

Topless Cellist

THE IMPROBABLE LIFE
OF CHARLOTTE MOORMAN

JOAN ROTHFUSS

FOREWORD BY YOKO

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The Juilliard-trained cellist Charlotte Moorman sat nude behind a cello of carved ice, performed while dangling from helium-filled balloons, and deployed an array of instruments and sounds on *The Mike Douglas Show* that included her cello, a whistle, a cap gun, a gong, and a belch. She did a striptease while playing Bach in Nam June Paik's *Sonata for Adults Only*. In the 1960s, Moorman (1933–1991) became famous for her madcap (and often unclothed) performance antics; less famous but more significant is Moorman's transformative influence on contemporary performance practice—and her dedication to the idea that avant-garde art should reach the widest possible audience. In *Topless Cellist*, the first book to explore Moorman's life and work, Joan Rothfuss rediscovers, and recovers, the legacy of an extraordinary American artist.

Moorman's arrest in 1967 for performing topless made her a water-cooler conversation starter, but before her tabloid fame she was a star of the avant-garde performance circuit, with a repertoire of pieces by, among others, Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, and Paik, her main artistic partner. Moorman invented a new mode of performance that combined classical rigor, jazz improvisation, and avant-garde experiment—informed by intuition, daring, and love of spectacle. Moorman's

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THE IMPROBABLE LIFE OF
CHARLOTTE MOORMAN

JOAN ROTHFUSS : FOREWORD BY YOKO ONO

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Endleaf image: Two pages from Charlotte Moorman's appointment diary for September 1968. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

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for Paul and Leon

WRITERS OF FICTION GENERALLY MUST STICK TO PROBABILITIES, MORE OR LESS, BUT IN REAL LIFE THERE ARE NO SUCH LIMITATIONS. THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENS CONTINUALLY. —W.B. SEABROOK, *THE MAGIC ISLAND*

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Foreword

YOKO ONO

In 1961 Norman Seaman said he would produce my piece *Of a Grapefruit in the World of Park* at Carnegie Recital Hall if I could get Charlotte to do the dirty work. “She’s good,” he said. *Of a Grapefruit in the World of Park* had already been presented that year at the Village Gate but not in an uptown music hall like the Carnegie.

I went to Charlotte and asked if she would do it. She wasn’t too eager. She was cute. She said she didn’t mind doing a concert for a guy, but doing it for a woman composer was not fun. I told her I would pay twenty-five dollars a week. She added, “And a bottle of Scotch.” I said yes. So she accepted the deal. Twenty-five dollars, by the way, was a lot for me. In those days, rent for a nice enough apartment was about twenty-five to thirty dollars a month. In any case, that was all I could pay then. Her asking for a bottle of Scotch was just style. It’s like a rock musician now saying, “and good drugs, please,” even if he or she was not taking any drugs.

I didn’t expect her to understand the avant-garde thing I was doing, she didn’t have to, and I didn’t explain. Both she and I worked like hell late into the nights—doing the envelopes, getting the musicians together, etc. The day of the concert she produced her cello, sat with it in my small room, and said, “Now tell me exactly what I should do.” I didn’t think she would be interested in performing because she was a classical cellist. I was surprised but thought, “Why not?” So I told her what I wanted her to do. She got it.

In early 1962, I went back to Tokyo. When I returned to New York in 1964, I discovered that Charlotte had produced concerts of all the other avant-garde composers while I was gone. Most of them were guys who were rather mean and nasty to me. She knew that. So I was hurt. I felt like she had betrayed me. So I said, “Charlotte, why did you do that?” She looked at me, wide eyed, and said “Yoko, I was lonely.” I still remember how she

looked at me. I forgave her instantly. We all knew we did crazy things when we were lonely.

Charlotte had become a very important person in the avant-garde by starting a thing called the Avant-Garde Festival. Whenever I visited her, there were always a few very good-looking men, sitting there, waiting for the Queen to recognize them. They were all artists who wanted to be in the avant-garde festival. Charlotte would offer me a seat next to her, and we would chat. She didn't care a hook about the guys who were waiting. Charlotte always called me and said, "Yoko, you have to put something in the festival." She insisted. At the time, I must say I was in a bit of a difficult situation. Being a mother can be a full-time thing, especially if you have to earn a living as well. So when I did not respond to her requests, she would call me and say, "I'm putting your work in anyway." She was like that. When I got busy with John & Yoko stuff, Charlotte still kept performing *Cut Piece* everywhere she went with a vengeance. She even kept the pieces of the dresses in plastic bags. It seemed that she was obsessed with *Cut Piece*.

When John went to L.A. in 1974, Charlotte called me and asked what was happening. She thought I definitely had to date somebody. She invited me to dinner at her place that night. I thought we were just going to have girls' chat. I didn't think it would be like what I discovered it to be. In no time, she had gotten three handsome guys to come to dinner. They were all composers or something. When I went home, which I did rather quickly, Charlotte called and asked if there was anybody I liked. I said, "No, Charlotte. It was so embarrassing. You must have told them why they were invited!" Charlotte swore blind that she hadn't told them anything. But I suppose it was not hard for them to guess. The guest list was three guys and me! Well, I didn't like it at all, but Charlotte was like that. But she always meant well.

Toward the end of her life, Charlotte performed *Cut Piece* on the roof somewhere. I didn't go, but everybody went, including my son, Sean. There is a film of it, but I don't want to see it and I never will. It's too sad for me to watch. I want to remember us as the beatnik girls who had great fun in the '60s, before we became such Queens.

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My project would have been impossible without the Charlotte Moorman Archive, part of the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, and its wonderful staff. Russell Maylone, the McCormick library's former curator, allowed me early access to the archive in 2006; during my many visits over the next six years, staff members Susan Lewis, Nick Munagian, and Sigrid Perry always welcomed me back and cheerfully tolerated my Moormanmania. I am especially grateful to the library's current curator, Scott Krafft, for his encouragement, assistance, and friendship.

