Welcome to Copper #76! ---here we are, halfway through January already, and I guess I'll find out if January actually exists without the mania of CES. I've attended since 1989, I'm done. My favorite newsflash so far has been that an autonomous car ran over an autonomous robot....

But we're here, and blessedly flu-free...so: Larry Schenbeck continues his look at musical storytellers--vocal ones, this time; we're revisiting Dan Schwartz's piece on Steve Reich; Richard Murison tries his hand at haiku---and some ku are hai-er than others; Jay Jay French brings us the second of two stories about meeting John & Yoko; Roy Hall tells his uncommonly-touching story of citizenship; Anne E. Johnson does double duty, with a look at lesser-known cuts from Richie Havens, as well as a Something Old/Something New review of new recordings of not one but two composers named Praetorius; Christian James Hand deconstructs REM's "It's the End of the World..."; and I obsess yet again about CES, and continue with a look at the audio segment of the amazing business empire of Sherman Fairchild.

Industry News continues the never-ending story of--well, guess who. No, it's a different guess who than last issue's guess who. Sheesh!

Our friend Fred Schwartz wonders what we'd hear in a certain situation; and we're pleased to have the first contribution from Jeremy Kipnis, writing about his illustrious ancestor, operatic bass Alexander Kipnis.

Copper #76 wraps up with a scratchy sound from Charles Rodrigues, and a Parting Shot all the way from Argentina.
Enjoy, and we’ll see you soon!

Cheers, Leebs.

Most vocal music does have lyrics, so what else can be said about its storytelling? Quite a bit, actually.

In December 1837 Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) became famous—and more important, respected—by getting his Requiem performed after months of political infighting that pitted him against the entire Parisian musical establishment. A radical upstart, he loved getting this big break, but what he really loved was the text of the Requiem Mass, which set his dramatic/literary imagination on fire. What a story!

Except it was not a story, at least not yet. It was a set of texts used for a liturgical rite, the Mass for the Dead. Commonly linked with funerals, Requiems could also be offered for a group of the dead or for a community in mourning. In fact, Berlioz’s music had been commissioned for a public ceremony in memory of 18 people killed in a terrorist attack. Although that ceremony was cancelled, the composer wangled a performance out of another worthy tragedy, this one for a General Damrémont and the soldiers who perished with him in October 1837 while invading North Africa.

Quite a pair of stories right there, but Berlioz had a grander narrative in mind. He hacked away at the Requiem texts, cutting some while rearranging, trimming, or repeating others until he came up with a dynamic storyline. Still, he chose a long arc: it takes Berlioz around 80 minutes to spin his tale. The story begins in grief so profound that orchestra and singers can barely utter their initial statements.

Perhaps you noticed that each of the first three full phrases, after making quiet, effortful chromatic ascents from the depths, ends in a muted fanfare of sorts. That gesture toward the dotted rhythms of French military musique funèbre is no accident (cf. the Funeral March from Beethoven’s “Eroica”). It reminds us that this music speaks on behalf of a nation. Heroes are being celebrated. An even stronger message issues from those hushed ascending phrases: the battle is over. These heroes are
now met on another field. None will emerge victorious. The nation offers prayers for them. (A common misconception about Requiems is that their purpose is to console survivors. Not so: of well-known Requiems, only those by Fauré, who omitted the lurid, fearful “Dies irae,” and Brahms, who discarded the entire Latin text, suggest consolation as a central value.)

If this first movement were a screenplay, the author would direct the camera to move from a wide-angle establishing shot—perhaps an eerily quiet, deserted battlefield—to a group of people, scattered families and individuals slowly moving toward a common destination, the interior of a massive cathedral. There they gather to remember, reflect, and pray. The camera descends from a great height until it arrives in their midst and begins a 360° tracking shot. A few people begin to sing; others join them.

From a balcony a new voice enters, with new text: “Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion.” (“You are prized, O God, in Zion.”) Another voice responds: “et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem” (“and homage will be paid you in Jerusalem”). The chorus directs its praise heavenward, but we also hear the orchestra:

That restless 8th-note accompaniment in the cellos, with its tense, worrying alteration of half-steps and upward leaps, complements a more lyrical structuring of the same material (half-step, upward 6th) in the voices. Less prominent is Berlioz’s first use of a timbral motive that will assume increasing importance as the work continues: high woodwinds, low brass, nothing much between. It’s a cold, empty sound that emphasizes the distance between heaven and earth. The choir’s fortissimo shouts of “Requiem aeternam dona!” return. When Berlioz brings back that chilly high/low effect, in No. 8, “Hostias” (“Sacrifices and prayers we offer you. . . .”), he foregrounds it with stunning results:

We’ll hear it again, in No. 10, “Agnus Dei.” But first let’s explore the overall story arc. We’ll use a screenwriting model popularized by Syd Field, three-act structure. (His ubiquitous textbook Screenplay is among the props shown on a recent New Yorker cover, itself chock-full of narrative.) Field’s basics—Setup, Confrontation, Resolution—are transparently evident in Berlioz’s restructured Requiem text and its music.

Setup occupies movements 1 and 2, “Introitus” and “Dies irae.” The battered emotional state of the protagonists is immediately apparent, as is their anxiety in calling upon God, the antagonist. “Dies irae” now presents what Field would call the inciting incident or catalyst, in this case The Last Judgment. Berlioz builds carefully up to it, then delivers it as a truly cinematic explosion, introducing the “Tuba mirum spargens sonum” (“The trumpet will send its wondrous sound”) with four brass bands, each placed in a different corner of the hall.

Following this moment—echoed in musical aftershocks at “Liber scriptus” and “Judex ergo”—Berlioz effects a long Confrontation by dividing the “Dies irae” text into separate movements (Nos. 3–6), transposing parts of the text in order to contrast cosmic events (think of Marvel’s Thor) with the cries of individuals. Crowd scenes are intercut with more intimate portraits, revealing singular human responses in the struggle. (Quick aside: Sergei Eisenstein invented the modern camera techniques associated with epic battle in his film Alexander Nevsky. He discovered that many short takes, intercut for maximum effect, produced an energy that could never be replicated with long takes in which the camera remained fixed in position. Berlioz was using a similar principle, although each of his “takes” is necessarily much more extended.)

So: in No. 3, “Quid sum miser,” the cataclysms of No. 2 are met with quiet, thinly scored pleas using
the same thematic material. No. 5, “Quaerens me,” scored for unaccompanied chorus, is even more intimate. But Nos. 4, “Rex tremendae,” and 6, “Lacrymosa” continue the succession of large-scale scenes from the End of Days. After the very long “Lacrymosa,” Berlioz offers a hint of Resolution with No. 7, “Offertorium,” (originally titled “Chorus of Souls in Purgatory”). In this subdued interlude, the chorus repeats a single, two-note plea as if reduced to exhaustion.

Further relief comes with No. 8, “Hostias,” a sequence of static declamations punctuated by the high/low wind motif. Finally, in No. 9, “Sanctus,” we are transported tonally and thematically to another world:

It’s capped by a “Hosanna” in stile antico. (Ah, nothing more comforting than the cozy embrace of 18th-century counterpoint). With No. 10, “Agnus Dei,” we return to the sound of the “Hostias” but with one more flute, which removes the (harmonic) chill. The music recaps “Te decet hymnus,” then “Requiem aeternam,” moving finally to an “Amen” on cadences borrowed from “Rex Tremendae.” And so Berlioz leads us home, using subtly transformed materials from earlier moments in the work.

I wish I could play the whole thing for you. But wait, here’s an idea: get a recording. You’ve been listening to the Bergen PO and friends, conducted by Edward Gardner (Chandos; SACD and download). It’s good; I spot-checked it against my personal reference, Robert Shaw’s 1985 Telarc reading. Perfect tempos, a very nice sense of the hall (extremely important with this piece), extremely sensitive musicianship, excellent engineering. Of course Munch and Davis, among others, are lurking back there from the Golden Age. But I think you’d do fine with Ed and his crew.

I’ve got another new recording, also a strong contender, from Ludovic Morlot and the Seattle SO. Once I get to know it better, I’ll report back, along with much, much more.

Happy New Year, everyone.
When I was 17, I discovered the compositional style called Minimalism.

I remember the moment very well. It was 1974, the spring of 11th grade, and my mother was downstairs teaching Hungarian to a student. I put on what had become my favorite radio show (remember them? Sort of like a podcast but meant for thousands, rather than “personal”) --- “Diaspar”[1], on Philadelphia’s University of Pennsylvania FM station, WXPN. I recall that the subtitle was “Energy Music”, though that might be wrong.

Out of my Sony tape recorder speakers flowed this tone cluster of dense pianos --- pulsing, gently hammering. I was dumbstruck. I had never heard anything like it --- it was as if I was awash in a pointillist mist of slowly-evolving sound.

Suddenly, the sound of a great beast came thumping up my house’s stairs, and my mom’s (somewhat tall) student burst into my room: “I didn’t know you liked Steve Reich!” “Is that what this is? Who’s Steve Reich?” I suppose everyone has a moment of discovery of something that hits him or her like this (minus the large student).

