

---

## COMPOSER INTERVIEW

# Pre-composing Behaviours: An Interview with Jay Alan Yim

*Robert Dahm*

---

The following interview has been collated from an email exchange that took place between January 2004 and May 2005. Originally, this article was to be an analysis with accompanying elucidatory interview of Jay Alan Yim's *:dreamin/gField*, a piece written in 1999 for Ensemble SurPlus. What resulted was an illuminating discussion of Jay's compositional ethics and aesthetics, which provided a body of material that was ultimately far more interesting and relevant than a dry analysis ever could have been. *:dreamin/gField* remains, however, in the background as a kind of referential *leitmotif* (or perhaps a generative trace, so to speak).

*:dreamin/gField* is part of an extended series of works, collectively titled *Songs in Memory of a Circle*, that all take as their point of departure an earlier piece for alto flute and electronics, *Song in Memory of a Circle*, written in 1992. *:dreamin/gField* is comprised of three separate strata that may be performed independently of each other. These strata are grouped by instrumentation—three winds, string quartet, and piano and percussion. Circularity resonates throughout the work on numerous levels, such as in the processes defining linear material, and in the constant cross-referencing within the work itself. Yim states in his programme note:

The compositional process which defines the basic linear material is in itself circular, ending at the point almost half an hour later, where the melodic loop would begin again. Each work also embodies a specific instance of a kind of holographic projection whereby each measure of the long cantus which spans each piece is related by a dense network of relationships to every other measure of the cantus. Furthermore, each instrumental cantus invokes a kind of mnemonic structure in which some variable subset of the preceding measure is embedded or imbricated in the measure which follows, creating a chain of constantly mutating linear shapes.

Yim describes the piece as being concerned with ‘mapping and re-mapping the trajectory of an extended stream of material as it negotiates a parametrically shifting terrain.’ Thus, what is changing and developing in the work is not the material, but the perspective and the environment of said material. Yim’s interest in biological and behavioural models can be seen explicitly here—the material adapts to its surroundings. Yim began our correspondence by expanding on this point.

JAY: All of these works (those that comprise the *Songs in Memory of a Circle* cycle of pieces) are also related conceptually by virtue of being parts of my work with what I call Extended Melody. The most straightforward way for me to contextualize this is to say that most of the time, a majority of composers conceive of the material that they begin a composition with as molecular; if we analogize individual sound events (like pitches) as ‘atoms’ then the typical material that a composer works with is some small grouping of these sound-atoms, and perhaps some small collection of these small groupings (for example, motives, chords, pitch arrays, etcetera).

In 1991 I became interested in working with the notion that instead of having a small piece of material to work with, and to subsequently make it grow organically / organismically, I would instead take as my starting point a very long chunk of material, typically some kind of monody that would span the entire duration of a work, or perhaps a very long chord progression (a recent orchestra piece is based on a chaconne that comprises 448 chords). What interests me in this enterprise is that the technical and creative challenge shifts more from questions such as ‘How do I maintain continuity?’ to ‘How do I diversify the context in which the material is presented?’

**RD: Your music contains elements of both minimalism and complexity (both terms are used for convenience, rather than to describe a specific ‘school’ or working method). In what ways do the interface between these two ideologies affect your working methods? Do you consider yourself to have a particular affinity for either of these ‘styles’?**

JAY: I don’t really mind the labels. I know a lot of composers *do*, but as I see it, human beings are taxonomists at heart, as one of the primary ways we interpret the sensory data input of the world. So, triangulation / perspectivisation typically involves some sort of mapping process based on known referents as the basis for comparison, and any assessment of uniqueness is thus an asymptotic interpolation between various archetypes. Actually, I don’t really espouse any kind of ideological position, at least not of the Capital Letter type (Minimalism, Complexism, Neo-Romanticism, Spectralism, etc) except perhaps that I favor Cultural Omnivorousness. I think that ‘either/or’ is a less amenable way of working than ‘both/and.’ To me, the main technical issues that face any composer are:

- how does one convincingly generate and maintain a sense of continuity in the work; and
- how does one manipulate contrast in the same work to avoid risking tedium or complacency on the part of the listener?

