Morton Feldman: A Celebration of His 80th Birthday

Curated by John Bewley

June 1 – September 15, 2006
Case 1

Morton Feldman was born January 12, 1926 in New York City to Irving and Frances Feldman. He grew up in Woodside, Queens where his father established a company that manufactured children’s coats. His early musical education consisted of piano lessons at the Third Street Settlement School in Manhattan and beginning at age twelve, with Vera Maurina Press, an acquaintance of the Russian composer, Alexander Scriabin, and a student of Ferruccio Busoni, Emil von Sauer, and Ignaz Friedman. Feldman began composing at age nine but did not begin formal studies until age fifteen when he began compositional studies with Wallingford Riegger.

Morton Feldman, age 13, at the Perisphere, New York World’s Fair, 1939?
*Unidentified photographer*

Rather than pursuing a college education, Feldman chose to study music privately while he continued working for his father until about 1967. After
completing his studies in January 1944 at the Music and Arts High School in Manhattan, Feldman studied composition with Stefan Wolpe. It was through Wolpe that Feldman met Edgard Varèse whose music and professional life were major influences on Feldman’s career.


Let me tell you about the factory and Lukas Foss (composer and former Buffalo Philharmonic conductor). The plant was near La Guardia airport. Lukas missed his plane one day and he knew I was around there, so he called me up and invited me to lunch. He didn’t know what I did. I was doing pretty well as the boss’ son.

I told him to come over to the plant. I took off my coat, shirt, mussed up my hair and took my place at one of the giant pressers, a terrible, menacing-looking machine.

When Lukas walked in I had the top steam on, the bottom steam on, sweating, slaving away, the artist in chains. Lukas stood there, horror-struck. He said, Oh Morty. This will not do. We must get you out of here.”

**Lukas Foss** was instrumental in having Morton Feldman appointed Slee Visiting Lecturer at the University at Buffalo for the 1972-3 academic year. The University created the position of Edgard Varèse Professor of Composition for Feldman in 1975 and he held the position until his death in 1987. Feldman served as director of the Center of the Creative and Performing Arts 1976-1980 and created the June in Buffalo festival in 1975. The festival ran 1975-1978, and 1980 under Feldman’s leadership and was revived by David Felder in 1986. Feldman celebrated the music of his colleagues from the so-called New York School at the first June in Buffalo festival, with programs devoted to the music of John Cage, Earle Brown, and Christian Wolff.
Photograph of Morton Feldman at piano, with Creative Associates Julius Eastman, Jan Williams, William Appleby, and David Del Tredici taken during Feldman’s first year at the University at Buffalo as Slee Professor.

*Unidentified photographer.*
Photograph of Morton Feldman with Renée Levine Packer, Managing Director of the Center of the Creative and Performing Arts, 1974-1978

*Irene Haupt, photographer*
One of the turning points in Feldman’s life occurred when he met composer John Cage at a concert of the New York Philharmonic performing under conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos either January 26 or 27, 1950. Both Feldman and Cage left the concert after the performance of Anton Webern’s Symphony, op. 21 and happened to meet in the lobby where they expressed their mutual admiration.
for Webern’s music. Cage and Feldman, along with Earle Brown, Christian Wolff, and pianist, David Tudor, became the nucleus of the musical component of the “New York School”, an informal group of visual artists, dancers, and poets who shared interests in various means of experimenting in their respective art forms.

Feldman told the story of meeting Cage in various forms through the years. The following excerpt from his conversation with John Dwyer for the *Buffalo Evening News* is perhaps the most complete.


In the winter of 1950 I went to Carnegie Hall to hear Mitropoulos conduct the New York Philharmonic in the Webern Op. 21, the Symphony for Small Orchestra. I was 24, there with my 17 ½-year-old wife. I’d already composed my graph pieces, the first of their kind, but I was vastly unknown.

No piece before or since had the impact of that Webern work on me. The audience was cackling, laughing, hooting, people walking out.

