflet) (Philip) talks about the diversity but at the same time he thinks there's a continuity running through it.

S: (talking about the CD) So there are pieces for piano and different instrumental groups?

M: Yes. There's quite a lot of solo piano music. Because Philip wanted to play the piano pieces. It was originally only supposed to be a single CD, but in the end there was enough music for a double CD.

S: Is that the first CD of music completely by you?

M: No, there's a recording by John Tilbury of piano music, which is all mine.

Question 22

In *Levels* for string quartet, you were seriously restricted as regards compositional options. (One string player had injured their hand). Are such limitations welcome, given that they provide a focus that has been imposed upon one?

S: Does that enable you to focus better?

M: Yes, I think it does. I think one needs some parameters, or guidelines, to get started. There's an interesting passage in Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music (in the Form of Six Lessons)*. Have you ever seen that?

S: No.

M: He talks about being confronted with the idea of freedom – do anything you like. And he says he found this terrifying. The only way he could cope with it was to say "Right, well here we have so many instruments, so many notes – now I'm beginning to feel secure with some sort of guidelines, which I can work with." But the idea of just doing anything you like is totally confusing.

S: We were talking about Wolpe, and in that book I showed you earlier, they have a look at a couple of his pieces which are for three pianos. Well, if he was working in a university, he'd probably *have* three pianos; which they could put together in one room. But I think it's asking for trouble to write a piece for three pianos.

M: Yes, you wouldn't get many performances. Well, that's another consideration from a practical point of view. But if that's the sound he wanted, then OK. I wrote a piece for 20 harps. For a particular occasion.

S: So it *was* played.

M: It *was* played, yes. It was written for a particular harp ensemble. Actually, I was listening to that this morning, as I thought you might be interested to hear a bit of it. Because it is quite Feldman-like.

(More on this piece and the notion of limitations, e.g. resulting from an ensemble that includes people who do not read music; a comparison of notes on this last topic with reference to the Cheltenham Improvisors and the Scratch Orchestra).

Question 23

In *Rhythmic Canons*, of 1998, you write what I think of as minimum input for maximum output. Do you find that there is something very satisfactory about this approach to composition?

S: You can get a massive piece of music out of that.

M: Well, it's generally quite short. The performance is only two or three minutes long. Because each line has to be played only once or twice. Or two or three times, I think it is.

S: And how long would it last?

M: About two or three minutes.

S: What, the whole piece?

M: Mm.

S: Oh, I've misunderstood it then.

M: Yes, it's quite short, but the freedom there – the indeterminacy – consists in the fact that the players choose their own pitches. They just have to follow the rhythm. They're only given a rhythm.

S: Oh, I've misunderstood it. Sorry. I see now, yes.

M: But they begin at different times, so...

S: So they're not synchronised.

M: They're not beginning together, but they are adhering to the same pulse. Or trying to. Sometimes there's a bit of turbulence, because the rhythm...

(More on the duration of this piece)

Question 24

I have read John Tilbury's account of how the Scratch Orchestra got started. What is your take on the origins of that project?

M: Well, it arose out of the Morley College group. Cornelius was working on *The Great Learning* at that time. And he needed more performers. The Morley College group was only

usually about 12 to 15 people. And he needed 40 or 50 people for *The Great Learning*. So we all had to go out and bring in friends and colleagues and students, and any other interested people. And it had to be something that people could learn quickly. And rehearse on the day; and then all get involved in. And I think the Scratch Orchestra grew out of that larger group. Although it became very diverse and volatile, in the sense that it was often not the same people in more than one performance at a time. But it was also fuelled by the fact that a number of us were teaching at art schools. And Cornelius used to visit art schools a lot... and I was teaching in Portsmouth at that time. And students were very interested in the idea of getting involved in something which didn't necessarily involve being a trained musician. There was this huge explosion of interest in performance.

S: So were you involved in the Portsmouth Sinfonia too then?

M: I was, yes. I wasn't one of the founders; it was Gavin Bryars who was one of the founders...

S: And what was the difference between the Portsmouth Sinfonia and the Scratch Orchestra?

M: Well, the Portsmouth Sinfonia only played classical scores – to the best of their ability. It was all based on popular classics. They didn't improvise; they didn't play experimental music, as such. They played classical scores in a very experimental way. As best they could.

S: The Scratch Orchestra did that...

M: The Scratch Orchestra also played popular classics. But that was only one small part of their repertoire. But the Portsmouth Sinfonia devoted itself entirely to classical scores. And behaved like a sort of orchestra.

S: So do you think that the Scratch Orchestra really was an original idea? Or had there been anything in New York similar to that? New York, for example, I mean.

M: Yes, there was a Fluxus orchestra, wasn't there?

S: I don't know anything about that.

M: It was just brought together for one or two performances with George Maciunas and La Monte Young in the early '60s. They used to get musicians together to play mostly Fluxus-type pieces. So that might have been a precedent. But, of course, the other thing to say about the Scratch Orchestra – if you're talking to people who are not familiar with what it was – was that it wasn't really an orchestra at all. I mean, an orchestra is something that has clearly defined sections. You know, a particular kind of instrumentation; the Scratch orchestra had none of that; it was completely anarchic. Any sound resources – not just violins and trombones - the usual orchestral set-up. So the use of the word 'orchestra' was ironic. I think Cornelius used it as a way of just ...an assembly of people which...he called it an orchestra for want of a better word. But it was really a sort of collective.

S: But was it the first ensemble - if I can call it *that* – where...I mean, I can play the piano and I can improvise on the piano. I also have a violin. I know how a violin works, but I can't play it. But I also play that.

M: Mm.

S: So there are two kinds of musicianship here. So was the Scratch Orchestra the first to introduce that idea of people not only playing instruments they were adept at but also instruments that they could produce sounds from but couldn't actually play.

M: Mm. I don't know if there were any precedents, in that respect. If you back to the early part of the 20th century, you might have found some Dadaist groups doing similar things.

S: Oh, I don't know...

M: No, *I* don't. I can't think of anything.

S: OK, thank you.

END

Appendix XI: James Saunders

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

James Saunders. Bath. 15.1.2018.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Questions 1 and 2

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

J: Good question. I think it's an age-related question. I'm 45 now; I was born in 1972. Its first iteration was in the 60s and 70s so a lot of that was before I was alive or aware of (it?). So it's very hard to speak about that first phase outside of the documentary evidence of it: recordings, Michael Nyman's book, articles... And, I suppose, for me as a composer, I started to become active in the late 80s []. And really up until 2001, I would say... I was starting as a composer... a lot of my work was more the other side of the fence: it was a little more fully notated – so moving towards complexity and some of the other strands of new music. And it wasn't really until about 2000, 2001... I went to Ostrava, I had some time with Christian Wolff and Alvin Lucier and some other composers (Phill Niblock)...

S: Where?

J: Ostrava. It's a city in the Czech Republic. They run a biannual summer school there.

S: And you met Christian Wolff?

J: Yeah, I met Christian, Lucier, Block (?), amongst other people, and I'd been thinking more about experimentalism for the previous couple of years, and that for me was a sort of a starting point. And also developing an interest in free improvisation, which is very much part of this world. And I think, for me, it was about recognising it at that point personally, and starting to more explicitly engage with that way of working. And I've not really looked back from that. And so, I suppose, like anything, when you recognise it, you see it everywhere. So I think since then I've been very aware of, obviously, the free improvisation scene, which is linked to composers working in this way. And in the last five or ten years... younger composers working in a more experimental way; whereas perhaps 20 years ago they might have been a little more fully notated... new music. Yeah, so for me... whether there has been a revival is not an easy question to answer, but, if pushed, I'd probably say yes there probably has been.

S: I'm after some younger composers, because I've had talks with quite a lot of the older ones. And Michael Parsons, for example, said it probably disappeared for a while, but it has come back...

J: Yes, exactly. I think Michael's in a position to say that. Whereas, for me, I'm not clear whether I was just unaware of it, or whether it has come back.

S: I understand. I think it has come back. I'm asking a lot of questions I kind of already know the answers to.

J: Yes, that's fine! (laughter)

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

J: Oh, well, I think I've had my fingers burnt a little bit, with trying to pin things down. As a term, now, I kind of try to avoid using it. Because, I think, whilst it does signify certain aspects, you know, trying to find things out through making the work... different relationships with the institutions all the... various other things, it becomes a label which relates it very clearly to other musics. It's the sort of pigeon-holing aspect of that which I find problematic as a term now, without that changing the nature of what a work is.

S: Yes, I think I agree with you, and I think, probably, the term will become defunct. Like 'Baroque' and 'Romantic' have...

J: Exactly.

S: ...because it's beginning to mean less and less, I think.

J: Yes.

S: It's so diverse.

J: Exactly. The meaning has widened so much now that ...

S: And also 'the experimental tradition' always strikes me as an odd collocation.

J: I know...

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

J: Yes. And I suppose, again, that's a conditional 'yes', in that... obviously the early work, particularly, when he was close to Cage and working in that environment, erm, and starting as a composer, some of the notational and structural experiments and tests that he did, are clearly within that world. But, for me, the most interesting work is the later pieces, and the way that, whilst fully notated and fixed on the whole, they are testing something again. They are testing boundaries of perception, and time and audience... memory. There's a sense of 'what if?' being asked through that music.

S: You prefer those late works?

J: Yes. I do.

S: That's good; I've found somebody who agrees with me. Because I prefer them. But quite a lot of composers I've spoken to – the older ones – they grew up with the early works, so they prefer them...

J: Yeah, I love them as well, but I think, if I had to take one lot, it would be the later ones. Because they've had such a powerful impact on me as a composer I think.

S: To be perfectly honest, I wouldn't be doing this if it weren't for the later works. The early works are interesting, but I think the late works are great and... lovely.

(Laughter)

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

S: Yeah, it can be. Absolutely. And I think that's one of the things I find attractive - it doesn't always take itself so seriously. Or there's a self-awareness there about it. And whilst other music can be humorous – there are lots of examples of that, obviously – I think there's an inherent wryness, particularly in British experimental music. You think of Gavin Bryars' earlier work... There's something gently humorous about it, despite the seriousness of intention - the investigation, I suppose. It's not a binary thing: it doesn't have to be one or the other; it can be both. Some of John White's music is uproariously funny, whilst being very clear and specific, and beautiful. It does more than one thing, I think.

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

S: Erm...I would say yes to both of those things. (Pause) Inherently, a lot of experimental music is not elitist, because it's one of the few areas that opens itself up to a wide range of performance skills and backgrounds. So for people who are sensitive to sound and human engagement, and want to work in this way.... there are fewer barriers with a lot of this music to realising it as a group. That's quite important to me. Although, you know, there are some pieces that can only be played by virtuoso musicians. But there are ways of making those so that they can still be played by a mixed range of groups, and, socially, that's important. Whether elitism is a good thing? I think it can be, because it can show us striving for the highest possible level of enquiry in a piece. Sometimes you need - like medicine – you need people who are trained, and really understand what they are doing to practise it.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

Question 7

Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

J: Yeah, absolutely.

Questions 8 and 9

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

J: Yeah, it was the experience in about '95, '96, hearing a lot of his late work for the first time live in Huddersfield. His work was featured, and I experienced a lot of the late pieces in performance; you know, during a week that's quite intensive...

S: When was that?

J: It was mid-1990s. It was a retrospective really... various people who play his music regularly playing lots of the late pieces. And then, I think probably two or three years later I heard *For Philip Guston* live in London with John Tilbury playing piano. I can't remember who the other musicians were.

S: How long did *that* last?

J: That was four and a half hours. And that was a really important formative experience for me. Because at the time the thing I was interested in was duration.

S: You mean overall duration?

J: Yes, the actual length of the piece. And hearing lots of late Feldman and - this must be 1996, I think - because in 1995 I heard a lot of late Nono, which, again is - not *as* long - but some lengthy pieces...

S: Really?

J: Not on the Feldman scale, but pretty long pieces. And I'd been thinking about duration... the thing for me was, as composers, we get drawn to very specific durations. So, you know, I was a young composer, and one of the things was calls for pieces or competitions, and it always said a piece that's eight minutes or ten minutes. There are these set durations, and we get to learn those...to articulate them. I came across a Feldman quote, where he said something like we were all brought up on the 20-25-minute piece.

S: Yes.

J: And that becomes the norm. It's the same with all music... you know, you listen to the radio, and most commercial music tracks are two or three minutes. Because that's what the convention is, and you learn that as a way of working. So the difficult person in me wanted to

look at that and say ‘Well, what happens if it’s not that?’ And Feldman and others were clear models in an extreme way. So I did the opposite and I started to write very, very short pieces. So I spent four years – from 1996 to 2000 – only writing pieces that were under 20 seconds. I felt, you know, they’ve done that end, so what happens when you have that constraint? It was really about the idea of a compositional constraint, and seeing what happens. So in that sense it was experimental. And Feldman talks about scale: once you get to, I think, an hour or 45 minutes plus, and when you start to deal with extremes of duration, you have to think in a very different way. So a piece that last eight seconds – what does the structure become there? The piece finishes within your working memory.

S: Are they conventionally notated?

J: Yeah, these are fully notated. This is more my carefully controlled pieces.

So the parameters...I’m wondering whether any of those? (looking at the list in question 9) ... Well, form and structure. The others: not really at all. The language is very different. Yeah, duration I would say, specifically from that point of view of structure.

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

J: Up until about five or six years ago, I was writing stave-based work, like you’ve got there (indicates scores), and everything would be in English. I just write in the language that really has the most (?) understanding how I think about it. Which is why – apart from dynamics, as you say...but since about 2012 I’ve also been writing lots of text scores anyway, so the people I generally write for know English.

Question 11

In the interviewer’s (my) view, Feldman’s sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

J: Well, there’s individuality there, because I think he’s clearly recognisable; so in that sense ... ‘Unique’ is an interesting word, isn’t it? Erm, yes, he’s unique! In the sense that everybody is, I guess.

S: Well, there are some composers who tell me that they haven’t pursued a consistent path and style. But, then, perhaps nobody does that, because ...I mean, Beethoven didn’t do it either...

J: Yeah...you just kind of drift along, don’t you, really?

S: But when you hear *Durations* or *For Philip Guston*, you’d say that’s fairly typical Feldman.

J: Yes.

S: It could be no one else, perhaps.

J: Yes. Particularly with the later pieces. Or, if someone's working in that way too, the reference point is Feldman. I think, before those pieces, yes, there was nothing like *that*.

(More on the subject of originality in composers)

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

(They laugh about the very short pieces)

J: I think... I tend to be quite focused on a way of working once I find it, so I spent four years writing these very short pieces. Then from 2000 to 2009, roughly, I started to see those as modules within a larger piece, and worked on a singular modular... a composition for nine years, which is called *#[unassigned]*. So there's a kind of a focus there. I think I probably had a couple of years after finishing one project for so long, I tried a few things out; some things worked and some things didn't so well. And then, really, since about 2011/2012 – my focus has really been on behavioural processes and group dynamics, and the way that people work with each other in groups.

S: Yes, I've seen some YouTube things.

J: Yes, exactly. Yes. I don't know. What's unique about it? The obvious answer is I made it. I feel uncomfortable saying it's unique, but I can only say what I'm trying to do...

S: Well, the very short pieces sounds very interesting to me. I can think of a piece by Howard Skempton, which lasts 12 seconds.

J: Yeah, Howard's music is quite short. He's normally a one-to-three-minute composer.

(More on Skempton's music)

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

J: Erm... I wouldn't say painting as such in the same way. For me, the starting point for pieces at the moment is human behaviour, and ways that groups interact. And that happens through observation: you know, just being alive and seeing what people do, and thinking 'Oh, there might be a piece there somewhere'.

(Mention of other non-art disciplines, like psychology, and the current importance of interdisciplinarity)

Question 14

Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

J: Erm...at certain scales of magnification, yes. In that I think a lot of my pieces - if there's one thing that really ties everything I've done for the last 20 years or so – it's the sense that, at a certain level... the pieces do one thing. So the surface might be busy, or chaotic, or changing, or placid, and static, but if you look at the piece as a whole, they tend to be single-idea pieces. The behaviour, or whatever happens in it, is set and continues. And reinvents itself... So, at a remove, they are fairly static pieces. I think of change as being...

S: This may be one descriptor of experimental music: this sort of lack of contrast or rhetoric, and staying with the one thing.

J: Yeah. I think there are lots of pieces that have sudden cuts of material, so extreme contrast is another kind of stasis. You might have a sort of mosaic - John Zorn is a good example of that – a piece that is cutting between styles very quickly, so on the surface it's a very changeable piece but the situation it creates is something that's actually stable...it doesn't change.

S: Oh, that's interesting. Whenever, I hear things like that, I always think how incredibly before his time Charles Ives was.

Question 15

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

J: They have been. But for different reasons. I think there was a certain obsession with quietness around the late 90s, and onwards.

S: On your part?

J: In general, I think. In certain new music scenes. And I think that comes from two places, which are both linked. One is the free improvisation scene, in particular in Berlin and London: there were groups of players who were referred to as the 'new London silence' – I don't know if you have come across that term? So, people like Rhodri Davies, Mark Wastell...that group of players.

S: So, this is the sort of British take on the Wandelweiser scene?

(J explains that Wandelweiser relies on composed music more, while the UK group tends more towards improvisation)

S: But they're still doing that kind of music.

J: Yeah, but (Rhodri Davies) has done quite a lot of noise stuff as well. Anyway, those two things were kind of in the air about the time I was doing this #[unassigned] project. But for me the starting point is not a quietness of attitude, which you find in some Feldman; for me it's about the very specific timbral qualities that are only able to be produced at that dynamic level.

(Demonstrates on a melodica)

So it's very difficult to control the consistency of the sound, so playing with low dynamics creates a certain response, which is unpredictable. So it goes past that level where your

technique as a player has some control over the sound you make. And pushes you to an area where the physical qualities of the instrument take over, or have more of a role.

(More on this)

Question 16

(If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

J: I think when I was making work like that...no, it was very much about the material. It was about exploring sound very much for me at that point.

(More on this)

S: It's just that I think that some experimental music is associated with spirituality, or zen or perhaps a political reaction to the noisy world.

J: No, that's never been the case.

S: OK.

Question 17

Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

J: Well, notation is a meeting point, I think. And it's imbued with so many different forces that the composer places within a score. And the things that people reading the score take away from it. It's a point of translation of an idea, I suppose. And everything that's there has an impact on the way you respond to it. As a composer, I spend all my time - when I'm making final scores - just to adjust little things. Last night I was finishing a piece, and just changing words here and there, because I realised that it was completely the wrong sense of what I wanted people to do. And there's always ambiguity, I would say. You know, however clear you think you've been, whatever music you write, you can't assume that it's unambiguous.