I think that everything else that composers work with is either subsumed under those two general concerns, or else (like political commitment) they are situated outside these technical concerns and instead reside somewhere in the constellation of relations that comprise the content

of any such work. Instinctively, I've always been attracted to various ideologically supported aesthetics, some of which find their strongest adherents at odds with one another. I like having a varied diet, and musically speaking, it offers me a wider range of things to work with. And the subcutaneous commonalities between such putative opposites like Minimalism—emphasis on processuality (Steve Reich, for example)—and Complexism—emphasis on processuality (see Richard Toop's excellent deconstructions of Ferneyhough's *Lemma-Icon-Epigram* and Chris Dench's *Sulle Scale [de la Fenice]*)<sup>1</sup>—means to me that they have more in common philosophically than not. The variance at the superficial level might then be more a matter of choosing initial conditions differently, but working rigorously with similar ethics.

That's a long-winded answer. I would say that both of the ideologies that you mention are of interest to me, but that I prefer to situate myself at some kind of interstice between them. I guess that makes me 'neither/nor.'

This goes back a long way. Chris [Dench] rang me up years ago and told me that the ABC had invited him to be on the air for a programme about Minimalism because they thought he would be a good representative of 'principled opposition.' When asked if there were any Minimalistically sympathetic composers around that he engaged with, he told me that he had mentioned me on the radio, and asked if I was offended by being branded a Minimalist. I said 'No.' I was happy to be a so-called Minimalist. Then he told me that several months later he was back again in the ABC studios for a broadcast about Complexism, that he had fingered me again, this time as a Complexist, albeit perhaps somewhat different from the accepted axis of complex music in the USA which was aligned with Babbitt and Carter. He asked me if it bothered me to be categorised as a Complexist, and again I said 'No.' I don't have any fantasies that many people cared so much *per se* about me, but I did rather like the idea that at least in Australia I could be both minimal as well as complex.

**RD: You mention liking to have a highly varied 'musical diet' as it gives you more to work with. Do you think that this suggests that your work occurs at a level 'higher than self' (in the sense that the materials you utilise are external to some degree), or do you think that this sort of engagement with a variety of material is more 'true to self' (in a sense of imbuing the work with a more detailed account of your persona) than a more restricted musical vocabulary?**

JAY: I don't see how my work *could* occur at a level higher than myself. At least, I don't think I can be involved with it at any level higher than myself. If someone else wants to interpret any particular work as such, then that is their prerogative, but solipsism being what it is, I can only operate at my own level. I personally don't find it at all strange or cognitively dissonant to enjoy listening to a live concert of Japanese *gagaku*, followed by a bracing performance of Xenakis, and then to sing along with Pet Shop Boys while driving home. I know I'm not 'supposed' to engage with some of this stuff, but I have such admiration for Trevor Horn as a producer ...

**RD: So perhaps both are true?**

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Toop, 'Brian Ferneyhough's *Lemma-Icon-Epigram*,' *Perspectives of New Music* 28.2 (1990): 53–100; 'Sulle Scale della Fenice,' *Perspectives of New Music* 29.2 (1991): 72–92.

JAY: Or perhaps neither. Some people prefer bland food almost all of the time. I would never impose spicy food on a dinner guest (and I don't have capsaicin in every meal!), but if I were going to dine with someone whose tastes were different from mine, then a restaurant would be a wiser option. Sidestepping genre/style restrictions in terms of listening means that I admit that I've learned as much about orchestration from Hugh Padham or Scritti Politti as from Stravinsky or Berio. I'm not 'working with' different musics in a Schnittke-esque sense, but I do want the database to be as broad as possible because that gives me more techniques to harvest, and I really believe that it is impossible for a composer to have too much technique. One might have half-baked ideas, which would result in mediocre pieces, but at least they should be maximally expressed. It seems to me to be more tragic if one were to have a great idea, and not enough technique to do justice to that idea. And I've encountered composers who are like that.

**RD: Does it depend on what one is trying to express?**

JAY: Perhaps.

