

Things are more than what they seem, or, at the same time, they are exactly what they seem. This is particularly true of the works created by a composer such as Alvin Curran, an artist of depth and contextual curiosity who is beguiled by the stuff of sound, its surfaces and substance, yet always conscious of its place in space and society. Pungent memories suffuse this recording, the compatibility of weather and sound as metaphors for shifting emotions and elusive life, yet sound is material, impinging on the skin, sucked into the body. Memory and place entwine, ether and solid, caught up in the music.

“I light my first cigarette of the day and turn away from the window with a shudder,” wrote Raymond Carver. “The foghorn sounds again, filling me with apprehension, and then, then stupendous grief.” And the Chinese poet Li Po, perhaps feeling some similar apprehension many centuries earlier, wrote:

“With my whiskers grown long I have entered Ch’iu-pu,
In one morning gusts of wind have made them decay.
The calls of the gibbons make my hairs turn grey,
Now they flow round my head as so many strands of silk.”

Then Carver again, in his poem *Sunday Night*: “Make use of the things around you . . . put it all in, make use,” a sentiment that could be described as Curran’s maxim and method.

Alvin Curran was born in Providence, Rhode Island, on December 13, 1938. “My father, Martin Curran, played baseball and spoke Yiddish,” he tells me. “His love was his trombone, and his own lovely tenor voice. My mother, Pearl, played ragtime piano and spoke Yiddish. I followed my father to his theater gigs, accompanying tap dancers and magicians, and swooned to the absurd Anglo-Hebraic harmonies of the temple chorus where my father was lead tenor.”

“At five years they made us all—three kids—study the piano, so we could be more, or as ‘cultured’ as the goyim, the non-Jews, but whatever all that Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Schubert was about, I had never been able to understand until I was about fifty years old. I played gigs with my father’s Bar Mitzvah band, when I was about thirteen. Meanwhile, I was freely improvising in the early 1950s with my closest friend and poet, drummer Clark Coolidge. Spitting from high up in his apple tree, we decided the world as we knew it sucked and needed a total overhaul. We would be ‘artists.’ We did.”¹

W. G. Sebald writes in *Austerlitz* of a radio program about Fred Astaire, through which he heard about Astaire’s only childhood memories, the sound of shunting freight trains in the Omaha marshalling yard. These sounds stimulated ideas of going on long railway journeys, and we can only speculate on the relationship between unremitting mechanical clatter heard in formative years and a career in which the clatter of feet becomes poetic, graceful, even erotic. Similar sounds entered the imagination of Curran at an early age, playing a complex role in his development and later obsessions. “The ship horns in Providence Harbor,” he writes, “and the trainyard night booms, were the sonic frame in which Louis Armstrong, Art Tatum, Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, later Bird, Monk, Miles, and Trane—all of whom we heard live regularly—was enough original compost to feed our young roots. I went to college, to Brown University, presumably to study medicine, and in the middle of dissecting a sand shark, threw the scalpel down and changed to music.”

He studied composition with Ron Nelson at Brown University, then with Elliott Carter at Yale School of Music. Even then, in 1963, his musical language was developing through sources that were either grounded in pragmatism—his work as a society band pianist—or leaning toward the exotic—the composition of a chamber opera based on Zeami’s fourteenth-century Noh play, *The Damask Drum*.

¹ Alvin Curran, personal e-mail correspondence with David Toop, July 10–12, 2004.