S: Yes. Of course, that's true of old music too. That's why they use the word 'interpretation', I suppose. You can't notate everything dead precisely, even if Boulez tries.

J: Yes. But I think that [] for recent music, performance practice is slowly developing. Performance practices change over time. And I think one of the really interesting challenges at the moment is - you know - in 2018, a lot of this music is nearly 70 years old, and in terms of the original performance...who would have made that work... you know, a lot of the understanding, experience and knowledge is gradually being lost, and... We've got documentation, notes and recordings, but passing on that sense of understanding of what this

music is really crucial, I think. Particularly at a time when archiving and data retrieval are at the centre of everything we do, it's amazing what we are probably losing at the moment.

(More on this)

Question 18

Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

J: Pretty much everything I've done since about 2001 or so has been indeterminate in some way. Again, I think that's a feature...because I like that sense of flexibility – it opens up a space for people who are playing the work to be involved in it. Chance is more of a technique, I think, which - no, I don't really use chance at all, actually. I don't think I ever have. I mean people do...

S: Do you think they still do?

J: (hesitates) ...yeah. I mean I'm thinking about computer-source composition, where you might have random number generation. You know, randomness is built into electronic work. I think, when I am in a situation where I need to generate material in that way, rather than look for chance procedures, I am more likely to look for structural principles. Things like permutations of a set of materials. It's a more integrated way of creating a block of material for me. I can justify that to myself a bit better.

Question 19

In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

J: I'd differentiate between audaciousness and trying to shock. I think, by its nature it's audacious, because it's often attempting to find something out; and that can sometimes be a difficult journey.

S: For the audience?

J: Yes, possibly. For the players; for the composer. For everybody involved in the piece in different ways. But then there are also pieces that deliberately try to play with that, and kind of to shock people. I think that that's less of an attractive quality (chuckles). Something can be shocking through its audaciousness, but I think that if that's its starting point... you know...

S: Yes.

J: People trying to write something that people will talk about... it's not an honesty, I think, there.

S: This question has proven problematic. Because some people – well, like you, I think – distinguish between 'audaciousness' and that kind of 'playfulness', and 'audacity': sort of taking the mick out of the audience, if you like. Which I don't think true artists are interested in.

J: No. Um...it's not so much taking the mickey out of the audience: I think it's more putting the shock value of the work at its heart. So that's the focus of the piece. So trying to be shocking as an end, regardless of how that shock is achieved. I think that's less interesting for me. Something can *be* shocking, but that's a by-product of what the composer or artist is trying to do. And I think that's a very different approach and a different attitude.

(More on this)

Question 20

Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

J: I don't know specifically enough about his compositional approach... Anyway, there are anecdotes, the obvious one being that in the longer pieces he'd tend to start writing and then knock the first five pages off the front, so you get the sense of 'already having begun'. I think he talks about this somewhere. I think, with some of those longer pieces, he would start writing, and then some way into that he would just kind of remove the first however many pages of the score, and they'd just go in the bin. Because the piece had the sense of 'always been going'; so he's trying to remove the sense of having composed...an opening. So you start composing and, intuitively, you are writing beginnings [] gestures...

S: So you mean he's got into his stride...

J: Yes, and you the listener don't have the experience of the piece as having a beginning. It's just always been the same way, almost. It's one of those things that you hear about Feldman...to what extent that's been documented. I'm not sure. But also, things like ruling the bar lines, so that they are all the same. So if you look at the score of some of those late pieces, even though the bars might be in 3/16 and 7/4, they are always the same width. And that grid-like approach is interesting I think as well. A lot of pieces are very intuitive, and not systematic in the rigorous sense. I wouldn't really want to say any more than that.

S: Well, that's fine. And Christopher Hobbs said to me that he couldn't answer that question, because he wasn't a Feldman scholar. Which is fine by me. Because I don't want too much competition anyway (chuckles). But the thing is, there are books on the market that go to town on Feldman's scores, and analyse them and find things which are, frankly, a bit ridiculous, as far as I can see.

J: Yes.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

James Saunders

Question 21

Your scores – some of them – remind me of some of the Wandelweiser Edition scores. Are you associated with that community?

J: Not formally. Just curious: what aspect of them reminds you of them?

S: I already mentioned that these scores reminded me of some Sam Sfirri scores (indicates the Saunders scores to hand). Oh no not these! Sorry... Some of your scores just have ... I don't know what they mean, but they seem like suggestions. Like just a treble clef, a one note and one dynamic marking.

J: Oh, those ones! There was a group of those pieces...

S: Of course, there are no British composers in the Wandelweiser community that I know of. Why?

J: I don't know.

(More on Wandelweiser)

Question 22

There seems to be a community interest in your pieces, which reminds me of Christian Wolff, and, of course, Cage. Is that a fair comparison?

J: Yes, I think so. Christian's music has been very important for me in that respect. I've played *Burdocks* a few times, and other pieces ...and they've left quite a big impression on me. And for me it's a jumping-off point, I think. Like any investigation, something initiates it. And then you find yourself going off in a complete tangent. That's OK! A thing that interests me at the moment is consensus-forming amongst the group; and how that can be achieved through musical activity. I'm also interested in the way that we make associations between sounds and other units of information. And the combination of those as a musical process.

S: This is linked to my last question.

Question 23

Where is experimental music going? Is it an important aspect of your work in Bath?

J: I don't know where it's going, because (it's) an experiment! (laughter) As we said, when we started really, the word for me has so much baggage. It's one I tend to avoid using quite a lot now. But I think the thing it represents - which is a sort of exploratory practice and research that drives that - is absolutely fundamental to what I think composers should do. And that's not to say that writing a fairly traditional pastiche-type film score shouldn't be experimental. You are trying to explore the possibilities of that context. So it's an attitude which I think can usefully underpin all creative activity. I'd be more concerned if it wasn't there (laughs).

S: Do you have experimental music concerts or concerts of your music here?

J: I tend not to perform my music here so much. Because I think imposing it on colleagues and students all the time would be very dull. I do run a research group called Open Scores Lab, which has been going for two years now, and that meets on the first Wednesday of each month. And that is an opportunity to try things out.

(More on this and James's work at the Bath Spa University)

S: OK. Thank you very much.

END

Appendix XII: Howard Skempton

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Howard Skempton. Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. 31.7.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

Question 1

Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

H: There has. I would say since Cornelius Cardew.

S: Yes.

H: Cornelius Cardew in 1958 got in touch with Cage... and, erm, he met Cage in Cologne when he was working with Stockhausen. So, from that point I would say... and then he promoted the work of Cage and Feldman and Christian Wolff.

S: And La Monte Young!

H: Very much so, yes. There's a wonderful *Musical Times* article describing this. And this is in the *Cardew Reader*.

S: Yes, I know. I read it.

H: The Cardew Reader is fantastic.

S: Yes, it *is* good.

H: But you can see that it was Cornelius... and that's why I went to study with Cornelius... because he *was* interested in European music... he worked for Stockhausen, so he knew about Stockhausen, but his main interest was in American music.

S: The answer is yes.

Question 2

If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

H: Yes, because I was... that's why I was studying with Cardew... and, of course, the Scratch and everything else... But, of course, very quickly, and... sort of... between the lines, as it were ... there is... sort of... improvising... I think Cardew... there were other people who were interested. Wilfred Mellers wrote a book called *Music in a New Found Land*. He came back to England and wrote that book. He wrote about Feldman then. Peter Dickinson, another academic, was instrumental too in... he wrote about Feldman and Cage in the 60s. So there were other people doing it, but Cardew was ...

S: ... was crucial.

H: ... was crucial.

S: I think that Cardew is... very, very crucial...

H: Cardew is crucial... and Cardew's students at the Academy... I was studying privately, but Cardew's... I mean, I would see Cardew's students frequently, and we all took part in the first performance of a (work?) of mine.

S: Christopher Hobbs?

H: Christopher Hobbs, who lives in Leicestershire.

S: Yeah, I played with him recently. I played with the South Leicestershire Improvisors. It's on Facebook, but you're not on Facebook.

H: No. He's a very good friend. I have seen him... I do see... Last time I saw him he was at the same concert... was a performance of *In C*, and I suggested that... Because Chris organised in 1968, when he was 17, the first British performance of *In C*. And I've still got a letter from him, with the score.

S: Oh great.

H: ... Hugh Shrapnel ...But Chris is the person to talk to about that.

S: I want to talk to him. And I've met him.

(Talk about the Experimental Music Catalogue)

Question 3

What do you consider to be experimental music?

H: Oh gosh. Every so often that becomes very clear to me. *(Pause)* Well, I think that it's not easily defined, but it really describes a type of music that takes its cue... is influenced by the experimental tradition.

S: You see, the thing is that Cage said... I think... that experimental music is experimental music because you don't know what is going to happen. But I don't think that's right. Somebody else has said that experimental music is music which doesn't adhere to what most people regard as sensible music. So, whether it be pop music or serialism or diatonic music or whatever, it does its own thing.

H: The point is, you know, I fit in in that case. I still regard myself as an experimentalist. And yet, I write choral music. I've done these pieces. I mean, some of these pieces are clearly experimental. Is Feldman experimental in the Cage sense?

S: Well, I'm asking *you* that. That's my next question.

H: I would say that it's music that acknowledges traditions outside the main central European tradition. So, I used to say that, in fact, I feel that it was music that sort of looked away from European music, and drew its strengths from other traditions. And I draw a lot of strength from

European music as well. There's a breadth of view. There are all sorts of things you can say about it. You can say... a lot of American experimental music is jazz music... A lot of it is written by composers for themselves - Nancarrow, for example.

S: Yeah.

H: There's a homespun quality. It's very close to folk music.

S: Yes.

H: All these things you can say about it, so that the concept... If you'd done psychology at Ealing, you would have been taught that you don't necessarily have to define something. What you've got to do, you can... If you've got a... like orange. What is the definition of orange? (Picks up an orange). This is an orange. That's orange. Or something else is orange. And you look at all the other things that are orange. What is the common factor? It's that. It's that colour.

S: Yes.

H: And that's the only way you can describe it.

S: Yes.

H: The concept orange can't be defined. You can only... (run?) through a list of things that *are* orange.

S: OK. That's good. Does the tradition continue to exist?

H: Well, *I* think so, yes.

S: Yes.

H: I think it does. It exists, for example, in the programme Late Junction.

S: OK.

H: ... which I was listening to last night. There was a former student, who had a wonderful... I sent an email to a colleague this morning, who said he'd heard it and I said she's an Anglo-Irish Björk. You know. So that's experimental music.

S: Oh, right. And in fact, more than that, I think, it's become more popular again. Certainly in Cheltenham. I mean we do Wolff, Christian Wolff pieces... and there's the Café Oto in east London.

H: Yes, I've played... I did an accordion recital there in February.

S: Did you?

H: Yes, I mean, not a whole recital. But I was... Again, another student at Birmingham said... Howard, would you like to do a concert... (with?) a concertina player and another accordionist? So it was a sort of three-part concert. And I did the Café Oto twice. So yes, you're right... And Christian's music has become... Philip Thomas played some at...

S: Yes.

H: ... at Huddersfield, with a piece of mine and a piece of Michael Finnissy... You see this is where...

S: When was that? Last year?

H: Two years ago, I think.

S: Yeah, I went there two years ago.

H: It wasn't Christian's 80th...

S: The problem with Huddersfield is that you can't spend an entire week in Huddersfield.

H: That's the last time I went...

S: It is a depressing place but...

H: But that's why people like going there. It's the grimmest place you could possibly go in November.

S: (?)

H: No, no. It's bleak. It's bleak. You know... it's sort of... um (they chuckle) It doesn't make any apologies.

S: (To Jinko) There's a good Chinese restaurant there, though, isn't there?

H: You know... sitting in the warm... eating awful sort of Yorkshire carrots.

Question 4

Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

H: Yes.

S: OK.

Question 5

Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

H: Well, I think one of the things that was refreshing about Cage was that he seemed to re-introduce humour into music. Music was very solemn... you know, Stockhausen and co and Boulez; it was a very grim sort of solemn business, but I think what people misunderstand is that there's a lot of humour in Milton Babbitt, as well,... it's not just experimental music. But Cage, when he first came to Europe, in '54 and then in '58, I think he and Tudor were regarded as clowns.

S: Yes.

H: So, yes, there is...

S: Howard, you are psychic! because my next question is about Milton Babbitt.

H: Right.

S: (jokingly hiding the questionnaire) You can't see?

H: No, I can't see.

S: Because my question is this.

Question 6

Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

H: I think that Babbitt article has been misunderstood. I think there are people who would say that it's... He was actually a very playful character.

S: Right.

H: I think he was making a point.

S: But I am interested in the political idea of elitism. Because, erm, since the Brexit thingy last year...

H: Yeah.

S: The rise of Trump and the rise of populism, it seems to me that Milton Babbitt's article makes sense once more... in other words, erm, is experimental music for everyone, and who cares if it isn't?

H: I think... that there's something in Cardew's character. If you read anything... if you read the instructions to his pieces. There's a wonderful sort of playfulness... wit... paradox is important... a lot of things... paradoxical or contradictory... of course, if you ever watched a Scratch Orchestra concert the orchestra outnumbered the audience. I mean, this is not popular, but it's not elitist. Because it's essentially practical; it's essentially pragmatic, so it's not an ivory tower music. The one thing that Cardew was really hot about was the ivory tower approach.

S: Yes.

H: So it's not elitist in that sense.

S: Yes.

H: And yet Café Oto is not... You know... you're lucky to get an audience of 40 or 50 at Café Oto.

S: Yes.

H: ... lovely to sit down at a table. To go and get a drink. And the concert begins an hour later because they like you to drink. It caught me out. It always catches me out. I turn up at 7.30 and think I'll catch the last train back.

S: Yeah.

H: And, of course, the concerts begin an hour late, because it's a bar...

S: Well, they want to sell their booze.

H: They want to sell their booze, and people... The last concert I went to was a concert of my music. I had to miss the last part.

S: Oh dear. Anyway. That's the end of the first section. The next section is on Morton Feldman. This is a longer section.

H: Good.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

Question 7

Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

H: Oh very much so! I think it would be... the word is disingenuous. Not to acknowledge Feldman's continuing importance.

S: You'd be surprised what other composers have said to that (laughs).

H: I mean, it's clear... *Humming Song*, which is a prototype piece that I wrote before I studied with Cardew, which is in there (indicates the published collection of piano scores), was a response to Feldman's *Piano Three Hands*.

S: OK, I know that piece.

H: Having heard it on the radio – the idea of, erm, I think it was a broadcast performance where Cardew was playing the third hand, but he insisted on playing it on the celeste, which was very interesting.

S: Oh really?

H: So the idea of a third hand as an extra colour.

S: Do you remember you played it (*A Humming Song*) at a Macnaghten concert, I think, somewhere in Paddington? I came with you, and there were lots of pieces... probably about eight pieces... and all the others were serial pieces or something like that, and I sat at the piano with you...

H: Oh... *Humming Song*; yes, that's right.

S: And to this day I have no idea why I was there because there was no page-turning.

H: No, you were just there because I asked you if you would like to go.

S: No but I sat with you.

H: In the front row.

S No, at the piano.

H: No, no, I wasn't playing the piano. There was a chap called... I can't remember the chap's name...

S: No, no.

H: No, I wasn't playing it. No, because it was a terrible performance because he couldn't stop laughing. He started to laugh.

S: No, that's not the one I remember.

H: It was. It was the Macnaghten concert at the Cockpit. You came with me and we sat in the front row, because, I tell you who was there: Olly Knussen.

S: Where's the Cockpit?

H: It was in north London. It was a Macnaghten Concert. I've still got the...

S: Delaware Road?

H: Erm, I can't remember. I can't remember, but I'll tell you who was there...

S: Oliver Knussen. I used to know him.

H: Now this may be why you came, because... well, Olly was there, and I know Olly very well. And I saw Olly just a few weeks ago. And I mentioned you again.

S: Oh right...

H: I said do you remember? He was with [], the singer... He said "Howard and I go back a long way, all the way back." Because he remembers that performance very clearly. He liked the piece very much... Despite... I think it had a lukewarm reception, because the pianist...

S: Did he remember me?

H: Well, he couldn't remember you.

S: No.

H: How did you know him?

S: Well, because we had a mutual friend. They went to school together in the same area of London.

H: He said he only came to that concert because he knew (Jo Lloyd?)...

S: I don't know. Anyway, I have this distinct memory of *you* playing it, and I was sitting next to you.

H: No, I wish I *had* played it, because it was a very embarrassing performance. Because he started laughing, and then other members of the audience started laughing, and it was - everything was right. It's just he couldn't keep a straight face, which made it very difficult for him to hum.

S: I must... just have...

H: ... So... It was embarrass... I stood up... he didn't acknowledge it in the end... and I stood up and took a bow. But Olly was one of the people who came up afterwards and said he liked the piece very much. I was talking to him about *this* (indicates disc CD of the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Only the Sound Remains*), because apparently, he, erm, I have to say, I'm not going to blow my own trumpet, but the Newboulds, who ran the Birmingham

Contemporary Music Group until last year, they played him this disc... a few weeks ago... he was conducting... apparently, he burst into tears.

S: Oh no!

H: Not because it was bad. He was moved by it.

S: And it's very *you*.

H: What is more me and what is more Feldmanesque is the other piece on this.

S: Yes, I have listened to...

H: If you listen to *Only the Sound Remains*, you will hear some very Feldmanesque things.

S: OK, let me ask you the next question.

Questions 8 and 9

If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

H: Right, well, there's a lot. Well, the focus... He said the sound was the experience... so... it's the concern with sound, and colour... the quietness of it. The lack of rhetoric. All these things that I would say about experimental music in general as well. There's a lack of rhetoric.

S: Yes.

H: The other wonderful remark Feldman made, which is in his essay called *The Anxiety of Art*, where he says everything you use to make art is precisely what kills it.

S: Yes. What about actual musical parameters? Do you take anything in from Feldman in the way of melodic gesture, instrumentation, rhythm?

H: Yes, definitely. Well, I mean, the thing is it's the focus on pitch. Pitch is a wonderful thing. He always felt that pitch was... erm...

S: What do you mean by that exactly?

H: Well, the focus on... instead of, erm... This is paradoxical as well. Because I think Cardew talked about... or somebody talked about... maybe it was Cardew... saying that certain composers were more focused on pitch than on rhythm... and so in Feldman we have pitches in a piece like *Durations 2*; or those pieces where players move freely through the score. Each player has a place in the score but they move through...

S: That's right.

H: So-called race-horse form pieces.

S: What are they called?

H: Race-horse.

(Laughter)

H: The *Swallows of Salangan* is like that. So everybody moves together. The conductor just gave the downbeat; then they went their own way. Everybody moves together.

S: You have to rely on your players so much.

H: Well...

S: Not to muck about.