**RD: Can one express anything at all through music?**

JAY: Perhaps, or, to paraphrase Lewis Carroll, 'One can't, but two can.' Maybe in a digital age it should be 'One can't, but zero can.' I don't know. I'm not as clever as Carroll.

**RD: If we assume that you can, does one, of necessity, always end up expressing no more and no less than one's self?**

JAY: Insofar as the whole *raison d'être* of artistic production is to filter all of one's experiences through the corporeal self and make some subset of those experiences (barring the improbability of being able to draw upon 100 per cent of accumulated experience) manifest in a way that can be transmitted/shared with others, I would agree. I'm not trying to suggest that creative artists are necessarily egotistical, but that it is a given that subjectivity is integral to artistic production, whether it be individual or collaborative.

**RD: How does expression relate to material?**

JAY: That is an interesting question, but it is too general, as it engenders a host of related questions: what are we talking about when we refer to 'material'? When I think about my own output, it has depended also on the particular piece. Sometimes the material has been secondary to the process that I have used in making the work. In those instances, the 'musical materials' could have been just about anything, because the manner of working with it was the focus of my attention. And in many cases, the materials have been the same from piece to piece, largely due to a fascination that I have had with the notion of a garden of forking paths: if the outcome of a work is causally dependent upon each and every compositional decision and if decisions represent the selection between competing options, then the alternative evolutionary track(s) might also yield viable works. Like twins separated at birth, so to speak.

**RD: Do you consciously engage with or disengage from traditional notions of instrumental 'personality'? The instruments in *:dreamin/gField* are grouped into theoretically homogeneous**

**groups. To what extent do you identify with, for example, Richard Barrett's comments (in regard to his *Ne Sonje plus a fuir* for violoncello solo) about needing to distance himself from any historical concept of the 'cello as an instrument, and envisage it purely as a 'resonant box with four strings'?**

JAY: I like that piece of Richard's, and I also think that his approach fits logically within a context of scientific skepticism about unquestioned expressive traditions. What I admire there is the tension between the rationalist underpinnings and the gestural irrationality. I don't know if I quite understand what you mean by 'instrumental personality,' so I'm not sure if my approach when writing is what you would call conscious engagement or conscious disengagement. When I think about what is idiomatic for the alto flute, it's not in anthropomorphic terms, but really just the physical capabilities of that particular configuration of metal keys, holes in a metal tube, vibrating air column, and the driver, or excitation source, which usually happens to be a person with embouchure, diaphragm support, manual dexterity, etcetera. Perhaps that sounds too clinical, but it would be misleading for me to say that I somehow tap into a 'primal flute spirit' that influences what I write for the instrument.

If what you mean is whether I strive consciously to negate a stereotype of 'cellistic expressivity' when I am composing a part for a cellist to play, I have to say that in a piece like *:dreamin/gField* that aim would have been irrelevant; it didn't occur to me to consider the stereotype or not, since the nature of the commission was such that my responsibility was to make something that would be appropriate for the cellist in James Avery's Ensemble SurPlus. (I had a different responsibility some years earlier when Samsung asked me to arrange Rachmaninov's *Vocalise* for seven soloists and orchestra, and these were people like Yo-Yo Ma, Isaac Stern, and Yefim Bronfman ... I enjoyed working on that project too, but it was parametrically different, as you might imagine.)

One of the pleasures of working with what you call theoretically homogeneous groups is that the perceptual boundaries can be blurred when the seven-part canonic structure that subcutaneously unites the wind trio and string quartet briefly becomes audible from time to time before submerging itself again into the dichotomy between aerophones and chordophones. What I enjoy most about any canon is when you can both hear it and also *not* hear it. Depending on how one writes for the instruments at hand, commonalities can be emphasized or not, and the cor anglais can be rather more similar to the viola than to the clarinet or the alto flute. It's all in the exploitation of resonance, register, articulation, dynamics.

