

San Francisco Tape Music Festival Friday January 5, 2024 8:30pm

[Pierre Schaeffer](#)

Étude aux chemins de fer (1948/1971)

3'45" Monophonic

First performances:

Original version: French National Radio, Paris Channel; October 5, 1948

Revised version: Halles Baltard, Paris; February 16, 1971

Étude aux chemins de fer [*Railroad Study*] is perhaps the most shocking work of the revolutionary* art of *musique concrète*, primarily due to Schaeffer's instance of treating the sounds of a railway station as musical. While we're all used to hearing "loops" in contemporary (art and popular) music today—modern day digital audio workstations (DAWS) easily compel the neophyte to create rhythmic loops—in 1948 such an instance on a mechanics of musical rhythm and "unmusical" sound material was found to be surprising AND challenging... some of us still are challenged!

Originally presented as *étude no. 2* in the 1948 premiere of *Cinq études de bruits*, by 1971 we're down to *Quatre études* and the *Railroad Study* becomes *no. 3*. The revision is around fifty seconds longer, expanding development of material, and includes much more deliberate shaping of cadences.

*Schaeffer began this new art of sound with turntables(!)

[Pierre Schaeffer](#) (1910-1995) is known primarily as the "father of *musique concrète*," but he was also an writer, pioneer and veteran of radio, and founder and director of many special projects within the French national radio, in particular *Le Service de la Recherche* (The Research Service) which he directed from 1960 to 1975. He was a

thinker and researcher whose ideas had applications in audiovisual communication and, most directly, in music. Although his compositional output was limited, some of the first *musique concrète* studies in 1948 are still as fresh and challenging as when they were produced. The 1948 premiere radio broadcast of Pierre Schaeffer's *Études de Bruits* (Noise Studies) serves now as it did then, as the best introduction to this entirely new musical form.

Pierre Schaeffer's theoretical work, the foundation of which he developed while working at Radiodiffusion Française, was published in 1966; his *Traité des Objets Musicaux*. It remains the seminal treatise of *musique concrète*. His goal and research was to define a "solfege" of the sound universe based on the perception of sound and to question many previous notions about music, listening, perception, timbre, sound, etc. In 1958, within the structure of the French national radio, he formed the *Groupe de Recherches Musicales* (GRM), which continues today. GRM was at first mobilized to conduct group research into its founder's ideas.

[Patricia Martínez](#)

***Del cuadro a la postergación* (1994)**

5'56" Stereo

Del cuadro a la postergación is an acousmatic piece. It was part of the diptych *Especjos de tiempo / Mirrors of Time* (2002). It is based on a work by the German artist Günther Uecker called *The Nail On the Paint*. The work is a reflection about time, about how an instant maybe can be the whole eternity, about that snapshot impression of something at the very first moment of the encounter, almost an inapprehensible instant. Composed at the GMEB Studios, *Del cuadro a la postergación* won a Prize-Residence at the International Competition of Electroacoustic Music in 1993, (Groupe de Musique Électroacoustique de Bourges, France). It also won second prize in the Diffusion International Competition (2003, University of Limerick, Lyric FM, Ireland).

[Patricia Martínez](#) (1973-2022) was an active Argentinian Spanish composer, interdisciplinary artist, and performer, based in Buenos Aires. Her creative and research interests focused on new music composition and interdisciplinary projects, especially contemporary music theatre, new opera, extended music composition and performance, a sensible use of technology (electroacoustic and video art), improvisation, and choreography-composition. Ensembles and performers who have played Patricia's music include: Arditti String Quartet, JACK String Quartet, sfSound, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Bang on a Can, SurPlus, Staatstheater Darmstadt Ensemble, Stanford New Music Ensemble, and many others. Her works received numerous awards including the most important recognitions of her country and abroad, and she received fellowships, grants, residencies and commissions from numerous domestic and international music organizations and institutions. Patricia was a professor of Composition at National University of Quilmes (UNQ) and at the Superior Conservatory of Music from Buenos Aires City Astor Piazzolla (CSMCBA). She earned a Doctoral and a Master degree in Music Composition from Stanford University, where Brian Ferneyhough was her advisor.

