

# The Treasures of Yvar Mikhashoff



**Yvar Mikhashoff**  
Photograph by Edward Nowak

University at Buffalo Music Library Exhibit  
October 17 – December 31, 2018

Curated by John Bewley

## The Treasures of Yvar Mikhashoff

**Y**var Mikhashoff (1941-1993) was a multi-talented pianist and composer who served on the music faculty at the University at Buffalo 1973-1993. He was an imaginative and tireless concert programmer who explored musical themes via genres (tangos and waltzes), eras, styles, and composers. He expanded the piano repertoire by commissioning new works and made his own transcriptions of other literature for keyboard, including his series of virtuosic opera transcriptions in the same vein as those by Liszt. He also explored lesser-known areas of piano literature as he pursued new programming ideas.



**Yvar Mikhashoff (then Ronald McKay)  
in an undated school photograph**

All of this activity drove him to become an avid collector of music, especially piano literature. His collection of annotated and marked scores contains more than 1200 scores, including many that reflect his working relationships with a wide range of composers. The unique nature of the holdings includes

the many contemporaneous works reproduced from manuscripts as well as many works that were either not widely distributed or collected.

While Mikhashoff clearly displayed a showman's flair, he was also an extremely diligent performer who closely examined anything he performed. This is evident in his study of Charles Ives's *Concord Sonata* (Piano sonata no. 2). He wrote an analytical article about the first and second movements, including a color-coded thematic analysis of the entire first (Emerson) movement.

A THEMATIC SURVEY OF THE FIRST MOVEMENT  
(EMERSON) OF THE SONATA NO. 2 "CONCORD,  
MASS., 1840-1860" OF CHARLES IVES.

by

WAR-EMILIAN MIKHASHOFF

- I. Introductory remarks
- II. Thematic survey.

## I.

Henry Cowell's book Charles Ives contains a chapter which is by many considered an analysis of the Sonata No. 2 "Concord, Mass., 1840-1860", better known as the "Concord Sonata". However, by our standards today, and by the retrospective made by Mr. Cowell, it can be truly considered no more than a perusal; he revealed some years later to Mr. John Kirkpatrick that he regarded the chapter as cursory at best, and in fact erroneous in a fundamental thematic identification. He states that the motive found which forms the opening five notes of the bass line is the basis of the entire movement, in conjunction with the motto theme of the Symphony No. 5 of Beethoven. In fact, the motive is of signal importance, yet is only one of seven which woven together form the fabric of the movement.

In an attempt to unravel the threads and form an analysis of this massive and complex movement, I have thought to make this essay more an explanation of the accompanying annotated score than a written analysis. The score is color-keyed in a manner that will make the occurrences and intersticings of the various themes easily apparent. As well, having spent several days with Mr. John Kirkpatrick in an effort to gain a greater overall comprehension of the work, I will also intersperse many of Ives's marginal comments. That is, there exist sixteen copies of the original edition of the sonata that were in Ives possession and in which he made corrections and emendations, since he felt always that this was a "work in progress" and indeed did continue to re-think and correct the sonata until the time of his death. In addition, many of the actual changes in notes and rhythms are noted in this edition that I have prepared for my performances. Many of these changes were culled from these many emended copies, many were made by Mr. Kirkpatrick from Mr. Ives's suggestions, many I adapted from Mr. Kirkpatrick's



(13"35')

Slowly THAT HUMAN FAITH MELODY

CHARLES E. IVES

NOTE OPENING  
1/2 STEP ———

## « NATURE AND INSPIRATION »

## DEMOCRACY

FAITH INVERTED

BEETHOVEN FIFTH SYMPHONY #5 AND CHARLES ZWILLER

HYMN: Missionary Chant

*faster and faster*

13

Concord Steeple Bell could. The tempo at starting may be around 72–80 = a quarter note. But even on the first page, during the 4th brace and the first part of the 5th, the quarter note may have climbed up to over a 100, though the tempi need not be precisely the same, each time played. The same essay or poem of Emerson may bring a slightly different feeling when read at sunrise than when read at sunset.



Slowly (PT: 1-72-76) (fully and not too early) (16, or slower, 19?)

I. EMERSON

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He utilized all his research in a thematic program about the New England transcendentalists, using the *Concord Sonata* as the centerpiece of the program.