**RD: Given that you suggest that the three strands of *:dreamin/gField* can be performed separately, the assumption is that none of the strands relies on any other for its comprehension. In this regard, how do you perceive the work as being defined? How does this affect, or how is this affected, by your perception of the ontology of music? Are the three strands expected to 'sit' together in a Mallarmean sense (I am thinking here of aspects of Boulez's *Pli Selon Pli*), or are they intrinsically 'locked' together?**

JAY: You're right in assuming that none of the strata in *:dreamin/gField* is causally-dependent upon any other for comprehension. But the underlying model is biological/ecological, rather than being drawn from recent philosophy (in the way that Deleuze or Derrida have been fashionable of late), *per se*. The majority of the pieces in the cycle—which includes

several others which I imagine you do not have scores or recordings of at the moment, like *Radiant Shadows* for metallic percussion ensemble, *Orenda* for cello with two bows, and *Song in Memory of a Circle* for alto flute and electronics—share the same DNA (the cantus material) and that genotype is expressed (in the genetic sense) differently in each piece, based on different environmental conditions in the musical ‘environment.’ And this results in different phenotypes for each piece.

The works which have different DNA (such as *:[ten]dril*) follow a different model, whereby two organisms, each of a different family—for example, sharks, which are cartilaginous fishes (Chondrichthyes) and dolphins, which are mammals (Delphinidae)—have similar basic morphologies due to the requirements of their shared environment. *:dreamin/gField* is more like a coelenterate (jellyfish, such as the Portuguese man-of-war); these organisms are in fact more like colonies of cooperative cells than unified animals, as are, say, vertebrates. Some parts of these jellyfish, particularly the stinging cells, remain alive long after the rest of the colony has died. (This is a familiar-enough hazard on some Australian beaches.) So, the strata are bound together in a quasi-parasitic way, but I’m not sure I would assert that they were ‘intrinsically locked together.’ I suppose it depends on what you mean by ‘locked.’

**RD: Is the derivation from biological/ecological models a recurring theme in your work? What draws you to naturally occurring models rather than constructed models? Or is the ‘biological/ecological’ element a superficially analogous system, rather than something comprehensively translated?**

JAY: I would say yes, biological/ecological models have been recurrent points of departure in my compositional work dating back to 1980 or so. Not exclusively so, but certainly recurrently. But I think it is important to recognize that the distinction you make between ‘naturally occurring’ and ‘constructed’ models is not all that clearly delineated, insofar as *all* scientific theories are themselves constructions, and that all of these constructions of any type are the responsibility of members of the species *homo sapiens*: obviously, it is not the theory of the honeybees themselves that is under discussion when entomologists try to assess the behavior of a hive: we are the ones constructing the hypotheses about natural phenomena of whatever type. Is Einsteinian Relativity physics or philosophy?

The fact is that there are no models of nature (or any subset thereof) that are not articulated as intellectual constructions on the part of mankind. And I believe that this analytical work is not easy to distinguish in an unambiguous way from other types of intellectual constructions that we might make, at least in terms of ‘constructedness’ or ‘naturalness.’ Darwin’s ideas about external reality were just as constructed as Baudrillard’s are, and arguably had just as much impact. I think that the nature-versus-culture debates that crop up from time to time are fundamentally misleading in fostering non-integrative difference rather than investigating the formation of a continuum that might connect the two terms.

When bees build a hive, or when beavers build a dam, is that not architecture? It is undeniably intervention in the environment, and it is site-specific. When we are talking about Paolo Soleri’s Arcosanti or Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin it is quite clear that these are site-specific environmental interventions. Libeskind’s museum design in particular represents a nexus of lines/vectors drawn (pun intended) from Berlin’s topology through its

history, and these lines inform the form of the building in a definite, site-specific manner. (On the other hand, Frank Gehry's recent buildings tend more towards a kind of branding strategy that makes them more identifiable as 'Gehry's' regardless of whether they are in LA or Bilbao. Perhaps bees are more like Gehry than Libeskind ...)

I find the implications of some of the vocabulary that you use here interesting in terms of its ramifications: if an artist's work were to have a 'superficial' relationship to some kind of analogous system, would that not also support the work's autonomy? And if instead the relationship were more 'comprehensively translated' would that not lend support to a contention that the artwork is dependent, and thus potentially illustrative, rather than asserting itself as *art qua art*?