At Yale, Tom Johnson and Joel Chadabe were his classmates; Richard Teitelbaum was his roommate. “Twelve-tone theory was a daily purge,” Curran says, with nothing but Webern, and Berg’s *Altenberg Lieder* and Violin Concerto, making any sense. Then Carter invited him and Chadabe to Berlin, where they met Iannis Xenakis, Yuji Takahashi, Luciano Berio, Louis Andriessen, even the ancient Stravinsky. Joel Chadabe remembers setting out on a marathon drive with Curran through East Germany, only a few years after the construction of the Berlin Wall, eventually landing up in Italy.²

Rome was the city where Curran decided to settle, and there he remains, shuttling between Italy and his post as Milhaud Professor of Composition at Mills College. By 1964, he was surviving by playing piano in Via Veneto bars, touring in Africa with the harmonica player John Sebastian Sr., then in 1966 co-founding Musica Elettronica Viva with a group of musicians and composers who typified the way in which music at that time crossed boundaries and absorbed seemingly incompatible inspirations. In parallel with a few other groups at the time—such as AMM, The People Band, The Scratch Orchestra, and SME in England—Curran, Frederic Rzewski, Richard Teitelbaum, Carol Plantamura, Ivan Vandor, Alan Bryant, John Phetteplace, and Steve Lacy began to explore the idea of playing without a safety net.

In *MUSICS* Magazine, in 1978, Curran wrote about MEV in relation to the mysterious sense of unity that can develop through this process: “In the infant days of MEV it was just this feeling of stepping into and outside of time that became almost the sole ‘raison d’être’ for the music—so powerful was its attraction. So when we would get to those magical moments where the music began playing all by itself, there would follow along with the joy an almost frightful awareness, as one might experience on entering a totally unknown place.”³

In conversation with Philip Clark for *The Wire* in 2002, Frederic Rzewski summed up the fruitful legacy of this period, when extreme pressure was exerted on all limitations, all constraints, all received thought: “All the people involved still look to MEV as a source of ideas and we continue to come together. We were radically—even self-destructively—into free improvisation.”⁴ The challenge to authority implicit in this method formed a close fit with the political mood of the times. Speaking in a 1995 panel discussion at a Mills College conference (“Here Comes Everybody: The Music, Poetry, and Art of John Cage,” later published in *Writings Through John Cage’s Music, Poetry + Art*), Curran reflected on these connections: “Like many Americans of my generation, I had an abysmal ignorance of history and social and political ideas. At the time, I am sure I never heard the word ‘anarchy,’ and I’d just begun to discover the significance of Marxism. Nonetheless I was there in the midst of a tumultuous student revolution, barricades, occupations, riots, tear gas, dogs, and dope—this was 1968. Consonant with all of this—considering our basic pacifist position—was our aim to make a spontaneous music which we began to call ‘collective,’ a timely buzzword that resounded then in almost all activity.”⁵

Despite his disclaimer, Curran’s activities as a musician and composer have reflected their social context from the outset. His immersion in the popular musics of America rewarded him with what he describes as “anarchic lyricism and dedicated hedonism.” Playing in a college dance-band “known for playing a slow four so slowly that people got the impression that the music had stopped, . . . watching people make love on the dance floor or vomit their brains out in despair, are powerful social experiences,” he says. “Somehow, maybe it was Miles, Monk, maybe Mozart, maybe sorrowful summer foghorns, maybe my father’s trombone that I played ‘Cielito Lindo’ on to a junior-high audience, in the wrong key. But this 1950–60s best-of-all-American worlds was clearly not going to be enough for me. I would soon trounce it under my feet, smoking a joint with Cornelius Cardew on the banks of the Tiber River.”

² Joel Chadabe, personal conversation with David Toop, June 21, 2004.

³ Alvin Curran, “Multiple Reflections On MUSICS 15,” *MUSICS*, London, UK, Issue no. 16, February 1978, p. 8.

⁴ Frederic Rzewski, “Manufacturing Dissent,” interview by Philip Clark, *The Wire*, London, issue 220, June 2002, p. 32.

⁵ Alvin Curran, *Cage’s Influence, Writings Through John Cage’s Music, Poetry, + Art*, ed. David W. Bernstein & Christopher Hatch, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2001, pp. 177–179.

