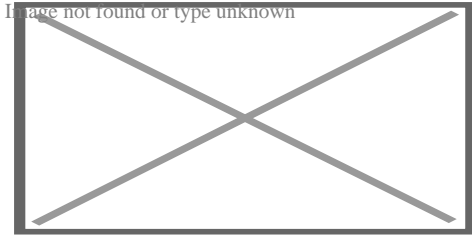


# Other Minds Festival: OM 23: Sound Poetry - Good Luck With/On/For/In/At, 7 of 22



**Identifier**  
OMF.2018.04.13.c1.G

**Object Type**  
Digital Audio

**Musical Selections**  
Say It Like You Mean (04:34) / Amy X Neuburg [World premiere]

## **Description**

The 23rd Other Minds Festival, focused on the art of Sound Poetry, took place in San Francisco at the ODC/Dance Theatre over the course of six days (April 9-14, 2018); OM's longest festival to date which included five concerts and a day of lectures and workshops. This year's line-up brought together old and new masters from several countries, all well representing the "intermedium between poetry and music": Beth Anderson (US), Mark Applebaum (US), Tone Åse (Norway), Jaap Blonk (Netherlands), Alvin Curran (US/Italy), Sheila Davies Sumner (US), Enzo Minarelli (Italy), Amy X Neuburg (US), Ottar Ormstad (Norway), Aram Saroyan (US), Susan Gilmore Stone (US), Anne Waldman (US), Taras Mashtalir (Russia); Lily Greenham (Denmark), Pamela Z (US); Michael McClure (US), Sten Sandell (Sweden), and Clark Coolidge (US).

Friday April 13, Concert 4 - Good Luck With/On/For/In/At

The fourth concert of Other Minds 23 was an antidote for triskaidekaphobia, the superstition of the number thirteen, featuring Amy X Neuburg, Enzo Minarelli, Mark Applebaum, Charles Amirkhanian and Carol Law.

PROGRAM

Mark Applebaum  
Three Unlikely Corporate Sponsorships (2016), for tape  
1 Nestlé  
2 General Motors  
3 Halliburton

From the composer: Three Unlikely Corporate Sponsorships is a work of sound poetry for four-channel audio. It comprises only recordings of my speaking voice, edited but otherwise unprocessed. The piece is dedicated to composer and friend Charles Amir Khanian. It consists of three movements. These movements progress, more or less, from an emphasis on the words' raw phonetic sound to their semantic meaning (in this case, in service of a liberal social commentary). Where Nestlé contracts language to rudimentary aural phenomena for example, the semantic satiation that renders cat (or is it Kat?) meaningless, or the pure auditory fascination of the words crunch and shrimp uttered simultaneously—a political screed, however inchoate and recklessly sweeping, emerges in Halliburton. An approximate crossfade transpires across the three movements.

Composed in February 2016, it was provoked by the unseemly political rhetoric accompanying the U.S. presidential election primaries. During its composition I had no clue that by November the conversation would become so venal, and the outcome so hideous. Now, in my post-election state of dyspeptic fury and morbid disillusionment, I hear my playful levity and ludic naiveté with an almost wistful nostalgia.

Amy X Neuburg  
My God  
Christmas Truce: a journal of tenant/landlord situations  
Say it like you mean World premiere  
That's a great question (a Jerry Hunt Song Drape)  
Life Stepped In

My God and Life Stepped In are from Neuburg's earliest repertoire of songs for voice and live looping, as heard on the 2004 Other Minds release, Residue.

Christmas Truce is a musical setting of one day in Neuburg's journal of tenant-landlord situations, inspired by poet Bernadette Mayer's Writing Experiments in which she suggests this topic (and hundreds of others) as a way to practice writing. The music was composed and recorded the following day.

Neuburg created Say it like you mean for a recent concert with saxophonist Ken Field, in which she live-looped both of them. This version is a very different solo reworking.

In 2015 the Cultural Department of Cologne, Germany, commissioned Neuburg to write and perform a new interpretation of the late Jerry Hunt's Song Drapes. Originally for Karen Finley, the Song Drapes are Jerry's pre-composed accompaniments to unspecified texts, which can be delivered vocally in any manner desired by the performer. She chose 16 of his 24 Drapes and wrote a song cycle on aging, death and stereotypes thereof.