I listened for the next 15-or-so minutes, rapt. The piece was announced as “Six Pianos” on the just-released 3-record Deutsche Grammophone set called Drumming, and as soon as I could, I was in Philly and hunting for it. I can even remember when I found it - it was a major score.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edKE10Yz_zs
I had been vaguely aware of a form of art music that wasn’t exactly modern classical, that wasn’t any form of rock or jazz, that used electric instruments unashamedly (like I did). And here it was, fully formed, in Reich’s album. The piece “Drumming”, played out over 4 LP sides, is a study in phase music, in which each of the sections (tuned bongos; marimbas and women’s voices; glockenspiels, whistler and piccolo), featuring gradually increasing numbers of players, articulates the pattern, until by the 4th section, it’s all there. (Yes, it takes a while.) Let me turn to the Wiki page on the record, for an explanation of phasing: “The piece employs Reich’s trademark technique of phasing. Phasing is achieved when two players, or one player and a recording, are playing a single repeated pattern in unison, usually on the same kind of instrument. One player changes tempo slightly, while the other remains constant, and eventually the two players are one or several beats out of sync with each other. They may either stay there, or phase further, depending on the piece.”

So what I heard on “Six Pianos” was exactly that, spelled out on pianos. This turns out to be a little bit of genius --- an elegant example of how to layer an ultimately complex texture from fairly simple materials. His “Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ” (the 6th side of the album), is, like the 4th section of “Drumming” likewise taking these same thoughts out into a more full scoring. And his rescoring of “Six Pianos” as “Six Marimbas” was an inspired choice (I can recall listening to the LP in the late 80s through a Moscode Super-IT phono preamp --- it was noisy, it was imprecise, but man, was it holographic!)

I’m unsure as to whether it takes a certain inner ear to hear beauty in this kind of music --- certainly, there’s something akin in this to Indian music; a sense of motion within stillness. I just know that I hear it like I hear little else. I heard Indian music at 10 (as I wrote early last year) and thought, “Aha! Music IS art!” I heard the minimalists at 17 and knew the truth of the idea.

As I write this I’m listening to an early 70s release on Shandar of Four Organs / Phase Patterns. There’s something about hearing raw sound, spooled out over time; an appealing texture, and little else --- the context IS the content, and vice-versa. Listen to Shem Guibbory’s transcendent take on “Violin Phase, for violin and tape (or 4 violins)” on ECM[2], written in 1967 and recorded in 1980.

Reich would (of course slowly) evolve in his compositions to embrace full orchestra (“The Desert Music, for small chorus and large orchestra”, 1984) and more complex content, like “Nagoya Marimbas, for 2 marimbas” (1994) --- without losing anything of his signature identity. The third part of his “New York Counterpoint (for clarinet, bass clarinet and tape)” (1985) gets a jaunty stride going – you can feel the pulse of Manhattan in it --- but it’s composer is unmistakable.

If you’ve read this far, the most effective way to get a lot of his work is to acquire the 10-disc set Works 1965-1995, though you’ll still have a few holes. Also of special note is the recent high-resolution release by percussionist Kuniko Kato on Linn Records, Kuniko Plays Reich.

Do I seem like a fan boy? I am (that’s the virtue of having a column in which I get to wax enthusiastic about whatever I want). At my 1994 wedding, we closed the ceremony with the composer’s “Tehillim”, his setting of Hebrew psalms[3]. I’ll discuss how we opened the ceremony, next time.

[1] The name comes from Arthur C. Clarke’s “The City and the Stars”
[2] Steve Reich and Musicians ECM New Series 78118-21168
[3] Steve Reich and Musicians ECM New Series 21215
Yes, it’s that time again. Time for Leebs’ annual rant about CES—after the fact, as the show took place last week in Las Vegas.

Way back in the very first issue of *Copper*, I wrote "I Am So Over CES", which described my dismay with the show, after nearly 30 years of attendance. Issue 25 included "Leaving Las Vegas", in which I discussed the directional shift in both the show and its hosting body. Last year in issue 51, I got all metaphysical, with "In the Land of the Surreal, is Realism Relevant?" I looked back at a show that started out 50 years ago as a showcase for hi-fi and TVs, and which had become a showcase for giant video displays, drones, and droning speeches by CEOs of car, phone, and software companies.

To put it mildly: this is not of interest to me. This is not useful for me. This is not useful for my misbegotten little industry.

I admit that there is a certain guilty pleasure in the greedy, seedy cesspool that is Vegas, though that usually wears off after 5 or 6 hours. After that, I need a shower.

The hyperkinetic main body of CES at the massive convention center also has a certain jangly,
adderall-affected appeal, full of flashing lights, dramatic, bad music, and the anachronistic presence of booth babes from multiple continents—apparently exhibitors haven’t gotten the memo that this practice is just not cool. Oh, well.

As is my practice, a couple months ago I started surveying colleagues in audio on who was planning on attending the show. Last year the tone had been fatalistic, and many had said that 2018 was their last year; another, sizeable chunk said that they’d give it one more try.

To my surprise, the fallout has been even greater than anticipated.

Keep in mind that CES’ site for high-end audio exhibits has been the Venetian Tower for many years now; historically, this three-pronged tower had included multiple floors of audio exhibitors, with several hundred rooms. Over the years, the number has diminished, and in recent years the previously-sacred turf of the high end had been invaded by a bizarre collection of unrelated software, chip, mattress, and garage door companies. Last year, pushback from exhibitors restored some of the integrity of the area; at least, Simmons Mattress and the AARP were nowhere nearby.

Come 2019, it’s clear that as far as “High Performance Audio” goes, no one in charge at CES gives a damn. And if all is not lost, it’s close enough that I’ll take a pass.

A little context: the show attracts something on the order of 170,000 attendees. Even for a tourist trap/mecca like Las Vegas, that’s a lot of folks, and unless you come several days before and stay several days after the show, simply getting flights in and out is challenging. This year the cost of housing has reached an all-time peak of extortionist absurdity, with $250 per night at places where they just got rid of the chalk outlines and police tape, and $1000/night for middling hotels is not uncommon. And then, and then: the coup de grace is the high likelihood of a post-show case of flu of virulence and tenacity rarely seen since the 1918 epidemic.

My hand-annotated map of the Venetian’s floor 29 shows what’s left in high-end audio. You’ll see familiar names like NAD, GoldenEar, Nagra, and VTL; you won’t see longtime exhibitors like DeVore Fidelity, Music Hall, or Vandersteen. They’re gone. What’s left doesn’t even completely fill one leg of the 29th floor, and those exhibitors are interspersed with a motley mix of gaming companies, chip makers, and if you’re lucky, the intelligent toilet from Kohler.

---Oops, sorry: that show-stopper will be in the main hall. Anyway, the latest 29th floor map from CES will show you all that’s there.

If you go, enjoy yourself. The time, expense, annoyance, and risk of catching the plague just aren’t worth it to me—and this is coming from a cheapskate who usually stays at his son's apartment during the show.

See ya, CES. I hate to say it, but I'll miss you.
A haiku is a traditional Japanese form of poetry, although it is now appreciated worldwide. A Haiku comprises three lines of verse structured around a 5-7-5 pattern of syllables. The first and last lines have 5 syllables, while the middle line has 7. A traditional haiku usually expresses a simple emotion, or an observation of nature, appeals to the senses, and contains a “trigger” word which suggests a season of the year. In more modern haiku, the last line often makes its point by taking the subject matter in an ironic or unexpected direction. It is traditional to write a haiku in the middle of the page, forming a diamond pattern (since the middle line has two more syllables), although they are intended to be spoken rather than read. Japanese culture places great emphasis not only on tradition, but also on elegance, so a good Japanese haiku will have a perfect rhythmic meter, while making a profound and uplifting observation, all in 17 syllables.

Haiku do not rhyme, but instead rely on a rhythmic meter. Consequently, English translations of Japanese haiku rarely deliver a complete rendition of all aspects of the original, and original English haiku tend to be more ready to depart from the strict form in order to better express the point.

I have prepared a brief collection of audiophile haiku for your reading pleasure (or derision, however it ends up working out). One or two are pretty cool, others, as you’ll see, less so. Still others descend close to parody. Japanese readers, if any, are advised to set their expectations to the lowest available setting.

Vacuum tubes glow red
warming my hands. While music
is warming my heart.
His wallet costs more
than the money he keeps there.
So too his Hi-Fi.

Silk tweeter.
Smaller than a woofer driver.
Size isn’t everything.

Kind spirit,
living in my cables,
blessing the sounds as they go by.

Have you no shame, sir?
Insult my clothes or my car,
but not my speakers!

--------------------------------------------------------------------

Listen to silence.
Know that music is more than
the sum of its sounds.

CD – eighty grams.
Amplifier – eighty pounds.
Music floats on air.

So many bits.
So much music. So little time
to waste arguing.

Seasons turn.
With spring comes the season for change.
New preamp maybe?

