

MUSICALITY AND TEMPORALITY
IN THE ART OF NAM JUNE PAIK (1932-2006)

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation is about the influences of Nam June Paik's musical career in the 1950s over his video art in the following decades. Paik is remembered more as a technology-savvy video artist than as a musicologist and musical composer and his active involvement in New Music and avant-garde musician circles in the mid- to late-1950s. This dissertation points to the fact that the artist's philosophy of music as a musician developed into the invention of video as an art medium. His musical objective was not simply to produce music but to redefine what music is and to challenge conventional notions of music. Through his incessant quest for an answer to the question, what is music?, Paik established music of his own invention, which evolved into multimedia art.

After a decade of active participation in the discussion of modern music as a musical composer and musician, Paik held his first solo show, "Exposition of Music-Electronic Television," at Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, in 1963, in which he showcased a series of television art wired to be visually manipulated according to audio input. This show was a watershed for Paik's career, as it propelled him into

electronic image manipulation through his exploration of music, hence essentially foregrounding Paik's creation of video art. Before he arrived at this unique combination of visual and audio, he delved into two major components of modern music: one was the idea of *Gesamkunstwerk*, a term that describes the synthesis of various genres of arts, professed by Richard Wagner and the other was the cutting edge technologies for electronic music in the 1950s. This dissertation addresses that the interesting marriage of the two led Paik to discover the visual aspect of his musical compositions, which expanded his music horizon and enabled him to push the envelope for unique music of his own that subsequently led to the invention of video art.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgment | iv |
| Table of Contents | vii |
| List of Illustrations | ix |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1 Nam June Paik asks, What is music?: Thoughts on Time and Space | 25 |
| John Cage's Influence | 28 |
| Music is Time-based; I'll Challenge the Concept of Time in Music | 32 |
| Time, Cybernetics and Spacetime | 35 |
| Adding a Spatial Dimension to Music | 40 |
| Chapter 2. Visualizing Actions of Music: Performance as an Extension of Music | 51 |
| Nam June Paik's Visual Deeds: Action Music | 55 |
| Paik as a composer for collaborating performers | 61 |
| Chapter 3 Television Art's Relation to Music | 75 |
| Exposition of Music | 77 |
| Electronic Television: Discovering New Technologies to Expand the Horizon of His Music | 79 |
| Oscillograph, Oscillons and Visual Music | 84 |
| Paik-Abe Synthesizer | 89 |
| Chapter 4. Video as a Medium for Music: <i>Guadalcanal Requiem</i> | 101 |
| Expanding the Parameters of Music Through Temporality | 101 |
| Manipulation of Time | 105 |
| [Repetition] | 106 |
| [Freeze] | 109 |
| [Reversal] | 112 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Synthesizer as a musical instrument for synaesthesiac music | 114 |
| Action Music Serving as Requiem within <i>Requiem</i> | 116 |
| Conclusion | 125 |
| Illustrations | 132 |
| Bibliography | 149 |

List of Illustrations

- 1-1 **Nam June Paik, *Urmusik (Primitive Music)***, 1961, Photograph: Museum moderner Kunst, Wien, Stiftung Ludwig, ehemals Slg. Hahn © Nam June Paik
- 1-2 **Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973), *Guitar***, 1914, Sheet metal and wire, 30 1/2 x 13 3/4 x 7 5/8" (77.5 x 35 x 19.3 cm), Gift of the artist, MoMA
Copyright: © 2013 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
- 1-3 **Nam June Paik**, Excerpts from ***Symphony No. 5***, 1965. Original score, dedicated to C. Caspari. Collection of the artist.
- 1-4 **Nam June Paik, *Zen for Head***, 1962 © Nam June Paik
- 1-5 **Robert Rauschenberg , *White Painting [three panel]***, 1951
- 1-6 **John Cage**, Performing ***4'33"***, 1952
- 1-7 **Nam June Paik** in front of ***Zen for film***, 1964
- 1-8 **Nam June Paik, *Symphony for 20 Rooms***, 1961, Original Score, Collection of the Artist

- 2-1 **Nam June Paik** performing ***Etude for Piano***, 1960
- 2-2 **Nam June Paik** performing **'Simple', *Originale***, 1961
- 2-3 **Nam June Paik** performing **'Simple', *Originale***, 1961
- 2-4 **Nam June Paik** performing ***One for Violin Solo***, 1962
- 2-5 **Nam June Paik, *Young Penis Symphony*** Score printed in *Decollage*, No. 3, 1962
- 2-6 Allison Knolwes performing ***Serenade for Alison***
- 2-7 Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman performing John Cage's ***26'1.1499" for a String Player***, 1965
- 2-8 Paik and Moorman performing Paik's ***Variation on a Theme by Saint Saens*** as part of Paik's Action Music, 3rd Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, 1964
- 2-9 Moorman during a performance of ***Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saens*** at 24 Studen, Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, June 5, 1965

- 2-10 Moorman, Paik and Takehisa Kosugi pose for publicity shots of Paik's *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saens*, January 18, 1966
- 2-11 Paik performing *Listening to Music Through the Mouth*, 1963
- 2-12 Poster for *Opera Sextronique*
- 2-13 Paik and Moorman rehearsing for *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*

- 3-1 Poster for *Exposition of Music. Electronic Television*, 1963
- 3-2 **Nam June Paik**, inside the exhibition, "Exposition of Music – Electronic Television", 1963
- 3-3 **Nam June Paik**, *Random Access*, at "Exposition of Music – Electronic Television", 1963
- 3-4 **Karl Otto Göetz**, Sketch Outlining Experiment emit der Braunschen Röhre, 1944-45
- 3-5 **Nam June Paik**, inside the exhibition, "Exposition of Music – Electronic Television", 1963
- 3-6 An example of an oscillograph
- 3-7 **Ben. F. Laposky**, *Oscillon No. 45*, 1952
- 3-8 **Nam June Paik**, *Magnet TV*, recreated 1965
- 3-9 **Wassily Kandinsky**, *Fugue*, 1914
- 3-10 **Oskar Fischinger**, *An Optical Poem*, 1937-38
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=they7m6YePo>
- 3-11 Thomas Wilfred at the Clavilux
- 3-12 **Mary Ellen Bute**, *Abstronic*, 1954
- 3-13 **Nam June Paik**, *Paik-Abe Synthesizer*, 1969
- 3-14 Example of a wobulator modeled after Paik's initiative
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijAaLxiYiWM>
- 3-15 **Nam June Paik**, "Video Commune - The Beatles from Beginning to End", 1970
<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/video-commune/video/1/>
- 3-16 Nam June Paik, Electronic Opera No.2 in "Video Variations", 1968
<http://thespace.org/items/e0001r3w?t=cv587>

- 4-1 Sequence beginning at 4'17", Bob Edwards' face
 - 4-2 Sequence beginning at 4'17" Bob Edwards' face distorted and colorized
 - 4-3 Sequence beginning at 9'11" Skulls and bones in the jungle of Guadalcanal
 - 4-4 Sequence beginning at 9'11" Japanese man with a bullet scar on face
 - 4-5 Sequence beginning at 9'11" Text "MACHINE GUN" superimposed
 - 4-6 Sequence beginning at 8'01" Mummified head wearing helmet
 - 4-7 Sequence beginning at 8'01" Skull drawing in colors
 - 4-8 **Ralph Morse**, published in the February 1, 1943 issue of *Life* magazine
 - 4-9 Sequence beginning at 14'50" Still image of Battle of Tanaru documentary film showing cannons firing.
 - 4-10 Sequence beginning at 15'11" Natives' children playing
 - 4-11 **Unknown Artist**, Still image from a documentary film, undated
 - 4-12 Charlotte Moorman playing "Le Cygne" (The Swan) from *Carnival of the Animals* by Saint Saens in front of the Marine Memorial Tower
 - 4-13 Above image distorted and colorized
 - 4-14 **Unknown Artist**, Still images from a documentary film bout nurses, undated
 - 4-15 Above image with line drawing superimposed
 - 4-16 Sequence beginning in 30'18" Charlotte Moorman wearing military uniform crawling on the beach.
 - 4-17 Sequence beginning in 30'18" Charlotte Moorman moving towards Paik
 - 4-18 Sequence beginning in 30'18" Paik dragging a violin on a string behind him
 - 4-19 **Nam June Paik, *Action with a Violin on a String*, 1963**
 - 4-20 Sequence beginning at 2'43" Charlotte Moorman appears holding her cello
 - 4-21 Sequence beginning at 2'43" Charlotte Moorman plays the cello
 - 4-22 Sequence beginning at 2'43" A violin cut in half
 - 4-23 Sequence beginning at 2'43" Moorman and Paik pass each other
 - 4-24 Sequence beginning at 28'55" Moorman and Paik perform *Infiltration—Homogen für Cello*
 - 4-25 **Josef Beuys, *Infiltration—Homogen für Cello* (sculpture), 1967**
 - 4-26 Josef Beuys, *Homogenous Infiltration for Piano*, 1966
- (4- are all from Guadalcanal Requiem unless indicated differently.)

Introduction

The prominent philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato aptly quoted Nam June Paik's statement "video is time" in order to explain the inherent quality of video art, which is that it reflects certain duration(s) of time. As Lazzarato pointed out, video technology is innately time matter. Video technology is a mechanical arrangement that establishes a relationship between a-significant flows (waves) and significant flows (images). In other words, video is the first technical means of producing images that reflects a general decoding of the flows.¹ When Nam June Paik, who is often called the "inventor" of the video art genre, stated that video is time, he was conscious of the fact that he had arrived at the discovery of video as an art medium through his incessant quest for ways to explore time in his art. Later Paik wrote

Napoleon said, "You can always recover the space lost, but you can never recover the time lost." Time is a very limited commodity. [...] A rich collector can buy up big space and fill it with many paintings. However, he cannot add even one single second to his lifespan. The poor and the rich are equal before death. Time is money, according to folk saying, but time is actually the inverse of money. Modern consumer society found out that the more money you have, the less time you have [...] Edmund Husserl, in his lecture on "The Phenomenology of the Inner Time-consciousness"(1928), quotes St. Augustine (the best aesthetician of music in the Medieval Age), who said "What is TIME?? If no one asks me, I know . . . if some one asks me, I know not." This paradox in a twentieth-century modulation connects us to the Sartrian paradox "I am always not what I am, and, I am always what I am not." [...] On my recent trip to Tokyo I bought dozens of books about TIME by Oriental and Occidental thinkers. On my return to New York, I found out that I have no TIME to read them.²

Obsession with the concept of time was a significant driving force for Nam June Paik to explore various art mediums. In order to understand that, one must be reminded

that Nam June Paik started his artistic career as a musician. As a musical composer, his philosophy was to “renew the ontology of music”³ by persistently trying to break down the establishments of music. In the course of this effort to transgress the traditions within music, he became involved in performance art and visual music. One cannot help but notice that they are all time-based art. Time-based art is defined as art that deals with duration(s) of time, such as: music, performance art, film, kinetic art, and of course, television and video art. This dissertation will attempt to prove that Paik’s quest to revolutionize music and his experiences with various time-based art mediums as a means to practice new music equipped him to pioneer television and video as art forms. Both video and television were very new, even foreign, to the artists of the 1960s. I will address the idea that at the core of Paik’s unique trajectory in time-based art mediums are is infatuation with modernist tactics of the historic avant-garde such as Futurism⁴ and Dada as well as his acute understanding of the nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner. However, seeing Nam June Paik in the context of a “mere revival of the historic avant-garde,” as art historian Benjamin Buchloh has suggested,⁵ is to denounce or oversimplify Paik’s oeuvre as well as his philosophy of art. As Paik stressed in one of his insightful writings, he took a point of departure from the modernist tactics of the historic avant-garde upon his discovery of Zen Buddhist philosophy.⁶ Seen against a larger context, I hope this dissertation will provide an alternative perspective on the significance of the Neo-Avant-Garde of the 1960s by delving into Nam June Paik’s transition from a conformist within modernism to a rebel: that is, his quest to not

repeat the socio-artistic strategies of the past but to make meaningful ruptures in the traditional understanding of modernism.

Nam June Paik is well known as a pioneer in video art, but few have scrutinized his career as a musician in the 1950s before his transformation into a video artist. I will argue that this overlooked aspect of Paik's oeuvre is an indispensable part of his journey as an artist, and prove that Paik's music was a catalyst for his subsequent invention of video art. Paik had a solid background in music and was a well-recognized musician. In Germany, where Paik went to study music in the late 1950s, he became an active member of the German Avant-garde musicians' circle. Obsessed with the idea of transcending the confines of traditional music and revolutionizing the traditional music genre, he began exploring the visual, rather than the acoustic, aspects of music. Understanding Wagner's music philosophy and following generations of musicians influenced by Wagner was crucial for Paik in producing his own musical philosophy and eventually his visual art. Paik's understanding of and reactions to Wagnerism, and his own resultant music serves as a significant reference point for the discussion of the visual aspects of Paik's music that subsequently led to his invention of video art.

In 1932, Nam June Paik was born into a family which owned the largest fabric manufacturing company in Seoul, Korea. Due to his wealthy background, Paik had access to foreign cultures and benefited from privileges that were not available to most Koreans. His family was one of the few in Korea to own a piano, and he received piano lessons. Upon entering Kyonggi Middle School, Paik's sister arranged

for him to take lessons from her friend Jae-duk Shin, a prominent pianist who later became the Dean at Ewha Woman's University School of Music.⁷ When Paik showed a keen interest in music composition, Shin introduced Paik to the composer Gon-woo Lee. Little is known about Gon-woo Lee, whom Paik described in many essays as a progressive musician, interested in the atonal music of Austrian composer Arnold Schönberg.⁸ Paik later reminisced:

Gon-woo Lee was one of the rare [avant-garde] musicians in Korean history. He never lost his footing even during such a gloomy time (Japanese occupation of Korea). And he was passionately tenacious about explaining Arnold Schönberg's music to me. It was in 1946. That was the catalyst for my decision to become a scholar of Schönbergian music. As a result, I wrote my bachelor's thesis on Arnold Schönberg at Tokyo University. Considering that it was 1948 when Schönberg first became known in the United States,⁹ Gon-woo Lee was ahead of his time in his knowledge, understanding, and passion for contemporary music.¹⁰

For the young Paik, Lee was a gateway to his accessing Western contemporary music on a highly advanced level.¹¹ Lee taught Paik Schönberg's compositional technique, dodecaphony or twelve-tone serialism, and atonality.¹² Paik often mentioned that the greatest achievement of his teen years was his discovery of Schönberg. He said, "Schönberg was not just a composer but an avant-garde artist who rejected the hierarchical system in music and expanded the concept of music to include noise."¹³ This statement illustrates that the young Paik learned from Lee about Schönberg's challenge to preexisting conditions of music, or tonality. Paik's declaration in 1963, "I [...] must renew the ontological form of music,"¹⁴ is in the exact same vein. Schönberg's reformist efforts that Paik learned were a branch of Wagnerism, in that Wagner had introduced new ideas in harmony, melodic process

(or leitmotif),¹⁵ and operatic structure. He had explored the limits of the traditional tonal system that gave keys and chords their identity, which paved the way for Schönberg's invention of atonality.¹⁶ Acceptance of atonality into the realm of music allowed noise to be included.¹⁷ Paik's mention of the rejection of the hierarchical system in music is addressing this Wagnerian tradition to surpass conventionalism in music.

Paik's family fled Korea in 1950 right before the break of Korean War, and Paik pursued his study in Japan. Upon graduation from Tokyo University with a thesis on Schönberg's music, Paik decided to further his studies in Germany. In 1956, he was accepted to the master's program at the University of Munich to study history of music, but Paik found the teachings of his professor, Thrasybulos Georgiades, too conservative. This propelled his move to Freiburg, to enroll at the Hochschule für Musik, to study composition with the composer Wolfgang Fortner.¹⁸ To his disappointment, Fortner turned out to be less progressive and open than Paik expected.¹⁹ It came as a shock to Paik that, when Paik presented his twelve-tone composition, Fortner instantly dismissed his ideas because its style was beyond what he would accept.²⁰ An anecdote indicates Paik's disappointment with Fortner. Once, when Fortner asked Paik to present his composition assignment, Paik walked up to the piano and took out an axe to smash it.²¹ Fortner's timely intervention saved the piano before Paik swung his arm down on it. Fortner understood that Paik was no longer interested in traditional composition. In fact, Paik's incessant quest for the new had already propelled him away from the discourse of tonality/atonality. This incident compelled Fortner to do two important things for Paik: to guide Paik

to Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, and to refer Paik to the Electronic Studio of Westdeutsche Rundfunk (WDR, West Germany Broadcasting).

Fortner had been teaching and associating with new music practitioners since 1946, when Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music)²² was founded. He may not have been the most radical musician among the lecturers there, but he was very well informed about the avant-garde musicians who were challenging the established traditions in music.²³ Fortner thought Paik would benefit greatly from attending Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, and significantly, Darmstadt is the city where Wagnerian tradition prevailed. This provides a clue as to why Nam June Paik mentioned Wagner as a point of departure for his artistic journey. At the turn of the 20th century, Darmstadt provided artists with a community where they could meet and discuss their art, in the spirit of Wagnerian *Gesamkunstwerk*, meaning art that is a synthesis of different genres.²⁴ Despite an obvious hierarchy within the arts designated by Wagner, many artists, art critics and philosophers picked up on the idea of integration of arts and praised Wagner for insisting on it.²⁵ His suggestion, a transformation of traditions in music such as bel canto and spectacle opera, was to unite music with drama, theatrical effects, and occasionally dance. Wagner's *Gesamkunstwerk* was, in fact, a part of his radical social and political views of the late 1840s, a proposal for the democratic German nation he imagined for the future. In other words, *Gesamkunstwerk* should be understood on two levels: as a method of artistic production to synthesize multiple genres of art, and as a sociopolitical agenda to promote cultural unity among its spectators.

After his first summer at Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in 1957, Nam June Paik became a contributing writer for a Japanese journal on music, *Ongakku Geiziutsu* (音樂藝術). One of his articles for the periodical introduces the new ideas in music discussed at Darmstadt.²⁶ It is worth noting that, in this essay, Paik adamantly supported the idea of reforming the existing form of music, another aspect of Wagnerian tradition. Paik talks about the summer courses at Darmstadt that were based on the Schönbergian twelve-tone music and mentions that one of the teachers was the prominent twelve-tone music composer Karlheinz Stockhausen.²⁷ Paik was simultaneously pleased to find a number of musicians working in twelve-tone music and frustrated that most of the musicians were mindlessly following Stockhausen without questioning or challenging him. Paik wrote, “Is this phenomenon the fate of the commoners (non-innovators)? Why not reach out for the new, why not strive for further evolution?”²⁸ He concludes that the great number of Stockhausen fanatics could not achieve true art, because they did not innovate as they should.

When Paik wrote this essay, he was already moving away from twelve-tone music, and what Stockhausen was teaching that summer was not so interesting and even outdated for Paik. By this time, in October of 1957, he was producing sound collage music by editing sounds from music tapes. He was interested in collecting “real sounds” from everyday life, such as the sounds of kids chuckling, cars honking, dogs barking, etc., that from a traditional perspective were regarded as “noise” and non-music. In a 1958 letter to Wolfgang Steinecke, the founder of Darmstadt

Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Paik mentions working on his new composition:

Piano will be used not only as a keyboard but also as a string instrument [combined with] pizzicato, and as percussion. Musicians will read out of the newspaper, “talk with the audience,” push away the grand piano and sink it. The audience will throw flames onto the stage, shoot guns, and smash glasses. Then a scooter will arrive from backstage. On top of that [will be] sounds of various toys, the weather report, news, sports broadcast, radio, boogie-woogie, water, tape recorder, etc... They are sounds free from their original function. [...] ²⁹

That same year, Paik wrote a column for *Jayou Shinmun*, a Korean Newspaper, titled “Concrete Music of Pierre Schaeffer.” ³⁰ Pierre Marie Schaeffer was a French composer and engineer. ³¹ His “musique concrète” (a term he coined in 1948) refers to music made from real-world audibles or other naturally occurring sounds, although there is more to it than simply recording and editing everyday noises. In a broader sense, musique concrete is an invention to dismantle the long-established tradition of “organized” sound in music. ³² At the beginning of his article, Paik identifies himself as a composer of musique concrète, and stresses the significance of the inclusion of noise into the realm of music. Paik goes on to write, “Schaeffer revived what was forgotten for three decades since [the Futurist Luigi] Russolo.” ³³ Paik’s main argument was that Schaeffer’s greatest achievement was the idea of using engineering technology to record noise, enabling the recordings to be readily edited. Paik’s interest in sound collage now migrated to electronic music. ³⁴ In the same article, he also mentions that the electronic music studios all over the world, including the WDR studio “owe much to Schaeffer’s invention and people who promulgated it such as [...] Stockhausen.” ³⁵

Although he was tired of Stockhausen's twelve-tone music, Paik was obviously entertained by the electronic music Stockhausen was experimenting with at the electronic music studio of WDR in Köln. It must have been Paik's interest in electronic music that propelled Fortner to realize Paik would be better off at WDR than within the confines of the university. In early 1959, he wrote a recommendation letter to the studio for Paik:

Such a curious phenomenon as Paik [is not to be taught at school ...He makes] Intriguing experiments with acoustics and sound organization, but it is difficult to assess them from a musical standpoint. [...] The relationship between his experimentations and composition is like that between photomontage and painting.³⁶

Fortner was not a great mentor for Paik, as Fortner's approach to music had a clear hierarchical system and did not admit real-life sounds as a form of music. But he made the right decision to send Paik to WDR's electronic studio. The studio was evolving into the epicenter of experimental electronic music at this time. Many young composers, such as Mauricio Kagel, György Ligeti, Gottfried Michael Koenig, Cornelius Cardew, as well as Stockhausen, were working there. And it was fully stocked with state-of-the-art equipment that allowed the musicians to synthesize the sounds and music they were composing. It is notable that Fortner's letter referred to the visual arts. He was aware that Paik's composition was a practice of *Gesamkunstwerk* in the sense that it transgressed the boundaries between visual and acoustic art, and the electronic studio of WDR was one of the birthplaces for 1950s synesthesia in music and art. Synesthesia refers to the phenomenon that the

stimulation of one sense modality also gives rise to a sensation in another sense modality.³⁷

The two very different disciplines of art and music may be perceived as part of a larger structure that unites the different arts in the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.³⁸ Not only the operas of the 19th century but new digital technologies of image and sound of the 1950s would bring theoretical issues concerning the unity of the arts to the foreground.³⁹ For example the oscillogram, a technology using cathode-ray tubes to create patterns on television monitors that move according the sound of the music with which it is coordinated, propelled artists to pay attention to the idea of synesthesia. Paik came across the oscillogram at the electronic studio and brooded over how to incorporate this technology for his own musical composition. In this sense, Paik was greatly indebted to Fortner for helping him find the path to visualize his music.

One of the aspects of Stockhausen's music that intrigued Paik was the idea of spatialization, which would play a key role, in combination with the concept of time, in Paik's incessant quest for new music and subsequent transitions to other time-based art mediums such as action music/performance art, visual music and, most importantly, video art.⁴⁰ Spatial music is composed music that intentionally exploits sound localization. The term "spatial music" indicates music in which the location and movement of sound sources is a primary compositional parameter and a central feature for the listener.⁴¹ Spatial music is connected especially with electroacoustic music to denote the projection and localization of sound sources in physical or

virtual space or sound's movement in space. Stockhausen had been developing the concept since the mid-1950s,⁴² and Paik was fascinated by this acoustics experimentation and mentioned in multiple sources that he would incorporate this idea for his music. In a 1959 article he wrote for *Ja-yu-shin-moon*⁴³ (Liberation Daily), he stated, "One of the most debated topics at this year's Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik was to add a spatial dimension to time-based art, music."⁴⁴ Here he explains in detail how Stockhausen configured the audience seats in a horseshoe-shaped formation for *Gruppen for three orchestras*, considering the acoustic effects for the people in these seats.

According to Paik's friend, the artist Mary Bauermeister, Paik went to see a Dadaist Kurt Schwitters exhibition in (Frankfurt) around this time.⁴⁵ What was supposed to be a visit to experience the spatial scheme turned into a major event for Paik. It seems that he was profoundly moved by the connection between Schwitters' art and his own. Paik never explicitly explained what the similarities were, but it seems only natural that he was drawn to Schwitters' Merz, his combination of various unrelated objects. Merz has been called "psychological collage": most of the works attempt to make coherent aesthetic sense of the world around Schwitters, using fragments of found objects. It is crucial to note that there is consensus that the beginning of nonmelodic, nonverbal sound used as a medium for artists was Schwitters' *Ursonate* (1922), a performed poem devoid of language and structure, in accordance with Rossolo's Futurist manifesto. Finding the historical avant-garde threads in this regard must have intrigued Paik, who was working from everyday noise to make collage. Schwitters' found objects put together and presented as art must have

seemed like a visual version of Paik's sound collage. The everyday objects collaged together lost their original function and became a part of a greater aesthetic plan, just as, Paik wrote, "[the sounds he uses] are sounds free from their original function."⁴⁶ He added that his sound collage music "is a kind of acoustic Schwitters." Paik was impressed by Merzbau, the name given to structures built with Merz collage. The spectators could enter and experience an environment Schwitters created. This exhibition was a catalyst for Paik to recognize the necessity to incorporate a spatial dimension to his music. It is not surprising that both Stockhausen and Paik, as musicians who were conscious of the Wagnerian tradition, were engrossed in Schwitters' art. Schwitters himself was influenced by Wagner's *Gesamkunstwerk* concept, which he took to a new level. As Hans Richter pointed out,

The goal he [Schwitters] had in mind was not so much the total work of art in the sense that [Hugo] Ball or even Kandinsky meant it—a synchronous combination of all the arts—but rather an unceasing obliteration of all borders between the arts and their integration into one. [...] In reality, HE, Kurt Schwitters, was the total work of art.⁴⁷

Schwitters' interpretation of *Gesamkunstwerk* —that the "ultimate goal is the unification of art and non-art in a Merz total vision of the world"⁴⁸— was exactly what Paik strived for throughout his entire artistic career. Paik also believed that art should not stray from reality, and that there should be no separation between art and life. Both artists accepted Wagner's idea of the total, all-encompassing work of art for the purpose of uniting art and life. As Koss stressed, Wagner's *Gesamkunstwerk* should not be mistaken as a culture-bed for anti-modernism, combining interdisciplinary art genres without any discipline. Wagner had a clear notion of artistic purity, autonomy, and medium specificity when he formulated this

idea. Hence, what seems to be a countermodel for modernism is, in fact, its birthplace. Paik was quick to realize that Wagner, who he once admired but later criticized ardently, was not a model for his own music because of the apparent hierarchy in arts and everyday life that Wagner manifested. Paik stepped aside from the Wagnerian chain of thinking and took the historical avant-garde, especially Dada, as a reference point for his art.

Paik's infatuation with Dada is apparent from his 1959 letter to Steinecke describing his recent project:

In this movement, my piano (which cost DM 50) is toppled over, glass is broken, eggs are thrown, paper torn, a live hen set free, and motorbike arrives. But it all has nothing to do with humour. The only Dadaist artists who have survived are those who treated humour as a result rather than a goal, e.g. M. Duchamp, M. Ernst, Arp. Schwitters. {...] I would like to supplement⁴⁹ Dadaism with music, although Dada remains a taboo for cultural philistines today.⁵⁰

Not only did Paik mention the names of his new artistic heroes, but he also made a strong assertion that he would complete the Dadaist agenda to bring art and life together with his music. Paik also laments here that the gist of Dadaism was overshadowed by artistic elitism. With the philosophical support of Dadaism, Paik decided to collaborate with the American artist George Maciunas, who agreed about abolishing snobbery in art. Their first collaboration, in 1962, was a manifesto titled "Neo-Dada in Music in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art."⁵¹ In their writing, they declare that Neo-Dada is non-art, anti-art, or concrete reality. The logistics to come to this statement reveal what Paik had experienced and referenced to showcase their art. It explains that Neo-Dada artists must reference "two coordinates: the horizontal coordinate defining transition from 'time' arts [meaning traditional music] to 'space'

arts [meaning Paik's version of *Gesamkunstwerk* he learned from Schwitters].... and the vertical coordinate defining transition from extremely artificial art, illusionistic art ... [ultimately] anti-art, nature, reality," In a lecture given in the same year based on the Manifesto, Maciunas concludes, "the anti-art form are directed primarily against art as a profession, against the artificial separation of a performer from audience, or creator and spectator, or life and art."⁵²

With the artistic conviction earned from Neo-Dada, Paik held an exhibition, "Exposition of Music," in 1963 at Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany. The show was a visual manifestation of what he believed—it epitomized his understanding of *Gesamkunstwerk* in a Neo-Dada perspective. In the foreword to the exhibition pamphlet, Rolf Jährling wrote:

Korea-born artist Nam June Paik accomplished what Wagner pursued in a crude, nationalistic way. Not only did Paik achieve [Wagner's] "Gesamkunstwerk", but let music permeate through the entire universe. [...] Paik releases us from the confinement of tonality, or any system at all. What he is providing us is pure sounds. We've never paid attention to pure sounds before. But now we understand the clinking sound of tin cans on the asphalt is more valuable than Symphony No. 9.⁵³

As Jährling implies, Nam June Paik's interest in Wagnerian music and its offsprings had gone from understanding to criticism. The gradual progression of Paik's criticism had brought about the establishment of a solid art philosophy of his own. He was to be one of the first to liberate art from modernist dogmatism.

