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Charlie Morrow

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Arctic Radio

The drum is synthesized; a harsh, digital car-door slam. The concussion catches your breath, like the downbeat of an extended dance mix. It has struck suddenly, interrupting the plaintive and guttural sound of an arctic grouse. The drum and other synthesized percussion start a halting rhythm. Over this accompaniment a woman sings a lilting song in Sami, the native language of the Lapps. The melody is doubled by a clarinet, perhaps synthesized, perhaps real. The grouse, which the Lapps call *riivsa*, is sacred. It carries the souls of the dead to the afterlife. When the song is over there is the sound of melting ice, conversation in Sami and broken English, and the growl of a Yamaha scooter starting and speeding away.

These sound events are from composer Charlie Morrow's recently completed *Arctic Radio* project. The piece is a densely textured composition using sound sources from around the polar circle: Lapland, Greenland, Siberia, Canada, Alaska. The sounds are a portrait of indigenous Arctic culture, and of the transformations that the 20th century has wrought upon it. The grouse and melting of ice have been sampled: digitally recorded, manipulated, and, to use Morrow's word, "recomposed" (New Wilderness Foundation 1988:1). All of the sound events are to some extent subject to his intervention. Together they comprise a 45-minute collage exploring the incongruities of the new and old as they coexist in the far North. The piece was broadcast 3 April 1990 by the *Hörspiel* (radio drama) department of the West Deutscher Rundfunk in Cologne, West Germany.

The contradictions that animate this collage of sound are embedded in the changing social fabric of the far North. The grouse and the drum are both sacred to the Lapps. The drum is the tool of the shaman and the mythical grouse in the heavens charm the sun into rising each day. Both of these symbols have been refigured by the arrival of technology-driven culture from the temperate zones. The indigenous cultures of the Arctic are interpenetrated by broken English and Japanese motor scooters. Local and traditional musical forms have been supplanted by the country and rock music popular on the ubiquitous American military bases; while seeking

traditional music for the Canadian part of the project, Morrow was able to find only a single Inuit song.

Morrow's Arctic soundscape reflects the ways new culture supplants the old. The digital "recomposition" of natural and traditional sounds, and their interruption by an overpowering synthesized score, recapitulates this process of change and replacement. The sounds of Morrow's *Arctic Radio* have not been merely recorded. They have been thoroughly produced, carefully juxtaposed and mixed into an elaborately processed species of counterpoint. The technical posture of Morrow's project embraces the intrusion of the new culture. In all the individual sound events in the piece, the technical facility of Morrow's hand is evident. His transformation of sound mirrors the transformation of Arctic culture.

The concussive, synthetic drum takes the signature role of Morrow's intervention into the native soundscape. In a larger video project, *Arctic TV*, for which this collage is a precursor, the Arctic region is portrayed graphically as a drum, and Morrow plans to tie that project's sound track together with the sound of drumming. The drum is a consistent element in the indigenous religions of the various Arctic cultures. It is the Arctic shaman's instrument, a magical medium for focusing her/his power, and the accompaniment to the spirit stories s/he tells. In Morrow's score the digital drum dominates the musical foreground. Overwhelming the natural sounds and the singer's voice, it calls attention to itself with every downbeat. This harsh, uncompromising concussion against the soft clucking of the grouse initiates the contrasts that inform the piece.

The counterpoint of juxtaposition is at the root of Morrow's montage. Both the piece's aural texture—the blend of human, natural, and mechanical sounds—and the story it tells are rooted in a contention between two voices: the new and the old. Morrow's position in this exchange—this contest—is not easily defined. In *Arctic TV* he will collaborate with native media artists and, although the production will be prerecorded, Morrow hopes that the finished product will ultimately operate on the level of "cultural transmission," with a deliberately live-TV look. The attempt is to create the fiction of a conversation in which we will "see and hear through the eyes and ears of broadcasters, producers, and filmmakers who



1. Charlie Morrow (right) with Paul Sima, his main collaborator on the *Arctic* project. (Photo by Jeff Day)



are living in the Arctic area” (New Wilderness Foundation 1988:4). On the one hand, Morrow’s role is to find an audience for the voice of an often-overlooked culture. On the other hand, his project is unapologetically complicit with the imposition of temperate-zone culture on the polar regions. His use of digital technology and broadcast media to “recompose” the North assumes the technologies by which Western ways have so often supplanted, ignored, or appropriated local cultures. From its first drum beat, *Arctic Radio* embodies the collision between its subject matter and its medium.

This species of friction is a consistent element in Morrow’s work. From his earliest efforts to the present, he has had an abiding fascination with the poetry of interference and the counterpoint of sharp encounters. The position he takes with regard to the New Arctic is the result of a long-negotiated stance Morrow has developed as composer, businessman, and eventmaker. Morrow’s “recomposition” about this intrusion of Western culture proceeds from the principle that Morrow’s music is itself composed from intrusions, contentions, and provocations. The Arctic, at a critical juncture now that glasnost has opened many of its boundaries, is an appropriate location for Morrow’s work. In the far North, the superpowers almost touch; day, night, and cold take on their most extreme aspects; and the distinctions of technology—between Arctic research and early warning stations and the indigenous methods of survival—are very great. The direction of Morrow’s work has always pointed toward extremes of disjunction like these. From his counterpoint in traditional musical idioms to the contention and clamor of his ever-larger event works, Morrow has tended to polarize and contrast musical elements. This inclination is at the root of the (re)compositional style he brings to the Arctic soundscape, where the

2. *Members of the Dalvadis Teater, an Arctic theatre group collaborating on Morrow’s Arctic project, in their piece Cuovgga Ciehka (Eight Minutes from the Sun). (Photo by Harry Johansen)*

contradictions of the landscape are the framework for his collage. As provocateur and showperson, contrapuntist and communicator, Morrow's course of musical development has equipped him especially well for this venture, this intrusion into the New Arctic.