If music soothes the
savage beast, how savage would
I be without it?

I am transported
each time I close my eyes and
hear a different place.

It was a dark day,
heavy with foreboding too,
when my tubes burned out.

--------------------------------------------------------------------

Winter in Boulder,
cold and white with snow. But Leebs
is from Florida.

I agree with Keats.
Books, French wine, good weather, fruit.
Yes, and music too.

Negative feedback
won’t damp the differences
that still divide us.

I can’t describe the
depths of my emotions. But
Gustav Mahler can.

All good things must pass,
and we must pass with them. But
let it wait a while.

[Leebs grew up in Minnesota, for whatever that's worth---Ed.]
New York City, 1979

This one really came out of left field as Doug Kleiman, the person whose story it is, is also a friend. Doug casually mentioned to me one afternoon that he and a friend snuck into The Dakota several months before Lennon was killed.

In 1979, New Yorker Doug Kleiman was 14 years old. Doug and his friend Joe snuck in to The Dakota on 72nd Street and Central Park West across from Central Park, one of the city's most storied apartment buildings, and the home of John & Yoko. Legend has it that it was nicknamed and then formally named "The Dakota" because at the time it was built (1884) there were no apartment buildings above 42nd Street, and if you lived there you were so far away from everything that you may as well live in Dakota!

Doug and his friend were interested in meeting John because they thought that he could provide answers to the many questions that they had about life, religion, spirituality, politics, Beatles, and more...answers that their teachers, friends, and family were not really able to provide. ---Or, they
were more willing to hear and accept them from John Lennon!

Doug explained that they wore suits and looked like rich private school kids who should be there. They snuck past the guards at the gate and roamed the building for a couple of hours trying to figure out what apartment John & Yoko lived in.

They hit paydirt when John emerged to walk a friend to the elevator and saw them standing in the hallway.

John asked them what they were doing there and after they explained that they came to meet him, he invited them into the apartment

JJF: Was the experience what you imagined?

DK: It was beyond what I imagined. He was as cool, inspiring, poetic, and witty as the world came to know...he was also funny, kind, encouraging, and was generous with his time and advice to us.

JJF: How much time total were you with them?

DK: We were with John for about two hours, and then Yoko joined us later for another 45 minutes to an hour, or so.

JJF: Thinking back now, would you say that they had a kind of hippie like trust vibe about how you were treated?

DK: John trusted us enough to invite us into their apartment. Yoko was initially more protective and wary. Of course we were young, slight, and certainly not intimidating. Our intentions were pure, so I assume that our vibes were rather “hippie trusting” too. Looking back, the irony of what was to happen to John a little more than a year later is haunting.

JJF: Did you ask any questions, or did John surprise you with his comments?

DK: Both! We asked John a lot of questions, and he answered them thoroughly. He also asked us a lot of questions about what we were interested in, where we went to school, etc. I believe that at least part of his reason for asking these questions, was to learn more about what kids close to Julian’s age were into. We asked questions that generally required a lot of explanation, and he really took his time to answer them carefully and thoughtfully. He most certainly surprised us with words of advice, inspiration, and wisdom...he was also quite poetic at times.

We did ask questions about the Beatles...as in, would they ever get back together?

John said: "Well, never say never, but probably not". I asked why not? He said: “Because that was then and this is now.” I told him that I had heard a reporter say that he was the only Beatle that didn’t want to get back together for a performance. He replied: “Yeah, is that what you heard? Well, that’s funny because I haven’t spoken to any reporters about it for a very long time...it’s important to know that people write a lot of rubbish to sell newspapers and magazines, and that you can’t believe everything that you read and hear.”

I asked if he would consider doing it if it was for charity. He said, “Concerts for charities are great in theory, but the problem is that they don’t always get the money to the people or causes that they’re intended for...there’s always someone taking a percentage of this and a piece of that...and by the time it’s all done, there’s barely enough money left to buy a cup a coffee.”
JJF: Did you walk away feeling that the experience brought you closer to knowing what kind of person John was?

DK: Yes, absolutely. But equally and perhaps more importantly, we learned about ourselves, too. The time we spent with him instilled us with a new self confidence. After all, if John Lennon says you’re cool, it goes a long way as an adolescent and beyond! From that point on, high school got a little easier. John and Yoko were very kind, generous, and hospitable to allow us into their home. They gave us wholesome and practical advice, too: to stay away from drugs, to follow our dreams and passions. In fact, when I told John that I was interested in becoming a photographer, John said:

“Photography is great you know...there are many different kinds of photography you can do; artistic, journalism, portraits. I have some friends that are photographers. Some photographers tend to be very compulsive...constantly taking pictures of everything. If you become a photographer, remember to put the camera down sometimes, and just look at the subject, a sunset or whatever. If you don’t put the camera down at least some of the time, then at the end of your life you will have a million pictures of everything, but you will have seen nothing.”

JJF: Lastly, did your friends believe you when you told them what happened?

DK: John and Yoko asked us not to tell many friends about our meeting because they didn’t want to encourage more people to sneak into the building. So, I only told a few select friends and family. After John was killed, I told more people. I was grieving so deeply that I felt compelled to explain why.
“Oh, you speak English? Thank God. You’re the first one today,” said the immigration officer.

I came to the U.S. in 1970, following the love of my life. We spent the first year in Binghamton, NY and after marrying, we moved to Israel for four years. My wife worked as an artist in Tel Aviv. She landed a job at AT magazine, a women’s publication owned by Maariv, Israel’s largest newspaper at the time. She had always wanted to study graphic art, so she applied for and subsequently was accepted into Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem and Parsons School of Design in New York. New York beat out Jerusalem, so in 1975 we moved there, ostensibly for 2-3 years. Somehow we never left.

As I was married to a U.S. citizen, I had applied for a green card in Israel, and in those days, it was a relatively easy process. The questionnaire was somewhat amusing.

“Are you a prostitute?”

“Have you ever been arrested or convicted of a crime?”

“Have you ever been a member of a political party?”

The questions seemed somewhat simple-minded, and it was only years later that I realized that the questions weren’t really that important; the answers were. It is much easier to deport a person for lying on the application than it is to deport him or her for errant behavior.
After about 10 years of working and paying taxes, I decided it was time to apply for citizenship. Being a political junkie, I also wanted to start voting. I studied for the test.

“What are two rights of everyone living in the U.S.?”

“What do we show loyalty to when we say the Pledge of Allegiance?”

I wonder if I could answer them all now.

When I met the officer, who was thrilled that I could speak English, he asked me, “Who makes the laws?”

“The Legislature?” I answered.

“No.”

I was baffled.

“Cong… Cong…” he volunteered.

“Oh, you mean Congress?” I replied.

“Yes. Very good.”

Even though I did know the answers, his coaching was amusing. Needless to say, I passed with flying colors and about a year later I was invited to the swearing-in ceremony.

The ceremony took place at the main courthouse in Brooklyn, whose website currently describes the location as “the site of General George Washington’s escape from Manhattan during the American Revolution, an escape that ensured a later victory for his army.” What a historic site for a building that epitomizes American democracy.

The day I attended the ceremony, there were over a hundred people waiting to become U.S. citizens. They seemed to have come from all over the world, but as a resident New Yorker, seeing this mélange of people was unremarkable. A United States District Court Judge presided. He was a tall, warm man in his sixties. He talked about the great honor it was to become an American Citizen. He also spoke about the responsibility and duties that came with the process.

He told us how earlier in the century his parents had come from Calabria, Italy, penniless, searching for a better life, and finally escaping the grinding poverty of their native land. How they worked hard to raise a family and educate them, because this was the way to a better life in the US. And now here he was, a United States District Court Judge, the product of their struggle, swearing in new immigrants. I found the ceremony beautiful and touching, and even though it was tinged with jingoism, I felt pride receiving my certificate. When it was over, I noticed a large bowl near the exit into which many people, clutching their naturalization certificates, were joyfully discarding their old papers and passports.

This was in 1985, and today I can’t help contrasting this poignant ceremony with the discourse in current politics; singling out immigrants as somehow dangerous or irrelevant. Most of them are just like the parents of that judge, poor and afraid. People like that become the best citizens because they are here to try to improve their lives, not to play the system.

We are a country of immigrants, just a generation or two away from the “Old Country,” and almost
all of us are proud of our American Citizenship and our heritage.

The ceremony over, I walked to the nearest post office and gleefully applied for a U.S. Passport.
In *Copper* #75, we began the story of the remarkable business empire created by Sherman Fairchild. Fairchild started over 75 companies, and as much as possible, we'll focus on those directly involved in pro and consumer audio. Given the interconnectedness of the companies and the timespan of many decades, that's easier said than done.