Nam June Paik's departure from modernism was possible through his continually evolving views on art that were formed and re-formed while experimenting in one medium after another (from music to performance to visual music to television)

until he arrived at video art. This dissertation will address Paik's involvement in each artistic medium to show how they were organically related and how each contributed to Paik's moving on to explore the next. Chapter 1 will address Paik's major agenda as a musician, his contemplation of the fundamental question, "what is music?" In his passionate quest for an answer, he found that music is basically temporal art and that he needed to study how to reveal and make use of that temporality. He could further this study when he realized that he needed to expand the very concept of time through the idea of "space-time," which subsequently called for the spatialization of music. This led Paik to see the visual aspect of music. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss Paik's development of this newly found aspect of music. In Chapter 2, Paik's performance art will be examined as an extension of his music. What was performance art to most Fluxus artists he collaborated with was, for Paik, his so-called "action music." Paik's action music shows clearly how he started to focus on the visual aspect of his musical composition. Chapter 3 will demonstrate Paik's involvement in electronic music being turned into electronic images through his infatuation with new technology coupled with his long-time interest in Wagnerian *Gesamkunstwerk*. Its potential to deconstruct the boundaries between different art genres made synaesthesia in art and music. Examples of Paik's own writings and art works will reveal that synaesthesia and its related technology led Paik to the invention of his early television art. In Chapter 4, Paik's groundbreaking video art will be discussed as his own unique extension of music. I believe it will become clear that his invention of video as an art medium was possible through

Paik's interesting development of ideas as to "what is music?"—the essential question where his quest had begun.

This dissertation does not necessarily follow the chronology of Paik's works. The first chapter does begin with Paik's earliest works and ideas and the last chapter with the latest; however the discussions in each chapter follow strands of ideas Paik continued to develop simultaneously over the course of four decades of his career. He spent a lifetime in contemplating the time element in art, in various art mediums such as tonal and atonal music, action music, television manipulation, and video. Paik did not abandon one medium to work on the next one. Hence there are overlaps of time for discussions of the various mediums.

¹ Maurizio Lazzarato, "Video, Flows and Real Time," *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, 2008), 283-91.

² Nam June Paik, "Input-Time, Output-Time," in Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot, eds., *Video art: an Anthology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 98.

³ "I am tired of renewing the form of music.- serial or aleatoric, graphic or five lines, instrumental or belcanto, screaming or action, tape or live ... I ~~hope~~ must renew the ontological form of music.": Nam June Paik, "New Ontology of Music," *The Monthly Review of the University for Avant-garde Hinduism!* (1963) The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archive MoMA.

⁴ As architecture historian Juliet Koss pointed out, Futurist artists were very much interested in the temporality of music, as they stressed the importance of mobility as the foundation of their artistic endeavors. It was their way of challenging the static nature of visual art. Unlike most visual artists, playwrights, filmmakers, and musicians have the unfolding of time at their disposal. Juliet Koss, *Modernism After Wagner* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). Nam June Paik referred to the Futurists in his writings multiple times, indicating that this group of artists had paved the way for future generations of artists to see the significance of the time element in art, to realize the visual aspect of music, and to include noise as an integral part of music.

⁵ Hal Foster, et al, *Art Since 1900* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 456-463.

⁶ Paik's first writing that address his interest in Zen Buddhism I could find was from an essay he wrote in 1963: "Zen is anti-avant-garde," to explain how Zen influenced his avant-garde music. Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION" (March 1963, Galerie Parnass)', *fLuxus cc fiVe ThReE*, June 1964, section 2. p. 4. New York Public Library

⁷ Nam June Paik "Pensées at 59," printed in Toni Stoos et al, *Nam June Paik: Video Time - Video Space* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), pp. 17-19.

⁸ Schönberg's approach, both in terms of harmony and development, is among the major landmarks of 20th century musical thought. Subsequent generations of composers, most of whom were indoctrinated in conventional Western music, have either embraced or reacted negatively to Schönberg's methodology. Early in his career, Schönberg was widely recognized for his success in adopting the German Romantic styles of Wagner's music, which had been a discontinued tradition due to Wagner's apparent anti-semitism. By reiterating Wagnerian German Romanticism, Schönberg became the first modern composer to embrace ways of developing motifs without a dominant centralized melodic idea. Later,

his name would personify pioneering innovations in atonality that would become the most polemical feature of 20th century art music.

⁹ Professor Milton Babbitt introduced Schönberg studies to America at Princeton University in 1948.

¹⁰ Yong woo Lee, *Nam June Paik: The Passionate Life and Art* (백남준 그 치열한 삶과 예술), (Seoul: Yeoleum Publishing, 2000), p.53 (my translation.) It is significant to note that Paik was already immersed in Marxism by the time Gon-woo Lee introduced him to the music of Arnold Schönberg. In an interview, Paik mentioned, “[...] I think that perhaps my understanding of Schönberg was something that came out of my discovery of Marx. Following liberation from the feudalist exploitation of the Japanese occupation, Korean sentiment included a sort of adoration of Marx, something which was like a disease amongst intellectuals. [...] If Schönberg was the extremist regarding reform in both experimental and traditional music, radicalism was possible only through him [...] Paik’s fascination with Schönberg’s music was mainly due to its significance in the history of music as he was one of the pioneers to challenge the conventionalism in music. Due to the influences of Marxism and Schönbergian music, Paik believed that “the socio-economical substructure profoundly manipulates the facial value of ‘Geistes wissenschaft,’ and art being one of them.” Hence art must be an integral part of our society and everyday life. This anti-Modernist stance based on Marxism became the central quest for Nam June Paik’s oeuvres.

Electronic superhighway: Travels with Nam June Paik, Carl Solway Gallery (Cincinnati: 1995), 10

¹¹ In 1947, Nam June Paik managed to acquire an LP record titled “Transfigured Night,” a collection of Schönberg’s music of which only two copies were available in Korea. “Transfigured Night” was issued in Japan as a part of series called “Five Modern Composers,” which featured music by Schönberg, Béla Bartók, Jean Sibelius, Igor Stravinsky, and Paul Hindemith. The series featured musicians who experimented with unconventional tonality; all had adopted a non dodecaphonic serial composition style, a precedent to the twelve-tone method.

¹² A method of musical composition devised by Arnold Schönberg. The technique is a means of ensuring that all 12 notes of the chromatic scale are sounded as often as one another in a piece of music while preventing the emphasis of any through the use of tone rows, an ordering of the 12 pitches. All 12 notes are thus given more or less equal importance, and the music avoids being in a key. The technique was influential for composers in the mid-twentieth century.

¹³ Young-chul Lee ed., *Return of Nam June Paik* (백남준의 귀환), (Yong-in: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2010), 53

¹⁴ Nam June Paik, "Postmusic" The Monthly Review of the University for Avant-garde Hinduism! (1963) The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archive Museum of Modern Art.

¹⁵ A leitmotif is a musical term (also used in theatre and literature), referring to a recurring theme associated with a particular person, place, or idea. Richard Wagner is the earliest composer most specifically associated with the concept of leitmotif. His cycle of four operas, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (the music for which was written between 1853 and 1869), uses dozens of leitmotifs, for example, often related to specific characters, things, or situations. As Wagner demonstrated in his essay *Opera and Drama* (1851), his use of leitmotif was to best unite disparate elements of the plot of a music drama. Arnold Schönberg was one of the composers in the following generations who used a complex set of leitmotifs; *Gurre-Lieder* (completed in 1911) is an example of that. As a musicologist Paik must have been familiar with Theodor Adorno's criticism against the use of leitmotif, as he believed it only reduces emotional content to a mechanical process. See Theodor Adorno, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, "Wagner's Relevance for Today (1963)", *Essays on Music*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 589-92

¹⁶ Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage*, (New Haven: Yale Press, 2002), 174-79

¹⁷ Futurism was also credited with adopting noise as music. Paik also mentioned Luigi Russolo.

¹⁸ Wolfgang Fortner (12 October 1907 – 5 September 1987) was a progressive composer and influential music teacher in Germany. When he moved to Heidelberg in 1933, a group of young students almost instantly formed around him to learn the modern music, and his reputation started to grow. In 1946 he joined the circle of the Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, and taught within that framework, which connection allowed Paik to attend and participate in it. Paik was one of the students when Fortner was teaching musical composition in Freiburg.

¹⁹ "Roundtable Discussion: International Avant-Garde and Music" *Ongakku Geiziutsu* (音樂藝術), August Issue (1963): unpagged.

²⁰ Despite his disappointment with Fortner, Paik continued pursuing his own style of music. Yongwoo Lee writes that Paik showcased a composition for *String Quartet* and started working on tape collage. Lee, *Nam June Paik: The Passionate Life and Art*, 50-55

²¹ Edith Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*, (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1998), p.24f.

²² Founded in 1946 by Wolfgang Steinecke, the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Darmstadt was held annually until 1970 and subsequently every two years, encompassing both the teaching of composition and interpretation and including premières of new works.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the courses were charged with theories and practices led by Pierre Boulez, which imposed a strict set of rules for composition. This led to the use of the phrase 'Darmstadt School' (coined originally in 1957 by Luigi Nono to describe the serial music being written at that time by himself and composers such as Boulez, Maderna, Stockhausen, Berio, and Pousseur) as a pejorative term, implying a mathematical style music. Konrad Boemer, "The Sanctification of Misapprehension into a Doctrine: Darmstadt Epigones and Xenophobes". English translation by Sonia Prescod Jokel. *Key Notes* 24, 43–47.

²³ Many distinguished lecturers appeared at Darmstadt, including Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Wolfgang Fortner, René Leibowitz, György Ligeti, Olivier Messiaen, Luigi Nono, Karlheinz Stockhausen, David Tudor, Edgard Varèse, to name just a few. Thomas, Ernst, and Wilhelm Schlüter, "Darmstadt". *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, (London: Macmillan Publishers, 2001)

²⁴ Wagner felt that the Greek tragedies of Aeschylus had been the finest (though still flawed) examples so far of total artistic synthesis, but that this synthesis had subsequently been corrupted by Euripides. Wagner felt that during the rest of human history up to the present day (i.e.1850) the arts had drifted further and further apart, resulting in such "monstrosities" as Grand Opera. Wagner felt that such works celebrated bravura singing, sensational stage effects, and meaningless plots. In "Art and Revolution" Wagner applies the term "Gesamtkunstwerk" in the context of Greek tragedy. In "The Art-Work of the Future" he uses it to apply to his own, as yet unrealized, ideal. Richard Wagner, translation by William Ashton Ellis, *The Art-Work of the Future and Other Works*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993)

In his extensive book *Opera and Drama* (completed in 1851) Wagner took these ideas further, describing in detail his idea of the union of opera and drama (later called *music drama* despite Wagner's disapproval of the term), in which the individual arts are subordinated to a common purpose. Barry Millington, ed., *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1992), 294-5

²⁵ In "Outlines of the Artwork of the Future," Wagner wrote:

"[...T]he three sister-arts unite their forces in one collective operation, in which the highest faculty of each comes to its highest unfolding. By working in common, each one of them attains the power to be and do the very thing which, of her own and inmost essence, she longs to do and be. Hereby: that each, where her own power ends, can be absorbed within the other, whose power commences where hers ends [...]"

"Not one rich faculty of the separate arts will remain unused in the United Arts work of the future; in it will each attain its first complete appraisalment."

Wagner, "Outlines of The Artwork of The Future", 69-214

²⁶ Nam June Paik, "Bauhaus of Music—Notes on Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik," *Ongakku Geiziutsu* (音樂藝術), October Issue (1957). Lee, *Return of Nam June Paik*, 142

²⁷ Karlheinz Stockhausen was a German composer, widely acknowledged as one of the most important but also controversial composers of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Music critic Ivan Hewett calls him "one of the great visionaries of 20th-century music" He is known for his groundbreaking work in electronic music, aleatory (controlled chance) in serial composition, and musical spatialization.

David Power, "Book Reviews: *Towards a Cosmic Music*, Karlheinz Stockhausen; Tim Nevill". *Tempo* 175. (December 1990), 30–31; Ivan Hewett, "Karlheinz Stockhausen: Both a Rationalist and a Mystic, the Composer's Influence Stretched from Boulez to the Beatles" *Guardian Unlimited*" (December 7th, 2007).

²⁸ My translation of Nam June Paik, "Bauhaus of Music — Notes on Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik." In criticizing Stockhausen's followers, Paik quotes Schönberg: "If it is art, it is not for all. If it is for all, it is not art." On one level, it means Paik believed art is about innovation. On the other hand, this is a rare case in which Paik demonstrated elitist thoughts. Ironically, even if Schönberg and Paik disagreed on hierarchy in music, both were dismissive of non-innovative musicians.

²⁹ Nam June Paik, "A Letter to Dr. Steineke, 1958" printed in Lee, *Return of Nam June Paik*, 156-57.

³⁰ Nam June Paik, "Concrete Music of Pierre Schaeffer," *Jayou Shinmun*, (1958) reprinted in Lee, *Return of Nam June Paik*, 144. Paik's brother was a president of the newspaper *Jayou Shinmun*, and gave Paik a platform from which to write about his recent studies and experiences with European music for a Korean audience.

³¹ Pierre Marie Schaeffer is known for his innovative work in the marriage of science (acoustics) and music. Amongst the vast range of works and projects he undertook, Schaeffer is most widely and currently recognized for his accomplishments in electronic and experimental music, at the core of which stands his role as the chief developer of a unique and early form of avant-garde music known as *musique concrète*. The genre emerged out of Europe from the utilization of new music technology developed in post-Nazi Germany, following the advance of electroacoustic and acousmatic music. Today, Schaeffer is considered one of the most influential experimental, electroacoustic and subsequently electronic musicians, having been the first composer to utilize a number of contemporary recording and sampling techniques that are now used worldwide by nearly all record production companies.

³² Schaeffer believed traditionally classical (or as he called it, "serious") music begins as an abstraction (musical notation) that is later produced as audible music. *Musique concrète*, by contrast, strives to start with the "concrete" sounds that emanate from base phenomena and then are abstracted into a composition. The term *musique concrète* is then, in essence, the breaking down of the structured production of traditional instruments, harmony, rhythm, and even music theory itself, in an attempt to reconstruct music from the bottom up.

³³ Luigi Russolo was perhaps the first noise artist and can even be called the inventor of what is now called *musique concrète*. His 1913 manifesto, "L'Arte dei Rumori," translated as "The Art of Noises," stated that the industrial revolution had given modern men a greater capacity to appreciate more complex sounds. Russolo found traditional melodic music confining and envisioned noise music as its future replacement.

³⁴ A quote from Isang Yoon's letter to his wife in Korean while attending the Darmstadt Summer Course, dated September 7th, 1958 (Yoon was a renowned twelve-tone composer, politically contentious for his close bond with Il-sung Kim, the communist leader and first premier of North Korea.):

"My roommate here at the dormitory [Paik] was Korean as well. I am very surprised to know there is another Korean participant here. He is studying composition in Germany. [...] He must be below 30, and a very smart person seeing from the fact that he graduated from Kyunggi Middle School and went directly to Tokyo University.

He said he used to study history of music but recently shifted to composition. He wants to study electronic music from now on. Electronic music is a new music style that does not require a player nor an instrument; it only needs editing with electronic devices. No other Korean has ever stepped into this genre, and that propelled him to pursue this path.

This year's Summer Course is full of people like Paik. I think there are less than 2 percent of the people here write traditional (tonal) music like I do. New music you can't even imagine and even I am flabbergasted at is presented everyday. Schonberg and Alban Berg are just as old as Beethoven.

But this Nam June Paik that I'm staying with is fortunately very intelligent and seems to have a fine aesthetic sense. He said he would smash sheets of glass and shoot pistols at them to experiment with how the sounds work together. I guess I'll leave that sort of 'music' with him. Think about it. Music that's devoid of melody from piano but all noise of crashing glass... Paik himself said the word 'music' must be differentiated from what he does." (My translation) Nam June Paik Art Center Archive.

³⁵ Nam June Paik, "Concrete Music of Pierre Schaeffer." Lee, *Return of Nam June Paik*, 144

³⁶ Wulf Herzogenrath ed., *Nam June Paik: Werk 1946-76, Music-Fluxus-Video*, (Köln: Kolnischer Verein, 38

³⁷ J. Harrison, and S. Baron-Cohen, "Synaesthesia: An Account of Coloured Hearing," *Leonardo*, vol. 27, no. 4 (1994): 343-46; S. Baron-Cohen and J. Harrison, *Synaesthesia: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell Publ., 1997).

³⁸ Crotien van Campen, "Artistic and Psychological Experiments with Synesthesia," *Leonardo*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1999), 9-14.

³⁹ Roger F. Malina, "Visual Art, Sound, Music and Technology," *Leonardo*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1987), 103-15; B.M. Galeyev, "On the True Sources of Light-music," *Languages of Design*, vol. 3 (1996), 33-44; Craig Harris, "Visualizing Music & Sound - An Annotated Bibliography," *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*, vol. 2, no. 9, (1994), 4-9

⁴⁰ This will be discussed at greater length in the first chapter of this dissertation.

⁴¹ Spatial music may involve a single, mobile sound source, or multiple, simultaneous, stationary or mobile sound events in different locations. There are at least three distinct categories when plural events are treated spatially: 1. essentially independent events separated in space, like simultaneous concerts, each with a strong signaling character; 2. one or several such signaling events, separated from more "passive" reverberating background complexes; 3. separated but coordinated performing groups. See Robin Maconie. *Other Planets: The Music of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), 296.

⁴² In lectures such as "Music in Space" from 1958, Stockhausen called for new kinds of concert halls to be built, "suited to the requirements of spatial music." He proposed a spherical space to be fitted all around with loudspeakers. In the middle of this spherical space a sound-permeable, transparent platform would be suspended for the listeners. They could hear music composed for such standardized spaces coming from above, from below and from all points of the compass.

⁴³ This daily newspaper was printed from 1945-1961 in Korea, financed by Tae-chang Textiles, a company run by Nam June Paik's family. Its liberal political view attracted persecutions by the right-wing parties.

⁴⁴ Nam June Paik, "Music Deconstructed: Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik," *Jayou Shinmun*, (January 6-7, 1959), a copy is available at Nam June Paik Art Center.

⁴⁵ Wulf Herzogenrath et al., *Nam June Paik: There is no rewind button for life: Hommage to Nam June Paik, Kunsthalle Bremen, 25th March 2006*, (Köln : DuMont, 2007), 40.

⁴⁶ Nam June Paik, "A Letter to Dr. Steineke, 1958" printed in Lee, *Return of Nam June Paik*, 156.

⁴⁷ Hans Richter, "Dada: Art and Anti-Art," cited in Udo Kultermann, *Art-Event and Happenings*, tr. John William Gabriel (London: Mathews Millart Dunbar, 1971), 37; Maconie, *Other planets: the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen*, 219

⁴⁸ Annja Müller-Alsbach and Heinz Stahlhut ed., *Kurt Schwitters: Merz—a Total Vision of the World*, (Sulgen: Benteli Verlag, 2004), 9

⁴⁹ I think Paik believed Dada was mainly a visual art movement, and hence lacked musical factors. He was aware of some artists who exhibited musical factors, such as Hugo Ball's performances with their direct connection to Russolo's Futurist soirees, and also Schwitters's Ursonate performances. Paik must have felt sympathetic to Schwitters' inclusion of non-melodic, non-verbal noise into the realm of art. In response, Paik made an assisted-readymade *objet* (Urmusik) à la Duchamp and his philosophical ancestor Picasso. Ur- is a prefix meaning "primitive." Interestingly, it differs from the readymade *objet* by Duchamp and Picasso; Urmusik is a functional instrument. Urmusik is a great example of Paik's effort to "supplement" Dadaism with his musical endeavors. "Paik did not deny the analogy between his Urmusik and Schwitters' Ursonate, and the sound from the former could have been a good accompaniment to Schwitters' Ursonate recital in the respect that both deal with primordial sound." Quoted from Kang's telephone interview with Paik, 10 Jul 1987" from Taehi Kang, "Nam June Paik: Early Years (1958-73)", (PhD Diss., The Florida State University, 1988), 15.

⁵⁰ "Letter to Dr. Steinecke", Cologne, 2nd May, 1959, This letter to Dr. Steinecke of the International Music Institute Darmstadt was Paik's second attempt at presenting his action music in the context of the yearly summer courses in Darmstadt—again without success. Original is located at Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt (Darmstadt International Music Institute), reprinted in Edith Decker ed., *Niederschriften eines Kulturnomaden*, (Köln: DuMont Verlag, 1992), 51–53.

⁵¹ "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art, George Maciunas." This is a draft of an essay/manifesto by George Maciunas (1931-1978), read by Arthus C. Caspari, in German, at the Fluxus concert Après John Cage, Wuppertal, West Germany, June 9, 1962. A version in German was published in Jürgen Becker and Wolf Vostell, *Happenings*, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme (Hamburg, 1965) 192-95.

⁵² George Maciunas, Kleinen Sommerfest lecture June 9, 1962, printed in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 23

⁵³ Wulf Herzogenrath ed., *Nam June Paik: Fluxus, Video*, (Köln: Verlag De Buchhandlung Walther, 2000), 75

Chapter 1 Nam June Paik asks, What is music?: Thoughts on Time and Space

In an essay Nam June Paik wrote in 1968, he made a statement that is significant for the study of his musical career. In it he attempts to give an overview of how he perceives the availability and transmission of a composer's work:

97% of all music written is not printed, or printed early enough for contemporary evaluation, performance and study. [...] A vastly unfavorable gap exists for the composer, compared to the booming pop-op-Kinetic (and one might add today—video) art boom. Even experienced concert managers and performers have difficulties getting materials from composers, who are often unreachable, whereas composers on their part complain of the too rare performing chances.¹

Before he became a video artist, Paik was a composer and performer of music, who was seriously engaged in the discourses of modern music and formulated his own philosophy of music. The above quote demonstrates that he was still very much aware of his identity as a musical composer and performer even after he started working with video as an art medium. Elsewhere in the essay, Paik even mentions video as a helpful vehicle for musicians and composers: "Often there is no way to make the notation of music except by recording the whole performance. [...] Video tape will be a useful supplement for their sketchy instructions."² It is clear that the accumulation of his experience and knowledge as a musician guided Paik to arrive at his discovery of the new art medium: video.

Nam June Paik had a keen interest in music and musicology at an early age. His high school friends remember that Paik made Korean folksong-style melodies for well-known Korean poems when they were teenagers.³ Paik majored in History of Arts and Aesthetics at Tokyo University and received his bachelor's degree with a thesis

on Arnold Schönberg's music.⁴ Subsequently, Paik moved to Germany in 1956 to further his study of German/Austrian musical aesthetics. Around this time, he formulated his own critical stance toward the arts, especially to Western music. He later wrote:

In Tokyo University, with strict academism soaked with admiration of Western culture, our job was not to judge but to learn the Western music. Therefore if we would encounter a piece which would not impress us, both teacher and students would rather say "I don't understand this one," than to say "This is a bad piece." . . . Therefore the accumulation of mediocrity at the Lembach Gallery⁵ finally killed my heavy minority complex about Asian composers, and it led me to think that "I can compose at least as badly as they do."⁶

Despite his expansive study of German musical aesthetics, Paik realized his thirst for a better understanding of musical composition was yet to be quenched. From this time forward, Paik's incessant quest as a musician continued as he persistently asked the fundamental question: *what is music?* In his search for an answer to this question, Paik developed music of his own invention, which eventually extended to his video art production. While his definition of music and the composer's role evolved with time, there were two constants, according to the composer and musicologist Michael Laurence Nyman's apt analysis. One is that the artist's role was to oppose accepted social norms and do "abnormal things," and set about destroying hidebound social/musical values. The other is that, for Paik, music was a sequence of events in time.⁷

I believe Nyman's analysis comes from an interview Paik had with the German periodical *Magnum* in 1963. When asked what music is, Paik replied, "If I may

suggest a compromise, I will say that music is ‘*zeitabfolge*’ (an arrangement of events in time).”⁸ Temporality plays a key role in Paik’s understanding of music. As art historian Benjamin Buchloh pointed out, Paik saw the historical avant-garde as a significant point of reference for his own understanding of the arts.⁹ An example that demonstrates Paik’s affinity to modernist art tactics is an object called *Urmusik* (Primitive Music) (1961, Plate 1-1). *Urmusik* is a wooden crate that functions as a primitive resonance box, a musical instrument of Paik’s creation: strings are stretched across the top, and attached to the side is a rotatable tin with a ball rolling about inside it. It is not difficult to see its kinship with Pablo Picasso’s *Guitar* (1913, Plate 1-2). This construction made a radical leap from the sculptural tradition of modeling (carving or molding) to a new technique of assemblage, an important inspiration for the Dada artists. In Paik’s case, though, it is assembled from found objects and retains its functionality as a musical instrument that the viewer can actually touch and make sound with. This is a noteworthy difference from Picasso’s *Guitar* in that it acquires a time element for those who manipulate the device. Paik also wrote in numerous essays that he learned to expand his own philosophy of music by studying Futurism, the early 20th century avant-garde movement.¹⁰ For Paik, it was only natural to take sound and noise into the realm of music.

For the Futurist artists who upheld the beauty of technology and glorified the mobility it brought, the temporal aspect of music was primary. Kineticism challenged the static nature of art. Unlike traditional painters and sculptors who dealt with non-stationary mediums, playwrights, filmmakers and musicians had at

their disposal the unfolding of time.¹¹ In the center of Paik's pursuit of a fresh new definition of music lay his obsession with the concept of temporality.

John Cage's Influence

Before delving into Nam June Paik's manipulation of the notion of time, it is essential to understand Paik's exploration of the duration of time in relation to John Cage's philosophy. Before he met Cage, Paik's composition was in line with Schönbergian serialism¹² (Plate 1-3). Paik began attending the Summer Courses of New Music at Darmstadt (Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik) in 1957, and met John Cage the following year. Paik already knew of Cage through the music critic Kuniharu Akiyama and from his teacher Yoshio Nomura at Tokyo University.¹³ Paik learned from them that Cage was interested in Zen Buddhism and was incorporating Zen ideas for his music,¹⁴ but Paik was skeptical about how well a Westerner could understand an Asian philosophy. For this reason, he was not particularly intrigued by Cage until he attended a concert by Cage at Darmstadt in 1958. Paik remembered that night as having changed him: "I went to see the music with a very cynical mind, to see what Americans would do with Oriental heritage. In the middle of the concert, slowly, slowly, I got turned on. At the end of the concert I was a completely different man."¹⁵ As Edith Decker-Phillips pointed out, the change in Paik was caused by his insight that the boredom he felt listening to Cage's music was parallel with the teaching of Zen Buddhism.¹⁶ Cage was fascinated by the idea that, for Buddhists, all things have equal value, and he applied that idea to his perception of music. Categories like dissonance and noise had become meaningless, and the line between

sound and musical sound had disappeared; every sound had become musical sound. It was John Cage who took the Futurist Luigi Russolo's impulse to its logical conclusion when Cage proposed that even "any sound can be used in music"¹⁷; there need not even be any intention to make music for there to be music, only the willingness to attune to aural phenomena. For Cage, sounds no longer required any authorial or intentional organization—just someone to listen. This new definition of music served to extend the range of sounds that could qualify as musical raw material as far as possible into the audible world. In addition, Cage's anarchic ideas led him to introduce chance operation to eliminate the composer's taste and will in organizing sound.¹⁸ Cage was convinced that everything must be able to develop freely, and so should his scores.

When he attended Cage's concert and lectures at Darmstadt in 1958, Paik realized that what Cage had learned from Zen Buddhism was going to bring a breakthrough for his own method of musical composition. Paik's enthusiasm is evident from his published report of the 1958 Darmstadt Summer Courses of New Music. Paik wrote that the leading ideas for that year's courses came from John Cage, and that the rest was practically meaningless. Paik explained Cage's working methods in detail:

This eccentric American composer [...] applies different methods for different pieces, and has unique ways of notations. To take his *Music for Piano* for example, he notices marks on paper made from its manufacturing process, and expands them by drawing in pencil. What happens next is to choose a few of the marks by chance operation. [...] Then lay a sheet of music staff paper over it.

The marks on the first piece are seen through the staff paper and that's where the musical notes are to be. Again by chance operation, he adds

sharps and flats to finish off his composition. The pianist who plays it improvises the length and tone of some notes. I asked Cage, “You can compose twenty pieces a day in this way. How do you decide which one to play then?” [...] “It doesn’t matter.” This response is of course not a result of irresponsible abandonment. It is beautiful compliance with nature. It is to discard self and reach the golden mean of the heaven.¹⁹

The passage indicates that Paik was impressed by Cage’s ability to find incidental methods of composition such as chance operation through Asian philosophies, and how it helped Cage emulate nature’s ways of operation and forgo the composer’s will in his music. Not only did Paik relay to the Korean readers how to employ chance operation, he also explained that in this way one is able to comply with “heaven’s will”—his own Zen interpretation of Cage’s music.

