

ACUTE CORYZA

Anthony Coleman's autobiographical gesture of conflating his and Aaron Copland's initials with an esoteric name for the common cold (*Fanfare for the Common Cold?*) recalls the "weird formative experience" of meeting the older composer:

My aunt was related to him by marriage and she wanted me to meet him. I said, "Oh I don't think he's going to like me!" but she pushed me to go, and I went up to Peekskill soon after grad school. I played him a bunch of the work I had done. He didn't seem particularly impressed. At one point he asked me which of his works I knew. I mentioned the Piano Variations and the Short Symphony, the pieces from the period in the 30s when he had been a lot more steely in his approach to composition. . . .

American glyphs. Copland Woody Guthrie Pete Seeger Folkways Popular Front Lefty Earnest Americana. John Cage Morton Feldman Christian Wolff. Duke Ellington Jelly Roll Morton. John Ford.

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Acute Coryza (2009) is written as a timeline of events across two staves with stemless note heads. As in most pieces on this album, particular instruments are not assigned to given gestures or positions within a chord. Vertical alignments within events are flexible, as is the number and pacing of repetitions. Register is always extremely specific, as are the number of players designating the weight of one part against another. Against the usual binary of notation/improvisation, the notions operative here are control, resistance, negotiation. Notational images that sabotage unequivocal interpretation share the page with limpid instruction. Technical demands go from the near-impossible to easy as falling. The players can never rest in one position or another, are always forced to think on the feet of their ears.

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Remnants of Heterophony: the Christian Wolff *Exercises*, the "aleatoric counterpoint" of Lutoslawski's *Venetian Games*, the uneven cut-offs in Ellington's saxophone sections. Central African Banda polyphony. King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band.

The time grid does not preexist the groove with slots for the sounds to fill, it is generated by a concatenation of animal gestures: an urban pond with bullfrogs that have *Octandre* on their mind, Cootie Williams, Tricky Sam Nanton, then suddenly . . . the sickly Thornhill sheen of the diaphanous chord at 5:07—right before the *ongo* low-brass hocket—its half-plunger mysteries and collapsing timbres.

Many people thought there was an unknown French horn in the last chord of Ellington's Mystery Song. Probably some kind of half-muted high valve trombone. All these discussions of who's-doing-what . . . nobody knows. Nobody knows also because of the strain of extreme registers. Originally the piece had two tubas doing very un-tuba-like things.

A horror of "good" orchestration. My love of Janáček, Coltrane's altissimo. Heidegger's comment about the language being authentic only when it breaks down.

OOGENERA

The tolling in *Acute Coryza* is echoed at the end of **Oogenera**, a quasi-improvised sonatina written in 2013 in response to the death of neighbor and occasional colleague, the composer/conductor/brass player Butch Morris. It is a kind of self-conduction *with a certain amount of slippage in how, where, and when the events happen.*

Pitches, gestures, chords are grouped in brackets across two staves. Each bracket signals the option to repeat the material within. Though sparse, the texture is riddled by a polyphony of subjects, several I's and their voices, some silent, each with its own manner of unfolding in time. The most persistent is the trebly thin tentative unspooling voice that insists on certain pitches in certain registers. *The third half-step in a row is where one of these obstinate little scalar areas gets displaced.* Resistance sharpens the individuation of the event. This voice, and its obbligato which knows only one-and-a-half gestures, gingerly step through a field of looming verticalities that obstruct the path with their sculptural punctuations, the chimes and dooms that become the tolling of the end.

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Ever since I wrote the music for The End of Summer, I've tried to have a different relation to my subconscious. I try to write almost automatically and keep the La Monte Young maxim in mind: "Draw a straight line and follow it." Whether the line leads to something that's overtly emotional or much more hermetic, whether the climaxes are obvious or not, since 2009 I follow my ear more.

Vocalization: reaching for voice through the intractable nature of the piano, until with a sudden startling shriek that is one of AC's signatures, the body erupts onto the scene, the shriek seldom louder than a whisper (can the form itself scream?) Remember that AC sang as boy soprano in a choir.

