

minimal at liminal program

La Monte Young (1935-) "The very first sound that I recall hearing was the sound of the wind blowing through the chinks and all around the log cabin in Idaho where I was born, and I've always considered this among my most important early experiences . . . During my childhood there were certain sound experiences of constant frequency that have influenced my musical ideas and development; the sounds of insects; the sounds of telephone poles and motors; sounds produced by steam escaping.

I wrote *Composition 1960 #7* in July 1960 when I was living in San Francisco after I had completed two years of graduate studies in composition at Berkeley. This was still the inspirational stage of my seminal works in concept art . . . *Composition 1960 #7* is comprised of the sustained interval of a perfect fifth, B and F#, with the instruction 'to be held for a long time.' This work evolved from the long sustained tones which I had introduced in *for Brass* (1957) and the *Trio for Strings* (1958). *Composition 1960 #7* is the only one of the 1960 concept works that is written in conventional (albeit brief) notation."

John Cage (1912-1992) may be the godfather of minimalism. Though never directly associated with the genre, his reduction of music down to melody only, and of melody down to its repetitive constituents, qualifies many of his prepared piano works as proto-Minimalist. Such is the case in *Prelude for Meditation* and *Music for Marcel Duchamp*.

Terry Riley (1935-) was strongly influenced by jazz, tape loop experiments and Hindustani music when he began composing repetitive music. In 1964, Riley composed *In C*, which is generally considered the benchmark work of American Minimal Music. For this work, Riley evolved his theory of 'pattern fields', in which identical musical phrases are overlapped as a kind of hyper-canon. *In C* is performed by an ensemble of musicians playing any combination of desired instruments. The score consists of 53 different figures that all performers play in order. Following a continuous pulse, performers play these figures at different times and repeat them at their own discretion to create a highly structured, yet improvisational performance.

Philip Glass (1937-) based early works on repetition of musical figures through his characteristic additive technique. Glass was influenced by Indian music when he started creating musical phrases by building them up over time, rather than breaking them apart. In 1968, Glass composed *1 + 1*, a simple piece for amplified tabletop, where a performer rapidly taps out two repeated rhythmic cells in a regular arithmetic progression.

Steve Reich (1936-) started by using tape and other electronics as a medium. Fascinated by the phasing effect of two reel-to-reel machines playing at slightly different speeds, Reich was moved to arrange similar 'phase shifts' for electronic instruments. He eventually abandoned his attempts at phase-shifting via electronics, but his piece *Pendulum Music* from 1968 survives as a lively representative of this transitional period. In this piece, three or more microphones, fed through amplifier and loudspeaker, are suspended from the ceiling at the same height. The microphones rest exactly above the loudspeakers so that feedback will be produced when they swing above the speaker. At the beginning of the performance, the performers draw the microphones towards them and simultaneously release them into free swing to produce a series of feedback pulses.

It can't get much more minimal than John Cage's *4'33"*, which Liminal performs this evening with special instrumentation.

"*arabic numeral (any integer)* was one of my best-known, radical early works . . . This work consists only of a repeated forearm cluster when performed on piano. *arabic numeral* may consist of any number of clusters or strokes (including only one), the number of clusters or strokes to be selected by the performer before the concert and printed in the program, for example, as *997 (April 1960) to Henry Flynt*, in the case where there are 997 clusters or strokes. This work shows a definitive beginning for what I call the more mainstream or 'hardcore' minimalism that is based on repeated rhythmic cells, as introduced by Terry Riley with *In C* in 1964 and later continued by Reich, Glass and others."

- La Monte Young

1. **Composition 1960 #7**
2. **Prelude for Meditation**
3. **Music for Marcel Duchamp**
4. **4'33"**
5. **1 + 1**
6. **Pendulum Music**
7. **Intermission**
8. **In C**
9. **997 (April 1960) to Henry Flynt**