In the same article, Paik stated that, although he felt exhausted after experiencing the “non-art,” some of the audience laughed at Cage’s music for its nothingness. Cage, he wrote, just smiled like a wise “Zen Buddhist monk” when he was ridiculed. Zen (禪) emphasizes the attainment of enlightenment and the personal expression of direct insight without relying on written doctrines (the production of the author’s will). According to the Zen teachings, men are already originally enlightened and only need to realize it through individual experiences.²⁰ The experiences do not need to be anything special but just ordinary moments of one’s life, with the emphasis on *suchness*, reality just-as-it-is, as expressed in daily life.²¹ The audience at Darmstadt was expecting something extraordinary from Cage, so when he showcased his Zen-inspired performances, people did not fully understand and simply felt bored. Cage was well-aware of this and responded with an aphorism: “If

something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all but very interesting.”²²

For Paik, the idea of boredom he learned from Cage was the key to his conception of the notion of time in art. In a letter he wrote on May 2, 1959, to Wolfgang Steinecke, the director of Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music, Paik explained that he had abandoned his serial music piece *Shilla Hyangga* because he had discovered “a new style,” an antithesis to “twelve-tone mannerism.” He had composed a piece called *Hommage a Cage*, and in his letter to Steinecke, he proposed that its second movement would be “as bo-o-ring as possible: like Proust, Palestrina, Zen, Gregorian Chant, missa, Parisian café, life, sex and [a] dog staring into the distance.”²³ Paik reveals that he equates Zen’s emphasis on mundaneness with boredom while implying his interest in the temporal experience with his mentions of Proust and Gregorian chant in Catholic masses. In a later essay Paik discussed this relationship between boredom and his exploration of the notion of time in his art. He wrote:

Boredom itself is far from being a negative quality. It is rather a sign of aristocracy in Asia. [...] [T]his confusion (that boredom is bad) stems from the confusion about INPUT-time and OUTPUT-time. [...] [Those who are confused] insist that INPUT-time and OUTPUT-time be equal. However in our real life—say, live life—the relationship of input-time and output-time is much more complex—e.g., in some extreme situations or in dreams our whole life can be experienced as a flashback compressed into a split second (the survivors from air crashes or ski accidents tell of it often) ... or, as in the example of Proust, he can brood over a brief childhood experience practically all of one’s life in the isolation of a cork-lined room. That means, certain input-time can be extended or compressed in output-time at will.²⁴

This interest in the perception of time in real life, and how it is be stretched and condensed in the human mind is at the core of Paik's music in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Music is Time-based; I'll Challenge the Concept of Time in Music

In an²⁵ interview with Gottfried Michael Koenig, Paik said that "a musician would primarily be interested in the question, "How can I deal with time?"²⁶ Indeed, Paik explored various ways to "deal with time," ranging from obsession with real-time, to duration, to extending time to infinity. Paik was conscious of the temporal aspect of music at the same time he was actively engaged in the discussion of how to challenge the very concept of time. Although Paik is not discussed in her book, it is suitable to apply the ideas from art historian Pamela Lee's seminal book on the obsession with time in art of the 1960s, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s*, to examine Paik's manipulation of time. Lee explores what she calls a phobia of time and duration in the reception of 1960s art. As she wrote in her preface:

Indeed to survey the art and art criticism of the sixties is to encounter a pervasive anxiety that I describe as *chronophobic*: as registering an almost obsessional uneasiness with time and its measure. Cutting across movements, mediums, and genres, the chronophobic impulse suggests an insistent struggle with time, the will of both artists and critics either to master its passage, to still its acceleration, or to give form to its changing conditions. [...] this preoccupation illuminates the emergence of new communications and information technologies in the postwar era, offering a historical prelude to our contemporary fixations on time within digital culture...²⁷

From Michael Fried's polemic 1967 response to Minimalist art in his essay "Art and Objecthood," Lee teases out that the present, for Fried, constituted the only

possible time frame of the art experience, a theory that negated the cultural environment of the period.²⁸ Paik wrote about how to reconstruct the time one perceives, which may differ from the physical idea of time:

[I]n order to preserve the purity of information or experience, some video artists refuse to edit or to change the time-structure of performances or happenstance. In other words, they insist that INPUT-time and OUTPUT-time be equal. However in our real life -say, live life- the relationship of input-time and output-time is much more complex—e.g., in some extreme situations or in dreams our whole life can be experienced as a flashback compressed into a split second (the survivors from air crashes or ski accidents tell of it often) . . . or, as in the example of Proust, one can brood over a brief childhood experience practically all of one's life in the isolation of a cork-lined room. That means, *certain input-time can be extended or compressed in output-time at will.*"²⁹ (my emphasis)

Paik became fascinated with the idea of extending a durational period into infinity, and he conducted interesting experiments with the duration of time. To address his ambition to control duration at his will, he wrote: "the longest record of music (4 days in Wagner's 'Ring') is not broken for 50 years, although every record is renewed every years. [...] I will renew this record and compose a music [...] continuing for more than 99 years, because I think physical music is the next station after absurd music."³⁰ Paik carried this idea out in 1965 by composing a musical score that lasts for eternity called *Symphony No. 5* (Plate 1-3).³¹ Paik's introduction to this score begins: "The eternity-cult is the longest disease of mankind. The MOMENT one plays is as important as the piece he plays." What follows is his direction of what musical notes to play at certain hours of the day, i.e., 1 a.m., 2 a.m., 3 a.m., 5:23 a.m., 12 p.m. ... etc., during the first year of its performance. It articulates what should be done in the second year, third year, etc., until it reaches the 5221st

year, 9997999th year, and eventually infinity marks appear coupled with the direction to “play this sound [there is musical notation for it] for the duration of 1964 years [long] without pause.” At the end of the score is a quote from the French poet Arthur Rimbaud’s “L’Éternité”: “Elle est retrouvée!/ Quoi? - L’Éternité./ C’est la mer allée/ Avec le soleil.”³²

Paik did not stop at simply prolonging a musical note into infinity; he went a step further to confuse the concept with sequencing. A prime example is *Zen for Head* [Plate 1-4], which was first performed in 1961.³³ In this highly celebrated performance, Paik dips his head in ink mixed with tomato juice, and using his body as a brush, he drags himself along the entire length of a 13-foot-long sheet of paper to draw a line. In order to fully understand its implications, it is crucial to comprehend its relation to La Monte Young’s *Composition 1960 #7*. By Michael Nyman’s account, La Monte Young “seemed to spend the whole of 1961 trying to perfect the art of drawing straight lines.”³⁴ These works would ultimately result in Young’s durational music—one note held for hours or days or months or years. In *Composition 1960 #7*, the instructions are to hold a note for an unspecified “long time.” The note here would hold as a constant to the straight lines of the musical staff, an indicator for pitch, extended nearly to infinity. Young’s performance score for Robert Morris’s *1960 #10* takes the instructions a step further by including the source of the line itself, saying, “draw a straight line,” an instruction that effectively translates the durational sound into a manual instruction, followed by “and follow it.” When Paik performed *Zen for Head* by dipping his head in ink and dragging it along the length of a roll of paper, he pressed the logic of Young’s score to its logical

conclusion. His response to “draw a straight line and follow it” essentially folds the second part of the instruction into the first. Clearly, the assumed reading would have the line drawn and then followed, which Paik transforms into simultaneous actions. He draws and follows the line at the same time. Not only did Paik experiment with duration of time in his music, he also addressed how he could manipulate time so that it was potentially non-sequential within a musical score.³⁵

Time, Cybernetics and Spacetime

Almost simultaneously with his composing music with the duration of infinity, Nam June Paik started to see the idea of infinite duration in the light of contemporary science. In her seminal book *Chronophobia*, that deals with artistic strategies in 1960s to manipulate temporality, Pamela Lee argues that emerging artists of the 1960s went beyond the modernist concepts of time (linearity) and music through cybernetics.³⁶ This mathematics/physics concept of “communication and control,” as introduced by Norbert Wiener in his book *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*, had a great influence over many artists during the 1960s.³⁷ Artists in particular were inspired by the idea of cybernetics as a system that is not a closed entity but open to feedback. The cybernetic subject is equally a producer and receiver; the input and output are interactive. Upon the basis of this interactivity, cybernetics is both proleptic (the user can predict the system’s future form) and recursive (the future effect loops back to impact the current structure).³⁸ A cybernetic system folds together the past, present and future in a continuous loop; it is potentially endless. Paik was interested and engaged in the discourse of cybernetics. However, he did not stop at simply using this theory to explain the

endless aspect of his music but went a step farther to expand the realm of time into spacetime, another way for him to restructure the human experience and perception of time. Lee's main thesis is to point out that this idea of perpetuating the presentness is at the very core of the "chronophobia (obsession with the concept of time)" of 1960s art, in which Paik actively participated.

In 1966, in a short essay on cybernetics theory, Paik wrote:

Newton's physics is the mechanics of the power and the unconciliatory two party system, in which the strong win over the weak. But in the 1920s a German genius put a tiny third party (grid) between these two mighty poles (cathode and anode) in a vacuum tube, thus enabling the weak to win over the strong for the first time in human history...³⁹

Although it may seem curious for Paik to be mentioning Newton, it is significant that Sir Isaac Newton wrote, "All things are placed in time as to succession; and in space as to order of situation."⁴⁰ In other words, absolute time determines the sequence of events and absolute space their location in Modern Western thought. This modern theory of time imagined an empty, homogeneous and infinite line, independent of the relative space of individual objects and relationships in the material world. If we see this as the classic space-versus-time axis, we would realize that what Paik is writing about is a rupture in this Newtonian understanding of a homogeneous relation of time and space.⁴¹

The "German genius of the 1920s," to whom Paik refers is Albert Einstein, as the concept of spacetime was a part of his celebrated Theory of Relativity. As art historian Hannah Higgins explains in her seminal essay about Nam June Paik's comprehension of spacetime, in Einstein's modeling we see the familiar space and

time axes [Plate], but the speed of light, shown here as a cone, is constant, no matter the speed of the person traveling alongside it. This constancy of lightspeed creates wrinkles, irregularities, in the rate of time for the object in motion or at rest—we see these irregularities as a wobble in the “worldline” of a given moving object. If lightspeed is constant, in other words, then time must be able to stretch and shrink in relation to space if spacetime is to remain a constant number.⁴²

After meeting Cage and his pupils in 1958, Paik became interested in the idea of moving to New York City. Paik had a growing awareness of Cage’s circle of artistic colleagues and the new scientific concepts being researched in the United States. In the aftermath of the Second World War, new art centers were being established outside of Europe, and the United States, with its financial advantages, was determined to create art institutions nurturing new experiments in art, as Bauhaus had done. Several Bauhaus artists and architects actually fled their home countries to immigrate to the United States. A number converged outside of Asheville, North Carolina, at Black Mountain College, where they participated in a series of experimental summer arts programs between 1948 and 1952. To cite a few examples for the purpose of this study, Robert Rauschenberg produced his all-white canvases, John Cage developed the basis for his musical form of silence, and Buckminster Fuller built his first geodesic dome.

Fuller shared his knowledge of relativity theory with his colleagues at Black Mountain. Fuller’s idea that the “universe of total man experience [...] may not be simultaneously recollected and reconsidered, but may be subdivided into a plurality

of locally tunable event foci or ‘points’”⁴³ is fundamentally derived from his understanding of an event-interval view of the world, a concept consistent with relativity theory. Rauschenberg’s white paintings—blank canvas that shows no formal content but only the shadows and articles of dust collected on it [Plate 1-5]—in the early 1950s could be described in similar terms as “a plurality of locally tunable event points.” To quote Hermann Minkowsky, Einstein’s teacher and subsequent collaborator, who unpacked some of the most important implications of Einstein’s special theory: “Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality.”⁴⁴ By this account, Rauschenberg’s white canvas becomes more real than any other manmade images: it makes a display of the “mere shadows” of things in the physical space as shadows, while allowing for the reality of their constant transformation in spacetime. John Cage’s famous 4’ 33” of silence (1952) [Plate 1-6] must be understood in the same vein. 4’ 33” is a three-movement composition originally made for any instrument (or combination of instruments). The score instructs the performer not to play the instrument during the entire duration of the piece, throughout the three movements, which, for the first performance, were divided into thirty seconds for the first, two minutes and twenty-three seconds for the second, and one minute and forty seconds for the third.⁴⁵ The piece purports to consist of the sounds of the environment that the listeners hear while it is being performed. 4’33” became for Cage the epitome of his idea that any sounds may constitute music.⁴⁶ He wrote about the significant similarity between the ways in which the white paintings provide a context for the flow of shadows

created by their environment and 4' 33" provides a context for the acoustic contexts of everyday life. Cage wrote, "There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. Sounds occur whether intended or not."⁴⁷ Just as one cannot simply call the white canvases pure space, the silence of 4'33" is not pure sound organized in (linear) time. Rather, each work addresses spacetime as a sensory-perceptual experience. As Higgins points out, if in Rauschenberg we see spacetime as space (a painting), Cage's piece might be an occasion for hearing spacetime as time (a piece of music).⁴⁸

After learning of the Black Mountain College artists from Cage, Nam June Paik was receptive to the work he observed and produced his own reaction to it. One of Paik's most celebrated responses to Cage's performance and lectures at Darmstadt is his first film, *Zen for Film* [Plate 1-7], which he presented as his musical composition for the 1964 Fluxus festival held at the Technische Hochschule, in Aachen, Germany. *Zen for Film* is an eight-minute-long imageless (clear) film that runs through the projector in an endless loop. Cultural critic Heike Helfert described it: "The resulting projected image shows a surface illuminated by a bright light, occasionally altered by the appearance of scratches and dust particles in the surface of the damaged film material." Helfert goes on to analyze the piece, writing, "As an analogy to John Cage, who included silence as a non-sound in his music, Paik uses the emptiness of the image for his art."⁴⁹ Paik's expression of the spacetime concept in *Zen for Film* reflects his understanding of Rauschenberg's and Cage's art; *Zen for Film* is the

epitome of Paik's efforts to represent spacetime in his music by commenting on both spacetime as space and spacetime as time.

Adding a Spatial Dimension to Music

The western music as a whole can be grasped as a many faceted dialectic struggle between TIME (sound) and SPACE (notation and other various visual elements).⁵⁰

Expanding his concept of time into the realm of spacetime led Paik to see the spatial aspect of music, and it seems clear from this quote that, for Paik, the notion of space as an axis was as integral as time in his art. John Cage's musical experiments surely taught Paik the usage of space in relation to time sequence in music and inspired him. Cage's *HPSCHD* (pronounced harpsichord), a musical piece written between 1967 and 1969 had its premiere performance on May 16, 1969, at the Assembly Hall of the Urbana Campus, University of Illinois. It was a highly immersive multimedia experience, featuring musicians such as David Tudor and Philip Corner playing harpsichords whose sounds were captured and amplified, along with numerous tapes with computer-generated sounds played through multiple monaural tape players, and an array of projectors showing a wide range of slides and movies on a number of screens installed throughout the theater. The performance, which lasted for about five hours, was not intended as a static, unidirectional event, but rather as a hypnotic environment where the audience was encouraged to "move in and out of the building, around the Hall, and through the performing area."⁵¹ Paik wrote that *HPSCHD* "aims at creating a micro-tonal, and macro-spatial multimedia environment, where visitors can move freely to create their own composition,"⁵² noting the spatial dimension as an arena where the temporal aspect of music unfolds.

Before John Cage stimulated Paik to see the spatial facet of music, Karlheinz Stockhausen, an electronic musician and a colleague of Paik's, also was exploring the world of spatial music. In a 1961 essay on his work-in-progress titled *Symphony for the 20 Rooms*, Paik wrote,

“One evening in the summer of 1960, I visited Karlheinz Stockhausen... In his yet finished [sic] piece “Paare” (pairs), there is neither a fixed beginning nor ending. The audience may come into the concert hall and leave freely. And come back. All the while the music continues, for 5-6 hours or more until the last listener has left.”⁵³

Paik goes on to confess that the idea of Stockhausen's spatial scheme impressed him but did not convince him, because at that time he was seeking “the last consummate second.” Paik claims that he had been working for half a year in order to “fix” this on tape, but in vain. Paik realized his categorical obsession with the time element alone was not helping him find the answer in his quest to know “what is music?” At that point, he decided to write scores that expanded his music into the spatial realm using what he had learned from his study of spacetime.

In the next series of my compositions — “Symphony for 20 Rooms”, “Etude platonique No.2 for 10 Rooms and a Beautiful Girl (as tedious as possible)”, “Read Music – Do It Yourself (Answers to La Monte Young)”, “Bagatelle americaine”, “Half-time” — I will try to demonstrate that the relative IS the absolute. Do I need to also demonstrate that the absolute IS the relative?⁵⁴

This infinite loop of the two ostensible opposites—the absolute and the relative—substantiating each other is exactly what Paik learned from cybernetics studies and relevant Newtonian physics. Paik had described the Newtonian universe in terms of power relationships, meaning he understood the relationship between space and time and the shaping of history as logically continuous: “Newton's physics is the

mechanics of power and the unconciliatory two-party system, in which the strong win over the weak.”⁵⁵ His understanding of the non-homogenous relationship between time and space and the productivity of the results of its amusingly irregular relationship propelled Paik to incorporate the spatial dimension as one of the axes of his own music.

Symphony for 20 Rooms, although never realized as an actual event, can provide insight as to how the element of space played out in Paik’s musical compositions. *Symphony for 20 Rooms*, first sketched in the spring of 1961 in Cologne, was perhaps a model for the *Exposition of Music* exhibition of 1963 in Vienna, in which Paik showcased his television art installed in multiple rooms where viewers were invited to freely move from one to another and interact with exhibits inside. However, it can also be viewed as a genuine symphony in its all-inclusiveness and formal/spatial organization.⁵⁶ The published score of the *Symphony for 20 Rooms* (Plate 1-8) shows each of sixteen rooms as having its own music, visuals, and/or dynamic lighting, and occasionally heat and smell (except for one room which appears to be empty). Eight of the rooms have one or more tape-replay machines. Five rooms invite direct audience participation: one has a piano to be played; another has found objects such as stones, lumps of wood, etc., to be touched and generally explored and enjoyed for their sound and feel; three are so-called “fortissimo cellars.” Of these, one contains a heavily amplified metal plate, which spectators may use to make sounds, and another is brightly illuminated with a “sine-wave torture” tuned to the highest possible pitch and volume, a vinegar-scented stink bomb, a very strong wind, and a very hot stove. The fifth room that invites audience participation is for a “free

orchestra made up of bad players” that has a hundred whistles, a hundred toys, and a number of orchestral instruments at their disposal. Other rooms are filled with live sounds, including a series of simultaneous readings of texts by pairs of authors such as Montaigne, Pascal, Thoreau, as well as detective stories, etc.; uncut tape recordings like a “playground at a joyful school at Paris Montmartre which Mary Bauermeister mentioned” as Paik specified; and simple or more elaborate tape collages. By contrast, an “Andante sostenuto espressivo (Traumerei)” room has three sound sources: in the top left corner three radios (pianissimo) are “tuned to delicate noises” and there are two tape machines, one with the “main voice” playing sentimental French, American, Korean, Japanese songs and some Tchaikovsky, and the other replaying twenty-five sounds ranging from a “lonely train station sound (noise and announcement),” through Chopin, Mendelssohn, an early Korean folksong-style composition of Paik’s, and to distort radio noise, a heartbeat and the ticking of a watch.⁵⁷ *Symphony for 20 Rooms* is thus a compilation of Paik’s early musical endeavors, with sound collage intertwined with the idea of audience interactivity, made possible by Paik’s expansion of the idea of temporality of music: that time can become space.

It is perhaps ironic to note a line from Richard Wagner’s 1882 opera, *Parsifal*: “Zum Raum wird hier die Zeit,” meaning that time becomes space.⁵⁸ Almost eight decades later, Nam June Paik’s endeavors to constantly renew the definition of music would bring full meaning to this statement. Paik was referring to his ongoing quest when he wrote: “I am tired of renewing the form of music. Serial or aleatoric, graphic or

five lines, instrumental or belcanto [sic], screaming or action, tape or live. . . I ~~hope~~ must renew the ontological form of music.”⁵⁹ Indeed, he did not stop his efforts to renew the ontological form of music. By doing so, he was able to upend the conventional view of music as time-based art, to declare that time is related to space in physical terms, and subsequently that music is an exploration of the irregular relationship between space and time. As Paik demonstrates in *Symphony for 20 Rooms*, consideration of music’s spatial dimension brings the visual into the limelight. In the subsequent chapters, I will delve into the visual aspects of Paik’s music, namely his action music and visualization of music.

¹ Nam June Paik, "Expanded Education for the Paper-less Society," in Judson Rosebush, ed., *Nam June Paik: Video 'n' Videology 1959-1973* (Syracuse: Everson Museum of Art, 1974), 31. (This book does not have page numbers. For the convenience's sake, I've assigned numbers from Foreword as page 1.)

² Ibid., "Event and Action Music: Often there Is no way to make the notation of music except by recording the whole performance. Stockhausen and Ligeti suggested a film of my action music pieces (1959-61) to be used as a score, which I rejected for a philosophical reason. However, for many events music (which exists now in every country in the world) such as Brecht, Chiari, Christiansen, Hidalgo, Kosugi, Patterson, Schnebel, Shiommi, Tone, Welin, k0, Young, videotape will be a useful supplement for their sketchy instructions." p.33

³ Jae Woong Suh, "Nam June in Middle School," in Thomas Kellein and Toni Stoss, *Nam June Paik: Video Time Video Space* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 71.

In 1994, Nam June Paik reconstructed his compositions from 1947-48. Paik left a note on the cover page, "Early Songs composed in Seoul 1947/48." The scores are notated in a conventional style (on staff paper) and are melodious traditional folk songs. Nam June Paik Art Center Archive.

⁴ "I knew a bit about Bartok, Stravinsky, Hindemith, and Sebelius then already. They were all great composers who were the highlight of the mid-20th century's music. But the one who truly arrested my interest was Arnold Schönberg due to his extreme radicalism. Perhaps I had been fascinated by him even before I heard of his music because of the reviews saying how rebellious and challenging his music was. Infatuation with radicalism reflects the ambience of the society (Seoul) that was expecting a great change in the war time.

"In 1947, the only score by Schönberg I could come by was *Sonata for Piano No. 31*. Just like Richard Leaky could reconstruct the origin of humanity from a few pieces of Lucy's bones, I imagined the whole universe of my 'mentor' Schönberg from that single score. It took me more than two years for me to persuade the shop master of "Baek-jo" (name of a record shop in Seoul) to finally let me listen to *Op. 6 (Verklarte Nacht Op. 6)*, the only Schönberg album in Korea then. At the very first exposure, however, I knew instantly that he was nothing but a Wagnerian quatsch.

[...] On one afternoon of 1951, I was at Kamakura, Japan listening to the radio out of boredom. There a soprano was singing as if crying in a sensual voice, creating such cacophony. I whispered to myself that it had to be a Schönberg piece. It was *Pierrot Lunaire* (Op. 21, 1912). I feel as if I still 'see' the brown plastic radio box in front of me now." Nam June Paik, "Pensee a 59ans," in Kellein and Stoss, *Nam June Paik: Video Time Video Space*, 68.

"Korean peninsula in 1948 was a region where the Avant-Garde fever was in effect. Many composers in Korea understood the original styles of Bartok, Hindemith, Stravinsky, Schönberg and the like. There was thirst for the new ideas. The pervasiveness of Marxism was one symptom of it. That's when I discovered a modern music book that had a whole chapter dedicated to Schönberg's music..."; Nam June Paik, "La Memoire mediatique", printed in Irmeline Lebeer and Edith Decker, *From a Horse to Christo* (말에서 크리스토까지), (Young-in: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2010), 24

⁵ A venue for contemporary new music by European composers.

⁶ Nam June Paik, "Erinnerung an Muenchen" (typescript), Letter to Hugh Davis dated July 15, 1972, collection of Hugh Davis; see also Caleb Kelly, ed., *Sound (Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art)* (Boston: MIT Press, 2011), 176.

⁷ Michael Nyman, "Nam June Paik, Composer," in John Hanhardt, *Nam June Paik* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982), 83.

⁸ "Interview: Die Fluxus-Leute," *Magnum* (April 1963), reprinted in Lee, *Return of Nam June Paik*, 243

⁹ See section on Fluxus in Hal Foster et al., eds. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, vol. 2 (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 456-63.

¹⁰ In a drawing Paik made for Wolf Vostell's *Decollage*, Paik declared Futurism as one of the main influences on modern music. Nam June Paik, "Fluxus Island," *Decollage*, no. 4 (1963). Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Museum of Modern Art Archive, New York.

Futurism is responsible for the experimental music of the latter half of the century. The Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo inaugurated avant-garadism in music when he questioned the nature of musical materiality. In his famous 1913 manifesto, "Art of Noises" (he also published a book under the same title in 1916), he proposed that, because musical sound was self-referential and thereby had no link with the world and its sounds, music had stood still and become self-occupied while everything that happened in life all around it had energetically advanced into the modern world. His stated goal was to open up music to all sounds, from the "sudden and delicate noises" of nature and rural settings, to the brutal bruises of the modern factory and city. But he also stated, both in his writings and in the way he designed his class of *intonaurumori*, the noise-intoning instruments he built to play his music, that he wished to avoid imitation of these worldly sounds. It is hard to have it both ways, to invoke the sounds of the world—by phonographically reproducing them, by bringing the actual sound-making device or event into the concert hall, or by simulating them through other means—without to some degree being imitative. Thus Russolo's embrace of "all sounds" became conditional upon the tenacious requisites of musical signification. If he had chosen to create a compositional and performance practice based upon the tension between sound and musical sound, he might have created an autonomous *art of noises*. Instead, his "great renovation of music" became one that would not confound the representational bounds of what stood as musical sound. For the next a few decades, it represented the strategy propelling or repelling composers with avant-garde motives.

¹¹ Juliet Koss, *Modernism after Wagner* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2010), Introduction.

¹² Paik wrote *String Quartet* in 1955-57, and *Shilla Hyangga* (신라향가) in 1957-58. The scores are available at Nam June Paik Art Center Archive.

¹³ Calvin Tomkins, "Profiles: Video Visionary", *New Yorker*, (May 5, 1975), 47; Decker-Philips, *Paik Video*, 25.

¹⁴ Since 1947 Cage had been studying Zen Buddhism with the Japanese philosopher Daisetz Taitaro Suzuki, who was teaching at Columbia University in New York City.

¹⁵ From Nam June Paik's own narration from his videotape *Nam June Paik Edited for Television* (1975).

¹⁶ Decker-Philips, *Paik Video*, 25.

¹⁷ In an interview with Richard Kostelanetz, Cage said he believed small sounds like ants marching in the grass should also be taken into the realm of music. Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 126

¹⁸ In early 1951, Cage acquired a copy of the *I Ching*—a Chinese classic text, which describes a symbol system used to identify order in chance events. The *I Ching* is commonly used for divination, but for Cage it became a tool to compose using chance. To compose a piece of music, Cage would come up with questions to ask the *I Ching*, and then use the book in much the same way as it is used for divination. For Cage, this meant "imitating nature in its manner of operation." James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 97.

Although Cage had used chance on a few earlier occasions, most notably in the third movement of his *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* (1950–51), the *I Ching* opened new possibilities in this field for him. The first results of the new approach were *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* for 12 radio receivers, and *Music of Changes* for piano (both 1951).

¹⁹ Nam June Paik, "Music Deconstructed: Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik," *Jayou Shinmun*, (January 6-7, 1959), Nam June Paik Art Center Archive

²⁰ Morten Schlütter, *How Zen became Zen. The Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 3.

²¹ Albert Low, *Zen and the Sutras* (Boston: Turtle Publishing, 2000).

²² Written in 1956. in John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 93

²³ Nam June Paik, letter to Dr. Steinecke, May 2, 1959. Decker, *Niederschriften eines Kulturnomaden*, 51–53.

²⁴ "Video cryptographie," (1979), published in Catherine Ikam, *Dispositif pour un parcours video* (Paris: Centre de Pompidou, 1980), its translation reprinted in Decker, *From a Horse to Christo*, 183

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²⁶ Herzogenrath, *Nam June Paik: Werke 1946-1976, Musik-Fluxus-Video*, 52.

²⁷ Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Boston: MIT Press, 2004), viii.

²⁸ Ibid., viii.

See also, Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood", *Artforum* 5 (June 1967), 12-23.

²⁹ Nam June Paik "Input Time and Output Time," in Ira Schreider and Beryl Korot, eds., *Videoart: Anthology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 98; Paik believed he learned this idea from John Cage in as early as 1958 at the Darmstadt Summer Music Course. Paik explained "Cage wanted to make electronic music that is playable in either three seconds or 30 hours, without a definite retrieval time."

³⁰ Nam June Paik, "New Ontology of Music, Postmusic-the monthly review of the University for Avant-Garde Hinduism," written in 1963, in Rosebush, ed., *Nam June Paik: Videan' Videology 1959-1973*, 3.

³¹ The score is now at Whitney Museum of American Art. See 1982 exhibition catalogue, Hanhardt, *Nam June Paik*, 84-85.

³² This quotation from Rimbaud's "Une saison en enfer" (A Season in Hell) is the first verse of the poem "L'Eternite," and can be translated as: "It is found again. What? - Eternity. It is the sea gone off With the sun."

³³ Karlheinz Stockhausen invited Paik to make a 7-minute appearance in the performances of his piece *Originale* (Originals), which was first presented in Cologne on October 26, 1961. Paik varied his music action from performance to performance, but *Simple* and *Zen for Head* were basic elements which Paik later presented outside the scope of *Originale*, for instance, in 1962 at the festival Fluxus Festspiele neuester Musik, Wiesbaden.

Zen for Head enacted La Monte Young's 1960 performance score *Draw a straight line and follow it*. *Zen for Head* also was inspired by Cage and Robert Rauschenberg's collaboration *Automobile Tire Print* (1951), a direct "print" made by rolling a tire covered with black house paint over sheets of typewriter paper. Both Paik and Rauschenberg were referring to the tradition of Asian ink painting, with its scroll format and emphasis on the immediacy of the encounter between ink and paper.

³⁴ Nyman, "Nam June Paik, composer," Hanhardt, *Nam June Paik*, 80. Paik and Young both studied with Karlheinz Stockhausen in Darmstadt during the summer program of 1958.

