

# DIFFUSION

Into the Labyrinth curated by Chris DeLaurenti

Friday, November 8, 2024  
The Red Room, Baltimore

Cortege - for Charles Kent (1969) – Jean Eichelberger Ivey

Pendlerdrøm (1997) – Barry Truax

Eclipse (1967) – Pril Smiley

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Into the Labyrinth (2000) – Hildegard Westerkamp

Farewell to a Hill (1975 / 2024) – Alice Shields

Tides (1974) – Bengt Hambraeus

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Well, hell (2022) – Robbie Wing

Sud (1985) – Jean-Claude Risset

## Cortege - for Charles Kent

For her 1973 Folkways LP, *Music by Jean Eichelberger Ivey for voices, instruments and tape*, the composer wrote, “*Cortege - for Charles Kent* (1969), a purely electronic piece, was the first piece to be composed in the Peabody Conservatory Electronic Music Studio, which opened the year it was composed. I thought it fitting to commemorate in that piece a former director of Peabody (d. 1969) who had his own electronic music equipment [including a Moog synthesizer] from about 1964 on, gave demonstrations on it, and by his interest helped pave the way for the present studio and courses at Peabody.”

In the score, Ivey states there are two types of sound in the *Cortege*: “A low, booming sound, like a kettledrum or distant cannon, of more or less indefinite, but subtly changing pitch,” and arcing sine waves “tuned to produce a clangorous cluster in the medium to medium-high pitch range.” This surround-sound mix attempts to spatially portray the multiple corteges in the original stereo recording. By grouping speakers and plotting trajectories of sound, I hope to honor the composer’s elegantly elastic collisions of dynamics, filtering, tempo, and quicksilver glissandi. – CD

**Jean Eichelberger Ivey** (1923-2010) was a composer, pianist, electronic musician, professor, and the founder of the Peabody Conservatory Electronic Music Studio, which she directed from 1969 until her retirement in 1997. She studied composition with Wayne Barlow at the Eastman School of Music, and later, as a concert pianist, gave recitals in Mexico in 1957-1958 and then in Germany and Austria in 1958. After attending lectures by Karlheinz Stockhausen, Vladimir Ussachevsky, and Milton Babbitt, she grew interested in electronic music and studied with Hugh Le Caine at the University of Toronto. Ivey’s rich range of compositions include pieces for performers and electronics, including *Terminus* for mezzo-soprano and tape (1970); *Aldebaran* for viola and tape (1972); *Testament of Eve* for voice, orchestra, and tape (1976); and *Sea-Change* for orchestra and tape (1979). – CD

<https://aspace.library.jhu.edu/repositories/4/resources/1490>

## Pendlerdrøm

*Pendlerdrøm* (1997) (or “Commuterdream”) is a soundscape composition that recreates a commuter’s trip home from the Central Train Station in Copenhagen. At two points, one in the station and the other on the train, the commuter lapses into a daydream in which the sounds that were only half heard in the station return to reveal their musical qualities. It is hoped that the next day the commuter will hear the musicality of the station’s soundscape in a different manner as a result of the dream; the rest of us may discover the very same aspects the second time we hear the work. *Pendlerdrøm* was commissioned by the Danish group SKRAEP in conjunction with a project concerning commuters. They provided the original one-hour recording on which this piece is based.

**Barry Truax** (1947) is a composer, teacher, and theorist. After studies at the Institute of Sonology in Utrecht, he moved to Vancouver, Canada in 1973 where he taught electroacoustic music and acoustic communication at Simon Fraser University. He joined the World Soundscape Project, editing the *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (1978) and writing an important monograph in Acoustic Ecology and Sound Studies, *Acoustic Communication* (1984, 2001). As a composer, he pioneered real-time granular synthesis in *Riverrun* (1986) and continues to compose multichannel music, most recently *What The Waters Told Me* (2022) and *How The Winds Caressed Me* (2023). – CD <https://www.sfu.ca/~truax/>

## **Eclipse**

*Eclipse* was composed in 1967 during the early pioneering years of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. This composition evolved from many sketches and preliminary experiments on tape. All elements such as rhythm, timbre, loudness, and duration were precisely determined and controlled. Two kinds of timbres dominate *Eclipse*: low, sustained gong-like sounds (always with increasing or decreasing loudness); and short percussive sounds, which can be thought of as metallic, glassy, or wooden in character. Often these timbres are in contrast to one another – either with one kind of sound interrupting another, or being dovetailed so that one timbre appears to emerge out of another.

**Pril Smiley** (1943) was a pioneering composer at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, starting in 1963. In addition to composing and teaching at the Center, she served as Associate Director for 25 years, finally retiring in 1995. During her career there, Pril composed electronic music for over forty theatre, film, and dance productions, and served for six years as Electronic Music Consultant for the Vivian Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Center in New York City. She is the recipient of various awards and honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a Creative Artists' Public Service grant, and a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship.

