

biography

Biographical

Whether applying for grants, which I incidentally stopped during the 90's. I digress, but the problem with grants is that one is always making proposals for work not yet funded. I recall a story of Schoenberg's where he laments the loss of all the compositions he proposed for funding, where lesser works obtained the necessary cash to secure his family lifestyle. During the later part of the 1960's I realized that in order to live an artistic lifestyle, an artist must find a means of support in order to have enough time to produce art. I was fortunate in that my father, much like the artist Marcel Duchamp's, sent me a check every month until I was 28 and that's when my formal life as a student ended. On the practical end of things I only work two to three days a week as a piano technician to support myself leaving plenty of time for my art work.

So as I was saying at the beginning, whether applying for grants or any presentation be it to art galleries, music ensembles and any submission where a biography is necessary, here's some of those bios I've pieced together.

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Drew Lesso, b. 1949, USA

I was brought up in a musical family in Strabane, Pennsylvania which is adjacent to Canonsburg and just 21 miles south of Pittsburgh. My father was Swing Era pianist, a machinist, draftsman, tool and dye man and electrical engineer of some note, who serviced 1960's era electrical switches at substations around the country, running his own business into his 90's. He played piano with the Rus Romero and Stan Vinton orchestras on the east coast and worked in our home as vocal coach with Bobby Vinton and The Four Coins amongst others. He had a vast collection of popular sheet music spanning better than 5 decades and also the classical music literature. Otherwise two of my uncles played the violin and another played the cembalo. Most of my cousins and my sister were taught piano by my father. My great grandfather was accomplished at the coronet and was the designer of the steepest incline in the United States at Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

I grew up playing the piano starting at five years of age and as a teenager taught my father's piano students. Every evening and Saturday mornings there was a long line of piano students during my whole childhood and adolescence. It seems not so long ago that I was home practicing piano in the basement. There was also a piano in the living room, but that piano was reserved for my father. Never thought I would do anything more than be an entertainer, so I set about it at an early age playing piano recitals, then later playing solo and working my way through various bands while making a pretty decent living as a musician during my teens. By mid-teens I was writing piano music and also performing my own songs. In the late teens I was signed with and recorded by MAX Productions (rumored as funded by Peter Max) in New York City with a band called Federal Reserve. The \$20,000 given to the group for on the road start-up was embezzled by one of our agents conspiring with a pinup girl from Penthouse Magazine. I heard they were caught in Bermuda and served time.

I studied Business Management at Duquesne University and Psychology at Point Park College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for three years after High School. I had this idea that I would like to manage a hotel and provide the entertainment at my hotel's cocktail lounge. I thought that would be a great life. At Duquesne University I was more interested in the computer lab with its punch card computer than corporate accounting. Just watching the workings of this computer led me to imagine musical applications, but alas the lab would not be available to me until my junior year.

Then it was 1969 and the war in Vietnam was raging and so was the Peace Movement. So I walked out of the business program and into psychology and the humanities. During this period I played original music with a group called Burning Bush with whose members I've remained lifelong friends.

Then at the age of 19, I had a dream in which I experienced an omnidirectional vision unifying light and sound including a Doppler effect in a seemingly infinite space. At the time I didn't even know what the Doppler effect was, but I played that dream over and over in my mind. It led me to wonder if there was a connection between sight and sound. My initial experiments attempted to find a correspondence between geometry and music. Within three years I became aware of what I was hearing and seeing in that dream. By the summer of 1970 I decided to pursue a music education and with the aid of Dr. Thomas Canning, then head of the Music Department at West Virginia State University, I was introduced to Karlheinz Stockhausen.

After playing everything from Jazz to Pop and Classical to Religious I left for Cologne Germany in late 1970 to meet with Karlheinz Stockhausen. At my interview with Stockhausen I played and sang one of my songs, played American Revolution Fanfare in a sonata form at the piano and showed him my ideas about applying music to triangles. I needed to reside in Munich because my American girlfriend was teaching near there in Eichstadt. So Stockhausen wrote a note to Gunther Bialas who taught composition and counterpoint at the music school in Munich saying, 'take this young man and plug him in'. I had eight months to learn German and then return to Cologne where I remained soaking up a fabulous musical experience for six years in Stockhausen's class at the Musik Hochschule. While in Germany I also had the opportunity to study Astronomy and the computer languages Fortran and BASIC at the University of Cologne.