³⁵ See Hannah Higgins, "The Oldest TV: Time and Spacetime in the Early Work of Nam June Paik," in Youngchul Lee, ed., *Shifting Perspectives and the Notion of Time* (Yong-in: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2009), 10-23. I am greatly indebted to this essay for my understanding of Paik's evolution regarding the concept of time. The essay is devoted to dissecting the ideas behind Paik's television art; however, these ideas are crucial for me to see how they shaped Paik's philosophy of music.

³⁶ Lee, *Chronophobia*, 64-70, 245

³⁷ Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1950; Second Edition Revised, Doubleday Anchor, 1954.)

³⁸ Lee, *Chronophobia*, 116-17.

³⁹ Nam June Paik, "Cyberated Art," in Randall Packer and Ken Jordan, eds., *Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 41.

⁴⁰ Sir Isaac Newton, *Principia*, trans. Andrew Mott (1687; Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), 15.

⁴¹ H. Higgins, "The Oldest TV: Time and Spacetime in the Early Work of Nam June Paik." *Shifting Perspectives and the Notion of Time*, 13.

⁴² Higgins, *ibid*, 14

⁴³ Buckminster Fuller, 'Introduction' to *Omni-Directional Halo*, p. 95.

⁴⁴ Quoted in J. B. Kennedy, *Space, Time, and Einstein: An Introduction* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 50. See also H. Higgins, "The Oldest TV: Time and Spacetime in the Early Work of Nam June Paik." *Shifting Perspectives and the Notion of Time*, 33.

⁴⁵ William Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), 69.

⁴⁶ Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with John Cage* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 69-71.

⁴⁷ John Cage, "Experimental Music," in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*, 8.

⁴⁸ H. Higgins, *ibid*, 20.

⁴⁹ Heike Helfert, see <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/zen-for-film>. See also Edith Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*, 26-27. Edith Decker-Phillip laid out a similar line of thought for understanding *Zen for Film* in relation to 4'33". Her groundbreaking book on Nam June Paik's oeuvre dates back to 1984, although the English version was not published until 2010. After almost three decades, some of her arguments leave margin for updates and rebuttals.

⁵⁰ Nam June Paik, "Expanded Education for the Paper-less Society," in Rosebush, ed., *Nam June Paik: Video 'n' Videology 1959-1973*, 34

⁵¹ John Cage and Lejaren Hiller, Program for the premiere performance of *HPSCHD* at University of Illinois (1969).

⁵² Sook-kyung Lee and Suzanne Rennert ed., *Nam June Paik*, (Liverpool: Tate Publishing, 2011) 124

⁵³ "As I mentioned before: it was Stockhausen's idea to let the listeners leave and come into the concert hall freely. John Cage wanted to compose his "Music Walk" for two rooms of the

“Galerie 22” in Dusseldorf where the listeners were supposed to move freely from one room to the other. When the piece was first performed there, this was not realizable. With respect and appreciation I note Cage’s and Stockhausen’s priority in this respect; although art is often a bastard the parents of which we do not know.” With the last statement, It seems Paik is setting his music aside from Cage’s and Stockhausen’s. From Nam June Paik, “To the *Symphony for 20 Rooms*” (1961), La Monte Young and Jackson McGraw ed., *An Anthology*, (Unknown Publisher-Artist Book, 1963), Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Museum of Modern Art Archive.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Nam June Paik, “Cyberated Art,” in Randall Packer and Ken Jordan, eds., *Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality*, 41.

⁵⁶ It is also a symphony in the etymological sense of “many things sounding together,” though this cannot be the reason why Paik generally adopted the term symphony, since his *First Symphony* and *Fifth Symphony*, according to Nyman, deal with individual sounds or sound events heard in succession—or, most probably, not heard at all, apart from the possible rustling of the paper sheet in the *Young Penis Symphony*. . . . The Sixth (completed and actually performed in 1980) also presents individual sounds in sequence, as each string player plays a single note (occasionally two), and then passes the only bow used in the work to the next player, who plays his note (or notes), and then passes the bow to the next player, who... etc. Nyman, “Nam June Paik, Composer,” in John Hanhardt, *Nam June Paik* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982), 83

⁵⁷ Nam June Paik, “My Symphonies” (1975) in Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn ed., *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde 1966-1973*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 75.

⁵⁸ Richard Wagner completed *Parsifal* in 1882. I borrowed the concept from Parsifal but I do not mean to imply Paik was aware of this idea in Parsifal and its relation to his own music.

⁵⁹ Nam June Paik, “Postmusic” *The Monthly Review of the University for Avant-garde Hinduism!* (1963) The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archive Museum of Modern Art.

Chapter 2. Visualizing Actions of Music: Performance as an Extension of Music

Nam June Paik was introduced to the United States as a founding member of Fluxus, which led to his ready reception as a performance artist. Although Paik was participating and performing consciously as a composer of a new kind of music, this association with Fluxus was at the core of the misunderstanding of Paik as a visual/performance artist. Most of the American members of Fluxus (such as Allan Kaprow, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Charlotte Moorman, etc.) were concerned with the idea of happenings and related performance and were already known for such by the time Paik came to the United States. However, as Fluxus artist Ken Friedman pointed out, Fluxus had its foundation in music.¹ Fluxus was musical not only because many of its members were composers but also in the sense that many Fluxus works were designed as scores for their events. Scores for Fluxus events had visual elements, as the performance is a temporal art that requires its spatial scheme.²

Paik was not the first member of Fluxus who paid attention to the visual/ spatial aspect of musical scores. John Cage's influence over the members of Fluxus led the young artists to create art that oscillated between visual and sound art. In an interview with the American avant-garde scholar Richard Kostelanetz, Cage revealed his thoughts on the mutual influence between music and visual art:

I think that this is a realization in music that is different from what music was at the turn of the century. It was then that music so greatly influenced the visual arts as to be the excuse for the turn toward abstraction ... I think that much of what is being done since 1950 in music is a response to music ... So that music's response now to the

visual arts of the first half of the century produces a situation to which the visual arts must reply.”³

Art historian Dieter Daniels has concluded that John Cage and New Music were initially translated from the visual arts into an open work synaesthesiac concept for music (as discussed in the introduction, the basis for synaesthesiac art was the influence of music over abstract art), which, in turn, was used to derive models for a process- and media-based form in the visual arts, especially for Fluxus artists in the late 1950s and 1960s.⁴ Musicologist Simon Shaw Miller concludes that Fluxus artists inherited from John Cage the idea that “the performance, or concert occasion, is to be viewed as a complex *field* of activities—visual, textual, and sonorous—one that, among other things, understands the concept of music as a *discourse*.”⁵ Therefore it is not surprising that Paik’s action music performances were more visually compelling than traditional music concerts, which were primarily acoustic experiences.

In a broader context of musicology, Wagnerian concept *Gesamkunstwerk* functions as a reference point for Cage and Fluxus artists. As discussed in the introduction, in the early history of performance (e.g., Greek plays), all the genres were interwoven, and it was only later that the arts divided into different genres. Fluxus paid attention to this rupture and reintegrated artistic practices for their events. So with the *Gesamkunstwerk* idea adopted, Fluxus artists practiced their art that bridged between various mediums. However, they did not simply reproduce what Wagner had preached and devised a concept developed from *Gesamkunstwerk*: intermedia.

Intermedia is a term coined by Dick Higgins, that refers to interdisciplinary practices of his colleague Fluxus artists. Higgins wrote on intermedia that:

"Part of the reason that Duchamp's objects are fascinating while Picasso's voice is fading is that the Duchamp pieces are truly between media, between sculpture and something else, while a Picasso is readily classifiable as a painted ornament. Similarly, by invading the land between collage and photography, the German John Heartfield produced the [sic.] what are probably the greatest graphics of our century[...]"⁶

It differs from *Gesamkunstwerk* in that its focus is the occurrence between genres of art, instead of amalgamating various genres. Shaw-Miller points out "the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach [like intermedia] offers a methodology that is willing to consider the fields that operate between and through disciplines,"⁷ indicating the "field" where visual, sonorous, and tactile activities simultaneously take place. Not only does this connection corrects the preexisting reception of Paik as performance artist in a visual art's sense, but also addresses the complex relation between Paik's position as a musician to demonstrate his action music and his involvement with Fluxus leading to his ties with visual art. .

Paik already was creating musical performances that went beyond acoustic music, such as *Etude for Piano* before Fluxus was founded in 1962. On one evening in 1960, inside artist Mary Bauermeister's Cologne studio, Paik played some Chopin on the piano, then broke up the piano as he began frantically weeping. He got up and threw himself on the innards of another eviscerated piano that lay scattered on the floor, and then picked up a pair of scissors and walked over to where John Cage, David Tudor and Karlheinz Stockhausen were sitting in the front row. He took Cage's jacket off and started to slash away at his shirt with the scissors and also cut his

necktie off. After doing so, he poured a bottle of shampoo over Cage's head and then over David Tudor's [Plate 2-1].

Except for the brief playing of Chopin, there is not so much music in its traditional sense in *Etude for Piano*, but mostly gestures and actions. For that reason, one can easily overlook the fact that many performances by Nam June Paik were in fact realizations of his musical compositions. His “deeds,” the visual stimuli that were shown to the audience, were meant to be an integral part of his music. Most likely with *Etude for Piano* in mind, he wrote:

In the normal concert,
the sounds move, the audience sit down.
in my so said action music,
the sounds, etc., move, the audience is attacked by me.⁸

Etude for Piano does have a very distinctive history to prove its musical lineage. In 1958, John Cage presented his “Music Walk” in Jean-Pierre Wilhelm's Galerie 22, Düsseldorf, and the following year, Paik staged his first action music in the same venue. Titled *Hommage à John Cage, Music for Tapes and Piano*, it was dedicated to the artist who inspired him. In a letter Paik wrote to Wolfgang Steinecke, the director of Darmstadt Summer School of Music, Paik outlined three main elements of his homage that were inspired by Cage: that the sublime of music is inseparable from the ugly and the comic; that the most mundane can essentially be a significant part of his music; and that a musician must have his own philosophy.⁹

Upon its first performance of *Hommage à John Cage* at Galerie Parnass 22, a local newspaper gave an account of the concert:

On top of the ladder sat the poet Helms, reading the score from a roll of toilet paper. Beneath him were the instruments: two pianos (one of which had no keys), tape recorders, tin cans with stones, a toy car, a plastic train, an egg, a pane of glass, a bottle holding the stump of a candle, and a music box. The audience was urged to be careful: Stand back, please! The cries of twenty distressed virgins rang out from the tapes, then came the WDR news broadcast. (...) In the fourth movement, the finale furioso, Paik ran about like a madman, sawed through the piano strings with a kitchen knife and then overturned the whole thing. Pianoforte est morte. The applause was never-ending.¹⁰

Paik repeated the action a number of times in Mary Bauermeister's Cologne studio in 1960. When John Cage and David Tudor came to see the performance in October, Paik made an improvisation on *Hommage à John Cage* to include Cage in his performance, during which he cut off Cage's tie then washed his hair with shampoo. Later he changed the title to what we now know as *Etude for Piano*.

Despite his history as a musician, Paik was often seen as a performance artist in the early 1960s in the context of emerging new media such as happenings and performance art. However, Paik's action music must be differentiated from the performance art of the 1960s. As Heinz-Klaus Metzger pointed out, one must remember the origin of Paik's art is music, and that, "Only when it is not seen as performance art, theater, demonstration or the like, but steadfast perceived as music can Paik's composition be understood for what it is: music that breaks with the concept of music."¹¹ From that perspective, the visual demonstration of actions in his performances must be understood as an extension of his music.

Nam June Paik's Visual Deeds: Action Music

Following the successful performance of *Etude for Piano*, Paik continued to compose action music. Karlheinz Stockhausen, who was sitting next to Cage and Tudor at the

historic performance of *Etude for Piano*, witnessed firsthand the significance of Paik's action music to overcome the limitations of traditional music. He invited Paik to make a seven-minute appearance in the performances of his own piece, *Originale*, to be presented in Cologne in October 1961. *Originale* is a musical theater piece that Hubertus Durek, manager, and his stage director, Carlheinz Caspari, of the Theater am Dom in Cologne, asked Stockhausen and Mary Bauermeister to create, in which actors, painters and other types of artists, or just simply authentic (originale) people would appear with spontaneous actions. Stockhausen and Bauermeister made sure that Nam June Paik, the eccentric who "attacked" John Cage during the actions in his previous year's music, would perform other radical deeds of music. From an account of the theater piece written by Hans Helm, one of the participating artists, one can reconstruct what *Originale* was like:

Every evening, Paik took a bath splashing water from an old pail that looked like from our grandmother's time or postwar period, with his dark colored suit on. Then he played excerpts of *Moonlight Sonata*, *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, and such like a good piano student, and moved through the narrow aisles of the seats towards the columns in the back, then threw rice and peas and so forth to the audience. While David Tudor and Christoph Caskel played the piano and the percussion under Karlheinz Stockhausen's direction and connected with the carefully listening audience, Mary Bauermeister shot colorful designs that reminded one of the inner structure of a snail's housing from a light projector in my direction. A few actors [...] made a mockery of the ruling class. In the meantime I read, sang, and made loud noise [...].¹²

Among the various eclectic performances by a number of "authentic" artists, Paik's improvisations stood out as one of the most esoteric yet arresting. Although *Originale* was directed by Stockhausen and Baumeister, stage director Caspari

estimated Paik's role as much larger than just that of a mere participant/actor's. In his essay, "Paik's part in *Originale*," Caspari praised Paik's involvement: "Paik was [one of the few] who was capable of aleatorik music (chance music) that is free from fixed scores [...] He could move effortlessly in an unfixed structure. He was able to improvise any given situation into a fun play."¹³ Caspari also addressed his frustration with Stockhausen. He explained that his main point of the theater piece was to bring intuitive improvisations, to rediscover the "ludus," or playfulness, of theater that had long been forgotten and suppressed, and to let go of the fixations in stage art. Stockhausen, however, had a hard time forgoing his directorship; the cast and staff had tried to help Stockhausen give up his obsession with fixed scores, but in vain.¹⁴

Paik varied his actions for each performance, but *Simple* [Plates 2-2, 2-3] and *Zen for Head* were so well-received by the audience that Paik later presented them outside the scope of *Originale*.¹⁵ Paik's instructions for *Simple* read: "1. throw peas into auditorium, 2. smear shaving cream on body, 3. put rice in the shaving cream, 4. slowly unwind a roll of paper, 5. go into a pool of water, 6. come back and play some piano with baby's dummy in mouth."¹⁶ Except for the additional deployment of tapes with Paik's typical acoustic montage of sounds such as women's screams, radio news broadcasts, noises made by children, scraps of classical music, and electronic sounds, his performance was much more about the visual aspect of the action than an acoustic experience. However Paik's approach to *Originale* was definitely that of a musician, which is evident from his own writing. In an essay he wrote for the Japanese audience about *Originale*, Paik addresses his actions as

drastic measures to break free from the highly organized serialism in music through indeterminism and chance operations. He also characterized the simultaneous actions by multiple artists on stage as a “collage of personalities,” which is symbolic of a deconstruction of structural forms.¹⁷

Paik was convinced that the violent actions he made for his New Music was a great contribution to the development of music in a broader perspective. In the same year, Paik published another conceptual score of his action music titled *Development Aid*. Here Paik gave his tactics to “attack an opera performance” and explained his rationale:

“[...] When a couple (a soprano and a tenor)
Embraces each other
In pianissimo.
When they sing a sweet tune of a lovers’ duet
and/or
When a well-built and heroic-looking tenor
lets out a nice and long ‘do’ in a sharp voice
and/or
When a glamorous prima donna
lets out a long breath of painful aria
--bows with a charming smile
in an applause with bravas,--
then breathes again,

Right then you silently get up from your seat,
Walk straight towards the door
Over the seats
And exit (as directed).

This is not to ruin the performance
But willingly contributing to
The most beautiful moment
Of the Western Opera!”¹⁸

Other scores Nam June Paik wrote for action music also show that it is rooted in his musical philosophy while trying to transgress the traditional format of music. In *Bagatelle Americaine*, composed in 1962, Paik began the performance of the first section, titled “Platon Etude No.1,” by playing Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata*, symbolic of traditional music, and then continued to play it with a stringless violin and a hammerless piano, to challenge the boundaries of conventional music concerts.¹⁹ In the second section, “Suite for Transistor,” Paik first set the mood for the action:

The first movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 1 is just finished.
The conductor of the orchestra wipes sweat off his forehead.
The horn player shakes off the saliva in the instrument.
The audience, deeply moved, whispers and makes excited noise.²⁰

The next direction is for an action to defy the authority of the solemnness:

So,
Now,
So when the conductor lifts up the baton, the orchestra gets ready
For the next movement.

Just then,
Take a seat—careful not to make loud noise—
And turn on the transistor. And turn it off in a few seconds.

If you didn’t have the guts,
Turn the radio on from a remote control. [...] ²¹

In the same sense, he also wrote about grand gestures to contest the hegemony of conventionalism in music, such as to saw a piano into three pieces and “hand the first piece as if it were Mussolini,” and “burn the second one as if it were Hitler,” and “decide the last piece’s fate in the people’s court with no attorney but

prosecutors.”²² Paik is alluding to the execution of authoritarian conventional music, which is essentially the very quest he pursued for his own music. Probably the most violent action Paik composed and performed was *One for Violin Solo* [Plate 2-4].²³ Over the course of five minutes, under dim lighting, Paik very slowly and intently lifts up a violin and then smashes it with one bang on the table in front of him. As he swings the instrument down, the lights go up in the auditorium. As a result, the suspense of the performance intensifies, and the audience is confronted with a visceral visual of the violin being broken into small sharp pieces and flying threateningly in all directions. Not only was this a gestural demolition of conventional music, but also it had musical alliances with multiple musicians of the time. Paik recalled in an interview:

“I think that the influence of La Monte Young and George Brecht is very strong in this piece, stronger than John Cage. La Monte Young sent me a composition for piano that impressed me very much. His butterfly action and other pieces he wrote had a very fresh quality. [...] La Monte Young was more important because he was a musician, a student of Cage’s. John Cage inspired him to write his music.”²⁴

I have discussed viewing Paik’s action music as a manifestation of his philosophy of music. However, the reception of his music as happening/performance was not entirely groundless, for Paik was first introduced in the U.S. as a co-founder of Fluxus. In fact, he did not mind that categorization, and he could point the finger at himself for any confusion. In the interview just mentioned, he explained how he became involved in the first Fluxus performance. After *Originale*, he wanted to concentrate on object making for the 1963 Wuppertal exhibition. Hansjörg Utzerath, a famous director at the Kammerspiele theater, Düsseldorf, asked Jean-Pierre

Wilhelm for ideas for fresh stage works. Wilhelm recommended Paik's action music pieces and asked Paik to compose a few to show in this venue. But Paik did not have enough repertory at hand for the one-man show Wilhelm had in mind, and Paik had to decline the offer due to time constraints. Paik suggested he write one piece and invite his artist friends, so that they could have a group show consisting of each one's performance. This became the historic first Fluxus performance, *Neo-Dada in der Musik*, at the Kammerspiele, which took place on June 16, 1962.

Paik as a composer for collaborating performers

Nam June Paik was now composing performance pieces for other people, and while doing so, he was able to extend his ideas about music. By this time, Paik had embarked on a new idea to revolutionize musicology in yet another way, which was to infuse sexuality—a centuries-old taboo for music—into the realm of music. In 1963, Paik wrote: "INDETERMINISM and VARIABILITY is the very UNDERDEVELOPED parameter in optical art, although this has been the central problem in music for the last 10 years (just as parameter SEX is very underdeveloped in music, as opposed to literature and optical art)."²⁵ The idea to develop sexuality as an ingredient for his New Music was something he had already been exploring. His first idea was to find a woman willing to perform a striptease in a piece called *Etude for Pianoforte*, but he could not find one, not even a prostitute.²⁶ In 1962, after trying unsuccessfully to hire a female pianist to play Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* in the nude for his piece titled *Sonata quasi una fantasia*, he did it himself.²⁷

In a 1962 issue of Wolf Vostell's *Décollage*, Paik published his score titled *Young Penis Symphony*, to be performed by ten male artists.

Young Penis Symphony

.....curtain up.....

the audience sees only a huge piece of white paper stretched across the whole stage mouth, from the ceiling to the floor and from the left to the right wing.

Behind this paper, on the stage, stand ten young men.....ready.

.....after a while.....

The first sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The second sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The third sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The fourth sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The fifth sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The sixth sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The seventh sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The eighth sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The ninth sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

The tenth sticks his penis out through the paper to the audience. ...

N.J.Paik²⁸

The score [Plate 2-5] has little to do with sonic experience but rather is an action music plan, describing how the piece should be presented, and clearly showing his tendency to converge sound and visual as a total work of art. Then he adds the shock of presenting human sexual organs, which is not expected within the boundaries of traditional music concerts. This idea to transgress the parameters of musical conventions through erotica developed further with female collaborators Paik invited to perform his scores.

Paik had difficulty finding a female artist who would agree to take the role of the performer in a musical piece that involved sexuality. Fortunately for Paik, he started to find colleagues within Fluxus who understood the historic significance of erotica

in music. Alison Knowles, one of the founding members of Fluxus, consented to perform a score Paik wrote for her, titled *Chronicle of a Beautiful Paintress (dedicated to Alison Knowles)*. Knowles was knowledgeable enough about the progressiveness of Paik's music to take on this highly sexualized piece. The score directed Knowles to stain a series of national flags with her menstrual blood and then present them at a gallery while nude.²⁹ Unlike *Chronicle of a Beautiful Paintress*, the next score Paik wrote for Knowles, *Serenade for Alison*, was actually performed. At Monet Gallery in Amsterdam, as a part of a Fluxus Happening concert [Plate 2-6], Knowles wore multiple transistor radios around her neck, letting the glaring sounds from each compete with one another. Paik directed Knowles to appear wearing layers of panties and then to perform a striptease. He went even further by asking her to interact with audience members by taking off her underwear and putting it on people in the audience, specifically the snobbish music critics, to dishonor them, which was his way of awakening the conventionalists to understand his intentions.³⁰

Knowles started to feel uncomfortable with Paik's scores. After performing *Serenade for Alison* twice (with her own modifications), she decided it was not for her and withdrew. "[The piece] made me isolate the femaleness of my body and present it as if it was especially important," Knowles later said. "[Emphasizing] the 'objectness' of woman was not my way."³¹ Paik was frustrated to find so little help in pursuing unique progressive music through sexuality, calling the absence of sex from classical music a "lamentable historical blunder."³²

It was not until June 1964, when he came to New York, that his hope of finding a female collaborator would be realized. Paik learned that Charlotte Moorman, an avant-garde cellist who was well aware of Fluxus and Cage, was looking for him. She arranged a meeting on June 12 to tell Paik that she was planning a production of Karlheinz Stockhausen's musical theater piece *Originale* and wanted Paik in the cast. He accepted the offer in exchange for her accepting his invitation to be his musical partner and perform a striptease in a work he would write for her. Moorman hesitated briefly but then agreed.³³ When Paik met Moorman, she was already very comfortable with risk and improvisation.³⁴ Paik later acknowledged his luck in finding "maybe the one and only [woman] in the whole world" who "would play classical music semi-nude in public."³⁵

Their first collaboration was a piece called *Pop Sonata*, which was premiered at the Philadelphia College of Art on October 14, 1964.³⁶ The score directed Moorman to remove her jewelry, clothes, and several pairs of panties, one piece at a time, alternating the striptease with phrases from Johann Sebastian Bach's *Suite no. 3 in C Major for Unaccompanied Cello*. As he later said, "I take very clichéd classical music and put some salt and pepper in," to subvert the conventions in music.³⁷ *Pop Sonata* (later renamed *Sonata for Adults Only*) is based closely on *Serenade for Alison*, but with a different ending. After Moorman had lost all but her underwear, she lay on the floor and placed her cello on top of her as if the instrument were her lover.³⁸ With its success in infusing sexuality and subverting the conventions of music, Paik decided to write another erotic number for Moorman in 1965. This time the score involved a modification to a work in Moorman's repertoire, which she frequently

played: John Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player*. Cage's score gives precise directions for sounds to be made on the strings and body of the instrument, but also includes a line for other sounds, which can be produced in any way the musician chooses. Moorman chose to fire a gun, pop balloons, rub a microphone in gravel and bang on a trashcan lid, among other things. In Paik's version, Paik himself became the instrument. At a certain point of the piece, Paik appeared shirtless and knelt between Moorman's legs, stretching a single cello string taut across the length of his bare back [Plate 2-7]. While Paik was facing her chest, Moorman thumped, slapped, and bowed the string he held.³⁹ Cage later commented on the piece, saying, "Paik's involvement with sex, introducing it into music, does not conduce towards sounds being sounds. It confuses matters. I am sure that his performance of my *26'1.1499" for a String Player* is not faithful to the notation, that the liberties taken are in favor of actions rather than sound events in time."⁴⁰ Clearly, Paik had departed from Cage's notations.

Paik's second full composition for Moorman debuted in February of 1965, under the title *Variations on a theme by Saint-Saens*. The piece is based on "The Swan," from Camille Saint-Saens's *Carnival of the Animals*. The formal structure is quite similar to that of *Pop Sonata*. He chose a standard cello repertoire piece and challenged it by adding an absurd intervention. In this piece, Moorman was directed to play the first several measures of "The Swan," then put down her cello and walk across the stage to an oil drum that was filled with water. There was a ladder for her to climb up to the opening of the drum. Moorman was to perch at the top, like a swan, put herself feet first into the water, and come out [Plate 2-8]. She would then return to her chair

to finish the music. Paik's score coupled traditional music with the visual: with Moorman playing "The Swan" and becoming the swan.

Paik and Moorman performed *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saens* at multiple concerts on their 1965 European tour, with the piece undergoing some changes along the way. At the American Center in Paris, Paik made an impromptu adjustment after the dress Moorman was to wear for the night's performance was lost. Paik improvised a new dress, wrapping Moorman in clear cellophane he had found backstage.⁴¹ As a result, Moorman was essentially nude for this performance [Plate 2-9]. For their next performance, at the University of Frankfurt's Studentenhaus, Paik made another adjustment to increase the sexual connotation. Moorman appeared in the cellophane gown again, and this time, she sat on the back of a male assistant who knelt on his hands and knees. A second male assistant (the artist Bazon Brock) lay at her feet and took the cello's endpin into his mouth [Plate 2-10].⁴² The image recalls another example of Paik's conversion of multiple sensory stimuli for his music, his sexually charged 1963 performance of *Listening to Music Through the Mouth* in which he played records on an old gramophone while holding the phonograph tone arm in his mouth [Plate 2-11]. Moorman's collaboration, however, allowed Paik's musical score to make the point more provocatively, with a female body in contact with a male one.

In 1966, Rene Block, whose gallery promoted the avant-garde artists, invited Paik and Moorman to Berlin for a series of concerts he was organizing. On July 17, Paik debuted his modification of *Vexations*, by Erik Satie, an eccentric work for piano

with a single musical motif that is to be repeated 840 times.⁴³ Its full performance is supposed to take about 18 hours. When Moorman came on for her second shift, she was directed to be topless.⁴⁴ As much as the repetition of the musical motif was hypnotizing, Moorman's partial nudity served as its visual counterpart of hypnosis. It should be noted that Paik's sexualization of Satie's *Vexations* must have been made fully conscious of how it would affect Cage. Cage was not only an enthusiastic admirer of Satie, he had discovered the score for *Vexation*, which had never been published, and arranged its premiere in New York in 1963. Paik had respect for Cage, yet he felt it necessary to transgress Cage's musical achievements and ideas in order to make advances in the history of music. This intervention for *Vexation* Paik hoped was a gesture by Paik to make a progress in New Music by infusing the erotic visual experience into preexisting music.

Moorman's performances inspired Paik to come up with a philosophical agenda for his next project: "Passing through East Germany's gray buildings and quiet car-less streets, [I] pondered, 'If there is progress in society and progression in mathematics, then why not the progressive progression in music???' Thus the *Opera Sextronique* was born."⁴⁵ Two days after the Satie performance, Paik wrote a score titled *Cello Sonata Opus 69*, which served as a preliminary sketch for *Opera Sextronique*, a revised and expanded version, which was performed in New York on February 9, 1967 [Plate 2-12]. Moorman sat topless with her cello, playing a variation of the German Christmas carol "Stille Nacht heilige Nacht," alternating different masks over her face. During the performance, Paik and Moorman were arrested for performing topless and convicted for lewd conduct, which ultimately made their

collaboration widely known in the United States.⁴⁶ By the time the performance of *Opera Sextronique* was banned by the New York police for nudity, Paik was knowledgeable about television circuitry, and devised an alternate version of the piece concealing Moorman's breasts behind tiny television tubes encased in plastic boxes. While Moorman was playing the cello, Paik taped the audience with a video camera, feeding the live images to the monitors on her TV bra [Plate 2-13]. As Moorman became both the musician and electronic instrument. Paik retitled the piece *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*. This piece marked a major shift for Paik between the dynamics of music and the visual. With the incorporation with the television-video technology into his musical collaboration with Charlotte Moorman, Paik was able to make the historic leap from the genre of music to the visual world of video art.

¹ *Electronic superhighway: Travels with Nam June Paik*, Carl Solway Gallery (Cincinnati: 1995), 95-96. See also, Ken Friedman, "Behavioral Artifacts: What is an Artifact? Or Who Does it?," *Artifact*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2007): 8. For an excellent compendium and analysis of music as a primary aspect of Fluxus, see Simon Shaw Miller, *Visual Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002). For general reading on Fluxus, see for example, Joan Rothfuss, Elizabeth Armstrong, et al., *In the Spirit of Fluxus* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993).