We've already mentioned Fairchild's pioneering work in the creation of the first aerial cameras capable of sharp, repeatable images---due largely to the shutter mechanism incorporated within the lens itself, as shown in the patent drawing below. The cameras led to creation of purpose-built aircraft to house and transport them---the first monoplane built by the company was designed by no less than Igor Sikorsky.
As the depression deepened and business slowed, Fairchild sought out sub-contract work to keep the metalworking shops at Fairchild Camera busy. He encountered a gentleman named Crook---wait for it---looking for a company with the technical chops and production capabilities to develop and build devices that would record sound on aluminum discs. Intrigued by the technical challenge and presented with ready suppliers of aluminum and signed contracts from waiting buyers, Fairchild took on the project---on the basis of payment upon delivery of working equipment.

You can guess the rest. Here's how Fairchild himself told it, decades later: "We had just about completed the design of the equipment when we discovered that Crook was more than the man's name. All those contracts he had were fraudulent, forged. He disappeared and left us with the almost-completed equipment for cutting aluminum records."

Rather than a lost cause, Fairchild was presented with entree into the broadcast world, and creation of a new division of Fairchild Camera devoted to mechanical and electronic devices for recording and broadcast studios.

As World War II approached, Fairchild's aerial cameras proved vital for surveying and reconnaissance, and the aircraft divisions boomed as well: over 8,000 trainer aircraft were built during the war, used for pilot training. Further details of Fairchild's importance in the world of aircraft can be read here.

Post-war, the camera division continued to prosper, and Fairchild Camera's management decided to sell off the unprofitable audio division: the company's products were always built to be the best available, and were priced accordingly. Unable to find a buyer, Sherman Fairchild bought it personally, and named it Fairchild Recording Equipment. A fair jazz pianist, Fairchild frequently
recorded well-known musicians in recording studios in his homes. Fairchild Recording Equipment was an early developer of tape recorders, and for several years continued to offer disk recorders and lathes in parallel with tape recorders.
TAPE OR DISK

YOU CHOOSE FAIRCHILD FOR TOP PERFORMANCE

★ The Fairchild “Synchroll” Drive System combines advantages of the transfer of power through soft rubber idlers with those of direct gear control of the capstan. This unique development of Fairchild results in a no-slip synchronous tape drive.

★ High Frequency Flutter causes roughness in a reproduced sine wave tone. Smooth motion in the Fairchild Tape Recorder is apparent in the cleanliness of simple musical tones.

★ Hum problems are generally recognized as inherent in magnetic recorders. The high efficiency of Fairchild Playback Head design and amplifier construction results in a hum measurement at least 68 db down. (ref. 2% distortion).

The Fairchild Professional Tape Recorder easily outperforms requirements set by NAB Standards. Features include: "plug-in" type construction, both mechanical and electrical, for uninterrupted service; interlock system to prevent accidental erasing; volume indicator and circuit metering; adjustment of playback head during operation for optimum performance with all tapes; simultaneous monitoring from the tape during actual recording. Major network and recording studios are using Fairchild Tape Recorders. Write for complete information.

FAIRCHILD SYNCHRONOUS DISK RECORDERS

Accurate Program Timing—Synchronous direct to the center gear drive for shows "on the nose".

Freedom From Wow—No slip-page. No musical pitch change to make listeners aware the show is transcribed.

Sound On Film Dubbing—Many of the motion picture sound tracks you hear and enjoy are first recorded on Fairchild Synchronous Disk Recorders.

Above are some of the features that have gained FAIRCHILD the reputation for the finest in recording equipment. Fairchild Synchronous Disk Recorders are manufactured in 3 models; Unit 523 for the finest fixed studio installation; Unit 539K for the small budget studio; Unit 539G (shown above) for console performance in a portable unit. Maintain your reputation for making the finest transcriptions and masters with Fairchild equipment. Write for illustrations and complete specifications.

Fairchild

RECORDING EQUIPMENT CORPORATION

154TH STREET AND 7TH AVENUE, WHITESTONE, L.I., N.Y.
In the pro audio world, today Fairchild is best known for its model 660 (mono) and 67 (stereo) limiters (compressors), built to military spec and beyond—as you can see by the engraved faceplate of the 670, at the top of this page, and the photo below. Out of production for sixty years, the 660 and 670 are still regarded by many as the best ever built—six of the units are still in use at the Abbey Road Studios, and when units become available for sale, prices approach $40,000. You can read an in-depth account of these legendary devices here.

The 660 and 670 were designed by an Estonian refugee named Rein Narma, whose incredible story includes walking away from his homeland, and being chosen in a refugee camp by American troops who needed an English-speaking radio expert. Subsequently, Narma recorded the stories of fellow refugees, and was involved in handling the simultaneous translation and recording gear at the Nuremberg trials!

His path upon reaching the US was no less incredible: he designed a mixing board and rebuilt a defective Ampex multitrack recorder for Les Paul, and subsequently, Fairchild personally hired Narma to be chief engineer at Fairchild Recording Equipment, where he designed the 660 and 670. You can read Narma’s amazing story here, and can read the manual of the model 670 here.

Fairchild studio gear was widely used by the most quality-conscious, including Robert Fine (of Mercury Living Presence recordings) and record-cutting legend George Piros, as shown below. In the next installment, we’ll go more into Fairchild’s studio gear, amazing projects they were involved in, their consumer gear, and more—- in Copper #77.
With the Fairchild Studio Recorder, Unit 523, George Piros of Reeves Sound Studios is cutting a microgroove, long playing disk. George varies the pitch while recording. There's no overcutting on loud passages — no need to closely ride gain on the audio. He just changes pitch to follow pianissimo and fortissimo. Result . . . unusual dynamic range on a long-playing disk!
Richie Havens

OFF THE CHARTS
Written by Anne E. Johnson

Born in 1941 in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, with heritage from the West Indies and the Blackfoot tribe, Richie Havens always loved to sing. He had a neighborhood doo-wop group and joined a gospel choir as a kid. But he thought of himself as a poet first and a musician second. That won’t be a surprise to anyone who knows his songs. They always have a message.

In his teens and twenties, he prowled Beatnik-soaked Greenwich Village, reading his poetry and sketching people’s portraits. Once he did start writing songs, he was an immediate draw in the folk clubs. People were ready for what he had to offer. Soon he signed with Bob Dylan’s manager, Albert Grossman. Not too shabby.

Under contract to Verve Folkways, he pushed out three records in as many years. (He’d already cut two albums for a small label called Douglas, which later released them without authorization.) The first Verve record was called Mixed Bag (1966), but it was the second, Something Else Again, that put him on the charts for the first time.

As would prove normal for Havens, Something Else Again was a combination of his own songs and other people’s. Some were well known enough to be considered covers (Bob Dylan’s “Maggie’s Farm”), and some were unknown (“The Klan” by soon-to-become-actor Alan Arkin and his father David, using the pseudonyms Alan and David Grey).

Among Havens’ compositions is the philosophical “Inside of Him.” The chiffy flute of Jeremy Steig
and laid-back piano of Warren Bernhardt set a jazz tone, skittering like a stream under the stolid bricks of Havens’ vocal line.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSlslKldOQ

Today, Havens is probably best remembered for his performance at the Woodstock Festival in 1969. It was no ordinary gig for him. Scheduled as the opening act, Havens ended up playing for almost three hours because so many of the other artists were stuck in traffic. By the end, he’d not only played every song he knew, but had also improvised the song “Freedom,” which he based on the spiritual “Motherless Child.”

It was worth the effort. His career took off, and soon he had enough capital to form his own label, Stormy Forest. Its first release was his studio album *Stonehenge* in 1970. From that album, “There’s a Hole in the Future” is a vaguely apocalyptic lyric with a gritty arrangement for multiple guitars that aren’t quite in sync. That roughness and imperfection breeds excitement—and more than a little dread about the future.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0N6cSYWde8M

While *Alarm Clock*, from the following year, was Havens’ highest-charting album, he also came out with a second release in 1971. *The Great Blind Degree* features almost entirely songs by other artists. Bob Brown wrote “In These Flames,” which Havens sings almost like he’s reciting beat poetry. The Indian sitar and tanpura (drone) are played by Havens himself, providing an undulating atmosphere for lyrics about heartbreak. (For more of Havens’ sitar playing, listen to the wordless 7-minute title track of *Something Else Again.*) He makes the interesting choice to replace sitar with banjo toward the end of “In These Flames,” which returns the story to less exotic ground, making it seem more personal for the listener.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULumm6zXtUQ

There may have been great potential for Stormy Forest Records, but Havens put much of his energy into other endeavors during the ’70s. For one thing, he seemed to be trying for an acting career, appearing in a few small films. But closer to his heart was his work with children and ecological activism. He founded an oceanographic museum for kids in the Bronx as well as an educational organization called the Natural Guard.