[L.J. Altvater](#)

***Zoos and Airports 1* (2023)**

3'18" Stereo

I'm interested in the surrealistic juxtaposition of unrelated sounds chosen from a limited palette of source material. To that end I've been recording environmental sounds from zoos and airports for a number of years. *Zoos and Airports 1* is an experiment in layering and manipulating some of those sounds.

[L.J. Altvater](#) is a visual artist who has also been active as a musician and recording artist since his days as drummer with the 1980's Columbus, Ohio rock band The Highly

Evolved Cosmic Beings. He creates experimental recordings under the name Mission Hypnotic, mostly non-musical in nature, involving layered and manipulated field recordings and randomly triggered sounds. He also produces electronic music under the names Green & Submarine and Tetryon Field and is the recording engineer, co-writer and producer of the collaborative effort Project Tierra. He occasionally does live performances using cassette tape loops, physically cut and spliced, processed through eurorack modules and guitar effects pedals. He has lived in San Francisco since 1989.

[Matt Robidoux](#)

Corn Straw Ball (2023)

2'20" Quadraphonic

Centered around activations of a “singing straw”, *Corn Straw Ball* began while cleaning out a family member’s home and finding a yoga ball, and sticking an overtone straw into the air hole of the ball while it deflated. This recording became an improvisational prompt for my corn synth (full name: Kinetically Operated Randomness Network) — using the dual oscillator from the Buchla 158 with an aluminum cast touch controller shaped like two corn cobs.

[Matt Robidoux](#) is a San Francisco based composer, improviser, educator, and community organizer interested in the convergence of movement and sound as it relates to free improvisation, accessibility, and the communicative capacities of sonic energy. Their primary instrument is the “corn synth” — (kinetically operated randomness network) a modular system that interprets physical input from two “ears of corn” sculptures cast in aluminum. In 2017 Matt established the Adaptive Instrument Ensemble (AIE), a community based practice focused on expanding the improvising community across abilities, demographics, and geographies. Beginning with a pilot workshop in 2019, Robidoux founded the Prepared Guitar Ensemble in collaboration

with Creativity Explored, a studio-based collective that partners with people with developmental disabilities to celebrate and nurture the creative potential in all of us.

[Jonty Harrison](#)

Kammermusik (2022)

11'47" Stereo

dedicated to Folkmar Hein

A space (or concatenation of spaces) whose qualities we examine, explore and experience in sound... Different areas (sections) of this 'chamber' betray their physical sources, but also resonate with references to terms used in electroacoustic music and signal processing - in order: *threshold, noise floor, brick wall, windowing, headroom*. The final section combines materials from the first four, after *windowing* ends with two further 'windows' which offer aural glimpses of 'beyond' - outside, to external spaces, but also within, to the internal space of the imagination. *Kammermusik* was commissioned through the Thomas Selig Fixed Media Award given by DEGEM.

[Jonty Harrison](#) studied at the University of York, UK between 1970 and 1976, before moving to London, where he worked at the National Theatre and City University. In 1980 he joined the Music Department of the University of Birmingham, where he was Director of the Electroacoustic Music Studios and BEAST (Birmingham ElectroAcoustic Sound Theatre), which he founded in 1982. He retired as Professor of Composition and Electroacoustic Music in 2014 and is now Emeritus Professor. He was Guest Professor of Computer Music at the Technische Universität, Berlin (2010) and Leverhulme Emeritus Fellow (2014-15). He is Compositeur Associé with Maison des Arts Sonores/KLANG! Acousmonium, Montpellier, France. He has been commissioned by leading organisations and performers (INA-GRM, Bourges, ICMA, MAFILM/Magyar Rádió, Arts Council England, Electroacoustic Wales/Bangor University, Maison des Arts Sonores/KLANG! Acousmonium, BBC) and won several prizes (Bourges, Ars Electronica,

Musica Nova, Destellos, Thomas Selig Fixed Media Award/DEGEM, Lloyds Bank, PRS Prize). His music appears on four solo albums (empreintes DIGITALes, Montreal) and on several compilations (NMC, Mnémosyne Musique Média, CDCM/Centaur, Asphodel, Clarinet Classics, FMR, Edition RZ and EMF).