My interest in finding out about composers and theorists dealing with music visual form was satisfied in the Cologne environment. By 1975 I was able to start composing using the discipline of Harmonics. Its focus is the study of ratio and proportion. Harmonics originated more than 2500 years ago formally with the Greek Pythagoras. Its usage certainly preceded him amongst the priestly classes of ancient Egypt and with traces in India and China. In 1976 before leaving Germany I began to meet the American dancers from the Tanz Forum in Cologne. I've often wondered what would have developed had I remained. To this day, I often think about working with a dance company and would welcome such an opportunity wholeheartedly. For that matter, it would be fun to collaborate a musical given an interesting play and libretto. Beyond bliss... instructing the fundamentals of Harmonics.

I returned to the United States on July 4th. 1976 flying over the armada in New York Harbor. I took up residence in the Los Angeles Arts District and with my first wife Elke, started a thriving fashion business and began my journey into Harmonics. It wasn't until 1981 that I built my first computer, a Sinclair ZX81. By 1983 I was working on an Apple IIe and a Yamaha DX7. From there advancements seemed to move very fast for access to the computer world and computer music.

By the time I married my second wife Katherine, my son Karsten from my first marriage was already seven years old. From that time onward, I compose algorithms and experience a beautiful simple elegance by writing code, that is music. Music based on the use of Harmonics and elements from the visual world. Although I'm trained as a composer I've always had a predilection for the visual arts. Most of my audio works have a visual component. Indeed the visual generates an impetus for the audio in my work. I began working with visual artists in collaborative projects in 1976. Since that time I participated in numerous collaborations and have shown my visual art in group shows. I consider myself neither more of a composer than a visual artist. This has created some confusion as to what it is that I actually do. My reclusive nature allowed me to realize a body of work.

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Drew Lesso was a student of Karlheinz Stockhausen from 1971-1976. He was a member on the founding board of the Independent Composers Association. He served two terms on its board of directors, vice president in 1988 and president in 1990. He also served on the steering committee of New Music Los Angeles - an alliance of 20 new music groups. For the past twelve years he has been instrumental in developing AIR artist loft buildings in downtown L.A. He was the co-founder of the Los Angeles River Arts & Business Association LARABA, a community association for the Arts District in 1989. He managed ZOE, with designer Elke Lesso, a fashion design company for eight years.

His musical work centers around the study of harmonics and proportion as applied to our environment and human experience. Since 1976 he collaborated with more than 12 artists, finding the proportions in their works and mapping them to a music. In 1988 two of his short works were performed at the Cologne Philharmonic as part of the International Computer Music Conference.

Drew still reserves a part of himself for writing a music based entirely upon the haptic of emotion. This style is evidenced in his collaborations with poets and his piano music.

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My written musical works were performed at the Japan America Theater by the USC Contemporary Music Ensemble, the Bing Theater by the California Ear Unit, at the Cologne Philharmonic for the International Computer Music Conference 1988, by Basso Bongo (e-drums & bass) at the Hartford Symphony and the Hong Kong Symphony. I was on the founding board in 1978, and served as President of the Los Angeles Independent Composers Association in 1990. I received the ASCAP award for two consecutive years 1998-99. I was the cofounder with Al Taira of the Los Angeles River Artist and Business Association, LARABA a community association for the Arts District. Most of all, I enjoy providing people an introduction to Pythagorean World Harmonics, an adventure in proportional analysis and construction. I delivered a paper on that same topic at MicroFest 2001.

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When I sit down at the keyboard in public to play music my awareness is focused on the interaction of guests and the space we share. I strive to place my music at a dynamic level that allows for conversation. I delight in providing a live harmonic music and perform to compliment the rising and falling ambience of the moment. Most importantly my playing maintains a pleasurable balance while guests express themselves freely. The inspiration for my musical expression is based entirely upon composing music that communicates a creative influence. I provide moods of music that are solely original and yet sustain a familiar spirit.

My studio is mostly quiet unless I am composing or playing music. I do not possess a huge library of recorded music and prefer to hear music in the environment or when visiting friends. When I was 13 I remember going to a grade school party and all the girls and boys shuffled around the record player arguing about which 45 record to play next. I was happy with whatever I was hearing. I do know exactly what music I like and dislike, but I prefer silence. I do not like the sounds associated with any type of human tragedy. For a time I thought that I actually did not like music, but enjoyed composing it. Truth is, I do not spend much time listening to my work after it's completed. In 1975 I quit playing music from the classical repertoire and quit playing popular music, standards and songs by request seven years prior to that. I cannot remember any of the music I used to play.