Despite those projects, he made time to record *Mirage* in 1977. He hits a satisfying funk groove on this cover of “We All Wanna Boogie” by the prolific Allen Toussaint (whose songs have been recorded by The Who, Elvis Costello, The Rolling Stones, and on and on). That not-quite-a-saxophone you hear is a wind instrument/synthesizer hybrid called a lyricon.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCSRtlK5NSw

The 1980 album *Connections* sports a lively disco vibe, as you can hear in this Charlie Calello/Lamont Dozier composition, “Going Back to My Roots.” What charges the long intro with
energy is David Lebolt’s piano and Havens’ rhythm guitar. The lyrics are hardly the typical stuff of disco, describing a search for identity and pride: “Not talking about roots in the land, / I’m talking about the roots in a man.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SskFlasmjF8

I’m going to warn you against listening to the 1987 collection *Richie Havens Sings Beatles and Dylan*, which relies on sickly Casio-keyboard accompaniment. Dreadful stuff. Happily, Havens did some wonderful covers of both Beatles and Dylan numbers earlier in his career, including an intensely percussive version of the Lennon-McCartney song “Lady Madonna.” This 1969 recording was a non-album promo single but has since appeared on compilations. Just when you think he’s added as many layers of rhythm as possible – conga, glockenspiel, guitar, drum kit – he adds hand-clapping and piano:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8pOC1ev0DU

Havens continued to release records every few years for a couple more decades. *Cuts to the Chase* came out in 1994. Among its tracks is “How the Nights Can Fly.” Havens’ rendition of this Bob Lind song has a dream-like quality, cloaked in velvety trumpet and strings and textured with some nice acoustic guitar riffs. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=299iEhdStI

When Havens made the album *Nobody Left to Crown* in 2008, he had little decent health left to enjoy. In 2010 he had kidney surgery that he never quite recovered from, and he died of a heart attack in 2013. *Nobody Left to Crown* now stands as a fitting farewell.

About half the tracks are by Havens. But one of the highlights is Peter Yarrow’s “The Great Mandala (The Wheel of Life),” which Yarrow had originally written for Peter, Paul, and Mary. Havens and Yarrow also had the chance to perform it together, although Havens sings it solo on this album.

The song is about how established society deals with a young man protesting war. One of the many things I like about this song is that the opening of each melodic phrase mimics (unintentionally?) the melody of “Candide’s Lament” from Leonard Bernstein’s operetta *Candide*. Yarrow’s lyrics are just as dark.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVN214ysPKg

Richie Havens ended life as he had lived it: loving music and poetry and showing the world how it might heal itself.
Athens, Georgia has always had a very specific musical sound. The colleges in that area were a breeding ground for tangential thought and musical insurrection. R.E.M. came to exist from the soup of all of that insurrection.

The band has always been:

- **Peter Buck**– lead guitar, mandolin, banjo (1980–2011)
- **Mike Mills**– bass guitar, keyboards, backing vocals, occasional co-lead vocals (1980–2011)
- **Michael Stipe**– lead vocals (1980–2011)

They came into my life in the mid 80's when I was given their album *Murmur* on cassette by a friend who thought that I might like it. I did. A lot. That record's title comes from Michael Stipes' insecure tendency to mumble his way through his vocal takes. Brilliant. The record blew my mind. One has to remember back to a time before "Alternative" became "Mallternative." Before it was possible to hear the hidden music of America EVERYWHERE! These sounds were unlike anything anyone else had recorded. R.E.M. has earned every single record of the 85 million albums that band has sold. Every single one.

After *Murmur* came *Reckoning*, then *Fables of the Reconstruction*, followed by *Life's Rich Pageant*, and THEN, in 1987, the monster that was *Document*. Ironically enough, the record called *Monster* was anything but, but I digress. Each of those albums were a year apart. That's fucking ridiculous. The output of this band is not to be down-played. Don't forget that each of those years were ALSO filled with touring America, TIRELESSLY. That is how prolific they were. The streak continued afterwards as well. Listening on through to records like *Green*, *Out Of Time*, and *Automatic For The People*, reveals a band whose song writing power is hard to match. Especially today. That's eight albums, that span 11 years, and ALL are incredible. All are individual to them. R.E.M. created a sound that was THEIRS, and a million bands found inspiration in that sound. It is a strange thing that almost all of the huge Alternative bands of the day displayed similar skills. The Cure, Depeche Mode, New Order, and U2 all came ripping out of the 80's and well into the 90's with amazing discographies, leaving a wake of brilliant bands that emulated, borrowed, and stole, from them. What a fucking time to have been a music fan in America.
In April of '87, the band entered Nashville's Sound Emporium Studios to begin work on what would become Document. It was their first foray with new producer Scott Litt, who had been picked for his work with The dB's. He would go on to work with them for over a decade. It was a powerful team and the sound of Document is testament to the fertile and creative environment that the band found themselves in that Spring.

The album features three songs that went on to shift a BOAT-LOAD of units for the band. More than they had ever envisioned prior. Their biggest success to date. "The One I Love" was a great intro to the band's new, more muscular, and complete sound. It was everywhere! And REAL R.E.M. fans were justified in their excitement. One of my favorite moments is when a band that you are an early adopter of come out with new material that you just KNEW they had been capable of all along, you were just waiting for it, and now they were going to be ENORMOUS! I have no truck with fans who decry a band's becoming successful, what a dumb perspective. This record, and that song, was IT! And then "I.T.E.O.T.W.A.W.K.I." was released and it all goes BALLISTIC! Holy shite. You knew upon the first listen that it was gonna be a hit. And it was.

TO THE TAPE!!

**Bill Berry.** Badass. All you need to hear is the first drum hit of the song, and you know what it is. Being a drummer is a difficult place to find oneself, musically. How does one carve out an identity with this limited sonic pallet AND the responsibility of keeping it all together? All chugging along? The Post-Punk movement was a rebellion against all forms of musical bullshit, and drummers were no exception. Most of them smashed and bashed away with reckless abandon, but a few created their own thing anyway. Stephen Morris of New Order is a PERFECT example. Bill Berry was a creative drummer who formed the second half of the rhythm section with Mike Mills, and these two complement one another admirably. They are a perfect team. I particularly love the "Wipe Out" tom bits in the post-chorus sections before the verses crank back up. Bill is a player who creates PARTS for each section of the composition. It is an infinitely more complicated drum track than one hears at first blanch. I love musical drummers and Bill is one on a World Class level. He is the bedrock, the Back Beat, sure, but, also, he uses the ride to build drama in certain passages, his bass-drum pattern changes to reflect the energy of the moment, some great little fills to enunciate the breaks, and the entire song is a 4-minute CHARGE! Perfect.

**Mike Mills?** GTFO. If you are a regular reader of these missives, then you will have cottoned-on to the fact that I am a HUGE fan of bass-players. They are my favorite members of the band. The songs start and finish with the bass part, as far as I'm concerned. And THIS ONE?! Beautiful. The verse is soooooo good and, then, the CHORUS?! How the hell did he find THAT melody inside the guitar part that Buck constructed? It always amazes me when I hear something like this. Listen back to the attached audio and then listen to the song in its entirety and focus on the melodic drive that he provides with that funk-infused ridiculousness. His usage of the octaves to build excitement throughout the chorus turnarounds? The step-downs as each chorus ends, mimicking the guitar part? This is a VERY smart bloke writing very smart parts. He's one of my favorite bass-players ever. It is Mill's voice that is the most recognizable in the backing-vocals department, and its counterpoint to Stipe's is a signature texture in all R.E.M. songs. He's also a massive music fan who's record collection consists of about 25,000 records, by all-accounts. Perhaps he needs some PS Audio bits to play it through? Oh, and he ALSO plays the piano parts on this song, too. Dude.

**Peter Buck.** Yeah. I got nothing. There are guitar players who play and then there are guitar players who have carved a niche that then changed the sound of the instrument from that point on. Buck is one such player. And that isn't hyperbole. He took The Byrds, and the sound of a Rickenbacker, and placed them both in an entirely new context. He, pretty much, single-handedly created the "jangle." That sound that rings through the songs of that era and beyond. That
"fliiiiiiiingy-chimey-flingy thing!" You know what I'm talking about. Madchester doesn't exist without it. Most bands from the East Coast in the 80's don't exist without it, I'm looking at you Miracle Legion. Almost all of the Alternative bands in the US stole it. He invented it. By standing on the shoulders of the giants that came prior. But it is his crown to claim. And I will gladly be at that coronation.

There's a chord that happens at the turn-around of each verse section in "I.T.E.O.T.W.A.W.K.I." that is completely discordant, until you hear it contextualized. But it is played that way to announce the new part and to put an exclamation point on that moment. There are so many little bits like that. Places where he plays a strange note to emphasize something and make something happen that wouldn't have happened without that choice. So much thought. And that, to me, is one of the benchmarks of R.E.M.'s music. You can HEAR the thought, the construction, the care. It's why Scott Litt went on to do records with them for a decade. He's a producer who ALSO pays attention to the "little moments" and he helped bring them to this new peak of creativity and renown. One should never minimize the effect that a Producer can have on a band and their sound. It is a choice that can have a LASTING impact, both negative AND positive.

"I.T.E.O.T.W.A.W.K.I." is, to me, the quintessential Peter Buck guitar part. It does everything that he does well...VERY well. Fragile, pretty, huge, jangly, punky, blistering, strange, all of the flavors, all the moods. The weird, bluesy, bendy, thing that he is doing at the 1:40 mark?! What is THAT?!! It's SMART, that's what. He is bringing in some deep blues business. Don't forget, they are a band from Georgia. That sound is in EVERYTHING. Even Peter Buck couldn't escape its effect. Them Blues blokes taught without anyone knowing they were being taught.