**RD: If, however, the extra-musical material on which the piece has such a 'dependence' is architecturally fulfilling when separated from the programme, would this then mean that the piece is a valid work in its own right? For instance, I recently heard a performance of New Zealand composer Jeroen Speak's stunning *Episodes* for solo E $\flat$  clarinet, which is based (apparently quite literally) on the EEG readings of an epileptic going into seizure. The sense of structure and interrelatedness of material in this piece made it supremely satisfying even when separated from the programme.**

JAY: I'm not aware of Speak's work, but I hope to someday have a chance to become acquainted with it. It seems like with your conjecture you are risking stepping into the quagmire of trying to separate form from content. Thomas McEvilley deploys a marvellous epithet 'Heads it's Form, Tails it's Not Content' as a chapter title in his book *Art and Discontent*.<sup>2</sup> The bankruptcy of formalist mythologies (such as those promulgated by critics like Clement Greenberg) makes it clear how quixotic a project that line of interpretation was, and how misguided and myopic it is to continue to base one's understanding of art on such a separation. To be sure, we routinely indulge in temporary fictions in order to gain a deeper comprehension of complex phenomena: scientists often tried to break down very complicated interactions into linear systems in order to grasp the individual agents (though this has been mostly superseded by the rise of chaos theory). Music students study counterpoint (Renaissance or Baroque varieties) with alternating focus on the horizontal domain (crafting a line which is intrinsically interesting—whatever the criteria for that might be) and on the vertical domain, which means taking full account of harmonic progression.

The reason I say it is a temporary fiction is because it really takes one hundred per cent of one's attention to shape a good line, and it takes one hundred per cent of one's attention to shape a good harmonic progression, and one doesn't really have two hundred per cent available. So we timeshare, in listening the same as with composing, which fosters the illusion that we are really attending to all of it with all of our cognitive powers. I haven't read much lately on audio cognition research, but I wouldn't be surprised if this timesharing turned out to be analogous to saccadic eye movements and the phenomenon of retinal blur. So I would contend that whatever it is that you find formally/architecturally fulfilling about an EEG trace requires its combination with some sort of content, whether that be an E $\flat$  clarinet or

---

<sup>2</sup> Thomas McEvilley, *Art and Discontent: Theory at the Millennium* (Kingston, NY: McPherson, 1991).

the human drama of being aware of another individual's illness. It's not just the trace itself, because art doesn't exist without some kind of medium of transmission. Even conceptual and/or virtual works make use of some transmission medium, whether it be language or light projections or whatever. Without transmission there is no cultural activity. Like Busoni said, it's all transcription as soon as you attempt to express an idea.

A related point would take consideration of the similarity of underlying models of behaviour in non-linear systems, thus demonstrating why Edward Lorenz's discovery of strange attractors has had applicability to meteorology, subatomic physics, animal populations, astronomical predictions, and a plethora of other systems that exhibit chaotic characteristics at some level. Perhaps at the mathematical level this EEG trace is congruent with other neurological phenomena in the unselfconscious way that artists sometimes find themselves placing significant compositional elements at Golden Sections even when they don't know anything about the Golden Section. We are probably predisposed to respond to GS proportions just as pine trees and nautilus cephalopods are guided by them. That doesn't of course mean that slavish or insensitive use of GS guarantees success any more than all rectangles are squares. To separate form from content is therefore fictional, since each requires the presence of the other. Another composer writing a solo E $\flat$  clarinet piece based on the same EEG trace might fail miserably in eliciting the fulfilment that you experienced in Mr Speak's piece. (That would make for an interesting cultural experiment: have another composer write such a piece and compare the results.) I think it is to his credit as a composer and the specific way that he chose sonic elements and deployed and developed them that his piece stunned you, not merely an attribute of the formal structure itself.

**RD: If this is then valid as *art qua art*, despite a literal translation of extra-musical material, does this render it merely a situation of there being 'systems that work' and 'systems that don't'?**

JAY: Of course not. The lesson of non-linear dynamic systems is that the outcome depends entirely on initial conditions. If a butterfly flaps its wings in China ... As I said, the success of Mr Speak's piece is an instance of his being appropriately sensitive to the potentialities of a particular system; the system doesn't do it all on its own.