H: Well, you *can* muck about by ... When I rehearsed *The Swallows of Salangan*... I rehearsed it (inaudible but I recall Howard saying he rehearsed the piece with the instrumental groups separate)... five flutes one moment... then I had five trumpets.

S: Oh did you?

H: And then we rehearsed it absolutely together, so, they were all, to begin with anyway, playing in exactly the same tempo, so that when they *did* separate... then we said now we're going to do it separately... they were never very far apart. Because they were already used to playing together.

S: And they were listening to each other.

H: They were listening... It's the listening, which is important, you see. Feldman draws you in; makes you listen. You have enough time... technically, you're not... the demands are not too great.

S: Yes. (To Jinko) Our cats love Feldman, don't they? Whenever I've got...

H There's a new recording of *For Bunita Marcus* that's just been reviewed in *The Guardian*. It's Hamelin.

S: I think I've got it [this is wrong].

H: Well, it's just been reviewed... very favourably in *The Guardian* this morning.

S: Yes. And then the next three questions are about linguistics.

H: Have I answered all of that? (Indicates Question 10).

S: No. But there's a list of... I don't need you to go through it all.

H: Oh yes... I was going to say... I worked as Feldman's editor. Did I tell you that?

S: Mm... No.

H: I worked as his editor.

S: Really?

H: Yes. Oh, there are some wonderful stories. I mean, I worked as Feldman's...

S: Because he was always making mistakes (chuckles).

H: Exactly. Well, there is one particular story about that. Anyway, I'd done some freelance work for Universal Edition. I started in that because I decided to leave Faber after five years. I did some freelance work for Bill (Bill Colleran?), then I went to Boosey and Hawkes. So I carried on doing freelance work for Bill... writing performance instructions for Earle Brown, things like that... And then he said: Would you like to be Morty's editor? And I said Yes I'd love to be. And then he sent me the first score, which is a piece for violin and piano called *Spring of Chosroes*...

S: I know... yeah...

H: (I?) looked at the first page. And I sort of edited it. The first page is the busiest page. He said, he liked this piece to relax. Quite often in Feldman, the piece begins... you know, the texture is quite saturated to begin with, and then it thins out.

S: Yes.

H: And relaxes. You get that with *Piano and String Quartet*... at the end... You get this sort of relaxing. You get a sort of plateau. It happens very much in *Extensions 3*... and space is important...

S: I played *Two Pianos* – with another pianist, obviously – at the City Lit, and that piece, you know it's all kind of dense and plodding through mud, and then it's just repeated patterns, which, of course, are echoed between the two pianists, and then the last half of the piece is this... you know, it's just that kind of extended ending.

H: It's reflected... I don't think it's laziness... it's not just sort of freewheeling...

S: Oh no, no!

H: I think, what happens is, he becomes absorbed in the thing. It's like the rugs he used to collect. You can imagine him, sort of saying, ooh that's great. I've got a book on American art by David Sylvester, where he says the Americans understood, which the British didn't... what the American abstract expressionists understood, which the British abstract painters didn't, was the work has to be arresting... has to... it has to grab you... so you have to say Wow! And you have to be struck by the paint. You have to say, right, this is the painting. That has to be clear too. It's not always clear... So that there's a confidence, and there's a sort of theatricality about those paintings. You go into a room with Rothko paintings and you go Wow! you know. And you're immediately engaged. You *then* go and look at them and you go in close... you look at the handling and you look at everything else, and I think that's what he is doing in those pieces.

S: Yes.

H: But what he said, Spencer, during an early meeting. Oh! I'll tell you about the *Spring of Chosroes*. There are triplets in there, and he takes... He puts the triplets over a bar line, so that you get two-thirds of a beat before the bar and a third after. Sorry, it's very technical (to Jinko?) But anyway, you get two-thirds before the bar line and a third after...

S: Yeah.

H: Now, he then sort of goes into reverse. You have a third of a triplet before the bar and two-thirds afterwards. Or is it the other way round? And I said, this doesn't add up. You've got a third of a triplet too many. And I went away and I worked out... or, you know, I stopped for half an hour.... I think I went away and came back and I said I can't... The only solutions I could come up with are very complicated. He said no, no, they're too complicated. So if you look at the score of *Spring of Chosroes*, there's a footnote saying this doesn't add up.

S: Ah!

H: We know this doesn't add up, but we left...

S: I've got the score!

H: Yeah, well if you look, there's a footnote on the frontpage that says, sorry but this doesn't add up!

S: Marvellous.

H: Well, the point is... Cardew said, Well that's Feldman. And it's interesting that in Feldman's own recording of *Extensions 3*, which I gave away... I gave it to the BBC. I'm very cross about that; they wanted to borrow it, and I haven't seen it again. Spencer, I've given away so many scores. It's always in a good cause, cos otherwise they end up in my cupboard, and I don't look at them.

S: Mm.

H: So if I meet somebody... they're doing a concert... Ian Pace is doing a concert... music from the 50s, and I fish out these early scores, and give them away.

S: There's a famous story about Schoenberg... same thing, isn't it? One of his twelve-note pieces... late pieces... like the fourth string quartet, or something... somebody said there's a wrong note, and Schoenberg said leave it.

H: (laughs)

S: It's like the abstract painters who go away... and when they come back some paint has dripped...

H: Yeah...

S: And then they think, Shall I leave that or shall I do something about it?

H: Well, I remember... probably when we were at Ealing... I've still got a copy of the Webern posthumous piano piece, which I...

S: Which?

H: Webern's posthumous piano piece.

S: Oh yes. I've got a copy of that.

H: I memorised it and I must have played it to you when I was at Ealing.

S: It's quite difficult.

H: And then I analysed it, and there *is* a missing note.

S: (laughs)

H: What he does... he goes though the row over and over again. You know, this is an early experiment in writing 12-note music, and he's missed out a note. Now whether... Maybe that's one of the reasons why it's not published.

S: Oh right!

H: But obviously it doesn't matter. I must say that, as a composer, I never revise. I make sure at every stage of the process that I've got it right. I would never...

S: Would you say...?

H: Let me quickly say something about this... Because when I was working for Feldman... when I was editing, we spent a whole day... we spent a morning trying to get a screw into the back of one of the Victorian (??)... He collected Victorian (sparklers?), as well as rugs. And we were trying to get a screw into the back of the frame, and it broke. So we walked down Finchley Road and found the right screw. Then he bought me lunch. So we lost a morning... anyway, in the afternoon, I think we went through *Violin and Orchestra* which he was working on... a great piece.

S: Yes.

H: I've got a recording of that.

S: I have too, yes.

H: There's one by Isabel Faust, and there's a more recent one which I've got. But when he was there he said: You know the two things that really interest me are rhythm and form. And that really struck me as strange, because I always thought of him as being interested in colour and in pitch.

S: Mm.

H: But then when you think about it, it *is* rhythm and form... Of course, in the later works... he said that to me... thinking about the later pieces... when he was writing *Violin and Orchestra*. We went through the score of *Violin and Orchestra*, and I said, Well, there is... and I knew by then... Gosh, there's so much to say... It's impossible, isn't it? (laughter)... that the technique he was using in the last 10 years of his life... working with a grid. He'd take a page of manuscript paper and he'd draw the bar lines, put in the time signatures, and that was his primary canvas, and he worked page by page, and this new recording of *For Bunita Marcus* - every page is special. It acknowledges the fact that each page was like a canvas.

S: Yes.

H: So you move from one page to the next page. He drew the bar lines... twelve bars... rejigged the time signatures... next page... and so he was thinking very much of form. He started that with *Neither*... If you've read that interview...

S: Yes.

H: He talked about that. He says he was working with a Beckett text, and then he [] into a grid. Now, I think after that he always worked in that way. But when you think about the early

works, what's so interesting is, you've got that grid idea... I mean all those early works are in three-time; they're either in 3/16 or... and there's a pulse... You always have the same pulse: 63 to 66...most of the pieces have that pulse. But, of course, what he did... what he was doing in the later works; even by then... was playing around with these rhythms... these triplets, over the bar line and so on... trying to find, as he said to me...erm,... again I was working with him ... sorry, I didn't make any notes... but he said, I'm trying to find the rhythms that they've got on Mars. But he...

S: It's really about *your* music.

H: Ah!

S: ...what you may have taken.

H: Oh, I see. Well you see the other thing... just saying about why rhythm and why form because, you know, even in the early works... think about the piano pieces... even the sort of race-horse form-type pieces... what he's trying to achieve is a different type of rhythm.

S: Yeah, yeah, I see what you mean.

H: I mean ... (looking at the list in question 10) for me, though, it's the harmony.

S: Dynamics, presumably.

H: Dynamics yes, because, erm... although my default setting is mezzo piano. I mean it's a sort of non-rhetorical... I say mezzo piano is conversational, mezzo forte is with conviction, piano is confidingly... that's the way I would describe it. Especially...

S: But you're dead right about Feldman... the rhythm. That's what it's *all* about, isn't it? It really is. All his pieces are rhythmic.

H: You can't really separate... you see, those jazzy chords... that's what I think... it's almost like jazz. Because if you've got those added note chords... They're not like jazz chords... I mean... He works intuitively. George Russell ... constructivist chords... using his Lydian principle ... You know... George Russell wants to be able to describe every single chord that you can make in music in terms of his theory... Now Feldman worked purely intuitively. To that extent, they were opposites. The thing is, Spencer, if you've got those chords... and I remember doing a little seminar at Birmingham University... I was asked to give a talk, and I mentioned this... I said, if you take those chords... you play those chords... maybe all whole notes like *Piano Piece 1969* [by Skempton]... you've just got semibreves, just got whole notes, but when you play those chords, you *can't* play them on the beat, because they're jazzy. They have to be slightly before, or slightly after. You can't play them absolutely rigid...

S: There's a sort of coolness to them...

H: There's a coolness to them... and the *touch* in Feldman... and the swing... I would call it swing... I mean, it's written in. He quite often writes a note just before a bar line. He's writing the swing into the music. But the chords demand that slight swing. I don't talk about rubato by the way. I talk about the possibility of rubato. It's a sort of latent thing... You've got a row of semibreves... a row of chords which apparently are equally spaced, but the character of the chord...

S: The way I described it in...

H: ... you can't divorce rhythm and pitch...

S: ... I wrote that Feldman writes in the randomness.

H: Yep. Well, I think he... what a lot of people say... that in his late music... he's trying to write in what... he suggested in the earlier music... But he also, quite honestly, wanted to be accepted as a bona fide composer. He was writing for people like Paul Zukofsky, the violinist ... he was writing for these people, and he was giving them something to think about.

S: Right. I want to ask you a question about linguistics now.

H: Yep. Slow progress, but anyway...

Question 10

Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

H: Oh I see what you mean, yes.

S: So, in other words, I was surprised that you wrote a piece called Lento. I would have thought that you'd have called it 'Slow'.

H: I use a lot of Italian.

S: You do? Cos *he* doesn't...

H: No... I... in the early pieces I... when you're young, you're shameless... you just copy... you know, you don't think this is plagiarism, you just copy your heroes. And my hero was Feldman, so I... *Humming Song* says 'As slowly and quietly as possible'. I don't think he actually wrote that... I thought in *Last Pieces* [by Feldman] he put 'as slowly and quietly as possible'. In *Extensions 3*, it just says 'Extremely slowly'.

S: Mm.

H: And I don't think... anyway... English. I suppose it's a way of shaking off the European tradition again.

S: But my concern is that... 'Adagio' is not 'Slow'. If you see what I mean.

H: No. I love the Italian words, because 'Largo' is not very slow. 'Largo' is 'Broad'.

S: No. I'm not talking about measure for measure here. I'm talking about the connotation.

H: Oh yes, it's association. It's like keys, you know. People have said G flat... You know, it's the way the hands lie on the piano keys... G flat's a very good key... or E flat ... it's the way the hands lie on the keys, but it's also the association with Chopin, or whatever.

S: We'd better press on...

H: But it's a very, very subtle quality. If you say Adagio... I mean I love these terms. My favourite tempo is comodo...

S: ... is?

H: Comodo.

S: Which means what? Comfortable?

H: Comfortable (chuckles) It means 'comfortable', but it's also a tempo roughly between adagio and moderato, that sort of thing.

S: But... of course, you know... Debussy wrote French. He doesn't write 'Adagio'; he writes 'Lent'. So it's as if he were starting something completely new.

H: Well, the Germans quite often use German.

S: Yes, they do, that's true, yes. That's true... I know, because I can't understand it half the time.

H: You get 'Ruhig' or something, you know...

S: What's 'Ruhig'? Quick, brisk or something? Or is it peaceful or something?

H: It probably is 'Quick'...

S: If I play Schoenberg, I just go from what I've heard.

H: There's a Schoenberg *Etwas Ruhiger In Austruck*... which became the title of a piece by Donatoni. 'Always quick in the attack'... or something like that. So you may be right. Anyway, let's move on. We could talk about languages for a long time.

Question 11

In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

S: Would you agree with that? Do you think that his music is unique?

H: I think it's his own sound, yes. It's not like Christian Wolff. I was talking to Christian Wolff on Saturday. What these composers have in common, if I can go back briefly to experimental music... there's something that Feldman said to Tom Johnson, which is in this book (indicates *Morton Feldman Says*, ed. Chris Villars). There's a wonderful statement. Tom Johnson was studying with Feldman, and Feldman said: "What we have in music is sound and time, and now I'm not even sure about sound." So it's time – it's rhythm – it's time. And I think that all those composers, they were all interested in the moment. They were all interested in vertical form, as it were. The title of the Feldman pieces... And that's what La Monte is about as well: it's being in the moment. It's a zen idea. Cage's interest in zen is absolutely paramount, and Feldman... not in a zen way... has sort of... Tudor, as well, was interested in that. I mean, Tudor could play the scores he played with Stockhausen... by being absolutely in the moment, I think. Extraordinarily quick...

S: Mm. Of course, this is the controversial thing. Because people will say, well, that's the opposite of what music is. Music is a time-oriented art. It has a beginning, middle and an end. So you can't write something that progresses, and yet focus on... you know... that moment in time as being divorced from...

H: Well, Christian's music comes closest to it. What is interesting is that it is a question of where you focus. It does happen in time, but it's a question of whether you are thinking...

S: Whether you're anticipating something or...

H: Yes, whether you're planning ahead or whether you're just... Feldman said that his technique... he didn't have... and technique is something else... that's very interesting ... technique is how you approach your work ... it's like [] technique is what Feldman was doing when he was drawing those bar lines. How do you approach your work? That's your technique, and that's very personal to you.

S: But, anyway, there's a kind of uniqueness to Feldman's music, but is there a uniqueness to yours?

H: What I was going to say was that Feldman said that he doesn't have a method for composing. His approach is purely intuitive, and the reason is... because he's focused very much... he maintains a level of concentration, and it's that level of concentration that gives the music its immediacy; but also, because there's a consistent level of concentration through the piece, there's also coherence.

S: Yes.

H: Inevitably. How do we live our lives? We live our lives from moment to moment; and yet, when we look back... Somebody said this on the radio the other day... We look back, and we see the same thing happening every day. We see that our lives have a sort of form. That from day to day, there are routines. Obviously, there are things we *don't* think about. We do them as a matter of course. Like getting up in the morning, cleaning our teeth and getting dressed... We are not focussing on (them?) necessarily... Although, if you're like me, you have to... Or otherwise, you know. You might go out without your trousers.

S: (laughs)

H: You know... if you're thinking about music... I think that it's a question of what are the things you control and focus on, and what... you know, obviously, the beauty of music is that it's the two things... it happens in time, but it's also... it's a certain time as well... it plays with time. And it can, erm... so the experience of time is not the experience you have in everyday life.

Question 12

Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

H: Oh, well, as I say, I did a lecture on form with footnotes the other day, and I quoted from the writer Primo Levi about this. He sort of said it's the way you overcome obstacles that reveals your individuality. And I always tell students that, because then you don't worry about

individuality, cos you are going to be faced with problems, and it's the way you overcome them... and he's talking about rhyme, you see. But any sort of problem you create for yourself... erm. I think that reveals your originality. I think melody... but then melody is... you know, all composers are interested in... Feldman is *very* interested in melody... I suppose it's... What is it, Spencer? I don't know. I think it's, erm... I think that an interest in... an acceptance of popular idioms... vernacular. I mean, the Beatles are very...

S: OK.

H: So what Feldman *didn't* have was that... I mean, I play the accordion... so what interested me... the accordion didn't become a sound-producing box to me... I started to play tunes. And so playing the accordion released an interest in simple melody. So it's simple materials. Arnold Whittall in his piece (gets *Gramophone* magazine)...

(Chat about coffee and tea, etc.)

S: Howard, I've stopped taking the *Gramophone*, because I'm fed up reading about Mendelsohn all the time (guffaws).

H: I only bought it because I'm in it.

S: (To Jinko) He's featured as the British composer...

H: I can't find it... There's a very nice review.

S: Which month?

H: Last month. But no, but he says here... something about the chords... it's the... quoted in the current *Gramophone*... the review... It's the thing about familiarity and unpredictability. I think that, for me, it's... The question is really ... Do you really want a one-word answer or a simple answer?

S: No. I don't really expect any simple answers to anything. I think the popular idiom thing is quite an interesting one. Yes.

H: I've got to do these responses now for Wells [Cathedral, presumably]... I will work with, erm... I think I am very interested in the play between the familiar and the strange. So I like taking familiar materials, but I'm not happy unless it's strange... you know, strangeness is a criterion... Strangeness I associate strangeness with beauty, which I associate with truth.

S: OK.

H: It's the strangeness that's important, but I use very familiar elements. On the whole, I would say I would say I use familiar elements in music. Feldman doesn't do that. He goes for these very exotic chords. Feldman, in a sense, is a modernist. I mean it comes from modernism, and he stays with...

S: Well, it's very dissonant...

H: ... so... it's taking its cue from Varèse... it's sort of an abstract expressionism... it's modernist. Brancusi is very important to me, you see. So in terms of time, it's the balance in Brancusi between the...

S: Balance between what, sorry?

H: In Brancusi's sculpture, between ... if you know the Brancusi...

S: No.

H: Well, these are little works. I've got photographs upstairs. But I mean it's Mondrian, Brancusi and Giacometti... three 20th century artists. Brancusi's work is very small, defined shapes... but he says that the surfaces should suggest the infinite... So it's... the openness... So I like the idea of small works like *Humming Song*, which are also very open. Timeless. Michael Nyman... put it... minimalist works don't have to be long. So I write these tiny little pieces, but they suggest endlessness. So it's that... against the familiar and the strange, and it's the immediate and the open as well. I think that's pretty good.

S: OK, that's good.

H: So you've got time and sound.

S: All right. The next question is about art... abstract art.

H: Oh yes. We keep going round in circles! (chuckles).

