

# Jerry Hunt (1943-1993)



1. *Lattice* (1979)\* ..... (22:53)  
Jerry Hunt, Pianoforte
2. *Transform (Stream)* (1977)\*\* ..... (8:47)
3. *Cantegral Segment 18.17* (1977, 1976)\*\* ..... (11:41)
4. *Transphalba* (1978)\*\* ..... (14:12)
5. *Volta (Kernel)* (1977)\*\* ..... (7:49)  
Jerry Hunt performing on original mechanical and electronic instruments.

Originally released on Irida 0026 ("Texas Music")\* and Irida 0032\*\*

Total playing time: 65:37

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## Notes

In the 1970s electronic music practitioners constituted a rare and marginal population on the frontiers of interactive media and performance. Audio, with its modest bandwidth requirements, led video by at least a decade in every major discovery. Early artists were able to experiment, construct, interconnect and perform with electronic systems that were consciously digital, realtime and interactive long before those buzzwords were mentioned in other artistic contexts. The multimedia malls we now see rising upon that same landscape bear little resemblance to the regions surveyed by the pioneers. It's just like the westerns.

Among the pioneers, Jerry Hunt was the rarest, most marginal explorer of a terrain whose remoteness is conjured by the titles of his works – small-town placenames in Texas intermingled with Elizabethan magical invocations— *Cantegral Segment*, *Transphalba*, *Haramand Plane*, *Bitom*.

As his musical activities moved from the electronic soundpieces of the 1970s into the legendary performances of the 1980s, Hunt brought along with him a curiously rich and viable ecosystem of pieces, structuring principles, performing gestures, and theatrical personae. Above all he is remembered for his physical presence— a lanky, jointed body, animated by an awkward almost extra-worldly energy, a bony face across which played expressions of cryptic dismay, wicked laughter and dead seriousness. In performance the image of his shamanistic rattling and tapping predominated, and the tangle of wires and dripping of electrons from home-built hybrid audio and video systems receded into darkness.

The kinetic disruptive power of the shaman, long attributed to the street musician, is frequently invoked to describe Jerry Hunt's performances. Our musical culture makes us uncomfortable with this lanky figure from east Texas. Is he following any score? Are the electronics really doing anything? Clearly, this man is playing. Most probably, he is playing with us. The question then becomes, are we playing too?

Physicality remains at the margins of serious music in our culture; Glenn Gould's humming, Awadagin Pratt's low slouching position at the piano, even Pavarotti's paunch are elements we are taught to politely disregard by closing our eyes. Jerry Hunt made his physical being central to the experience of his music.

The act of listening to music, eyes closed, disregarding the accompaniments of the physical actions of the player, a rare experience before the invention of sound recording, has become the prevalent experience of serious music in our century. Sound recordings allow us to focus on only one culturally correct dimension of musical experience. Keenly aware of this rupture, Jerry Hunt began attaching bells to his wrists in the early 1970s—they provide a companion track to the piano performances that constantly serve to remind us of the physical presence of the performer. As recorded sounds, as heard on *Lattice* (1979), they have become preserved encodings of his highly individual movement patterns. Hearing their jingling now, we are constantly reminded of Jerry Hunt's performing gestures, his physicality as it extended into his performances and his personal presence.

The depth of Jerry's work does not end here, however. His means and motivations require mention. Jerry was an avid inventor of electronic circuitry, computer software and cybernetic systems and, like many electronic music composers of his era, self-taught. He was involved in the design of semiconductor integrated circuits and helped design one of the first musical integrated circuits - the top-octave organ chip produced by Mostek in Carrollton, Texas. His deep involvement in technical fields allowed him to freely combine off-the-shelf components with homemade circuits, and gave him access to cutting-edge technologies well in advance of others in the field, as exemplified by the very early digital speech synthesis heard in *Transform (Stream)* (1977).