**Stipe.** Another innovator. A singer who hated the sound of his own voice, so he mumbled, had it mixed low, and created a vocal atmosphere that was entirely new in its presentation. And then others modeled themselves on it. That's what we forget about R.E.M. They invented something. Michael Stipe was one of the first of the American "Literary Alternative Singers." His lyrics featured weird couplets, strange imagery, peculiar characters, angst, pain, and honesty. But they were also fragile in a way that nobody I had heard prior had been, at least not on this side of the pond. And they were also Southern. What a feat it was to have pulled THAT off. There is a deep Southern connection to his voice and phrasing. But he also sang, and wrote, in a way that resonated with us from the suburbs, and those from the cities, and it wasn't simply the songs, it was something else. Something that wouldn't become clear to everyone else until they heard "Everybody Hurts." He was also pan-sexual and asexual in a way that was new to the music that America was putting out. Sure, there had been the David Johansens of the world, etc, but Stipe wasn't glam, or punk, or showy in any way, shape, or form. He was a quiet, regular, guy, albeit beautiful to look at, and, clearly, intelligent, but his lack of glitz made it comfortable for all of us misunderstood to know that we were understood. That we had brotherhood out there, somewhere. A welcome feeling.

Stipe mentioned in interviews that, while penning the lyrics to this song, he had had a dream where he was at a party hanging with a bunch of L.B.'s, hence the Lenny Bruce, Lester Bangs, Leonid Brezhnev, and LEONARD BERNSTEIN!!, references he felt compelled to write into pop-culture history. And that, for me, says ALL that you need to know about John Michael Stipe. Who has THAT precise a dream?!! And then gets us all to SING about it along with him? Only THAT guy. Only Mike Stipe. And maybe Moby.

https://soundcloud.com/theklossessions/rem-iteotwawki

**THE LYRICS:**

That's great, it starts with an earthquake
Birds and snakes, and aeroplanes
And Lenny Bruce is not afraid

Eye of a hurricane, listen to yourself churn
World serves its own needs
Don't mis-serve your own needs
Speed it up a notch, speed, grunt, no, strength
The ladder starts to clatter
With a fear of height, down, height
Wire in a fire, represent the seven games
And a government for hire and a combat site
Left her, wasn't coming in a hurry
With the Furies breathing down your neck

Team by team, reporters baffled, trumped, tethered, cropped
Look at that low plane, fine, then
Uh-oh, overflow, population, common group
But it'll do, save yourself, serve yourself
World serves its own needs, listen to your heart bleed
Tell me with the Rapture and the reverent in the right, right
You vitriolic, patriotic, slam fight, bright light
Feeling pretty psyched

It's the end of the world as we know it
It's the end of the world as we know it
It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine

Six o'clock, TV hour, don't get caught in foreign tower
Slash and burn, return, listen to yourself churn
Lock him in uniform, book burning, bloodletting
Every motive escalate, automotive incinerate
Light a candle, light a motive, step down, step down
Watch your heel crush, crush, uh-oh
This means no fear, cavalier, renegade and steering clear
A tournament, a tournament, a tournament of lies
Offer me solutions, offer me alternatives, and I decline

It's the end of the world as we know it (I had some time alone)
It's the end of the world as we know it (I had some time alone)
It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine (time I had some time alone)
I feel fine (I feel fine)

The other night I drifted nice continental drift divide
Mountains sit in a line, Leonard Bernstein
Leonid Brezhnev, Lenny Bruce, and Lester Bangs
Birthday party, cheesecake, jellybean, boom
You symbiotic, patriotic, slam but neck, right, right

It's the end of the world as we know it (time I had some time alone)
It's the end of the world as we know it (time I had some time alone)
It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine (time I had some time alone)
I mean...right? Right?

The grand conceit that this album ended-up being called *Document* shouldn't be lost in the discussion. It IS a document. It's the Operators Manual for a band writing some of its most indelible songs, finding a way from Indie Darlings to Household Name without losing any of their cred or fire, and instruction on how to own it all...and it's a, nigh-on, perfect album. Give it a listen and you'll soon agree, I'm sure. Start to finish, flawless.

I've always considered "I.T.E.O.T.W.A.W.K.I." to be the Indie Rock response to Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start The Fire." Both songs are anthems of their times, commentary on said times, and a wonderful example of how two different artists can handle the same basic premise from two completely different ends of a room. A room with Lester Bangs, Leonid Brezhnev, Lenny Bruce, and LEONARD BERNSTEIN! hanging-out in it. Brilliant.

"That's great it starts with an earthquake" - THAT'S how you start a song.

Keep listening, thanks for reading.

See you at the next one.

cjh

PS - You can find me on IG, Facebook, and here if you want any info about The Sessions and where to catch me live.

My fav REM song...well, one of them:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCMy6kq5ZA0
No, they’re not related, but Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) and Hieronymus Praetorius (1560-1629) co-existed in Germany, composing mainly Lutheran sacred music as the Renaissance was giving way to the Baroque. Each is the focus of some recent recordings.

If ever you hear the name “Praetorius” mentioned in a musical context but without a first name, the subject is Michael. Not only did he write a book about musical instruments and music theory that continues to be used by historians, but he collected and published two songs that remain in the canon of Christmas carols: “In dulce jubilo” and “Est ist ein Ros entsprungen” (Lo, how a rose e’er blooming).

Since Michael Praetorius valued old music, let’s start with the recent appearance of a classic recording on streaming platforms. Any true-blue early-music fan will know the name David Munrow. He helped to invent the field with tireless scholarship into lost works he dug up, playing them on instruments nobody had ever heard of. In 1967 he co-founded the Early Music Consort of London with fellow brilliant nerd Christopher Hogwood. Sadly, Munrow died in 1976, and the group disbanded.

This 1974 album, Praetorius – Dances and Motets (Erato), primarily contains some of Michael P.’s so-called Dances from Terpsichore. These are short instrumental pieces taken from Praetorius’ 1612 collection 300 newly arranged tunes. Instrumental music was just starting to leave its centuries-long state of not being considered important enough for the best composers to bother with, so Praetorius wouldn’t have felt ashamed to offer arrangements of pre-existing melodies rather than original music.

“Passamezze” is one of the Terpsichore dances, a duple-time number featuring brass, woodwinds, and drums. Although Praetorius wrote out the arrangements, he did not specify which instruments should play what. Therefore, any instrument that can play the pitches on the score are welcome to play. (Scoring for specific instruments would have been a new concept at the time, and still rare.)

Munrow and his band have a slightly heavy-handed sound here, I admit. But keep in mind that these
early brass instruments were completely unfamiliar to modern players, so they hadn’t figured out how to control them for an elegant turn of phrase. Munrow’s experimenting allowed for the virtuosity of the following generations.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2SjmwwY7Ag

The Munrow record also includes some motets. For Praetorius’ generation, “motet” had come to mean a religious choral work with instruments. While motets were an old genre, instruments had been included in their scores only since the Gabrieli (Andreas and his famous nephew, Giovanni) started adding brass and basso continuo to the motets they wrote for San Marco in Venice. That would have been when Praetorius was a kid.

“Resonet in laudibus” is a seven-voice motet. Praetorius is not the first to set this popular Latin sacred song as polyphony, but he’s the first important composer to add instruments. You may recognize the basic melody as a Christmas carol. The solo singers in this thoughtful performance are Munrow himself and Peter Hurford, who is also leading the choir of St. Albans Cathedral.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ax9f2GGmflg

Among M. Praetorius’ largest selections of works are the chorale concerts, sometimes misspelled as “choral concerts” because of confusion with the German. In English, a “chorale” is a sacred song used in Lutheran worship. And “concert” indicates that the piece uses both voices and instruments. Praetorius’ chorale concerts feature between 10-20 vocal parts, including chorus and soloists.

The ensemble Gli Scarlattisti, led by Jochen Arnold, has a recent recording of chorale concerts called Michael Praetorius: Gloria sei dir gesungen (Carus). “Komm, heiliger Geist” features soprano Anja Bittner and other unnamed soloists. Unfortunately, it’s rich material clumsily performed; the instruments seem to be playing under a different conductor from the singer, if not actually in a different church!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTyfmHtFr4

You’re better off choosing another new recording instead: Michael Praetorius: Erhalt uns Herr bey deinem Wort - Lutheran Choral Concerts (CPO label, for Deutschlandfunk Kultur). This is by the Bremen-based ensemble Weser-Renaissance. The chorus, vocal soloists, and instruments -- strings, winds, and keyboard – are directed by Manfred Cordes.