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Very special thanks are due to Yoko Ono for contributing a remembrance of Moorman, which appears as this book's foreword.

Finally, I must thank my husband, Paul Shambroom, for his love and encouragement, and our son Leon, who amazes me every day.

Introduction

At twelve o'clock noon on November 12, 1969, a short, buxom woman in a floor-length taffeta evening gown strode onto the set of the *Mike Douglas Show*, a nationally syndicated talk show that was then taped in the basement studio of KYW-TV in Philadelphia. She made her way to the center of a cluttered stage setup that was anchored on one side by a World War II-era surplus practice bomb, and on the other by a coatrack hung with cans, squeeze toys, a gong, sponges, and other noisemakers. Arranged on the floor between them was a miscellany of everyday objects: a tape player, a phonograph, a frying pan and bowl of eggs, a bottle of Pepsi-Cola, a cymbal, a garbage can lid, microphone stands, amplifiers. With an air of focused concentration, the woman sat down behind a music stand, to which were tied a few inflated balloons, and opened a large, battered folder containing her sheet music. Then she picked up a cello and forcefully sounded two scratchy opening notes, thus beginning what was surely the oddest musical number ever seen by Douglas's studio audience.

During her five-minute performance she blew a razzler and a whistle, rang a bell, fired a cap gun, struck the gong and garbage can lid with her bow, and played a tape recording of a ship's foghorn. She fried the eggs, swigged the Pepsi, and belched while holding a microphone to her throat. Occasionally, she bowed or plucked the strings of her cello. She moved around her one-woman orchestra quickly and efficiently, tossing the cymbal to the floor with a crash, leaning toward the coatrack to squeeze the sponges (no audible sound was produced), and stroking the bomb with a bunch of plastic flowers as if it were her cello. For the finale she stood up and vigorously swung a hammer at a pane of glass, shattering it. Douglas and his other guests watched with exaggerated disbelief, jaws agape; the studio audience tittered and guffawed.¹

Douglas had introduced the woman as Charlotte Moorman, a classically trained musician who would be performing that afternoon as “a Happening cellist.” He opened their post-performance conversation with the question that must have been in the minds of everyone in that basement studio: “Charlotte, are you serious about your music?”

MOORMAN HAD BEEN invited to Douglas’s show because she was a curiosity: a rigorously trained cellist from Little Rock, Arkansas, who had attended the renowned Juilliard School and then, somehow, morphed into a New York-based avant-gardist who was known for extraordinary performative antics. A onetime devotee of Brahms and Bach, she now performed pieces by the likes of John Cage and Yoko Ono that fell far outside the limits of what most people called music. During the 1960s she was the darling of the avant-garde performance circuit, with an up-to-the-minute repertoire of works, many of them written for her, by Joseph Beuys, Earle Brown, Giuseppe Chiari, Philip Corner, Takehisa Kosugi, Jim McWilliams, and La Monte Young, as well as Cage, Ono, and others. Her main artistic partner, the Korean composer and video artist Nam June Paik, had composed for her a series of subversive “postmusical” works that were visual as well as aural and prominently featured Moorman’s body, usually with an emphasis on her sexuality. In Paik’s *Sonata for Adults Only*, for example, she did a striptease while playing Bach on her cello, and in his four-act *Opera Sextronique* she played while partially nude. During a performance of the latter in 1967, she had been arrested by plainclothes policemen and charged with lewd behavior. For a short time after that, she had been a nationwide water-cooler joke known as the Topless Cellist.

For Douglas’s show Moorman played a short excerpt from a more decorous composition by John Cage, *26'1.1499" for a String Player* (1953–1955), whose score includes a line for noninstrumental sounds of the performer’s choice. She had been playing the piece since 1963 and over the years had transformed it into a situation comedy of sounds and sights—hence the egg frying, the pistol shot, the bomb, and the belches, as well as the purely decorative balloons. She tended to approach a composer’s score as merely

a starting point for her own intuitive, embroidered realization, which fluctuated with the context, the audience, the weather, and her own physical and emotional state. She did not set out purposely to thwart the composers' instructions; she had been trained to follow a score as precisely as possible and she always claimed that she did. But Moorman was nearly helpless before her own irrepressible onstage self, an avatar that was quickened by her intuition, wit, daring, and love of spectacle, not to mention her deep craving to be at the center of attention. In her performances, high spirits trumped good intentions, and this nearly always produced disorder. For these reasons, Moorman's contemporaries had mixed opinions of her work. Paik, Corner, and others applauded her unpredictable ebullience; for the same reason, Cage and many in his circle detested her version of 26'1.1499" for a *String Player*. These mixed critical responses should not be seen as a failing on her part. As a performing artist, Moorman hewed to no established mode of behavior. Instead she invented a new one that blended classical rigor, jazz improvisation, and avant-garde experiment with her own powerful image and aura. More than most instrumentalists do, Moorman became the works she performed, and thus every work she performed belonged partly to her.

Moorman told Mike Douglas that she was, indeed, serious about her work. This was an understatement. "Serious" does not begin to suggest her fervent dedication to her self-assigned mission: to bring avant-garde art to the broadest possible audience. Forget playing only to the cognoscenti; she wanted every living man, woman, and child to be exposed to the art of his or her own time. To this end Moorman performed all over the world in unorthodox venues from prisons to shopping malls. Although the works she played were challenging, she never condescended to her audience. Instead, she reminded them that the classics had once been new, too. "I would give anything to have been the first to perform Brahms's Double Concerto," she asserted. "Since I couldn't do that, I am satisfied and thrilled to play the newest and most exciting music of our time. In fact, it's what I live for."² To further promote experimental art (and support its creators), she produced fifteen Avant Garde Festivals between 1963 and 1980, most of them staged in such public spaces as Central Park and Shea

Stadium. “I get especially thrilled when children come,” she said of these events. “I feel we’ve really accomplished something.”³ Would any other artist of her generation have made that statement?