Artists experimenting with digital modes of representation

have frequently discovered associations between their work and earlier systems of secret coding. For Jerry Hunt, the Elizabethan magical works of John Dee provided a map for certain relations among nature and physicality on one hand, and machine encoding, with its ability to record and decipher while simultaneously obscuring, on the other. It is no accident that John Dee's work on translating angelic dictation and his job as court cryptologist to Queen Elizabeth I both found expression in elaborate matrices of alphabetic characters. The score of *Cantegral Segment 18* (1977) bears a resemblance to these tables – a matrix of phonetic symbols describing a soundspace through which Hunt charts his way along winding trajectories. The intense and intimate interior physicality of Hunt's vocal tract, miked up close, mingles with the symbolic and abstract, transporting us to an imaginary geographical place where speaking winds blow across a landscape marked with symbols.

The present recordings provide us with both an artifact and a trace of Jerry Hunt. The artifact stands alone to be listened to, evaluated, used and incorporated into our lives and experiences. The trace, on the other hand, is an added dimension, not present in many recordings. It offers us a point of departure, a pointer to somewhere else. A trail to follow, to where?

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Notes from the original LP releases:

From Irida 0026:

*Lattice* – the version produced here is the first work available for the pianoforte mechanism by the composer since 1969. The work is dedicated to Paul and Oz Srere. *Lattice* was devised in 1978 to allow insertion of invariant intonation-timbre features into the melody-rhythm pattern requirements of a variable intonation timbre structure. Each melody-rhythm interval is used as a complex envelope of time variant spectra subject to transformation in performance by a variety of goal sequences uniquely specified for each performance: the selection is dictated in response to the characteristics of the pianoforte and the acoustic features of the space in which the instrument is used. For the pianoforte version of *Lattice*, the controlling goals for performance involve the variation and reinforcement of the dynamic and resonance properties of pianoforte tones, particularly with respect to the accumulative non-harmonic resultants which occur as essential characterizing features of pianoforte sounds. The amplitude, overlap and interaction dynamics of the pianoforte action are coloration features which indicate variations in the approach to the sequence of melody rhythm types: the type sequences occur as a patterned deviation from drone (still) in a successive scanning of time variant envelopes. The attack and movement gesture of the keyboard articulation is delineated in each performance by a uniquely selected group of auxiliary attachment transient sounding devices; in performance this description is visually explicit to the coloration of types.

From Irida 0032:

All the works in this recording are derivatives and transformations of components of *Cantegral Segments*, a continuing series of material for various mechanical and electronic instrument combinations and systems. Electromechanical reproduction involves repeat identity; this aspect of narrow range variation in rehearing characterizes the format of the versions of the music presented here, distinguishing them from the performance versions.

The series of *Cantegral Segment(s)* has as its source a compositional procedure begun in 1972, *Haramand Plane: parallel/regenerative*. The principal consideration in these continuing, overlapping and overlaying music components

has been an exposition of some ways in which the transformational procedure of *Haramand Plane* can be interrelated to specific contexts of gesture and stylistic definition and general situations of perceived expectation of gesture, function, and sequence. This produces a defining core for this music, and that core is involved directly in the many levels of perceived activities convergent with the music, performing and listening.

*Haramand Plane* is a collection of general procedures for signal generation derived from standard signal analysis techniques (correlation, averaging and related spectrum signal analysis approaches). For the compositional and analysis process, pattern components are recirculated (as performance material, or for analysis, electronically) in ways to allow limit-defined convergent and divergent characteristics to develop in time. Duration, speed, and orientation of the feedback feed around components in this evaluation are given limits. The pattern loops thus constitute, at the signal analysis level, the means for defining the sound structure and its development, and at the pattern (performance) level, the memory of prototypes: the development in rehearing of the history of a musical performance in such a way as to determine its stylistic and gestural tradition. In analysis, composition, and performance, the signal activity is selectively monitored in a goal-directed manner by interaction with the current output and in adaptation to the harmonic definitions of the prototype memories: the compositional result is characteristically cyclic but at once open to interruptive and highly variable goal changes. The compositional procedure can be described as harmonic variation involving situations for the generation and interactive-adaptive specification of the control of sounds, this process engaging both the individual components of sound structure (timbre, rhythm, melody) and the interaction of control leveling in composition (the continuation of variation). Variation in the context of this music means the patterned deviation (gesture) from drone (still). This still is harmonically specified and for each work consists of a complex envelope of time-varying phase and amplitude relationships (the harmonic relatedness of components in this definition is taken as an implicit function of pattern deviation and results in all of the specific features-for example, the intonational variations characterizing melody).