Question 13

Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

H: Very much so! But I think, for a time in the 70s I was working with Michael Parsons. Constructivism was important... but, er, the artists I've mentioned... particularly Brancusi... thanks to Michael Parsons who wrote... in an article in (?) magazine...

S: How do you spell that name?

H: B-R-A-N-C-U-S-I. Brancusi. He was a Romanian who ended up in Paris. And his studio has been preserved. You can't actually go into it: you can see it. You can look through the windows to all his work. I think it's next to the Pompidou Centre, in Paris. So it's interesting because, he also said that beauty is absolute balance, which I like. My mother was an artist... was particularly interested in art; so I grew up with art books around me. And my elder brother became an architect, but there were always original paintings on the wall, and so on. So the visual arts were very important. So I grew up with that. That was one of the reasons...

S: But you're obviously interested in literature too.

H: Erm... poetry. Very much.

S: Poetry. Which Feldman, I don't think... he doesn't mention much in the way of literature...

H: Except that Frank o' Hara was a very good friend of his. He's a poet.

S: Yes. There is a bit.

H: There is a bit. When I say I'm interested in poetry... If I go to an exhibition, I get a lot out of it. I don't read a lot. I have a large library of books of poetry because that's because I'm setting... I like books of poetry...

S: So you browse through them to...

H: I browse through them... I will skip through them, find a poem and then I'll set it. I've got lots of anthologies: the Norton Anthology, the Best Poems of the English Language Harold Bloom, The New Oxford Book of English Verse. So lots of books... a book of 17th century verse, which my wife inherited... including her Fowler Modern English Usage. Both her parents were English teachers.

S: Yeah... being a linguist, we don't look at things like that.

H: But Fowler is actually very subversive.

S: Really?

H: Oh yes. He has no time for pedantry.

S: Oh right.

H: It's a good read. It's almost a Desert Island book.

S: Can I ask the next question?

H: Yeah.

Question 14

Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

S: (regarding the first part of the question). Do you think that's right?

H: Absolutely; I think that's right.

S: Do you have a quest for stasis? (chuckles). Do you like that notion? I was thinking of "like a painted ship upon a painted ocean".

H: Oh yes... erm.

S: (humorously) That's right up your street that poem.

H: [] something I said last year [] I said all music worth listening to, even when slow or contemplative, is marked or coloured by a sense of urgency.

S: Say again?

H: All music worth listening to, even when slow or contemplative, is marked or coloured by a sense of urgency. You can have music that is almost static, but in Feldman there's movement. When he's talking about... he's talked about Beckett... Feldman doesn't hang about. A lot of modernist mainstream music is mind-numbingly static, so it's a question of what do you mean by stasis? This is the paradox. Music is full of paradoxes. If you focus... if you try and create something still... there's an underlying pulse. There's always an underlying pulse in Feldman. And it's about 63 to 66. It's a sort of pulse. I talked about *For Bunita Marcus* to a group of choreographers once. Gosh! What a long life! All these things... I keep thinking... When was that?... We were doing *Rothko Chapel*, and I played the opening of *For Bunita Marcus*, and I

walked backwards and forwards across the room, and suddenly the music started to... clicked into... There's an underlying pulse, and, of course, but the point is... the music – the beat - is going away from the pulse... it's trying to get away from the pulse.

S: Yeah. It's like the Ligeti, where he has the 50-part canon, or whatever it is, so there's complete movement, but it sounds static.

H: But the point is that Feldman never... you never get that sense of, again, how it's made. You don't get that awful sense, that deadening sense of cleverness, of vanity... you know... look at me, aren't I clever? You don't get that with Feldman.

S: No. I know what you mean. Well, I think I know what you mean.

H: So, with stasis... yes. How do you get that sense, without a sense of forward movement? How can you appreciate stillness without a sense of forward movement? Sorry, that's a paradox again... as in *Extensions 3*, you get those F sharps... you appreciate the stillness... which is unprecedented.

S: But I think all these things you've said about pitch versus rhythm and stasis versus an underlying (forward?) movement. This is why Feldman is such a marvellous composer.

H: It's hovering... it's floating...

S: Because he... it's not exactly that it's full of contradictions. It's that he can do all this stuff at the same time... Things that seem contradictory.

H: Yes, well again... it's finding that point of balance between... I think the crucial thing... talking in general terms about Feldman now, but I think that's useful. You know, it's subtle adjustments which he's making, which are so interesting. The music is *so* much about that... making these subtle adjustments, and that's what Feldman does.

Questions 15 and 16

Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

(If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

H: There's a couple of things. I did a (?) contribution called *On Feldman*... four-line verse, but it's a whole page.

S: Where?

H: It's in *Tempo* magazine. A couple of years ago. It just says: 'On Feldman. Each measure is its own formula.' That's the entire article! But before that I gave a talk, and I talked about Feldman; I talked about quietness... or listening... it was a little piece which they printed on the future of art music. And I talked about the importance of listening. And I said, really, we've got to listen. And someone in the audience picked up on... it's not a political point... but in encouraging people to listen there's a sort of promotion, of what? modesty? I don't know.

S: It's not a reaction to the noisy world?

H: If you encourage people to listen, then you're promoting empathy. The world would be a more peaceful place if people listened. I'd say.

S: All right. That's nice.

Question 17

Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

S: Even Cardew writing about this piano piece for three hands: you are presented with a score, the like of which you have never seen before. What is this? This is not how I've learnt to read music.

H: Yes. You get puzzling things. It was Cardew who... when I noticed a mistake in Feldman.

S: Because your music is easy to read. I haven't found any scores of yours where I thought I don't understand what that means.

H: Well, again, Cardew said... I think presentation's very important. He took me to task immediately. He wasn't going to tell me *what* to write, but he said you've really got to... presentation's important, because you are dealing with professionals.

S: OK.

H: It's insulting to present things in a sloppy way. So I try and do things clearly. But also, my scores are clear because every note counts.

S: OK. You also like writing the notes, don't you?

H: I still write by hand.

S: But you enjoy actually doing it.

H: Well, there are an awful lot of notes in the sequel to this (indicates CD of the Rime?) which was done last week. It's 30 minutes... Six players, and there are a lot of notes in that. It's a Lawrence poem. It's a more active piece. It's about a man and a bat... It becomes...

S: A bit of a chore.

H: You know, I was writing over a thousand notes a day in sketch draft, then fair copy, and then scanning the fair copy.

S: Hard work.

H: Very laborious. But what I do enjoy... I like the idea... if you are writing a sound, there is something palpable about that note.

S: Yes.

H: You are actually having to write that dot... that sound. There's a sort of physical... well, palpable is a good word. It's a word Michael Parsons liked. It has a sort of concrete (presence?)...

S: OK.

Question 18

Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

H: I used chance. Early on yes. This is something that I don't think other people... this is maybe a distinctive thing, that from the very beginning... I used chance to control those things that weren't important. That's my view of chance. Whereas Cage... though Cage did that as well. Because I think he wanted to neutralise everything. *Music of Changes*, for example, where everything is controlled through the tossing of coins. In *Variations I* you've got lines and you've got dots. It seems as if he's trying to control everything.

S: So, for example, in *September Song*, as far as I remember you've got three...

H: ... just three notes.

S: Three notes. And it's not important as to how they fall out in sequence.

H: The sequence is not important.

S: OK. I get that.

H: But on the other hand, what is interesting... because I thought, well, it's like going into a gallery... you're free when you go into a gallery to go to any painting. Or if you've got a sculpture you can go round and look at it from that side. So it comes from Earle Brown's mobiles. But I'm not giving somebody a mobile... I'm actually fixing...

S: Yes.

H: But there's still that sense of openness. So we've got the immediacy of the chord (?), and we've also got the openness that chance gives us. But I would say, again, it's the balance of that immediacy, which is the sound. I was really focusing on the sound. Outside time. So you've got the balance between the immediacy of the sound and the openness. The sort of endlessness quality of... and yet it is defined... it becomes an object... And I'm fascinated by that. When I look at a piece like *September Song* or *Humming Song*, I'm actually quite interested by the patterns within the piece. It's almost like picking up a pebble. Sciarrino talked about it. If you pick up a pebble, it's a unique thing... it's a distinct thing. But it's also completely naturally formed. So chance is important. But I don't use chance now.

S: No. I didn't think you did.

H: And I don't think Feldman uses chance.

S: It seems that he probably didn't.

H: Because the richness of the music is the richness of the decision. You know, if you've got to make a decision about... the concentration that's required for that... which note are you...?

S: My last question is about audaciousness – not audacity – but audaciousness.

H: That's very good. You're very good.

Question 19

In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

H: I think it's *very* important. Yes, I mentioned what the writer David Sylvester said about abstract expressionism. It's that sense of being arrested. I mean, I remember the first time I ever gave a talk at the Birmingham Conservatoire, I had all these students in front of me and the first thing I said was 'We should all be arrested'.

(Laughter)

Meaning, we should all be *arrested*, you know...

S: Yes.

H: And what *he's* saying is we live in...we have our own imagination, and so on... I think this is the idea. That you live in your own thoughts and daydreams and everything else. And what a work of art is – it sort of snaps its fingers, as a primary school teacher would say: Come on, show attention. So there's that sense of drama... you do that... so that there's a sort of theatrical... As composers, what we want to do most, we really want to surprise ourselves, you know, surprise all the time, and if you're not surprised at something, you... So that when you are working through a piece, you think, well I need to do something different at this point. It's a challenge. Cardew used to say, well, Cage is important because it's a challenge. But why do we need a challenge? Cage said that Feldman's early music was heroic. That sort of heroic element. Whereas the later work was erotic. He was writing in 1960 – this was *Silence*. When he did his 'Lecture on Something' he said that... I think Feldman *is* heroic. I think that doing those things... interestingly in *Piano Piece 1952*, those notes are dotted crotchets, I think.

S: So it kind of swings...

H: You've already got that Viennese lilt in there. But he could just put dots. But he doesn't. He puts dotted notes, doesn't he? In *Piano Piece 1952* those are dotted notes.

S: They're dotted quavers, yes.

H: But they're dotted. Why are they dotted? They're dotted, because it gives the notes a sort of lift, but they're all the same ... so they don't need to be dotted but they do need to be dotted... because what?

S: Well, this is it. Yeah.

H: Because all the other music he was writing at that time tended to be three in a bar.

S: That's right. 3/8 and stuff.

H: Because the thing about three in a bar is it takes you away from the march, which is what...

S: That's right.

H: It means that the music is already floating. Three in a bar. It makes it easier for him to get away from the past because...

S: There's a lot of music by Vaughan Williams, for example, which uses 6/4 or 3/2.

H: Yes. I've got a problem with Vaughan Williams. I think it plods, though. It's very much to do with word setting...

S: Plods.

H: It goes (sings)... All English music is Greensleeves.

S: Well, I give a talk on Holst and Vaughan Williams, and I came up – this is interesting – I came up with the 'Holstian plod' (sings a plod). It's a way to drive the music forward, but it does plod on. But what I like about Holst is that it's a plod through an alien landscape quite often.

H: I worked with Imogen Holst for three years.

S: Did you?

H: I've got a manuscript of Imogen's upstairs. I've got scores, cos I saw her just a few months before she died. Extraordinary. I was Feldman's editor, and as soon as I stopped being Feldman's editor I started working for Imogen Holst.

S: Really?

H: Because of the Aldeburgh connection.

S: We live around the corner from Holst's house (chuckles).

H: We were in Aldeburgh. Britten was a Mahler buff... he loved Mahler. My old friend Donald Mitchell loved Mahler. Lots of good friends loved Mahler. She gave me a miniature score of Shostakovich's Fifth Quartet. And it's inscribed with my name. I'll show it to you. (goes off and returns). Here you are.

S: Oh! Good heavens.

H: So that was a present. That's a present from Imogen Holst.

S: I *like* Shostakovich's string quartets.

H: Well, the point is... (to Jinko) cos we were talking about Shostakovich, so she gave me that. Mind you, she died about six months later, you see. So she was obviously passing stuff on. But she gave me that. We were talking about Shostakovich and she leant forward and she said (whispers) "Howard, do you know something?" And I swear that she looked over her shoulder, and she said, "I don't really like Mahler." It's extraordinary because, you know, we talked about Shostakovich, and we were talking about comparing Shostakovich and Mahler, and then she said this, and I thought it was so funny because it was exactly *my* reaction, as well.

S: And mine. I can't *stand* Mahler. Except *Kindertotenlieder*.

H: Well, the songs are different.

S: The songs are different.

H: But... he was Cardew's favourite composer.

S: I can't believe it.

H: Stockhausen loved him and, er... Feldman, as well. Well, Feldman's more Schoenberg.

S: I can't imagine Feldman liking Mahler except that... you know, he liked Jewish composers.

H: Shostakovich is very important, because if you listen to *Only the Sound Remains*, there are hints of Shostakovich...

S: OK.

H: I think Shostakovich's use of this harmonic language again... this nine-note mode sort of chromaticism...

S: And if you don't know it, listen to the Viola Sonata.

H: Yes.

S: It's absolutely incredible.

H: Yes. The violin sonata.

S: I'll ask you some questions on Howard Skempton.

H: These will be very briefly answered.

S: OK.

(Question 20

Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?) (Question not asked, but the subject had already been covered).

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Howard Skempton

Question 21

Rebelliousness. You have referred to the notion of rebelliousness in music, and I have used the term audacious. In the CD liner notes to African Melody Song you say that it is ‘startlingly brief’ (at just 12 seconds).

Is there a link between these terms, do you think?

Are you a rebel? If so, what drives you? (Is it politics, for example?)

H: Again, it would be disingenuous of me to say that I am not rebellious. To have done what I’ve done suggests that I was... there’s a sort of Satiesque... it’s like Satie. I always had short hair. I never had long hair.

S: You were very unfashionable.

H: I used to wear a jacket.

S: I had hair down here (indicates shoulders).

H: I had a sports jacket and a tie. I always wore a tie. I still...

S: Drip-dry shirts I seem to remember (chuckles).

H: Non-iron sort of shirts (laughter). Even now I wear a tie and a dark jacket. I look a bit cooler now... even then that was cool. John White and I... John was 80 last year... we were interviewed, and he remembers me wearing a jacket with short hair. And he said he wore a three-piece suit.

S: Cardew looked like some old hippie, didn’t he? In some respects. He was very good looking, but he looked like some kind of groovy character.

H: We used to call it the beat generation. But it was a sports... sort of tweed jacket... and a long, black coat... a French coat. And he would let his hair grow very long, and then he would have it cut very, very short. So he didn’t have long and flowing hair.

S: No, he didn’t. But he had a rather groovy haircut.

H: He had a groovy haircut, and then he had it shorn...

S: Yeah, and I always remember, you know when he used to come to college (Ealing Tech now University of West London), which he did two or three times, and he always had this entourage, and these rather lovely looking women.

H: Oh yes, well the biography talks about his women.

S: Yeah.

H: But his wife, Stella, is still alive, I think. She was very quietly spoken... extraordinary voice.

S: OK.

H: I do accept that but, on the other hand, it’s paradoxical. I’m now doing all this... it’s something slightly subversive. I do acknowledge that... You know, I’m an experimentalist, and here I’m writing church music. Isn’t that subversive?

S: Well, we have a friend in Herefordshire who we know from walking... from when we lived there. And one day she started talking about Philip Glass. Which in Herefordshire... it was

usually... you're talking about Tesco's or what happened in church... And I said, oh yeah? And then, she said to me one day "Oh, I heard a lovely piece on the radio the other day by someone called Howard Skempton." Well, I said blah, blah, blah... And we are very good friends, aren't we? (to Jinko). And I said I was going to see you, and she said, well, give him my best (H chuckles)... But, the thing is... exactly, how have you managed this? Rebellious, experimental, acceptable, very busy, loads of commissions, loads of people like you, and I have never read a bad review. ...apart from the bloke who laughed at *Humming Song*! (laughs).

H: Oh yes.

S: So you've trod quite a clever path in a way. I don't mean that you set out to be commercial. You've just kind of hit the right... chord!

H: No, when Arnold Whittall... he talks about accessibility and unpredictability... those two things... I mean, I want to communicate...

S: Do you?

H: I still present (?) that I should be unexpected for the students, you know I present... it's almost music hall... look, you and I did those Scottish songs in the Purcell Room. Wasn't that music hall? People were throwing darts at us.

S: They were throwing flowers.

H: Paper darts. I remember catching a paper dart.

S: Ah! These were the hippie days.

H: Yes.

S: People were wearing floral shirts.

H: We were singing Scottish folk songs as part of a [] arranged by Beethoven. Except that we sort of rearranged them for reed organ and you were playing the piano part, if I remember. So it's that idea of... almost... of a music that is.. almost like folk music, but it's natural... it's not driven by commercial considerations. And Cardew said all great art was explicit. He said that once in a journal - it's in John's (John Tilbury) book. I grew up in Merseyside, you see, it's this thing about... erm... a sort of enthusiasm or, you know, the wish to communicate, and to be fun, and all those things. But at the same time... I mean what do you want of music if music is your whole life? You want it to entertain you; you want it to surprise you. You want it also to be addressing serious questions. And bringing people together and making them collaborate in interesting ways.

S: Well, I think it's more than that as well, because Feldman... he used to say, I think, that things kind of worked... it was good... The sound was good... or pieces that did not come off... the sound wasn't 'good'. What is 'good'? I think I know what he means, but does anybody else?

H: He's very amusing... in a self-deprecating way, he said "Well, how can I help it if I do things so well?"

(Laughter)

“Well, people say to me, my pieces are getting glamorous.” I wish I had the New York accent. (imitates Feldman) ‘My *woik* is getting glamorous!’... you know.

S: I saw him do a talk... he had a *marvellous* voice...

H: A Brooklyn accent. Very softly spoken initially...

S: I’ve got just three more questions.

H: Yes.

Question 22

Englishness/Britishness. It may be just my fancy, but Feldman sounds American to me (there’s some Ives in there, for example). On the other hand, Cardew’s (fully or partially notated) music has a cool, Nordic (or at least northern) quality to it, and so does yours, I believe. I also hear Holst, and you have mentioned Britten. Furthermore, I have the impression that the texts you set are mainly in English.

Can you comment on this? Are you an ‘English/British’ composer?

H: Yes. I mean probably that’s another reason why the *choral* music has been popular. And *Lento* was popular.

S: Yes.

H: One critic said that *Lento* was like the *Tallis Fantasia for Strings* re-orchestrated by Satie.

S: *Lento* is in my next question, but...