At intermission I went out to the inner lobby by the staircase, and there was John Cage. Well, I’d recognized him when he came in, with Virgil Thomson, Lou Harrison and Ben Weber. I mean, I’d seen his picture in a spread by PM (now-defunct New York tabloid-size paper of a progressive sort).

Cage asked me what I thought of the Webern. I said I’d never heard anything so thrilling. He practically jumped up and down in agreement and asked my name. When he found I was a composer he brought me in, introduced me to his friends, invited me to a gathering later in the week.

Cage introduced me, in fact, to the whole world of Bohemia at the time, largely centered in the Village. He threw a party and I played some of my piano pieces. I began to meet the artists, the New York painters, who were such a strong influence on my creative life, much more so than composers in general.
The visual artists of the New York School were as influential, if not more influential, as the New York School composers to the development of Feldman’s style and aesthetic. He wrote about these influences in detail in several of his articles, but the following excerpt from “I met Heine on the Rue Furstenburg” (Buffalo Evening News, Saturday April 21, 1973) captures the essence of the interactions and Feldman’s respect for his fellow artists of the period.
I was living in the Village by now, and began to get involved, myself, with the painters in New York, as friends and fellow artists. Barney Newman, Rothko, Larry Rivers, Jasper Johns, William de Kooning, Motherwell, Rauschenberg, Kline, Pollock, Philip Guston. They were my graduate school.

…

The painters I knew, mostly older than me, were inspiring in other ways besides their art. They could starve but they wouldn’t quit, wouldn’t adapt to the market. Barney Newman drew that line down the canvas for 25 years, and then people began to look. Painters, you see, are not concerned with how a thing is made. They make. And then their stamina, their gift of survival. Musicians want to be fed from above.

I remember a party once at de Kooning’s studio with the three-day eviction notice on the door. He didn’t have the $22, whatever it was, to stay in business.

Such men wouldn’t change a line for the galleries, not when they were being evicted, or later when most of them were hugely successful.

We had the feeling, then in the Village, of sharing something in art that was unknown to the world at large. It was kind of a cul de sac, and I still enjoy the feeling. I grew up in an era when there was very little ability to hear contemporary music. And when you met someone who could there was that kinship.
Postcard from painter, Philip Guston, to Morton Feldman.

Case 2

Morton Feldman composed more than two hundred works. Only 132 of the compositions have been published to date, leaving 45 compositions (for which complete manuscripts are extant) that have not been published and more than two dozen works that exist only in the form of sketches. Almost all of Morton Feldman’s music manuscripts are held by the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, Switzerland. However, there the Music Library does possess some unique musical items.

(A list of Feldman's unpublished works is included following the summary of the exhibit.)

A facsimile of the unpublished Flute Trio (1972) was printed in the program notes for its premiere at a Berlin concert in 1989. This program was fortunately among those saved by Feldman. He gave the original manuscript to Sophie Kotanyi, a Hungarian filmmaker and director. A copy of the facsimile has been submitted to Feldman’s publisher for publication.
The pencil manuscript of Feldman’s unpublished setting of Thomas Campion’s *Followe Thy Faire Sunne* (1962) for voice and chimes is unique to the Music Library. The fair copy of the score, with some minor changes to the ending, is in the Paul Sacher Stiftung.
The Music Library is fortunate to possess the C. F. Peters Collection of Morton Feldman Manuscripts. It consists of 72 scores and 7 sets of parts for compositions by Feldman. The collection provides little in the way of musical evidence for Feldman’s compositional processes or thinking since the manuscripts are the vellum fair copies that Peters used to produce their publications of Feldman’s music.

Two of the scores in the Peters collection are in the hand of John Cage, who was responsible for bringing Feldman’s music to Peters. According to Feldman in “I met Heine on the Rue Furstenburg” (Buffalo Evening News, Saturday April 21, 1973): “He [Cage] took my early graph scores and copied them over himself, hours of careful work. Said they were too messy.” Peters remained Feldman’s publisher until 1969 when he switched to Universal Edition.