*Transform (Stream)* is a transformation of material of *Cantegral Segment 16* in combination with material of *Cantegral Segment 7*. *Cantegral Segment 16* consists of material for human voice, as a primary source, alone; *Cantegral Segment 7* consists of material defining performance of sounds produced by impulse-activated semi-resonant mechanical assemblies. *Transform (Stream)* uses derivatives of continual fricatives from the allophonic sequences of *Cantegral Segment 16*, articulated using derivatives of two components of the assemblies of *Cantegral Segment 7*. The principal performance version involves theatrical movement of a soloist (compound gesture) and a group of responding voices performing in a goal-directed relation to the soloist. The version produced here reverses the responsive goals of the voice group which require the interdependent hearing and production of sounds in relation to the selection goals of the solo. *Transform (Stream)* was produced in memory of my father, Clarence Edward Hunt, 1912–1977.

*Cantegral Segment 18* is an extension of *Cantegral Segment 16* utilizing a general group of electronic systems for the emulation of components of my voice. The compositional definition consists of sequences of allophonic bundles and characterizing groups of transformations: the music is

essentially system transparent. Variational procedures and articulation derived from a selection of associational gesture components of human speech are made implicit in this version by *Cantegral Segment 17* utilizing a group of electronic systems for the emulation of the sound mechanisms defined by *Cantegral Segment 7*. The repeat identity aspect of recording directed a choice in this version of a multi-path overlay for the voice resulting in three possible divergences in any bundle. The system of *Haramand Plane* is used as an interactive-adaptive control with narrow range directives for this version: specific choices at a given moment were given higher priority, resulting in a core version.

*Transphalba* is defined by selective derivatives of *Cantegral Segment 19* and *Cantegral Segment 17*, a uniquely defined control web for the interaction of the *Haramand Plane* system. The succession of pitched models in a uniquely specified intonational structure is limited by small incremental variants. *Cantegral Segment 19* consists of material specified for lip-vibrated aerophone in two versions, one for solo mechanical instrument and one for this instrument in an electronically extended environment defined by an interactive control modeler. The articulation of *Cantegral Segment 17* is similarly limited. The

transformation of the instrument definitions constituting the pitched and unpitched sounds proceeds in a discontinuous pattern of accumulation or negation of features which for each performance are selectively isolated. The version recorded here follows the limiting biases of direct feedback control.

*Volta (Kernel)* is an explicit gestural transformation of transitional vocal phenomena extracted from *Cantegral Segment 16* and articulated by a discrete derivative of *Cantegral Segment 7*. The text pitching of *Cantegral Segment 16* is essentially translingual: the development exploits the extensions to remote language structures and formulates a highly specific context of features of the individual voice mechanism used. Articulation components of *Cantegral Segment 7* define only extreme limits of phrase parts; a high relief, totally convergent version directly for microphone transduction is recorded here.

With the exception of *Volta (Kernel)*, all the material produced for recording is binaurally reduced following the independent patterning source of *Kelley: Drape* (presented as a transactional mimetic exercise for performance). Here this activity provides the movement in a closed four quadrant presentation field generated during mastering.

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## Production Notes

Original recordings produced by Jerry Hunt

Recording engineer for Irida 0032: David Garner.

Digitally remastered by Robert Wolff, engineer at Sony Classical Productions, NYC.

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