**RD: Does the translation of extra-musical material into musical material make the resulting systems abstract to the point that any of these systems bears only a 'superficial' resemblance to the original?**

JAY: Possibly, but why be concerned about the degree of abstraction, and why be concerned with whether resemblance is on the level of skin, muscle, or bone? For that matter, there are quite a lot more species of exoskeletal creatures (crustaceans, all insects, all arthropods) than endoskeletal ones (like vertebrates) so sometimes the surface *is* the structure, too. With new building materials, there are some interesting possibilities with exoskeletal architecture, too.

As far as 'superficiality' goes, I'm quite suspicious of any artist or composer who claims disinterest in the surface of their work. The surface—the way that something actually looks, the way something actually sounds—is the experiential interface between the work and the audience. It genuinely matters: I am not satisfied with contemplating the underlying intentions of an artist if I cannot enjoy the sight or sound of their piece, assuming that I am trying my

best to see or hear it from the optimal perspective (relative to their intention). It *is* my job to try as best I can to approach the work from the right angle and to be sufficiently informed to be able to do this, but it is *their* job to make that rewarding if I am doing my job in good faith. I really need art to deliver an experience that requires the artwork; if the real payoff is *just* in reading a text (and it's not work by Joseph Kosuth) and not in hearing or seeing the work, then as far as I'm concerned, the work is a failure, because being in its presence it is nonessential.

**RD: Given that you suggest the biological/ecological model as an alternative to recent philosophy, are you expressing disagreement with, for example, the Derridaen concept of a text (which, in theory, applies regardless of conceptual model), or are you suggesting a lack of engagement with the process of 'reverse-engineering' philosophy to create art? Are metaphysics and ontology things that concern you when you work, or do you prefer to let the work exist 'despite' metaphysics, so to speak?**

JAY: Offhand, I would think that taking a position of *active* disagreement with Derrida's deconstructive approach would entail an expenditure of energy analogous to the amount of thrust needed to break free of the earth's gravitational pull. Since I don't identify myself as primarily being a philosopher, I would prefer to expend that energy in the service of other pursuits. I should make it clear that I am not positing the bio/eco metaphor that you mention as an alternative to recent philosophy in an either/or type of opposition; to me these are not mutually exclusive vantage points. I have enjoyed and found it to be enormously stimulating to read in a variety of areas and freely admit that many ideas from many other people have served as catalysts for my own. It is just that I have been circulating in the art world and the music world long enough to have developed a sense of *ennui* when I encounter for the *n*<sup>th</sup> time some work which takes as its primary justification for existence a passage taken from the writings of this-or-that French/German philosopher. In most of those cases, I would rather read the original philosophy than listen to the music-inspired-by-abc or contemplate the art-inspired-by-xyz. The music/art really needs to transcend being merely the result of 'reverse-engineering.'

The interesting and operative questions here concern distance from the model: were we to consider a philosophical premise to be analogous to, say, a gene, then I would not want my art/music to be analogous to the proteins that the said gene codes for in cellular metabolism. Rather, I would want my art to be analogous to the phenotype or the behavior that results from the production of those proteins; I'm more interested in someone having blue eyes and blinking more rapidly in bright sunlight than in cataloguing protein concentrations. (There I go again: using bio/behavioral models ...)

One of the things which I find to be one of the most resonant aspects of Derrida's grammatological point of view is his assertion of the non-primacy of spoken language over written language. What interests me here is that by extending a kind of *langue = parole* the notion arises of taking a written text (for example, a musical score) as possessing an equally authentic standpoint. There is for example the notion of a 'well-heard' score: one that is essentially a maximally accurate transcription from the imagination of the composer's inner ear. (Quite a lot of compositional training aims to instill this as a worthy ideal for the student composer to strive for.) This might be contrasted with the notion of an equally impeccable score, which

is brought into existence with the intention of being written without first being conceived as a transcription from an audible phenomenon, or at least an imagined audible phenomenon. For over twenty years, I have preferred to operate from the potential of exploring the musical possibilities as they might exist in a grammatological domain, not in foolish denial of the acoustic result, but certainly not with the *a priori* limitation that what I write be absolutely constrained by what I have already heard in either my Mind's Ear, or my Real Ears. It seems to me that the scope for auditory expansion is so much more flexible if having open ears means that we are sometimes willing to write music that has not yet been heard.