Intersection 2, composed in 1951, is one of the two scores copied by John Cage. This ink copy in John Cage’s hand is the one used by Edition Peters to create its publication of the piece.
Projection I, written in December 1950, was Feldman’s first work in graphic notation. This ink copy is the one used by Edition Peters to create its publication of the piece.
Morton Feldman at piano in his apartment in Buffalo.
Irene Haupt, photographer.
Case 3

Morton Feldman’s writings, interviews, and lectures are invaluable sources of insights into his personal life, his musical processes, and his thoughts about the artistic climate of the second half of the twentieth century. The Music Library possesses a substantial collection of Feldman’s published writings and interviews as well as a small number of his writings in either manuscript or typescript.

The typescripts “Mid-Way” and “I can't say that in terms of fame ...” have been transcribed and published in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman* (Cambridge, Mass. : Exact Change, 2000).
Page one of the Morton Feldman typescript, “Mid-way”. The full typescript is available online at:
http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/music/spcoll/feldman/aid/ts3p1.html

XXX

MID-WAY

[I am writing this at mid-career, and by the way things are going, what is being said about me, how I feel about myself it wouldn’t be long before I will reach that ultimate goal that art-lovers, art-haters and artists alike have agreed upon.] For some I have invented a new esthetic, for others I have destroyed music, for myself, I’m in mid-career.

Actually, it’s a great period in an artist’s life, if he is fortunate enough to even reach it, because, to some degree, well, his feelings are still his own, even though they’re being pulled this way and that. But the excitement after all, is in feeling that anything can happen, especially if you’re my age which is thirty-six. Do you remember in XXX Hamsun’s “Hunger” starving without even thinking of looking for a job. There was, a writer, XXXXX XXX XXXX XXXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX X
I can't say that in terms of fame -- that is, in terms of the cultural milieu, the fact that what I did is not of some interest. I'm also a New Yorker. I have to make a living, totally outside of music. It wouldn't be completely true to say that I don't handle myself in the world. In my musical life, also I make practical decisions, decide on practical moves, perhaps deciding not to make a move at all. But it's all a form of shadow-boxing. It all amounts to what Babbit once told me when I was a boy. "A mad scramble for crumbs."

I'm not worried about music, but I'm desperately concerned about my life in art in America. For you see, I don't like it here in America, and want to go back where I came from. I don't want the Left Bank, I don't want an English moor. I want to go back where I came from. Where is it? Any suggestions?

There is something rotten here, and we don't have to go to Denmark to look for it. It's not the public, that was always a lie. It's not the mass media. A bigger lie. It's not the Capitalist system -- another lie. It's my colleagues. My fellow American composers. The most pedantic, the most boring, ungenerous bunch of human beings one can meet on an earth so crowded with the last men that hop and make it smaller and smaller. This earth, I mean.

It's the college boys that are deciding what's what in America. I'll leave them with their judgement. I'll leave America with my fame.

What difference does it really make to me? I'll still die a tired man.
"We can no longer, by taking thought, transcend the life that exists by taking thought."

— Alfred Kröner

in Berlin, June 1937

Piano and voices II was written during this time in Berlin.

The title of the second piano piece (Piano, Clarinet, Bassoon, Oboe, and two voices) was actually changed, the composition, orchestration, practical, from anything else. The simple fact of its orchestration.

...what is orchestration? A world of pitch, space, and volume, in which the separate voices might be a definition of reduction.

For example, the sound of a musical composition is heard at one time very clearly. Even a professional finds that though he remembers the words and are close in her memory, she is not convinced that she is remembering. In her memory, she is not convinced that she is remembering anything else, even if she finds that the voices are still a part of her mind. The second voice in the world of imagination, which we hear, to conquer it.