Composers are very interesting in terms of how much they trust their ear and don't make their things thicker than they are able to handle. What does your ear take in, what can your ear do? Thinness, separate voices, writing everything in melodic lines, brush strokes, that's my ear.

.... enunciation, accretion ...

So much getting back into the transparency of these things, whether it be medieval music or post-Cageian music, let it be that thing and just shut up that voice that says it has to be complex in a certain kind of way and let it be complex in another kind of way.

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Oogenera is a huge dinosaur egg and belongs by title to AC's egg series. The egg: a perfect construction whose seamless unity of shape, surface, and semiotic ("*egg sounds so eggy*") is delicious to contemplate but nauseating to the composer when eaten. Asthmatic Proust filled pages with single long-breath sentences about flowers of which a mere whiff could send him to the hospital. Jewish humor. Freudian compensations. Radical. Culture.

Late nineties, AC takes me to the takoyaki joint off of 9th Street and 3rd Ave after a Selfhaters rehearsal to experience a different order of spherical edibility, the octopus ball. The conversation unexpectedly turns to Mozart, his genius, his perfect revolutionary constructions and those of his contemporaries Fragonard and the Marquis de Sade. By the time our food is served, a poetic of the yummy and the subversive against the dreary and the obedient has drawn

within its circumference Adorno, Abba, the Melvins, Bataille's ovular eye and *L'histoire d'O*. AC recommends I eat the octopus balls "*with everything*." They're weird and chewy, delicious and disgusting all together—the sonorities of the Selfhaters Orchestra: specificities covered in bonito flakes.

These are observations, not a philosophy.

The Shaggs, Daniel Johnston, Ligeti's *White on White*.

The sickly consonant interval at the moment of the sickness instead of the expected dissonant interval.

A new language that is consonant but not tonal.

The sweet-sour yumminess that Ellington gets in certain harmonies . . . the pleasure in that, just as the thing that it is . . . is something that was very important to me . . . The thing that it is. These words keep coming back. Thingness. Van Gogh's shoes . . . Ugly Beauty.

*

One dream is to become the listener, witness, erstwhile editor of a text produced by an other which is you freed from the voices of all the teachers and influences that have left their marks and of which you've been the often unwilling ventriloquist. Another dream: to find some anonymous *made* thing somewhere in the woods or ruins of a city—endtimes. All referents effaced, the few legible inscriptions only add to its inscrutability, add or subtract, a pebble thrown in Webern's pond.

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New England Conservatory, late seventies, Donald Martino plays a chord at the piano, a sumptuous jazz chord, a Gil Evans/Thornhill chord. "You know what I do when I write a chord like that? I scratch it out!"

How you use influences . . . one way is you oppose them, another is you correct them, another is you break down the signifiers and combine them into a simulacrum of the music from a country that does not exist.

Riff on Derrida: "I have x number of languages and none of them are mine." Also stated as "all languages are one and it isn't mine."

I think about the caves in Lascaux. Why did they feel the need to represent? Why do I feel the need to efface? The idea of unity from studying serial music . . . the need for a consistent vocabulary but at the same time wanting to have traces of all these other vocabularies inside it, for that little dance between unity and multiplicity to be not too neat and not exclude the vulgar.

It's why Eastern Europe felt like such a home for me for a moment. There was scarcity but not poverty. I remember when bananas would show up in Belgrade. Usually you'd go to the market and there would mostly be cabbage and peppers and apples and pears, but then every once in a while, bananas would show up, and it would be a real thing . . .

Europe: Kagel Bataille Godard Boris Vian, the ability to phase between earnest and non-earnest, the not-absolute scarcity of bananas.

It's just about things that have become unstrange recovering their strangeness . . . things becoming prized, valuable . . . that have been taken for granted. See, as opposed to becoming totally fetishistic like you'll never get one, you have to just dream about it. You'll get it you'll get it, but you won't get it until you realize you don't get it just whenever you want it—you don't get it just to get it.