² The use of text scores led the Fluxus artists to the visual side of music, which was already a prevalent among the musician members within the group who learned from Cage such as Nam June Paik, La Monte Young and George Brecht. To take Brecht for example, in his so-called incidental music, music sound and noise is the by-product of action, in contrast to conventional music performances where sound is the result of musical action. Another example is La Monte Young's *Piano Piece for David Tudor No. 2* (1960) In this piece, he reconstructs what Cage did with 4'33" from raising the keyboard cover of the piano to closing it again, only with no noise in this case. "Open the keyboard over without making, from the operation, any sound that is audible to you. Try as many times as you like. The piece is over when you succeed or when you decide to stop trying. It is not necessary to explain to the audience. Simply do what you do and, when the piece is over, indicate it in the customary way." The result here is that by suppressing the sound, the score actually promotes the visual. The audience is forced to 'see' what prompts the beginning of the performance and 'witness' the end of the piece when the artist bows as a custom.

³ Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 218.

⁴ Sook-kyung Lee and Suzanne Rennert ed., *Nam June Paik*, (Liverpool: Tate Publishing, 2011), 111.

⁵ Simon Shaw Miller, *Visual Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 209. Shaw-Miller sees Fluxus as a reaction to/against Modernism. On the performative aspect of Fluxus art, he wrote, "This view, which stands diametrically opposed to modernist references to music as a paradigm of autonomy, introduces the concept of music to evaluation on a number of levels, both performatively and textually, not the least of which is the visual. Music is to be understood as an umbrella under which Fluxus presented many of its ideas."

⁶ Dick Higgins, "Intermedia", *Something Else Newsletter* 1, 1966, reprinted in Randal Packer and Ken Jordan ed., *Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 2001), 30

⁷ Shaw Miller, *Visual Deeds*, 211

⁸ Nam June Paik, "Postmusic" *The Monthly Review of the University for Avant-garde Hinduism!* (1963) The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archive Museum of Modern Art.

⁹ Paik described about three movements totaling approximately 10 minutes: 'First set is: "Marcel Duchamp + Dostoyevsky = K. Schwitters, Variété = Variation," to prove his point about the beauty of the ugly and humor. Second set is "As boring as possible; like Proust, Palestrina, Zen, Gregorian chant, Missa, Parisian café, life, sex and dog staring into the distance." Third set is "more philosophy of music than philosophical music. Quotes from Artaud and Rimbaud resound from the loudspeakers." Paik's letter to Steinecke dated May 2nd, 1959. Printed in Lee, *The Return of Nam June Paik*, 153. Original is located at Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt (Darmstadt International Music Institute); a copy is at Nam June Paik Art Center.

¹⁰ "Ein Müllmann und ein Eierwerfer," *Düsseldorf Nachrichten*, November 14, 1959. Reprinted in Wulf Herzogenrath and Sabine Maria Schmidt ed., *Nam June Paik, Fluxus Video*, (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen, 1999), 27.

¹¹ Heinz-Klaus Metzger, "Paik's Musik als Musik," in Wulf Herzogenrath ed., *Nam June Paik: Werk 1946-76, Music-Fluxus-Video*, (Köln: Kolnischer Verein, 1976), 34

¹² Hans Helms, "The Original *Originale*, Cologne 1955-65 as a temporary center of music," in Wulf Herzogenrath, ed., *Cologne The Center of 1960's Art: From Happening to Art Market* (Cologne: Cologne Art Association, 1966), 136.

¹³ Artus C. Caspari, "Paik's Part in *Originale*," (written in February 1999) printed in Klaus Bussmann and Florian Matzner eds., *Nam June Paik: Eine Database*, (Ostfildern: Edition Cantz, 1993), 106

¹⁴ Ibid. See also Nam June Paik, "Photo Report on Stockhausen: his recent theater piece *Originale*," *Ongaku Geiziutsu*, May 1961. In this essay for a Japanese music journal, Paik mentioned that a critic had written a harsh review of *Originale* due to its lack of indeterminism. In a defense of Stockhausen, Paik explained that, for Stockhausen, "intensity is as important as variability in music," and that the balance between the two paradoxical elements is not easily achievable for untrained actors.

¹⁵ For instance it was a popular repertoire in 1962 at the festival 'Fluxus Festspiele neuester Musik', Wiesbaden.

¹⁶ Lee, *Return of Nam June Paik*, 169

¹⁷ Nam June Paik, "Photo Report on Stockhausen: his recent theater piece *Originale*."

¹⁸ Nam June Paik, "Development Aid," in Wolf Vostell, ed., *Décollage*, no. 1, 1962. Sohm Archiv, Stuttgart.

¹⁹ Nam June Paik, *Bagatelle Americaine*, 1962, Sohm Archiv, Stuttgart. This conceptual score was not performed.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Premiered at the Düsseldorf Kammerspiele (a small theater with intimate atmosphere) on June 16, 1962 in the course of Neo-Dada in der Musik.

²⁴ Interview by Justin Hoffman in *Nam June Paik: Exposition of Music Electronic Television Revisited* (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 2009), 87-88.

²⁵ Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION" (March 1963, Galerie Parnass)', *fLuxus cc fiVe ThReE*, June 1964, section 2. p. 4. New York Public Library

²⁶ Calvin Tomkins, "Video Visionary,' *New Yorker*, vol. 51, no. 11 (May 5, 1975), 58.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ In Wolf Vostell ed., *Décollage*, no. 2, 1962. Vostell was an avant-garde painter, sculptor and video artist, with close ties to Fluxus.

²⁹ In Wolf Vostell ed., *Décollage*, no.3, 1963

Chronicle of a Beautiful Paintress (dedicated to Alison Knowles)

"In January, stain the American flag with your own monthly blood.
 In February, stain the Burmese flag with your own monthly blood.
 In March, stain the Chinese flag with your own monthly blood.
 In April, stain the Ethiopian flag with your own monthly blood.
 In May, stain the French flag with your own monthly blood.
 In June, stain the German flag with your own monthly blood.
 In July, stain the Hungarian flag with your own monthly blood.
 In August, stain the Irish flag with your own monthly blood.
 In September, stain the Jamaican flag with your own monthly blood.
 In October, stain the Congolese flag with your own monthly blood.
 In November, stain the Mongolian flag with your own monthly blood.
 In December, stain the Russian flag with your own monthly blood.

In an irregular month, stain the Ugandese or the Kathangese or the Yugoslavian or the United Arab Republic flag with your own monthly blood.

(continue)

Afterwards, expose them and yourself in a beautiful gallery."

Nam June Paik

Alison Knowles

³⁰ In Ibid.

Serenade for Alison

"Take off a pair of yellow panties, and put them on the wall.

Take off a pair of white-lace panties, and look at the audience through them.
 Take off a pair of red panties, and put them in the vest pocket of a gentleman.
 Take off a pair of light-blue panties, and wipe the sweat off the forehead of an old gentleman.
 Take off a pair of violet panties, and pull them over the head of a snob.
 Take off a pair of nylon panties, and stuff them in the mouth of a music critic.
 Take off a pair of black-lace panties, and stuff them in the mouth of the second music critic.
 Take off a pair of blood-stained panties, and stuff them in the mouth of the worst music critic.
 Take off a pair of green panties, and make an omelette-surprise with them.
 (continue)
 If possible, show them that you have no more panties on.”
 Nam June Paik

In *Decollage*, no.3, 1963; Antje von Graevenitz, “About Boundaries(경계들에 관하여- 공연예술과 구상예술의 한 중심테마에 대해, 중점 2 뒤셀도르프 6-년대 초안들),” *70th Birthday of Joseph Beuys 1970-91*(요셉보이스의 70 번 생일), (Düsseldorf: Düsseldorf Art Museum, 1991), 82. Reprinted in Korean in Lee, *Return of Paik*, 191

³¹ Lee and Rennert, eds., *Nam June Paik*, 146.

³² Nam June Paik, “Charlotte Moorman Chance and Necessity,” 1. This undated unpublished typescript is in Emily Harvey Foundation Archives, New York.

³³ Charlotte Moorman and the New York Avantgarde (1980), a video interview by Fred Stern, DVD in Charlotte Moorman Archives, Northwestern Univ, Evanston, Ill.

³⁴ “Moorman had been deeply involved with New Music already for three years when she met Paik. Since 1961 she had studied and performed open-form works by Earle Brown, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Barney Childs, Philip Corner, Morton Feldman and La Monte Young. She was infatuated by what she called the ‘sensuous, emotional aesthetic and almost mystical power’ of their music, and liberated by the performative freedom that required her to make choices – sometimes in the moment of performance – about the nature, duration and sequence of the sounds she played. She also had ventured into the downtown avant-garde scene, taking part in Yoko Ono’s first major solo concert, Works by Yoko Ono, and Judson Dance Theater’s Concert #4. In early 1963, she had even begun to organize concerts: for a YAMDAY event at Hardware Poet’s Playhouse, she convinced a group of skeptical classical musicians to play a program of works by 13 contemporary composers, including Edgar Varese, Luciano Berio, Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Christian Wolff, Philip Corner, and John Cage. Notes for a lecture given on WBAI radio on 2 Nov 1963.” Quoted from Lee and Rennert, eds., *Nam June Paik*, 147.

³⁵ Nam June Paik, “Charlotte Moorman Chance and Necessity,” 5.

³⁶ They repeated the performance at the New School in New York City on Jan. 8, 1965.

³⁷ Nam June Paik, interview by Jason Weiss, in *EAR Magazine of New Music*, 9, no. 5/10, no.1 (Fall 1985), 37.

³⁸ Paul Turok, "More Torso than Playing," *New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 9, 1965; Mike McGrady, "Going to a Happening," *Newsday*, Jan. 30, 1965; Art historian Joan Rothfuss remarked on this piece as "a live sex show for the cultivated classes in which a woman holds her lover/cello between her thighs, expertly caresses it as she strips to the music of Bach, and consummates their ecstatic artistic union on the floor, in classic missionary position," to analyze the reasoning behind the highly sexualized presentation of the musical score. Lee and Rennert, eds., *Nam June Paik*, 147

³⁹ Note that it was a reversal of the traditional gender roles embedded in the relationship of a player and his instrument. (I intend to write a paper to address Paik's feminist agenda in his collaboration with female artists.)

⁴⁰ John Cage, "More on Paik," Richard Koselanetz, *John Cage Writer: Selected Texts* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 156.

⁴¹ Nam June Paik, "Charlotte Moorman Chance and Necessity," 3

⁴² Adam Seide, 'Zartlich brutal' in Nam June Paik: Fluxus/Video, exh cat, Kunsthalle Bremen (Bremen 1999), 97

⁴³ John Cage was responsible for the first publication of this virtually unknown and never-published piece by Satie. "The manuscript of *Vexations* ... was first reproduced in *Contrepoints*, vol. 6 (1949), opposite p. 8, in an editorial by Fred Goldbeck... The first American publication of the piece was in *Art News Annual*, vol. 27 (1958), to which Cage contributed an article on Satie.... : for more on the history of Satie's *Vexation*, See Gavin Bryars, "Vexations and its Performers," orig. publ in *Contact*, no. 26 (Spring 1983): 12-20. Reprinted in *JEMS: An Online Journal of Experimental Music Studies* (upload date, March 17, 2004). See <http://www.users.waitrose.com/~chobbs/Bryars.html>

⁴⁴ Nam June Paik, "The Confession of a "Topless"(?) Cellist," undated typescript, 4, Charlotte Moorman Archive.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ The performance of *Opera Sextronique* in New York took place at the 41st Street Theater on February 9, 1967. *Opera Sextronique* had four movements during which Moorman performed topless. In the first movement, she wore a bikini bra while playing Massenet's *Elegy*. For the second movement of *International Lullaby* by Max Matthews, she played the cello with various objects in nothing but a long black skirt. Before Moorman got the movements composed by Takehisa Kosugi "organic music" and Nam June Paik's "Variations on a theme by Saint Saens," the concert was interrupted by police officers who arrested Moorman. She was tried and found guilty on charges of indecent exposure, which was later overturned. Regarding the prosecution and ruling, Moorman criticized the court for its decision to support censorship in art, and subsequently persecuting the artists without understanding their artistic agenda. In February 1977, Moorman and Paik staged a re-creation of *Opera Sextronique* and titled it *The People of the State of New York Against Charlotte Moorman*. Ironically, the incident got her nationwide fame as "topless cellist," enabling Moorman and Paik to address their goal –challenging the contemporary concept of music through

sexuality– to a larger audience. Also, as a result of her arrest and the press it gained, a law was passed to allow nudity in performance art. See Russell Baker, “Seated One Day at a Cello”, *New York Times*, May 14, 1967; Charlotte Moorman, Robert Glassman and Milton Shalleck eds., *Charlotte Moorman Trial Documents*, (New York: Criminal Court, 1967)

Chapter 3 Television Art's Relation to Music

In a 1958 letter to John Cage, Nam June Paik discussed what his next project would include:

My new composition is now 1 minute (For Prof. Fortner). The title will be either "Rondo Allegro", or "Allegro Moderato", or only "Allegretto". Which is more beautiful? I use here: Colour projector. Film 2-3 screens. Strip tease. Boxer. Hen (alive). 6 years girl. Light piano. Motor cycle, and of course sounds. One TV. // "whole art in the meaning of Mr. R. Wagner."¹

The potential titles he mentions—all names of musical forms—and his references to his music professor (Fortner) and Richard Wagner suggest a musical composition. However Paik's description of what he will use in his composition—various electronic devices, a hen, a child, a boxer, etc.—clashes with any traditional ideas about what we think music is. The clue is in Paik summary of his plan as "the whole art in the meaning of Mr. R. Wagner." What he means by that, and most importantly, how it is relevant to his later works such as television and video art, are crucial to understanding how Paik came to the point of writing this letter.

This description referring to the use of multiple screens projecting images precedes his "Exposition of Music-Electronic Television," at Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, in 1963, which debuted the first television art. This show was a watershed for Paik's career, as it propelled him into electronic image manipulation through his exploration of music, hence essentially foregrounding Paik's invention of video art. Paik is remembered more for his career as a technology-savvy video artist than for his early study of musicology and musical composition in Germany and his active involvement in New Music and avant-garde musician circles in the

mid- to late-1950s. His goal as a musician was not simply to produce music but to redefine what music is and to challenge conventional notions of music. Through his constant quest for an answer to the question, what is music?, Paik developed music of his own invention, which evolved into multimedia art.

Paik's mention of "whole art," or *Gesamkunstwerk* in German, meaning "total work of art," is commonly associated with "Mr. R[ichard] Wagner," the well-known German opera composer. As discussed in my introduction, *Gesamtkunstwerk* is the unification of various art mediums in an effort to synthesize and utilize all the artistic senses.² By acknowledging Wagner, Paik was consciously referring to the "whole art" effect he planned to achieve with this composition. He intended to incorporate sensory experiences other than sonic, such as the smell of a living animal or motorcycle tires making friction against the stage floor, and more importantly, the visual, with moving live beings and the color projector showing films on multiple screens, and a person stripping bare on stage. I would argue that Wagner's idea of *Gesamkunstwerk* propelled Paik to discover the visual aspect of his musical compositions, which expanded his music horizon and enabled him to push the envelope for unique music of his own that subsequently led to the invention of video art.

Another key factor at this point of Paik's musical career was developing technologies. This is what Pamela Lee is saying in her book *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s*, when she states, "Time and technology, I want to argue, are twinned phenomena in that decade; and works of art provide special insight into

this relationship as much as they model that relationship in turn.”³ Nam June Paik’s music was indeed an example of temporal art that evolved beyond the traditional boundaries of music, as was demonstrated in the Wuppertal exhibition. In this chapter, I will address how new ideas from science and contemporary technologies coupled with *Gesamkunstwerk* enabled Paik to transgress the border of sonic art and pursue visualizing the auditory input. By analyzing Nam June Paik’s groundbreaking 1963 exhibition, I hope to demonstrate that his early works that are celebrated for their avant-garde visual effects were actually intended to be displays of his avant-garde music.

Exposition of Music

In March 1963 a unique exhibit opened at Galerie Parnass, owned by architect/art supporter Rolf Järting, in Wuppertal, Germany. It was Nam June Paik’s very first solo exhibition, titled “Exposition of Music-Electronic Television. [Plate 3-1] As the title suggests, Paik intended this show to be an event where he could “exhibit” his music. In a letter he wrote to Järting while preparing for the exhibition, Paik wrote that the objects he would showcase “are neither painting nor sculpture; it is a ‘time art,’”⁴ stressing what he believed was the core of his music, temporality. Paik’s Exposition took over the entire Wilhelminian villa where Järting lived, housed his practice, and operated the Galerie Parnass. From basement to bathrooms, Paik filled the entire property with installations for producing sounds. The exhibition was two-fold: the “Exposition of Music” section showcased various sound-producing objects Paik created, and the “Electronic Television” section displayed his recent experiments with cathode-ray-tube-related technologies.

The “Exposition of Music” was described by Tomas Schmit, one of Paik’s assistants, who later attempted to reconstruct the installation. According to his memory, there were four “prepared” pianos placed in the hallway of the house. [Plate 3-2] A prepared piano is a piano that has had its sound altered by placing objects (preparations) between or on the strings or on the hammers or dampers. John Cage coined the term ‘prepared piano’ and was undoubtedly the composer who made the technique famous.⁵ Whereas Cage temporarily modified pianos for the duration of a performance, Paik actually reconstructed the instruments so that the public could carry out its own interactive experiments. What needs to be noted is that the prepared pianos are the manifestation of *Gesamkunstwerk*, where Paik put the audience in an environment to experience his music in various sensory parts. Schmit wrote:

The capricious mechanics of the piano are used in three different ways: -I press a key, the key moves the hammer, and it strikes the string(s); some of the hammers are doctored by things placed on top of them, and on top of, beneath, or between many of the strings are all manner of objects(...). -I press a key, the key moves the hammer, and it moves whatever happens to be stuck to it or hanging from it; for instance: it makes an old shoe dangling over the lid rock bob up and down. -I press a key, and it squeezes something like a squeaking bellows mounted below it, or maybe an electric switch: there are three different types of circuits –pushbutton, flip-flop and dual circuits. Examples: -When I press the C#5, a transistor radio starts up; it goes silent as soon as I release the C# key. -When I press the F2, an electromotor screwed to the soundboard begins to agitate; it calms down when I press F again. - When i press the C3, a hot-air fan begins to blow hot air on my legs; the button that makes it stop is hidden beneath the A4.⁶

Another musical concept Paik incorporated for the “Exposition of Music” was “random access,” to music pieces, a concept previously introduced by Cage to

assemble randomly selected sounds or noises. Paik's *Random Access* was an interactive piece made up of magnetic tapes on which various sounds and noises were recorded that were then glued onto the wall. [Plate 3-3] Visitors could use the tape recorder sound head, which had been detached, to run through the tapes at random and produce musical compositions of their own. ⁷

Electronic Television: Discovering New Technologies to Expand the Horizon of His Music

Paik's creation of *Random Access* helped him to learn the basics of wiring, and propelled him to explore a more ambitious electrical experiment with the circuitry of television sets. The second half of the 1963 show was dedicated to his exploration of television as a medium for his music. By reviewing this part of the exhibition, the impact of Paik's intense interest in new technologies, such as the oscillograph and cathode-ray tube, and how this expanded his exploration of new music will be revealed.

Paik's interest in manipulation of the cathode-ray tube propelled him to discover television as a medium of music and art. In a text that accompanied the Wuppertal Exposition, he wrote about how he became inspired to explore the potential of electronic images: "As is well known, Prof. K. O. Göetz has been publishing for a long time about kinetic painting and the programming of electronic television. My interest in television has been fundamentally inspired by him. I thank him for this with great respect."⁸ K. O. Göetz is a German abstract painter who was associated with the Art Informel movement and also experimented with new technologies to

produce gridded images in the 1960s. He was a co-founder of the Frankfurt-based Quadriga group and exhibited at *Documenta 2* and 1958 Venice Biennale. What aspect of Göetz's art was Paik referring to as the source of his own experiments with television art?

Art historian Christine Mehring has suggested that Nam June Paik's Wuppertal exhibition is seminal as a visual example in any discussion of the relationship between art and television.⁹ The history of television art is not unrelated to European abstract art. As Mehring points out, it was made by artists who primarily worked non-figuratively in other media and who used the new medium to produce abstract images of a self-reflexive nature.¹⁰ In contrast to Modernist artists for whom abstraction was the culmination of a process of reduction in their traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture, the pioneers of television art looked to abstraction to help them clarify the separation between old and new media. Their weapon against the grain of the traditional art world was new technology. Paik was inspired by the electron paintings Göetz experimented with in the 1940s. Paik specifically mentioned "(Göetz's) experiments with cathode-ray tubes in Norway (17 years ago),"¹¹ referring to early abstract electron paintings that derived from his exposure to radar technology during the Second World War. [Plate 3-4] As an artist, he was fascinated by the displays on the radar's circular screens, describing the military planes "distinguished themselves from the so-called noise, like on television after the station turns off its programming. The dancing swarms of dots are disturbances from the immediate environment of the radar equipment, and they

make it difficult to find smaller spikes, which always result from objects in the distance.”¹² Göetz used the new technology to create kinetic paintings. By applying electrical current to the radar instrument, he could create horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines that became the “gestural strokes” of his paintings.¹³ He found that he could manipulate the cathode-ray tubes for graphic effects:

A representation of forms of all kinds is possible with the help of the directed electron ray. Making forms visible on a luminescent layer, similar to a television studio. [sic] The fracture stimulations of the new forms brought about by the electron ray are by nature so strong and lively that no draughtsman could put them on paper. [...] Conserving in optic-electronic ways with the help of the photocell, thereby stimulating the apparatus to control the cathode-ray tube, which provides the optical experience. [sic]¹⁴

However, Göetz was conscious of the limitations of radar technology as a tool for his painting and lamented that it was not possible to control or fix the radar images he could produce. This is what intrigued Paik to delve into the technology of electronic images. “FIX! . . . that word hit me like lightning. [...] Yes, —then it must be the most fitting means to deal with indeterminism (today the central problem in ethics and aesthetics, perhaps also in physics and the economy [...]). Therein lies the foundational concept of my television experiments.”¹⁵ Indeterminism was one of the key concepts Paik had taken from Darmstadt, where, in 1958 Cage gave a lecture titled “Indeterminacy.”¹⁶ As defined by Cage, “[indeterminacy] refers to the ability of a piece to be performed in substantially different ways.”¹⁷ Musicologist Bryan Simms conflates the idea of indeterminacy with what Cage called chance composition, that “any part of a musical work is indeterminate if it is chosen by chance, or if its performance is not precisely specified. The former case is called

'indeterminacy of composition'; the latter is called 'indeterminacy of performance.'" ¹⁸ In order to understand why Paik was immediately drawn to indeterminacy, it is important to note that indeterminism in music emerged as a reactionary concept to the compositional method of Arnold Schönberg's invention, serialism, where the composer controls every minute detail of a piece through numerical patterns. ¹⁹ As was discussed in my introduction of this dissertation, Paik moved to Germany to further his study of Schönberg's music and eventually to go beyond its limitations. Therefore, upon first exposure to the idea of indeterminism, Paik became passionate about this notion to expand his own philosophy on music. ²⁰ In order to stress that his art was wholly a musical invention, Paik made a solemn statement: "My TV is [...] PHYSICAL MUSIC." ²¹

The "Electronic Television" component of the Wuppertal exhibition represented a relatively small portion of the exhibition and included a group of television sets. In the garden room, one was placed on the console and others on the floor [Plate 3-5] and another television was installed upstairs. Many of the objects from the exhibition no longer exist, but Tomas Schmit, a Fluxus artist who helped install the show, left a long description enabling us to re-create what was on display:

The starting material is the regular television program, but this is no longer recognizable on most of the televisions. (The various complex interventions that Paik carried out on the internal organs of the TVs transcend the comprehension of the lay electrician and mine, too; I try to describe the results): one of the televisions shows a negative and moving picture. On one of them the picture has been rolled up like a barrel around the central vertical axis of the screen. On one of them, the horizontal has been modulated. In what Paik sees as the most complex case, three independent sine oscillations have aggravated the parameters of the image.

For the pair: the lower one is striped horizontally, the upper one is striped vertically (the upper shows the same picture as the lower, but is lying on its side instead on its feet).²²

What were shown on the screens were black-and-white distortions with fragments of broadcasted television programs, which resulted from manipulations of the sets' inner working circuits, Schmit explains:

[...] On the upper TVs the shape of the picture [...] is determined by the more or less controlled manipulation of the set electronics, and on the four lower TVs the manipulation leads to the picture being determined or influenced by material fed in from and outside: one of them is connected to a foot switch lying in front of it; if you press it then the short-circuits created lead to a firework display of sudden, instantly extinguished flashes of light on the screen.

One of them is hooked to a microphone; if someone speaks into it, he sees a similar but now continuous firework display of flashing lights. [...] The *One Paint TV*, which is linked to a radio, shows a bright dot in the middle of the screen, the size of which varies with the volume of the radio program; when it becomes louder, the dot gets bigger, when it becomes quieter, it gets smaller.²³

The "Electronic Television" section of the exhibition was an exploration of new technologies to transfer sonic stimulation into kinetic visual outcomes. In the same text, to stress their indeterminate nature, Schmit declares that Paik's manipulation of the inner circuits were "halfway fixed," as it partly depends on "the uncontrollable contents fed by the television programs."²⁴ Explaining his intentions for the Wuppertal exhibition, Paik asserted, "INDETERMINISM and VARIABILITY is the very UNDERDEVELOPED parameter in the optical art, although this has been the central problem in music for the last ten years," revealing his strategy to bridge between music and the visual art.²⁵ Paik's use of technology to infuse his music with

indeterminacy had become a major opportunity for him to visualize sound, to create a very peculiar kind of music, in Paik's own right, that couples the auditory senses with the visual.

Oscillograph, Oscillons and Visual Music

Nam June Paik's fascination with technologies to manipulate what appears on the television monitor began before he embarked on his research on the circuits of television. What triggered him to find Göetz was the oscillogram he encountered in the Electronic Studio of WDR (Westdeutsche Rundfunk/West öermayn Broadcasting) in Cologne in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The studio was an important center of contemporary music and attracted young musicians such as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Maurio Kagel, Guorgy Ligeti , Gottfried Michael Koenig and Cornelius Cardew. The studio had technical tools and machinery needed to create synthetic sound with the help of sound generators and to record on tape their original compositions.²⁶ As they developed new techniques to create and manipulate sounds, they were influenced by books like *Electronic Sound Creation* (1949) by physicist and experimental acoustician Werner Meyer-Eppler, and *The Music of the Technical Age* (1956) by musicologist Fred K. Prieberg. According to Decker-Phillips, Meyer-Eppler's book served as a technical handbook for these electronic musicians, while Prieberg's traced the latest developments and attempted to identify future tendencies in electronic music. While working with other electronic musicians at the studio, Paik was inevitably exposed to these books and ideas. At the same time, Paik was applying the 19th century idea of *Gesamkunstwerk* to the new technologies, fusing radio and television as new instruments to facilitate it.²⁷ One of the technical

instruments at the electronic studio that arrested Paik's attention was the oscillograph.

An oscillograph is “an instrument for recording alternating current wave forms”²⁸ that appear on the screen of a cathode-ray tube. [Plate 3-6] This engineering device opened possibilities for some artists to create kinetic abstract images that are electronically controllable. The American mathematician and artist Ben F. Laposky first utilized oscillographs for aesthetic purposes in the early 1950s to create abstract patterns on monitors; he called them *Oscillons*.²⁹ [Plate 3-7] Nam June Paik created a number of creations of his own, in close aesthetic parallel to Laposky's *Oscillons*, for the 1963 Wuppertal exhibition. *Magnet TV*, for example, had moving patterns on its television monitor that resemble Laposky's creations. [Plate 3-8] Although Paik utilized the electromagnetic current as Laposky did, he wanted to be able to insert a disturbance to obtain varying results. He considered how magnets applied from outside would alter the electromagnetic flow of electrons. The magnet's force of attraction hindered the cathode rays from filling the screen's rectangular surface. This pushed the field of horizontal lines upward thus creating baffling forms within the magnet's gravitational field. If the magnet maintained its position, the picture remained stable—apart from minimal changes caused by fluctuations in the flow of electricity. Moving the magnet caused endless variations on the forms.³⁰

Laposky described his *Oscillons* as “visual music” because of their origin in soundwaves.³¹ The term visual music here refers to the result of using electronic

methods or devices to translate sounds or music into a related visual presentation, but the term was first coined by the art critic Roger Fry in 1912 to describe the work of Wassily Kandinsky.³² In fact, visual music is understood in close relation with Kandinsky's interest in Synaesthesia, referring to a wide variety of artistic experiments that have explored the mixing of the senses in genres such as visual music, audiovisual art, abstract films and intermedia art.³³ Kandinsky believed that music was the purest art form and that visual art should emulate it. He devised an abstract art form that was, he believed, analogous to the dynamic rhythms, tone color, and non-subjectivity of music. His use of terms such as "improvisation," "fugue," "sonata," "composition," "blue and green music," in the titles of his works often underscored their debt to music. [Plate 3-9] It is also well known that Kandinsky shared his interests with a composer, none other than Arnold Schönberg.³⁴ Experiments in synaesthesia were conducted on the music side as well by him. In *Theory of Harmony* (Harmonielehre), Arnold Schonberg published in 1911, he revealed his fascination with the visual effect of color shifts coordinated with his music. He wrote:

The evaluation of tone color, the second dimension of tone, is in a still much less cultivated, much less organized state. [...] Nevertheless, we go right on boldly connecting the sounds with one another, contrasting them with one another, simply by feeling [...] it must also be possible to make progressions out of tone colors. [...] progressions whose relations with one another work with a kind of logic entirely equivalent to that logic which satisfies us in the melody of pitches.³⁵

Schonberg wrote *Farben* ("Colors"), the third movement of his composition *Five*

Pieces for Orchestra, Opus 16 (1909) roughly contemporary with his writing

Harmonielehre. *Farben* is interpreted as the first attempt to design tonal color scheme (added by lighting colors) for the performance of his music in order to create a visual color image in the mind of the listener.³⁶ *Farben* was not well received by his contemporary audience due to its lack of harmonious melody; it simply presented “chord progression enlivened by orchestrational changes” synchronized with sets of shifting color effects.³⁷ The tonal color effects was, for Schönberg, an integral part of his music that enhances the development of melodic progression and its accompanied imagery. A more celebrated example of such synaesthesiac experiment Schönberg conducted is *Die glückliche Hand* (1910-13), a dramatic play with a musical score, in which the color shifts synchronized to the melodic scheme Schönberg designed in order to represent the characters’ changing psychological states.³⁸ It is not surprising that Nam June Paik, who had been a fervent admirer of Schönberg’s music theories, started to explore synaesthesia in his own music.