...from our memory it is soon lost to us. But not so much lost is the quality of the piece, as we played a Mozart Sonata once (which one?) or a tune from a Schubert trio (which one?), but we remember the three instruments—what will always be remembered.
It has been transcribed and published in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman* (Cambridge, Mass. : Exact Change, 2000).
The full manuscript (5 leaves) is available online at: http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/music/spcoll/feldman/aid/ms1p1.html

*Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964-1987*, edited by Chris Villars (London : Hyphen Press, 2006) is the most recent collection of Feldman texts and interviews. It contains almost three dozen photographs, as well as score examples, from Music Library collections.

Feldman’s comments were always frank and sometimes biting, as evidenced in his review of a concert at Carnegie Hall, Nov. 9, 1962, conducted by Gunther Schuller.
“Mr. Schuller's History Lesson” in *Kulchur*, v. 3, n. 9 (Spring 1963): 88-89
MR. SCHULLER'S HISTORY LESSON
Twentieth Century Innovations: Prime Movers; conducted by Gunther Schuller at Carnegie Recital Hall, November 9, 1962.

L’Homme et son Desir, Milhaud; Five Pieces (Op. 10), Webern; Oiseaux Exotiques, Messiaen; Octet, Stravinsky; Chamber Symphony in E flat (Op. 9), Schoenberg.

Innovations be damned — it’s a boring century.

Was everything since 1900 so flashy? Was everything an audition for Diaghilev? With the exception of the Webern, the compositions here assembled by Gunther Schuller were all wrought of the same self-conscious "humanism" embalmed in the labored academic experiments usual to middle-aged "enfants terribles."

This selection of material suggesting each composer’s most flashy and popular aspect along with one or two of his more experimental elements seems to reflect Schuller’s notion about music in general, even extending to his third stream nonsense. Of course with Webern it is another matter, though under Schuller’s sentimental baton even this was just more Viennese pastry for the bourgeoisie. But after all, it was their revolution.

Everything on the program had one thing in common: drama. Webern’s drama is arrived at through a manipulation of color and dynamics. All the rest was “pour la scene.” The Milhaud was like viewing a bourgeois family on a country outing through that wonderful filtered scratchy brownish air so typical of the older French films. Occasionally the more sensitive member of the family — a young virgin of course with a white dress and Renoir eyes — gazes dreamily up at the sky. Then suddenly dark polytonal clouds begin to form. Mon Dieu! she’s drenched, and they’re running for cover.

But this bourgeois music is very optimistic. Before you know it, the sun is out again — and thank God for joie de vivre and Vuillard’s portrait of Edward G. Robinson and his family.

Messiaen on the other hand is more robust. (Not that Milhaud isn’t full of energized Gallic counterpoints.) Messiaen is artistically Gallic and considerably more abstract — remember he’s a younger man. He is fascinated by complicated rhythmic cells derived from the East and shows a curious preoccupation with bird calls.

Out of this poor man’s aviary a sustained piano chord in unbelievably bad taste raised the audience to a state of exaltation. I closed my eyes. Slowly the same bourgeois family came into focus. This time they were endlessly climbing hills — or was it always the same hill? In the frenzy around me I couldn’t quite determine. Let me say only that Paul Jacobs’ playing of the piano part was so brilliant, so matter of fact, so Olympian, that one felt he should be climbing not hills, but mountains. This, unfortunately, ruined the outing for the other members of the family, but that is merely incidental.
Stravinsky's offering was a neat little neo-Classic ditty which our family also enjoyed — but this time from a balloon. Oh, how they enjoyed themselves as they glided over Provence, then dipped toward the Spanish border and over to North Africa. It's true the trip to the Russian steppes proved much too long and exhausting an attempt, but happily the balloon soon turned about, heading safely back to Paris and Vuillard's portrait of Edward G. Robinson and his family.

My own journey on this night of nights was soon brought to a close. I left quite soon after the Schoenberg began. Need I say more? Not that my adventures were over with the concert . . . But that we must leave for another time.