Antiphony

When Charles Ives first received serious attention as a composer in 1939, he was often asked where the inspiration for his startlingly original music came from. His answer, shocking at the time, was that he was inspired by the music of marching bands in parades. He was fascinated by the dynamism of moving sound sources, and most especially by their potential for discord. To the stationary observer, the music of one marching band fades after its passage and the sound of the next grows to encroach upon the first. At some midpoint, the two are indiscernibly mingled and confused. This cacophony, this collision of sound, was the music for which Ives was listening.

Morrow has been a composer and a creator of events for almost 30 years. His music spans the idioms of orchestral chamber music, tape collage, and chant forms. The events he has created include citywide festivals, practical jokes, and global telecommunication hookups. His works are extremely varied as to their media, their subject matter, and the technologies (musical or otherwise) they employ. But in many ways Morrow has been consistently attentive to the same phenomenon—the collision—which fascinated and inspired Ives.

In much of Morrow's early work, collisions take the form of jokes, ambushes, or conflicts of style. In these diversions Morrow playfully intervenes against the accepted and the everyday. In his later festive events, the collision is embodied by the optimistic geometry of people coming together. Often, the linear movement of a parade is reworked, with performers starting from diverse locations to arrive at a common site. In his recent works, collisions are created in the discord between differing cultures, in the contention between the old and the new, and in the conflicts that arise within specific human communities as they are incorporated into global technological arrangements. These encounters are sometimes comical, sometimes deadly serious, and occasionally bittersweet.

In his orchestrated provocations, Morrow does not so much take sides as provide a forum for the voices of the contestants. His events and compositions remind us of the polyvocality of our world, and bring to the forefront the unsettled condition—the noisiness—of human affairs.

Morrow's works often come in the form of rituals, either invented from scratch or derivative of the familiar rituals of everyday life. His earliest pieces tend to poke fun at established, traditional forms of pageantry, while his more recent works are attempts to provide a new and more relevant species of celebration for the present-day world. In constructing his events, Morrow pays close attention to the music of contradictions. He takes a composerly interest in the counterpoint of interference and commotion. His events often take the form of conversations between different locations, different sound sources, or different cultures. These are the contrapuntal voices that inform his musical language. Like the bands marching to different drummers which so fascinated Ives, these voices are often at odds.

Morrow's first instrument was the trumpet, which he played with his high school marching band in parades around the country. The vitality and potential for discord inherent in parades is almost always present in Mor-



3. Morrow in the early '60s, perusing one of his scores. (Photo courtesy of Charlie Morrow)

row's events. As a brass player, Morrow was also exposed to a number of antiphonal compositions, in which horns interact with each other in a kind of call and response, the music moving from one group to another. Throughout his event-making is a well-developed sense that music is dynamic rather than stationary, that crucial to a musical event are its direction and location. In addition, performances such as parades are celebrations, not just musical performances. From the beginning, Morrow's musical experience associated music with events, with specific celebrations and rituals. He prefers the broad gestures associated with pageant, spectacle, and fanfare. Many of his works draw upon familiar events of this order, such as graduations, heavyweight fights, or presidential inaugurations, which Morrow reworks for his own purposes.

The first composition Morrow specifically identifies as an event is *Flower Music* (1965). The performer's instructions read, "While walking in a daze to receive your diploma, knock over the flowers onto the graduates and/or faculty. Deny that you knew it had even happened." Often starting with a form of traditional pageantry, Morrow mischievously transforms it with his own flourish. Here, Morrow's use of the collision is on the one hand literal: the performer's foot collides with the decorations, the flowers and

4. *Morrow's Cleansing Ritual (1985) was a musical collision between Jewish and Christian Sabbaths. (Photo by Becky Cohen)*



dirt collide with the robes of the assembled participants. But also at work is the collision between the solemnity of academic ritual and the puerile pleasure of fucking things up. The object of such a piece is to *intervene* against the monotonous ritual of calling out graduates' names. The performer's action blithely destroys the fragile ceremoniousness of graduation, simply by colliding with ingrained expectations. The performer embodies the two extremes of honored scholar and impetuous miscreant. The success of this piece is proportional to the damage done to the august proceedings, and the extent to which the performer's protests of innocence are believed.

As a student at music camp a high school-aged Morrow organized a similar event for orchestra. Unbeknownst to the conductor, the members of the student orchestra were to stop playing suddenly at a predetermined measure and en masse deliver a cacophony of farting noises. Morrow reports that one successful staging of this event (during a rehearsal) reduced the otherwise austere conductor to speechless laughter. Here again, Morrow used the visceral and puerile to subvert the authority of pomp and circumstance.