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In 1975 I remember taking the bus out the winding mountain roads that led to Stockhausen's country home in order to tune his pianos. I had taken an apprenticeship to learn piano tuning and repair six months earlier in order to become more financially independent, and Stockhausen hearing about this, invited me to tune his pianos. I wasn't very experienced at the time so it took me two hours to tune a piano. While I was tuning, Stockhausen came into the piano room and said that my ears were very sensitive and that I had a great power of concentration. I was just trying to get the tuning as perfect as possible and I knew that more experienced tuners could finish the job in a much shorter time. So I was not sure what he was trying to say to me as he led me into his library, where he had just installed a seven foot brass rod of about an inch and a half diameter with a quarter inch bore from top to bottom. The rod was suspended on springs. He said that considering my patience I would appreciate the sound of this rod. He struck the rod very hard with a padded beater and we stood there for minutes until the room fell silent. It turned out that most people for whom Stockhausen had struck the rod would never wait until the room had gone silent. My whole Stockhausen experience led to one conclusion, centering. He liked to make a diagram for each of his compositions. That diagram fit on one page and would describe the work from start to finish in great detail. He also used color in the diagrams to maintain hierarchies. I adopted this concept of centering in my work and for that I am extremely thankful to Karlheinz.

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Living in Los Angeles since 1976 and to acknowledge Walter Zimmermann's observation of American composers back in 1975, he was right! It's been a 'Desert Plant' experience. I don't mean to say there's too much isolation for composers in Los Angeles, for the connections are certainly there if one should need that attention. Los Angeles is a very good place to allow my ideas to develop at a comfortable pace. An artist could not pick a better place to hide, not to mention the absence of funding in the United States for the Arts.

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Sorting out what's visual and musical led to producing visual as well as musical pieces. I am currently working on the design of programs for piano playing with an automatic self-accompaniment, MIDI Masturbater series. My next work will create a musical animation of the Shri Yantra and another work is planned for a small orchestral ensemble that describes the I Ching of Fu Hsi in comparison with the traditional version. A book of hundreds of motives, that I've written over the years, is also planned for free-style improvisation. Of course I'll take time to continue collaborations with artists, poets and then still my love for songwriting. Oft times you'll find me roaming through the beautiful California countryside gathering digital photos.

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The following interview was conducted by Paddy Campanaro and is excerpted from her book of 8 artist interviews titled, "subjects matter" Portraits Interviews 2003-2004.

Interview 9/19/03

You are a composer and a harmonist.

Drew Lesso: That's right.

What is a harmonist.

DL: A harmonist is one who has a world view. So it's very large in scope. What we do is study proportion according to the ancient Pythagorean methods.

Are there harmonists that aren't in music.

DL: Yes, Yes. Music is just a by-product of the Harmonics, but the Harmonics deals with a world point of view. In other words, you can graph any discipline onto the harmonic grid as long as it has a proportional base, and that includes language.

And is that the basis of all your compositions.

DL: Yes, yes, for years now. Since 1974 I've based all of my work on harmonics, except of course when I sit down to write a song and just feeling good write a song or feeling sad and write a song.

laughs.

How have you dealt with differing labels over the years; musician, composer, electronic music composer, new music composer. Poet Whitman McGowan who's a friend and a collaborator of yours refers to you on his CD POFU, that features music by you, as a computer music pioneer. Of all those labels what feels right now.

DL: Well, I mean basically, I'm still a computer music composer. I've gotten lost, I mean, you brought up the idea of different labels, I've stumbled through all of those monograms, all of those titles. I say stumbled because since the 70s I've considered myself a computer music composer because I write algorithms. But like I said a little earlier, I like to write songs. You know, growing up in America I have this commercial music background, considering that my father was a Swing era pianist. It's hard to shake. It's something that's taken me half a century to come into a better identity for myself and now I'm much more at home with the idea of being a computer music composer.

In the late 60s pop artist Peter Max produced some of your music. What were you doing then and what attracted him to you.

DL: Well, I was 17 years old and I had an awakening when I was 17. Actually it was a very strange occurrence because it was a dream. In the dream what I saw was an infinite space. I had a 720 degree vision, considering the 3 dimensions. And in this infinite space I perceived 2 points of light, 1 red and 1 white. As I perceived them in the far, far distance I heard them as well. As the lights came closer to my vision the sound got louder and as the light shot through my vision I heard the Doppler effect. That's where the sound goes up and then goes back down again as it retreats. The lights went back out to points and then they formed a loop and then they came back through my vision and vanished from whence they came. Now, that dream was seminal in my discoveries. It's what led me on to look for something different. So it was 1967 and I was in New York city. I'd been discovered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I'd played in Rock and Roll bands from the age of 14, played with some of the members of The Sky Liners. When the other kids were going to the high school dances I was on the bandstand. So I had an early education. All those players that I worked with when I was 14, there wasn't one under 27.

Were you working in that band when Peter Max saw you.

