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

1. “Leftovers”: Aleatory
   a. Warm up: Feldman, *Projections 2*
      i. Politics. Writes, music “to stir up … a sense of the political conditions in
         which we live and of how these might be changed, in the direction of democ-
         ratic socialism.” Active communist still (c. 1997)
      ii. *Burdocks* for 1 or more orchestras of 5 or more players (1970–71): Indeter-
          minate rules leaving much room to improvise. Allows the “dignity” of the
          performer.
      iii. Philosophy of sound, number of pitches.
   b. Expanding role for musical performers? Death of Improvisation?
   c. Influence
      i. Black Mountain College (1933–1957): Gropius, de Kooning, Buckminster
         Fuller
      ii. Fluxus and Performance Art: Alison Knowles, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik
      iii. Randomness as aesthetic: Lutosławski, Hovhaness
      iv. Cage: As Slow As Possible
   d. Discussion [performance?] of compositions.
      i. Indeterminacy with respect to performance or with respect to composition.

   a. New pitch resources and new instruments to perform them.
   b. Different approaches to Microtonality
      i. Increasing ET (common in new complexity and post serial composition)
      ii. Just intonation (Ben Johnson, Ezra Sims, La Monte Young, Partch)
   c. Overtone series and overtone series of the harmonics.
   d. Returning to Greek ideas of tuning.
   e. Return to “Monophony”
   f. How can the instruments of the past make music of the future?
   g. Instruments at Montclair State University (New Jersey)


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

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

b. “Canons”: Studies for Player Piano [unknown dates mostly in the 50s; notated in the 60s]

c. Convergence points

d. Study 4 – pitch canon only (analysis from Kyle Gann, The Music of Conlon Nancarrow)
   i. introduction (mm. 1–27): five ideas, mostly dealing with descending or ascending arithmetic sequences. For instance (m 1, 3, 5: have 9, 8, 7 notes)
   ii. 3, 2, 1 notes each interrupted by 3 (second system)
   iii. 2, 3, 4, 3 notes (last system, first measure)
   iv. Figures which begin toward the extremes of the piano and converge in the middle (top of hand written “p. 2” right hand side).
   v. 51-tone row:
      B C E♭ F B♭ D♭
      B C E♭ F A♭ B
      B C E♭ F A♭ B G♯ E♭ E♭, etc.
   vi. System 6 begins the first canon; begins again on system 11 (top of p. 4)
   vii. System 16 (p. 5 bottom) begins a second canon in the bottom voice. Note that when the middle voice comes in, all 3 are now √ and when the top voice comes in, they are now √, but the sixteenths stay the same.

e. Canon 14
   i. 5:4, plus P19 transposition.
   ii. Convergence point, middle of p. 3

f. Canon 21
   i. Canon X – crossing tempos
   ii. Bottom voice begins at 3.4 notes per second and speeds up at .117% per note. Finishes at 110 notes per second.
   iii. Top voice begins at 36 notes per second and slows down at .179% to 2.3 per second.
   iv. Proportional notation for the score – note the ruler’s length stays the same, but meaning changes. At first it means 1/2 second (120 = 120bpm). By the end, the same length = 1/8 second

g. Canon 25
   i. synthesis – brings together isorhythm, canon, acceleration
   ii. Idiomatic player piano music? “Zoom lens” for the quick glisses, arpeggios and other runs.
   iii. Only piece of his to use a 12 tone row conventionally (that is, with inversions, retrogrades, transpositions), but frequent references to tonal harmony in the quick notes keep the work grounded in tonality.
SOME NANCARROW CANON RATIOS

Study       Canon/Tempo Ratio
1           4:7
2a          3:5
5           5:7
9           3:4:5 (2:3, 5:8)
13          3:4:5
14          4:5  [second voice = P19 (2 8ve + P5) higher]
15          3:4
16          5:3
17          12:15:20
18          3:4
19          12:15:20 (Each line made up of a 4-part row in 4:5:6:7 canon)
21          “Canon X”
22          accel. by 1% : 1½% : 2¼%
24          14 : 15 : 16
26          1:1 [sic]
27          accel. by 5%:6%:8%:11%
30          a. 3:5, b. 4:5:7, c. 5:7, d. (9:10 inexact), e. (24:25:30 inexact) — prepared player piano
31          21 : 24 : 25
32          5 : 6 : 7 : 8
33          √2:2
34          (9:(4:5:6)) : (10:(4:5:6)) : (11:(4:5:6))
36          17 : 18 : 19 : 20
38          e/π
39          [(1/√π)/(√13/16)]/[(1/√π)/√13/8]
43          24/25
48          60 : 61
49          4 : 5 : 6
50          3 : 5 : 7 (arr. of orchestral work)