Morrow is obviously intrigued with the power that rituals and other traditional forms hold over our lives. With an irrepressible sense of the inappropriate, his early events are prescriptions for taking the stage away from its customary occupants. The resulting diversions are, of course, adaptations rather than simply negations of that power. But Morrow's appropriations of the traditional are not always so disrespectful. He has composed several works which are "reconstructions" of J.S. Bach, such as *Bach Reconstruction for Piano, Cello, Clarinet* (1970), and *Bach Reconstruction*



5. Intrigued with the power of ritual, many of Morrow's events are "healing ceremonies." Here, participants join in a healing ceremony staged by Morrow at the Annolfini Art Center in Rhinebeck, New York, in 1977. (Photo by Mary Ellen Morrow)



6. At another Morrow ritual event for the Spring equinox in 1987, Morrow staged a fire and ice collision at Wollman Rink in New York City. The flaming skater is Rob Steiner. (Photo by Taria Tupperainen)

Opus 8 la Les Adieux (1970). Each of these works takes all the notes of a Bach piece and reorders them. The collective of pitches is the only part of the piece retained, with the location and duration of each pitch "recomposed." From the raw material of the source music a new counterpoint is created. The old music is disrupted by Morrow's imposition of his modern sensibilities. The style of Morrow's reconfiguration undercuts the tonal concerns of Bach's baroque musical language. On the other hand, the piece also imposes on Morrow's postexpressionistic treatment the statistical bias of a tonal work by Bach. As in many of Morrow's pieces, a compromise is

struck between the new and the old: Bach picks the pitch and Morrow picks the place. A conversation between the two styles is created by the disruption of each by the other. Rather than parodying Bach or perhaps farting during a performance of the Brandenburg Concerti, Morrow has created a method of deconstructing the original without disparaging it; taking apart but carefully restoring all the pitches of the original. In counting and tallying every pitch in a Bach opus, Morrow reveals a kind of affectionate fussiness; the postexpressionist version of a man forever tinkering with his beloved vintage automobile.

In *Very Slow Gabrieli for Double Brass* (1957), performers play a Giovanni Gabrieli piece from traditional brass literature: Sonata Pian' e Forte, a 16th-century work written for the Cathedral of St. Mark in Venice. Morrow's only change to the original is that the piece is played at one-fourth the usual tempo. Body movements, including entrances and bows of the performers and conductor, are correspondingly slowed down. Dramaturgically the piece is very silly. The performers' exaggerated flourishes and lugubrious motions can turn the performance into an excruciatingly long and hammy pantomime. Musically, however, the sonorities of the traditional piece are revealed in a new and startlingly beautiful light; majestic and deliberate in a kind of proto-minimalism. By drawing out the lush harmonies of Gabrieli's work, Morrow has, changing only the tempo, invested the traditional form with new musical interest. The piece both teases the staid and out-of-date genre of the brass prelude and teases out a new version of the piece's inherent beauty. What begins as a somewhat childish parlor game (pretending to be in slow motion) becomes an intriguing and revitalizing minimalist experiment. Morrow's music is not all jokes. In his provocations there is often great respect for the traditional forms which he has parodied, appropriated, or otherwise disrupted.

Morrow's intervention against Gabrieli is distinctly an idea born of a technological era. In the recorded and digitally sequenced music of the present, a piece's tempo can be radically altered simply by changing playback speed. The concept of slow motion is a conceit of a filmic culture, in which the parameters of playback are at the discretion of the recording machine's operator. To subject the brass section to this kind of manipulation as it plays a 16-century piece is to intrude upon the past using the mechanisms and metaphors of the technological present. But in this rather simple exchange between the new and the old, a conversation is enjoined. Harmonic dissonances which Gabrieli intended as passing tones become long, drawn-out chords. Repetitions which were bombastic trills are transformed into almost meditative pedal tones. The dramatic shape of Gabrieli's piece and the grammar of its musical language are so completely refigured by Morrow's contemporary-minded adjustments that the piece could easily pass in concert as a modern composition. It is still, however, Gabrieli's piece, informed by its traditional harmonies, rhythms, and structure.

In addition to working with the interference between different time periods or musical styles, another Morrow preoccupation is the interaction of sound from different directions and the alteration of sound through the movement of its source. The dynamic of the marching band becomes the starting point for a collection of works based on motion. Sometimes the movement is literal, with musicians marching or sound sources being transported in various ways, and at other times the motion is more figurative, with sounds coming from different directions or referring to diverse locales. On the one hand, the motion and directionality of his

music offer Morrow plenty of opportunities for collision: sound sources can move into discord and cacophony, cultures and musical idioms can literally as well as metaphorically collide. On the other hand, the emphasis on *placing* music also gives the different voices of a piece more individuality. Spatial distance reinforces the important distinctions of cultural or social difference. In both cases, Morrow's sense of ceremony and occasion is well served by *locating* his music, since ceremonies and pageantry are often specific to, and draw their power from, certain sites.

An early work that actually invents its own location is *Fantasie on Repeated Notes* (1966). In it, a pair of brass orchestras play acoustic games across the performance space, mimicking the delayed repetition of a sound echoing as if through a large cave or cathedral. In determining the intervals at which the notes in the piece are echoed, Morrow composes not only a piece, but also a place: a cavernous location full of echoes, larger and more acoustically volatile than the hall in which the piece is actually performed. This work, like *Very Slow Gabrieli for Double Brass*, takes a technological convention—using a digital or tape delay to artificially create resonance—and has the orchestra actually *perform* the alteration. Rather than playing in “slow motion,” the orchestra plays in “digital delay.” Morrow's original interest in Gabrieli's *Sonata Pian' e Forte* was spurred by the way that piece produces its own echoing motion. Highly antiphonal, it is a collection of calls and responses between brass players actually located in various arms of the cathedral. The piece, played by Morrow as high school trumpet player, was Morrow's introduction to the kind of illusory dynamism many of his own pieces now employ.