COMMENT # 1: THIS IS NOT A NICE SONATA FOR A NICE PIANO PLAYER. WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN? WHAT IS BEHIND IT ALL? THE "VOICE OF GOD" SAYS THE ARTIST, THE "VOICE OF THE DEVIL" SAYS THE MAN IN THE FRONT ROW. NO, SIREE! IN THIS SONATA THEY'RE SPITTING ABOUT, THERE IS A DESIGN -- SOMEWHAT MORE THAN THERE SHOULD BE, IT SEEMED TO ME -- AND THE FORM IS OBVIOUS, BUT IT ISN'T DRABBLED ON EVERY MILESTONE ON THE WAY UP OR TO OR ON -- IN HIS REFLECTIONS EMERSON IS NOT AFRAID TO GO WHEREVER HE IS CARRIED--- TO PARNASSUS OR TO "MUSKETAQUID." WE SEE HIM STANDING ON A SUMMIT WHERE MANY MEN DO NOT DARE TO CLIMB, PEERING INTO THE MYSTERIES OF LIFE, HURLING BACK WHATEVER HE DISCOVERS THERE -- NOW, THUNDERBOLTS FOR US TO GRASP IF WE CAN -- NOW PLACING QUIETLY, EVEN TENDERLY, IN OUR HANDS, THINGS WE MAY SEE WITHOUT EFFORT --- IF WE WON'T SEE THEM, SO MUCH THE WORSE FOR US. . . BUT IF WE CANNOT FOLLOW ALL THE WAY -- IF WE DO NOT ALWAYS CLEARLY PERCEIVE THE WHOLE PICTURE, WE ARE AT LEAST FREE TO IMAGINE IT -- HE MAKES US FEEL THAT WE ARE FREE TO DO SO; PERHAPS THAT IS THE MOST HE ASKS.

Flute is offstage throughout Part I

STAGE LAYOUT [Part I]

TAPE OF  
VLNS



Script for Mikhashoff's November 18, 1974 program based on Ives's Concord Sonata: Concord Mass., 1840-1860, a musical stereopticon



**Sylvano Bussotti and Yvar Mikhashoff at the Almeida Festival, 1986**  
Photograph by Sarah Ainslie

**Sylvano Bussotti** (born 1931, Creative Associate at the Center of the Creative and Performing Arts 1964-1965) composed *Le Racine, pianobar pour Phèdre* in 1980. It is scored for piano, four singers (including the soprano part of Phèdre), and six mimes. The piano part is performed onstage, non-stop for the 3-hour duration of the piece, by a character in the opera, Monsieur Fred. Bussotti wrote the part expressly for Yvar Mikhashoff and Mikhashoff performed the premiere at La Piccola Scala December 13, 1980.





**Yvar Mikhashoff as Monsieur Fred**  
**in Sylvano Bussotti's *Le Racine*, pianobar pour Phèdre**  
Photograph by Lelli and Masotti



**TEATRO ALLA SCALA**

ENTE AUTONOMO  
STAGIONE D'OPERA E BALLETO 1980/81

**PICCOLA SCALA** FUORI ABBONAMENTO  
"NOVECENTO/OTTANTA"

SABATO 13 DICEMBRE 1980 - ORE 20.30  
TERZA RAPPRESENTAZIONE

**BUSSOTTI OPERA BALLETO**  
**LE RACINE**  
**PIANO BAR POUR PHÈDRE**  
Un prologo, tre atti e un intermezzo  
Libretto (da Jean Racine) e musica di  
**SYLVANO BUSSOTTI**  
(Edizione Ricordi)

Monsieur Fred; pianiste du Racine	IVAR MIKHASHOFF
Armél; son jeune élève, tourne les pages au Racine	MAURO MARCHETTI
Julien; vieil assassin, souffleur, travesti; dirige le Racine	PAOLO RICCUCCI
Jo Leblond; habitué du Racine (mimo)	ANTONIO MENICUCCI
Bob Lennoir; occasionnellement au Racine (mimo)	MICHEL RAKOTOSAONA
Hippolyte; pensionnaire au Racine (attore-mimo)	ROCCO
Le « grec »; garçon d'étage au Racine (tenore)	ANDRÉ BATTEDOU
Jean Racine; père d'Hippolyte, client du Racine (basso)	GIANCARLO LUCCARDI
Xio Leblanc; voyageur, de passage au Racine (baritono)	ALESSANDRO CORBELL
Madame Phèdre; belle-mère d'Hippolyte; patronne du Racine	ELISE ROSS
Les garçons du Racine	UMBERTO BERGNA
	CLAUDIO CALCAGNI
	VITTORIO D'AMATO
	LUCA VEGGETTI
	FEDERICO BETTI
	VINCENZO CAPUTO
	LUCA TODINI