H: But let’s hope we are ambivalent to Englishness, you know. Because otherwise it becomes nationalist. What I like about England... I quite like the weather. The weather is interesting, cos it never stays the same for long. OK. And the landscape is interesting, because it’s full of twists and turns. No road is straight... they always go round and round... you’ve got green fields, you’ve got trees... Warwickshire is beautiful. There’s trees... it’s a leafy county. And then you’ve got the language. And the language is not like Finnish... where you’ve got about 22 tenses... (S laughs). You know all about this... all these different... English is... quite an easy language to learn, but then you know... every word can have a subtle... it’s the flexibility of English, which is...

S: What English is, it’s an easy language to learn badly. And because it doesn’t have the grammatical complications that other Indo-European languages... but as an Italian student of mine said to me... he said, “I thought English was easy at first, but then I realised it just gets more and more difficult.” Until it becomes impossible... There’s a kind of finiteness to German and Italian... all this does come to an end... but English never comes to an end. It keeps reinventing itself.

H: It’s flexible and...

S: And also it’s a bastardised lexis, so it’s... we’ve got two words for everything. Almost every concept. You know, one from the south and one from the north.

H: Oh yes.

S: You know, like ‘book’/‘library’ – a simple example. And so it has this wealth which other languages don’t have.

H: Yes. I suppose that’s why I like setting English poetry. Because you can hint at the various... the richness... the meaning...

S: Yes.

H: Even a word like ‘desire’. ... in my Song of Songs setting. I’ve got a new CD, which actually arrived after this (cannot tell what ‘this’ refers to)... er, with Song of Songs settings... that’s King James Bible. But the great thing is if you are setting Edward Thomas or... erm, there is a richness to the language.

S: Although it’s prosaic as well, isn’t it? I did Spanish at college, and we did the poems of Lorca and... the famous Castilian poet whose name I can’t remember [Antonio Machado], and, you know, you’ll get three words: ‘pozo’, which means ‘well’; ‘plaza’, which means ‘square’; ‘agua’, which means ‘water’, as you know, and so on. And he’ll just write three words, and if you write a poem with those English words, it reads like a shopping list.

H: It’s dead. But there again, I’ve just set Lawrence. I just set a poem called *Man and Bat* by Lawrence. And somebody said: What does he mean by ‘neurasthenic lunge’? I set the word ‘neurasthenic’, you know. I do know what ‘neurasthenic’ means but I can’t define it. It’s a sort of nervous ...neural?... a sort of involuntary lunge? So you sort of home in on the meaning, but you... there again, Lawrence had those words... I mean all these funny words you get in Lawrence... Yes, that’s why it can take quite a long time to find the right poem, because you want something you can get your teeth into. I have set American poetry, which is slightly more...

S: All right. Two more questions...

H: I don’t think I’ve answered that very clearly, have I?

S: It doesn’t matter. Right, the next question is about Sibelius.

H: By which I hope you mean the composer!

S: Yes.

Question 23

Sibelius. Feldman is known to have been something of a Sibelian. There is even a theory extant that Feldman’s *Five Planos* is (partly) based on a note series from Sibelius’ Fourth Symphony. When I hear *Lento*, I hear Sibelius: the chorale-like sequences, the succession of mournful triads, once again a kind of northern soundscape, tympani rumbling like distant thunder – all Sibelian traits.

Is this purely fanciful, in your opinion?

If not, tell me about your musical relationship with the music of Sibelius (not a composer you normally mention as someone you admire).

H: (interrupts) I am reminded of what *you* said. I've quoted you many times, Spencer. Because you said you thought... you said, when you were around 20, that you thought that Sibelius and Feldman were very close.

S: Yes.

H: Even then.

S: I still think so. (Continues with question)

H: What I do know is that *For Philip Guston*, which is a late work, uses ... there's a theme running right through that, which I think is related to a theme in the Fourth Symphony. The point is, I think he and Takemitsu were having supper with somebody, and this music was playing, and they wanted to hear through to the end of the work. Now the big theme in the Fourth Symphony is (sings) ...and it sort of goes C, G, A flat, E flat, something like that... and those are the notes he uses in *For Philip Guston*. Nobody else has said that, but I definitely think... if you listen to that theme, you can hear that... but then it's only four notes. And also it's related to the sort of mode I've been talking about.

S: But what about *Lento*?

H: *Lento* is very Sibelian.

S: Ah, thank you! Because we put on *Lento*. Jinko doesn't know which one *Lento* is. But... (to Jinko) you immediately said it sounds like Sibelius.

H: Very, very good. I'll tell you why that's very good. My friend Colin Matthews... I have the score... He said "Howard, *you'll* enjoy this." *The Swan of Tuonela*. And I looked at this, and I was thinking about *Lento*. And here is a piece lasting about, what? 12 minutes or something. And it's 16 pages.

S: It's a four-movement work.

H: It's one of the *Legends*.

S: That's right, yeah.

H: But... Here it is. I stole the idea of violins being divided in four... and that's exactly what I stole from Sibelius. Cos I wanted that sort of texture. The other thing I stole... I wasn't aware of this until quite recently. I really thought... you know, I talk about it in the programme following the *Parsifal* Prelude. I talk about that and... I talk about other things... but also Andante Molto Sostenuto. At the top of the score of *Lento* it says Andante Molto Sostenuto, so I borrowed that. There's a cor anglais solo, of course, in *The Swan*.

S: Yes. That's right, yes.

H: Well, there is in *Lento*. It's the only solo instrument.

S: Is it cor anglais? Because I've written 'chorale-like sequences' - and Sibelius is full of chorales - a 'succession of mournful triads' - perhaps that's not right; 'once again a kind of northern soundscape'.

H: The triads are very much me.

S: These are all Sibelian things... and the tympani rumbling like distant thunder.

H: Well, that's very Sibelian, and I've used that in an earlier piece called '*Chorales*'. But it was after that that Colin gave me the score. No, the thing about divided violins, divided strings... In the first performance I had... I mean, you normally have about 60 strings. It's unbelievable in an orchestra, cos you have... if you think about it... the normal string complement is eight seven six five four, which adds up to 30 I think. So you have 60 string players. I had an extra desk of second violins. I had all these violins, and they were placed left and right, for the first performance. Because they were doing Mahler's Tenth (laughter)... I am always being paired with Mahler. The previous work, called *Chorales*, was before *Lied von der Erde*... so I got used to this. Then we had a Wagner piece beforehand. I was getting sandwiched between Wagner and Mahler all the time. I was becoming typecast. I was the filling, you know. If you've got a concert with Wagner and Mahler then you put Skempton... No, seriously...

S: (laughs) It's a bit Wagnerian, *Lento*, too. You actually talk about *Parsifal*.

H: Yes. That's because I knew in advance that the concert was going to start with the Parsifal Prelude, so I got a recording of the *Parsifal* Prelude, and I... the fact that it begins in G... it begins in G because I thought... I wanted *Lento* to follow the Parsifal seamlessly. So I wanted to sustain the tone of the *Parsifal*. I used exactly the same instrumentation as *Parsifal*. Exactly the same. So nobody was walking on and off between the pieces. So the band was there. And the other thing was... *Parsifal* begins almost like *The Blue Danube* (sings)... so maybe triads came in there, but I had already been working with major and minor chords... that's the accordion. That's what I got from my accordion.

S: Yeah.

H: And also I'd written some settings of Mary Webb, which is just triadic...

S: ...of?

H; ... of a writer called Mary Webb...

S: Oh, I don't...

H: ...who wrote novels, mainly; but she wrote some beautiful lyric poetry. But the thing about *Lento*... I am still in awe of that piece, because... I couldn't repeat it. If I did repeat it, I would have made a lot of money, I'm sure, but you can't repeat a piece like that.

S: No. It's not *my* favourite piece by you. I *like* it...

H: It's again a question of favourites. What are the pieces I enjoy listening to? Well, no, I'm very proud of that piece, because it *is* extreme. It's the only piece of music I know that has not a single dissonance in it.

S: Ooh. And yet it's not... the new tonality (chuckles).

H: No but there's no dissonance, or if there *is* one, it's a mistake. I promise you. The material exists entirely of major and minor chords.

S: In a way that's weird because... things are only dissonant in the context of consonance. For example, Webern to me doesn't sound dissonant at all.

H: Right.

S: (laughs)... because he cancels himself out all the time.

H: I wrote an article called the 'Blue-note Invader' (?). I think there's a lot of jazzy harmony in Webern. And the end of the *Piano Variations*... you play the last eleven bars of the *Piano Variations*... it's Gershwin...

S: This is my last question...

Question 24

Non-Feldmanesque elements. As far as I can see, your music differs from that of MF in a number of ways. Here are some:

a. consonance/dissonance

Feldman is a very dissonant composer, and fairly consistently so. Your music seems to re-examine consonance, though not necessarily diatonicism.

b. melody

Feldman employed melodic gesture but wrote no 'true' melodies (*Rothko Chapel* may be an exception) but you are famed for your melodies. You often even write unison melodies (like Puccini!): I am thinking, for example of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *From the Palm Trees*, for example.

c. minimalism. Feldman's music may use pared down resources but he is not a minimalist. At the risk of incurring your fury, your music very occasionally sounds New Age/film score/Philip Glass-like: I am thinking, for instance, of *Surface Tension I*.

d. aesthetics. Feldman's music is very frequently described as 'beautiful'. I have always doubted the reliability of that epithet, and, indeed, Alistair Noble, in his recent book on the early music of MF, has sometimes found his music to be "irritating, discomforting, or even profoundly disturbing". I tend to agree, a case in point being *Spring of Chosroes*, which has a persistent edginess to it. The usual attributes associated with MF's music – delicacy, passivity, gentleness, humanity – seem better suited to your work. I would also say your music sometimes sounds serene, humane, doleful – with a dash of eeriness, sometimes the result of unison writing, such as that in *The Gypsy's Wife's Song*.

H: Well, I am very much at home... Somebody said that with choral music you quite often begin with diatonic... I mean I am writing purely diatonic music at the moment... because I am doing responses...

S: So is this the new tonality? I don't know what that means.

H: No. *In C* is the new tonality. Terry Riley's *In C*.

S: Yeah, but it's not...

H: ...paved the way for... and then we've got Steve Reich.

S: Yeah.

H: It's modal, surely.

S: (hesitates) ...yeah. But it's...

H: I might use a set of seven notes. As opposed to a set of nine notes... Well, I wrote a piece for church bells...

S: I don't see *In C* as being a reaction to Schoenberg and Webern. I think it *grew out* of it. Ultimately, what you've got with Webern, and then Stockhausen and Boulez is this static sound, where stuff doesn't go anywhere.

H: Yes.

S: And then Riley came along and wrote a piece that is, sort of in C, and... but it also doesn't go anywhere.

H: Yes. No, I think you're absolutely right. There's a book by [] - I've got it in the next room - where he talks about minimalism being the direct successor of serialism.

S: Mm. Good! (chortles)

H: What does Arnold say? (in *Gramophone*) He says, erm... (quoting?) "such liturgical items as the Magnificat and the Nunc Dimitis from the Missa Brevis preserve functional decorum while predicting strong musical preferences. By contrast *Rise Up, My Love*, setting verses from the Song of Songs, he moves away from the choir stalls..." I think a lot of the choral music... Yes, that's probably why it's accessible...

S: I'm glad you said that, because I love some of your pieces, some pieces I am not interested in one way or the other, and the pieces I like least are the choral pieces...

H: That fits in because...

S: Because they sound like Britten as well...(chuckles)

H: There's a little piece, which you won't have heard because it's on the new disc ...This is the new disc. And there's a piece on here called *More Sweet Than My Refrain*. The title 'First Drop' comes from a two-line couplet that I set 'More Sweet than My Refrain is the First Drop of April Rain'.

S: Yes. (looking at the CD). Oh it's different people.

H: And the point is that *Rise Up My Love* is a very old recording. So that's interesting, because you've got Steve Reich – you've got a version of *Clapping Music* for voices. And that thing *More Sweet*... I went to visit Paul (Paul Hiller) and his wife in Denmark two and a half years ago, and I thought, well, I'd better not go empty-handed, so I wrote this little piece for them. It's in three parts and the idea was that we should sing it over supper on the first night. Which is what we did. And he went off to the studio and recorded it with his choir - a fantastic choir there in Copenhagen - one of the best in the world. So he recorded this piece, and then he sent me this CD with a note, which I've got here. I put it there, because I knew you were coming.

S: Oh yes.

H: What does he say? He says "Finally here is the CD of what we recorded a few years ago. It also includes one of our most recent recordings, *More Sweet*, which I hope will come as a

pleasant surprise”. He didn’t tell me about this. And the point is that this came out, and it was reviewed on Record Review, and they played my track.

S: Oh!

H: And they played the track on the breakfast programme a few days earlier. The point is, this was written as a gift. This was something that we sang over supper on the day I arrived. It was never intended... you know... and, I sort of listened to that, and I think... well, how can I do that? There’s almost nothing there. It has a *Lento*esque feeling. No, it’s diatonic. *Lento*’s diatonic. But it’s not diatonic really. Each of the chorales in *Lento* is diatonic. It begins... it’s Aeolian mode on G, so it’s like a G major scale with a flattened seventh... so you basically have an A minor... How does *Lento* begin again? No, it’s G. So it’s G minor. But everything is within that G minor... And then the second section... it’s B flat. It’s almost like I’ve modulated to the dominant.

S: Yeah.

H: This is mischievous. I call that the second subject. In my notes. And then you have a third section. Then you have a section later on where you have an A flat, as well. It’s almost like one of the academic exercises you did as teenagers. You go into one of the flat keys. And then, right at the end I was sort of walking around the shops. I’d just written these few chorales, and I was sort of moving them round my head, and I thought that if I take that second one, which I’ve mischievously called the second subject, that can come back as the penultimate section, but I’ll transpose it back to the tonic. So it was like doing a rubric cube puzzle. And that’s why I like *Lento*. I just feel, what do we do as composers? We’re really pushing... We’re stretching ourselves in all the ways we want to be stretched. So if you wrote a piece, you might have a Finnish text, and you’d bring all your linguistics into play as well. You would bring everything into play. And that’s what Cage said, and to some extent experimentalists do that... They’re looking outside musical tradition... they’re looking at paintings. I grew up in an artistic household... I still take enormous pride in in my manuscripts.

S: Yes. They *are* lovely to look at.

H: And with *Lento*... you know my grandmother said “Howard, you should have been a maths teacher”. She told my wife: Howard should have been a maths teacher, but then my wife said I wouldn’t have met him... My grandmother said, “Oh yes you would!” (chuckles).

S: Sibelius wrote a choral symphony, *Kullervo*...

H: Oh yes... sort of predating...

S: And he’s more or less the first composer who set Finnish in classical music [this may or may not be true]. And Finnish words have regular stress on the first syllable.

H: That’s right.

S: No matter how long they are.

H: Everybody incorrectly says *Helsinki*... *Rovaniemi*...

S: So the word for smug in Finnish is ‘omahyväinen’. And so he had to devise music that would cope with this patterning... and you get (sings illustrating initial stress of words and phrases).

H: And you get that in *Lemminkäinen’s Return* [vocally illustrates the same sort of patterning]... That sort of thing. *Night Ride and Sunrise*. And you get that patterning feel. I love that.

S: (Continues with question: melody)

H: (in response to S’s comment on HS’s unison writing in the *Rime* (part b)) You’re very good, Spencer! You pick up on all the things that other people *don’t* pick up on.

S: And it gives an eeriness to the music. (sings). It gives you the creeps.

H: One of the reviewers on the radio... Kate Molleson on *Record Review* reviewed this. She talked about ‘creepy’. She said it was a creepy performance. I don’t hear this music as creepy; I just... cos when you are setting the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* you’re just pleased you don’t fall flat on face, quite honestly. The poem is already so musical; it would have been very easy for me to get it wrong.

S: Yes. Just don’t overdo the imagery. You didn’t fall for that trap. There is... when the boat sinks down like lead, we hear the piano going (growls)... but not much (laughs)...

H: Yes, it’s just playing in unison.

S: It’s tremendously effective.

H: I was worried about that. I thought: is that a bit obvious? But then the obvious thing can be...

S: No, no. It’s good. I like it.

H: It’s very restrained at the end. I’ve just got the double bass playing with the voice at that point.

S: It ends the way it begins, doesn’t it?

H: That’s right, yeah.

S: A long, single note. on the cello? or double bass?

H: Yes. It’s the same mode. I’m using a mode there, because... But what’s interesting is, the *Rime* is a very good point, Spencer; again, it’s worth reading the liner notes, because it sounds like a folk tune. So it sounds diatonic. But I don’t use the D natural. I use all the other white notes, but I don’t use the D natural. And the reason for that is that... all the notes except the D natural form part of the nine-note chromatic mode that I use... one of those modes of limited transposition. If you think of these three little three-note clusters. So let’s say you’ve got a D sharp, an E and an F... miss out the F sharp and you’ve got G, A flat, A, miss out B flat then you got B, C, C sharp... then you miss out the D. All the white notes are there except the D. And so I use that particular transposition of that mode, so I’ve got all the white notes except the D available. So I begin the piece with all the white notes except the D, and it sounds like a folk song. It’s very easy then for me to become chromatic.

S: Yes.

H: Do you see what I mean? Cos I've started with this nine-note chromatic mode, and I just use the white notes. And I make up a tune using the white notes, and that is the same tune, or place to which you return at the end.

S: Yes. That poor singer doesn't get a moment to breathe.

H: No, he's good though... it's better than... I did another Lawrence setting, *Snake*, 60 minutes, and he really doesn't get a moment to breathe.

S: OK. The last two things. The first is minimalism (part c of the question). Do you think you are connected with that kind of movement?

H: Absolutely. Yes, again it would be crazy... disingenuous of me to say I'm not. I grew up with this stuff.

S: Yes, of course. But you know what composers are like; Jürg Frey said (misquoting) "There's nothing of Feldman in my music."

H: This is rubbish. There must be, because Feldman enabled all of us to write... this is where your Master's comes in... soft...

S: Absolutely! He more or less... he didn't actually say that... but he kind of pooh-poohed the notion...

H: You see... what Feldman said about Cage, when asked about Cage's influence, he said "I owe everything to John, and I owe nothing to him."

S: Yeah...

H: But the thing is... I grew up in the 60s. It was the Beatles, who were very good, and I had Webern and I had Stockhausen. Then, when I went down to London, it was then that... I was already interested in La Monte Young. And then we did the Terry Riley piece. And it was a year later that Steve Reich came over. And a group of us gathered in Bryars's bedroom, with Steve. He was playing his early pieces. It's extraordinary; when Steve Reich first came over to England, the only concert he had, I think... He may have been doing a concert somewhere, but he came round to Gavin Bryars's house, and Gavin invited a few of us over. There were about a dozen of us, squeezed into the bedroom with Steve Reich... he was playing recordings of his...

S: Oh, right.

H: So it was very interesting at that time. But I already felt - when I was introduced to Steve Reich and, especially Philip Glass, I felt I'd heard it all in Terry Riley.