Even Morrow's work for the normally static medium of recorded tape is influenced by his sense of directionality. A great deal of Morrow's work for tape is mixed in a radically binaural stereo format. In other words, rather than conventional stereo positioning in which sounds emitted by left and right speakers are only slightly different (as sounds heard by right and left ears are only slightly different), Morrow often makes the output of two speakers mutually exclusive. Stereo was created to model the human hearing apparatus: two speakers for two ears. Instead, Morrow uses stereo to model the architecture of *conversation*: two distinct locations for two separate voices. This process facilitates a tape version of his preference to orchestrate by location.

One example of this use of stereo is the four-hour *Soundhead* show (1969), a radio presentation for children designed as a sound picture of pan-Americana. In the piece, layers of sound that represent different locales across the United States maintain their distinctness within the binaural environment of the playback. The sounds of city traffic may occupy one speaker while a conversation between a woman and her child occupies the other. The contrasting and simultaneous sounds are “mixed apart,” rather than mixed together. Sounds may “pan” from speaker to speaker, creating the impression of motion. These techniques, along with the collage's subject matter, enable the fiction of a journey. The narrative of travel vitalizes each snatch of local color, of conversation, or of ambient noise. The motion and disjunction between the two speakers also makes the piece more volatile, the juxtapositions of different sounds more wrenching. The late-'60s America of *Soundhead* seems to be in motion. In the disruptions and contrasts between the two distinct worlds of the left and right speakers, there is contention between America's various parts.

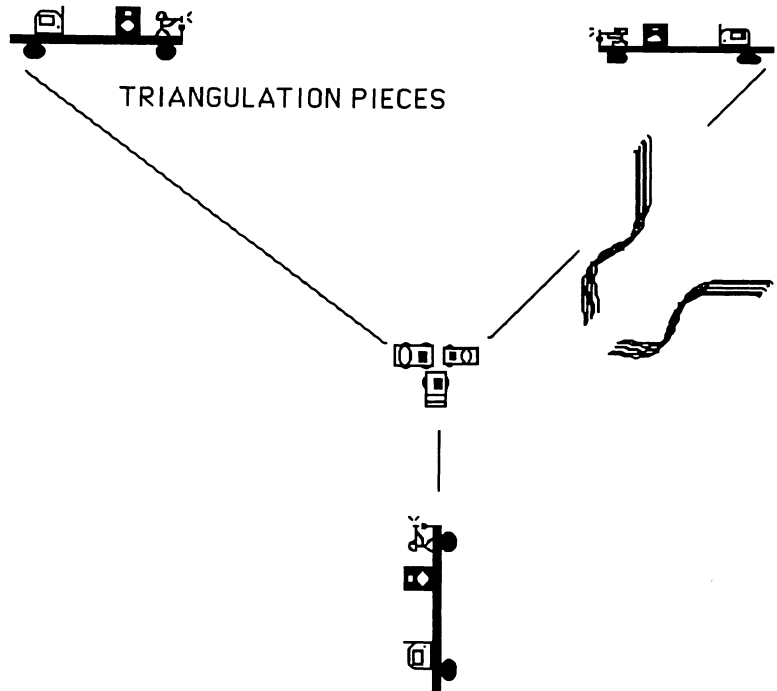
Another version of this technique occurs in *Zoo Music* (1968), a piece in which four cassette recorders are walked through a zoo in a fluctuating

square formation. The four tapes are played back in sync and in formation, on four hand-held speakers to recapture the movement of the recorders. The technique of having sound pan from one speaker to another recreates the motion of the procession through the zoo. In this piece, as in most of Morrow's event scores which utilize recorded sound, the positions of the speakers within the performance space are indicated with great precision; the speakers are treated as performers rather than mere playback facilities.

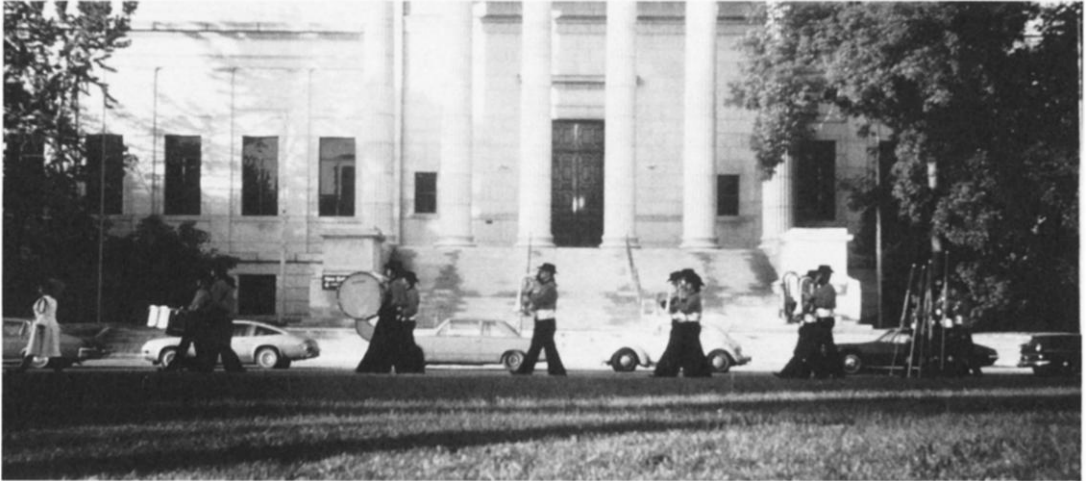
As Morrow's pieces increase in scope and scale, the movement and disjunction of sound sources become more dramatic. In the unrealized outdoor event *Triangulation Pieces* (1970) three flatbed trucks move out from a common starting point. The music is performed live on one of the trucks and transmitted to the other two trucks via FM radio. Speakers on the vehicles reproduce the sound from their shifting locations. The series includes a performance in the desert and another in the mountains. A third performance takes place on the seacoast, with boats instead of trucks. This series marks the beginning of Morrow's flair for the drama of extremes: desert, mountains, and seacoast create the geographical grammar of disjunction that will reappear in the Arctic projects.