If it were to be the case that I am disengaged from what you call the 'process of "reverse-engineering" philosophy to create art' then that would primarily be because I prefer art-making not to be subservient to philosophy as merely a kind of elaborate illustration or example of this-or-that philosophy. I think that art and philosophy are both stronger if they are not each other's lackeys.

**RD: To what extent does pre-compositional planning determine the musical outcome of the work? What factors are predetermined, and are these processes expected to be audible? Why do you believe that these processes are necessary to a work?**

JAY: Actually, I don't believe that pre-compositional planning even exists as a separate activity: as soon as a composer has an idea that is in some way related to the overall process of creating a piece of music, they are simply composing. Full stop. I also don't believe that anything in a piece is 'predetermined'; if, for example, there are ten sections in *:dreamin/gField*, each of which proceeds from an inharmonic spectrum to a harmonic one, then I regard that as a compositional decision/determination, not something which came *a priori*. Basically, I think about my work in rather algorithmic terms, and have done so for twenty-plus years now. I think it is a misperception/misconception for people to think of composing proper as being only the part of the activity where the composer decides if the next note is going to be an E $\flat$  quaver or a D $\sharp$  dotted quaver. A serial composer working out isomorphic trichord relationships in their row is (in my mind) already composing; a remixer/producer selecting and editing samples is already composing. Choosing between a real Fender Rhodes piano and a DX7 simulacrum of one is a real orchestrational choice, just as deciding between cornet and trumpet is. I used to own both a hotrod Rhodes Suitcase 73 and also one of the first-generation DX7s. They're both good instruments, though the Yamaha was certainly easier to cart around ...

So, certainly the compositional work (it's all 'planning' isn't it, until the first rehearsal?) determines the musical outcome. Everything a composer does, from choosing a title to deciding that the piece is really finished (or abandoned, as Stravinsky suggested), is integral to making the work itself, and therefore of shaping the potential musical experience for the listener. As far as audibility of process is concerned, I am reminded of John Cage's dictum that 'composing is one thing, performing is another, and listening is yet a third.'<sup>3</sup> I know a few people whom I genuinely trust to be able to hear twelve-tone aggregates being formed as a piece progresses; I also know people who seem to be (perhaps surprisingly the case when they are musicians) unaware of natural harmonic spectra being formed as a piece progresses. Quite a lot of what

<sup>3</sup> See Steve Sweeney-Turner, 'Cage-Interview No. 1,' *Frankfurter Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 4 (2001): 16 [online resource], available at <<http://www.fzwmw.de/2001/2001T3.htm>>.

I compose is intended to be audible, but it's a rather different matter to conjecture about what portion of any audience is likely to decode any/every aspect of a particular work. (It's interesting to test musicians and composers with Tom Johnson's *Rational Melodies* and see how many of them can hear what he is doing in each of those pieces. Some of them are more recondite than one would expect.) I've been very much interested in the notion of re-inventing functional harmony (but not in the recidivist nineteenth-century fashion of some American Neoromanticism) since the early '80s, and I think that a lot of what I now consider to be paradigmatic concerns relative consonance and dissonance, and proximity effects (which I regard as precursors to voice-leading principles).