Concertatore e direttore  
**MASSIMO DE BERNAT**

Regia, scene e costumi di  
**SYLVANO BUSSOTTI**  
con immagini di LUCIANO MORINI  
Direttore dell'allestimento scenico  
**GIORGIO CRISTINI**

Direttore della produzione ENRICO TRANCHINA	Maestro collaboratore JOHN FISHER	Maestro rammentatore CESARE ALFIERI
Assistenti alla regia GIAN PAOLO PRINCIPE FRANCO VACCHI	Scene realizzate dalla BOTTEGA VENEZIANA diretta da GIUSEPPE RANCHETTI	
Pittori scenografi realizzatori GIANNI BELLINI NELLO BALLERIN RENZO CORNUDA WILLY LUISE DANIELE PADIN		
Responsabile archivio musicale CORRADO ABRIANI	Accordatore ANGIOLINO LEALI	Costruttori ALBERTO VENEZIANO SERGIO SASTORATO
PAOLO GNOLO ANTONIO GIANCATERINO	Costumi e acconciature realizzate da ANNAMODE, Roma	
Elmi e corazze ANNAMODE - STAMIGNA	Calzature ANNAMODE-ARDITI	Styling FRANCO FREDA
Parrucche ROCCHETTI-CARBONI	Parrucchiera ADALGISA FAVELLA	Direttore di scena GIULIO TREVISANI
Realizzatore delle luci Gianni Mantovanini	Capo serv. macchinisti Luciano Spaoloni	Capo serv. sartoria Mario Secchi
Capo rep. elettricisti Salvatore Mancinelli	Capo rep. attrezzi Luigi Metaldi	Capo serv. laboratori Aldo Gildardi
		Capo rep. meccanici Giancarlo Astorri

IMPAGINAZIONE E STAMPA ARTI GRAFICHE CONFALONIERI - MILANO

Yvar Mikhashoff's copy of the full score of *Le Racine, pianobar pour Phèdre* from which he performed the piano part. Mikhashoff marked the score in preparation for performance and in many places attached rewritten versions of passages. Many of these are Mikhashoff's attempts to clarify Bussotti's original notation, sometimes involving enharmonic changes to pitches and the notation of rhythms.

529" → 6'08"

# Le Racine

Prologo:

Hippolyte!

bjur. Arnel  
jornisfred  
bonjour  
Madame

TOTAL SUITE : 28"



ENTER STAGE LEFT / TAKE DRINK, CHAT / EXIT STAGE RIGHT 13

After Racine Exits / ENTER TO PIANO / Armel is there / BEGIN GIVING

PIANO LESSON, BECOMING IMPATIENT, EXASPERATED - STANDING

FROM TIME TO TIME - WHEN LIGHT BEGINS TO (Julien enters, BT, Bonjour, mumble)

GO DOWN, GIVE UP ON LESSON; LEAVE PIANO WITH

SCORE (leave it there) STAND IN WINGS, VISIBLE,

(GET HANDKERCHIEF) RE-ENTER FATIGUED, USE


MOUCHOIR TO FUSS W/ PIANO THEN PREPARE:


Entrée 7.12.18

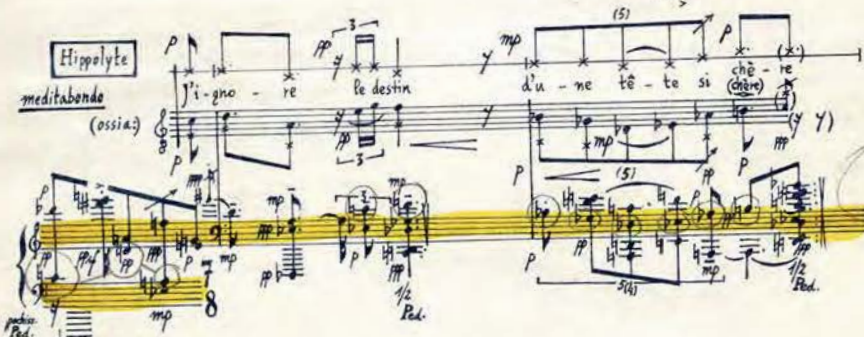
## IN DARKNESS

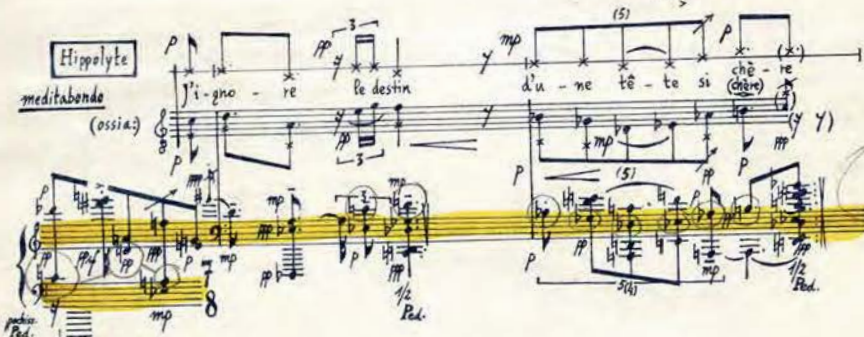
Hippolyte on stage before small curtain opens

il tempo di una lenta apertura di sipario

Pl.  l.v. tilt extinction

10.  *secco*  
Nel Silenzio

Hippolyte  *meditabondo*  
(ossia:)



*PIU LENTO*  
*dolcissimo*



ARMEL  
tourne  
la page...

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1-Entrata | 4-Preludio  |
| 2-Prologo | 5-Passo     |
| 3-Romanza | 6-Cabaretta |
|           | 7-Coda      |



**In** addition to re-notating portions of Bussotti's score for the purpose of legibility, Mikhashoff also prepared a transcription for solo piano in the form of a suite of music from *Le Racine, pianobar pour Phèdre*. He recorded three movements from the suite during recording sessions August 19-20, 1992 at the University at Buffalo's Slee Hall. The recording was released as part of his two-CD set titled *Opera: Virtuoso opera fantasies, paraphrases & transcriptions* (Mode Records 2006).



**Yvar Mikhashoff and Haline Moretti in performance of  
Sylvano Bussotti's *Pianobar pour Phèdre* at the Almeida Festival 1986  
Photograph by Sarah Ainslie**

A patron's request for the score of the entire suite prompted a search of Mikhashoff's collection and revealed that in all likelihood, Mikhashoff never prepared a full score of the entire suite. He fully transcribed some of the



**COPA**

BASSOTTI - MIKHAISHOFF

*moderato*

Soprano: *p mp p I. mf*

Alto: *pp*

Piano: *assai f*, *mp*, *ppp*, *mp*

[S.P.]

(1)





Lukas Foss and Yvar Mikhashoff  
Photograph by Irene Haupt

**Lukas Foss's** *Solo for piano* is among the solo piano works commissioned by Mikhashoff. The copies of the score that Mikhashoff kept provide an excellent example of the relationship between a performer and composer and the process of working together on a work from first draft to final published version. Mikhashoff re-notated Foss's original notation in many passages to clarify it for pianists. The scores and accompanying letters from Foss to Mikhashoff also indicate that the title of the work evolved during the process.

HELIX for PIANO SOLO

LUKAS Foss

1981

Commissioned by Your Majesty

$$57 = 60 \text{ (in case)}$$

legato leggero, non rubato. cadenza in un solo movimento. (no tempo change Kurujant)

pNo Sol.

Sinra pedata

podmiss. pedale (leaves 1/4 depressed)

*Senecio pedunc.*

pochiss. pedale (leavo  $\frac{1}{4}$  depressed)

senza ped.

(normal slight pedalling)

exact yet playful

POST OFFICE

(a) sup

Sub. princpr. (no longer playful)

1/4 bel. depressed

tem pect pivi pectate

Sul. quas. f

Hold your breath!

*Stenopoda*



1981-

page 62



LUKAS FOSS

Solo  
for piano

please  
Xerox

from here on

Dear Yvonne

Found a few errors -  
one serious (where I miscorrected  
in Paris)

Disregard my changes in stems and  
crossing out of fingerings, that is  
for the printer, not for you.