To contrast with the messy track by Gli Scarlattisti above, here’s “Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g’mein,” a piece in a similar style that also features soprano. My only quibble is that they’ve chosen not to use brass instruments, which were so popular in German church music at the time. But, as I mentioned, it is a choice; Praetorius didn’t specify. (This album has no tracks on YouTube, so please use Spotify.)

https://open.spotify.com/album/6mhcxEQVKrZNcqJZJFH5ct

In an impressive feat of thoroughness, the ensemble Wester-Renaissance has just released another new Praetorius album on the CPO label. It features music of Hieronymus, the other Praetorius.
Hieronymus P. spent his entire life in Hamburg, about 140 miles north of Michael P.’s home in Wolfenbüttel. Although he was a quite gifted composer, he never reached Michael’s level of fame, either during their lifetimes or subsequently.

But some early-music artists are working to remedy that. Weser-Renaissance’s Missa in Festo Sanctissimae Trinitatis (Mass for the Festival of the most Holy Trinity), with Volker Jänig on organ, reconstructs a complete mass as it would have been done in early 17th-century Hamburg.

The Gloria from this Mass proves Hieronymus to be a composer of refined skill in that concerted church style inspired by the Gabriels. It also shows off Weser-Renaissance’s smooth, confident sound and well-crafted phrasing:

https://open.spotify.com/track/0u2r8HIXr1h22o0jjDK9xo

Apparently 2018 was the Year of Hieronymus Praetorius: There’s not one, but two new recordings of his music! His Missa Tulerunt dominum meum was recorded for the first time ever by Siglo de Oro for Delphian Records. This British choir has only been around since 2014, but they’re already a group to watch. Under the direction of Patrick Allies, they sing a cappella on this album; unlike the Missa in Festo discussed above, this one was composed in the old pre-Gabrieli style, without basso continuo or obbligato instruments.

Again, the Mass is presented within the context of other music that might have been sung during the service, including motets by H. Praetorius, Lassus, Hassler, and others. There’s one live promo video featuring the Kyrie:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZapUxFqR5U

But you’ll want to play the whole beautiful album on Spotify:

https://open.spotify.com/album/431RRpe4jvfOhj4fGJs6g6

Siglo de Oro’s website sports the slogan “Bringing unusual and neglected music to life.” Hieronymus Praetorius certainly qualifies, but if this two-a-year trend keeps up, his fame may someday catch up to Michael’s.
We've written about the decline and fall of Sears a zillion times in Industry News, most recently in Copper #45, Copper #69, and Copper #70. The dual themes of all these stories have been "how are they staying alive?" and "what's taking so long for them to disappear?"

Well, the end may be in sight. Operative word is, of course, may.

The latest development is that Eddie Lampert, venture capital mogul and former chairman of Sears Holdings, has made a string of offers for what's left of Sears, starting at $4.4 billion, and at last report, up to $5 billion in cash. The question is: why?

Through all the store closings and sell-offs of valuable brand names like DieHard and Craftsman, it really appears that only one person has benefited: Lampert. Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) owned by his group Seritage Growth Properties---and there is apparently no irony intended in that "Growth"---have managed to leverage real estate formerly occupied by Sears stores into millions of dollars in profits. Maybe billions: the accounting is a little circuitous, and far from transparent, or GAAP-oriented.

The options remaining are few---two, to be exact: liquidation, meaning whatever assets Sears Holdings still possesses will be sold off to pay creditors; or acceptance of Lampert's buyout offer in some form. Many creditors feel they have a better chance at being paid with the liquidation option; a minority group opt for Lampert's offer.

Viewed from the outside, it's easy to understand the sentiments expressed by Georgetown University business prof Sandeep Dehiya, as quoted in a Chicago Tribune article:
"With its large real estate holdings, creditors may see it as 'more valuable dead than alive,' Dahiya said.

"The $5 billion rescue bid would have been more compelling if it hadn't come from ESL [Lampert's hedge fund---Ed.], Dahiya added.

"While Lampert was CEO, he and his hedge fund threw Sears several lifelines as the company continued losing money, closing stores and laying off workers.

" '(Creditors) may simply feel, 'We've seen this movie before, and we don't think anything different will happen,' " he said."

Sears will make a decision between the two options shortly after the time when this article appears---so we'll keep an eye on developments.
More often than not, it used to be that weekday mornings I would be rushing around, behind schedule, trying to get out the door to get to work. Since I was going to be late anyway, just before leaving, I was usually unable to resist the temptation to turn on the T.V., just to make sure there wasn't something on that I would want to watch. Instead of being just late for work, I would then be very late for work.

One morning I happened upon the Joan Rivers talk show, and her guest happened to be Itzhak Perlman, whom I think is arguably the most famous classical musician in the world. He had already performed, and was now seated on the couch discussing his personal violins with Rivers. He said that the fiddle he held was a Guarneri and not a Stradivarius (one of which he also owned), and he discussed the subtle differences between them. He also explained the care taken to protect the Guarneri, especially regulating temperature and humidity.

Rivers seemed to be interested only in how much his violin cost—which Perlman kept diplomatically side stepping. Finally, Rivers reached behind the couch and pulled out a hidden violin. She explained that, just that morning she had given one of her assistants $200 to go out in Manhattan and come back with a violin. The assistant had returned with a violin, and $50 change. Rivers handed that violin to Perlman, and asked how it was any different than his violin.

Perlman looked at the very cheap violin, then back to Rivers, and asked if she was being serious. She assured him she was; so he looked at the violin, put it under his neck, and tuned it up and then ripped off what I recollect to be Mozart. It sounded great to me— but that is with the understanding that I was hearing it as most everyone else watching it on television was, which is to say through a tiny, tinny TV speaker.

He stopped, looked at her and said: "Did you hear that?"
She replied: "Hear what? That sounded exactly the same as your violin!"

Perlman then studied the violin in his hands while he seemed to mull over what she said. He then replied to her: "Well, there is only one of 2 possible explanations for this. Either you have no ear for music, or I paid WAY too much for my violin."

For years I would occasionally dredge up that story, always making the point that Rivers had to be the most incredible Yutz (a Yiddish word meaning a person not worth taking seriously). Rivers just had one of the greatest violists ever play a "priceless" violin for her, and then told him his priceless violin sounded the same as a "cheap as they come" beginner's violin. I always got a laugh out of that story at Rivers' expense; always implying that I, and whomever I was hearing the story, would of course hear the big difference in sound quality--- as Perlman implied that he heard, and Rivers didn't.

Then, all at once, I had this complete change of perspective. I suddenly asked myself what I thought Joan Rivers should have said instead: a lie? If she could not hear any difference between the violins, then she was just being honest. To her, the two violins sounded the same, so that is what she said. I have to wonder what I or anyone else would do given the circumstances.

Would I have had the courage to tell classical music star Itzhak Perlman, in front of a huge audience no less, that I could not hear any difference between the sound of a very cheap beginning student's violin and a multi-million dollar violin revered for its sound? I don't know.

I do know the language. It would be easy to say that Perlman's Guarneri violin sounded "rich, lush, warm, sweet, beautiful, full...." On the other hand, I could say Rivers' cheap student violin sounded "thin, harsh, strident, edgy, and so on."

I sometimes wrestle with the fear that my opinion might hurt someone's feelings. I might listen to music or sound that I dislike, and try to lie diplomatically to protect someone's feelings. That's different.

It's a hard thing to do to stand against the crowd and trust yourself over the opinions of experts. But-- that's the honest and the brave thing to do.

I saw that a Guarnieri del Gesu 1743 "sauret" violin was sold for 16 million dollars. I don't know about Perlman's Guarnieri, but using this record setting sale price for a violin, one can see that the Guarnieri cost around 100,000 times more than the student violin. Mull that over: one Guarnieri violin cost the same as 100,000 beginner's violins. Even discounting the incredible museum and exclusivity value differences between the violins, I still think that instruments (and sound reproductive equipment) that cost that impossibly far apart should sound more than just a little different. Actually, for that kind of money, they should be hang glider vs. fighter-jet on afterburner sort of different.

When it comes to musical talent or musical understanding, I know that I am less than a grain of sand compared to Perlman's Mt Everest, but a lot of fabulous sound has passed through my ears. How do I know it was fabulous sound? Because I say it was fabulous sound, that's how I know. If I don't hear it like Perlman does, that is just the way it is! For music analysis, I'll kowtow to Perlman, but not for sound. My ears are wired to my own unique brain/mind/soul/spirit, just as yours are. Nobody knows what anyone else hears, thinks, or feels. If we hear things differently, there should be no problem with that. Each and every one of us is wired to our own set of ears, leading up to a brain/soul sort of contraption which decides how it is heard and. No two of us hear or feel in exactly the same way.

I was not there to hear the differences between those two violins--- but in terms of the way they
sounded I may well have, like Rivers, come to the conclusion that, yes indeed, Itzhak Perlman did pay "WAY too much" for his violin.
Records as Time Machines

FEATURED
Written by Jeremy Kipnis
After years of experience as a producer and engineer, I’ve come to expect the unexpected—even with something as familiar as the sound of my own grandfather’s voice. Astute listeners can easily tell the difference between good and bad sounding recordings; great artists are immediately evident, compared to mediocre ones, even many decades after stardom and notoriety have faded.