The impact of John Cage resonated strongly during the early days of MEV. Rzewski had heard Cage and David Tudor at work in Buffalo, and so MEV followed their practice of amplifying objects of all kinds with contact microphones fed through cheap mixers. “By amplifying the sounds of glass, wood, metal, water, air, and fire,” Curran said during the *Cage’s Influence* discussion, “we were convinced that we had tapped into the sources of the natural musics of ‘everything’.” But Cage may also have connected the pivotal philosophy of sound, all sound, as music, with Curran’s natural propensity to process sonic memory and broad musical experience into a personal, overarching aesthetic.

“It’s all a ‘ballroom’,” he says, so linking his college dance-band days with the Cageian universe, “and then when I began to record every sound around me—every fly, fart, wasp, toilet, market, fountain, every Sardinian maid singing her heart out in the courtyard, every love-making, every marble quarry, cave, high tension wire, every foghorn on the east coast of the USA, every footstep in the sacred city of popes and whores, every poor family calling in unison to their Giovanni or Federico into the Regina Coeli Prison in Trastevere—then I became aware that this music was not only there for the taking, it was like thinking that every sounding piece of junk was an exciting and unique challenge, like scaling Kilimanjaro or Everest.”

“It was not just aural cinema, nor sonic documentation; it was simply capturing the magic of what we hear, where we hear it, and how. It was like capturing the magic of what we cannot hear—the silent universal language that lives and breathes between the air particles it travels on. Later, geographical spaces, as in *Crystal Psalms*, real and conceptual spaces as in *Maritime Rites*, and just about anything—architecture, garbage dumps, urban streets, open country, piazzas, rivers, lakes, oceans, tunnels, prisons, dives—became sources of inspiration, and still are, at a growing pace.”

As Rzewski makes clear, the often chaotic experiment of MEV, the *Spacecraft*, as they called it, was a resource, a deep well from which individual members could draw as they moved away from collectivism and developed their own voices as musicians and composers. Curran’s work in the 1970s is marked profoundly by the elements through which he had assembled an identity: improvisation, singing, jazz piano, popular tunes, the local soundscape, amplification, instrumental technique and personal voicing, open composition, recording technology, and the synthesizer. In the early days of MEV, Richard Teitelbaum had arrived in Rome with one of the first Moogs; Curran was sufficiently impressed to begin his own experimentation with VCS3 and Serge synthesizers. Solo pieces such as *Songs and Views From the Magnetic Garden* (1973), *Light Flowers Dark Flowers* (1974), and *Canti Illuminati* (1976–77), all released as LPs in Italy, explored the hinterland between live improvisation, taped soundscapes, voice, analogue synthesis, and electronic transformation. *Songs and Views*, for example, is an organic mix of synthesizer, amplified cymbal, voice, glass chimes, flugelhorn, harmonica, jew’s-harp, African kalimba, whirling tubes, an Emilian folk song, and recordings of wind and high tension wires, swallows, bees, a Roman water conduit, frogs, and the sound of footsteps on a beach.

Clearly, there are connections back to MEV’s embrace of jazz, chance procedures, ethnomusicology, electronics, and the amplification of surfaces, along with a recognition of Terry Riley, whose all-night solo performances of the late 1960s had gone some way toward integrating composer, audience, performer, place, improvisation, sound, and score. But Curran’s works of this period were also more controlled than collective improvisation, more open than American minimalism. To a degree, they prefigured the live DJ mixes heard in ambient clubs since the late 1980s, and the laptop and soundscape improvisations of the present. Just as it is no surprise to find that members of MEV can still perform together in the twenty-first century, so there is a feeling of natural evolution to hearing Curran in the company of a young laptop improviser such as Domenico Sciajno. *Our Ur*, their collaborative CD of 2004, was an unsettling mix for our times, eerie zones of concentrated stillness emerging through firestorms of disturbance, a powerful evocation of invisible chatter, the ghost wars, out of which violence and counter-violence erupt.