Paik was not the first artist whose experiments in visual music entered the public sphere. In the 1940s, a virtual army of Schönberg’s disciples had emigrated to the States (including some to Hollywood), bringing with them ideas about synaesthesiac art. Hollywood in the 30s and 40s became a fertile soil for the Schoenbergian filmmakers to experiment with synaesthesia or the notion of visualization of music. Arguably, the most prominent of these figures was Oskar Fischinger, who worked at the Walt Disney studio on the opening sequence for the animated film *Fantasia* (1940)—perhaps the most well-known example of visual music—featuring Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Toccata* and *Fugue in D Minor*.³⁹ While Kandinsky could only

suggest movement through repeated forms and lines, Fischinger was able to create an actual kinetic art in which each motion sequence is shown. Fischinger had been previously employed by both Paramount Pictures and MGM, where he worked on several of his most important films, including *An Optical Poem* (1937), in which the kinetic abstract images are in constant morphosis perfectly synchronized to the music by Franz Liszt, *Second Hungarian Rhapsody*. (Plate 3-10)

Fischinger, a “survivor” of the European avant-garde film movement of the 1920s, attracted a range of aspiring young artists. In 1937, the young composer John Cage came to him, hoping that he might write a score for one of Fischinger's film projects. Besides putting him to work on the animation of *An Optical Poem*, more importantly, he conveyed to Cage his Buddhist-inspired idea that all objects contain an inherent sound, which had led him to photograph objects onto a film soundtrack so that the shape could also be released to speak. Cage acknowledged that this helped start him on the path to his main life's work: finding new musical resources in natural sounds, chance noises, and "silence."⁴⁰

A number of interesting artists or inventors emerged in Hollywood from this Schönbergian soil, including some filmmakers and visual musicians who were using technology to find ways to visualize music with inventions such as color organs. Fischinger invented the “Lumigraph,”⁴¹ and Thomas Wilfred devised color organs called Clavilux, to create visual music made with light that he called “Lumia.”⁴² [Plate 3-11] A student of Fischinger and Wilfred, visual musician, Mary Ellen Bute began using oscilloscope patterns to create "figures" in her films,⁴³ including *Abstronic*

(1954) [Plate 3-12] and *Mood Contrasts* (1956). Some did their experimental work using film, including painting directly onto the celluloid, a technique later adopted by a number of filmmakers including the John and James Whitney, whose experiments in film sound would lead to a precursor of the synthesizer.⁴⁴ In Cologne, the WDR electronic studio collected and researched these and other interesting experiments with electronic music and image. It is, therefore likely that Nam June Paik discovered the oscillogram in the studio and incorporated it into his early experiment with television, and that his 1964 production of *Zen for Film*, which featured an endless loop of unexposed film run through a projector, was influenced by the technique of painting on celluloid, although instead of paint on celluloid, it showed particles of dust that collected during its projection.⁴⁵

Paik-Abe Synthesizer

Later Nam June Paik also created a device called Paik-Abe Synthesizer, for his own invention of synaesthesia electrically coupling sound and images. [Plate 3-13] After his initial experimentation with television sets for his 1963 Wuppertal show, Paik became interested in the idea of making collages of sound that would work together with moving electronic images, but he did not have enough technological knowledge to support the idea. However, during a brief trip to Tokyo after the 1963 exhibition and before his relocation to the United States in 1964, Paik was fortunate enough to meet the renowned engineer Shuya Abe, who was working at TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System), equipped with the needed cutting edge engineering knowledge. Paik started building the synthesizer with Shuya Abe from this time.⁴⁶

With the technical knowledge he acquired while building *Magnet TV*, Paik was able to put together a “wobbulator” of his own, a prototype for Paik-Abe Synthesizer, that many electronic musicians today still emulate for D.I.Y creation of the kind.⁴⁷ [Plate 3-14] A wobbulator is “a prepared television which permits a wide variety of treatments to be performed on video images,”⁴⁸ allowing its user to manipulate and distort the image on the television monitor. While studying the engineering technologies as such, Paik realized he wanted to go beyond simply creating distortion on video, and build a machine that enabled editing on the videotapes. He discussed his needs for this upgraded version of the device in great detail:

I wanted to have some keys that could make it possible for me to edit seven different sources at the same time, to edit in real time. The first thing I thought was seven cameras with seven picture sources, which could be mixed instantaneously on a switchtable. So the machine has two pieces of equipment, the keys for immediate mixing, and a tiny watch dial that changes the color from infra-red to ultra-violet. The operator can change the colors. The seven cameras themselves are tuned to one color each. One camera takes in only red, the other only blue, a third this or that color. The seven rainbow colors are there. What one sees depends on the mix.⁴⁹

From his description of the future project, it becomes clear that his aim in building the device was twofold: one is to be able to readily manipulate the presentation of time and the other is to synchronize visual input with the audio. In fact, the part where it addresses his plan for the machine’s visual effect enablers reads subordinate to the editing capacity of the device. That is to say, Paik’s main interest was in the machine’s capacity for temporal manipulation and the collages of video sources and colorization was meant to reinforce his maneuver of temporality.

However, his attention to the visual effect was not to be underestimated. What Paik wanted to accomplish with the synthesizer was to digitally edit videos and create patterns directly on videotapes and to make video “as malleable as paint”.⁵⁰ Nam June Paik saw television as the canvas for the next generation of electronic artists, and the Synthesizer as the brush. In his essay “Versatile Color TV Synthesizer”, Paik associated the characteristics of the Synthesizer’s image manipulations with names of renowned artists: “This will enable us to shape the TV screen canvas; as precisely as Leonardo, as freely as Picasso, as colorfully as Renoir, as profoundly as Mondrian, as violently as Pollock and as lyrically as Jasper Johns.”⁵¹ However, Paik’s interest in the paint-like quality of the synthesizer was intended for an intriguing visual effect for music.

In another essay Paik wrote in 1965, he anticipated his creation of video synthesizer:

I hope to open a studio for electronic color television in New York City so that I can begin more complicated technical experiment such as maximum exploitation of shadow-mask color TV picture tube, self-programming of whole video signal through TV cameras, tape-recorders (visual and audio), the combination of electronic music and electronic TV, and if possible, combining the TV with computers and self-invented 50 channel data recorders. As an adjunct to these experiments I plan to construct a compact version of electronic TV for concerts so that it can be easily transported and demonstrated in collages.⁵²

While hinting at what his new project—a video synthesizer that would make it possible for him to edit multiple sources simultaneously—was about, he also revealed his interest in temporality still continued by mentioning that the Synthesizer’s main use was for musical events (“electronic TV for concerts”). Paik consciously sought synaesthesia in music through the invention of Paik-Abe

Synthesizer. In 1966, he wrote that synaesthesiac art edited by an electronic synthesizer could be installed in theatrical venues: "Big theater or opera house could change their lobby designs everyday, matching to their repertory and this lobby design could progress in accordance with the developing plot. Big cathode-ray wall with color cidophole or controllable electroluminescence can be programmed for this purpose,"⁵³ he added, demonstrating closer relation to the visual music.⁵⁴ Therefore the Paik-Abe Synthesizer was, despite its fame as a graphic editing technology, invented as a musical instrument for synaesthesiac effects.

Indeed, when Paik debuted the Paik-Abe Synthesizer, it was used for a visual music concert. The Synthesizer's first official debut was for a broadcast television show called "Video Commune - The Beatles from Beginning to End" on WGBH on August 1, 1970. With the licensing agreement that WGBH had to air Beatles songs, Paik created a four-hour long video work that featured performances of colors and shapes synchronized to Beatles music.⁵⁵ The synthesizer was operated by Shuya Abe and also by the studio guests.⁵⁶ Paik was there to give instructions, just like when he oversaw his compositions of action music being performed by his collaborators. And the program was right in the vein as his music as it was based on indeterminacy. It was a live broadcast of the Beatles medley that the operators of the Synthesizer instantaneously created distorted images and added different colors to the video signal that was on at the time. The result of what the operators created with the Synthesizer was the deformation of images. Magnetic deformation was formally similar to what Paik did with televisions for his 1963 exhibition. For example, *Video Commune* has numerous image distortions people witnessed in

Magnet TV—the image being pulled and pushed as the magnet got near the television set. *Video Commune* went a step further by adding movements that was controlled from the Synthesizer. Also the images continually composed and decomposed into abstract Lissajous figures. [Plate 3-15a] On top of the constant change of images that seemed almost liquid and melting into one after another, bright colors kept pouring on top of the distorted images. [Plate 3-15b] Alluding to its indeterminate nature of the program, Susan Dowling, later director of the New Television Workshop, described *Video Commune* as "All the images on the show--surreal landscapes (crushed tin foil), eerie abstractions (shaving cream), bursts of color (wrapping paper)-- were transmogrified by the Synthesizer at the very moment of broadcast: "live" television at its most unexpected."⁵⁷

In the same year, Paik produced another piece of his visual music with the Synthesizer. At this time, WGBH planned a series called *Video Variations*, a one-hour program that aired for the first time in 1972. The station asked a number of artists and producers to collaborate with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.⁵⁸ Each artist was asked to choose a musical piece from the orchestra's repertoire and produce a visual interpretation of it. Paik chose the third movement of the fourth piano concerto of Ludwig van Beethoven, and turned it into a seven and a half minute long program, *Electronic Opera No.2*.⁵⁹ Paik coupled the sound of the Beethoven number with the image of the orchestra playing the piece and superimposed abstract patterns of colors. Then the video shows a bust sculpture of Beethoven being knocked out by a fist, followed by a piano being engulfed in flames. [Plate 3-16]

Those are interpreted as gestures of attack on the conventionalism in music, which is epitomized by the historic composer and the traditional instrument.⁶⁰

Through his development of the Paik-Abe Synthesizer, Paik was able to expand his realm of time-based art to musical composition based on Synaesthesia. It was made possible with the knowledge of science and technology, which essentially led to the creation of video art.

¹ Nam June Paik, "Nam June Paik: A Diary," in John Cage, *A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), 90.

² Wagner noticed that performance of the ancient Greek drama was a synthesis of different genres of arts, and wanted to revive that tradition in his musical composition. In the same fashion as the Greek theater included poetry, music and dance, Wagner proposed to unite various genres such as verbal, sonic, and visual art for his operas, hoping to offer an breakthrough to develop music further. In *The Artwork of the Future*, a collection of his writings between 1849-57, he introduced the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. He wrote *Gesamtkunstwerk* essentially consists of three fundamental arts --tone, poetry, and choreography. For him, the purpose of their unification lied not only in its artistic capacity but also in cultivating harmonious social relationships. This societal concept is best expressed in his statement that "the artist of the future is not the individual poet, actor, musician, or sculptor, but the people (*Volk*) itself." See Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 39-42.

³ Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Boston: MIT Press, 2006), xxii .

⁴ Letter from Paik to Järling, Dec 22, 1962, in Edith Decker, ed., *Niederschriften eines Kolturnomaden*, (Köln: DuMont Verlag, 1992), 54.

⁵ Richard Bunker, *The Well-Prepared Piano* (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1973)

⁶ Tomas Schmit, "Exposition of music" in *Nam June Paik: Werke 1946-1976: Musik-Fluxus-Video* (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1977), reprinted in *Nam June Paik: Exposition of Music. Electronic Television Revisited* (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien), 131-34.

⁷ Lee and Rennert, eds., *Nam June Paik* , 87-88.

⁸ Nam June Paik, untitled text, in pamphlet for "Exposition of Music. Electronic Television" (Wuppertal: Parnass, 1963), republished in Edith Decker, ed., *Niederschriften eines Kolturnomaden*, 96.

⁹ Christine Mehring, "Television Arts' Abstract Start: Europe circa 1944-1969." *October* 125 (Summer 2008): 29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹¹ Nam June Paik, untitled text, in pamphlet for "Exposition of Music. Electronic Television"

¹² K. O. Göetz, *Erinnerungen und Werk*, vol. 1a (Dusseldorf: Concept, 1983), 243, 257-58, quoted in from Mehring, "Television Arts' Abstract Start", 33.

¹³ "Abstract Film and Electron Painting" in Rudolf Frieling and Dieter Daniels, eds., *Media Art Action: The 1960s and 1970s in Germany* (Vienna: Springer, 1997), 51-52.

¹⁴ K. O. Göetz, "Die Fakturenfibel" (1943-46), in *Göetz: Dokumentation*, ed. Manfred de la Motte (Bonn: Hennemann, 1978) quoted in Mehring, "Television Arts' Abstract Start", 33.

¹⁵ Nam June Paik, *ibid*, 1963.

¹⁶ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 35-40

¹⁷ James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage. Music in the 20th Century*. (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 108.

¹⁸ Bryan R. Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (New York: Schirmer Books; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1986), 357.

¹⁹ John Cage, "Composition as Process. Part II: Indeterminacy," reprinted in Rudolf Frieeling and Dieter Daniels, eds., *Media Art Action*, 30-33. Cage originally provided precise instructions for the results of chance operations, but when it developed into "indeterminacy," around the end of the 1950s, there was more room for interpretation in a score. Cf. Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York and London: Schirmer Books, 1997), 136f.

²⁰ Nam June Paik, "Music Deconstructed: Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik," *Jayou Shinmun* (와해의 음악 다름슈 타트 국제 신음악 하기강좌), (January 6-7, 1959), Nam June Paik Art Center Archive

²¹ Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION" (March 1963, Galerie Parnass)', *fLuxus cc fiVe ThReE*, June 1964, section 2. p. 4. New York Public Library

²² Tomas Schmit, "exposition of music" in *Nam June Paik: Werke 1946-1976: Musik-Fluxus-Video*, reprinted in *Nam June Paik: Exposition of Music. Electronic Television Revisited*, 131-134.

²³ Numerous sources were used to unpack what was exhibited in this historic Exposition. See also Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION" (March 1963, Galerie Parnass)', *fLuxus cc fiVe ThReE*, June 1964, section 2. p. 4. New York Public Library; Tomas Schmit, "exposition of music" in *Nam June Paik: Werke 1946-1976: Musik-Fluxus-Video*, 67-73; Edith Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*, 33-40; John Alan Farmer, "Art into Television 1960-65 (PhD. Diss., Columbia University, 1998), 149-53.

²⁴ Tomas Schmit, "exposition of music" in *Nam June Paik: Werke 1946-1976: Musik-Fluxus-Video*, 132

²⁵ Nam June Paik, "afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION 1963".

²⁶ Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*, 24.

²⁷ There is evidence that Paik borrowed some ideas from the authors to explain his own art. For example, Prieberg wrote: "one of the most fruitful possibilities of the music machine is [...] the production of a sound background that is simply entertaining music [...] The radio is on all day long. The hand only reaches for the knob when a particularly long-winded program or musical piece comes along and requires really listening to it and so unpleasantly interrupts the sound wallpaper." Paik later transposed the term 'sound wallpaper', coined by Prieberg to describe radio programs, to the concept of 'visual wallpaper' for the television screen. Decker-Phillip, *ibid*, 30.

²⁸ Merriam Webster Dictionary

²⁹ Ben F. Laposky, "Oscillons: Electronic Abstractions" *Leonardo* 2 (1969), 345 ff.

³⁰ Edith Phillip Decker, *Paik Video*, 62

³¹ Ben F. Laposky, *Ibid*.

³² Francis Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life* (University of California Press Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980), 168.

³³ To understand multiple layers of synaesthesia, refer to: Cretien van Campen, *The Hidden Sense. Synesthesia in Art and Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007); J. Jewanski and N. Sidler, eds., *Farbe - Licht - Musik. Synaesthesie und Farblichtmusik*. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006); Carol Steen and Greta Berman, *Synesthesia: Art and the Mind* (Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2008); Greta Berman, "Synesthesia and the Arts," *Leonardo*, No 32, no. 1 (1999), 15-22.

³⁴ Konrad Boemer (ed.), *Schoenberg and Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter* (New York: Routledge, 1997), ix

³⁵ Boemer, *Ibid*.

³⁶ Charles Burkhart, "Schoenberg's Farben: An Analysis of Op. 16, No. 3" *Perspectives of New Music* Vol. 12, No. 1/2 (Autumn, 1973 - Summer, 1974), pp. 141-172

³⁷ Burkhart, *Ibid*. 170.

³⁸ John C. Crawford, "Die glückliche Hand: Schoenberg's Gesamtkunstwerk", *Musical Quarterly* 60 (1974), 583-601; Phillip Truman, "Synaesthesia and Die glückliche Hand", *Interface* 10 (1983) 481-503.

³⁹ Walt Disney has often been portrayed negatively in his relationship with Fischinger, but his willingness to open the doors in the 1930s and 1940s to European artists and experimental filmmakers marks a pivotal moment in the history of visualization of music, if not in modernism itself. It is enormously significant that by 1940 an exiled German experimental filmmaker was working in Hollywood for a major film studio. See Brougher et al, *Visual Music* (New York, Thames and Hudson, 2005), p. 89-96

⁴⁰ "The World of Oskar Fischinger," laserdisc release (LaserDisc Corporation, Tokyo, 1988); William Morritz, *Optical Poetry: The Life and Work of Oskar Fischinger* (Bloomington: Indiana

University Press, 2004); Richard H. Brown, "The Spirit Inside Each Object: John Cage, Oskar Fischinger and the Future of Music", *Journal of the Society for American Music*, Volume 6, Issue 01, (February 2012) 83-113

⁴¹ Fischinger continued his relationship with Hollywood at Orson Welles's Mercury Productions, where he worked on lending his lumigraph color organ to the production of the 1964 science-fiction feature *The Time Travelers*. Brougher, *Visual Music*, 97-100

⁴² Stephen Eskilson, "Thomas Wilfred and Intermedia: Seeking a Framework for Lumia", *Leonardo*, Volume 36, Number 1 (February 2003), 65-68.

⁴³ In her publicity, which is often repeated, Bute claimed to be the first person to combine science and art in this way. "Mary Ellen Bute, Film Maker", *New York Times*, October 19, 1983; Brougher, *Visual Music*, 112

⁴⁴ Brougher et al, *Visual Music*, 125-33

⁴⁵ The experiment to visualize music was already in swing on both sides of the Atlantic under the influence of Arnold Schoenberg. The interest in technology by Schonbergian artists continues onward in the visual music discipline both in Hollywood and West Germany. Los Angeles-based artists, who are brothers, John and James Whitney were trying to create a new filmic experience by embracing new technology. In as early as 1940, the Whitney Brothers collaborated to experiment with non-objective films in 8mm. John constructed an 8mm optical printer, so that they could reprocess basic images shot in black and white, manipulating the variations in size, speed, color, etc. James devised a system of stencils, through which images could be traced or airbrushed onto animation paper, creating hard or soft-edged forms. John had encountered Schonberg's twelve tone music theory through René Leibowitz he had befriended in Paris, and the first of these 8mm films, *Twenty-Four Variations on an Original Theme*, was visually constructed "by analogy to Schoenberg's serial principles, with a given optical "tone-row" (a "P" shaped configuration formed by an overlapping circle and rectangle) submitted to various inversions, clustering, retrogressions, counterpoints, etc." They loved to build machinery and devised a system of creating sound from the motion of a pendulum, which was influenced by the serial music of composers such as Ernst Krenek, another Schoenbergian disciple. Whitney's pendulum system was a very intricate sort for early synthetic-sound experiments. "Pendulums of differing lengths fitted with adjustable weights were attached by a wire to an aperture in the camera which recorded their movement, thereby creating sound from motion. With this system, the Whitneys were able to create a four-octave range of electronically produced tones." In *Five Film Exercise*, (1943-44) the Whitneys synced this optically produced sound to images that were produced by light shot through a stencil system devised by James, enabling the electronic image and sound being intricately linked. The Whitney brothers' inventions influenced the special-effects artists of Hollywood. In 1958, designer Saul Bass approached him to create the geometric spirals that swirl out of an eyeball in the title sequence of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. Brougher, *Visual Music*, 125. This exciting experiment of synthesizing of sound and visual is to be in parallel to Paik-Abe Synthesizer in a decade.

⁴⁶ In an essay Paik wrote in 1970, Paik referred to Shuya Abe as his great mentor. See Nam June Paik, "Video Synthesizer Plus: California/ New York/ Boston", *Radical Software* No.2,

1970 reprinted in Rosebush, ed., *Nam June Paik: Video 'n' Videology 1959-1973*, 59; In a 2009 interview with Nam June Paik Art Center, Abe talked about his first encounter with Paik in 1963, at which point Paik had told Abe about his failed project to build a video recorder. Lee, *Return of Nam June Paik*, 318-319

It was not until 1969 that Paik was able to complete his collaborative experiments with Abe for the Paik-Abe Synthesizer. After their first encounter in 1963, Paik had been receiving engineering support from Abe to virtually devise the video synthesizer but did not have funding for its actual realization. In 1968 when Paik became an artist in residence at WGBH-TV in Boston, Paik was able to convince its president of the significance of the video synthesizer and received financial support sufficient enough to bring Abe to the United States and have him build the first model of Paik-Abe Synthesizer.

⁴⁷ See Radiophonic Workshop run by BBC, UK, <http://webaudio.prototyping.bbc.co.uk/wobbulator/>

⁴⁸ "This is accomplished by the addition of extra yokes to a conventional black and white receiver and by the application of signals derived from audio or function generators on the yokes. The unit is a receiver modified for monitor capability; all of the distortions can thus be performed either on broadcast signals or, when the unit is used as a monitor, on images from a live or prerecorded source" See <http://www.experimental-tvcenter.org/raster-manipulation-unit-operation-and-construction>

⁴⁹ Decker-Philips, *Paik Video*, 152.

⁵⁰ Nam June Paik, "Video Synthesizer Plus", *Radical Software*, No.2 (1970), reprinted in Rosebush, ed., *Nam June Paik: Video 'n' Videology*, 55

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Nam June Paik, "Project for Electronic Television", 1965, from *Video 'n' Videology*, 9; it is indicated in this catalogue that this essay was written for the New School for Social Research, New York.

⁵³ Nam June Paik, Untitled, 1966, in *Flykingen Bulletin* (Stockholm, 1967).

⁵⁴ As Paik's quest for his own synaesthiac music continued, he was convinced knowledge of science and technology would allow him to create machinery for the purpose of it. Priding himself as someone who could serve as a bridge between art and music, as well as art and technology, he wrote, "Art history and musicology suffered too long from the separation of the inseparable. [...] if all arts merge into one [...] then the study of various arts should merge too into one by the qualified investigator, who [...] is a specialist in his own field but possesses a thoroughly sound and trained acquaintance with the fields of his neighbours." Nam June Paik, "Norbert Wiener and Marshall McLuhan" printed in Rosebush, ed., *Nam June Paik: Video 'n' Videology 1959-1973*, 27-29

⁵⁵ George Fifield, "Paik-Abe Synthesizer", unpublished script, undated, Nam June Paik Art Center; it is also available online <http://davidsonfiles.org/paikabesynthesizer.html>

⁵⁶ Videotape of the interview with Shuya Abe (Nam June Paik Art Center Archive). Paik recruited passers-by from the street to participate and manipulate the images. This is similar to his role as a composer where he writes a musical piece and invites other musicians and people from the audience to actually perform it. WHERE DOES THIS COME FROM

⁵⁷ George Fifiield, "Paik-Abe Synthesizer"

⁵⁸ The project included Fred Zarzyk, Stan Vanderbeek, Russel Conner, Douglas Davis, Wen-Ying Tsai, Mimi Garrand, James Seawright, Constantine Manos, and Jackie Cassen, along with Paik. Videotaped interview with David Atwood, Olivia Tappa, and Fred Barzyk, Nam June Paik Art Center Archive

⁵⁹ Edith Decker-Philips, *Paik Video*, 155.

⁶⁰ The Boston Symphony Orchestra was not enthusiastic about this interpretation. Calvin Tomkins, "Video Visionary", *The New Yorker* (New York, May 5, 1975), 74.

Chapter 4. Video as a Medium for Music: *Guadalcanal Requiem*

Expanding the Parameters of Music Through Temporality

Nam June Paik was able to find a common thread that connected his musical career with his video works by exploring various time-based media to expand the peripheries of his musical composition. He started his artistic career as a composer interested in Arnold Schönberg's ideas to break down the conventionalism in music. After his relocation from Asia to Germany, he submerged himself in the avant-garde music scene and wrote unconventional scores and performed action music. During this period, he also started his experiments with television's inner workings to create "physical music,"¹ as he referred to his television art. Upon acquiring a prototype Sony Portapak, the first portable video camera, in 1965, he began working predominantly with video. He was especially interested in the ability of video to achieve the synaesthesiac coupling of visual and sonic materials.

During his first three months as an artist-in-residence at Stony Brook University, New York, in 1968, Paik wrote an essay in which he stated that "Western music as a whole can be grasped as a many faceted dialectic struggle between TIME (sound) and SPACE (notation and other various visual elements). Therefore the impact of video tape recorder cannot be overestimated in composition, [...] musicology, [...], and music education."² He was enthusiastic about using video as the "visual accompaniment to the soundtrack," which could be synchronized to "enrich the study and appreciation without disturbing the musical flow."³ By investigating some techniques Paik learned from his exploration of other time-based media and used

for the production of his video work, we will be able to unpack this idea that Paik used video as another medium to expand the boundaries of music.

For this analysis, I chose *Guadalcanal Requiem*, a video work Paik created in collaboration with Charlotte Moorman during 1976–79, using the Paik-Abe Synthesizer. It consists of a videotape filmed in Guadalcanal during two weeks at the end of 1976.⁴ Located in the southeastern part of the Solomon Islands, Guadalcanal was the location where American and Japanese military forces had fierce battles from August 1942 to February 1943, during the Second World War, and where U.S. President John F. Kennedy had been stationed.

In 1976, while an artist-in-residence at the TV Laboratory at WNET/ Channel 13 in New York,⁵ Paik received a \$17,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, which funded Paik's creation of *Guadalcanal Requiem* and other projects.⁶ Paik and Charlotte Moorman were performing in Australia, supported by the Jon Kaldor Public Art Project,⁷ before they went to the Solomon Islands to film primary source material for *Requiem*. *Guadalcanal Requiem* was premiered at Carnegie Hall on February 10, 1977,⁸ and broadcast a few days later, on February 14, at 10 p.m., on New York's WNET/ Channel 13. Paik did not insist that the videotape be kept in an unchangeable master format, and he produced a number of re-edited versions for various situations, as he had done with other musical scores he wrote in the 1960s. The original version of *Guadalcanal Requiem* runs for 59 minutes, and includes actual footage of the Second World War, interviews with American and Japanese war veterans and local islanders, scenery and war remains in the Solomon Islands

(in 1976), and footage of collaborative musical performances by Paik and Moorman filmed on the Islands.⁹ The original video was re-edited on December 20, 1979, and shortened to 28 minutes, 35 seconds. This revision was also re-edited into different versions, including one distributed by EAI (Electronic Arts Intermix) (28 minutes, 33 seconds),¹⁰ and another that includes interview excerpts from Asahi TV, Japan.¹¹

For my analysis in this chapter, I will investigate the original 59-minute version of *Guadalcanal Requiem* to demonstrate that Nam June Paik's video served as an extension and further exploration of his ongoing quest for new musical forms. As the title suggests, it is a requiem, a form of musical composition to honor and lament the souls of the dead, in this case the war victims, both American and Japanese, and to give the condolence they deserve. In creating this work, Paik employed a set of time-bending techniques he had previously used for the production of his action music and electronically induced synaesthesiac music. First of all, his interest as a musician in manipulation of the concept of time is evident in this requiem. *Guadalcanal Requiem* juxtaposes Second World War footage and the actual sites in the Solomon Islands filmed by Paik where traces of the war could still be found. Edith Decker-Phillips and David Ross have noted the non-linear time structure of this piece as evidenced by the juxtaposition of war images and the filmed performances by Paik and Moorman.¹² Paik himself declared that "the main character of this show (*Guadalcanal Requiem*) is time," stressing the significance of temporal distortion in this piece.¹³ The *Requiem's* starting point is images of the Second World War (past), followed by Paik's interviews with the war veterans (present) to talk about their horrible memories of what happened on the Solomon

Islands during the war. Then visceral images of the war (past) are juxtaposed with Paik and Moorman's performance (present), which is presented as a metaphoric cure for the wounds of the war.

