

Nicolas Collins
Ten Years of *Leonardo Music Journal*
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Some time in the spring of 1990 I received a phone call from Larry Polansky asking me to contribute an article to the premiere issue of *Leonardo Music Journal*, a spinoff from the venerable "journal of record" in the field of technological art. Larry's timing was auspicious: I was, figuratively if not literally, twiddling my thumbs in my Bleecker Street loft, waiting for my firstborn to emerge from my wife's impossibly cantilevered belly, as I engaged in rewinding and fast forwarding the tape of my life. Fearing the blessed event would hit our house like a bomb, rendering me incapable of composing for months (or even years) to come, I accepted his offer on the assumption writing words would be somehow easier than writing music. I was wrong, on both counts: the expanded family slipped into a blissful (if perhaps self-opiated) trio state, curiously devoid of chaos, but writing turned out to be a more serious challenge than I had anticipated.

The invitation to reflect on the technology and aesthetics of my music gave me something distinctly un-biological to focus on in the first few months of Teddy's presence. My previous writing experience had been largely confined to grant applications, concert and liner notes, and the odd lecture. *Leonardo Music Journal* provided an excuse to indulge in musical self-analysis on a larger, more detailed scale. So, between extended periods of baby gazing, I cobbled together an essay whose style owed more to the ghost-written sports autobiographies of my childhood than to academic journals, but that I felt accounted reasonably well for my activities to date.

The experience was cathartic, and broke the ice for me as an author. Over the next few years I became increasingly involved in writing and editing, from essays and lectures, to *An Incomplete Handbook of the Phenomenology of Whistling*. Self-reflection gave way to more general analysis of the interaction of musical aesthetics with technological and economic developments. Writing became an integral part of my life.

Seven years later I found myself sitting in a splendid Berlin apartment, a guest of the DAAD Künstlerprogramm, while fellow-composer Jonathan Impett tried to persuade me to apply for the position of Editor-in-Chief of the *Leonardo Music Journal*. The gummy grin of my 18-month old Charlotte triggered *deja vu* of my first contact with the journal, and prompted me to reflect on the current state of the musical world.

Post-Cagean composers developed approaches to technology that were experimental, analytic and, above all, idiosyncratic. The existing tools of musicology are ill-suited for describing music based on echolocation, computer networks, CD error correction, doppler shift, or speech patterns. Moreover, much interesting contemporary music has fallen into a gap between the journals serving academic composers and musicologists, and the magazines and fanzines dedicated to pop music. As a result we are left with a body of music -- conveyed largely in oral tradition, unlabeled circuits, obsolete synthesizers and forgotten computers -- whose aesthetic has never been adequately articulated. The flurry of attention surrounding electronic pop in the 1990s only served to distract from

the groundbreaking work of earlier pioneers, and a sense of impending ignorance fueled my activities as a writer and editor as the decade continued.

Leonardo Music Journal has, since its inception, been an invaluable resource in the documentation of fascinating, if often marginalized, music. By emphasizing writings by composers and audio artists themselves over those by musicologists and journalists, it has provided a direct channel for voices that might otherwise have remained unheard. The compact disk that accompanies each issue has made many rare recordings available for the first time. By 1997 I found that the musical public's awareness of the Journal far exceeded its modest distribution, and had imbued it with a quasi-oracular value. Leonardo gave me my first opportunity to make a statement about my own work, and it seemed appropriate for me to repay the debt by offering others a boost onto the same soapbox.

But I would be insincere if I did not confess to a baser motive: I saw my term of editorship as an opportunity to produce, at someone else's expense, five beautiful books, with stories, pictures and sounds by friends and artists I admire. I've organized each issue around a theme, in an attempt to make it more like a book, less like a magazine. Topics have included the conflicting influences of history and futurism; aspects of identity and responsibility; music out of Africa, South America and England; and I plan to wrap up my tenure addressing the role of pleasure in music. Similarly, I trust my audio curators to make each CD a stand-alone record album, not just sonic illustrations for the text. I've somehow managed to cajole a wonderful array of artists to contribute to the project, and been extremely pleased with the results so far.

In this age of internet publishing and virtual texts there is something indulgently nostalgic about turning a page, even if the pleasure is tempered by the poignant knowledge that a tree must give its life for this luxury. Books are real, and seeing an essay in print gives it a sense of value and permanence; the printed word bestows pedigree to my fellow inhabitants of the lunatic fringe. These feelings may be unsubstantiated by facts, but they are important nonetheless, like the affirmations of a twelve-step program. It was the love of books that finally drove me to accept the hair shirt of editorship, and the sheer pleasure of holding them has easily made up for any itchiness the job may entail.

Thank you, Larry Polansky. Happy Birthday, *Leonardo Music Journal*.