DL: No. When I was 14, I was doing that music. As I got to be 16, 17, after playing cover songs, you know, Wooly Bully, some James Brown, Animals songs, Temptations songs, I decided I was tired of playing other peoples songs and I wanted to just write my own songs. I had a manager at the time. I had 3 or 4 different groups of musicians I was playing with at the time and put together my own group to play my own compositions. Within a period of six weeks I wrote an album's worth of songs and had all the tunes rehearsed. The manager came over, heard the music and contacted his friend in New York City who knew Peter Max. They played him some tapes. So then we went to New York and recorded the album. We were given a 20 thousand dollar advance, which was a lot of money in those days, to buy equipment and get dressed up and go out on the road. The manager from New York took the money with Miss November in PENTHOUSE and left for Florida.

Laughs

They were caught later and went to jail, but that voided my contract with Max Productions. Actually, I was under contract with them for the next 4 years. I couldn't really do anything after that. I continued with a different group after that and new material, but from that point on I wouldn't play any cover songs. I'd only play material that was written by me or the group or by other people.

What music weren't you listening to at that time.

DL: At that time I was totally unaware of Stockhausen for example. I was listening to opera, classical music. I was listening to polka music, to 40s Swing era music, of course. So I was listening to a lot of music.

But you weren't listening to the music of the person you would eventually study with.

DL: No. At that point in my development I was unaware of the avant-garde or of my contemporaries even. I knew about Arnold Schoenberg. I had heard some of his works. But at that point in time I had not heard anything beyond Schoenberg.

In 1970 you went to Cologne and studied with Karlheinz Stockhausen and you remained there for 6 years. What got you there.

DL: I have to back up a wee little bit. Getting out of high school in 1967, right around the time of the Max Productions deal, I had applied to go to music school at Duquesne University. So I came into Duquesne University for my interview, my audition, I sat down at the piano and I played a piano sonata I'd written, and half way through the moderator stopped me and he said, What about the repertoire, you haven't prepared anything from the repertoire, have you? Could you play something, Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, something. And I said, Well, I played Bach and Mozart when I was in grade school, and now I was writing my own music and I'd hoped to study composition so I could further my career. And they said that I wasn't suited for their music school. So I studied business law at Duquesne University for 2 years. At the time I thought maybe I could manage a motel like a Holiday Inn and play the organ in the cocktail lounge. That didn't work out. Then I studied psychology at Point Park College in Pittsburgh in between different bands I was working on. When I turned 21, I knew what I wanted. I wanted to study music. And I said, This time they won't turn me down, because I know what I want. And I had more control. So I applied at Berkeley School of Jazz in Boston, at North Texas State University, I was up at, W and J College in Washington, Pennsylvania to see their music program and West Virginia State University. I was accepted at all those places. While I was at West Virginia State University, Dr. Higgins, the head of the music dept, took a look at what I was doing because at that time I was working with geometry. I was trying to devise systems to bring geometry to life tonally. That goes back to that dream of mine, this idea of seeing and hearing. So I was already on that quest. He said, Gee, you can study here at West Virginia State but wouldn't it be great to study with somebody who's at the top of the whole thing right now, who's a real pioneer in new music. I said, Yeah, that would be great. Who is that? He said his name was Stockhausen and he proceeded to pull out some scores and some writing and had me read while he wrote a letter of introduction to Stockhausen for me. We mailed that off and I went to Germany, had an interview with Stockhausen and he accepted me into his class. That's how that happened.

Could you be creating the music you are today If you hadn't studied with him.

DL: Probably not. We talk about this idea of fate in our lives and fate may have a dark side at times, but it's actually been very good to me. I was very fortunate because when I explained to Stockhausen that I was looking into geometry and sound, and that that was my quest, to find out which composers had written music in the past from a visual basis rather than from first listening. I was fortunate that fate gave me a person like Stockhausen, who may not have understood what I was looking at, but readily accepted that. He enjoyed my piano pieces at the time and I even played him some pop songs that I'd written. I played and sang for him. He enjoyed that.

Did the electronic music start then or after that.

DL: Way after that period. That was in November of 1971. I stayed in Germany from that point on. I didn't really start writing music until 1974-75. I started writing a year and a half before I left Germany. I started working in the electronic music lab with my dear friend Jim Whitman, Dr. Whitman, who's now deceased of course.

What was the first computer you were composing on.