S: Yes.

H: But I've got a lot of time for Steve.

S: Yes, so do I.

H: He's gone on developing and growing... I mean *Different Trains*... fantastic...

S: Yes, yes, I agree.

H: Pieces like *New York Counterpoint* and *Vermont Counterpoint* as well. And *Electric Counterpoint*, which is a great...

S: Yes. But, er, I feel sorry for Riley. I went to a concert of his works in London a few years ago – well, about 20 years ago. There was hardly anybody there. People didn't even know who he was.

H: Oh, it's ridiculous...

S: Ridiculous.

H: I met him about 20 years ago. He came to a concert... the second half was just my music, and Riley said it reminded him of Terry Jennings. But I'd met him earlier – he was a friend of John Tilbury's, so he came to London. And John invited me round, and Terry Riley turned up, and he was feeling queasy after his flight, and so he just had a glass of milk. But I remember going on the tube afterwards with Terry Riley – I thought: I was sitting on the tube with Terry Riley! (they laugh) In the same way, I'd caught the tube with Feldman a few years before, and he was looking at the tube map.

S: (laughing)... mesmerised!

H: (quoting from Feldman) It's like one of my scores!

S: Ha! Yes. That's right: *Projection 3*, or...

H: His manuscript scores... you've got these 12 bars. You might have a bar of 5/2 next to a bar of 3/16, and the bars are the same width. Because in manuscript, all the bars are the same width. Cos now, if you look at the published scores, they've all been processed so that they...

S: I see.

H: ... so that everything has changed. They lose that sense of the grid. But it was extraordinary – you get these scores where each bar is the same width on the page...

S: The last ques...

H: Well, anyway minimalism... yes definitely, but the great thing – and this is something I think that Michael Nyman picks up in his book – sorry, I'm going to quote... It's...

S: 'Ye Olde Experimental Music'.

H: I couldn't afford it when it first came out. It was too expensive. So I bought this reissued one. And he says... Sorry it sounds (?) terribly vain.

S: No, no.

H: "Howard Skempton's music stands apart from the recent trend towards endlessness." He was writing in 1974. "Brief, delicate, miniature works like *A Humming Song*, *Snow Piece* for piano, *African Melody* for cello and *Maypole* for orchestra are occupied with the captured moment...". I mean this answers all our questions really. "... potential rather than actual recurrence, and the reductive extremes of discipline turned on isolated harmonies or pitches". So it's *all* discipline... but also openness. But it's also controlled variables and uncontrolled variables, which I've talked about. But it's this idea of - and I've always said this – that the only difference is, I sort of feel that if I (extend?) a sense of forward movement, if I create the

stasis that I want to create in those pieces, why go on? Why do you need to go on more than a few seconds?

S: Mm.

H: You've done what you wanted to achieve. If you convey that sense of endlessness, you know...

S: Yes, OK.

H: That is the point: the captured moment. It's a sort of critique of minimalism, as well: writing short pieces.

S: Yes. All right. The last subject of the question is aesthetics. (Continues with question (d))

H: What Arnold was saying about this piece (indicating *Rime*?). He was saying you get ordinary chords, like the D major chord, but of course they're not in a conventional relationship. And this is what happens in *Lento*. So, although there's no dissonance in *Lento*, you get a chord where you don't expect it. So you don't get a sense of what Arnold called antecedence and consequence, which happens in music. You get a sort of questioning phrase, and then you get an answering phrase in the music. Now, if you disrupt that, you get something else. You get a sort of strangeness. You're still using familiar elements – that's why I've [] the familiar and the unpredictable. You know, if you take the words of a sentence and mix them up, you're going to get something really strange - nonsense. And if you do that very carefully, then you get exactly the right balance of strangeness. You make a sentence, but at the same time you do it in a fresh way. I think, as far as Feldman's concerned... it's almost a principle that beauty is truth. Beauty is a sort of criterion. But also, if you lack a system... you know, there are two problems in composing. How do you start? And how do you keep going? And Morton Feldman's very funny about that. So that's what we all want to know... Even Aaron Copland ... He rang him up and said "Morty, you are writing these long pieces." Even Aaron Copland wants to know how you keep it going. And then he made this wonderful statement, which I've just caught on my cassette... he said Beethoven's big problem...

(Laughter about Feldman's probable pronunciation of the name of Beethoven)

... was how not to be just another composer. Well, that's absolute pure Feldman. Nobody else would have said that. Beethoven's big problem was how not to be just another composer. So that's a wonderful statement. If you start with the idea 'I'm going to do something beautiful'. 'I'm going to make a beautiful sound'. That's already quite a lot. If you say: 'Whatever I do, it's going to be beautiful.' You know, you take a note and you say, 'What is a beautiful thing that I can do?' Whereas in your *Passacaglia* (S's piece), you're not so concerned about beauty. It's much more about energy.

S: Mm.

H: Sorry. I only looked at it, and tried to play it through. So what is beauty? I acquaint beauty with originality... if something strikes me as fresh... if I'm delighted by something. Because it seems strange or fresh.

Feldman is purely beautiful music. It doesn't always sound beautiful by accepted standards, but I think that it's a very important guiding principle for him to produce something beautiful.

END

Appendix XIII: Olivia Block

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Olivia Block. 16.12.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the USA? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

I think there are multiple interconnected American traditions of experimental music. Many of the more formal branches of this music originated with the ideas of John Cage and his contemporaries who made drone based minimalist music. But there are also traditions based on more industrial, beat oriented, and noise origins.

2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

I am part of the tradition, although it is a male tradition and I am a woman, so I have always felt that I am set apart because of that. I am probably most aligned with the electroacoustic movement of the late 90's / early 2000's in Chicago. This tradition gravitated loosely around Jim O'Rourke but included elements of post rock improvisation and contemporary classical.

3. What do you consider to be experimental music?

(This question appears to have been deleted – perhaps mistakenly – by the respondent)

4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

He is a part of it in many integral ways. He was connected with John Cage and created pieces written in graphic notation. His sensibility--spare music with emphasis on particular intervallic relationships, has become a major influence in post classical improvisation and sound art today.

He contributed to the white male foundations of contemporary classical music. Feldman was allegedly demeaning and abusive to women, notably Bunita Marcus. This type of unfriendliness towards women perpetuated a general lack of receptivity to women in the field.

5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

It can be. It depends on which music you are talking about. I think there is a levity in many of the Fluxus text scores, for example. Sometimes experimental artists, particularly when first starting out, will include sounds which are "off limits,"--baby noises, bodily function noises, whatever, which can often be funny or absurd sounding.

6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

I assume that by elitist you mean music requiring academic knowledge or some sort of cultural refinement to understand. Academic analysis is important, and there is a place for it. That said, in my own work I try to retain an appeal outside of layer and layers of academic analysis. So in that way maybe I feel similar to Feldman, in that the ideas and innovations are secondary to the sensibility or sound of the music.

I think Feldman is a good example of an artist whose work is still appealing for the immediate qualities of the music alone--the space, pacing and the mysterious feeling of the melodic fragments. I think the problem with elitism is some individuals use their cultural or academic knowledge for power over others. But that can be reduced to individuals behaving poorly.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

Yes.

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

His orchestral pieces, particularly, appeal to me in that he arranges chords which fold over and over themselves in complex patterns. They unfurl very naturally and slowly.

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

d. form/structure

e. rhythm and tempo

f. dynamics

(Questions 10-14 deleted by the respondent?)

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

The realm of dynamics relates the most, aside from timbre, to me as a sound artist. By marking something "pppp" in a concert piece, I am not so much reducing sound, but including the surrounding sounds of the room into the piece. I am very interested in concert orchestral pieces that hover under room noise or field recordings, for instance. Dynamics can transform the meaning of a single sound drastically. A very low sine wave, for instance, is a warm hum at low volume and a threatening rumble at a higher one.

Question 16 missing.

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

I think that these had different purposes. Some were more related to achieving specific outcomes and others were more conceptual.

The impossible pppppp dynamics markings in Feldman's scores seemed to make a point of emphasis. Those dynamic markings told the conductor and performers how important low dynamics were to Feldman. There could be no ambiguity that the musicians were to play as low in volume as possible, not relative to other sounds, or to create a general feel of quiet, but actual low amplitude. That's why Feldman had the strings muted in his orchestral pieces. When I imagine some of his pieces played at higher volumes, they would sound bad, so I can understand why he was so emphatic about dynamic markings I have done this in the past in my own ensemble pieces, but I have found that it doesn't really work.

The piano chord stretches might have been more specific, to achieve an effect of slightly off-time attack on a chord instead of perfectly unison, but that is a guess.

I am not sure about the other examples.

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

Always. There are always aspects of improvisation and chance in my work—The process of composition-trying out sounds together in the studio or on the piano, to some of the recorded content. Most of the non-chance stuff comes in at the end of the process.

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

Not really.

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations* for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

I think this type of defiance is less important now. I don't feel like asserting myself as a rebellious presence in the larger field of music. Experimental music (as a genre) is established enough at this point. However, at that time, I the addition of those playfully defiant moments was necessary to loosen the conventions of notation and tradition.

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

I have no idea. Looking at some of his scores there was certainly a larger plan, at least the larger ensemble ones. There was a lot of pattern repetition in complex ways. But I don't know if that means there was a real "method" in place.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Olivia Block

21. Are you a composer or a sound artist or both? What is the difference?

I am both. My work exists on a continuum with sound art on one end and music on the other. These are more cultural concepts than my own categories, though.

22. *Lazarus*. This piece reminds me of Ives. Your electronic music features collage, I think, so is this a written-out (fully notated) collage?

*This orchestral piece was influenced by Ives. In *Lazarus*, instead of an American scene expressed in marching bands or circus music, the music I overlapped was based on a more recent type of American scene. I created two pieces of commercial music from the 1970's/80's. Those types of music pieces were created to play in stores, waiting rooms and elevators. That was a different era of American culture--after the idealism of the 60's and transitioning into the new cynical era of materialism in the 80's. So instead of two marching bands crossing as*

Ives would do, the orchestras simulated a walk between two stores with different songs playing in each store in a shopping mall. Both of the pieces were conventionally notated. There were two conductors facing away from each other towards two small orchestras. They each had timers so that they knew of cues when to enter and they had tempo markings so things would be timed relatively the same each performance.

23. Karren. *Opening Night* is rather beautiful. It is described as a 'layered' score: what would that mean?

Thanks! Basically, there was one main orchestral score, conventionally notated. This score was performed and recorded. Subsequently, the recording was layered upon itself in my home post production studio. The recording was layered at three different speeds, so that certain chords and patterns would form from those differences in time and pitch. That piece was influenced by Feldman for sure, but was sort of Feldman on heroin or something with the slowed down tape stuff.

END

Appendix XIV: Isaiah Ceccarelli

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Isaiah Ceccarelli. 29.11.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in Canada? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

*Yes, a healthy experimental music scene exists in Canada. My feeling is that there is a good blend of musicians and composers who are dedicated long-time adherents to the genre, but the scene is also nourished by those who cross over into some kind of experimental music on a more or less frequent basis from such backgrounds as jazz, rock, classical, and baroque music. I would describe the scene as ongoing and multigenerational. In Quebec, the area I know best, there is a strong current of *musique actuelle*, which means a lot of different things to different people, but often has as a partial definition a composer who also performs in his or her own works.*

2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

Humbly, yes, I'm very much a part of this scene. Since my move to Montreal in 2003, I have been very fortunate to participate in the experimental music scene as a drummer, improviser, and (more recently) composer.

3. What do you consider to be experimental music?

I don't really know what experimental music is supposed to be besides a style of music. I think it's more of a genre than a movement now, a genre that has a lot of very sound-based or noise-based music, some "contemporary-sounding" chamber music might still be lumped in there... I'm not exactly sure what it means. The name gives the impression that there is a field in which musicians experiment, as if that weren't the case for other much more 'popular' musical genres. I get the impression that most experimental music is just a new classical music with its roots in the 1950s or 1960s instead of further back. I also feel like the popular impression of experimental music (even one shared by certain musicians) is that one puts out an unfinished product—a sketch—since one is artistically always in flux and experimenting. Then again, a lot of experimental music does seem like it's trying to reinvent the wheel in every piece. Graphic scores are often a good example of that.

I have been described as being part of the experimental music scene because I play 'free jazz' (which is somehow different from 'jazz', even though there is 'free jazz' with written compositions...), or because I play noisy percussion with Subtle Lip Can (with Bernard Falaise and Josh Zubot), or because I have participated in large-scale improvising ensembles (with 20+ musicians), or because, as a composer, I write major and minor triads or solo pieces for baroque cello. None of those situations make me feel particularly experimental.

4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

Morton Feldman for me is definitely part of the American experimental tradition, but he's not simply part of that scene by accident of birth or something; his stature, attitude, and opinions make it that he most likely could not have been from any other country.

5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

Much experimental music can be seen as funny, yes. I try to keep in mind how ridiculous it is to the average person, even to the average music fan. Even to someone who follows the music and is interested in it, there are still many times where I feel that I'm listening to a random collection of sounds or something that could be played better by a microwave working or a refrigerator humming.

6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

It is most likely elitist, especially because so much interesting and 'experimental' music and ideas are coming from areas outside of the experimental music scene proper, and especially from popular and commercial music.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

Yes.

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

Mostly his writings, but also the overall aesthetic value of his music and the effect it has on me compared to the vast majority of other 20th-century works.

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

c, f.

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

French or English, depending on who has commissioned the piece. I see no extra significance, no.

11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

I agree. Again, I can't give concrete examples so much as I can just feel it and know it when I hear it.

12. Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

If there is anything unique about my music, I hope it is that I am making music as it must be made today, but that it is still made with the aesthetic and spiritual concerns of most music over the past 1000 years.

13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

They used to be more so in the past, but I do not pay much attention to visual arts now. My main contact with art is through writing (novels, essays, etc.) and very specific art from earlier periods of history. I appreciate many of the artists Feldman himself admired, but not in the same way or with the same passion. Something that I heard in a documentary about Mark

Rothko was that he always (or frequently) listened to Bach, Beethoven, or Mozart while painting. Maybe it wasn't those exact composers, but either way. That really stayed with me: Feldman spent all of his time concerned with painters, with surface, with detail, etc., and meanwhile Rothko didn't paint to Feldman, he painted to Mozart. I have had discussions with some visual artists, and it seems to be that this has something to do with the great shift away from the basic elements of music in contemporary music (identifiable melody, harmony, and rhythm), whereas visual art for the most part retains its links with its traditional constitutive elements (according to these same people). I'm not sure I agree since so much about music and visual arts today revolves around the materials and processes used to create, but it's an interesting subject to think about. Music today doesn't retain the interest of other artists as much as those arts retain musicians' interest.

14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

To a certain degree, but I don't think I have the same kind of stasis as in Feldman's music. My stasis comes more from the popular or folkloric music world.

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

I'm very influenced by his use of low dynamics and I use them a lot myself. It was always one of the elements that attracted me the most to his music.

16. (If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

Nothing political, definitely spiritual, and probably reactive in that I became very blasé about the clichéd dynamics in a lot of contemporary music. I wanted to slow down my music and make it focus on one or two things, without all the extraneous movement.

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

Strangely enough, I think Feldman was probably being quite realistic with these challenges. I think when he wrote pppppp he had probably heard many rehearsals where pp was played as some sort of mf and was committed to making the musicians think about actually playing very soft. I can't be sure and can only surmise, however.

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

I have written music with more indeterminacy in the past (never using chance elements), but I always thought these pieces were somehow deficient. I found that I usually had an idea of what I wanted to hear in a moment where I had given some option to be indeterminate. I still have many 'open' sections or other types of semi-improvised elements in my music, but they are usually controlled to a high enough degree that I get the result I want without necessarily writing many extra pages of music. I also rely on close friends and collaborators—or musicians who know about this kind of music, often with an improvised music or popular music background—to play these pieces, and it tends to be music I play on myself.

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

I don't know if audaciousness is part of the experimental music scene as a necessary element, but you're right that it is frequently present. On the other hand, I have never considered the examples you've given as audacious so much as being useful to a certain musical feeling that the composer wanted to instil. That's an interesting observation!

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

I believe Feldman wrote intuitively, but only because I do as well and do not understand how to develop a method.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Isaiah Ceccarelli

21. What is your link to Wandelweiser and what is the significance of that organisation, would you say?

My link to Wandelweiser is a friendly one: I performed with the Bozzini Quartet and many Wandelweiser performers and composers when they did a big concert in Montreal in 2014 at the Suoni per il Popolo festival. After that, I took a composing lesson with Jürg Frey once when he was visiting Montreal. I also performed with Radu Malfatti and Mira Benjamin in London in 2015 and I have performed Jürg Frey's Unhörbare Zeit in 2017 with the Bozzini Quartet. Besides these opportunities to perform their music and to play with them, I have no formal relationship with the collective... I think I get along quite well with Radu and Jürg and would love to do more with them in the future.

22. Is *Sainte-Ursule* a series of pieces? What is the structure?

Sainte-Ursule was a series of improvisations recorded at a friend's house in Sainte-Ursule, a small village about 90 minutes northeast of Montreal. The pieces were improvised, but Kate Clark and I had the ideas laid out beforehand and are able to replay the same forms if we feel like it. We played one of them for the record launch at Cafe Oto in May 2017.

23. On the CD I have there is *Oslo Harmonies* parts 1 and 2. Are these to be regarded as separate works? If not, why are they separated by a recording of another piece?

Oslo Harmonies is one piece, but it is made up of only several measures of music containing either chords or descriptions of what to play (for example, "descending harmonics, barely audible"). As such, the duration of the piece has varied greatly over time (from 12 minutes for all seven measures at the premiere in Oslo, to 45 minutes for only three measures when performed in Toronto). It's essentially a mapped improvisation for Mira and I and we play bits and pieces of it as we see fit. For the recording, Simon, Mira, and I found that it sounded good split into two sections.

24. *Falsobordone*: does this piece rely on any compositional methods from the Renaissance period? Can you elaborate a bit on that?

No, there is no Renaissance compositional method in play here, except for perhaps simple stepwise motion and originally I thought about making the lines friendly for singers, but it's more of an impression of a type of harmonic movement than anything concrete. I do enjoy singing faux-bourdon settings in music, though, and I greatly appreciate that kind of harmony. I wanted to recreate that feeling in this piece.

25. I hear a penchant for drones in your music. What are your influences in this area, if any? Are you a La Monte Young fan perchance? Is there a tie between the drone sound and the

ancient music sound I have already alluded to? I also hear Riley – is he an important composer for you?

I think my influences in sustained ideas (be they harmonic or rhythmic) come from further back in musical history and from wildly different sources in this case. This idea of 'sustain' is much more an impression than anything concrete, but I'm thinking of influences from plain-chant, baroque faux-bourdon psalm singing, Corsican paghjella, Sardinian singing, Mississippi hill country blues, Duke Ellington, Ahmad Jamal's trio with Israel Crosby and Vernell Fournier, etc.