## INTERMISSION

Enzo Minarelli  
Polypoetry 10 from Fama: Ciò che voglio dire (Fame: What I Want to Say), (2012)  
1. La grandeur di Gengis Khan  
2. Il sapere scopo di vita  
3. I nomi delle città come inno nazionale per Sinclair Lewis

4. Affermarsi senza chiedere
5. Che teme il dolore (use la medicina della religione)
6. Alla ricerca del suono farmaceutico
7. Poema, from Polypoetry 4 (1977-85)

#### La grandeur di Gengis Khan (The grandeur of Genghis Khan)

This polypoem is an acoustic exercise (eight vocal tracks, three noise) pushing the boundaries of tonal and rhythmic patterns, and exemplifying the greatness of Genghis Khan. The grandeur is built through the expansion of individual phonemes, amplified and repeated several times. Every single sound invades another, as did the indefatigable Genghis Khan who pushed the boundaries of his already boundless empire.

#### I nomi delle città come inno nazionale per Sinclair Lewis (The names of cities as national anthem, to Sinclair Lewis)

This idea came while reading the novel *Free Air* by Sinclair Lewis, in a vintage edition of 1937. At page 156 the female protagonist, Clara, composed a poem using only names of U.S. towns and which could serve as the perfect national anthem. On one track the text is read bombastically and over the top, while in another track each city name has been taken out of context, each referring only to itself. There are two additional tracks for enhancing the phonemic web. The composite list is devoid of musical nuance and symbolizes an unlikely national anthem. It also addresses those poets who have used real music as a didactic commentary.

#### Affermarsi senza chiedere (To succeed without asking)

The simplicity of this poem shows how poetry can communicate with either a little or a lot of sound. Air suction, a guttural sound symbolizes desire, and a sardonic laugh serves as a message of self-satisfaction.

#### Chi teme il dolore (usa la medicina della religione) (Those who fear pain [use the medicine of religion])

Three tracks provide a litany of nonsense, sung straight and vibrato-less. A collection of many voices cry in pain, and through this cry lies a pathway to relief.

#### Alla ricerca del suono farmaceutico (Finding a healing sound)

The sounds of nature, machines, and objects are not, per se, healing. I've employed electronic modules and other strategies to transform these sources into healing sounds. The twelve tracks are an attempt to induce acoustic wellness through hearing. To this end, I've employed homonyms and soothing, comforting words in multiple languages.

#### Poema

A micro-macro cosmos stuffed into a unique word: poema (poem). The emotions of a lifetime are condensed into a single, simple word.

#### Charles Amirkhanian

History of Collage\* (1981)

Hypothetical Moments (in the Intellectual Life of Southern California)\* (1981)

Maroia\* (1981)

Ka Himeni Hehena (The Raving Mad Hymn, 1997)

Marathon (1997)

Dutiful Ducks (1977)

[\*Carol Law and Charles Amirkhanian]

#### History of Collage (1981)

History of Collage is based on the text of an introduction to an art book on that subject with all of the phrases rearranged in cut-up fashion. A drum

synthesizer, set at its slowest speed (quarter note = 40mm) is heard along with natural sounds of ducks, birds, and bubbling water – also a very tame cricket, recorded so close to the microphone that the aggressiveness of the sound is greatly magnified.

Artist Carol Law, with whom I've often collaborated in performance, has used collage techniques in many of her projected images for my pieces. And I myself, using the control room as a compositional tool, often juxtapose aurally diverse found and composed materials by collage methods. Therefore, the text of this particular piece holds a shared meaning for us that extends into our fascination with the Dada, Futurist and Surrealist work of the earlier part of the 20th Century. And the text, itself a collage based on a book that traces the history of collage, produces a metaphor for the essential identity of our shared methodology.