Bicentennial Drum and Bugle Coast (1976), an unrealized event for several thousand musicians, has drummers and buglers playing "Taps" spaced at half-mile intervals from the West to East Coasts of the United States as sundown moves across the continent. Here, Morrow again takes a figurative concept, "pan-Americana," and makes it literal. The piece actually moves across its subject matter—the U.S.—encompassing the political federation in motion and sound.

In later works, Morrow's preoccupation with dynamic sound has consistently moved toward the specific geometry of voices coming together. Consistently, his events involve sound sources that move from sometimes



7. Diagram depicting *Triangulation Pieces* (1970). (Graphic by Charlie Morrow)



8. *Wave IV—Drums and Bugles was performed for the New Music America Festival in 1980 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. (Photo courtesy of the New Wilderness Foundation)*

quite distant locations to a common site where they interact. This species of collision gradually takes on more and more optimistic forms in Morrow's events.

In 1978, Morrow organized *Wave II, Solo Parades* in which orchestra members march from their homes to the performance site, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City, while playing the piece. The arrivals are staggered, with some musicians meeting each other along the way, and the final section is played when all have reached the site. This is a fairly benevolent scenario; people emerging from their homes to gather and converse musically. What makes the piece an event is that the gathering together of performers is itself part of the performance. The ritual of assembling to debate, inaugurate, or simply play together is superimposed on the musical performance. The linear parade is reworked into an assemblage of solo parades; the motion of the players toward a common site underscores the notion that they are playing together. Created for the opening of MOMA's Summer Garden, the individual processions were composed to give the gathering its impetus as celebration—performers and audience alike having gathered to inaugurate a garden.

The musical structure of *Waves II, Solo Parades* recapitulates the theme of assemblage. The notes of the piece are added one by one, accumulating in the fashion of the verses of "The Twelve Days of Christmas." This musical format also calls motion to mind; a spiraling out from the center or a circuitous procession toward a common goal. As in most of Morrow's event work, an improvisation extends from the initial statement. The musical theme becomes an invitation for the musician to find her or his own voice in the conversation.

One of the most ambitious works to employ this geometry of gathering is the 1982 piece *Toot 'n' Blink*. In this nighttime event, performed in Chicago on Lake Michigan, four large boats are stationed at a pier, awaiting the return of the night fleet. The night fleet comes from just over the horizon into view, and the boats greet each other by blowing their horns and flashing their lights.

The event could be construed as a larger, more rough-hewn version of Gabrieli's brass prelude. The antiphonal call and response is performed with a giant and evolutionarily distant cousin of the brass family—the boat

horn—and the slow unfolding of the piece recalls the lugubrious progression of *Pian' e Forte*. Set on Lake Michigan, the antiphony is reinforced by the extreme distance between the two fleets.

The ships' captains are directed by FM radio when to blow their horns and flash their running lights. The audience, with the fleet at the pier, is invited to listen in on the FM band. The simplicity of the piece's architecture, one group joining another, is part of its charm. The boats' orchestrated conversation, beginning at a great distance and ending almost an hour later with the night fleet's arrival, is a friendly encounter. Many of the familiar rituals of our culture, from marriage to a simple handshake, are of this same species: joining. The audience is also invited to join, since Morrow uses the technology of radio both to conduct the piece and to include the audience.

These optimistic events are noisy affairs, in keeping with Morrow's aesthetic of the collision. The assembling of musicians in *Wave II*, *Solo Parades* is a haphazard affair. The spiraling accumulation of notes that comprises the work's musical aspect is as nonlinear as the happenstance of the performer's arrival. The blowing of boat horns in *Toot 'n' Blink* is impossible to conduct precisely, resembling more a rough, hale greeting between large and cumbersome beings than an orchestrated encounter. In fact, the sounds of boat horns on a recording of the event recalls the good-natured flatulence of Morrow's orchestral farting joke, as the assembled audience cheers at the loudest and longest of them.

In designing these events, Morrow has recreated on ever larger scales the rituals of greeting and gathering. This optimistic geometry of things-coming-together seems to inform his work in the 1980s as well. This later work, however, tends to deal with collisions of culture and often operates as conversation rather than clamor. Since these pieces involve interaction on a global scale, the low technology of mechanical encounters is replaced by the high technology of telecommunications.

The use of radio in *Toot 'n' Blink* or *Triangulation Pieces* was essential to coordinate such large-scale works. As Morrow's compositional subjects reach global proportions, however, the technology changes. Transmission becomes the medium rather than simply a tool of convenience. Rather than organizing collisions between groups of performers, Morrow's later work is configured to open channels between participants. The radio itself provides the space for the encounter. During the '80s, Morrow became an architect of telecommunications.

The metaphorical and literal motion of Morrow's work enters a new register when applied to conversation between cultures. The exchanges are no longer as simple as a hale greeting; the optimism is tempered by the unequal positions of power inherent in intercultural forums. The aesthetic of provocation undergoes changes when so much is at stake. But Morrow's instincts lend themselves well to the needs of this new position. His sense of antiphony—voices calling to each other across a divide—assures the participants at least momentary parity. His use of displacement and disjunction, and his attention to the distinctness of voices, provide a space for differences between conversants. In a way, Morrow has adapted for this purpose a traditional compositional device: counterpoint.