Moorman had a vision that art should be open, available, free, and fun. Since she understood the appeal of live, light entertainment, she made certain that her festivals included at least one spectacular moment, usually featuring herself in some feathered, flamboyant costume. She performed a trapeze stunt at the Shea Stadium festival and submerged herself and her cello in a tank of pungent East River water during a festival staged at New York City’s South Street Seaport. Her madcap solo performances included works in which she was coated in chocolate frosting, nude behind a cello carved of ice, and dangling in the air while suspended from a bunch of helium-filled balloons. The flamboyance of these works still draws mixed reactions from her peers. One friend compared her to the ostentatious entertainer Liberace; the artist Larry Miller, on the other hand, admirably gives her credit for introducing kitsch into avant-garde art.⁴ Certainly Moorman is a pivotal figure whose drive to popularize experimental art during the 1960s and 1970s played a key role in the gradual, postwar death of the avant-garde. Her specific influence can be seen in the continued intersection of performance art and New Music. Indeed, there are many compositions—for example, Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Harlekin*, written in 1975 for a dancing clarinetist—that might not exist without Moorman’s example.

During Moorman’s conversation with Mike Douglas on that November afternoon in 1969, he asked her if the cello was an uncomfortable instrument to play. “It looks so terrible for a lady to play one of those,” he explained. Moorman tipped her head slightly, gave Douglas her best naughty-girl smile, and purred, “Feels good.” The only other female guest on the show, the singer and actress Liza Minnelli, giggled conspiratorially.

Moorman’s work matured during the mid- to late 1960s, when second-wave feminist ideology and artistic practices were just coming into being. As an independent, inventive, ambitious, and very active female artist whose work made defiant use of her sexuality, she might seem an obvious profeminist figure. But Moorman never understood herself or her work as feminist. Coquetry was second nature to her, and some of her feminist peers feel that she allowed herself to be used by the male artists with whom

she collaborated. Moorman saw no shame in this; on at least one occasion she proudly stated that Paik considered her to be one of his artworks, and that as far as she was concerned he could do what he pleased with her body and her image.⁵ Still, the fact remains that Moorman's performances helped to liberate the image of female sexuality from the realms of erotica and pathology, the "exclusionary structures" that artist Carolee Schneemann, an acknowledged pioneer of feminist art and a contemporary of Moorman's, has said helped to provoke her own work during the 1960s.⁶

All of these internal paradoxes make Moorman a fascinating character and one who is difficult to pigeonhole. With a few exceptions, she does not appear in histories of twentieth-century music. In the history of visual art, she is at best a sidebar and more often a footnote in considerations of work by Nam June Paik, John Cage, Yoko Ono, and the also-indefinable Fluxus group. Feminist scholars have mostly ignored her, and histories of performance art, a relatively new field of scholarship, seem to take her work for granted without delving very deeply into its methods or meaning.⁷

As an art historian whose focus has been mixed-media art of the 1960s and 1970s, I became aware of Moorman during the early 1990s while researching an exhibition on Fluxus for the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Moorman's bizarre vocation and the unusual trajectory of her life intrigued me. But the idea to write her biography did not occur to me until a decade later, in 2001, when I saw cellist and composer Joan Jeanrenaud's revival of *Ice Music* (1972), a standard work in Moorman's repertoire. The performance began with a strange vignette: Jeanrenaud, wearing a black wetsuit, sat on a low platform with a cello-shaped block of ice between her legs. Over the course of the next two hours she destroyed the ice cello by "playing" it with a saw, file, and pickaxe. Her violent attacks on the instrument were amplified, as was the dripping of water from the melting ice. When the cello was reduced to a heap of ice chunks in a puddle, the piece was finished. As I watched, I thought of Moorman's own performances, which I knew had been done in the nude, and marveled at the brio with which she must have lived her life. I wished that someone had written her biography so that I could read it. Impulsively, I decided to write it myself.

What follows is the story I found. It is as factually accurate as I could make it, using raw material mined from archives, libraries, and the memories of

people who knew Moorman. (I never met her, or saw her perform.) And yet it is also, like every biography, incomplete and speculative. Incomplete because I could never have discovered every document or interviewed every person who had something to say about Moorman. Speculative because the motives that propel any life are ultimately unknowable, and no amount of study would have revealed the “real” Moorman.

In 2003, early on in my research, I interviewed the American composer Benjamin Patterson, who was a friend of Moorman’s. Tucked in with the anecdotes, insights, and opinions he shared was a warning. “It will be difficult getting a fix on who she was.”⁸ At the time I didn’t realize in how many ways he was right. I never did get that fix, and so much the better.

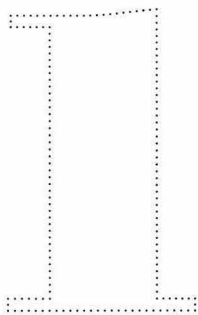
This story, then, is both Moorman’s and mine. It is one among many that could be told. Others, I hope, will follow.



1961

PART ONE : LEAVING LITTLE ROCK

1963



Good Music and Small Towns

CHARLOTTE MOORMAN WAS BORN ON THE MILD EVENING OF NOVEMBER 18, 1933, AT BAPTIST STATE HOSPITAL IN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS. SHE WAS DARK-HAIRED, PLUMP, AND DIMPLED, THE CHERISHED ONLY child of James Roy “Jerry” Moorman and Julia Vivian Kelly. They gave her a lovely, lilting name, Madeline Charlotte, and nicknamed her Mattie. After a few years everyone called her Charlotte.