END

Appendix XV: Christopher Fox

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Christopher Fox. 1.1.2018

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

Yes.

2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

I think so.

I was unusual in my generation of British composers in thinking of Cage, Wolff, Bryars, et al as my closest musical ancestors.

3. What do you consider to be experimental music?

For me it is an approach to music-making that, in the spirit of experiment, always tries to begin from first principles, taking nothing for granted.

4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

Yes.

5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

Sometimes.

6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

Music is elitist. Art is elitist. For me, elitism is about valuing people who are good at something.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

Absolutely yes! I loved the notation and sound of Piano Piece for Philip Guston when I got a copy of the score in about 1975 or 76. Then I forgot about him. It was hearing him and his music in Darmstadt in 1984 that rekindled my excitement about his work and sometimes it felt over the next ten years that I couldn't get his voice out of my head.

He didn't like the music of mine that he heard.

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

I think it was the emphasis on the beauty of instrumental sounds.

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

All of those, for a while, but maybe not any longer.

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

Mostly English.

It's currently a lingua franca.

11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young as well as Varèse and Wolpe notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

No, I hear a lot of Webern, even Schoenberg, in there too.

12. Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

Sometimes.

I am fascinated by other art forms, especially painting, sculpture, installation, drama.

14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

I disagree. I think Feldman's music is always in motion.

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time, in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

Sometimes. But I think Feldman used quietness because he wanted to focus on a particular dimension of instrumental sound.

16. (If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

All notation is ambiguous to some extent but I think Feldman's is always clear when he knew what he wanted. Also sometimes I think he made notations just to see what would happen.

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

Yes, and no. I don't really think of Feldman's music as indeterminate, certainly not when compared to Cage or Wolff, who are the main influences on my (extensive) use of chance operations and indeterminacy.

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations* for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

Yes. Very.

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively?

He had many techniques (chromatic clusters as a source pitch collection, for example) but no one method, I'd say.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Christopher Fox

21. Some of your music seems connected to the past. For, example, *Boat Song*, with its nod in the direction of Schoenberg and others. Does the 'experimentalist' composer need to have an understanding/appreciation of old(er) musics?

The history of experimental music suggests to me that you shouldn't generalise from any one 'experimental' composer. But I love being a composer in part because it's the same job that Perotin, Monteverdi, Mozart and Janacek did.

22. Do you think your music 'reaches out' to audiences, or are you happy to follow a non-populist approach? How relevant is the 'elitism' debate in today's contemporary music scene?

I am not interested in audiences because they're all different. The audience in Café OTO is not like the audience for ensemble recherche's Freiburg series, for example. I write the music that I want to hear.

23. In *Chambre privée* I hear echoes of Xenakis, and, in other works of yours, of Riley and Reich. Nevertheless, your music does not sound like anyone else – to my ears at least. Is this, in your opinion, a mark of your success? Or do you think that you are not successful (as regards this matter of personal identity or your popularity with audiences, for example)? (Some overlap with question 22 here perhaps).

I don't know about success, although people tell me that I am 'established', 'successful', etc. I think my music sounds like itself but there are other people who struggle to understand how and why individual works seem to them to be quite different from one another.

24. I think *Chile* is very interesting as it seems to resolve what I see as the problems of the acoustic guitar (its inability to sustain sounds for long and its, for me, flattish sonorities) with the quest for stasis and a meditative approach. Or is this all a bogus notion of mine?

I think that's a very good notion – I agree!

Many thanks!

END

Appendix XVI: Jennie Gottschalk

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Jennie Gottschalk. 31.12.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the USA? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

I'm not sure if it fully qualifies as a scene, but there are quite a number of people who relate to it and to each other. It's fairly international though. Most people I know in the US who are involved with it have some ties to Europe as well.

2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

*I was a part of it first as a composer and an observer. I wrote my dissertation on Alvin Lucier and Michael Pisaro, and that led to a longer-term interest in locating where experimental music was happening elsewhere. I travelled quite a bit and got in contact with more people involved with it mostly in the UK, Germany, and the US. I started a website called Sound Expanse to record what I was learning, and that in turn led to writing *Experimental Music Since 1970*. That publication has put me more visibly in the overall dialogue about experimental music, but I'm still not sure that there is a scene as such. A lot of very independent minded people relate to this field in their own ways.*

3. What do you consider to be experimental music?

I can't answer this simply, and I've gone into more detail in chapter one of my book, but in general I look for questions/indeterminacy/uncertainty within the work (whether in composition, performance, or reception), and also some acknowledged chain of influence that follows from Cage and his circle.

4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

Yes.

5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

It can be, if that is the intent. It would probably have something to do with perceptual play. I can only think of a few examples offhand though.

6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

No! There may be people who imagine it to be elitist, but that's only from well outside of it. If anything, it's more welcoming than traditional classical music, being less reliant on that body of prior knowledge. It does require some engagement and reframing, but that is not difficult if those approaching it have an open mind.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

I can't point to a direct influence of his work on my own, though it interests me quite a bit. As a composer I'm not exploring the same kinds of issues that he did.

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

English

It's my first language and the most direct way to communicate with whoever is using the score.

11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

Yes, it is unique. In Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello and other late works, his use of inexact patterns and repetition, the challenge of alignment between players, and the overall form and duration combine to create a disorienting temporal experience.

12. Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

I feel relatively new as a composer of experimental music, and my projects are always changing from one to the next. I can't point to a distinct unique attribute at this point, and I don't think that is an aim for me. I don't think I have a readily identifiable style, since I'm asking very different questions depending on the piece.

13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

I definitely take inspiration from some art that has been termed minimal (Rothko, Agnes Martin, a Czech artist named Václav Boštík). Their work appeals to me on an aesthetic level, and my music often relates in the sense of using few materials or components. But it's not so much a direct influence as a point of resonance. I write about visual metaphors and the perception of time in my book, as it relates to Feldman and others. Those are better examples of direct, acknowledged influence.

14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

Again, through the use of minimal materials, I'll often stay in a harmonic or other situation for an entire piece, so that other parameters can be brought to the foreground. While that may feel like stasis in some way, for me it's just a reframing of parameters.

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

I'm not sure that I can generalize in those terms, but I do lean towards slower and quieter sounds. The premise of a piece may create a very different situation, though.

16. (If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

I think it's just a personality thing, that I often prefer gentler sounds and work that gives the listener time to inhabit it (without necessarily being long in duration).

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be ‘counted’, unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF’s work, your own, and composition in general?

With Feldman it seems to be a deliberate sort of destabilization. The music is not easy, and he provokes a certain kind of engagement and also a practical instability through these kinds of devices.

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF’s music?

There is again no direct influence from Feldman. My work has never been chance determined in the compositional process, but within my experimental output there is always some indeterminacy either of performer decisions or actual performance, or both.

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF’s music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations* for piano begins with 18 bars’ rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly “with all beats equal”, the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be ‘hardly there’ at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that ‘this is not music’, ‘anyone could do that’, etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

Similarly to my answer to question 16, I think audaciousness comes with some of the personalities of the unusual/unconventional people that are drawn to this kind of music. It’s by no means a prerequisite, but it’s not to be unexpected among people who are doing things on their own terms and taking nothing for granted.

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

I think the answer is probably both, but I couldn’t answer definitively for him.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Jenny Gottschalk

21. *Infinities-between*. The songs in this piece seem to rely mainly on a reduced number of pitches/pitch-classes. *Patience* has just two, for example. What is your thinking behind this approach?

I'm drawn to the use of fewer pitches because it pulls other musical parameters to the foreground and helps to define a sonic world. This song cycle isn't the clearest example of my experimental work, but that comment often holds true in the more experimental work as well. It's a personal preference as much as anything, that manifests in many of my pieces.

22. *Also*. This piano piece to me seems full of drama and even rhetoric (not traits we normally associate with experimental music). What is your reaction to that comment?

I wrote this piece shortly before getting more deeply involved in experimental music, so I wasn't really thinking of it from that angle. I don't think drama and rhetoric would preclude a piece from being experimental though.

The [enclosed](#) series was written shortly after that with a more direct influence. I have a few more recent scores (mostly text scores) that are not online that I could send if you want more context.

23. Are you happy with the reception of your book *Experimental Music since 1970*? Is there another in the offing?

Yes, I'm happy with how it's been received. It seems to have a wider reach than I expected, and some people have found it useful. I hope that eventually it will help to generate a more lively dialogue around what experimental music is and can be.

END

Appendix XVII: Michael Pisaro

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Michael Pisaro. 17.12.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the USA? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

Yes, depending on whether you begin it with Ives/Cowell/Varese or with Cage/Feldman/Tudor/Wolff, etc. since the early or mid- 20th century. It might be stronger than ever now. A low point would have been the 80s and first part of the 90s. Not sure why – might partially have political reasons (Reagan, resurgence of the Right).

2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

Yes, I see my music as falling in that lineage: those mentioned above as well as Tenney, Oliveros, Radigue, Lucier, Amacher, G. Brecht, Robert Ashley (the list could be extended).

3. What do you consider to be experimental music?

A music that imagines that works with a hopeful but fragile image of an alternative, more open, more egalitarian world.

4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

Yes.

5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

Yes, because it's a bunny filled with honey. (I.e., it can be – sometimes Ashley, for example, is very funny. Lucier too. Cage did so much laughing. There's quite a bit of laconic humor in Fluxus scores.)

6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

All art, without exception, is elitist: in that it asks a potential listener to come to it. But it can also be universal. I dislike Babbitt's formulation however and mistrust Adorno on this topic.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

Inasmuch as he's a part of that tradition, sure, why not?

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

A lot of his music is beautiful, and I enjoy it. The things that most fascinate me come from the ways in which he dealt with longer forms. It's a kind of negative influence: he was so good at what he did, that I'd just as soon leave his idiom for others to imitate.

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

Answered better with the above sentence.

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use?

English; though sometimes (in the harmony series) I also use French or German (at least implicitly).

And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

Not really.

11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

I don't think in those terms. Everyone and no one is unique.

12. Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

See above.

13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

Sometimes. I've been fascinated by Twombly, Agnes Martin, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd, Nancy Holt, Robert Smithson and so on.

14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

16. (If yes in 14 and 15, why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?)

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations* for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Michael Pisaro

21. You are probably one of the better known of the Wandelweiser-associated composers. Are you a more ‘established’ composer within that community?

That could be – though I think most of the original members, historically speaking, are pretty well known by now (at least Antoine, Jürg, Manfred and Radu).

22. Why is silence in music so important to you? Are there political, spiritual or other reasons for that?

I’ve written a lot about this in various places. There’s really no short answer to this, sorry.

23. Listening to your music on YouTube, for example, I have the impression that you are interested in combining live sounds in the environment, electronics and conventional/unconventional musical ‘instruments’. This, to me, is appealing. But are there any specific thought-processes at work in this area?

Oh yes, many – again, I’ve written quite a lot about it – perhaps the essay that accompanies “Continuum Unbound” is as good a place as any that discusses the features of the work you’ve mentioned above.

END

Appendix XVIII: Sam Sfirri

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Sam Sfirri. 28.12.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the USA?

There is a community of people in the USA and elsewhere who work with experimental music. This community actively performs music that are generally understood as tenets of that tradition, in addition to composing and performing new material.

If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

It seems to have continued to exist in some kind of way. Maybe a particular composer or piece is revived each and every time it is performed.

2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

I have performed music that was advertised or generally considered part of the experimental music tradition. I've also composed pieces employing text-based notation and other methods developed by people considered to be – or have been at one time – experimental music composers.

3. What do you consider to be experimental music?

The acceptance of unforeseen outcomes and subsequent course of investigation based on those results, where practitioners engage in widely varying approaches and attitudes toward their work, sometimes questioning preconceived notions of the boundaries of music.

4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

I remember reading somewhere that Feldman didn't believe that there was an American experimental tradition. One has to respect his disinterest in considering what he does as beyond the general conventions of Josquin or Mozart. However, he did seem to develop and

use alternative notational methods out of convenience for his ideas in some early stage of his music and was colleagues with people who are widely considered experimental musicians.

5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

People (myself included) sometimes seem to find that some instances of experimental music are funny or ridiculous and might laugh. It doesn't seem as though most experimental musicians are trying to be funny, though. It seems a normal response to laugh when people are confronted with something previously unknown. Then, of course, sometimes people are malicious and shaming when confronted with things that fall outside of their understanding or interest, but this isn't unique to experimental music by any means!

6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

Inherently, no. Experimental musicianship is just an attitude that you either have or don't have when approaching some kind of performance situation. I don't think you even need to engage with this attitude all the time to be an "experimental musician." Similarly to the previous question, it seems as though people sometimes have a hard time accepting something that challenges their preconceived notions. On the other hand, I am sure that plenty of experimental musicians believe that they are part of an elite force. Personally, I don't think that what I do is particularly important, but it is important for to me to be able to do my work and communicate freely with the people who are interested in what I'm up to.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

I researched and performed some of his pieces about ten to fifteen years ago. So, by virtue of an awareness of his music and life, he has at least been an influence in some subconscious way.

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

No, I can't think of anything unique to Morton Feldman that I find inspirational, as a person or as a musician, though some things are interesting. For instance, atypical instrumental groupings, vocal parts with no lyrics, and seemingly inappropriate usage of traditional notation are interesting to consider.

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

c, g

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use?

English.

And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

It seems purely practical. Most people know English or know someone who can translate for them.

11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

This is a difficult question to answer. In one sense, yes, he found his own way to use traditional instrumentation and – for the most part – traditional notation and arrived at some interesting results. On the other hand, I take very seriously the allegations against him that he engaged in an intellectually (and perhaps physically) abusive relationship with Bunita Marcus wherein he claimed much of her concepts and methods as his own.

12. Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

Sometime in 2014, it occurred to me that a score always demands more of a performer than the performer is able to offer, that a performer cannot begin – let alone sustain – the performance of a score. In other words, a performer and score have a fundamental misunderstanding that can't be reconciled

With this realization, I have operated from the perspective of what the music requires to get started, which has led to a failure to proceed to a "beginning" in each instance. Therefore, nothing ever ends up happening in my music; it never started.

Along these lines, my output has almost exclusively consisted of failed attempts at the performance of "Skylark" (Johnny Mercer/Hoagy Carmichael), with some small amount of scores and some fixed media when commissioned.

13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

Yes, I am concerned with forms other than music and they surely find a way into my own output. My mom is a trained architect and an avid reader, while my dad is a woodworker in both functional and non-functional craft. Both of these practices interested me since an early age and continue to do so, particularly in terms of their inherent ambience and background-ness, the lack of necessity to pay attention to them at all.

14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis.

Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

Since my music never started in the first place, no opportunity for 'stasis' has presented itself.

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

Some things are fairly quiet or slow (or lacking pulse whatsoever), but only to make for an appropriate background.

16. (If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

It is essential for me to express myself of things as a musician, even if the music never started in the first place. This insistence and my curiosity are certainly spiritually motivated.

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be ‘counted’, unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF’s work, your own, and composition in general?

I don’t know what Morton Feldman’s motivation was to use conventional notation to express things that are “humanly impossible,” but as a performer approaching his work, it would certainly disrupt my preconception of reading music.

Since I believe that all notation is “humanly impossible” to perform successfully, I find no meaningful difference between one form of notation to another. Nevertheless, it is important to note how Morton Feldman has used conventional notation to push the limits of its own function. To me, it is a sign that he had committed to the use of conventional notation, but was seriously trying to push things through that notation that hadn’t been done before. Beethoven is another composer who did something like this.

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

Most of my output since 2014 has been audio recordings of failed attempts of performances of “Skylark” and other songs, rendering them “undetermined” results rather than “chance-determined” or “indeterminate,” in my opinion. In previous pieces, I have used methods of indeterminacy in some scores (i.e. “beckett pieces”), leaving a considerable amount of decisions up to the performers in terms of instrumentation, pitch, dynamics, etc. Maybe this isn’t all that different from trying to play “Skylark” or other songs, after all.

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF’s music?

No.

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF’s music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations* for piano begins with 18 bars’ rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly “with all beats equal”, the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be ‘hardly there’ at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that ‘this is not music’, ‘anyone could do that’, etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

This isn't unique to experimental music, but it is important to be audacious insofar as it serves what you are trying to express, to try to express what needs to be said regardless of conventions and beliefs. Even 'audaciousness for the sake of audaciousness' has its place and importance. Being audacious is probably a good way to remind people who say 'this is not music' or 'anyone could do that' that the parameters of music changes and that anyone can do anything.

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

It seems to me that his methods developed through intuition, but I don't really know. I'm not sure that one can make any kind of blanket claim with regard to his method but himself. With much of his work, it sounds like he started at the beginning and wrote until the end. If so, this could certainly be regarded as a method that involves intuition. I'm not really sure.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Samuel Sfirri

21. What is your link to Wandelweiser and what is the significance of that organisation, would you say?

Sometime in 2006 or 2007, my roommate Jason Brogan contacted Michael Pisaro, who sent some scores his way. I remember thinking that it was great that an "established" composer felt comfortable sharing their music with a stranger. For some years following, Jason and I performed a lot of music by Michael and other composers through the "Silent Music Series: 4'33" and Beyond," a concert series produced through the New Music Collective in Charleston, South Carolina.

In my experience, the significance of these musicians – which I see as a collection of musicians, not a formal organization – is that they don't bother getting in the way of others. It's not structured around an ideal. In fact, there is no structure. It's just people doing their work and weaving in and out of potential collaborative opportunities.

22. What are the 'name pieces' on your website?

What 'name pieces' and which website are you referring to?

23. Is there an extra-musical dimension to your music – spiritual, political, etc.?

My feeling is that music inherently deals with spiritual, political, and other phenomena that you might consider “extra-musical.” While working, I am solely concerned with what the music needs in order to begin, which never ends up happening.

24 Is South Carolina a hub for experimental/new/avant-garde music?

It is my understanding is that Nic Jenkins (Charleston) and Greg Stuart (Columbia) are the two people in South Carolina who are working hardest to organize “experimental/new/avant-garde” music events in South Carolina at the moment. From 2005 to around 2012, Charleston was fortunate to have an organization that was able to produce and facilitate many events dealing with all kinds of different music from about 1950 to the present, with a particular emphasis on premiering work by young composers. Most of the people involved in the organization moved elsewhere and the organization sort of fell away. Also, Tom Law ran a venue in Columbia (“Conundrum”) that featured all sorts of different things including what you might call “experimental/new/avant-garde,” but that venue closed its doors some years ago.