Except the change in stems in the

pp 2<sup>nd</sup> place (the toad canon) where  
I beg you to cross hands. In my  
slower tempo no problem.

LUKAS

All my editings  
are in ink.



5  $\Delta = 60$  (or less)

legato leggero, non rubato, cantando ma non espressivo (no tempo change throughout)

*P*

senza pedale

pachiss. pedale

4

L.H. poco marcato

(leave 1/4 depressed)

6

*pp*

pachiss. pedale (leave 1/4 depressed)

\* senza pedale

*p*

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**Lukas Foss's Solo for piano as re-notated by Yvar Mikhashoff  
and further marked with corrections by Foss**



**Yvar Mikhashoff and Giacinto Scelsi**  
Unidentified photographer

**M**ikhashoff also worked closely with Italian composer, **Giacinto Scelsi**, performing five world premieres of Scelsi's works. Mikhashoff's collection contains four unpublished solo piano works by Scelsi. They are not titled but bear stamped numbers. In order to identify the works it was necessary to contact Friedrich Jaecker, a composer and musicologist who has researched Scelsi's music at the Fondazioni Isabella Scelsi in Rome, home of Scelsi's archives. According to Jaecker, the works are most likely drafts of works that were never authorized for performance (indeed, working with pianist Ivan Il'ic, we have been unable to get the authorities at the Fondazione to authenticate the pieces **or** grant permission to perform them).

Professor Jaecker explained that, "Scelsi improvised on the piano or on the ondiola (an ancient keyboard) and his collaborators "transcribed" it into scores. So Tosatti, Filippini and others were more than copyists but less than composers. In any case, Giacinto Scelsi can be considered to be the

"author" of his works." Jaecker identified Vieri Tosatti identified as the copyist of these four pieces.