The chord Martino threw out came back as a banana in a Yugoslavian fruit-and-vegetable market right before the explosion.

STATION RER (B) DRANCY

The name of a detention center for Jews about to be sent off to the death camps (over 67,000 deported in two years). It was located in Drancy, a nowhere suburb northeast of Paris. The RER takes you there from Châtelet in less than half an hour.

In 2011, I was commissioned by Banlieues Bleues to be in Paris and write for the Chamber Orchestra Erik Satie. Sometimes I would get a ride, but sometimes I would walk to the station. And then it hit me, this is the Drancy stop! So the next day, I didn't take the ride and I just kind of sat there and wrote one of these pieces that I can write without even trying. Like I say, follow the straight line—two hours, boom, it was done. I didn't think to imitate anything. The screams of the Jewish children, all these different kinds of grinding which you could see as the wheels of the train, all these brutal moments, like when I hit the piano—note after note, it's so freaking explicative but I didn't do it on purpose, it just happened that way.

New areas of word-painting that a liberated relation to the unconscious can deliver and which the archeologist of one's own text can discover in the reading/hearing of a sonic gesture which includes the title as one of its signs. Sound reverts to granitic insignificance. "What concerns me is that condition in music where the aural dimension is obliterated." (Morton Feldman)

ATROPINE

I really love banal phrases that become obsessions. Something about that structure gets to me. They return, they won't go away, they become traumas, everything is repeated, a new relation accrues each time—not Minimalist at all—it keeps growing and growing.

The sub-current of edgy hilarity evident in AC's earlier work has morphed but it's still there, just listen. Tom Zé Stefan Wolpe Gamelan, Beckett's *What Where*: "Take him away and give him the works until he confesses." Bunuel's *Discreet Charm: And another restaurant where there's nothing to eat. And another weird person coming up to tell a story.*

Though **Atropine** (2013) is the only piece on this album which uses conventional notation and whose rhythmic intricacies live against a time-grid, it achieves the same feel as the rhythmically indeterminate pieces, the same gait, deliberate tumble stumble fumble gait that makes you listen aware of your own listening.

I know I'm pursuing a thing, I know it has something to do with: time, repetition, absurdity, things accruing, instruments having characters, minimalism, anti-minimalism; with a kind of reaction against profligacy of gesture, the conglomeration that came out of post-Webern practice, "the twilight mistaken for a dawn," too much language.

Atropine, the drug, dilates the pupils, increases heartbeat, and reduces salivation and other secretions (language!) Atropos is the one of the three fates who cuts the thread. Somewhere in there is also a play on *la pine de Troppmann*, atrophy, and the privative of trope.

METONYMIES OF PASTNESS

The gone world of acoustic music. Irremediably retro. Or not? *I started to wonder if acoustic music was a genre. I had visions of classical instruments looking sad, droopy, like in a painting or cartoon or LSD trip.* Thought-bubble above the piano—with *its scrolls and detailing and the good wood*: “Can we, in the Digital Age, experience the savage Thingness of a piano’s sound as anything else but an artifact, and should it matter, and to whom?”

Metonymies of Pastness (2013) opens with the only *explicit* polyrhythm of the album, a five-note chord in the bass divided between the hands beating at different speeds. As it rumbles on, our attention shifts to the resonances produced by the overtones colliding, their morphed decay. The Negative space between attacks expands as the piece unfolds. Prodding rhythms and jabbings from AC’s previous work come back, but their destination has shifted from assertive marks in an acoustic space to the specific colorations of silence they produce.

This lovingly etched score, the most varied in its types of notation, details the many ways that the middle pedal can play tricks on our perception of the relationship between resonance and attack. In fact, they’re not quite married and—those Heidegger lectures on the Being of Equipment having not fallen into the ears of a deaf man—the Piano too seems to be experiencing a subtle divorce from its Beingness. Overtones play hide-and-seek with Ideas of Music, Pastness contaminates the Now. The piece cannot help but register the moment when a pure resonance-producing gesture has begun to lose its purity and sound like an attack with a name, or a rhythm with, however effaced, the memory of a groove. That moment is where we are when the fourth movement begins; what ensues is a fascinating Stravinsky-collage of sonic artifacts, memory-squiggles, and diary entries, all done in brushstroke-style on a canvas imbued with many negations.