DL: My computer music career started in Cologne in 1974 at the University of Cologne. I took a class in FORTRAN and again I was very fortunate to have an instructor who was trying to write a program to generate new pieces of Bach. He was a Bach fanatic. Everyone in his class of course was part of the computer science department at the university and there were only 3 of us in the class that were composers. It was so odd because the first day he started the class and introduced these reiterations that he was working on, manipulating tonal fragments. Ha, explosive laughter It couldn't have been better. It was handmade. I mean, this was way before MIDI, MIDI wasn't even around. You were applying number systems to all the tones on the piano and applying numbers systems to all the rhythms. You know, to the five elements of music. Tone, time, amplitude, color and space and you had variables for all five. I was in heaven. It was wonderful. It was exactly what I wanted.

Since then you have created a large body of work over 30 years.

DL: Over 30 years now, yes.

Could you venture to say how many compositions.

DL: Well you know it's so funny because I just opened the filing cabinets last year, but I didn't do a count. Perhaps 40, near 40.

Are some years completely nonproductive.

DL: Some years, yes. And it went on for years and years at times. When I managed a very successful fashion design company, for 12 years all I did is what I call, almost music. I did diagrams and studied harmonics because I didn't find out about the actual harmonics until it was already say 1973, and as soon as I found out about it, I started working on it. It's very difficult work.

How did you find out about it.

DL: I was studying with one of the original members of the Stockhausen group, Johannes Fritsch. And Johannes had a class in harmonics and specifically Hans Kayser harmonics. So that was my introduction. The Hans Kayser harmonics is only taught now in one place as far as I know, and that's in Vienna at The Hochschule Für Darstellende Kunst. It's an art school.

What makes you create a piece of music.

DL: I think it probably goes back to the idea of archetypes. Trying my best to find archetypes, and say when I can't find them, because they are so difficult to find to begin with, then I'll create them. A good example is the number 6, at 6, there's a completeness. It's not like 4, you know, 1 plus 2 plus 3 plus 4 is 10. So that's your whole cosmos of numerology right there. But 6, at 6, you have a certain completeness. Everything after 6, that's where the dissonance starts, the numbers where you have the decimal point in this non-repeating fraction. But up till 6, you have everything very simple and beautiful and in Latin it's called scenario.

Your composition Senarius is one of the pieces I would like you to talk about in detail.

DL: Senarius• was written in 1992 and it was actually my 2nd piece of computer music. In order to realize my idea I had to write an algorithm. There's a lot of confusion in that area because people think that you write an algorithm and then you push the button and then everything's automatic. The music just unfolds and I have nothing to do with it. That's just quite not so. With Senarius I was mainly dealing with groups of 6, groupings of 6. I would allow them to overlap in different ways. The instrumentation was for a woodwind ensemble with a harmonium. There were 6 overlapping parts.

What was it composed on.

DL: I wrote that in MSBASIC with MIDIBASIC from Altech Systems, plugged into it. It's written as a standard program.

There's a Senarius diagram first. The first thing I set down to do was to create a diagram and even before I started creating the diagram the first thing I decided was the duration of the piece.

It's one of the longer pieces you have.

DL: I don't recall.

It's 13.56 minutes.

DL: Actually that time got a little bit stretched in the programming and in the MIDI manipulation. I think my original time for that piece was 12 minutes, 6's again, dealing with 6's, and it did stretch to 13 something, that's right. That's happened quite a number of times. I'm not upset by those things. It's kind of, that's where you have that surprise at times. Stockhausen, Beethoven, talked about it. Everybody talks about that surprise. You know, where you're going in one direction with things, you're working through this vision in your mind, because that's all it is, composition is a vision in your mind, and as you're working through this vision there's sort of a slight of hand that takes place at times. Something happens and there's a change and you can make a decision at that point. You can say, I'm going to go with the flow or I'm going to go back to my original vision. I've gone both ways with it. At times I've said I'll go with it, and at other times I go against the grain. Back to Senarius like I say, it's dealing with 6's all the way through, every section. It kind of comes in streams. There's a part where there's a lot of melodic activity and then there's a part where there's like a stretch, where the tones, the time, gets stretched out. So it has this ebb and flow throughout the whole piece. Actually the tempo of the piece is just a little shy of andante.

What does Senarius mean.

DL: Senarius quite properly in harmonics is that perfection before you reach 7, because up to 7, 1 through 6, 1/6th through 5/6ths, there's a perfection that goes on. At 1/7th that perfection is broken. It heads off into this repeating decimal, which in sound is dissonance.

Can this piece be performed by musicians, live.

DL: Yes. Senarius can be played live. I showed it to a good friend of mine who is a brilliant orchestrator and he pointed out some parts which he felt weren't possible to play, although according to the information I have on instrumentation, they can be played. So there is some discrepancy. It would have to be gone over with a group, and again the piece being 13 minutes long and rather rhythmically complex, it would take either a dedicated group or a grant of some substance in order to rehearse a group for that long, to produce the music that needs to be produced. Otherwise it would be like other pieces I've tried to have played and people don't come up to tempo, normally.