From within the tradition of radio narrative and atmospheres there is an air of storytelling to these pieces that runs deeper than their integration of spoken tales. *Maritime Rites* is a complex, ambitious work of numerous levels that has been in development for decades, or, more accurately, for a lifetime. Curran describes it as having a “semi-documentary radio art quality.” Through an accumulation of listening points, the emotional and physical qualities peculiar to horns and echoes, reverberating in landscape, embedded in memory and social history, arrive at a point

of revelation. Most of all, we hear him listening, ruminating, structuring, mapping, conjoining his vision with the methods of musicians he loves. Perhaps this is a kind of sonic literature, I speculate, in which the weaving of oral reminiscence, sonic documentation, and musical elaboration fashions short stories for the ears.

“It is ‘literary’ insofar as it evokes many historic places,” he responds, “and in some cases memories of my own childhood on the southern shores of Rhode Island and New England in general. Other than that, I wanted, as in much of my work in the seventies, to create a kind of ‘democratic musical forum’ where the humblest of sounds could be heard on an equal footing with the great instrumental traditions of the West. I wanted ‘space’ to speak for itself, and rather than narrating a story, let these monumental recorded environments speak for themselves. So there is no *Night on Bald Mountain* or Debussian *La Mer*. There are only the magical spaces—their histories and sounds—which frame, harmonize, and descant with the live players.”

Alvin Curran has never been afraid of vulgarity, nostalgia, the future, what’s out there and what’s in here, human presence and the limits of the body, the sensual beauty and precision of sound and its passionate need to be free from the cage. Consistently, he has searched for conduits through which the composer can connect with the world beyond so-called contemporary music. His *Music For Every Occasion*, a collection of monophonic pieces written in 1971 and ’72, published in Michael Byron’s *Pieces 3* anthology in 1977, was written “for professional and amateur alike on any suitable occasion—births, deaths, arrivals, departures, new moons, feasts, concerts, etc.”

“We had some very noble and radical ideas,” Curran writes, speaking of MEV. “After all, we were all privileged intellectuals, who could and needed to break out of our well-mannered, composerly destinies. But discovering then the vast lies and deceptions governing most of the music business and the business of music and life, the increasing exploitation of peoples’ musics, the alienation and distortion of tradition old and new, and the basic fear of unfamiliar sonic gesture and unpopular music language led MEV to a fundamental understanding that anyone could make music and anyone could make music with anyone else.”

“This was revolutionary, but did not generally have the consequences we’d imagined. What did have consequences is our precocious and profound understanding that music could be made without any order, rules, score, leaders, producers, authority of any kind, and even without knowing in advance when it would start or end. This too was revolutionary, and today practiced, to lesser or greater degrees, everywhere.”⁶ —David Toop

David Toop is a composer, curator, and author of four books: Rap Attack, Ocean of Sound, Exotica, and Haunted Weather.

Program note

Maritime Rites is a series of ten environmental concerts for radio composed by Alvin Curran. This series features the Eastern Seaboard of the United States as a musical source in collaboration with improvised musical performances by ten distinguished artists in the American new-music scene: John Cage, Joseph Celli, Clark Coolidge, Jon Gibson, Malcolm Goldstein, Steve Lacy, George Lewis, Pauline Oliveros, Leo Smith, and Alvin Curran. The programs use specifically recorded natural sounds as musical counterpoint to the soloists, whose improvisations are freely restructured and mixed by Curran. As nature is spontaneous and unpredictable, so is the music of man. Curran simply brings the two together in a common radiophonic sound-space letting both chance and intention make the music. Featured here are the foghorns of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and New Brunswick, Canada. Also included are maritime bells, gongs, whistles, and regional bird and animal life. Comments from lighthouse keepers, Coast Guard personnel, and other local people are woven impressionistically throughout.

There are nine eleven-minute programs, each featuring a specific artist as soloist. The tenth program of about twenty-five minutes features Curran in a closing work of “symphonic” dimensions.

⁶ Alvin Curran, “Music For Every Occasion,” *Pieces 3*, ed. Michael Byron, York University, Canada, 1977, p. 92.