If Morton Feldman’s surface aural plane is a primed canvas tintured with a hue of music (think Rothko), AC’s canvas is a palimpsest (think Twombly).

YOU

You (2008) *was part of the cycle It Was in a Hotel, which had to do with the soft rock of the 80s and coming up in that period.* In *You*, as in *Drancy*, the anomie outsider figure of the traveler/observer from Coleman’s *by Night* is back, examining a place and a time, responding and distilling with the exquisite and empathetic accuracy of tools honed by years of notational and improvisational practice and *a sort of weird subjectivity with no real desire to access my feelings particularly.* *You* is written as a timeline of motives and mementos, chords, loops, gestures extracted from their mawkish origins and arranged in fine mobile-like constructions. Combined, these form a kind of installation.

It was 2007 in Boston. It was cold and dark and I was in the bathroom of a seafood restaurant attached to a hotel. Three people in the bar, it’s not even 10pm, and that FM soft rock station is playing 80s hits from the speaker in the bathroom. You’re past fifty, looking in the mirror and you look old and everything is closing . . . And then the song goes, “You put me high/ Up on a pedestal . . . You needed me you needed me.”

Everything in those songs is about what you did—it’s all creating nostalgia for some past without any present playing off of it. And you’re listening to this music and you don’t feel any real attachment to it but at the same time you can’t help but get a little chill down your spine.

Some songwriter sat around coming up with what they could get until they hit that thing. But there's a mechanism there I wanted to touch . . . how to capture the free-floating placelessness of it all?

*

Part of what sets Anthony's music apart from that of his contemporaries is the intensely focused intellectual force with which he pushes against the sybaritic outward-moving impulse and compresses multiple vocabularies around a core poetic. Through compressed, the vocabularies do not merge or blend, they fray at the edges where the play of opposing forces is most intense, and languages contaminate and confuse each other. However spacious, thin, desultory the texture may sometimes pretend to be, it is this dialectic that gives Anthony's music its peculiar density, a gravitas riddled with horror and hilarity, a vertigo of language. Under the surface, a carnival of thought rages with so much filth, appetite, and sensuality, such wrenching quietness, such ear-piercing delicacy as resonates in the special silence of an empty street bordering the East Side of Tompkins Square Park at dawn after a night of debauched omnivorous music and talk and gossip and lore and history and polemic and genius bad jokes, when the night fades to reveal the detritus of the park and the strange beauty of those trees, the empty sky, a mockingbird's broken refrain, a car alarm.

—Michael Attias

Michael Attias is a New York City-based saxophonist and composer with numerous recording credits to his name both as bandleader and sideman. He has also composed music, designed sound and translated text for regional theatres and Off-Broadway.

Composer /pianist **Anthony Coleman** (born 1955, New York City) studied at the La Guardia High School of Music and Art, New England Conservatory of Music (BM, 1977) and Yale School of Music (MM, 1979). His major teachers include Jaki Byard, Donald Martino, Malcolm Peyton, David Mott, and Betsy Jolas. He also studied with Mauricio Kagel at the Centre Acanthes, Aix-en-Provence, France (1981).

Commissioners and performers of Coleman's work include clarinetist David Krakauer/Concert Artists Guild, accordionist Guy Klucevsek, Relâche, pianist Joseph Kubera, The Crosstown Ensemble, Neta Pulvermacher and Dancers/Meet The Composer, Bang on a Can All Stars/Jerome Foundation, Kitchen House Blend, guitarist Marco Cappelli/Associazione Alessandro Scarlatti, TILT Brass Band, the Ruhr Triennale, the Brecht Forum, Merkin Concert Hall, the Festival Banlieues Blues/Ensemble Erik Satie, and ISSUE Project Room/String Orchestra of Brooklyn.