Charlotte’s matrilineal line can be traced through documents—birth certificates, obituaries, letters, and handwritten lists of names with birth and death dates—that survive in her archive.¹ Through these papers we know that Vivian, as Charlotte’s mother was called, was born in 1908 in Hope, Arkansas, to Dr. John Luther Kelly, a Louisiana man whose medical practice specialized in “diseases of women and children,” and Lillie Edna Lowe, the daughter of a prosperous Civil War veteran who owned a

watermelon plantation in Magnolia, Arkansas. Young Charlotte was captivated by her grandmother's recollections of plantation life, from details about the cultivation and storage of watermelons to evocative tales of "male Negro servants" appearing on the family's porch on sultry summer evenings to serenade them with guitars, fiddles, and "plantation songs" in hopes they might be rewarded with homemade cakes.² Charlotte's Southern roots ran deep on her mother's side. Perhaps the same was true of her father's kin. But no identifiable traces of the Moorman family exist among Charlotte's papers.

Jerry Moorman and Vivian Kelly married around 1930. Lillie Edna, by then long widowed, came to Little Rock to live with the newlyweds. After Charlotte's birth the family occupied an apartment on the second floor of a brick house at 3115 West Markham, a busy street in the Little Rock commercial district known as Stiff Station. Vivian worked as an accountant for the state welfare department; Jerry was a salesman—cars, real estate, and insurance. Since both parents worked during the day, Charlotte's upbringing was entrusted to Lillie Edna, whom she later called her favorite parent.³ "I wanted so much to love my mother as much as I did my grandmother," Charlotte later confessed, "but I just didn't. [...] My grandmother had raised me. She was everything."⁴ Vivian was Mother, but Lillie Edna was Mommye.

In 1943 ten-year-old Charlotte attended a string quartet recital by a group of her schoolmates. Years later she told a reporter that she had been enchanted by the sweet sound of the violin and decided at that moment to become a concert violinist.⁵ Her first teacher was Miss Katherine Lincoln, head of the orchestra department at Pulaski Heights Junior High School and proprietress of a studio for beginning string students, which she ran out of her apartment near downtown Little Rock. Miss Lincoln always had a surfeit of aspiring violinists, so Charlotte took up the cello instead. It was an impractical choice: the instrument, her classmates remember, was almost as big as she was. Worse, playing it required her to spread her legs in front of an audience. At the time, this was considered slightly risqué, and some of her more ladylike friends began to think of her as bold.⁶

In October 1946, just before her thirteenth birthday, Charlotte auditioned for the fledgling Arkansas State Symphony and won a seat in the



FIGURE 1.1

Charlotte Moorman, ca. 1935. Photo by W. H. Duke Studio, Little Rock. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

cello section as a student apprentice. She succeeded not because she was a prodigy—she always freely admitted that she was not—but because the orchestra was young and needed cellists. The symphony’s schedule included twice-weekly rehearsals and monthly forays into greater Arkansas. “We traveled on chartered buses,” Charlotte wrote in a school essay, “ate and slept in the best of hotels, and brought good music to small towns.”⁷ At home they performed in a three-thousand-seat hall inside Robinson Memorial Auditorium, an imposing Greek revival pile in downtown Little Rock. Charlotte served for a time as the symphony’s librarian, managing correspondence and keeping track of sheet music. When the Symphony Guild staged a statewide membership drive in 1949, she was among those who went door-to-door for donations of one dollar and up.⁸

Lucy Purvis Hughes, a childhood friend and a violinist who sometimes practiced with Charlotte at the Moormans’ home, remembers that playing with the symphony seemed to galvanize her friend’s ambition. “She began to put more time into her practice—voluntarily—and became more proficient. She began to really develop her talent at around this time.”⁹ Was it a coincidence that her parents disappeared from her emotional landscape at just this moment? Jerry Moorman, whom young Charlotte idolized, was a tubercular. He had been quarantined at least once during the 1930s at Arkansas’s state sanatorium, which was situated in a remote area high in the Ouachita Mountains.¹⁰ On October 25, 1946, just after Charlotte had won her seat in the symphony, Jerry died at the sanatorium. And after her daddy died, her mother began to drink.

Charlotte felt the withdrawal of her mother’s attention as a violent loss. “All these [medical] students of my grandfather’s tried to help my mother, but they ended up really murdering her,” she later recalled. “They didn’t give her tranquilizers. [...] They didn’t want her to get hooked on pills. So they told her to drink wine every night before she went to sleep. I saw my mother become an alcoholic. It was an awful thing to see her die before my eyes.”¹¹ Charlotte did not actually see her mother die. She was not present when Vivian passed away, in 1981, in a Little Rock nursing home. But the metaphor is apt. A drunken mother can be nearly as unavailable as a dead mother.

It would be a decade before Vivian’s drinking reached a crisis point. Meanwhile she continued to work at the welfare department, and Lillie Edna



FIGURE 1.2

Charlotte Moorman as an apprentice musician with the Arkansas State Symphony, 1947. Symphony member Eugene Rosheger leads the class. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



FIGURE 1.3

Charlotte Moorman with Lillie Edna Kelly (center) and Vivian Moorman, early 1950s. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

took over management of the household. The three women moved out of the apartment on West Markham and set up house in a trim little bungalow at 219 Rosetta Street. In autumn 1948 Charlotte entered high school.

The city's white students attended Little Rock High, whose population consistently numbered upward of two thousand during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Charlotte was an A student and a member of the honor society but never a popular girl or a school leader. Male classmates tend to recall her ample breasts, while the women remember that her lipstick was much too dark for a girl her age.¹² Julianne Morley Honey, who was alphabetically compelled to sit behind Charlotte for much of their school career, recalls that her classmate dressed unfashionably in skirts that were too long and jackets of the wrong cut, and bundled her long dark hair into a crocheted snood, an outmoded, matronly kind of hairnet.¹³

Charlotte's classmates cannot remember her having close friends of either sex. Instead, they recall her lugging her cello down the high school's marbled hallways, her five-foot-two-inch body dwarfed by the instrument that already defined her. She was not invited to join the area's exclusive social fraternity, whose members were mostly children of well-to-do families from the right neighborhoods.¹⁴ Even her peers in the state symphony remember her as a bit of a grind, a girl who preferred to go home after rehearsals rather than go out for a soda with the gang.¹⁵ If not for her subsequent career, most of Charlotte's classmates might not remember her at all.