## **Into the Labyrinth**

*Into the Labyrinth* (2000) is a sonic journey into aspects of India's culture. It occurs on the edge between dream and reality, in the same way in which many visitors, myself included, experience this country. Nothing ever happens according to pre-determined plans or expectations. Although travelers usually do reach their destination somehow, the journey itself – full of continuous surprises and unexpected turns – becomes the real place of experience.

In composing this piece, I was challenging my own compositional process as it has developed over the last 25 years: just as India has challenged many of my Western Eurocentric values and turned them upside-down, so has this piece challenged my preconceived notions of the creative process. From the start I had the image of entering a labyrinth of a multitude of sounds and sonic experiences. I had made no plans for the piece other than letting the recorded sounds move me through a compositional journey into an unknown sonic labyrinth. Obviously, my experiences of travelling in India and of recording the sounds played a significant role in the formation of this piece. But I could never be sure of where I was going and where I would end up. I worked on it continuously as if on a 15-day journey, where the journey itself became the center of experience. The composition simply is a result of that experience.

Many thanks to Darren Copeland of New Adventures in Sound Art for giving me this opportunity to explore composition for 8-channel diffusion. I would also like to thank Savinder Anand, Mona Madan, Arun Patak, Veena Sharma and her mother Mrs. Goyal as well as Situ Singh-Bühler and Virinder Singh for taking me to the places where the sounds and soundscapes for this composition were recorded. Without their help and local knowledge I would have had a difficult time gathering them on tape. Many thanks go to Max Mueller Bhavan (Goethe Institut Delhi) for inviting me to India in the first place and giving me the opportunity to meet and work with those who have become my Indian friends. Listening to India together has deepened our understanding of each other and our cultures' differences.

*Into the Labyrinth* is dedicated to my daughter Sonja, who courageously travelled through India by herself and emerged enriched from a labyrinth of new and complex experiences. For a list of sound sources and musicians, visit <https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/sound/comp/1/laby/>

**Hildegard Westerkamp** (1946) is a composer, radio artist, teacher, and theorist. In the early 1970s she joined the World Soundscape Project under the direction of R. Murray Schafer at Simon Fraser University. Her involvement with this project not only activated deep concerns about noise and the general state of the acoustic environment in her, but it also changed her ways of thinking about music, listening and soundmaking. She also taught acoustic communications courses until 1990 in the School of Communication at SFU together with colleague Barry Truax. Since then she has written numerous articles and texts addressing issues of the soundscape, acoustic ecology, and listening; she has also travelled widely, giving lectures and conducting soundscape workshops internationally. Her many compositions include *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989); *Beneath the Forest Floor* (1992); *Talking Rain* (1997); *Once Upon a Time* (2012); and *Klavierklang* (2023), a collaboration with pianist Rachel Kiyō Iwaasa. <https://www.hildegardwesterkamp.ca/>

## **Farewell to a Hill**

*Farewell to a Hill* (1975) was made from electronically generated sounds, electronically manipulated harpsichord sounds, the sounds of small bells, and the cries of mallards. It is a piece made in mourning for the death of a loved one. It consists of three sections. In the first, wavering, unstable harpsichord pitches are heard against lines of percussive electronic sounds. The harpsichord motifs are mostly descending ones. They repeat and drift off into the distance as the second section approaches. In the second section, the electronic sounds try to whip themselves into an ecstasy, but they fail. The cries of the mallards emerge from their failure. In the third section, powerful electronic sounds override the more percussive sounds and the returning low-pitched harpsichord. At the end, the delicate sounds of bells are heard, as if someone covered with bells were moving into the distance.

**Alice Shields** (1943) is a pioneer of electronic music. From 1965 to 1982 she served as technical instructor and Associate Director of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center teaching the musical uses of electronic music equipment to composers enrolled in Columbia's electronic music graduate courses and assisting visiting composers such as Luciano Berio, and from 1995-1996 served as Director for Development of the Columbia University Computer Music Center. Shields creates operas and other music for voice, instruments and media based on Western and non-Western forms of classical music and theater such as the Noh Theater of Japan and the Bharata Natyam dance-drama of India. Her work has been performed by the New York City Opera, Akademie der Künste in Berlin, Venice Biennale, and Arangham Dance Theater in India. Shields has also been a professional opera singer performing traditional to modern roles with the Metropolitan Opera-at-the-Forum, the New York City Opera and the Washington National Opera. <http://www.aliceshields.com/>