[Ryoji Ikeda](#)

ultratronics 02

5'10" Stereo

Glitch pioneer Ryoji Ikeda's 2022 release *ultratronics* features seventeen tracks of compositions created between 2013 and 2022 using audio material recorded in the 1990s. A surprisingly colorful set, *ultratronics* often sounds like Ikeda's DJing a retrospective of his own career alongside the sounds of his influences. *ultratronics 02* (the third track of the album) features Ikeda's signature Gen X-friendly hyper-digital glitch rhythms juxtaposed with ambient textures and a sample of his "ULT 708X" robotic voice.

[Ryoji Ikeda](#) was born in 1966 in Gifu. He currently lives and works in Paris and Kyoto. While rooted in electronic music, the internationally active composer and artist also produces art as experimentation. Ikeda's immersive live performances and installations employ an elaborate orchestration of sound, visuals, matter, physical phenomena, and mathematical concepts. He established his online source as codex | edition. In 2022, Hirosaki Museum of Contemporary Art presented his first major solo exhibition in Japan since 2009. Ikeda has received the Prix Ars Electronica Collide at CERN in 2014, and the 70th Japanese Minister of Education Award for Fine Arts (Media Arts Division) in 2020.

[Nicholas Virgo](#) & [Alistair MacDonald](#)

***A Confluence of Birds* (2022)**

8'00" Stereo

A Confluence of Birds takes field recordings of birds across the United Kingdom: corvids in Dorset, starlings on the Isle of Lewis, buzzards and finches in Aberdeenshire, gulls and kittiwakes on the easternmost tip of Scotland and curlews in the North Pennines. Songs manifest in dense choruses and individual calls across riverbanks, precipitous cliffs, plains and valleys. The piece is a playful, kaleidoscopic counterpoint of these original recordings and their transformations.

[Nicholas Virgo](#) is an on-off composer, working mostly in the area of electroacoustic music. His background has ranged through music academia and teaching, freelance composing and in community development.

[Alistair MacDonald](#) is a composer, improviser and sound artist who designs his own computer-based instruments and environments, to create uniquely rich, spatial music. His work encompasses composing, field recording, live electronics, interactivity and improvisation. He makes standalone electroacoustic works, music for instruments and voices, music and sound design for dance, film and interactive installations. He is Professor and Director of the Electroacoustic Studios at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and is a regular visiting teacher leading masterclasses in improvisation with live electronics across Europe.

Intermission

[Raphael Radna](#)

strung (2023)

3'18" Stereo

strung proposes a deconstructed music through the transformation of instrumental timbres, with special attention given to sounds of the piano. These are processed and juxtaposed against textures derived from additional instruments, e.g., flute, oboe, and bassoon, giving rise to sonic morphologies that are at once familiar and uncanny. Taking inspiration from the dynamic profile of the piano, the formal development of the piece is driven by the residual energy of several strong attacks, which manifests in ever-shifting textures. Space has a primary role in articulating the changing nature of this energy, with the speed, degree, and shape of spatial movements serving to communicate its release, dissipation, or resurgence.

[Raphael Radna](#) is a composer and computer music researcher working in acousmatic music, mixed music, computer-assisted composition, spatial audio, and creative music software development. He has presented music and research worldwide in such venues as the International Computer Music Conference, DAFx, the SEAMUS National Conference, the New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival, the Meta-Xenakis Global Symposium, and the Visiones Sonoras Festival of Music and New Technologies; and has collaborated with such artists as Antonina Styczeń, Shanna Pranaitis, HOCKET, and the Isaura String Quartet. His music technology work includes the Space Control spatialization software, the Xenos stochastic synthesizer plug-in, and projects for prominent developers Arturia and Cycling '74. Raphael holds a BA in Music from Vassar College, an MFA in Electronic Music and Recording Media from Mills College, and an MS in Media Arts and Technology from UC Santa Barbara, where he is currently a PhD candidate in Music Composition studying with João Pedro Oliveira and Curtis Roads.