In this video piece, Paik used multiple ways to complicate and refute the concept of linearity of time, including using a Paik-Abe Synthesizer, a machine he had helped invent, to edit directly on videotape. The Synthesizer allowed Paik to juxtapose multiple video sequences seamlessly, to interrupt and even reverse the flow of time, and to add specific images to certain sound effects for the creation of *Guadalcanal Requiem*. The Synthesizer was essentially a musical instrument that permitted Paik to manipulate time and create synaesthiac effects. Lastly, *Guadalcanal Requiem* exemplifies how Paik continued his action music into the years during which he was fully exploring the medium of video. Paik's collaborative action music performance with Moorman is at the core of the message of *Guadalcanal Requiem*—that through their music he attempts to heal the dreadful scars of the war.

Through the analysis of *Guadalcanal Requiem*, it becomes clear how far Paik had moved forward from the traditional sense of music, and his practices with action music and visual music foregrounded the expansion of his music into the realm beyond the sonic experience to integrate the visuals. Video was, in that sense, an effective medium of art to create an unconventional kind of music that Paik had incessantly pursued. In this video, Paik inserted collage of different sound effect sources ranging from found sound such as the Island's natives playing the percussion, Chinese traditional music, machine noise, random band music, folk

songs, to recordings of his music from earlier years such as the sound collected from Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originale*, as well as classical cello number Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals—Le Cygne* freshly performed by Charlotte Moorman. The way the sonic inputs are assembled is modeled after the musique concrète¹⁴ of his own from 1957, the sound collage he created with found sounds and recordings of his own. Despite the apparent reference to his musical style from the 1950s that functions as the backdrop of the video, my focus is on the temporal and spatial (in relation to the time) manipulation Paik attempted for the creation of the video work, as they are the main factors that propelled the development and the expansion of Paik's music.

Manipulation of Time

Throughout his career Paik's interest was always about the experience of time, for he regarded himself as a musician, and music is a time-based art. As a musical composer, he felt compelled to investigate other time-based art forms, such as performance and the artistic use of television and video. Paik commented on how his musical endeavors influenced his arrival at the art of video: "I think I understand time better than the video artist who came from painting-sculpture. Music is the manipulation of time. All music forms have different structures and buildup. As painters understand abstract space, I understand abstract time."¹⁵ Indeed, Paik explored the abstract concept of time in various ways before discovering video as a medium for his music. For example, in his action music piece *One for Violin* (1962), [Plate 2-4] Paik prolonged the experience of time by lifting the violin extremely slowly before suddenly swinging it down in a quick motion and smashing it on a

table in front of him. After a tedious wait as he lifted the instrument, the audience got to experience the action of smashing as a moment of compressed time that encapsulated the duration of the entire performance. He became fascinated with new mediums such as television and video mainly because he was seeking ways to physically “edit” the flow of “real time” beyond this conceptual manipulation of time. In *Guadalcanal Requiem*, we see his signature visual style for his videos—image distortion effects—leading to temporal (dis)locations. In compiling this video-montage requiem, Paik employed three major techniques to complicate the viewer’s experience of linear time: repetition, freeze, and reversal. Throughout this video, we see examples of a scene and narration being repeated multiple times; a “frozen” scene or an image seemingly on pause; and a sequence being rewound and reshown. In analyzing each technique, we see that, for Paik, such time manipulation effects served the video’s main purpose: to console the victims of the war with his musical composition.

[Repetition]

Throughout the video, we see repetitions of the same short video clip or sound input. The viewer is queued to acknowledge that the linear flow of time (naturalistic depiction of time) is being challenged. The first example of this starts at 2’10” (2 minutes 10 seconds) with a short video clip made from archival footage of the Second World War that features a U.S. warship with its guns firing. The same clip is shown again at 4’17” following clips of an interview with Bob Edwards, a veteran from the Battle of Guadalcanal. This time the archival footage is distorted by the Paik Abe Synthesizer and transforms into a line drawing in grayish blue and purple.

[Plate 4-1, 4-2] In this way, the viewer understands there is more than one linear flow of time within the video: the one recorded by Paik in 1977 and the other from the archival war footage. By repeating video clips, Paik reveals his interest in video's medium-specificity in terms of its temporal manipulation.¹⁶

Not only does the use of repetition challenge and complicate the depiction of linear time, but it also functions as a method to reinforce and enhance the narrative and message of the video content. Some examples of the repetition emphasize the main idea of the selected scene being repeated. The sequence that begins at 9'11" is the first example of such repetition for emphasis in *Requiem*. At this point, we see skulls and bones in the middle of the Guadalcanal jungle [Plate 4-3], followed by a shot of a Japanese man's face. The camera closes in to show the tears welling up in his eyes, and then zooms out slightly to show the bullet scars on his face. [Plate 4-4] While the camera is showing his face, Charlotte Moorman's voice is heard saying, "Oh, look," bringing attention to the veteran's scars from the war. At the same time, a text is superimposed on his face that reads "MACHINEGUN," [Plate 4-5] to imply his wound came from a machinegun fired at the Japanese troops during the battle. This sequence is repeated five times in quick succession. This repetition creates a beautiful highlight to the contextual story that was being told in the previous sequence. Beginning at 6'27" we hear Moorman talking with Bob Edwards, saying, "We are admiring the beautiful calm river and someone said this is that Matanikau River, the bloody river, the Japanese-American border line. How many lives were lost in this river of blood and tears?" This conversation continues up to 9'11", to the scene showing the scarred face. Moorman narrates, "[...] are these tears or

raindrops? Yes, it's the tears of the samurai. Lost wars and wasted years." In this context, the repeated sequence is bringing strong emotional affect to the absurdity and devastation of the war.

Repetition is used for audio as well as for visual. A sequence that starts at 28'34" and ends at 30'50" shows Bob Edwards giving his personal account of the battle. He says, "[...] you're there. You don't run. You are there. What keeps you there? The whole world is falling apart around you and you're there. [...] [The] sounds are horrendous. [...] It's just like going through a night of hell." Then we hear Nam June Paik's voice asking Edwards, "He comes back in your dream now?" (In a section of the interview not included Edwards described a recurring nightmare in which he was haunted by a man in the battle.) Edwards's reply to Paik, that "a dream becomes less and less as you grow older," is repeated three times in a rapid succession, as the sound grows louder and louder. Then we hear the last word from Paik's question, "now," repeated three times, followed by a sequence synthesized to repeat different smaller and smaller fragments of Edwards' previous remarks as the sound fades:

a dream, a dream becomes less and less as you grow older [...]

a dream, a dream becomes less and less as you grow [...]

a dream, a dream becomes less and less as you [...]

a dream, a dream becomes less and less,

a dream becomes [...].

This repeated use of a video clip emphasizes those particular parts of the narrative Paik wanted to stress: the portrayal of the gruesome imagery of the war. The focus on visceral images of the violence heightens the purpose of consoling the dead,

which eventually turns the visual effect into supporting material for his music.

[Freeze]

Another mode Paik employed to complicate the time concept for his video was to stop and to pause the naturalistic depiction of time. In *Guadalcanal Requiem* he achieved this by inserting still images. Interestingly, instead of editing-in actual still images directly onto the videotape, Paik chose to film still images to create a sense of stopped time, with the recorded material actually running in real time. Even though these still images are actually scenes that are happening in the normal linear flow of time, the viewer experiences them as frozen moments, as the subject is not in motion. Paik then challenges this sense of stopped time by zooming in and out, and adding sound to the scene, so the viewer realizes that what appears to be a still image is actually a moving image.

An example of this technique can be seen after a sequence of video showing a conversation between Charlotte Moorman and Bob Edwards, when at 8'01" the viewer is suddenly confronted with what appears to be a still image of a mummified soldier's skull wearing a helmet. [Plate 4-6] In fact, rapid, repeated zooming on the image indicates that it is a black-and-white photograph being filmed with a hand-held camera. The Synthesizer distorts the image into an explosion of pink and purple, with a bright yellow line drawing of a skull floating over the colorized background. [Plate 4-7] While this visual effect is taking place, Bob Edwards's voice is heard explaining his experience of the battle, which goes hand in hand with the image being shown. The skulls move about in synch with the rhythm created as

fragments of his spoken words are repeated: “It’s like you’re, you’re, you’re in limbo. You’re, you’re in limbo. Your world is, is, is, is, is, is out. Your world is splitting in half. You’re, you’re, you’re you’re [...]” The inclusion of the still image after a filmed conversation that took place in 1977 abruptly stops the naturalistic depiction of linear time. Now the viewer is forced to see nothing but a photograph taken in 1942, which brings the viewer to a moment in the past, rupturing his or her perception of the time flow. On the other hand, the viewer also realizes that what he or she is seeing is a photograph being filmed near the time of the present conversation about looking back to the 1940s and conjuring up visceral images of the battle from this archival photograph. Juxtaposition of the 1942 image with the 1977 footage takes the viewer back and forth in time between two time frames that are three decades apart.

This break with the linear flow of time was already part of Nam June Paik’s agenda for manipulating time in his music when he declared in 1963:

Fly weight composer (HIGGINS) works with seconds.
 Feather weight composer (WEBER) works with minutes.
 Light weight composer (BEETHOVEN) works with ten minutes.
 Middle weight composer (BACH) works with hours.
 Light heavy weight composer (WAGNER) works with days.
 Heavy weight composer (N. J. PAIK) works with days, weeks, YEARS,
 CENTURIES, Megayears [...] ¹⁷

Paik carried this idea of working with long spans of time and manipulating time perception into his video work. In this sense, Paik’s signature style of compounding different time frames became his strategy for continuing his musical experimentation through his new medium, video.

What, then, did Paik want to achieve through the complication of temporality with this specific image? The photograph was taken on the Solomon Islands in 1942 after the Battle of Guadalcanal by photojournalist Ralph Morse, and published in the February 1, 1943 issue of *Life* magazine.¹⁸ [Plate 4-8] The photo depicted the skull of a severed head of a Japanese soldier who had been burned alive; his open mouth revealing the pain from his tortured death. After it was published, the photograph sparked protests from readers, as this horrendous image called into question the necessity of war with all its horrors (as well as the behavior of American soldiers who would so mutilate an enemy's corpse).¹⁹ Paik chose this well-known still image for its ability to instill the horror of the battle in Guadalcanal in a most unsettling way. After watching a series of scenes of moving images, the viewer most likely pays less and less attention to details, so that the viewer passively accepts the moving image and its narrative without having enough time to focus on a specific image in the frame. The individual frames in the moving images easily slip away in the viewer's mind as he or she is confronted with one new scene after another. That being said, the insertion of a filmed still image between the footage of moving images becomes an effective tactic to disrupt the flow of its linear time, forcing the viewers to focus on the one specific image.

Paik's use of the freeze technique here calls the viewer's attention to this graphic depiction of the pervasive violence at Guadalcanal. It serves as a powerful vehicle to convey the video's central theme, the absurdity and cruelty of a war that is now (in the late 1970s) being forgotten. Forcing viewers to contemplate the horrific violence

of this war, for Paik, is a way to honor the souls of the war victims, serving the purpose of his requiem.

[Reversal]

A third technique Paik employed to manipulate time for *Guadalcanal Requiem* is reversal. When a video clip is rewound, it creates an impression of going backwards in time, which goes against the naturalistic depiction of time and signals to the viewer a certain message Paik wants to address. In order to decipher the message, I looked for a common thread in sections of *Requiem* where reversal was employed. Throughout the video, reversal of time happens four times: at 14'50", 15'11", 30'18", and 34'26". What these four segments had in common was that all were pieces of documentary footage from the Second World War, and that all were presented with visual and audio input that addresses the violence of war, invoking lamentation for the victims—soldiers and civilians—who suffered in the war. Coupled with such input, the reversed documentary footage presented an imaginary undoing of the devastation of the war, which is essentially what Paik desired to do for the souls of the war victims.

For example, the footage that begins at 14'50" directly follows Charlotte Moorman's narration (beginning at 13'50") explaining the Battle:

Just two days after our American landing, the Japanese Navy struck a heavy blow to the U.S. navy, while still unloading their supplies. Our navy retreated. The marines in Guadalcanal were left with little food, little ammunition, and without control over the sea and the sky. Meanwhile, a strong Japanese army made a counter landing here at the eastern front. The first victim was a native policeman Mr. Jacob Vouza [spelling?] who was bayoneted four times for information but still kept the marine's

secret, and he was left for dead.

At 14'50", archival documentary film footage of Battle of Tenaru begins, but played in reverse. The original film shows soldiers at a cannon, and cannonballs shelling out [Plate 4-9], while its reverse presents the viewer a peaceful alternative to the horrible war scene narrative: the fired cannonballs shoot back into the cannon where they were housed, and the violence is undone. Another example of inverted time as a metaphoric healing for the atrocities happens in the following sequence, beginning at 15'11". It starts with an interview video clip in which Bob Edwards reminisces about the horror he experienced one night as he waited expectantly for a possible enemy attack (the caption indicates it was during the Battle of Savo Island). "It was starting to get dark, and I was all alone out there, and that was not a particularly good place to be because we didn't know if everyone, every Japanese was killed. In fact, how do you know if every Japanese is NOT killed?" At this point, the viewer may be convinced that any violence the veteran might commit would be justified because it would be committed out of necessity: if he did not kill, he might be killed. This endorsement of violence is challenged by the next footage Paik inserted that shows happy native children playing in the water. Juxtaposing the Edwards interview segment with the footage of children playing [Plate 4-10] serves to highlight the fact that the violence of the war doesn't always discriminate between soldiers and civilians, and avoiding war would save precious lives such as those children's. Right after this strong message, Paik inserted another piece of reverse footage of the war documentary film. It is a black-and-white film that

recorded a number of dead bodies piled on top of each another. [Plate 4-11] The shaky quality of the recording shows that the camera was hand-held. Curiously its rapid reversal brings a different meaning to the wobbling effect: it appears as if the corpses are shaking their bodies to wake up from their sleep. Here again, Paik is going backward in time to create a fantasy solution to the unwanted, unjustifiable violence. The intention of the reversal becomes even clearer when the next scene runs normally. What you hear are sound effects that signal the war, but what you see is a pig sniffing and poking at the ground with its snout, to signify the greed of the nations instigating the war.²⁰ At this point the caption appears: "Battle of Tenaru. Inexperienced marines, without air-sea cover, routed a fierce banzai attack," alluding to the fact that many soldiers and civilians were killed during the attack.

In these examples, temporal inversion in *Guadalcanal Requiem* functions as an effective tool for Paik to correct the devastating events of the war's history in the Solomon Islands, reinforcing his idea that lives could have been saved, offering in his requiem that these souls be honored by stopping wars.

The Synthesizer as a musical instrument for synaesthesiac music

Nam June Paik suggested in a 1970 essay about the Paik-Abe Synthesizer that he regarded it as a musical instrument. He wrote that the "Video Synthesizer is the accumulation of my nine years' TV-shit (if this holy allusion is allowed), turned into *a real-time video piano* [my emphasis] by the Golden Finger of Shuya Abe, my great mentor."²¹ That same year, he revealed his agenda that his new music should coordinate visual input with musical composition. "What kind of visual material will

accompany the vast repertoire of classical and pop music?," he asked.²² With televised musical programming in mind, he then suggested that visuals should be more than musicians playing during a performance, saying, "People will be quickly tired of von Karajan's turtleneck or Beatle's long hair." He went on to suggest that the electronic manipulation of the moving image such as could be created with the Synthesizer was the solution, that the cure for the boring prospect of simply televising performance "might end up by producing new fertile genre, called "Electronic opera."²³ He expected the Synthesizer would allow the next generation of musicians to compose a new kind of music that was visual as well as sonic. The Paik-Abe Synthesizer was the musical instrument that would facilitate Paik's creation of synaesthesiac music.

Using the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer, Paik was able to create montages of moving images and then to superimpose over them image distortion, sound effects and narration and captions, all simultaneously, enabling him to make *Guadalcanal Requiem* a total work of art. In the first few minutes of this work, he begins with a segment that combines all of these elements and serves as an example. Beginning at 1'31" until 2'43", a march sequence is heard as a background sound effect. For the duration of this sequence, we see a series of eight pieces of video footage in a row: a video clip from a Bob Edwards interview, a piece of archival footage of the Second World War, two more video clips of the Edwards interview, footage of a watch drifting onto the shore, another piece of archival war footage, the same footage of the watch, and footage of a Japanese car. Paik's "electronic opera" comes to its full effect when some of the footage is electronically manipulated, using the "lining"

effect combined with the Synthesizer's color channel mixer. For example, at 2'05" the image of the watch on the wavy shore turns into an abstract line drawing of the contour of the waves hitting the shore in the colors of purple and bright neon green. [Plate 4-2] Except for the line drawings, the rest of the image becomes a color field in light blue.

Another example of "total art" takes place between 16'27" and 19'30", which shows Charlotte Moorman with her cello playing "Le Cygne" (The Swan) from *Carnival of the Animals* by Saint Saens, for which the sound is partially distorted with noise. While the music is heard, the video shows Moorman performing in front of the Marine Memorial Tower at Guadalcanal. [Plate 4-12] Because, Paik (as he declared in the aforementioned essay) did not want to bore the viewer with ordinary footage of the performance, he manipulated the image using the Synthesizer. Whenever the sound of the melody is distorted, the image is also distorted in sync with the rhythm of the sound distortion, creating a perfect example of synaesthesiac music.²⁴ [Plate 4-13] In a third example, from 25'30" to 26'27", Paik inserted archival footage of Red Cross workers during the war. A line drawing in a neon lavender color following the contours of the workers is superimposed on the black-and-white footage. [Plate 4-14, 4-15] The lines wobble to create waves radiating from the original contour lines in accordance with the audio signal sound effect being heard, an effect that is supported by the Synthesizer's audio signal generator.

Action Music Serving as Requiem within *Requiem*

As discussed above, one of Paik's techniques for the distortion of depicted time in *Guadalcanal Requiem* was the reversal of video sequences. These inverted time sequences call attention to the message of the video—to give solace and honor the deceased through music. Paik sends a perhaps more personal message by inserting a filmed performance, shown in reverse, of his own action music in collaboration with Charlotte Moorman. The reversed time passage starts at 30'18", with video showing Charlotte Moorman crawling along the rocky beach at Guadalcanal. Paik directed Moorman to simulate the infantry landing of 1942 with her body. She is wearing a military uniform and a helmet, with her cello fastened to her back as if it is her weapon. [Plate 4-16] Behind her, we see pieces of war wreckage clad with barnacles and half submerged in the water. The camera slowly zooms out and shows that Moorman is crawling towards Paik. [Plate 4-17] Paik is walking on a parallel track in the opposite direction of Moorman, dragging a violin behind him on the sand as the surf comes and goes near him. [Plate 4-18] As the violin is dragged along the ground, it gets more and more destroyed. Paik had already employed the violent destruction of a violin in *One for Violin Solo* (1961), and he had dragged the violin on a string behind him in *Action with a Violin on a String*, which he showcased for his Wuppertal *Exposition of Music* in 1963.²⁵ [Plate 4-19] Similarly a reference to his destruction of a musical instrument for his action music appears at 2'43", where Moorman appears for the first time in the video, holding her cello on the beach. [Plate 4-20] This scene is followed by war footage of the making and transporting of shells. Next, the video shows Moorman playing the cello [Plate 4-21], followed by four more seconds of the war archival footage, and then an image of bombs and a

violin cut in half on the sand. [Plate 4-22] Here, however the repeated use of images of destroyed musical instruments has a different connotation for Paik than in the 1960s. Then, Paik smashed and hacked at a violin and a piano because they symbolized conventionalism in music. Then, he meant to address and attack these instruments as a way of creating a totally new kind of music as an avant-garde music composer. However, in *Guadalcanal Requiem*, this destruction of musical instruments is intended to show the violence of the war in a poetic way and also to soothe the wounded souls of the victims at Guadalcanal in 1942 by paying tribute to his early music. In this sense, the performance of destruction of a musical instrument serves as a requiem within a requiem, reinforcing the idea that the 1960s performances were indeed a form of Paik's music and that he acknowledged it.

In reenacting action music he created in the early 1960s, Paik made sure it was not just a repetition of the same old work, by reversing the flow of its time duration through video technology. As the distance between Paik and Moorman gets shorter and shorter, black and white archival images of destructive explosions appear between shots of their performance. As Paik and Moorman proceed past one another on their parallel tracks, the video is edited so its time runs in reverse. [Plate 4-23] In this inversion, the archival footage of Guadalcanal starts to reveal a different story. Dead bodies are resurrected and start walking backwards away from their deathbeds; a shell pops out of the ground and re-integrates its exploded pieces. We also see bombs flying back up into the openings in the bottoms of the fighter planes. This reversal implies undoing the violence of the war. The instant when

Paik's violin performance meets with Moorman's is when the healing begins through his music.

Paik's anti-war message is evident through his constant "implants" of metaphors for therapy and healing. Moorman's musical performance contributes to the purpose of the requiem as a consolation. Throughout the video, Moorman is seen with her cello: at 13'50" we see her cello on top of armored plane wreckage, followed by a scene with Moorman playing it on the plane wreckage using tree branches, and at 16'27" she is playing in front of the Marine Memorial Tower, paying respect to the victims of the battle. [Plate 4-13] The cello as a metaphor for the healing quality of music is referenced again at 28'55", where Paik and Moorman are seen performing *Infiltration—Homogen für Cello*, composed by Josef Beuys, their friend and sometime collaborator. [Plate 4-24] Next, as a veteran's voice speaks: "It's certainly nothing that you read about or that you see on the screen," Paik is seen meditating, sitting cross-legged, on the rusting plane wreckage. Soon the camera turns to capture Moorman climbing up onto the wreckage, dressed in an extravagant red gown, with her hand holding her cello tightly by its neck. The veteran's voice says: "The sounds are horrendous" He continues: "The screaming, the hollering." At this point the camera cuts back to Moorman moving slowly in the direction of the meditating artist. She presents him with a cello wrapped in thick gray felt. [Plate 4-25] At 30'10", we see Moorman's hand attaching strips of red tape forming a red cross to the felt-wrapped cello, re-creating the sculpture piece by Beuys, who had adopted the red cross, the international symbol of humanitarian aid, as a personal signature in the 1950s. (This segment appears just minutes after the archival

footage of Red Cross workers, at 25'30" to 26'27".) Beuys's use of felt was based on a personal wartime incident in which he himself had experienced felt as a material that brings life and health back to suffering souls.²⁶ Beuys's first felt-covered musical instrument with a red cross, the celebrated *Homogenous Infiltration for Piano* [Plate 4-26], was first "performed" in 1966 during a concert in Dusseldorf, where Paik (who had written a piece to be performed) and Moorman were in attendance, Beuys appeared on stage pushing a piano wrapped tightly in felt, and pinned a red cross mark on it in front of the audience. Moorman later asked Beuys to make a cello version for her, the *Infiltration—Homogen für Cello*.²⁷ Paik's inclusion of Beuys's felt-wrapped piece for Moorman's cello was then another metaphor for healing in *Guadalcanal Requiem*.

Paik later commented on the interesting weaving of Beuys' *Infiltration Homogen für Cello*, Moorman's cello performance and Paik's own performance in *Guadalcanal Requiem*. Paik remembered:

We performed at many and various places, and among them all the most impressive was a performance at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, the fierce battleground of World War II. [...] we shot a film of performance of the Beuys's *Infiltration* on the debris of a plane shot down during the war. We selected seven or eight pieces from Charlotte Moorman's repertoire and shot the piece one by one in each of the accessible and interesting locations: the beach where the Japanese landed, the bloody ridge, which was the turning point of the Pacific War, and at Henderson Field, the airport that Korean forced laborers constructed and the Americans captured, etc. It was the end of the last filming day and the sun was going down rapidly. We bumped into a huge World War II airplane wreck... and the only musical piece which was yet to be recorded was Beuys "Infiltration to Cello" piece.²⁸

Reinforcing the idea that *Guadalcanal Requiem* is Paik's musical creation in the form of video art are the significant musical connections that underpinned its creation. Through musical connections—because Paik had written a piece to be performed at the 1966 concert where Beuys introduced his felt-wrapped piano—Paik discovered the allegory of healing war wounds that was embedded in Beuys's use of felt. Paik's musical collaborator Moorman had her cello wrapped by Beuys to use for Paik's musical composition written for her. Paik's culminating expression of condolence comes through the symbolism of Moorman's felted cello at the very site where they wanted to honor the souls of the war victims and promote healing. In this sense, the performance of their music as a visual and sonic requiem, a synaesthiac experience, reinforces the idea that the *Guadalcanal Requiem* is Paik's musical creation in the form of video art.

The case study presented in this chapter, of *Guadalcanal Requiem*, one of Nam June Paik's major video works, has shown how the experience and knowledge accumulated during his exploration of multiple time-based mediums for music informed his video production. It shows that video for Paik was another time-based medium for composing, a medium that would facilitate his goal of abolishing conventionalism in music, a medium that would facilitate his continuing quest—one he pursued for the span of four decades of his career—to discover “what is music?”

¹ Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION" (March 1963, Galerie Parnass), *fLuxus cc fiVe ThReE*, June 1964, section 2. p. 4. New York Public Library

² Nam June Paik, "Expanded Education for the Paper-less Society, in Rosebush, *Videa 'n' Videology*, 34.

³ Ibid.

⁴ A number of people assisted in the creation of the video. A war veteran, Bob Edwards, was interviewed to give testimony of his personal account of the battles in Guadalcanal. Steve Mason worked as cinematographer, Russell Connor as narrator, Frank Pileggi as location director, Laurie Spiegel as sound effect expert, Michael Pursche, Peter Hardy, Richard Maude, Graham Hellett and Bill Viola as camera crew. See ending caption in *Guadalcanal Requiem*.

⁵ TV Laboratory at WNET/ Channel 13 was a video art workshop project that lasted from 1972-1984, supported from New York WNET/ Channel 13, San Francisco KQED, Boston WGBH, Rockefeller Foundation, New York State Council on Arts (NYSCA), and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The artists who participated in this residency program were allowed to utilize all studio equipment of the broadcasting stations for their video experiments, and the results could be broadcast on television. From Interview with Russell Connor, 2010, and Interview with David Atwood, Olivia Tappan, and Fred Barzyk, 2010, Nam June Paik Art Center Archive; Sang-Ae Park, "Guadalcanal Requiem Video Tape Analysis (과달카날 레퀴엠 비디오 테이프 분석)", *Cyberneticus*, (Yong-in: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2012), p.202-203

⁶ With this grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, Paik also produced a few more video works, including *You Can't Lick Stamps in China* and *Media Shuttle/ Moscow-New York* in 1978. Educational Broadcasting Corporation – Paik, Nam June, Series 200R, Rockefeller Foundation Archive, RAC This is NOT a complete reference—needs what it is, date, folder and box numbers

⁷ See, for example, <http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-archive/charlotte-moorman-and-nam-june-paik-1976>.

⁸ *Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik "From Jail to Jungle," 1976-77*, Carnegie Hall 1976-77, program, New York, Carnegie Hall, 1977.

⁹ Nam June Paik Art Center houses the original version, EAI distributed version (28'33") and another version of EAI marked "preview" that has an footage of Paik's interview with Ashahi TV, Japan.

¹⁰ This version is made available on EAI website: <http://www.eai.org/title.htm?id=4229>.

¹¹ John Hanhardt ed., *Global Groove 2004* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2004), 46.

¹² Edith Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*, 165; David Ross, *Nam June Paik*, (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982), 109.

¹³ Hans Breder and Stephen C. Foster ed., *Intermedia* (School of Art and Art History), (Des Moines: The University of Iowa, 1978, 135.

¹⁴ See Introduction for Paik's fascination with musique concrete in the late 1950s.

¹⁵ Gregory Battcock, *New Artists Video* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), 127.

¹⁶ Art historian Gabrielle Gopinath has argued that Paik's repeated use of a video clip makes reference to prior cinematic techniques. "Some American war movies rushed into production during the 1940s repeated short loops of archival footage to depict combat." She assumes Paik must have known the film *Guadalcanal Diary*, which documented the battle that took place there. The author points out that the battle scenes in *Guadalcanal Diary* rely extensively on repetitions of short film sequences showing actual combat. Gabrielle Gopinath, "Reversing Time's Arrow in Nam June Paik's Guadalcanal Requiem," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 30, no.3 (2013): 222.

¹⁷ Nam June Paik, "New Ontology of Music," in Rosebush, ed., *Video 'n' Videology*, 3.

¹⁸ "The Week's Events: Guadalcanal: The Battle of Grassy Knoll (burned skull of enemy soldier propped up on enemy tank," photo by Ralph Morse, in *Life* (Feb. 1, 1943), p. 21. For more information on the image and an with Ralph Morse, see: <http://life.time.com/history/guadalcanal-rare-and-classic-photos-from-a-pivotal-wwii-campaign/#1>.

¹⁹ "The referenced atrocities included not only the use of the flamethrower and the subsequent decapitation, but also the evidence of mutilations that had taken place prior to the head's display. The photo shows that the head's teeth had been knocked out, probably by U.S. soldiers in search of trophies or gold fillings. [...] This was not only a horrific image that recorded the devastation that modern methods of warfare might wreak upon combatants' bodies. It also became a controversial document that confronted *Life* subscribers with uncomfortable truths about the behavior of some U.S. soldiers abroad, and presumably provoked some readers to question their assumptions of inherent moral and cultural superiority over the enemy in the Pacific theatre." Gopinath, "Reversing Time's Arrow in Nam June Paik's Guadalcanal Requiem," 226.