Likewise, styles of music and their associated performance affectations tend to come and go within the era in which they were first invented or embraced. In that way, classical music was replaced by Jazz, then supplanted by Rock and Pop, Metal, Fusion, Rap.... Over the last century and a half, an entire legion of music-making trends has come and gone with people’s fancies, year in and year out. And yet: artists like Enrico Caruso, Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, and (as it turns out) Alexander Kipnis live on, as their performance careers were captured on the commercial picture and sound media of their times, and are now distributed through YouTube, Vimeo, and other streaming media sites.
Alexander Kipnis (from 1946)

When I was growing up, Stereo LPs (along with Open Reel and cassette tapes) were the media of the day, and as a family we were fortunate to hear a wide range of music as my father, Igor Kipnis, was a keyboardist and was also a reviewer at Stereo Review magazine for nearly 30 years. We also still listened to 78s: the heavy and fragile 12" disks were the state of the art until 1948 or so, when the long playing (LP) record first made its debut. So monumental was the sonic improvement, even in the Mono discs that were all that were then available, that critics and amateur listeners alike hailed the LP as a sonic revolution. Yet today, mainstream thinking is that 78s, LPs, and analog tapes are vintage formats, incapable of living up to today’s best efforts. Digital or otherwise, the assumption is that newer technology must provide better fidelity---and the evidence would mostly seem to support that contention. Mostly.
As it happens, my grandfather Alexander Kipnis was quite a famous musician, a bass at the Metropolitan Opera in NYC (during the end of his long career), and a soloist who toured the world music scene for over four decades. His recorded legacy is profound and amazing for two reasons:

1) His career spanned the early part of 78’s – known as the Acoustical Era (all analog – no electricity in the signal path) but also the later part – the Electrical Era (with microphones and amplification); two very distinctive sounding eras in our recorded history.

2) He was a performer of immense presence and stature, subtle in delivery and inflection but also quite emotional and often humorous – a true emoter of feelings in his work. Quite simply, he was as famous as Caruso or Sinatra in his day, and was featured on numerous recordings, like them, distributed all over the world on many different labels.

Enrico Caruso (from 1906)

It is possible, therefore, to use these historic formats as an acoustical time machine, capable of transforming our present into the past in which these musicians lived and worked. Of course, many would say, “these historic formats sound restricted in frequency and dynamics, and often have
ridiculous amounts of surface noise, clicks, pops, swish, and other distortion in addition to being monaural (one channel).”

Growing up, I personally realized the contrary: when properly played back, older formats like 78s can offer just as much of a sonic illusion of reality as anything we’ve had for the last 50 years. Only later, when I heard Ambiophonics (a specialized stereo delivery process) at inventor Ralph Glasgal’s house, did I truly understand the full capabilities of the Acoustical 78 RPM Disks, and appreciate the majesty of my grandfather’s talents.

Ralph had a genuine Victrola from the mid-1920’s in his living room, which was a tall, wide space with plenty of furniture and a few carpets amidst the artwork adorning the walls. The phonographs of this period were either tabletop models (such as most have seen, with a fluted horn) or larger standalone credenzas, like Ralph’s. This particular, massive unit contained the turntable on top, with a hand operated arm and stylus of cactus or steel needles, and a large radiator horn which passed beneath the turntable, and vented out the front between twin doors which folded open to reveal the mouth of the horn and a library of 50-60 disks.

From this library, Ralph selected and played some amazing examples of my grand papa singing at his very best! To say I was charmed by this demonstration would be putting it mildly: hearing my grandfather’s recording played back on a music system of the same era made all the difference. The tone, authority, dynamics, and brilliance of his performances were easily and clearly on display, with a total absence of any audible surface noise, pops, clicks, or swish. In fact, the presentation verged on being real, with a level of fidelity and volume we hardly, if ever, hear from recordings, today—regardless of when they were made, or the equipment and engineers involved.

Judy Garland (from 1942 in Stereo)

Why should this be? It turns out that the state-of-the-art back in the mid-1920’s was pretty good: in fact, with no electrical amplification in the signal path all the way from the original performer(s) through to the playback horn in this Victrola, the fidelity was stunning. The way the producers and engineers of the day balanced the sound of an entire orchestra against my grandfather’s voice so they both are easily heard together was really quite simple and functional: the orchestra was located farther away from the recording horn (not a microphone but an acoustical lens), while my grandfather was physically much closer in the same room. The inherent limitations and strengths of the 78-rpm shellac disk were well known and (apparently) well considered and compensated for in the recording and playback chain of the day. Thus, when the needle hit the groove, and the first notes emanated from the Victrola’s horn, my grandfather sounded magnificently alive, transparent, immediate, and scintillating…like he and the orchestra were in the room with us!

Now, I understand if most of you reading this are thinking something like, “Poppycock! There is no way a 78-rpm disk is going to sound like real life, better in some ways than anything recorded and played back in the last 60 years in Stereo--- and it’s just plain ridiculous if you think anyone is going to buy any version of this tale.” But I reiterate that this playback scenario (1920’s recording played on 1920’s Victrola Turntable) is unusual and that most astute listeners will give some credibility to Ralph’s commitment for historic sound recreation. I already thought I knew the sound of my grandfather’s voice, from the study of his career and recordings—but here I was, ear to horn and slack jawed at the apparent effectiveness of a 1920’s aural illusion of my grandfather performing Brahms, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, and Mozart (with orchestra) like I had never heard them or him, ever before.
As a professional Tonmeister, I’m fascinated with the way in which certain technology—even that which doesn’t use any electricity--- can effectively record and play back sound like it was a sonic time machine. In fact, it IS a time machine, of sorts; offering the remote listener a chance to hear both people and performances that have long since passed through time and space into obscurity. All at once, using the right combination of a state-of-the-art analog phonograph from almost 100 years ago to play 78 records of that same period produces an entirely new level of musical and emotional understanding; one that is only rarely hinted at in most people’s daily listening to digital audio these days. Having first been issued in 1889, cylinder and 78 phonograph records (competing formats just like VHS vs. Beta or Apple vs. Microsoft) had by the mid-1920’s been commercially available for nearly 35 years, and had become quite refined.

Frank Sinatra (from 1946)

What this ultimately boils down to is a very specific level of emotional communication that, with the
help of a higher temporal transcription speed (reading and writing at a 78-rpm speed), and careful understanding and compensating for frequency and dynamic limitations of the sound coming from many pre-electrical (1926) albums, offers simply stunning audio recreations when heard through optimal playback equipment of the period. The degree to which the hairs on the back of my neck, arms, and back rise up in response to my recognition of the music and performance and its level of personal connection to me is really unbelievable. That is, I get MORE human connection to the music and performers through an all acoustic, all analog, not electrically transformed recording and playback process than I do most any other type, short of hearing the very best of the best recordings played back under obscenely expensive and carefully produced conditions...or live (assuming one can find a good sounding and affordable seat).

In my opinion, we were actually ahead of the sonic game in so many ways using the more ancient recording and playback technology. The most important aspect was the emotional connection to the music, your music and by your artists, whenever you wanted (and wherever, too) to hear them. And while stereo and multi-channel recordings, with many microphones and speakers used to capture and replay (in the home environment), are supposed to get us all transported more INTO the performance and the space where it took place...taken by the ear (if you will) to the venue and time of the performance and placed within a song or album to luxuriate... few are willing to devote the full attention this approach actually demands. So, people's attention wanders while they get used to listening to worse and worse-sounding excuses for music and its delivered sound quality. Whereas---and again, based on my long experience of nearly 50 years as an astute listener and then as a professional producer and audiophile engineer--- the older technologies from almost 100 years ago were all about conveying the music and the performance to the remote listener. When reduced to its
most important aspects, the 78-rpm acoustical record may have provided the closest experience to listening live that we may ever get because everything was recorded live and intended to recreate that very same experience at home.

I think my grandfather would be proud knowing his legacy survives in such resplendent quality to this day, allowing people he could never have known to enjoy music and performances in a way that is all but lost to time and entropy. And if you are strolling through a tag or yard sale (or even at the Goodwill or Salvation Army stores) you might take a gander through the used records --- now ancient media that was recorded and distributed to benefit all of mankind. Well, amongst those ancient formats like LPs, cassettes, and even 8-track tapes, you may well find an album or two of 78s; shellac records made so many generations ago that they seem extremely distant to our own lives, today; even to be almost totally foreign.

But you know…it all comes down to liking the music and the performances, and sitting down and really listening to them, exclusively. And if you listen closely, even if it is through streaming sources instead of playing an actual record or 78 disk, please remember that you are experiencing a time machine, an historical window of sound that can transport one to times and places that don’t exist anymore. Just try to imagine another form of communication that can tell you as much about what Caruso, Garland, Sinatra, and Kipnis actually sounded like...when they were household names!
Scratchy Sound

FEATURED

Written by Charles Rodrigues
Buenos Aires

PARTING SHOT

Taken by Bill Leebens