[Maria Pelekanou](#)

Nach der Stille (After the silence) (2020)

8'12" Octophonic

Nach der Stille is a piece of electroacoustic music for eight or four loudspeakers or stereo, based on several layers, moving sound objects - which alternate and create a different spatial perception in the audience surrounded by them. The main theme of the piece is the impression that exists in the modern western world about a war, on the bombing of Syria and for this reason it is made from the reflections of a basic sound. A recording was used as source material, as well as a draft (in Audacity) of a shooting simulation. Based on these two, a polyphony was created not only of sounds, images, but also of space. Objects are transformed so that one emerges from the other. Pitch shifting, time stretching, delay lines, but above all reverbs. In this piece, reverb is what shapes the content, connects, binds, and constructs a poetic result.

[Maria Pelekanou](#) lives in Bremen, Germany and works as a sound artist and composer for interdisciplinary projects. She combines electronics, electroacoustics and 3D sound technology with visual elements in live performances to penetrate deeply into the physical and emotional essence of sound and space. Since childhood, music has accompanied Maria throughout her life. She grew up singing and playing piano in Thessaloniki. During her studies at the Department of Music Technology and Acoustics of the Mediterranean University of Crete, she gradually found her way as a creative composer. Her artistic research is based on immersive sound, listening and perception and is mainly influenced by the human voice for embodiment, human-machine interaction and acoustic ecology. Her works have been presented at "next_generation" at the "Zentrum für Kunst und Medien", at the "Long Night of Music" in Oldenburg (2020,2021) and Bremen (2021), at the Greek Days of Electroacoustics at the University of Ioannina (2021), at the "6th Conference on Acoustic Ecology" at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and at the Spanish radio RTVE. One of her most recent compositions was selected in a competition for the CD of the 30th anniversary of DEGEM and was presented at the concert ceremony at the ZKM in Karlsruhe.

[Luciano Berio](#)

***Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958)**

8'11" Stereo

Luciano Berio's *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* is known to be one of the classic pieces of early tape music. Composed in 1958 at his own Studio di Fonologia, *Thema* still sounds surprisingly fresh, and has continued to be an influence on tape music composers over the last 50 years. The piece consists entirely of tape manipulations of Cathy Berberian reading the opening "overture" text from the "Sirens" chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Berio was especially interested in exploring new relationships between text and music, and in *Thema*, his goal was to transform the poetry of Joyce's text into a more musical context. What is so easily achieved with digital sampling technology today — mixing, reordering, changing speed/pitch, reversing, etc — was a fairly laborious task in the days when Berio and his assistants created this work on electromagnetic tape. It is unclear if Berberian's unmanipulated reading on some commercial releases was intended to be a kind of prelude heard at the beginning of the piece in live performance -- we include it here.

[Luciano Berio](#) (1925-2003) was one of the most important composers and musical thinkers of the second half of the 20th century. A major force in the development of post-war new music, he produced a body of works that embraced a wide range of interests, genres and techniques. He is known for his virtuosic *Sequenzas* for solo instruments, his orchestral compositions, his early involvement in electronic music, and most importantly, his exploration and expansion of the musical and theatrical possibilities of the human voice. He was extremely interested in re-examining the music of the past, and transcribed many works by composers from Monteverdi to Mahler, as well as reconstructing several unfinished works. In addition, he often used material and quotations of other works (from others as well as himself) in his own compositions, predating "sampling" by many decades.

[Thom Blum](#)

Telescopic 1 (zoom out)

8'48" Stereo

This piece was inspired about 50 years ago when I first saw the Ray and Charles Eames short film *Powers of Ten* (the 1967 version). This film demonstrates the phenomenon of relative scaling by increasing the distance in increments between the viewer and an object, Earth. Every ten seconds, the viewer's distance increases by roughly a factor of 10. *Telescopic 1* is a series of seven vignettes in which each scene is an incremental enlargement or zoomed-out view of an imaginary, conceptual, universe of sounds. Each of the seven scenes provides a larger, more encompassing, viewport (or "earport") on the full sound world.