Expectations? Well, I hope that an attentive listener to *:dreamin/gField* hears some of the variational partial-loop structure of the melodic strata, but I hardly expect anyone to be able to reverse-engineer just which parameters were being manipulated in any specific sense. I hope that even the inattentive listener is at least aware of the gradual transformation from the relative dissonance of the inharmonic sections (those marked with an 'a' in the rehearsal numbers, and which I call DisreSpectful harmony in my sketches) to the relative consonance of the spectralized sections: 'b,' wherein the pitch lattice begins to show ReSpect, and 'c' where all of the pitches show Deep ReSpect. Do I imagine that many (any?) will consciously hear the work as a circular heterophonic double canon? Not really, because that's not really an important aspect of the content of the work; it relates more to technique, I suppose. Do I hope that some will hear it as a sort of Bruce Chatwinesque trope on the possible relationship between a musical line and a landscape? More so, but it's still not a requirement, and it's certainly not supposed to sound like errant ethnomusicology.

I'm not sure I understand what you mean by asking 'Why do you believe that these processes are necessary to a work?', unless I was supposed to agree with the aforementioned terms 'pre-compositional' and 'predetermined.' As far as processual thinking in general goes, I think it is a *sine qua non* for any kind of creative work, including composing music. But there is pretty wide latitude for what constitutes 'process' to me. I regard so-called intuitive composing as processual, and also systematic: after all, what is one's intuition except the momentary end-result of a person's lifetime of data acquisition and sensory input, as processed by their neural system, and output as voluntary decision-making? Just because we don't have a detailed grasp of the system—intuition—doesn't mean that there is no system there. Pre-Mandelbrot/Lorenz, chaos was thought to be nonsystematic. The system was always there, but humankind didn't know how to quantify it. Feldman composed intuitively, but there can be hardly any composers whose music was more rigorous, or more systematic. So I consider the conscious manipulation of sound parameters to be the yang side of my intuition as a composer; the fact that I cannot adequately describe how those intuitive mechanisms work hardly means that they don't represent something systematic. I assume that the yin side is the part of the iceberg that keeps dipping below the surface of inspection.

**RD: You describe so-called 'intuitive' composition as also being subject to some latent system. Which stages of your compositional process are intuitive and which are intellectually predetermined? When are the systems latent, and when manifest, so to speak?**

JAY: I couldn't say what part, if anything, is predetermined: everything is contingent. Well, okay, some of the pragmatic dimensions like maximal orchestration are set fairly early on in the

process if the work is commissioned. (Do I get to write for four two-octave sets of crotales or not?) Otherwise, as I've said previously, everything is subject to change until the work process is complete. Systematic techniques are ways for me to extrapolate from initial conditions, to lay the outline of the foundation in chalk on the ground as it were, pace it out, try to visualize the architecture, and evaluate whether the systematic extrapolations are congruent with what I intuitively sense to be the *kami* of the piece or not. For me the conscious processes and the intuitive processes are in a dialogue through most stages of working on a piece. If I set out to explore the consequences of letting several processes interact with each other, I rely upon some combination of intuition and dowsing (metaphorically!) to give me the feedback that I'm on the right track with the way a piece is developing. If I start out with some seemingly unrelated proportional systems in a polyisorhythmic relationship and lay them out and find that upon examination that they all sync up at the GS, then I begin to suspect that GS might play a role in that piece. If it doesn't happen that way, but I sense intuitively that this new structure is going to be fruitful to work with, then I know that GS relationships are not going to be a factor.

Debussy wasn't a slave to Fibonacci numbers, and hopefully no good composer is, but if they lock in more frequently than mere coincidence would suggest, I usually take that as a sign; some sort of confirmation of intuition, maybe. It was like invoking Divinity in Machaut's time via number. This is what I meant when I said earlier that these current '-isms' were not terribly important to me ideologically. I'm happy to intuitively decide upon something, processually extrapolate from there, and intuitively/intellectually evaluate whether or not I think the result is appropriate for the project at hand. But I suppose that I have a predisposition towards systematic working, and if the system that I have been using so far has seemed to work and then I come up against something that makes me question the continuation of that work along those lines, I choose to invent a metasystem that subsumes the previously understood system and provides a way to go beyond it. It's the grammatology thing put into practice: sometimes I write what I am already hearing and sometimes I write what I imagine I would like to hear that I haven't already heard. And if that metasystem runs into trouble, then I invent a metametasystem. It's infinitely extensible, but until now I haven't had to go as far as the edge of the flat earth and then fall off. But that might be interesting ...