In addition to playing in the symphony, which she did throughout high school, Charlotte took part in a few extracurricular activities. Most notable is her membership in the Southernaires, a club conceived by school administrators as a training ground for girls in the required social graces of the era. The Southernaires were the official hostesses for all school functions. They organized dances, fundraisers, picnics, and skits, served meals at banquets, provided the musical diversion at elegant Silver Teas, and welcomed new students with Coca-Cola parties. These activities were designed to cultivate the qualities deemed essential for successful Southern hostesses, such as charm, friendliness, and aplomb, all of which Charlotte would wield strategically in her later work as a producer and performer.¹⁶

After she graduated from high school Charlotte had a brief fling with beauty pageants. In April 1952, at age nineteen, she was crowned Little Rock's

Miss City Beautiful. The contest was linked to the town's annual beautification drive, and during her two-week reign Charlotte was a ubiquitous symbol of civic cleanliness, appearing at functions throughout the city and waving from an open convertible during the Cleanup, Paintup and Fixup Parade. Immediately afterward she entered the Miss Little Rock contest, part of the network of competitions that feed the national Miss America pageant. Contenders for the title were introduced to the community in another parade, this one led by a military color guard and accompanied by marching bands. Charlotte was eventually named one of five finalists (in the talent competition she played cello), but she advanced no further.¹⁷

Classical music concerts, tea parties, and beauty pageants all are, fundamentally, performances. Each involves costumes and codified rituals of behavior, and each is enacted before a critical audience. The power of Moorman's work as an artist lies in her fusion of these three old-fashioned modes of performance, all of which are associated with genteel Southern womanhood. When she later married these with the novelty of experimental art, she invented something new.

Performance, in general, can be understood as a gift—an embodied offering of one's talent, hospitality, and time. In return the performer hopes for the audience's love. Charlotte's need for devoted attention was deep and enduring, and it critically shaped the artist and woman she would become. "In the area of love," recalled her second husband, Frank Pileggi, "Charlotte was very needy. She loved to be loved."¹⁸

MOORMAN'S CAREER IN experimental music has cast a very long shadow of doubt on the strength of her musical education. Many observers of her work have been surprised to learn that her training was, in fact, rigorous. From her first exposure to classical music, at age ten, until she lost interest in it at age twenty-nine, she doggedly sought out or invented new ways to improve her technical skills. At Little Rock Junior College (LRJC), which she attended for one year after her graduation from high school, she loaded her schedule with classes in music theory, music literature, and choir. She enrolled concurrently at Arkansas State Teachers College in Conway, making the fifty-mile round trip once a week to take individual cello lessons.



FIGURE 1.4

Charlotte Moorman as Little Rock's Miss City Beautiful, 1952. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

After one year at LRJC she was ready for a more challenging curriculum. In spring 1952, at the urging of a high school friend, she auditioned for and won a scholarship from the Shreveport Symphony Society, one of only two awards offered each year to “talented players of orchestral instruments who are in need of financial assistance.”¹⁹ The award paid her tuition at Centenary College, an estimable liberal arts school in Shreveport, Louisiana, with close ties to the Methodist Church. Music instruction had been offered at Centenary almost since its founding in 1825, and by the time Charlotte arrived in 1952 the department had grown into something of a small, private conservatory, with two degree programs, instruction in voice, piano, wind and stringed instruments, several choral and instrumental ensembles, and classes in music education.

Charlotte matriculated as a candidate for the Bachelor of Music, a professional degree for students who aspired to performing careers. Her undergraduate work included classes in harmony, counterpoint, music history, orchestration, and sight singing; she also studied piano and played in chamber music ensembles for all three years she attended Centenary. Her instructors recall a “wonderfully talented” cellist who excelled in orchestra and was an exceptional sight-reader.²⁰ She and two friends fitted out their own practice room in the boxy, white frame building that housed the School of Music. “We have a desk, chairs, cabinets, music shelves, etc. and it looks real nice,” she wrote to her grandmother. “All the kids hang around in it, but we demand strict silence while we study or practice.”²¹ Indeed, classmates remember Charlotte as unusually dedicated to her studies, very conscious of what was expected of her as a scholarship student, and determined to excel.²² At the same time, some of them say that she was “a bit of a bohemian” who didn’t bother following campus rules and whose behavior shocked many of the more conservative students and faculty.²³ Her portrait in the 1953 Centenary yearbook suggests that she was at least an individualist: while most of the other girls wear conservative sweaters with a strand of pearls, Charlotte stands out as a sophisticate in a high-necked blouse, dark lipstick, and a short, asymmetrical bob.

Charlotte’s scholarship required her to play with the Shreveport Symphony, whose annual program included four evening concerts, a children’s series, a Christmas revue, and the occasional *Messiah*, light opera, or pops



FIGURE 1.5

Charlotte Moorman as a sophomore at Centenary College, 1953. Courtesy Centenary College of Louisiana Archives and Special Collections.

FIGURE 1.6

Tommy Coleman in the 1950s. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

concert. She and her friends picked up freelance jobs with symphonic groups and pit orchestras in northern Arkansas and eastern Texas, cramming themselves and their instruments into someone's car for the drive to Monroe, Natchitoches, Marshall, or Tyler. Charlotte also found work in Little Rock, enlisting her mother—who was by then on the executive committee of the Arkansas Symphony Society—as an informal agent. The jobs ranged from touring Broadway musicals to drawing-room recitals, and included several appearances on *The Pause That Refreshes*, a Coca-Cola-sponsored television program produced in Little Rock and hosted by the Australian soprano Marjorie Lawrence. Charlotte's hectic schedule was possible partly because she had developed a network of loyal (mostly male) Centenary classmates who were willing to step in when she needed them to lend her money, give her a ride, type her term papers, or otherwise help manage her life. One of them recalled, "Charlotte could be troublesome. She always had too many irons in the fire."²⁴