Rich in ambient detail, *Maritime Rites* presents the foghorn as indigenous American “found” music par excellence and the source of one of the most enduring minimal musics around us. The series is also a comprehensive aural documentary of our regional and national maritime heritage, including such historical sounds as the Nantucket II Lightship, now out of service and doing duty as a museum docked in Boston Harbor. The Lightship’s horn is the only one of its kind (and the loudest!) on the East Coast and was recorded extensively during an exclusive session ten miles offshore with the special cooperation of the ship’s crew. As the foghorn gives way to other electronic navigational aids, this work may serve as an historical document of some of the most beautiful and mysterious sounds of the sea.

As an expression of sonic geography, *Maritime Rites* brings together different areas of the Seaboard in a single musical moment. The series was expressly conceived for radio, the only medium that can safely accommodate more than sixty foghorns at once and bring an entire coastline, seemingly live, into anyone’s home!

As a form of radio-art, *Maritime Rites* is intended for everyone, however conventional or radical their musical interests. It should have a special appeal to the audiences in the regions where some of the sounds originate and likewise to those who may never have heard the haunting sound of a foghorn.

1. **Leo Smith**, composer and multi-instrumentalist, playing trumpet and seal horn in his composition *World Music*. This solo is mixed almost indistinguishably with the sounds of boats passing through Wood’s Hole, Massachusetts; the foghorns at Portland Head, Maine, and Point Judith, Rhode Island; the boat horns of an American Container Line vessel in Port Elizabeth, New Jersey, and a McAllister tugboat in New York Harbor.

2. **Pauline Oliveros**, composer and accordionist, performing her piece *Rattlesnake Mountain*. Mixed with her solo, in a quiet rhythm that emulates breath itself, are the sounds of the whistle buoy near Robinson’s Rock, a three-toned gong from the Graves near Camden, and foghorns from Rockland Harbor, all in Maine. Also heard is the voice of the only female lighthouse keeper in America, Karen McLean of the U.S. Coast Guard, Doubling Point, Maine.

3. **Steve Lacy**, composer and soprano saxophonist, playing his work *Coastline*, whose melody is inspired by the contours of the Italian coastline near Sperlonga. Combined with his solo are foghorns from another coast: Portland Head and West Quoddy in Maine; Governor’s Island in New York Harbor; and Cove Point, Maryland, in Chesapeake Bay. Also heard are Coast Guard personnel Tim Barber, Portland Head; John Richardson, West Quoddy; and Eddie Calhoun, Cove Point.

4. **Clark Coolidge**, experimental sound-text poet, reading from his 1982 work titled *Mine: The One That Enters the Stories*. Also heard is Arlan Coolidge, retired chairman of the Brown University Music Department, reminiscing about Block Island, Rhode Island, in 1918 and playing a portion of the popular 1917 song “Smiles” on the violin. This material is mixed with the foghorns of Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, all three horns on Block Island, and the foghorn on the Block Island Ferry during its crossing.

5. **Joseph Celli**, composer and oboist, playing reeds, English horn, and a *mukha veena*, an Indian double-reed instrument. His solo is combined with the haunting, almost ghost-like night sounds of plovers, a bell buoy, loons from Maine, peepers from Connecticut, frogs from Maryland, and the foghorns of Letete Passage in Black’s Harbour and Southwest Head Light on Grand Manan Island, both in New Brunswick, Canada, and Tangier Island in Chesapeake Bay. Also heard is the ambient sound of the radio room at the U.S. Coast Guard Station in Little Creek, Virginia, and an original sea chantey sung by dancer Simone Forti.

6. **Jon Gibson**, composer and soprano saxophonist, playing his composition *Soft Shoulder* against a mixture of foghorns from Tangier Island West Thorofare in Chesapeake Bay; Montauk Point and Montauk Point West Jetty, on the tip of Long Island, New York; Point Judith, Rhode Island; and the Elbow of Cross Light on the New Jersey side of the Delaware Bay.