#### Hypothetical Moments (in the Intellectual Life of Southern California) (1981)

This text was written at Tassajara, the Zen Buddhist retreat in the Carmel Mountains near Monterey in Northern California. I wrote it late one evening after having spent the day engrossed in two wildly differing bits of reading matter. I've always liked the escape afforded by Edith Wharton's novels of manners documenting the vicissitudes of late 19th and early 20th Century New York society from her alienated perspective, all of which is heightened by a sheen of gentility that can leave the present-day reader in a state of unrelieved frustration. Almost diametrically opposed is the gruff, drugged-out reportage of a Yankees-Red Sox baseball game published by poets Ted Berrigan and Harris Schiff in *Yo-Yo's with Money* (1979). The transcription of their irreverent comments, recorded live in the Yankee Stadium bleachers into a cassette machine, forms the hilarious content of the book. I began by intercutting phrases from the two source books (Wharton's *Glimpses of the Moon* was the other text) and then proceeded on my own. Clark Coolidge's virtuosic prose piece *American Ones* (1981) was also influential in developing *Hypothetical Moments*. My resulting text was spoken over a vaguely sinister improvisation that I recorded on an out-of-tune harpsichord modified by an Eventide Harmonizer.

#### Maroa (1981)

Maroa is the name of a street in Fresno, California, where I was raised. Only when I moved away from my hometown did I realize that "Maroa," which designated the street at the end of the block in the case of my family's two successive Fresno residences, had an unusual and unique sound.

A curious term in the piece, "psychodemocracy," is from an essay written in the 1920s by the American writer Mina Loy outlining "a movement to focus human reason on the conscious direction of evolution."

#### Ka Himeni Hehena (The Raving Mad Hymn) (1997)

This text-sound composition is in the rhythmic sound poetry style of my earlier live performance works *Dutiful Ducks*, *Church Car* and *Dumbek Bookache*. It was inspired by a trip to the island of Maui, during which time I became fascinated with the lengthy names of various streets with Hawaiian names and subsequently purchased several Hawaiian dictionaries.

The language utilizes only 7 consonants along with the 5 vowels familiar to most Romance languages. These latter are combined in various inventions to form diphthong-like sounds and intermixed with glottal stops and extended emphases to make up for the scarcity of consonants and to form the quantity of various words necessary to define the world of Hawaiian culture. In other words, their street signs often are strikingly long.

The piece was composed at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center in Italy after preliminary work at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in the Republic of Ireland and commissioned by the Ensemble Intercontemporain for performance by their music director David Robertson with the composer on December 19th, 1997, at the Cité de

la Musique in Paris.

#### Marathon (1997)

The breathless pace of Marathon is replicated in the headlong rush of this two-voice sound poem and the overlapping divisions of the word (Mara, thon).

The word is reminiscent of the fundraising drives I did on KPFA Radio over the years and therefore carries with it a certain trepidation. We'd interrupt programming of music and talk to raise funds (the concept was created at KPFA in the early Fifties and now is used by public radio and television everywhere). Some composers' names figure in the piece (Babbitt, Bazelon, Thomas Oboe Lee) the last to which my friend, composer Charles Boone, responded by christening himself Charles "Bassoon" Boone.

#### Dutiful Ducks (1977)

Dutiful Ducks is a sound poem for solo performer in which the voice and handclapping are performed to the accompaniment of an identical pre-recorded version of the piece. The object is to give an impression of very slight imprecision, which replicates the Indonesian practice of tuning adjacent metallophones slight out of sync with one another, producing a shimmering effect. In various different works of this type, my background as a percussionist are fused with my interest in language to create a kind of text-sound composition in which the sound takes precedence over meaning and syntax, though there is a real engagement with the "oddness" of the selected words and their juxtapositions which diverge from their normal usage.

The word imagery was inspired by my trip to a public radio conference on a former plantation in Virginia. A bust of ex-Secretary of Defense (under Richard Nixon) Melvin Laird in bronze was a highlight of the interior décor. At one point in the proceedings during which I was frustrated and bored, I went for a walk in a slight drizzling rain and observed numerous ducks parading over the cultivated rolling grass lawns of the conference center. Their "doings" seemed more engrossing than the conference itself, but their bodily functions created a kind of obstacle path for the stroller that suggested the title.

At the same time, my mother Eleanor had recently been in a severe car accident and sustained a concussion that left her in a coma for five days. When I visited her in the hospital somewhat later, but before her full recovery, and handed her some colored pens to write with, she took two of them at once and wrote various words absent-mindedly, straining to regain her memory. This is the "double Elly" image that crept into the text.

The composition is dedicated to my mother, Eleanor Kaprielian Amirkhanian (1917-2007), and has been performed widely by myself and others.

[Notes taken from printed program.]

#### People

Other Minds Festival (features)

ODC Theater (features)

Neuburg, Amy X, 1962- (features)

#### Related Collection

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