MORTON FELDMAN

Transcription of above letter:
Oct. 22, 1965

Dear Renee,

Right off the bat – the performance of Four Instruments was one of the best demonstrations of “good will” I have ever heard.

You know, there is very little else a composer really wants.

Please thank all the performers for me – and also thank Lukas for putting it on.

Well, I haven’t come to the end of the page – but then, you know what this means.

Always,
Morton Feldman
Morton Feldman at the University at Buffalo Music Department retreat, April 9, 1975, First Presbyterian Church, Buffalo, N.Y.

Leo Smit, photographer
Postcard from Morton Feldman to Jan and Diane Williams.
Morton Feldman composed his only opera, *Neither*, in 1977. The one-hour work has one character, no plot, no events, and a libretto by Samuel Beckett of only sixteen lines. The first performance took place May 13, 1977 in Rome at the Teatro dell’Opera.
One leaf of a sketch for the *Unheard Footfalls Only Sound* section of *Neither* is held by the Music Library. It shows an earlier working of the vocal line and supporting chords.
Critical reactions from the press and the public were mixed as demonstrated in these two reviews.


The evening’s most important event was the second work, Morton Feldman’s *Neither*, being heard for the first time anywhere. The painter, in this case, was Michelangelo Pistoletto, who doubled as director. His work was not very arresting or enhancing: some thumbprints of light on an off-white backcloth and an aimless crowd that wandered on and off the stage. Feldman’s elegant score is a fine-knit, understated elegy (to a text by Samuel Beckett), a world of nuance, with the soprano’s voice acting as shy soloist, the words becoming a kind of vocalize.

It is a long piece – lasting about an hour – and rightly demands the listener’s concentration. The audience of the Rome Opera is not famous for its concentration or for its manners. Many of those present reacted with forced coughing, then whistles, then dubious witticisms. The presence of a tin whistle suggested that the demonstration was not entirely spontaneous or directed totally against Feldman. As usual, the Roman theater is riven by political dissension and the object of the demonstration was probably, at least in part, the opera’s brave artistic director, Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi.

Despite the shameful display, the soprano, Martha Hanneman, sang with admirable aplomb and with touching purity of sound. Marcello Panni – the evening’s able conductor – kept the orchestra going, though understandably there was some nervousness, and Feldman’s steady pianissimo was not always maintained.

For a few heady minutes at the Rome Opera I thought I was at last about to witness a genuine theatrical riot of the kind that greeted some of the masterpieces of modernism over 60 years ago – though anything less like *The Rite of Spring* than *Neither* by Morton Feldman, which was receiving its world premiere, would be difficult to imagine.

After all, the special thing about this 52-year-old New Yorker’s music ever since he emerged from the group around John Cage in the mid-1950s has always been its extreme slowness and quietness, its lack of concern with self-expression, or drama, or anything except pure, contemplative sound. Actually the new work – a 70-minute procession of immensely gradual chord changes, with an intermittent soprano obligato to words of Samuel Beckett – suggests a certain shifting of ground, even an element of dialectic in its occasioned contrast of gentle note-clusters with more mechanical, Birtwistle-like iterations, apparently evoking Beckett’s gnomic contrast of “impenetrable self” and “Impenetrable unself.”

All the same, it was the old Feldman, the timelessness and hush (there are only six loud bars in the entire score), that Michelangelo Pistoletto chose to emphasise in his staging: placing the young American soprano, Martha Hanneman, motionless downstage and faintly illuminating the gloom behind her with pools of light fluctuating in counterpoint with the slow breathing – as of some sleeping giant – that Feldman’s muted grindings and sussprations sometimes suggested, through which wandered lost groups of male figures like Giacometti statues vaguely come to life.

Could it be then, that after so many decades of noisy *avant-garderie*, only the monotonous and minimal retain any power to outrage? After half an hour or so the increasingly restive audience had had enough. “Dance a salterello!” shouted a voice from the boxes. Someone else began to toot a penny whistle; soon the battle of shushes from the stalls and counter-cheers from the gallery was in full swing.