The piece begins with the most zoomed-in view containing merely a single sample, an impulse, a pixel if this were visual art. It then progresses in outward steps, over roughly nine minutes, ultimately expanding to a very broad bird's-eye view of the full sound universe. The central three minutes of the piece is the sweet spot. Details are in clear focus, and the perspective there enable one to hear the world's more delicate, articulated, and most musical expressions. As the zoom levels continue to expand, increasing our distance from the initial object, clarity and fine details get blurry and smeared. Ultimately the universe of sound transforms for us into pure noise, much like the starting point only extended.

At the end we are simply too far away from our sound universe to discern its finer details. It becomes only shape and color. So the piece begins and ends with noise, and the musical fineries are in the middle, yet it's all one universe and only the views are different.

[Thom Blum](#) composes fixed-media electroacoustic music and creates sounding objects and installations. He has been exploring these interests and residing in San Francisco since 1978. Recent musical activities include releasing an album titled *Three Improvisations* (2022, Bandcamp), presenting a talk about his musical life and processes at the [CREATE](#) seminar series (University of California at Santa Barbara), and giving a talk and performance, with Hadley McCarroll, for the [Art-Talk Salon](#) series (Project Artaud & Developing Environments, San Francisco). At the [Prelinger Library](#) (ongoing, San Francisco), he has created a multi-channel [installation/instrument](#) (aka the “instrullation”) and embedded it within the stacks. It runs on Sunday afternoons and provides a unique aural interpretation of the Library.

[Timothy Roy](#)

***Brompton & Braeswood* (2023)**

11'17" Ambisonic

Brompton & Braeswood is an acousmatic piece inspired by my personal experience living through Hurricane Harvey. The title derives from the street intersection where my wife and I were living at the time, along Brays Bayou in Houston. Central to my piece is a library of field recordings I captured at that intersection and along the bayou in the days immediately prior to Harvey making landfall. Some of these recordings were made with a Soundfield SPS-200 microphone; others were made with a matched pair of DPA miniature omni microphones clipped to the brim of a baseball cap, which allowed me to capture a quasi-binaural stereo image.

In composing *Brompton & Braeswood*, I sought to present a series of vignettes of contrasting mood and representation. The piece's opening presents the imagery and emotion of a violent storm. The storm is initially heard directly, then — after a door slams shut — from the perspective of someone taking shelter. The remainder of the piece depicts the gentle but unrelenting, oppressive rainfall that accompanied the hurricane, and there is a marked shift in the music which draws the listener inward toward a place of introspection. At the time Harvey struck Houston, I had just arrived

home from the hospital to recover from a major surgery, following a long period of illness. *Brompton & Braeswood* draws on my contemporaneous thoughts and feelings: those of intense worry and gloom, but also of optimism that my health would improve.

Aside from field recordings, other sound materials include noisy tones synthesized in Max/MSP, pitched wood, and piano and guitar samples. Sound was spatialized using 5th-order ambisonic encoding. The piece explores electroacoustic techniques of amplitude envelope following, filtering, and synthesis using bandpass-filtered white noise.

[Timothy Roy](#) composes music steeped in imagery and allusion, which seeks to elicit a sense of time, place, and feeling. His music has received performances at such venues and events as the National Theater of Taipei, Music Biennale Zagreb, ZKM Karlsruhe, BEAST, Atemporánea Festival, Toronto Electroacoustic Symposium, ICMC, the International Electroacoustic Music Festival of Chile, “Ai-maako,” Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, and Los Angeles County Arboretum. Recent honors include the Salvatore Martirano Memorial Composition Award (1st Prize), ASCAP/SEAMUS Student Commission Award (1st Prize), Robert Avalon International Composer Competition (1st Prize), Prix CIME (Distinction), and Giga-Hertz Prize from ZKM Karlsruhe (Honorable Mention). Tim resides in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where he is choirmaster and organist at the Church of Saint Peter. He is completing a doctorate at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music.



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