In music, "counterpoint" refers to the relationship between harmony and melody. At any moment in a polyphonic score, each musical voice has a harmonic relationship to the other voices, and a separate relationship to its own melodic line. The art of counterpoint is to balance these two axes, to provide individual voices with their own lines of motion even as they

harmonize with other voices. For Morrow, the object of broadcast event-making is to provide contrary voices with the opportunity to maintain their identities even as they clash noisily. His later work, no less than the aggressive encounters in the '60s and '70s, is imbued with the harmony of these commotions.

Multiplicity

In addition to the marching band, Morrow identifies his other early musical influence as ham radio. From his basement in Newark, New Jersey, while still attending high school, he used a ham radio to speak to other operators all over the world. Morrow graduated from high school in 1957, the year in which the Soviet satellite Sputnik was launched. That year he tuned his radio to hear the four-tone cadence of the first satellite transmissions. These transmissions, the precursors of worldwide telecommunications and the internationalization of broadcast media, were the opening fanfares for the global village. The world was turning from newsreels and printed matter to live television. A few years before, CBS journalist Edward R. Murrow had used cable transmissions to create the first telecommunications performance art piece: the televised, simultaneous viewing of the Atlantic and Pacific coastlines of the United States.

Morrow's relationship to technology, like his relationship with the traditional, is ambivalent. His *Moonwalk I* (1970), a score for the official NASA documentary on the Apollo XI mission, was partially censored by NASA because it included disrespectful music during space medicine sequences. Morrow scored scenes of gravity and acceleration simulators with humorous cartoon sound track effects. In that year he was commissioned by AT&T to compose *Telephone Music*, which utilized dial tone and other telephone sounds. This piece made use of very loud tri-amp speakers and "super woofers" to treat the sounds in a raw, cacophonous recourse to the brutal, physical qualities of sound. These mechanical sounds are exactly the noises AT&T was trying to eliminate from the phone lines. The custom-built speakers also made use of subsonics: inaudible soundwaves which affect the nervous system directly. The piece is Morrow's recomposition of the intrusive and annoying role of the telephone in modern life. In these two pieces the "miracles" of high technology and telecommunication are subjected to Morrow's particular style of irreverence. His cartoon sound effects, to which NASA objected, are like a kicked-over flower arrangement at humankind's graduation from planet earth.

Another early treatment of the theme of high technology is more serious. Rather than disrupting the solemnity of the trope of technological progress, *Shortest Way to Heaven* (1970) concerns technology's ultimate threat to the human community. The piece is a recorded collage of ballistic missile sounds and children's voices. The sound is mixed completely binaurally: the sounds of rockets and children are totally separated, each relegated to one of the two speakers. Morrow says that this separation is "metaphorical of parallel worlds that never meet due to technicalities" (1988). The splitting of sounds reflects the lethal chasm between human society and its machines, and Morrow's own equivocal position as a maker of technological art.

Despite these apparent reservations, however, Morrow says he is "undeniably a man of technology" (1989). As an event-maker, he has located many of his pieces in the terrain of electronic media. For his events he has engaged television, radio, and satellite communications. His private re-

ording studio in New York City has outgoing audio lines to link it with radio stations or other media and is equipped with the latest generation of digital samplers and synthesizers. The apparatuses of many of his events strike a counterpoint to this high technology, however. Conch shells, boat horns, and hot-air balloons are all put to work in his live, open-air celebrations.

In *Citywave Copenhagen* (1985), 2,000 performers transformed that city into a medieval festival, with jugglers, mounted bands, and hundreds of acoustic instruments. But the finale found the Fool of the event lifted away by helicopter. The piece was consciously constructed to be covered by radio and television. This hyperreal blending of high and low technologies has become more and more the cornerstone of Morrow's constructions.

The music that Morrow is listening for lies in the slow transition between the marching band and the ham radio: the elision between the local parade and the international newsflash. The antiphony between the new and old is perhaps the disjunction he has most consistently explored. This collision calls on his instincts as a showperson, a technophile, and a provocateur. The space for Morrow's most ambitious interventions lies between the poles of traditional and technocratic cultures, and his performances embrace both traditional pomp and circumstance and the slick new magic of telecommunications.

Morrow was raised with a healthy respect for the power of science. His parents were both physicians and his maternal grandfather worked at NASA during the Apollo missions. He holds a BS from Columbia in biology, and studied electronics throughout his college education. He bar-

9. In *Citywave* (1985), 2,000 performers transformed Copenhagen into a medieval festival with jugglers, mounted bands, and hundreds of acoustic instruments. (Photo courtesy of Charlie Morrow)



tered his knowledge of circuitry for the use of recording studios in the '60s, and had patched together his own multitrack studio as early as 1968. The structure of multitrack recording has proved an enduring influence in his work, including pieces which go beyond the use of recorded media. The early pieces *Very Slow Gabrieli* and *Fantasia on Repeated Notes* use performance techniques based on technological idioms. The architecture of the multitrack—that of events which are separate yet simultaneous and synchronized—has also provided a model for Morrow's composition. The influence of the modern studio can be seen in his event-making, his tonal compositions, and, most importantly, in the structure of his broadcast projects.

The multitrack studio allows a composer to take two series of sound events, each recorded separately, and lay them side-by-side. The musical results of this juxtaposition are completely repeatable because the playback of the tracks is synchronized. The apparatus also offers the composer the option to make changes in the tapes by intervening at will: adjusting volume, adding effects, editing freely. This facility repositions the composer as an organizer of multiple events. The sounds on different tracks do not respond to each other the way musicians performing in a concert hall do. They maintain their distinctness; the sounds are separately articulated and separately controllable. Morrow describes the effect of multitracking as a shift in sensibilities: "As soon as I had a multitrack studio, I was on my way to making multilevel scenarios" (1989).