In autumn 1953 Charlotte fell in love. Thomas Coleman was a gifted double bassist from Gladewater, Texas, who was also attending Centenary on a scholarship from the Shreveport Symphony Society. He was everything Charlotte was not: quiet, even-tempered, tidy, and conservative, the product of a strict Southern Baptist upbringing in an intact nuclear family of four. They seemed a perfect couple, with common interests and complementary strengths, and in the summer of 1954 they became engaged. Charlotte's letters home began to brim with references to her coupled status. She wrote about their rehearsals and performances, their dinner dates and picnics, his apartment, the birthday gifts he gave her. ("Tommy's tore-ador pants are just darling on me!"²⁵)

Not surprisingly, her letters do not mention her sex life, but on campus she could be the opposite of discreet. John Shenaut, a professor of Charlotte's who also conducted her in the Shreveport Symphony, remembered her as a delightful but extraordinary girl. He told this story:

The dean of the music school had a studio directly under the student practice room. One day, he came to my office and pounded on the door. "You've got to do something—you've got to go upstairs! This screwing has got to stop!" Apparently someone

upstairs was using the practice room for non-practice activity and the dean was having trouble concentrating on his work. [...] When I went and knocked on the door, I found Charlotte and her boyfriend in there. I said, “I hate to bother you, but I have a message for you from the dean. And I quote, ‘This screwing has got to stop!’” Charlotte didn’t get embarrassed or apologetic or anything—she simply said, “Oh.” And she did stop—they found somewhere else for their rendezvous. I found [her attitude] remarkable.²⁶

A classmate remembers Charlotte’s “air of naughtiness” when she and Tommy came out of their practice room in the music building. “She’d give me a look that said, ‘You know what we’ve been doing in here.’”²⁷

Even during the straitlaced, Southern 1950s, sex in music school practice rooms was not out of the ordinary, and Charlotte was probably not the first student to distract the Centenary dean. Still, by carrying on audibly with her boyfriend in a classroom building, she was flirting with exhibitionism, and in a venue—the campus of a small, sectarian college in the Deep South—where she was certain to shock. It is tempting to think that the lusty, immodest undergraduate somehow prefigures the artist who raised eyebrows with her sexually titillating performances and then wondered, disingenuously, what all the fuss was about.

Charlotte graduated from Centenary in May 1955. With Tommy as her accompanist, she played a senior recital of short works by Beethoven, Bloch, Fauré, Ravel, and Saint-Saëns, anchored by the more weighty Brahms Cello Sonata in E Minor.²⁸ Her graduation was noted in the society pages of the *Arkansas Gazette*, which ran a story based on a press release written by Charlotte herself.²⁹ Hometown opinion clearly mattered to her a great deal—she kept in touch with the Little Rock press well into the 1970s—but she also seems to have understood, from the beginning, the critical role of publicity in any performer’s career.



Austin, Buffalo, and New York City

WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF GRADUATION FROM CENTENARY, CHARLOTTE MOVED TO AUSTIN AND REGISTERED FOR SUMMER SCHOOL CLASSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS. SHE HAD BEEN ACCEPTED INTO THE master's degree program and was to study with Horace Britt, an eminent cellist whose playing had the kind of control and taste to which she aspired. "She had waited and waited for the chance to study with someone like him," remembers Claude Kenneson, a fellow Britt student who knew Charlotte well. "She was determined to do the very best she could. She was extremely diligent when she first arrived. [Mr. Britt] was very proud of her for that. [...] He was glad to have her."¹

Horace Britt was a seventy-four-year-old Belgian whose concert career had included stints with the Chicago Symphony and the Metropolitan Opera. He impressed students as a formidable figure even though he had

essentially retired into the teaching position in Austin. He accepted only a few students each year—perhaps no more than five the year Charlotte entered²—while indulging a passion for his instrument with odd pursuits such as the Britt Cello Ensemble, a group comprising just four celli that he promoted as “not only novel, but artistic.”³

Britt’s pedagogical approach was somewhat *laissez-faire* (“He taught by osmosis and inspiration,” recalls Kenneson), and he did not push Charlotte to correct her unorthodox habit of lifting her heels off the floor while playing.⁴ But he steered her toward a far more challenging repertoire than she had studied at Centenary, and her musicianship improved tremendously under his guidance. By the end of her two years in Austin, Charlotte had developed into a very good orchestra player—she led the university orchestra’s cello section for a time—and a respectable technician whose playing had a lovely tone. For her master’s thesis recital she performed a musically and technically challenging program of works by Boccherini, Kabalevsky, and Brahms. She spent an entire year preparing the Brahms.⁵

Tommy had followed Charlotte to the University of Texas and planned to finish his bachelor’s degree there. According to Kenneson, Tommy was the leavening in the relationship. “He held her tight to her promise [to excel]. He was really behind her—he wasn’t about to let [her] fail.”⁶ Charlotte certainly did not need Tommy to motivate her. But she did depend on him to help her focus her energy. She was not always “orderly,” as Kenneson put it, in the way she went about her business; Tommy steadied her.

Toward the end of her time in Austin, Charlotte became aware that, despite her work with Britt, she did not yet have the skills necessary for the solo career she craved. She was about to finish her master’s degree, and soon there would be nothing further she could do in Texas. On March 16, 1957, Charlotte saw the way forward. She had driven to San Antonio with Tommy and a group of friends to hear the acclaimed cellist Leonard Rose play Dvořák’s B Minor concerto, one of the warhorses of the Romantic repertoire for cello. The *San Antonio Light* called the concert “a sparkling and brilliant performance” in which the soloist “lent freshness to the familiar work.”⁷ Charlotte, captivated, decided on the spot that she had to study with Rose.