And then . . . it all simply faded away as the Feldman ground on, either hypnotizing into enlightenment or boring into acquiescence – with minimal art one can never be quite sure – finally leaving, if not exactly an impression of aesthetic plenitude, at least a suggestive mood and images to hover in the mind.
Program for premiere performance of Neither, May 1977, Teatro dell’Opera, Rome.

*Unidentified photographer*
The Music Library has seven recorded lectures by Morton Feldman. Four of these have been fully transcribed and the transcriptions are available online at http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/music/spcoll/feldman/mflectures.html. Nicola Walker-Smith’s transcription of Feldman’s April 15, 1973 pre-concert comments about Christian Wolff was published in her article about the relationship between the two composers in the Autumn 2001 issue of *Musical Times*. (Available to University at Buffalo library cardholders through JSTOR at: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0027-4666%28200123%29142%3A1876%3C24%3AFOWAWO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-X). The transcription of the lecture and an audio file of the lecture are available online at: http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/music/spcoll/feldman/mfslee326.html
Morton Feldman was presented with an award for musical achievement by the National Institute of Arts and Letters in May 1970.
The American Academy of Arts and Letters

AND

The National Institute of Arts and Letters

CEREMONIAL

Tuesday afternoon · May 26 · 1970

AT THREE O’CLOCK

Academy Auditorium 632 West 156 Street · New York
Presentation of Awards by the President of the Institute

IN ART
LELAND BELL
CHARLES F. CAJORI
KENNETH CAMPBELL
GIORGIO CAVALLON
RALSTON CRAWFORD
ALLAN D’ARGANZELLO
HARVEY WEISS

IN LITERATURE
BREWER GHISSELIN
GORDON S. HAIGHT
RICHARD HOWARD
PAULINE KAEL
JERZY KOSINSKI
JAMES ALAN MCPherson
N. Scott Momaday
Grace Paley
F. D. Reeve
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

IN MUSIC
WILLIAM ALBRIGHT
ARNOLD ELSTON
MORTON FELDMAN
GEORGE BALCH WILSON

Awards of Specified Purpose
Charles E. Ives Scholarship
JOSEPH C. SCHWANTNER

Marjorie Peabody Waite Award
RAMON GUTHRIE

Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation Awards
GEORGE SCHNEE MAN
JONATHAN STRONG

Loines Award for Poetry
ROBERT HAYDEN

Morton Dauwen Zabel Award
GEORGE STEINER

Morton Feldman studying Persian frieze at Persepolis, Iran, August 1977
Jan Williams, photographer
Morton Feldman at Land’s End, England, August 1977

Jan Williams, photographer
Martha Hanneman and Eberhard Blum pointing at Morton Feldman, Harrogate, England, August 1977

Jan Williams, photographer
Irene Haupt, a resident of Buffalo since the 1970s, photographed in his own apartment and other informal settings many times. Her photographs of Feldman have been used in numerous publications, including liner notes for many recent recordings of Feldman’s music.
Morton Feldman and cat

Irene Haupt, photographer
Morton Feldman at the piano
Irene Haupt, photographer
Rolf Hanns, a German photographer and artist, took several photographs of Feldman at Darmstadt in July 1986. The shots include both formal poses and informal shots.
# Feldman Unpublished Manuscripts, not including sketches