In Morrow's international events for live radio broadcast, the different locations of participants are often layered like the tracks in a recording studio. His most consistent format is that of the *Solstice* radio events. This annual radio broadcast links performances and conversants from around the globe on the day of the Summer or Winter solstice. The resulting collage is broadcast in the United States and often in several of the participating countries as well.

In *Solstice '82*, performers from the United States, China, Australia, Italy, and the Bahamas were linked in a simultaneous celebration of the shortest day of the year. Morrow's directives, which coordinated the different events, were carried on telephone lines. In most cases, the lines were one-way and the participants could not hear the other events. In Australia, aboriginal musicians performed, while from China an announcer in Beijing gave a history of the Great Hall of the People. Pueblo Indians performed a sun ritual in San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico, and a DJ in the Bahamas, only a few miles from the Tropic of Cancer, looked out his window and described the weather at high noon. Morrow, in his New York studio, mixed the sounds of these discrete scenarios as they were broadcast; fading from one to another, layering and laying events side-by-side, orchestrating the antiphony of the event.

The performative conversation yields many of the same results as earlier tape pieces such as the *Soundhead* show. Voices move in the figurative space of Morrow's stereo mix, and through the literal travelog of a shifting global transmission. But the piece is less jarring than the hectic pan-Americanism of *Soundhead*. The geographical disjunction of the participants serves to reduce the friction of their cultural difference. Since all the conversants are on "home ground," the meeting of voices never has the character of an intrusion or collision. No single setting or agenda controls the interaction. The sense of violent juxtapositions that informs so much of Morrow's earlier work is absent. The antiphony achieved is more like that of a traditional brass prelude; the voices broadcast from diverse locations,

not as contestants but as travelers in a greeting. The piece approaches the liturgical geometry of call and response.

Morrow's intent with broadcasts like these is to explore a wider range of interactive possibilities. In a traditional concert, musicians are coordinated by a score, interacting while fully cognizant of each other. The musical result is a single sound event: a mono-scenario. This is the mode of interaction that Morrow has always eschewed. In his live celebrations, the participants are usually at some remove from each other; the call and response or the noisiness of their collision constantly reinforces their distinctiveness. His tape pieces take this motif of separation farther, with events from different places laid against each other "after the fact." This is what Morrow calls "blind interaction" (1989)—each of the sound events incapable of reacting to the others.

The structure of cultural transmissions like *Solstice '82* seems to lie in the range between these two "distances" of interaction. On the one hand, the globally displaced musicians and announcers do not hear each other. The mechanism of telephone coordination lines means that only the barest cues can be exchanged between the participants. Their roles as performers are in some ways like those of separate tracks put together after the fact: their interaction is "blind." On the other hand, the performance events of *Solstice '82* are genuinely simultaneous. The conceit of the solstice, the moment when the earth's southern or northern hemisphere is most oriented toward the sun, constructs the notion of the planet as a whole. The scenario of a global celebration is created by the mixing and layering of these distant sound sources. This mode enables the fiction that these globally displaced performances are a single event, albeit an event in which multiplicity is maintained since the performers are not in direct communication much less coordinated into a whole. This species of event is in effect a live version of the multitrack recording process: a conversation in which the voices are both mixed together and kept apart.

In a way, Morrow is like the director of a televised sports event, able to cut between different cameras in a live context. The broadcast moves between conversants the way a microphone moves through the crowd at a town meeting. In a traditional multitrack environment, the composer more resembles a film editor. In that environment, the footage is "in the can": cataloged, easily ordered and intercut, and static. The live aspect of Morrow's broadcasts makes the performances a vital combination, an unfolding conversation and an event rather than simply a collage. Although Morrow assumes the position of a central controller, his ability to intervene is limited by the unpredictability of the event as well as his physical remove from the participants. The narrative structure of the resulting broadcast is ultimately determined by the "blind" nature of the interaction. Finally, it is the listener who constructs a totality of the event.

Morrow's intent in creating such events is to advance the idiom of "cultural transmission" (1989). Much as news, sports, and finance are currently the subjects of live international transmission, Morrow sees a place for culture in the dialog of the global village. Most important to this vision is that the transmission of culture be interactive rather than one-sided. The simultaneity of *Solstice '82* and its concurrent broadcast in the participating countries gave it the character of a cultural exchange rather than simply a cultural export. The conceit of a global celebration creates the fiction of a planetary culture (with the solstice as the planetary holiday), but that culture is still comprised of individual voices who are brought together in contrast, rather than homogenized by the international broadcast.

This maintenance of individual voices from different cultures is part of Morrow's goal. His first travel abroad in the '60s corresponded with the spread of American cultural hegemony. During this period he worked as a sound consultant with Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. Their popularity abroad epitomized the extent to which American pop music served to replace indigenous, local music throughout the world. Morrow's broadcasts are partly an attempt to reconfigure the aggressively one-sided character of cultural exchange between the industrial West and the rest of the world. Ironically, while enabling the fiction of a planetary celebration and perhaps even a planetary culture, he advocates the value of the local and indigenous.