7. **Malcolm Goldstein**, composer and violinist, playing his composition *From Center of Rainbow*, *Sounding* against sounds exclusively from the state of Maine: two bell buoys in Camden Harbor; seals and eider ducks near Lime Island with the Rockland Light heard in the distance; the foghorn on Manana Island and the voices of lobstermen Phil Raynes, retired, and Clive Poole, both of Camden—an unusual dialogue between an old salt and a new-music violinist.

8. **George Lewis**, composer and trombonist. His solo—virtuoso soundings falling somewhere between human and animal expression—is mixed with the horn of the historical Nantucket II Lightship, the wave-activated whistle buoy in the Ambrose Channel, New York Harbor, and the voice of Captain Ken Black leading us through his Shore Village Museum in Rockland, Maine. Composer Anthony Braxton is also heard reciting five words.

9. **John Cage**, poet and composer, reciting five monosyllabic words of his own choice. These are mixed—in a rigorous exercise in silence—with the famous diaphone horn of the Nantucket II Lightship and the broken horn of the Edgartown Lighthouse on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, which was recorded from the interior of the structure through a hole in the outer wall.

10. **Alvin Curran**, composer and the vocal soloist in this twenty-five-minute program of symphonic dimensions. The first section features the natural sounds of more than sixty foghorns and bells, gongs, whistles, and ships' horns, all recorded on location between New Brunswick, Canada, and Chesapeake Bay, which are blended into an ever-thickening texture creating an imaginary panoramic soundscape. Of special note are the horns from Boothbay Harbor in Maine and a recording of the now dismantled Brenton Reef (Rhode Island) Lightship diaphone made by Peter Kilham of Foster, Rhode Island, in the 1950s. Also heard is a play on the word "rite" by composer Elliott Carter and reflections on foghorns by Senior Chief Daniel Warrington of the U.S. Coast Guard's Aids to Navigation School on Governor's Island in New York Harbor. The second section begins with the high-pitched malfunctioning horn of the Race Point Light on the tip of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and features an improvised chorale of voices (all Curran) against the mysterious, almost humanlike vocal sound of the Brooklyn Bridge, which is caused by its vehicular traffic (drastically muted in the following decade to appease residents of lower Manhattan, this unique sound no longer exists); conch shells, and a concluding foghorn concert with horns from Upper New York Harbor. The program ends with folklorist Bill Bonyun of Westport Island, Maine, who sings a traditional American sea ballad, "Rolling Home," accompanying himself on the concertina-like bandoneon.

—*Adapted from the original program notes by Alvin Curran and Melissa Gould*

Co-Producer's note

Early one summer twenty years ago, Alvin Curran and I borrowed his family's car for a month or so (Rhode Island license plate C-73) and traveled between New Brunswick, Canada, and Chesapeake Bay, mostly along Route 1, recording virtually every foghorn, bell buoy, maritime gong, and whistle along the way. We ate "Trunk Salad," delicious concoctions assembled by Alvin, which seemed to magically materialize daily from collected local ingredients stored in the trunk of the sedan. We found a diner serving the best homemade apple pie in the state of Maine. We lodged in off-season wooden bungalow colonies, outfitted with kitchenettes sporting 1950s Sputnik-style refrigerators. We saw more of the Coast Guard than dry civilians normally do. There was only one instance of seasickness (mine) and one close call where I was almost taken out to sea by a wild wave on a bit of rocky coast while holding a microphone with my back to the water. In the end we had captured the Eastern Seaboard, in sound. This document, ultimately combined with our recordings of the solo musicians, resulted in *Maritime Rites*. Many of the structures we recorded have since been dismantled or sonically altered; their sounds now exist only in memory. And several of our musical collaborators have since passed away, John Cage and Steve Lacy among them.