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<td></td>
<td>Self portrait</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>[Sonatina for violoncello and piano]</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Violoncello, piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Location of score</td>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Two pieces</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Violoncello, piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Lost love</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Voice, piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Orchestra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195?</td>
<td>For Cynthia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>[Composition, string quartet] 1950</td>
<td></td>
<td>String quartet</td>
<td>Claren states the work is mentioned in an article but no score location is stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Composition] 1950</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>2 pianos, violoncello</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three dances</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>Are these complete?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>[Composition] 1951</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Violoncello, piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music for the film &quot;Jackson Pollock&quot;</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>2 violoncellos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three Ghostlike Songs and Interludes</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Voice, trombone, viola, piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Location of score</td>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Extensions 2</td>
<td>David Tudor Archives</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>According to Claren this work was withdrawn? Program located at Tudor Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Composition] 1950-1952</td>
<td></td>
<td>Violin or viola, Wind</td>
<td>This appears to be Intersection 3. The first 5 &quot;measures&quot; Instruments, Violoncello are in an article by Henry Coewll in Musical Quarterly, 38:1: p. 131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermission 3</td>
<td>David Tudor Archives</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermission 4</td>
<td>David Tudor Archives</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Extensions 5</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>2 violoncellos</td>
<td>Marked withdrawn in Claren? But, has an Edition Peters 6933 number stated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structure 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 violoncelli</td>
<td>Score lost? Program for 1955 performance located at University at Buffalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intersection +</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Music for the film</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>Flute, bass clarinet,</td>
<td>Claren states the work was cited in a works list but no location of the score is shown; date is &quot;before 1975&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Sculpture by Lipton&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>bassoon, horn, trumpet,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Composition] 1954</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>String quartet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-1962</td>
<td>[Composition, string quartet]</td>
<td></td>
<td>String quartet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>[Composition] 1958</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>2 pianos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Location of score</td>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Trio</td>
<td>2 Pianos, Cello</td>
<td>Cited by Metzger in Encyclopedie de la musique but no location of score is stated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instrumental Music</td>
<td>Small Orchestra</td>
<td>Claren p. [575] states source of citation as Metzger in Encyclopedie de la musique but no location of score is stated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Composition, 15 instruments]</td>
<td>15 Instruments</td>
<td>Claren dates it before 1959; work listed in Metzger in Encyclopedie de la musique but score location not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Arr. Of Josquin's Tu pauperum refugium</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Chamber ensemble</td>
<td>Possibly from the sketches?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Something wild in the city: Mary Ann's theme</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Horn, celesta, string quartet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montage 2 on the Theme of &quot;Something Wild&quot;</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Jazz ensemble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montage 3 on the theme of &quot;Something Wild&quot;</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Jazz ensemble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score for untitled film</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Flute, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion, violoncello</td>
<td>This matches the work listed on p. 574 in Claren. Music labels: City, The Beach, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sin of Jesus (Score for untitled film)</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Flute, horn, trumpet, violoncello</td>
<td>This matches the untitled film music listed on Claren p. 558.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Piece for seven instruments</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Flute, alto flute, trumpet, horn, trombone, violin, Voice, piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Followe thy faire sunne</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Voice, chimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>[Composition] 1963</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Percussion, celesta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merce</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Found</td>
<td>Percussion, piano/celesta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Location of score</td>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>[Composition, violoncello, piano] 1964</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Violoncello, piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Possibility of a new work for electric guitar</td>
<td></td>
<td>Electric guitar</td>
<td>Score possessed by Christian Wolff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>Paul Sacher Foundation</td>
<td>Flute, horn, trumpet, trombone, harp, vibraphone,</td>
<td>Music for a film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Music for a Film on Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This must be Peter Gessner's film, Time of the Locust, which is available on VHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Trio for flutes</td>
<td>Music Library, University at Buffalo</td>
<td>3 flutes</td>
<td>Reproduction located in program for 1989 Berlin concert; score in possession of Sophie Kotanyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Half a minute it's all I've time for</td>
<td>Warsztat Muzyczny</td>
<td>Clarinet, trombone, piano, violoncello</td>
<td>An ensemble?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For Stockhausen, Cage, Stravinsky and Mary Sprinson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Music for a Film on Willem De Kooning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Violoncello, piano</td>
<td>I don't see this in the Claren list, only Villars's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>[Composition] 1984</td>
<td></td>
<td>Violin</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>