N° 36

MEDITATIVO, intense  $\text{♩} = 58$

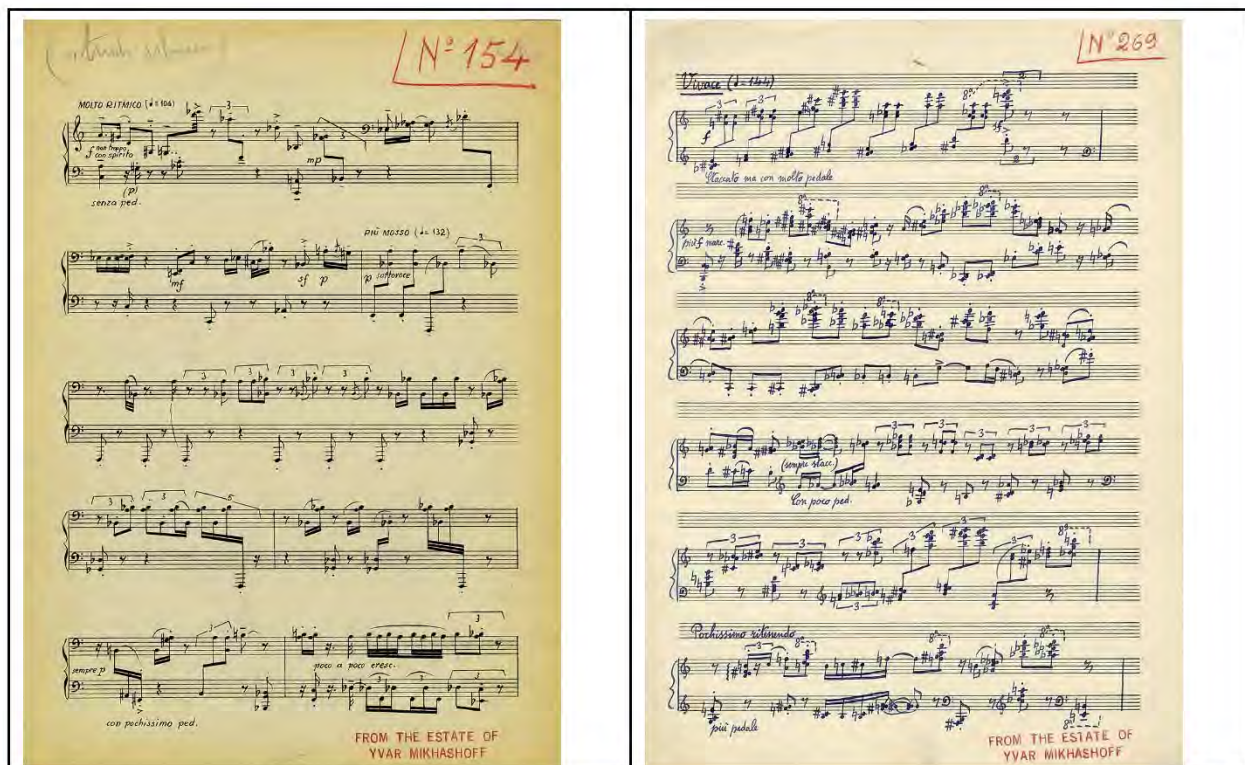
FROM THE ESTATE OF  
YVAR MIKHASHOFF

N° 37

$\text{♩} = 58$

FROM THE ESTATE OF  
YVAR MIKHASHOFF





Mikhashoff's collection includes another unusual work by Giacinto Scelsi, also identified for the Music Library by Friedrich Jaecker. His description of the score for horn and bass:

*The partition is written by Riccardo Filippini, a student of Vieri Tosatti and today completely unknown. It is a new version of the unpublished orchestral work Kamakala, which I found in the Scelsi archive in Rome and which was premiered 2014 in Berlin. The partition of Kamakala is written by Tosatti probably in the years around 1957/58, the duo version is written probably in the years after 1972 (in this year Filippini began to work for Scelsi). I found also the tape recording referring to this piece.*

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**I**

Molto (♩ = 60)

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One of the interesting works acquired by Mikhashoff is La Monte Young's *Piano pieces for David Tudor*. Mikhashoff was co-director of the North American New Music Festival from 1983 until his death in 1993. The music of La Monte Young was featured on the April 7, 1990 concert with Young in attendance and conducting two of his eleven works performed on the program. Mikhashoff performed the *Piano pieces for David Tudor* on that program. This copy seems to be a unique holding.

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PIANO PIECE FOR DAVID TUDOR #3

Slowly, on three finger of each hand, simulate slow jumping grasshoppers. Advance from the rear of the piano lid to the front. (There are two young fast ones!). They occasionally crossover. Near the middle of the lid, RH jumps over LH toward the center, then both together. Once they both jump together. Finally, one jumps in the piano, then the other jumps inside the piano, <sup>then</sup> and in tone... "most of them were very old grasshoppers"... BOW

PIANO PIECE FOR DAVID TUDOR #2

Sit down at the piano, prepare to play, in the usual way, begin to lift the lid, with care. Stop when it's halfway up, realizing that it made a sound, act a bit surprised. Try now to lift it more carefully, with two hands, positioning hands differently each time. Then, after an attempt with both hands near the bottom, move to the top and lay head nearly on the lid with ear nearly on the lid as you attempt to lift it without any sound -- you are listening attentively, with face to the audience. At this point you feel anger, changing to disappointment. Sit up, look at the lid, make a few half-hearted attempts, with two finger of the LH, then in a very dejected gesture of just touching the lid with two finger of LH, pause, then tap the lid with an exhalation and sigh and a gesture of resignation; stand up quickly and BOW.

PIANO PIECE FOR DAVID TUDOR #1

Climb to pulpit. Lift haybale so it appears to the audience, lift it and fling it to the stage. Go downstairs resolutely with the bucket of water (which is actually empty). Place the bucket in front of the kidney of the piano, <sup>then</sup> with right foot, from the back, position ~~the~~ hay <sup>hay</sup> under the piano, the assumed eating position. Go and get the piano bench and place it near the end of the piano, between the pf and the audience on a 45° angle; sit and stare at the hay, waiting

CONT.....