—*Melissa Gould, New York City, August 2004*

Composer's note

In the middle 1970s I began to formulate ideas and projects leading to the making of music outside the concert halls—often in large open and naturally beautiful sites. Ports, rivers, lakes, caves, quarries, fields, and woods, always ready sources of my musical inspiration, now became my new music theaters.

Over the years, these projects, large and small, were often mediated by radio and radio-production, which already had, especially in Europe, a notable role in the evolution of contemporary sound-art. Bringing a cast of extraordinary musicians and poets together in far-flung sites along the U.S. Eastern Seaboard—while conceptually easy to imagine—is something that the modern recording studio—and radio broadcasting in particular—are best suited for. So, in 1984 it was providential to discover a competition offered by National Public Radio and its newly minted Satellite Program Development Fund. The unconventional but timely ten-part radio series proposed by Melissa Gould and me was awarded funding; then as now, we were thankful for this support which enabled us to record all the major locations and artists in the summer of 1984 during a month-long adventure on land and sea. The composing and mixing were then done in the midst of the July heat in my Via Vestri sound-studio in Rome (with an eight-track Otari and DBX mastered to a Revox two-track, 15 ips). The superb audio engineering was in the hands of Nicola Bernardini. To my knowledge these programs were broadcast by some 50 radio stations throughout the United States—leaving over the years an artistic trail like a kind of quiet myth. The series was intermittently made available on cassette through the Deep Listening Foundation. Now, twenty years later, these works—which I feel are a microcosmic period piece and a memorable point of arrival and departure in my early creative journey—are at last available for all to hear. All except dear John (who was astonished when I asked him for only five monosyllabic words) and now Steve Lacy, to whom I wish to dedicate this work “in memoriam.”

—*Alvin Curran, August 2004*

Alvin Curran studied composition at Brown University with Ron Nelson and at the Yale School of Music with Elliott Carter. He has resided in Rome since 1964 and has been the Milhaud Professor of Composition at Mills College since 1992. Since Curran's appointment at Mills College he has lectured on his work at Brown University, Princeton, Wesleyan, The Art Institute of San Francisco, UC Berkeley, UC San Diego, Kölner Hochschule für Medienkunst and Die Gesellschaft für Neue Musik, Cologne, and at the conservatories of Frosinone and Cagliari in Italy.

Following his 1966 beginnings as co-founder of the legendary group Musica Elettronica Viva, his solo performances, radio concerts simultaneously linking several nations, and large-scale sound installations have been major new-music events around the world. Curran was the leading sound-artist for the Experimental Theater Movement in Rome (Perlini, Ricci, Victor Cavallo, Beat 72) in the 1970s and has continued as a close collaborator with the Trisha Brown Dance Company, The Living Theater, the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company, the Achim Freyer Ensemble, Joan Jonas and Yoshiko Chuma's School of Hard Knocks, and the June Watanabe and Nancy Karp dance companies. He has created works for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Kronos, ROVA sax quartet, Bang on a Can Allstars, the Alter Ego group and Frankie Hi NRG, the Relâche Ensemble, the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Group 180, the Paul Drescher Ensemble, the Karin Levine Flute Trio, Ars Ludi Percussion quartet, WireWorks, the Choral Academy of the Pacific, Apsara Recorder Quartet, and Playground, among others. His five-and-a-half hour “wall-to-wall” piano solo, *Inner Cities*, recently played in Nantes by Daan Vandewalle, crowns a large body of solo piano music that has been recorded by Aki Takahashi, Eve Egoyan, Ursula Oppens, Frederic Rzewski, Yvar Mikhashoff, Jeanie Golan, Bruce Brubaker, Reinier van Houdt, and Daan Vandewalle.