25. What happened at Biblioteka Mayakovskaya? Is that in Moscow? Is there an interest in experimental music in Russia?

In May 2014, Ilia Belorukov and Denis Sorokin organized a concert where they performed pieces by Michael Pisaro, Johnny Chang, and myself. I assume you are referring to the videos that they posted online from that event (I think that Biblioteka Mayakovskaya is in St. Petersburg, but I’m not entirely sure about that). This looks like a resource for some activities there:<http://www.intonema.org>

Also, Sasha Elina and Kirill Shirokov seem like interesting people working in Russia.

END

Appendix XIX: Linda Catlin Smith

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Linda Catlin Smith. 10.12.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in Canada? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

There is definitely an experimental music 'tradition' in Canada. This is a vast subject and I will touch on two very important people. Udo Kasemets came to Canada from Estonia in 1951. Upon discovering the music and writings of John Cage, he began writing experimental music based on translations of poetry into music; new notations that he invented; and working with various graphics and time-based scores. Udo was the first to bring John Cage to Canada. He created large works combining poets with improvisers, or dancers with instrumentalists. Every work he made was in some way an experiment.

Rudolf Komorous came to Canada from Czechoslovakia (via China) in the late 60s and he taught at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. He was a member of the Czechoslovakian arts group Smidra, an experimental group of visual artists and composers. In Canada, he was a teacher of many of Canada's current generation of composers, including myself. He certainly encouraged an experimental frame of mind in all of us. His students include many composers who continue the experimental journey in music, including: Christopher Butterfield, Martin Arnold, Allison Cameron, Rodney Sharman, John Abram and many others.

2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.

I am part of that group of composers who are constantly questioning the possibilities of what music can be.

3. What do you consider to be experimental music?

Experimental music, for me, is music which is in some way new, or in which the composer is investigating the art form in some way. There is an aspect of exploration of new territory, of trying something different – the "what if?" of art-making. Experimentation is making music where the composer questions some of the givens of music thus far. So for instance, Feldman's music asks questions about duration, quietness, variation, notation, form, etc.

4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?

Absolutely.

5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

Humour is possible but I don't think the experimental frame of mind is necessarily looking for humour. It is actually quite a serious endeavour.

However, there are some experimental composer/performance artists that have made work that is very humorous: Christopher Butterfield or Richard Sacks for instance. There is a subtle humour behind some of Satie's expression markings...

6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

Experimental music is not intentionally elitist. I believe audiences can also be specialists in new music, they can be open minded and interested in the 'new' in all kinds of areas, and they can be from any social or educational background. One doesn't have to have a particular special knowledge to experience new music. I do believe some contemporary music might seem elitist – as though there is a special code one has to know – but I also have a lot of faith in listeners, who make their own way through listening experiences.

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

Yes.

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

The first work I ever heard by Feldman was the recording of False Relationships and the Extended Ending – one of two LPs of Feldman's music the library had at the University of Victoria. I absolutely loved this work – it was so mysterious, and ravishing in its sound. I listened to it over and over again. Later I also heard Rothko Chapel and then, King of Denmark. There were not many recordings at that time, so I didn't hear a lot of his music. But I loved the slow tempi, the atmosphere, the unpredictability, the detachment from drama and from conventional gestures, the harmonic thinking, the intimacy – all of these things made me feel I could write music. In recent years, with the outpourings of recordings, I have loved hearing Coptic Light, the string quartets, Violin and Orchestra, and most recently, Neither, his opera.

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

rhythm and tempo, form/structure, dynamics, pacing, mood

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use? Do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

I use Italian, French and English.

I generally use the word that most closely fits what I am trying to convey. Sometimes 'semplice' feels more correct than simple, or 'en dehors' sounds better to me than in relief...

11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the possible influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

Yes: his pitch world - the harmony - of his language, coupled with pacing and near repetition (what he often called 'translation'); instrumentation (Rothko Chapel, Viola in my Life, Routine Investigations, False Relationships and the Extended Ending), the harmonic palette (Coptic Light, almost all of the later works), the non-narrative aspect of all works, including his opera, Neither, his sense of form and scale (For Philip Guston, String Quartet #2), the particular use of patterning (Why Patterns, Coptic Light). In fact, his approach to almost every aspect of composition is unique.

12. Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything. (This question was not asked).

13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

Yes, I am also very much interested in painting, particularly abstract expressionist work, but also including still life paintings, including the work of Chardin, Morandi, Vallayer-Coster, Zurburan. I am fascinated by Turner's work, particularly the 'unfinished' paintings, and the backgrounds of his works. I have travelled explicitly to see Turner exhibits, as well as the work of Agnes Martin, Joseph Cornell and Mark Rothko.

14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

I am not sure about stasis. Perhaps I am more interested in subtle movement, in interior reflection... I think it has to do with what kind of forward momentum one is experiencing. In Feldman's music perhaps it is more like a kind of spiral, where the movement is constantly circling around a few elements, but one is getting deeper at the same time. This aspect of music certainly interests me, as though one is not necessarily moving forward, but rather just getting deeper and deeper into it.

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

I do not generally like lots of contrasts in dynamics, and prefer a moderate to quiet approach in terms of volume. I feel the sound of the instrument doesn't need extra energy – this changes the actual sound to something more dramatic. I like to hear sounds unencumbered. I am also drawn to a more intimate kind of music making, and low dynamics is a part of that.

16. (If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

I have very sensitive hearing, so loud sounds bother me. But also... I am just not drawn to exciting, dramatic things. I have always loved slow, soft sounds, to suspended, atmospheric things. I am not so much interested in things that happen, as qualities of mood.

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

I think notation is an invitation to performers to create sound in a certain way. Sometimes notation can also invite the performers to think in new ways about what they are doing. The unmeasured preludes of Louis Couperin are a very different thing to work on than the more rhythmically precise works of Bach, for instance. The engagement with notation is such a serious thing, that any ambiguity is there as it is in poetry – an intersection where one pauses for thought.

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome? If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

I do have works that are based in very strict procedures (Moi Qui Tremblais, and Thought and Desire) but these are my own invented procedures and don't relate to Feldman.

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations* for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

Audaciousness is part of it, but that word implies a kind of "flying in the face of tradition" quality, sort of flaunting the risk-taking. I think of it more as a kind of courageous stepping out, cautiously trying something new, aware that it could absolutely fail. It is brave, and not necessarily as self-confident as the word 'audacious' implies.

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively? Do you have an opinion on this?

I believe Feldman often worked intuitively, but sometimes it seems to me he worked with a kind of grid (in terms of meter) as his canvas – for instance, it appears that some of his scores were planned out in terms of meter, but his process feels to me like he was intuitively working out – feeling out – what needed to happen. I think of this as a very deep process, not merely the transcription of an improvisation – but rather a deep speculation on possibilities, through constant questioning.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Linda Catlin Smith

21. Are you the leading light in the Canadian experimental music scene?

No.

22. In some of your works – *Moi Qui Tremblais*, for example - there are periods of reiterated chords that seem to have a mantra-like effect?

What is your reaction to that?

It is a kind of gentle chant perhaps, and that is a bit like a mantra. I think I just love to hear the same chord over and over again, so that I can dwell in that harmony.

23. Do you have a system? Is it a secret?

My ear is my system, and it is not secret.

END

Appendix XX: Charlie Ulyatt

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK. North America and central Europe

Charlie Ulyatt. 18.12.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the UK? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?

Tradition, I would say no, but 'scene' yes. However the scene probably only lasted a few years in the 60s/70s and whilst 'experimental' music often came from the jazz or prog 'scenes', it is now more diverse across all genres so can't really be defined as a 'scene'. It has been 'revived' in as much as it is easier to distribute music these days and no record contracts needed. plus social media etc.

2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.
3. What do you consider to be experimental music?

Mmmm difficult one, and I'm not sure 'experimental' is the ideal term although can't think of any other that is better. I would say it is anything that doesn't conform to the 'norm' in relation to sound. rhythm and/or method

4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?
5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.

Don't know about 'funny' but there should be more 'fun' involved. My suspicion is that way too many experimental musicians take themselves a little more seriously than perhaps they should. Music should be about a lot of things, and 'fun' should not be excluded from that.

6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

More or less repeating my above question. Yes, I think it can be elitist for sure, but again, I see no reason why it should be. Could it be that some musicians enter this field as it is a relatively small pond and it is easier to become a 'bigger fish' perhaps?

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

Have heard very little by him so extremely unlikely

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use?

As a solo performer, and an improviser, my only notes are to myself, where I even do any but would be in English if that helps

And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

No

11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

12. Can you briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

It comes from me and no one else, irrespective of influences. So far, my work has included aspects of drone, minimalism, noise, jazz etc ... a hotch potch, but one that hopefully uses the influences without sounding like them

13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

To an extent perhaps. I do like some abstract art, especially abstract expressionism. Many of these use textures, something which is in a lot of my music. I hadn't thought about this before, but perhaps subconsciously it does.

14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis.

Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

No

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace).

Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

An element of slowness and pace yes, although this is increasingly being interspersed with louder elements so perhaps, yes, but not influenced by Feldman.

16. (If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

I've always appreciated a minimalist approach, though also don't mind some 'busier' music. Initially, when I started, I more or less tried (and failed) to sound like Dylan Carlson (notoriously slow) and whilst my style has changed, I have maintained that aspect of it. Also, from a practical point, when I started to play guitar, playing slow meant there was more time to figure out where to put my fingers :)

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be ‘counted’, unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF’s work, your own, and composition in general?

Not really but occasionally throw in a ‘challenge’ mentally, during a number, to see what happens. Not always successfully.

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

Almost always as I improvise. Occasionally I have a loose plan, other times I just start and see what happens.

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF’s music?

No

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF’s music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that *Variations* for piano begins with 18 bars’ rest, *Piano Piece 1952* consists of 171 notes played singly “with all beats equal”, the sounded events in *Piano Piece (1964)* are so sporadic that the piece seems to be ‘hardly there’ at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that ‘this is not music’, ‘anyone could do that’, etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

Not really but so what if anyone could do this? As mentioned before, music should not be elitist. Anyone and everyone should have the right to make music. Whether anyone wishes to listen is another matter.

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Charlie Ulyatt

21. How did you make the compositions on the album *Shifting*?

It was all improvised, occasionally with a rough sketch but not always. I then listened to the tracks and selected the most appropriate for the album.

22. What are your plans musically speaking?

Make a million and retire :) .. But seriously .. just keep developing and not repeating myself too often. My next album is likely to be played on a prepared acoustic guitar and follow a more 'free improv' approach. The resistance to splashing out on a Cello is also weakening and could well happen.

23. Your music is not what I call – perhaps ill-advisedly – ‘pop’ experimental. Do you know what is that ‘pop’ experimental movement is; where it comes from; what it is trying to achieve?

No idea but then again, I'm neither young or 'hip' so perhaps to be expected :)

END

Appendix XXI: Christian Wolff

Questionnaire (this questionnaire is designed for those composers who have acknowledged [by email to me or otherwise] an influence of Feldman - however distant - on their music, or, at least, an interest in that composer.)

The legacy of Morton Feldman's music for the experimental music tradition in the UK, North America and central Europe

Christian Wolff. 18.12.2017.

Section 1 The experimental music tradition

1. Has there been an experimental music 'tradition', or at least an experimental scene, in the USA? If so, does it continue to exist, or has it in some way been revived?
2. If yes, have you, in your opinion, been part of it? If yes, describe briefly in what way.
3. What do you consider to be experimental music?
4. Is Morton Feldman part of the (American) experimental tradition?
5. Is experimental music funny? Interpret 'funny' in any way you wish.
6. Is it elitist? Can elitism be a good thing? (One thinks of Milton Babbitt's anti-populist stance in his article 'Who cares if you listen?'.)

Section 2 Feldman's legacy for the respondent personally

7. Do you acknowledge an influence of Feldman's music on your own, or at least a debt to MF? (If the answer is no, this whole section can be omitted, except for question 12.)

I 'grew up' with Feldman's music in the 1950s and admired his work, so yes, it has had influence on my work (but I should also say that just about any music I encounter - quite a variety - may affect how I work, or gives me something to think about, also negatively: e.g. hearing something I know I wouldn't want to have anything to do with). There was a time when I thought Feldman's music 'allowed' me to use any intervals/dyads/chords. This was from his earlier work, where, for instance he used octaves so beautifully (which in the general serial atmosphere of the time was strictly forbidden). But then in the later work his pallet of intervals was much reduced, to mostly 2^{nds}, 7ths and 9ths.

8. If yes, briefly describe what it is about Feldman and his music that you have found inspirational, at least to some extent?

9. If yes, in which of the following areas do you feel there is a match of approach between your music and Feldman's (indicate all that apply).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. melody/melodic gesture | b. harmony |
| c. instrumentation/vocalisation | d. form/structure |
| e. rhythm and tempo | f. dynamics |
| g. notation | h. other; what? |

10. Linguistics: Feldman more often than not uses English when providing instructions for performance (apart from the usual Italianate dynamic markings, that is). What language do you generally use?

And do you see any significance in this? If yes, what?

11. In the interviewer's (my) view, Feldman's sound world is in the broader perspective pretty much unique/original (the obvious or probably influence of Cage, Wolff, and La Monte Young notwithstanding). Do you agree? If yes, can you give one or two examples of that uniqueness?

12. Briefly describe what you think is unique or original about your music, if anything.

13. Feldman was impressed and moved by American abstract art and other external art forms. Are such phenomena relevant to your output? If yes, briefly describe in what way this is so.

Musical relevance of visual art. Well, Morty talked the most about art when he was supposed to be talking about music. When young I encountered and was impressed by what I'd see at MOMA in New York (where I grew up), and then was taken by Cage to visit Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, and liked their work a lot. Since then the later Guston (which Feldman didn't know what to do with) is much in my mind, and others... The relevance to my music? Oblique; say, going to a Jasper Johns show, or just recently a beauty of Arshile Gorky's work, energizes my head, makes me want to make music, but not to somehow 'represent' the artists' work – that's impossible anyway; visual art and music have radical differences.

14. Feldman's music is associated with the concept and/or sound world of stasis or at least a quest for stasis. Is such a concept or quest relevant to your music?

15. Feldman's music is associated with low dynamics (some explosive outbursts nevertheless occurring from time to time in some pieces at least) and slow tempi (or at least a slow pace). Are these aspects of your output in general would you say?

16. (If yes in 14 and 15), why do you pursue such a path? Are there external, non-musical reasons for this? Could the reasons be political, spiritual, reactive, for example?

17. Feldman sometimes notates ambiguously, setting up challenges for performance/interpretation. Examples of this would include piano chords that are humanly impossible in terms of stretch, time signature structures that can barely be 'counted', unusual markings (such as *pppppp* or pauses written over an empty staff).

Have you any thoughts about this with relevance to MF's work, your own, and composition in general?

18. Are there aspects of your output that were either chance-determined or indeterminate in terms of eventual outcome?

If yes, are they modelled to any extent on MF's music?

19. In my view, there is an audacious quality to at least some aspects of MF's music. Examples of audaciousness might include: the fact that Variations for piano begins with 18 bars' rest, Piano Piece 1952 consists of 171 notes played singly "with all beats equal", the sounded events in Piano Piece (1964) are so sporadic that the piece seems to be 'hardly there' at all, and so on.

All this would seem to be fodder for many critics and audience members, who might gleefully exclaim that 'this is not music', 'anyone could do that', etc.

Is audaciousness part of the experimental scene? How important is it to you?

20. Did Feldman have a method or did he write entirely intuitively, in your opinion?

We all have some method, but Feldman manages to seem to have none. I have thought that he really worked by pure intuition. But that doesn't rule out having sound images, thinking about patterning, as of rugs, or setting out with fixed restrictions (e.g. the pattern of Piano Piece 1952, or of Triadic Memories, or even just a particular instrumentation). Feldman said that the crucial initial choices when starting a piece were the instrumentation and the scale (approximate total duration), after that you're on our own.

Section 3 Composer-specific questions

Christian Wolff

21. Your output is very diverse. Does this mean that consistency of style is not of great importance to you?

The thing is being open to change, and then not wanting to repeat myself, to the extent that this is possible. My changes – not so much of style, as of techniques – come partly from that, partly from changes in the world around me and my response to them; e.g. the political turn of my work in the early 1970s in response to events then. It's not so much a matter of consistency as being, well, true to oneself and at the same time aware of what's going on around one.

22. I have owned the score of Piano 1 since the '60s, when I was a music student (with Howard Skempton, as it happens) in London. In the liner notes to the Wergo recording you explain how it was composed, confirming some of my thoughts on the matter (I'm glad to say!) Do you think you may have invented the system where a range of pitches is selected, but how they fall out precisely is chance-determined?

For Piano I: actually the 9 pitches are chosen; the chance element in that piece (a very rare use of chance on my part) determines which of a collection of structural densities (that is, how many notes in how much time, say, 5 in 2 seconds, none in 7 seconds, etc.), I think, 16 of them, is to be used; and allows the possibility of two such structural units to appear simultaneously or overlapped. Everything else is determined by me, drawing on pre-set collections of dynamics and durations (and the 9 pitches). So the only chance determination is the sequence and possible overlap of structural units. And it did allow for occasional longer silences (say, if a unit of no sounds in 7 seconds turned up by chance two times in succession). Yes, this whole procedure is my invention.

23. *Serenade*, from 1950, seems almost before its time. Modesty aside, do you think your originality has been overlooked and far more of the writings on you have focused on your improvisatory scores and your general fondness for the more 'unstructured' experimental scene (as I interpret it)?

*My originality, in the early pieces, overlooked? Somewhat I suppose, because those early pieces were not performed much after their early first performances, and some never did get performed till much later. I think of my subsequent work, at least some of it, with the various 'open' features for performers, just as 'original'. I don't, by the way, regard them as really improvisational. Have you ever tried playing, for example, *For 1, 2 or 3 people*? It appears very open, and no two performances are likely to be much alike, but playing the piece properly allows for very little improvisation. It's not in the least like 'free' improvisation (of which I have quite a lot of experience).*

A last word with reference to Feldman. I enjoyed his company a lot. He could be very funny and was very smart and observant. He also strongly supported me and my work at the beginning (and in the 60s arranged the first program made up entirely of my music, in Buffalo, NY), though I was rather younger. His early work first introduced alternative notations (the graph pieces) and a kind of indeterminacy (the open pitches, only described as high, middle and low); also the open space for initiating a sound. At the time we (Morty, John Cage and I,) then a few years later, Earle Brown were all having new ideas at the same time, sometimes the

same or similar ideas. Not really a matter of “influence”, just an atmosphere. Incidentally, those early striking inventions of Feldman’s (graph pieces etc.) he didn’t stay with very long. He eventually moved on to (large) scale, the very extended musical structures and the extended use of repetition (these, loops, do occur already in the early pieces, also the acute sense of instrumental sound was there from the beginning).

END

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