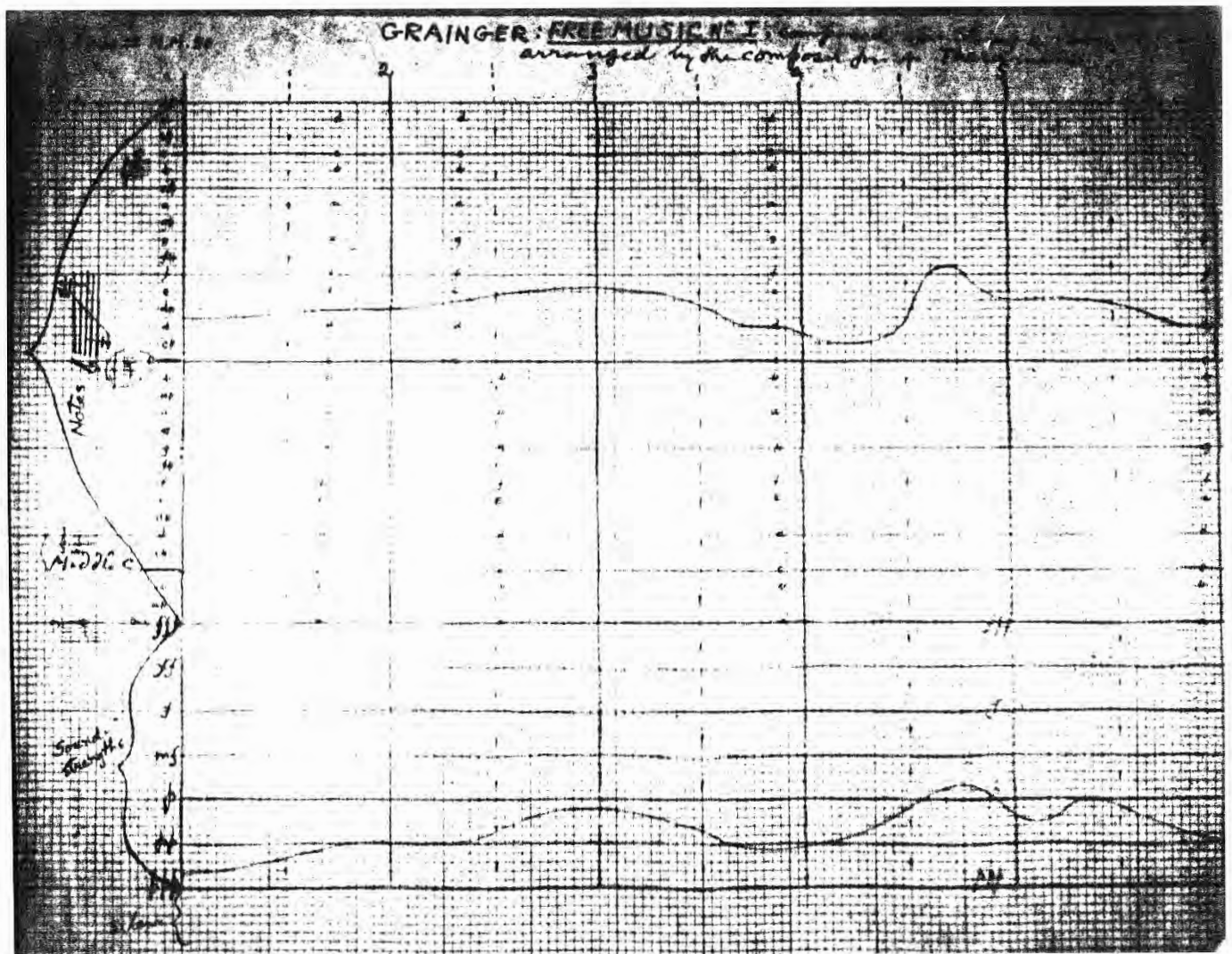
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PIANO PIECE FOR DAVID TUDOR #1