He has presented his own work at the Sarajevo Jazz Festival (Bosnia), North Sea Jazz Festival (Holland), Saalfelden Festival (Austria), and the Krakow and Vienna Jewish Culture Festivals. Ensembles led by Coleman have recorded extensively for Tzadik and include the trio Sephardic Tinge and Selfhaters Orchestra. He has also toured and recorded with John Zorn, Elliott Sharp, Marc Ribot, Shelley Hirsch, Roy Nathanson, and many others.

Coleman has been awarded grants from New York Foundation on the Arts (1988 & 2006), New York State Council on the Arts, and Meet the Composer. He has received residencies from the Yellow Springs Arts Center (1987 & 1990), the Djerassi Colony (1989), the Frei und Hansestadt Kulturbehörde of Hamburg, Germany (2002), the Civitella Ranieri Center, Umbertide, Italy (2003), and the Centro Veneziano di Studi Ebraici Internazionali in collaboration with Venetian Heritage (2011).

Coleman has recorded fourteen CDs under his own name, and he has played on more than a hundred recordings. He has been a member of the faculty of the New England Conservatory since 2006 and has also taught at Bennington College, Bard College (BardMFA), and the Mannes College of Music.

Dara Bloom studied double bass at the Jerusalem Academy with Dr. Michael Klinghoffer and at the New England Conservatory (NEC) with Don Palma. She studied viola da gamba and early music with Dr. Myrna Herzog and at The Juilliard School's Historical Performance department. She is a recipient of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation Outstanding Musician scholarship award.

Violinist **Jennifer Choi** has charted a career that breaks through the conventional boundaries of solo violin, chamber music, and the art of creative improvisation. She is often sighted in solo performances of works that stretch the limits of violin playing, and she collaborates regularly with some of today's most important composers and improvisers.

Trumpeter **Gareth Flowers** has played extensively with many orchestras and contemporary music groups such as the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and the International Contemporary Ensemble.

Marc Hannaford is an Australian pianist living in New York. He has presented his work at The Stone, The Banff Centre, Melbourne International Jazz Festival, and Skolska 28 (Prague). His current projects explore post-serial and polyrhythmic structures as the basis for improvisation.

Cellist and composer **Christopher Hoffman** studied at the University of Wisconsin and has lived in New York since 2002. He performs regularly with Henry Threadgill's Zooid, Dimples & Double Up Ensembles, Tony Malaby's TubaCello Quartet, Jeremiah Cymerman's Pale Horse and his own projects Silver Cord, Magic Wells, and Company of Selves.

Alto saxophonist and composer **Sarah Hughes** has performed with the Bohemian Caverns Jazz Orchestra in Washington, DC, the Brad Linde Ensemble, Freddie Redd, Butch Warren, Grachan Moncur III, Andrew Cyrille, Joe Chambers, Teddy Charles, Ted Brown, and Lee Konitz. She is a Masters student in Jazz Saxophone at NEC.

Cellist **John Popham** has performed with such ensembles as Klangforum Wien, Argento Chamber Ensemble, and the Talea Ensemble. The recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, including a Fulbright Fellowship and the Manhattan School of Music Full Scholarship, Mr. Popham holds a BM and MM from the Manhattan School of Music.

David Shively works in media ranging from Hungarian cimbalom to percussion to analog electronics and feedback systems. Since 2004 he has been co-artistic director of the New York City experimental music ensemble Either/Or. Dedicated to exploring the margins of American Experimentalism and European avant-garde practice, Either/Or's programming centers on artists outside the institutional mainstream and nontraditional ensemble formations. Other ongoing projects include the noise/drone band *UUU*, Balkan and Carpathian folk musics, composing for dance, and a wide range of work as an improviser.