This was both impulsive and audacious. Rose taught at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and the Juilliard School in New York City,



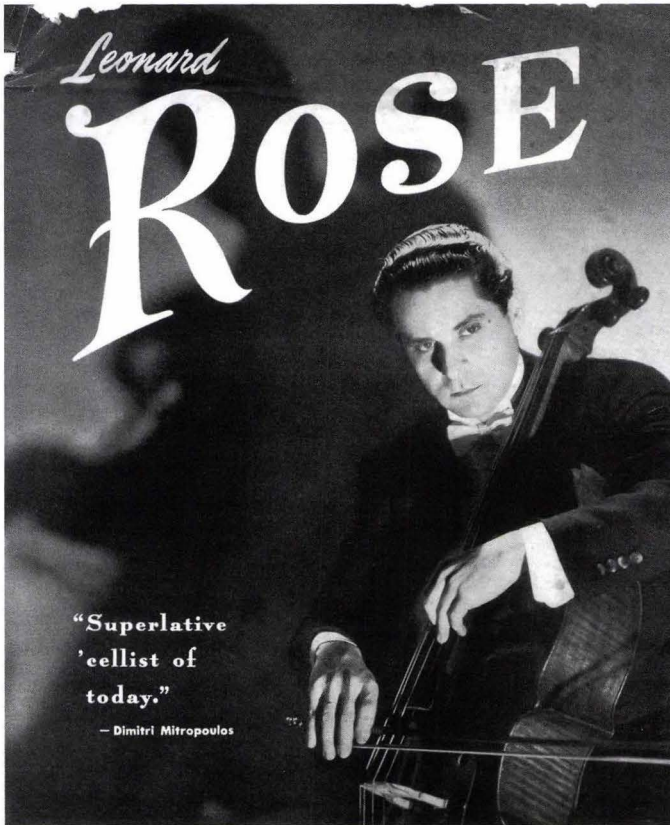
FIGURE 2.1

Charlotte Moorman in "The Naughty Nineties Follies," a student variety show sponsored by the University of Texas Department of Music, 1956. Even as a graduate student she had a flair for the melodramatic. Faculty member Paul Pisk is at the piano. Photo by Jack's Party Pictures, Austin. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

two of the nation's most elite conservatories. Admission to either would be extremely competitive. And Rose was in great demand as a teacher. "At that point in his career, everyone wanted to study with Leonard," recalls Claude Kenneson, who was with Charlotte that night. "He was at the peak of his powers."⁸ But Rose was not opposed to finding pupils "in an accidental manner,"⁹ and Charlotte somehow wangled an audience with him after the concert. (Wangling audiences with powerful men remained one of her particular talents.) She came away with an invitation to study with him at Meadowmount, a highly regarded summer music camp in upstate New York. The eight-week term would be a kind of extended audition; if she did well, she could follow him to either Curtis or Juilliard.

That spring Charlotte and her mother solicited donations from prominent Little Rock citizens to send their native daughter to Meadowmount. Tommy, who was studying at Tanglewood Music Camp in Massachusetts, offered encouragement from afar. "Here's hoping Charlotte's doing wonderfully on her 'Destination Meadowmount' fund," he wrote Vivian. "If she doesn't raise that money, I'm going to be hopping mad at some Little Rock millionaires. I know that you are helping in every way possible to get Charlotte to the East. I think it is marvelous for a family to be so interested as you are in Charlotte's schooling. Believe me, this venture will pay off many times the sum of money."¹⁰

The fundraising campaign was not quite complete at the end of June when Charlotte boarded a train bound for Elizabethtown, New York. She arrived on July 1, 1957, and a few days later reported to her mother, "I had my first lesson with Rose yesterday afternoon. I was scared to death. He is correcting every little defect I have. He is not letting one mistake go by. He assigned me bow studies & scales for this next week. He is such a great artist and teacher. All of his pupils are wonderful players. [...] I can hardly believe that I'm taking lessons from him."¹¹ One of the "defects" Rose worked on was one that Horace Britt had ignored: her playing posture. Charlotte reported to Claude Kenneson that during that first lesson Rose had spent a good deal of time on the floor holding her feet down. Kenneson found it "charming" that "the great master would get on his knees for her during a lesson."¹² At the end of the summer Rose invited her to continue her studies with him. Charlotte chose Juilliard, and in September she traveled to



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FIGURE 2.2

Poster for the 1957 Leonard Rose concert in San Antonio attended by Charlotte Moorman. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

New York City to register in the school's Special Study Program, a post-graduate option for musicians who wanted a structured way in which to continue their lessons. Then she went home to Little Rock until the start of the 1957 fall semester.¹³

One of Moorman's fellow Meadowmount campers, also a student of Rose's, feels that Charlotte "was a little out of her league [at the camp]. I even wondered what she was doing there."¹⁴ Other friends from those years agree that Moorman did not have the makings of a concert soloist, although the kinder of them will point out that very few musicians do. Their assessments seem to have been correct. During Charlotte's one year at Juilliard, during which she studied cello with Rose and chamber music with the violist Lillian Fuchs, she never earned a grade higher than "G" (for "good/average").¹⁵ Since Charlotte was never content to be merely average, her failure to distinguish herself at Juilliard can be seen as the beginning of her remarkable metamorphosis.

DURING HER FIRST year in New York Charlotte lived at 771 West End Avenue, a stately old building with a doorman, a marbled foyer, and spacious, high-ceilinged apartments. She had four roommates, all of them Juilliard violin students she had met at Meadowmount. Knowing that Charlotte was on her own and had limited funds, they had offered to rent her the maid's quarters in their apartment: a small bedroom and half-bath next to the kitchen, with a view into the airshaft. Rent was about thirty dollars a month. She lived with graduate student frugality, subsisting on "a jar of peanut butter and a loaf of bread," according to one roommate. "When she needed cash she would stuff envelopes."¹⁶ Since she was in New York for only one reason—Leonard Rose—most of her time was spent practicing. She worked hard, still "scared to death," as she told her mother, that she would not do well on her lessons. Sometimes she would play late into the night, the music drifting up the airshaft and into the building's courtyard, and at least once a sleepless neighbor had to summon the police to quiet her down.¹⁷