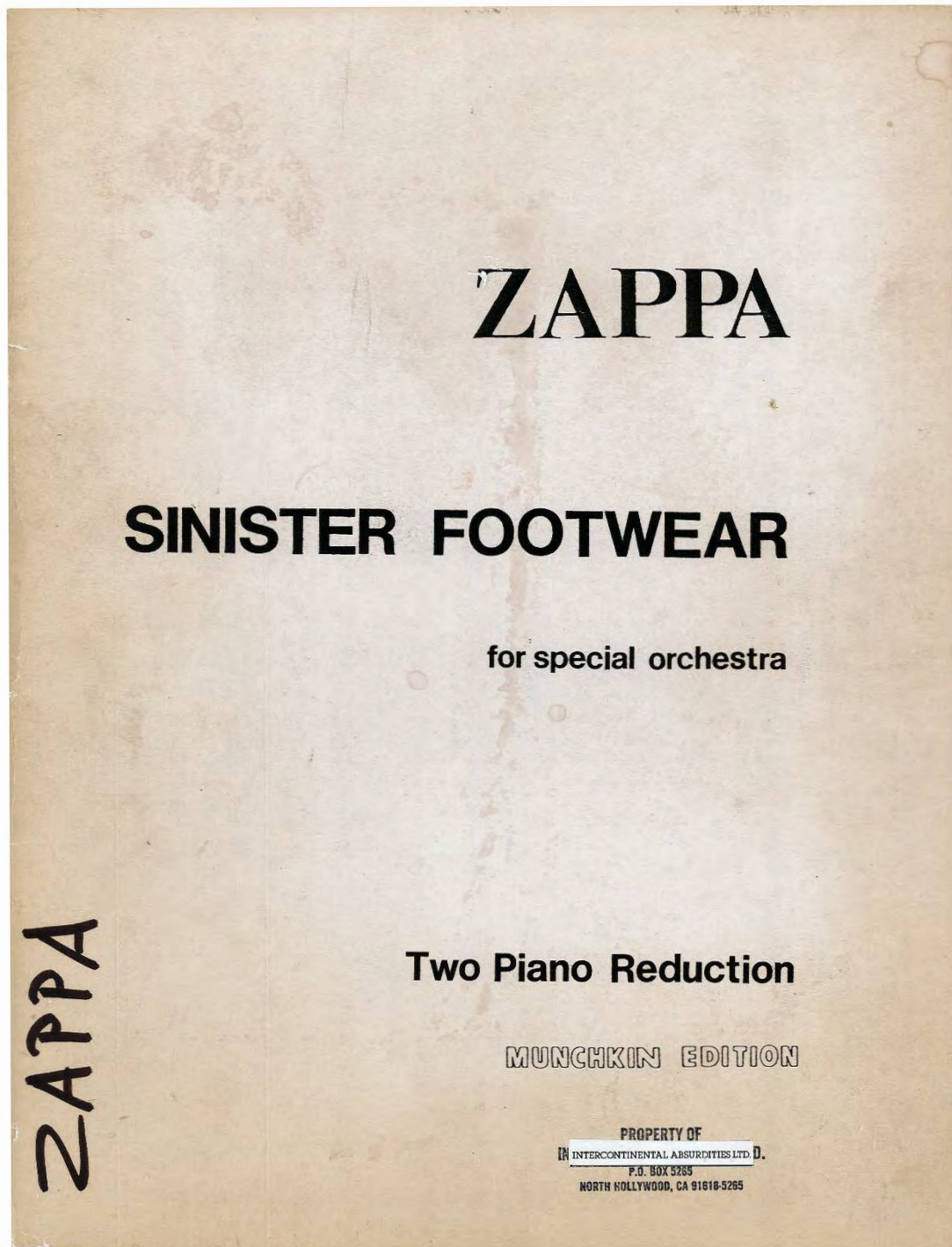
for the eating to begin. Cock head slightly when you perceive that the piano will not eat. Lift the lid, get the bucket of water, walk to piano and pretend to pour, methodically and carefully in two different places. Draw back -- it is not drinking! Step back and aggressively throw water into piano. Slam bucket down. Grab some hay, walk around to the keyboard. Thrust lid open, aggressively, from the back of the piano, offer the hay bunch to extreme high register. Hold position. Stuff in hay and jam the lid shut. BOW.

Hotondo wa Toshi oita  
Batta de aru.

The high percentage of photocopies in Mikhashoff's collection is perhaps an indication of Mikhashoff's appetite for collecting unusual music. If music was not commercially available, he would often request and purchase copies from libraries or people who held copies. That is the case with a packet of scores copied from the Percy Grainger Museum in Melbourne, Australia. Grainger is chiefly remembered for his popular settings of folk music, but he also had an interest in the experimental realms of music as represented in the scores acquired by Mikhashoff.



This score of the two-piano reduction by Arthur Jarvinen of Frank Zappa's *Sinister footwear* is marked throughout with performance indications. Although the score currently appears to be available for purchase, no libraries are listed as holding it in WorldCat, making this a unique copy.





For more information about the life and career of Yvar Mikhashoff, please refer to the Music Library's online guide to Yvar Mikhashoff Resources at <https://research.lib.buffalo.edu/mikhashoff>