The medium which Morrow chooses is radio, a technology which has consistently been the link between the artist and listener in Euro-American pop music. Wireless transmission, as originally developed, was a device for conversing and communicating, as Morrow did with his ham radio in a New Jersey basement. The phenomenon of cottage-level exchange, however, has largely been replaced by the dynamic of the broadcast: a central source transmitting to a multitude of passive receivers. Morrow's use of radio is a self-conscious attempt to open a two-way channel of communications. In his work, communications media are reconfigured as a forum rather than a broadcast, a global conversation rather than a planetary monolog. Morrow is constructing an idiom of cultural transmission which is kinder to local voices, and lends itself to inclusive and collaborative efforts. He uses, and coordinates others' use of, the apparatus of mass culture to celebrate indigenous performance forms and to create a less monolithic mode of exchange between cultures.

It is with this sense of collaboration that Morrow approaches the Arctic projects. Neither *Arctic TV* nor *Arctic Radio* will be transmitted live, but the purpose is still one of communication. As collages, they will serve to juxtapose the various cultures of the North, each with its own perspective in the overall scenario of the present interaction between temperate and Arctic zones. The different segments of *Arctic TV*, created separately by native artists from the various regions, will comprise the fiction of a simultaneous event and, though preproduced, will be mixed to resemble a conversation.

The marching orders for Morrow's live events apply to this recorded encounter as well. The sense of collision is inherent in the relationship between the technological medium and the subject matter of the piece. The structure of the piece combines both the benevolent geometry of the global broadcast and the more aggressive posture of his earlier provocations. Morrow's artistic intrusion, as coordinator, producer, and sound track composer, foregrounds the contradictions inherent in the New Arctic. With its origins in this intervention, the motion of *Arctic TV* is toward the sort of tensions and frictions that are Morrow's favorite species of counterpoint.

Arctic TV

The position Morrow takes in the conflict and negotiation between the old Arctic and the new is not as an advocate for either voice. Ultimately, his heroes are the local artists who use the media to continue their own languages and cultures. But by their natures, these continuations are not "preservations" in the strictest sense. They are rather further developments of culture in the face of change.

Morrow sees his role as a creator of fictions, a teller of stories. In moving from live events to broadcasts, he discovered that in many ways the two forms are guided by the same rules of motion. The juxtaposition and interference of forces is still what provides the initial impetus for his works, but in his later events the collision tends to be theoretical rather than real—the provocations are implied by audio rather than created by actual movement. For Morrow, media art is “making everything exactly as real as you want it to seem” (1989).

The primary fiction of *Arctic Radio* is a journey. The movement through the various locales of the Arctic region operates like a travelog. Morrow provides spoken narration, intruding on the native soundscape as a traveler intrudes upon the local landscape. The series of sound images—conversation, machines, natural sounds, local and synthesized music—is sometimes explained and sometimes unexplained. There is a counterpoint between information revealed and withheld. The sounds are not sustained over long passages of development like themes in a traditional score. The artificial resonance of digital reverb and the binaural stereo placement tend to distance the different sounds and isolate them from each other. Morrow’s score and voice provide a central focus around which the more incorporeal sound events cohere. The piece takes on a personal character, a series of pictures from a scrapbook, anecdotes from a traveler. The far North is filtered through the sieve of technology and presented as a single viewpoint. Still, the lack of narrative and, of course, visual structure, and the varied sources of sound preserve at least the illusion of counterpoint and keep the piece from becoming monophonic.

As work proceeds on *Arctic TV*, the question is whether the participants will maintain the same conversational equanimity they do in Morrow’s live broadcast events. To package an event for television, with all the conventions of graphic continuity and theme music, risks creating a mono-scenario. When a Western artist “collects” for presentation the work of artists from other cultures, there is always the risk of the Westerner becoming a “white shaman”—a rip-off artist. The visual and commercial structures of television—preproduced, upmarket, and slick—threaten the rules of free motion with which Morrow animates his radio events.

It is therefore telling that Morrow has chosen as his collaborators fellow media artists. Rather than the unequal exchange between informant and ethnologist, Morrow will meet the other artists in the project on the common ground of their work in electronic media. The actors on one level will be the Arctic media-makers themselves, engaged in creating their own media about their own environment. The *Arctic Radio* project gains its impetus from the intrusion of technology into the native soundscape, both on the level of representation and subject matter. *Arctic TV* will constitute an encounter on the footing of that intrusion itself: a conversation (or the fiction of one) between a white artist who has embraced the North and Northerners who have embraced the technology of the West. The collision of these two is the piece’s counterpoint: a prelude on the volatility of culture.

The *Arctic TV* project will be compiled from the media stories on the minds of the artists of the far North. After the first drafts of the various scripts have been completed, the scripts will be exchanged among participants. Then a discussion on the work’s overall direction will be held by telephone link, an encounter in the style of Morrow’s radio events. The artists will each videotape their own end of the discussion, with sound bites from the result to be included in the finished product. Each 8–10 minute

segment will then be produced independently, with the opportunity for partners to view each others' work as it progresses. This level of cooperation reflects the nature of the piece; the interaction is not blind, but maintains the independence of the different collaborators.

The commercial arrangements operate on a complimentary vein. The rights to show the work in its entirety are offered to each individual partner in exchange for participation. Rather than the mercantile nature of most television arrangements, *Arctic TV* is based on the barter system. This is a method Morrow has used for a long time. From his days as an electronics consultant cribbing free studio time to later works in which parks and police departments, media, and hundreds of volunteers are needed to support his vision, Morrow has depended on the unremunerated cooperation of others. The requirements of his large works insure that he will ultimately remain a negotiator rather than a supervisor.

Morrow has turned to the Arctic at a timely moment. Developing slowly, segmented by boundaries imposed by the politics of the temperate zones, finding its voice as a region only fitfully, the Arctic is an embodiment of the frictions for which he has for 30 years been listening. Since Morrow's style is to face such encounters head on, the result is likely to prove an interesting excursion.

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