This brings me to someone I want to reference. Conlon Nancarrow. I'll just read something from www.Americanmavericks.com Nancarrow found the traditional world of orchestral instruments too confining and the technique of the people who played them too limiting to express his musical ideas. The desire for the polytemporal (as opposed to the merely polyrhythmic) drove Nancarrow to the recourse of composing most of his music directly for the piano roll. By painstakingly punching in every note and every duration into the paper roll, Nancarrow was able to achieve a level of exactitude that would be more or less impossible to realize in the messy human world of live performers. In decades before personal computers, Nancarrow virtually abandoned composing for live performers and took his rhythmic explorations to the ne plus ultra.

Any comment on him and any similarities you can see.

DL: I think a lot of my music could be played by human beings, but again that's why it's so nice to have computers. To have people play your music would be wonderful, you know. If you're going to follow convention. And I do not follow convention completely. My meter is chopped. I have a chopped meter. So in other words, people will be tapping their foot and I'm all over the off beats. While your foot's up in the air I'm throwing beats all over the place and when your foot goes down there's nothing there sometimes. So people have a hard time with that. I'm aware of that. My geometric models work out perfectly in computer music, so I'm quite satisfied. Back to Nancarrow. Recently I've written a piano trilogy which is very much like his work, where he did his crossings and his double x crossings, very geometric kind of rows, that he was investigating. I don't believe he was properly a harmonist but somehow he had the ear for it. He had that in his bones. It seemed like it was presaging the rebirth of the harmonics, because harmonics has only been rediscovered in the later part of the 19th century. For us today, considering that it's not taught in the United States, it's a new territory.

Do you think at some point you might teach it.

DL: Yes, I hope to. I desire to teach harmonics. But probably not at a music school, because and only because the view of harmonics, when I use the word harmonics in a music circle, the first thing that comes to mind especially here in Southern California is microtonality and microtonality is but one page in the bible of harmonics.

There's another piece of yours I'd like you to talk about. It's an early piece, a favorite of mine. Little Green Man. It's so emotional. Could you also talk about the emotions that people feel through electronic music which seems to be on the other scale of things.

DL: Let me tackle that first. The emotions that are on the other scale of things. And they are and the reason being is because a lot of the electronics which we have today are capable of generating frequencies which we normally don't hear, and in certain combinations. There are certain harmonious very musical kind of effects. I mean, even just sweeping a filter that- œweeyooog delivered with air. It's astounding the spectral depth that one can achieve using electronics today. It's other worldly. It was never heard before. It's kind of like Bob Dylan going to Newport with his electric guitar for folk music. It's mind expanding. That's pretty much what electronics is. It goes without saying, it's other worldly. Little Green Man is very emotional music. Not computer music. Well, in a sense some would call it computer music because it was composed using a DX7, a computer sequencer and a drum machine and I simply played in all of the tracks. The piano, the strings, the drums, all the tracks that made up that music.

What was the motivation for the piece.

DL: Little Green Man was the title I gave to a cassette. It had a duration of about an hour and it was all of my emotional songs. They were all songs without words. But even though they were songs without words I had something in mind for each song. With Little Green Man I had in mind a creature from another planet who came to earth and he was the last of his kind. His race had destroyed their planet and he escaped in his space ship and came to earth here. He looked pretty much like us but he was green and he had an extra arm. laughs He was a very musical fellow. He was very well accepted by everyone on the planet, but he was very sad. He was a very sad man at heart because he had none of his own kind, and no female companion, and no one that he could really relate to, because on his planet he was able to talk without words, through telepathy. He had no one he could share that with here, as much of a good time as he had and as well received as he was. So that's what that song was all about. There's a kind of a sadness to it.

After a composition is finished do you ever go back, maybe years later and change anything.

DL: With my song writing, I have songs that I wrote when I was 14 years old that I've gone back to and redone. Still today, I play some of those. I have a tablet, a Pennsylvania map tablet from grade school, and that's full of songs that I wrote when I was a young man.

What about your serious compositions.

DL: With that work normally I would never go back. I have different friends who constantly rework everything, constantly rework. Just at the point where I tell them, Gee, I think that's really great, they tell me, Oh but here I've changed this and that. I've always thought when I finish a work, as long as it produced my vision, then it's done. But that's kind of changed just recently. The first piece of computer music I ever wrote is called, Nothing Greater Than One. • It was written as a string quartet with electronics. I showed it around. I even sent a copy to the Kronos Quartet in San Francisco, but no one ever picked it up. So I was thinking a few weeks ago, I'm going to reorchestrate that piece and turn it into something else, and that's what I've done. I've gone in, added a full string section with heavy percussion, orchestral percussion, electronic drums, it's still not finished. That work's in progress right now. And actually, I've been having further ideas as to many of the other computer music compositions I've done. Because I see exactly how they fit into it's the idea of a mainstream too. I'm trying to create a music now with this computer music that has a certain eclectic culture to it, for lack of a better word, that fits into the culture and yet still has all the underpinnings of being a very serious music.