## **Tides**

For his 1976 LP, *Concrète and Synthesizer Music*, the composer wrote, "I have often been interested in composing, so to speak, an environment, a situation, or an event." Regarding *Tides* (1974) he recalled, "I decided not to use any kind of real concrète [i.e. field recordings of] sound from the sea... The most important thing was to avoid anything that would give the impression of something synthetic, even though I used the normal studio facilities (voltage-controlled oscillators and amplifiers, sequencers, filters, etc.). I challenged the studio to speak my language and express my thoughts. As a matter of fact, the facilities of the electronic music studio turned out to be far more sensitive and useful than any other sound-source would have been..." – CD

**Bengt Hambraeus** (1928-2000) was a composer, musicologist, organist, and a pioneer of electronic music. After training as an organist, his studies embraced art history, religion, and musicology with a special interest in Renaissance music. In the early 1950s he attended the summer courses at Darmstadt, where he met composers of the post-World War II avant-garde. Named after an organ stop, *Doppelrohr II* (1955, "double-reed") was the first piece of electronic music by a Swedish composer. After working for Swedish Radio from 1957 to 1972, he moved to Canada in 1972 to teach at McGill University in Montreal where he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1995. – CD

## Well, hell

Recordings for *Well, hell* (2022) were produced by placing microphones (shotgun/binaural) into contaminated water wells located in Miami, Oklahoma. These wells consist of small PVC pipes that extend 50 feet or more underground and serve as monitoring sites for testing lead and zinc levels. This region is part of the Tar Creek Superfund site and is situated within the Quapaw Tribal Lands. Variations in tone are a result of vibrations caused by passing cars. Notably, larger vehicles create more significant variations. The most pronounced variations are generated by dump trucks hauling off the chat [toxic waste produced by lead and zinc mining] from the chat piles in Picher.

**Robbie Wing** (1989) is an artist, musician, and composer born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. His practice focuses on composition, sonic sculpture, psycho-geographies, and performance. Robbie has a Master's Degree in Urban Design from the University of Oklahoma. He has presented his work and performed at various venues, including the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art; Tulsa Artist Fellowship Flagship Gallery; Philbrook Museum; University of Kent in Chatham, UK; Institute for Advanced Studies in Kőszeg, Hungary; Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater; and the Center for Arts, Research and Alliances. <https://www.robbiewing.com/>

## Sud

*Sud* (1984-1985) is built up from a few sounds, mostly natural sounds recorded near Marseille, and also some computer sounds synthesized in Marseille. At the beginning of the piece, the recorded sounds are presented almost as soundscape photographs – but they are most of the time altered by computer transformations. Thus the dynamic flux of the wave profile opening the first movement permeates all three movements. The piece actually resorts to only a few germinal sounds: recordings of the sea, of insects, birds, wood and metal chimes, as well as brief “gestures” played on the piano or synthesized on the computer. These were then transformed and multiplied using several operations: filtering, modulating, reverberating, spatializing, mixing, and hybridizing.

I have used cross-synthesis to impart to one sound the dynamic character of another one – for instance, to give the flux of sea waves to different sounds. Also a major-minor pitch scale (G-B-E-F sharp-G sharp) will gradually color various sounds of natural origin; it will develop into a defective scale and act in the last section as a kind of harmonic grid, somewhat like an Aeolian harp. The arrangement in time of the many sounds implies several levels of rhythm and a logic of fluxes. However, one can imagine a scenario, to be taken only metaphorically:

- I. The sea in the morning. Animation of whistling and squawking birds. Synthetic harmonic clouds. Accumulation of hybrid sounds. Heat: real and simulated birds and insects.
- II. Call – a bell animated by the sea. Winds, waves, energy flows: a metaphoric tempest.
- III. Sea sounds gradually get tuned into a G sharp. The harmonic grid unfolds, animated by various pulses – from programmed gestures, from birds, from sea waves that finally subside.

**Jean-Claude Risset** (1938-2016) was a pioneer of computer music. Working at Bell Laboratories, he collaborated with Max Mathews to research and refine computer-realized sound synthesis. His revolutionary “Introductory Catalog of Computer Synthesized Sounds” describes the creation of sounds through code; published in 1969, Risset’s catalog not only presents recipes for flute, brass, gong, and other instrumental timbres but illustrates spectral analysis and endless glissandi. He later observed, “I worked on instrument simulation not to replace the instruments, but to prolong the instrumental world into a synthetic world with different constraints, capable of diverging from the instruments but also of merging intimately with them in close encounters.” Other notable works include *Computer Suite from Little Boy* (1968); *Mutations* (1969); *Inharmonique* (1977); *Songes* (1979); *Contours* (1983); and *Variants* for violin and electronics (1994). – CD

*All texts by the composers unless indicated otherwise.*