He has written prize-winning radio works for the Studio Akustische Kunst (WDR, Cologne), National Public Radio, and RAI–Audio Box (Prix Italia, Special Prize, 1984), and has collaborated with the artist Melissa Gould on sound installations for Ars Electronica, the Museum of Modern Art (New York), and Mass MoCa. Among his cinematic collaborations are music for Claudia von Alemann's *War Einst ein Fischermann* and Umberto Bignardi's multimedia memory of Bologna, *Ritorno alla Città*, video works by Alberto Grifi and performance films by Molly Davies. Recent commissions for concert/installations include the opening of the Klangturm in St. Pölten (Austria) and *TotoDonaueschingen*, a performance/installation covering a 15,000-square-foot space in a Baroque Park which opened the 1999 Donaueschingen Festival. *Weft Warp and Purl* (The Knitting Factory, New York City, 2000) and *Toto*

Angelica 2001 (Angelica, Bologna, 2001) are recent live performance “sound portraits” of these venues and festivals. *Un Altro Ferragosto*, a recent radio work for Deutschland Radio, has been selected for special distribution by the EBU (European Broadcasting Union) for 2003–4. Curran is working on an edition of his *Collected Writings* for publication by Edition MusikTexte. He is a 2004–5 Guggenheim Foundation Fellow.

Curran’s music has been released on the Catalyst (BMG), CRI, Tzadik, Mode, Centaur, New Albion, Alga Marghen, Ellipsis Arts, Electronic Music Foundation (EMF), and Wergo labels. For further info please visit: www.mills.edu/ACAD_INFO/MUS/ACURRAN/Curran.homepage.html

Melissa Gould (MeGo) is a New York–based artist, writer and longtime collaborator on visual and sound projects with Alvin Curran.

Nicola Bernardini is a Rome–based composer, sound designer, and teacher who has for many years directed the electronic studio Centro Tempo Reale, founded by Luciano Berio.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Animal Behavior. Alvin Curran, sampler, piano; Annie Sprinkle, voice; Roy Malan, violin; Donald Haas, accordion; Peter Wahrhaftig, tuba; William Winant, percussion. Tzadik TZ 7001.

Crystal Psalms. New Albion NA 067.

Electric Rags II. ROVA Saxophone Quartet. New Albion NA 027.

For Cornelius, The Last Acts of Julian Beck, Shtetl Variations. Yvar Mikhashoff, piano. Mode 49.

Lost Marbles. Tzadik TZ 7097.

Schtyx. Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio. CRI CD 668.

Songs and Views from the Magnetic Garden. Catalyst 09026-61823-2.

Theme Park. William Winant, percussion. Tzadik TZ 7039.

With Musica Elettronica Viva

Spacecraft/Unified Patchwork Theory. Alga Marghen plana-M 15NMN.038.

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Produced by Alvin Curran and Melissa Gould.

Mixed and engineered by Nicola Bernadini and Alvin Curran in Rome in 1985.

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Maritime Rites was originally produced in 1985. All location and studio recordings were made by the producers. The programs aired on 60 radio stations in the United States and Europe.

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Photograph of Alvin Curran © 1984 by Melissa Gould.

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ALVIN CURRAN (b. 1938)

MARITIME RITES

Featuring the foghorns and other maritime sounds of the U.S. Eastern Seaboard and solo improvisations by John Cage, Joseph Celli, Clark Coolidge, Alvin Curran, Jon Gibson, Malcolm Goldstein, Steve Lacy, George Lewis, Pauline Oliveros, and Leo Smith

80625-2 (2 CDs)

Disc 1

1. World Music (Leo Smith) 10:57
2. Rattlesnake Mountain (Pauline Oliveros) 10:46
3. Coastline (Steve Lacy) 11:33
4. Mine (Clark Coolidge) 11:09
5. Improvisation (Joseph Celli) 10:54
6. Soft Shoulder (Jon Gibson) 10:58

Appendix

7–12. Program introductions 8:19

Disc 2

1. From Center of Rainbow, Sounding (Malcolm Goldstein) 11:00
2. Improvisation (George Lewis) 11:08
3. Ice, Dew, Food, Crew, Ape (John Cage) 11:22
4. Maritime Rites (Alvin Curran) 23:35

Appendix

5–8. Program introductions 6:59

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