²⁰ Beginning at 2'10", Russell Connor's narration begins, revealing Paik's take on the cause of the Second World War: "World War II could be interpreted as the first oil war. In order to stall the Japanese invasion of China, the United States, the major oil producer of that time, imposed what was in effect an oil embargo on Japan, on July 31, 1940." Also, in his essay "First Oil War" he submitted to Rockefeller Foundation, Paik wrote his opinion on the cause of the Pacific War in 1941 was American oil embargo on Japan. According to his essay, when the U.S. set total embargo of oil and freezing of Japanese assets on July 13 1941, the Japanese emperor Hirohito wrote "...the question is oil." As a consequence, Japan overtook the oil fields of Indonesia, Hawaii and the West Coast by force. Series 200R, Rockefeller Foundation Archive, RAC.

²¹ Nam June Paik, "Video Synthesizer Plus," *Radical Software*, no. 2 (1970), 25.

²² Nam June Paik, "Video Variation" (1970), reprinted in Rosebush, ed., *Videa 'n' Videology*, 55.

²³ Ibid. By "electronic opera," he meant a musical presentation coupled with electronically manipulated images—a form of synaesthesia.

²⁴ The image manipulation includes techniques such as colorization, solarization, and lining distortion by adjusting scanning lines.

²⁵ Paik created the concept for this performance of dragging a violin on a string behind him to let the audience experience the slow destruction of the musical instrument (in 1961, the piece was titled *Violin with String*). It was in 1975 when the object was used for an actual performance and called *Action with a Violin on a String*, at the New York Avant-garde Festiva, which had been started by Charlotte Moorman. See Chapter 2.

²⁶ Beuys joined the German army during World War II and served in multiple combat bomber units. Beuys claimed that his obsession with felt began after his plane was shot down in 1944, on the Crimean Front, and he was rescued by Tartar tribesmen, who wrapped his wounded body in animal fat and felt in order to cure him. See for example, Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), 16–17.

²⁷ Nam June Paik, *Beuys Vox 1961-86*, (Seoul: Edition Won Gallery / Hyundai Gallery, 1990), 37. Paik wrote this catalogue essay as part of a tribute to Beuys.

²⁸ Nam June Paik, *Beuys Vox 1961-86*, 37.

Conclusion

For Nam June Paik, video was one of the many art mediums he explored to pursue his lifetime quest to challenge and overcome the traditional definitions of what constitutes music. As a young student, Arnold Schönberg's music had arrested Paik's interest because it defied the ideas of tonality, harmony and centralized melodic development that were the established norms for musical composition. Questioning the norms became a motto Paik learned from his extensive study of Schönberg; defying the conventional practices in music became a central notion of Paik's artistic evolution for his own musical compositions. In the course of his constant effort to redefine music, Paik came across and used various mediums as vehicles for his revolutionary music that transgressed traditional concepts of what music is. Paik utilized melodic folk songs, action music scores, synaesthesiac visual music, television art and video art, all of which, despite their vastly different manifestations, enabled him to challenge and expand the very definition of music. Merriam-Webster's dictionary definition of "music" is "the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity." For Paik, however, music was more than simply about tones and sounds. He became invested in the concept of its "temporal relationships" and delved into various ways to twist and manipulate those relationships for the creation of his music, and he chose mediums that would serve that very purpose.

Paik spoke openly and often about his obsession with temporality, of his interest in dealing with time as a musician. Be it real time, durational time, or infinity, Paik intended to challenge musical audiences' experience of temporality. In order to differentiate himself from other musicians, he borrowed ideas from science that complicated the concept of linear time and would help him to manipulate the human perception of time. Paik's discovery of Norbert Wiener's cybernetics theory led him to understand how bringing together the past, present and future in a continuous loop could perpetuate presentness into infinity. He also understood that Einstein's spacetime concept, that time can stretch and shrink in relation to space under certain circumstances, had challenged the long-established Newtonian concept of time and space—essentially, that absolute or linear time determines the sequence of events, and absolute space their location. Paik absorbed spacetime as further groundwork for manipulating time, to be incorporated into his music. Another interesting aspect of the spacetime concept is that it enabled him to find a spatial aspect of music, making it a sensory-perceptual experience.

Paik's spatial scheme in music was essentially the addition of essential visual elements for his musical compositions. This attention to space in relation to time was effectively explored through performances of Paik's action music scores, written from the late 1950s. The action music Paik showcased was far beyond the conventional understanding of music as vocal or instrumental sound with enjoyable melody and rhythm. The scores for his action music included much more description of the visual elements than of the sounds synchronized with them. Performance of the scores left most of the audience perplexed at such little attention

to sonic elements, but Paik contended that the planned gestures and actions to be presented were integral parts of the musical composition. Paik's need to use visual elements led him to devise performances for his collaborators, especially female ones. Once again, Paik wanted to break down the established norms by touching upon a taboo in music—sexuality; and to explore it effectively, visual presentation was crucial. While his first female collaborator, Alison Knowles, a Fluxus performance artist with a background in visual arts, ultimately did not feel comfortable with the erotic connotations embedded in the scores, Charlotte Moorman, a trained musician, understood that what Paik was doing was a revolution in music and wanted to be a part of it. Their collaboration eventually led Paik to expand his experiments with the spatial/visual aspect of music, and eventually to his discovery of video as the chosen medium for his compositions.

Paik's involvement with the Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music), and the Electronic Studio of Westdeutsche Rundfunk (WDR, West Germany Broadcasting) in the late 1950s brought him into contact with the avant-garde musicians and theorists of his day. Together with his interest in science, these influences led Paik to explore new technologies that would allow him to create works that would transgress the boundaries of sonic art. His attention to visual elements in action music turned into visualizing the sound input through electronic engineering.

The year 1963, with the opening of his "Exposition of Music-Electronic Television," at which he debuted the first television art, was a watershed for him. Using

television's inner workings—the cathode-ray tube—he manipulated temporality on a physical level within the small dimensions of a television monitor. I suggest that this is likely what Paik meant when he declared in the same year : “My TV is [...] PHYSICAL MUSIC.”¹ His discovery (at WDR) of Oscillons had spiked Paik's interest in coupling the visual with the sonic. The Oscillon, when its programming is complete, changes the shape of images on its own, leaving little room for the creator to exercise his power over the result on the screen. For Paik, the electronic image on the monitor was his way of exploring indeterminism, a concept associated with John Cage, to avoid premeditated compositions or overly precise execution of a musical score. Paik was aware when he wrote, "INDETERMINISM and VARIABILITY is the very UNDERDEVELOPED parameter in optical art, although this has been the central problem in music for the last 10 years [...],"² that indeterminism was a discourse to defy the determinant nature of Schönberg's musical methodologies. Oscillons had paved the way for the advance of electronically conceived visual music, which was a contemporary interpretation of Schönberg's synaesthesia, or integration of the senses. We can conclude that Paik's television experiments were made for the purpose of his musical composition, despite the fact that audience attention was focused mainly on the visual presentation. Paik even helped invent a musical instrument for synaesthesiac effects for his compositions. Almost simultaneously as he worked with cathode-ray tubes, Paik obtained one of the first portable video recorders, the Sony Portapak, and shot footage to combine with music to be displayed on television. The Paik-Abe Synthesizer was just the tool Paik had been looking for to edit these visuals so as to create his synaesthesiac music.

Thus I propose that Nam June Paik's video works must be understood as one of the various vehicles for his experiments in musical composition, and as the manifestation of the expansion of his musical philosophy extremely beyond—extremely beyond—the boundaries of sonic art. As is evident in *Guadalcanal Requiem*, an hour-long video work Paik made in 1977, his primary interest was always about the experience of time. He believed a musician understands time better than an artist with a background in visual art. In this video, Paik breaks the concept of linear time flow with techniques such as repeating the same scenes, pausing to create a sense of pseudo-infinity, and reversal to go backwards in time. With editing made possible by the Paik-Abe Synthesizer, Paik produced an example of synaesthesia by successfully synchronizing visual and sonic effects. Despite its hypnotizing visual presentation, *Guadalcanal Requiem* was a musical composition, with performances of his action music, and performances and collaborations with Charlotte Moorman and Josef Beuys. For this requiem for those killed and wounded during one battle but in all wars, metaphors for destruction of war and healing take the form of footage of action music that includes destroying musical instruments and then wrapping them in wool felt to promote healing. It is a personal requiem for Paik and his musical history within the *Guadalcanal Requiem*, constantly reminding the viewer that his is essentially a musical creation.

Early on, Paik looked to the historic avant-garde as a point of reference for his artistic endeavors. The nineteenth century composer Richard Wagner was a great influence for Paik to compound multiple sensory experiences for a musical piece.

Wagner's theories on *Gesamkunstwerk* initially led Paik to think about pairing visual stimuli with sonic practices. Early twentieth century art movements such as Dada and Futurism taught Paik to think critically about ways to blur the distinction between art and life and to abolish the hierarchical outlook regarding the arts. However, Paik was far from satisfied with simply reviving the historical avant-garde's artistic strategies and constantly sought ways to overthrow establishments in art. Through the evolution and expansion of his conception of music, he created significant ruptures in contemporary understandings of neo avant-garde art of the 1960s and 1970s.

¹ Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION" (March 1963, Galerie Parnass)', *fLuxus cc fiVe ThReE*, June 1964, section 2. p. 4. New York Public Library

² Ibid.

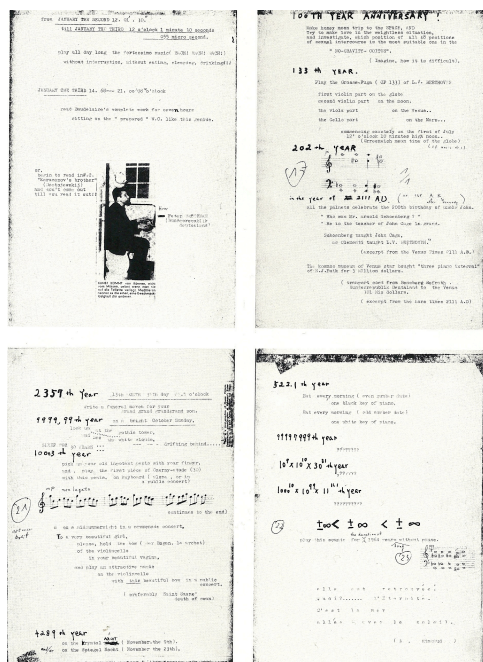
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1-2



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1-4



1-5

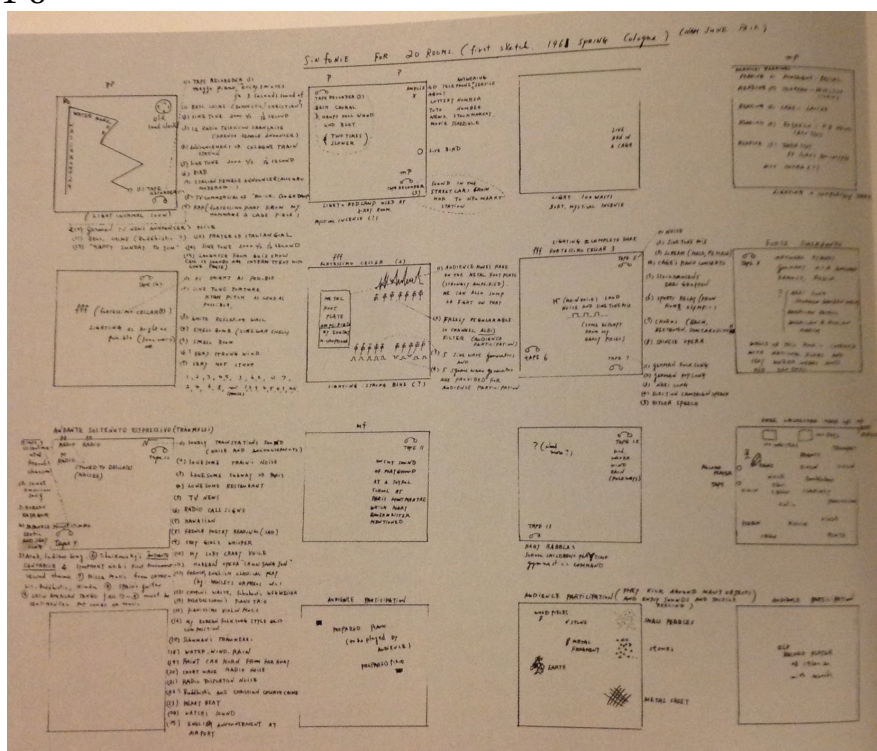


1-6



1-7





2-1



2-2



2-3

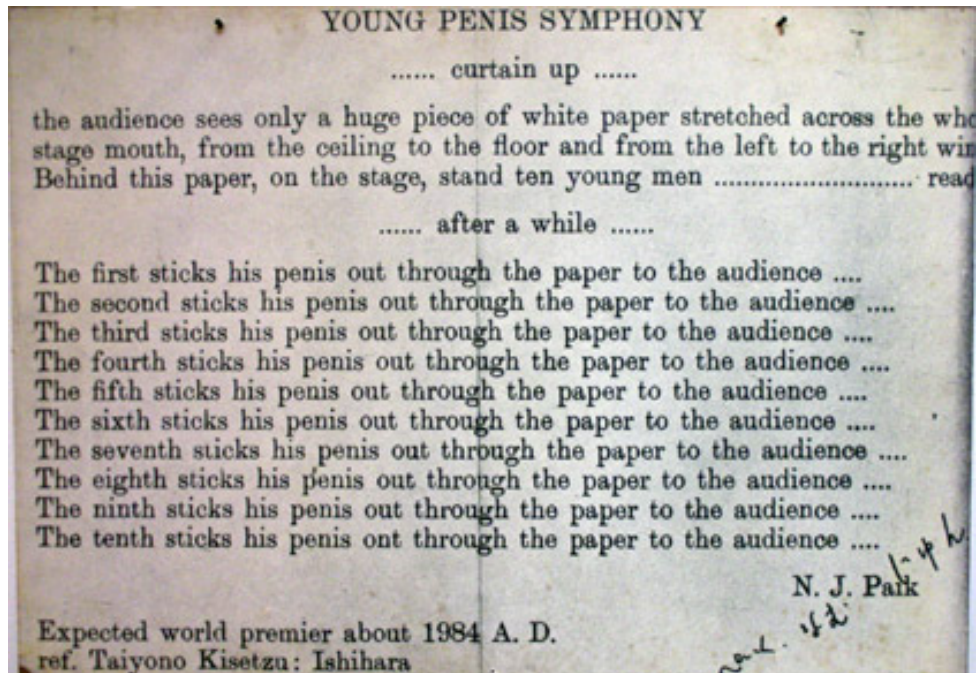


2-4

*Paile doing
a violin solo
raised it very slowly (about 5 min)
in concentrated manner & then
BANG!*



2-5



2-6



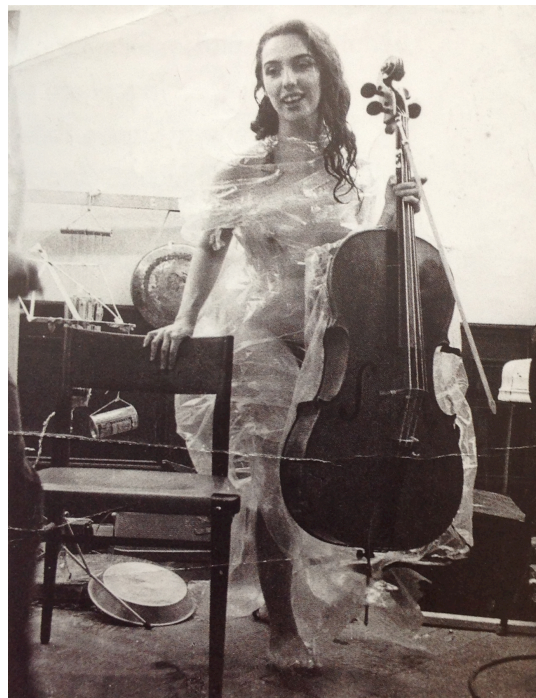
2-7



2-8



2-9



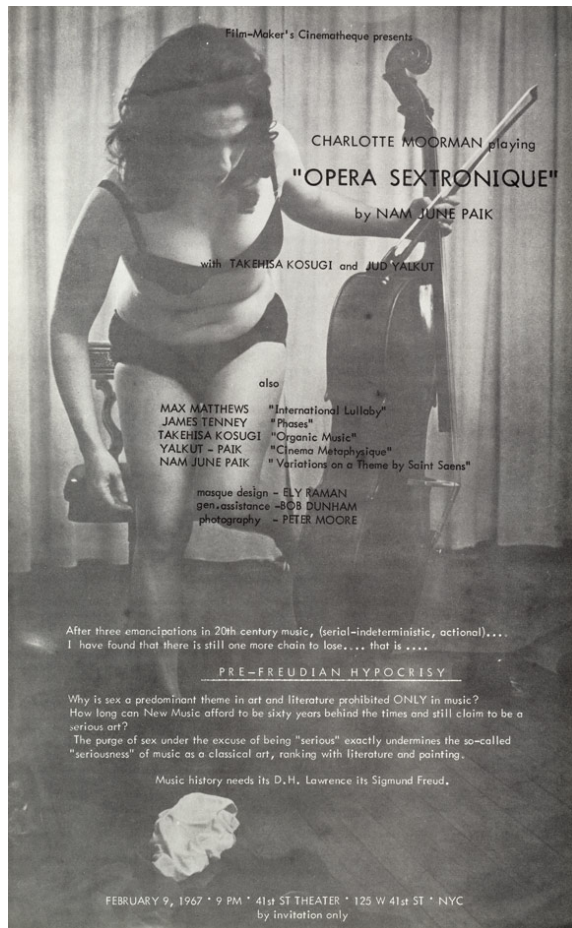
2-10



2-11



2-12



2-13



3-1

NAM JUNE PAIK

EXPosition of music

ELectronic television

11. – 20. März 1963

Wuppertal-Eberfeld
Mollkestraße 67
Tel. 35241

Galerie Parnass

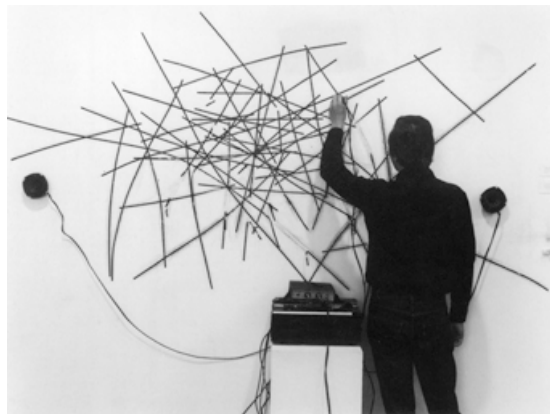
| | |
|--|--|
| Kindergarten der «Alten» | How to be satisfied with 70% |
| Feticism of «idea» | Erinnerung an das 20. Jahrhundert |
| objets sonores | sonolized room |
| Instruments for Zen-exercise | Prepared W. C. |
| Bagatelles américaines etc. | que sais-je? |
| Do it your ... | HOMMAGE à Rudolf Augstein |
| Freigegeben ab 18 Jahre | Synchronisation als ein Prinzip akausaler Verbindungen |
| Is the TIME without contents possible? | A study of German Idiocracy etc. |

Artistic Collaborators.....**Thomas Schmitt**
Frank Trowbridge
Technic.....**Günther Schmitz**
M. Zenzen

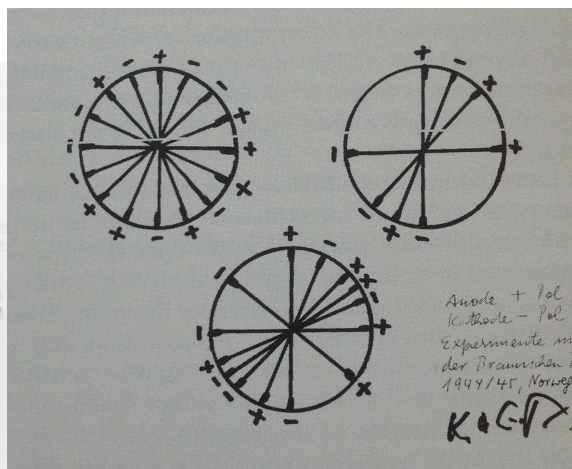
3-2



3-3



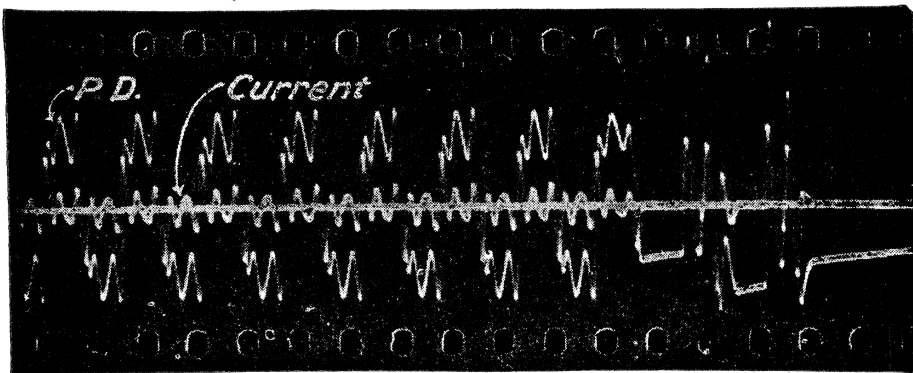
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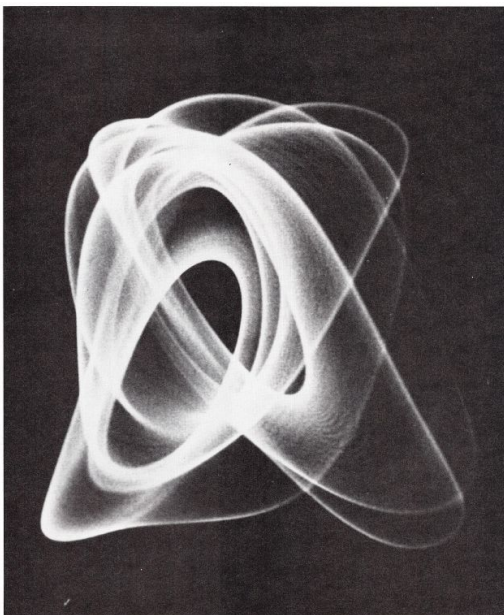
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3-6



3-7



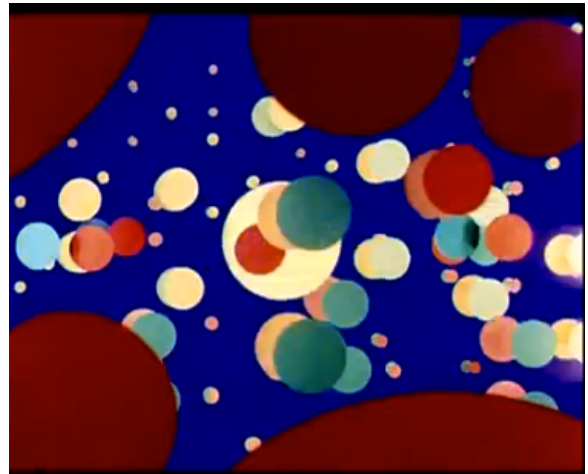
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3-9



3-10



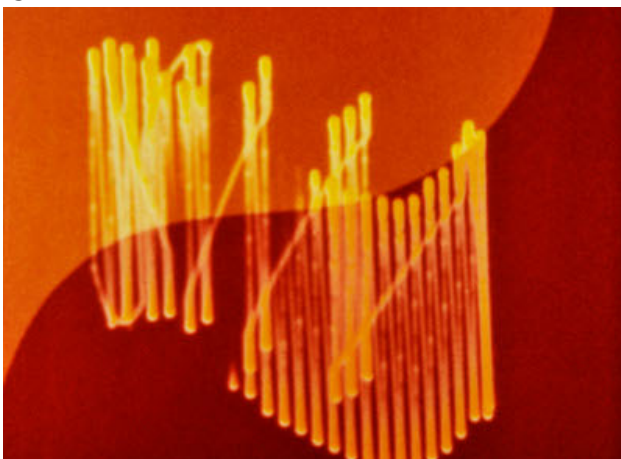
3-11



THOMAS WILFRED AT THE CLAVILUX.



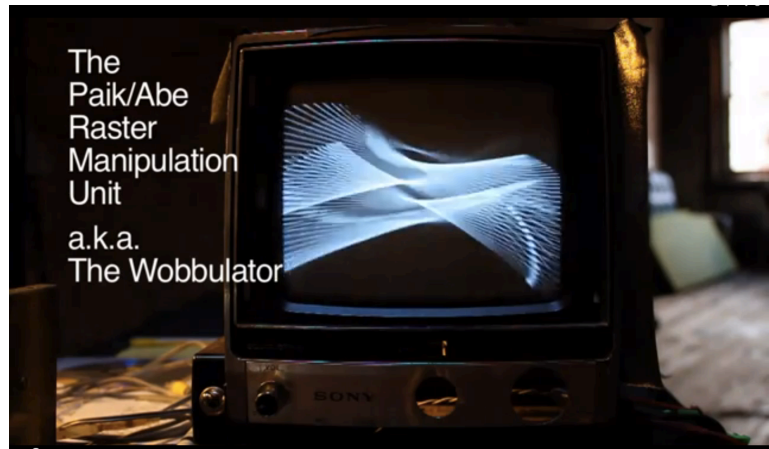
3-12



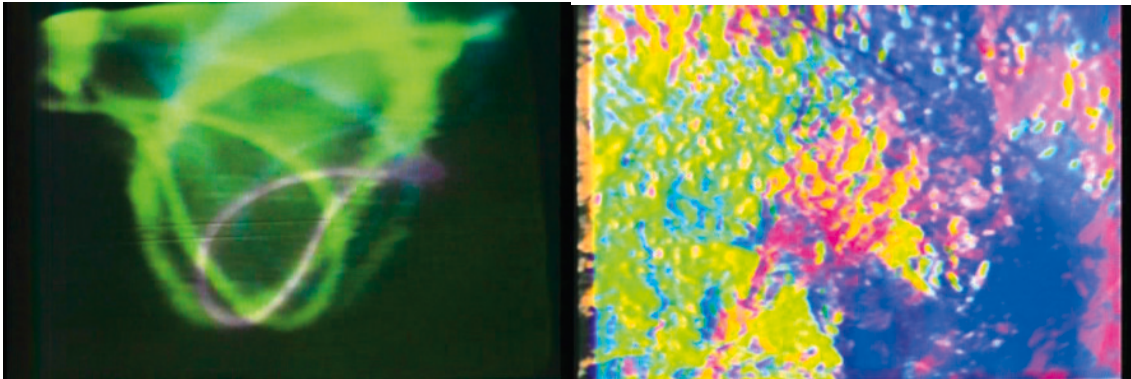
3-13



3-14



3-15 a,b

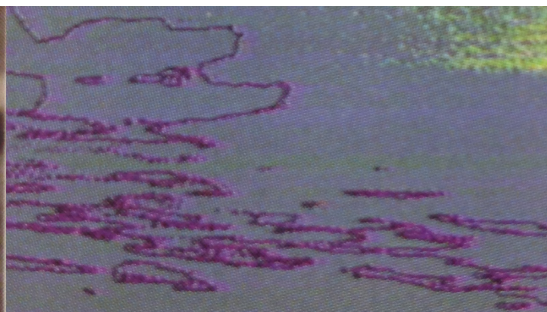


3-16



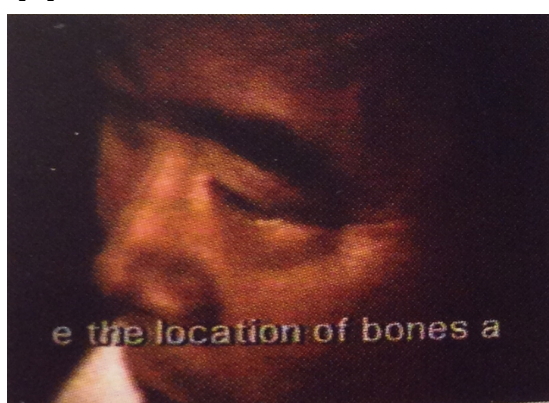
4-1

4-2



4-3

4-4



4-5

4-6



4-7



4-8



4-9



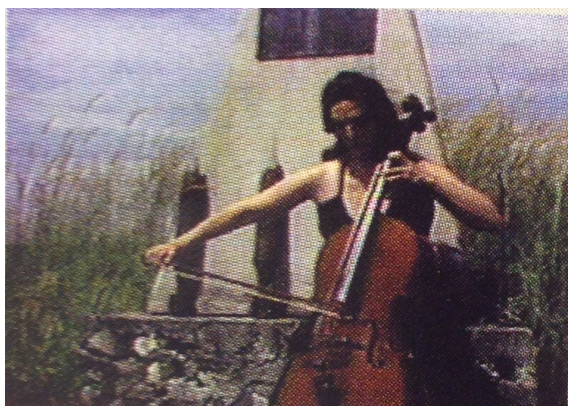
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4-11



4-12



4-13



4-14



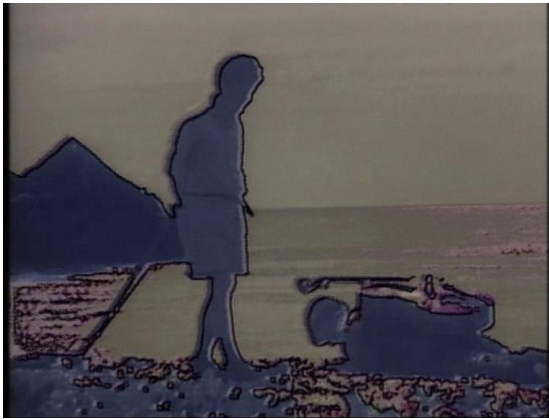
4-15



4-16



4-17



4-18



4-19



4-20



4-21



4-22



4-23



4-24



4-25



4-26