Will the new composition negate the original or will both remain.

DL: Both will remain because the original is the vision document. It shows exactly what I had in mind at the time. You can take a look at the computer program and dissect it, take it apart and see exactly where I was coming from, hear it. It's a complete document for that.

But is it only a document then and not it's own piece to be enjoyed just as it is.

DL: Oh yes. I can deal with it. But I can't listen to my music everyday, the originals, because there's this high pitch to them. That's the one thing I've always had a problem with, was these high pitches with my music. And probably because I was dealing with my harmonic rows arithmetically and harmonically. I never used the geometric rows in series. Just last year I started using them, combining the geometric rows, and now the music is taking on a new life. It's what I needed to do. I knew it was there, I guess I was practicing in the 2 simpler rows.

Do you feel that you've had to live a certain part of your life as a composer to get to this point.

DL: My work was always sporadic and I would have these times where I would have a lot of down time and I would be trying to think harmonically, and I had a hard time separating my harmonic thought from my music composition. Again, these are recent developments. Just last year I started composing one piece after the next. So now, I feel like a little spider monkey in the jungle and I'm flying through the jungle jumping from vine to vine and it's really divine.

laughs. Is it important that people hear your work.

DL: Absolutely, absolutely.

You've had important places and people play your music, has it not been enough.

DL: Oh it's always been enough. I think maybe what's not enough is my desire for self-promotion. I talk about that a lot with people. I go back to my childhood. I remember one day. I was in highschool, there was an evening at the high school in the theater. There were some theater works being presented and I played the piano as the audience came in, probably about 20 minutes, and when the play was over, as the audience was kind of hanging out in the theater, I played again for another 20 minutes. I was so impressed with myself. I went home, I was very excited about myself. I felt very successful and people were patting me on the back, etcetera. I went home and I told my mother what a successful evening I'd had and my mother told me that my music should speak for itself, that I didn't need to speak for my music. That kind of hung with me.

Do you think she was right.

DL: Ultimately yes. Yes, because the music has to be strong enough to speak for itself. It has to be strong enough that people say, What is that. I want to hear that again.

You've been a friend and collaborator with many artists and poets in L.A. and places around the world really. One of your longest ongoing collaborations has been with Dr. Mongo Taribubu. What makes a successful collaboration. What have you two given each other.

DL: I think a successful collaboration starts in the heart, for the work. When I've read his work it's had a tremendous influence over me. I kind of hang on every word. I believe in his work. I believe his work and so I am able to create to it.

How would you like people to hear your compositions. in what forms.

DL: Well, I hope to produce my work. Getting back to opening my filing cabinet last year and seeing, realizing, that I have this huge body of work that goes in all kinds of areas. It's not just all serious music. It has many areas. So I thought what I would do is make a DVD ROM. I have this scheduled for next year sometime. To gather all the drawings, scan everything in, make some Quick Time movies, have everything going on. So that a person approaching these, it might be a 2 DVD set, would have a choice of listening to music, reading about the music, text, or listening and reading text, or listening and seeing graphics. They will have a choice as to how they want to unfold the music. I don't think there will be a problem as to how they'll do it. Especially for younger people, it'll come naturally to push all the buttons and see what it does, to see what that interactive world of my music has to offer them.

What would you like to see in terms of live production, spaces, for your music.

DL: I have a couple of things in mind. Not so much focused on what I've written but more I think for what I'm writing and what I plan to write. I have a large-scale work coming about, it's in the seminal stage right now, which will be for a small orchestral ensemble. That's the way I consider it today. It may end up being another piece of computer music, again, I don't know. I'm going to try to hype the variables so that the meter is palatable for working musicians. I'm going to see what I can do in that realm, without being too flowery, because so many pieces right now are, it's kind of like time-lapse photography of a rose opening, a lot of new music is written and they're very beautiful pieces, it's a lot like some of the pieces of Boulez. I think a lot of composers have taken that route and it's very academic. I'm sure I'll break the mold if I

go into that area, if it works. The second thing I'm thinking about is doing it myself. In other words, what you'll hear will be an ensemble and I'll play parts live with it. I've thought that may be another way to do something live on my own, where I'll go on stage. For a classical composer even for some of the more gifted classical composers in this town, they rarely get to see the big concert hall. You have to go to some church in Pasadena to hear them. As far as having a piece performed, that's so rare to have something done live at a good venue and not just some church or some little hall where 40 people show up. I'm not so excited about that type of venue. I like the Schindler House.