Alexandra Simpson studies viola performance at NEC with Kim Kashkashian. She has developed a passion for performing and recording new works, playing in Anthony Coleman's Survivors Breakfast, the NEC Contemporary Ensemble, and Boston Young Composers' Ensemble. She has been a featured soloist with the Marin Symphony and San Domenico Orchestra da Camera.

TILT Brass is a Brooklyn-based organization dedicated to creating new content and contexts for contemporary brass music. Founded in 2003, TILT has premiered more than forty compositions in ensemble configurations ranging from solo and chamber groupings to experimental brass orchestra. TILT's work is heard on recordings on Tzadik, New World Records, Non-Site, and POTTR. www.tiltbrass.org

TILT Brass director and trombonist **Chris McIntyre** leads a multi-faceted career as performer, composer, and curator/producer. He performs in projects including TILT, UllU duo, Either/Or, and Ne(x)tworks. Curatorial work at The Kitchen, Guggenheim Museum, and MATA Festival. cmcintyre.com

Red Wierenga is an accordionist, pianist, keyboardist, improviser, and composer based in New York City. His longest creative association is with the Respect Sextet. He has also performed and/or recorded with The Claudia Quintet, Ensemble Signal, Brad Lubman, Salo, Fireworks Ensemble, and David Crowell. He teaches at Baruch College and Brooklyn College.

Doug Wieselmann has been associated with Anthony Coleman since the late '80s. He has worked with a variety of artists including James Tenney, Jerome Robbins, Laurie Anderson, Lou Reed, Robin Holcomb, Wayne Horvitz, Robert Wilson, Antony and the Johnsons, and John Lurie. He has a solo clarinet project based on melodies he has heard from bodies of water.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

The Abysmal Richness of the Infinite Proximity of the Same. Tzadik TZ 7123.

The Coming Great Millennium. Knitting Factory Works KFWCD-119.

Damaged by Sunlight. La Huit. (DVD)

Disco by Night. Avant 011.

The End of Summer. Tzadik TZ 8094.

Freakish: Anthony Coleman Plays Jelly Roll Morton. Tzadik TZ 7631.

I Could've Been a Drum. Tzadik TZ 7113.

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Lobster and Friend. Knitting Factory Works KFWCD-147.

Morenica. Tzadik TZ 7128.

Our Beautiful Garden Is Open. Tzadik TZ 7159.

Pushy Blueness. Tzadik TZ 8024.

Selfhaters. Tzadik TZ 7110.

Sephardic Tinge. Tzadik TZ 7102.

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Interview with Josh Ronsen.

<http://home.grandecom.net/~jronsen/mmpp11/anthonycoleman2004.html>

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Francis Goelet (1926–1998), *In Memoriam*

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ANTHONY COLEMAN (b. 1955)

You

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1. *Acute Coryza* (2009) 8:59

TILT Brass Sextet: Christopher McIntyre, Timothy Leopold, Peter Evans, trumpets; Mike Gurfield, Jen Baker, William Lang, trombones

Oogenera (2013) 11:01

2. I. 3:38

3. II. 3:22

4. III. 3:58

Anthony Coleman, piano

5. *Station RER (B) Drancy* (2011) 4:30

Mark Hannaford, piano; Doug Wieselmann, bass clarinet; Alexandra Simpson, viola; Christopher Hoffman, cello; Dara Bloom, bass; Michaël Attias, baritone saxophone; Gareth Flowers, trumpet; William Lang, trombone; Red Wierenga, accordion; David Shively, percussion; Anthony Coleman, conductor

6. *Atropine* (2013) 8:36

Anthony Coleman, piano; Jennifer Choi, violin; John Popham, cello; David Shively, percussion

Metonymies of Pastness (2013) 17:51

7. I. 8:36

8. II. 3:38

9. III. 2:22

10. IV. 3:05

Anthony Coleman, piano

11. *You* (2008) 7:17

Anthony Coleman, piano, electric organ; Doug Wieselmann, clarinets, bass harmonica; Sarah Hughes, Michaël Attias, saxophones; Christopher Hoffman, cello; David Shively, percussion

TT: 58:30

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