Do you think there will be a time when we will turn on the radio in the car and hear your music.

DL: It's possible. I've heard my music on the radio in the car before, so I imagine I will again. Many times I've heard my music on the radio. I mean not with the frequency. That's the difference, see. That's something you generally won't hear. You won't even hear Harry Partch on the radio with some frequency. Not like Beethoven or Mozart. You know you're going to hear Eine Kleine Nacht Musik constantly. You get it with your breakfast cereal. I'll have to be dead a long, long time or there will have to be little green men all over the planet to play my music, I guess.

laugh.

Can you say something that would help the listener, the first time listener of your electronic music.

DL: Yes there is something that is real important to me and that not everybody gets. A lot of my music has a certain dissonance to it and a certain high pitch. I think the one thing that people when they listen to a lot of my music think is, Oh, perfect for the horror film. I get that a lot and believe me my music has nothing whatsoever to do with horror films or with the dark side, none of it. I'm very positive. The listener should realize that when I start writing a piece of computer music I don't start at point A and end at point B in a linear fashion. The first thing I decide is how long the piece of music is going to be. It's total duration. And then I work on the whole. I work on the inside of the piece of music and construct my geometric harmonies in that fashion and it's not dark at all. It's actually very light. That's what I would tell the first time listener. Don't perceive it as being dark. It's not. It's light. You only perceive it as being dark. You have to change your sensibility to listen to my music. You have to shut off your preconceptions. It's very important to turn off your preconceptions with my music.

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Astrological sign of Cancer at the start of the New Moon.

How:

Raised in a musical family.

State School for Music, Munich, Germany, spring 1972.

Counterpoint with Gunther Bialas.

State School for Music, Cologne, Germany 1972-76.

Composition with Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Some Examples:

Vincent Tillman's 15 Pictures - Trio for Piano, Cello and Flute.

Galerie DeDeNovum, Dusseldorf, Germany 1976.

Chain Reaction - Three Time Zones & Resultant - scored music theater. Second Story Series presented by the Independent Composers Association, Los Angeles, 1978.

lo chou, good morning - scored dance music ritual for nine players using primitive instruments, 13 stringed monochord and flute. Al's Bar, Los Angeles, 1983.

La Demande de Paris - electronic music with slide show coupling commentary from Scientific American on nuclear war. D.A. Ward Associates, Los Angeles, 1984.

Moments Before the Sky Clears - Collaboration with visual artist Neal Taylor.

Off the Streets - Los Angeles City Department of Cultural Affairs Exhibition 1985.

Humanesque - computer music based on a painting by Sam Kirzencwajg. James Turcotte Gallery, Los Angeles, 1986.

Crystal - study in proportion and sound with sculptor Pamela Burgess. Composed for Bern Porter's 75th birthday party, Los Angeles, 1986.

Bentov's Universe - 19 piece chamber ensemble. 19 Miniatures by Southland Composers presented by the Independent Composers Association, Los Angeles 1987.

Planet Earth - sound-spatial study based on proportions of our planet with sculptor Pamela Burgess. New Music Los Angeles 1987.

Great River - scored electronic ensemble with processed violin and cello. International Computer Music Conference at the Cologne Philharmonic, Germany 1988.

The Cross - graphic orientated computer music, Christ suffering. SCREAM Festival, CalArts, Valencia, California 1989.

Collaborations with Poets 1985-present - Dr Mongo Taribubu, Cynthia Toronto, Blakeslee Stevens & Whitman McGowan.

Published Theoreticals:

Pythagorean Harmonics - The Journal/Southern California Art Magazine, issue no. 22, March 1979.

Humanesque - Element Magazine, Los Angeles, Summer 1986.

Algorithmic Composition - Computer Music Journal, Spring 1995

Some of the better things that have happened:

Composer representative to the Third Regional Seminar sponsored by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, Plaza de la Raza, Los Angeles, 1984.

Tanabi - score for a film by Tetsuro Saiki featuring poet Dr.

Mongo Taribubu. First prize winner at the Ninth Poetry Film Festival, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, 1984.

Bentov's Universe & Great River - performed as part of the International Computer Music Conference, Cologne, Germany 1988.

Independent Composers Association - acting President

Los Angeles, 1990.

Constellations for piano trio - selected by the International Computer Music Association for the first World Wide Web Museum (ArtNetIAMFREE) 1995.