After leaving Texas, Charlotte had transferred her union membership to New York's Local 802 and informed the Juilliard placement bureau that

she preferred teaching and performing jobs in the city so that her work with Rose would not be interrupted. But in January 1958, during the middle of the academic year, she asked for a leave of absence from school to go on an eight-week tour as principal cellist with the Manhattan Concert Orchestra. (Her mother fretted, “Take your galoshes with you. [...] Pack carefully each time, dear. [...] Do not accept any rides, Cokes, or anything from strangers, please.”¹⁸) During the tour Charlotte bonded so tightly with some of the (male) orchestra members that at its end she invited a group of them to stay with her at West End Avenue. “They were kind of underfoot, and there were a lot of us living in the apartment,” remembers a roommate, “so we finally spoke to them. They said, ‘We’ve been wanting to leave, but Charlotte wants us to stay.’ [...] She wanted to continue the camaraderie, I think.”¹⁹ She was an only child, and far from home. If she wanted a family, she would have to manufacture one.

Tommy had been on a tour of his own that spring, with the North Carolina Symphony. When it was over he came to New York—presumably after Charlotte’s friends had decamped—and presented his fiancée with “the most beautiful pearl engagement ring in the world.”²⁰ For the next two months he stayed with Charlotte at 771 West End Avenue, immersing himself in plans for their wedding. They reserved the neo-Gothic stone chapel in historic Riverside Church for the ceremony and engaged an Austin classmate, Charles Hunter, as organist. Their friend John Rothschild, whose son Joel was married to one of Charlotte’s roommates, offered his Washington Heights apartment for the reception and his Long Island cottage for the honeymoon. Tommy designed his bride’s modish gown of imported organdy and taffeta (his mother did the sewing) and baked their two-tiered wedding cake in the kitchen of Charlotte’s apartment.²¹

Meanwhile, she tended to their careers. They had dreamed of securing jobs in the same orchestra, but they were particular. The Tulsa Symphony offered them joint positions with a combined annual salary of \$3,600, but they turned it down because they didn’t like the location.²² Instead, Charlotte seized on an opportunity closer to New York City: an opening for a double bassist with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. To the amazement of her friends, she telephoned Josef Krips, the orchestra’s renowned Viennese conductor, introduced herself, and convinced him to hire Tommy for



FIGURE 2.3

Charlotte Moorman and Tommy Coleman, New York City, ca. 1958. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

the job without so much as an interview, let alone an audition.²³ In those years competition for such posts was not as keen as it is today, but this was still unusual enough to be remembered by their friends as an example of Charlotte's pluck and her almost magical powers of persuasion.

Tommy and Charlotte were married on June 24, 1958. In October they moved into an apartment in Buffalo. Charlotte seems to have spent very little time there. She was on tour for much of the 1958–1959 season, spending six weeks as principal cello with the Manhattan Concert Orchestra and ten weeks as soloist with the National Artists' Symphonette. Between tours she stayed with friends in Manhattan. She explained to Tommy that she wanted to be available for auditions and needed to be near her gynecologist.

In April 1959 she did audition for a position with the Buffalo Philharmonic, but she did not win the seat. She told a friend that she wanted to live with her husband but could not find work there because the Buffalo Philharmonic did not hire women unless they were harpists.²⁴ No doubt there were far fewer opportunities for her in Buffalo than in New York City, and it is certainly true that discrimination against female musicians was a problem in the profession. In 1953, for example, there was not a single woman in any of the major orchestras in New York City, and it was 1966 before the traditionally all-male New York Philharmonic hired its first permanent female member.²⁵ But during the 1958–1959 season, as Charlotte must have known, the Buffalo Philharmonic employed a female cellist as well as women players of violin, oboe, English horn, French horn, and harp.²⁶ Moreover, the position Charlotte had auditioned for went to a woman, Ruth Condell. In Charlotte's case, at least, sexism was not the issue.

During the summer of 1959 Tommy occasionally visited his wife in the city; their outings to the theater, ballet, art museums, and concerts were punctuated by tense conversations about the future of their marriage. Charlotte also made the trip to Buffalo a few times. In June she brought Tommy a Paul Klee print as a first-anniversary present (she overspent on gifts all her life) but cut short her stay after they had an argument.²⁷

Charlotte claimed to love her husband, and no doubt she did. But even she never denied that she was an absentee wife. Tommy's letters to her suggest that he was patient, even hopeful, well into 1960. But by the end

of that year both of them had taken lovers, and a few months later Tommy issued Charlotte a gentle ultimatum.

My thoughts about us have been quite numerous this time of the year, with another anniversary having come and gone, and your approaching visit. I don't think either of us have been very happy with this relationship nor do I think any further separation from each other can do anything but harm. So I am asking you to return to Buffalo for good rather than just for a visit. [...] Our affection for each other has been glazed with so many ugly incidents yet we must have deep feelings of love or I don't think we could have possibly remained together under these circumstances these three years. At least, with the many times I've mentioned divorce, I haven't made one definite step toward such a thing—something keeps me from it.

However, rather than spend the rest of our lives with indecision, we should make a definite decision to reconcile or separate. Maybe I should say I'm not willing to go another year with the vacillating thoughts and life of the past three. I wish more than anything we could be happy together. [...] Please don't think mistakenly that these are only the thoughts of a certain mood and I will think differently tomorrow. I have brewed [*sic*] over these very things for months now and am quite serious in everything above. Will you think about what I have said very hard too?²⁸

She did not answer immediately. Instead, she discussed the letter with her analyst, who advised her “to think about what *I* want and need instead of what others want and need.”²⁹

Tommy would have provided Charlotte with everything a woman was supposed to want and need in 1961: a husband with prospects, a nice home, children, financial security, social status. But Charlotte sensed that such a life was not for her, even though she could not say precisely why. Perhaps she was suffering from the same inchoate dissatisfaction that plagued many educated, married women of her generation, a condition Betty Friedan

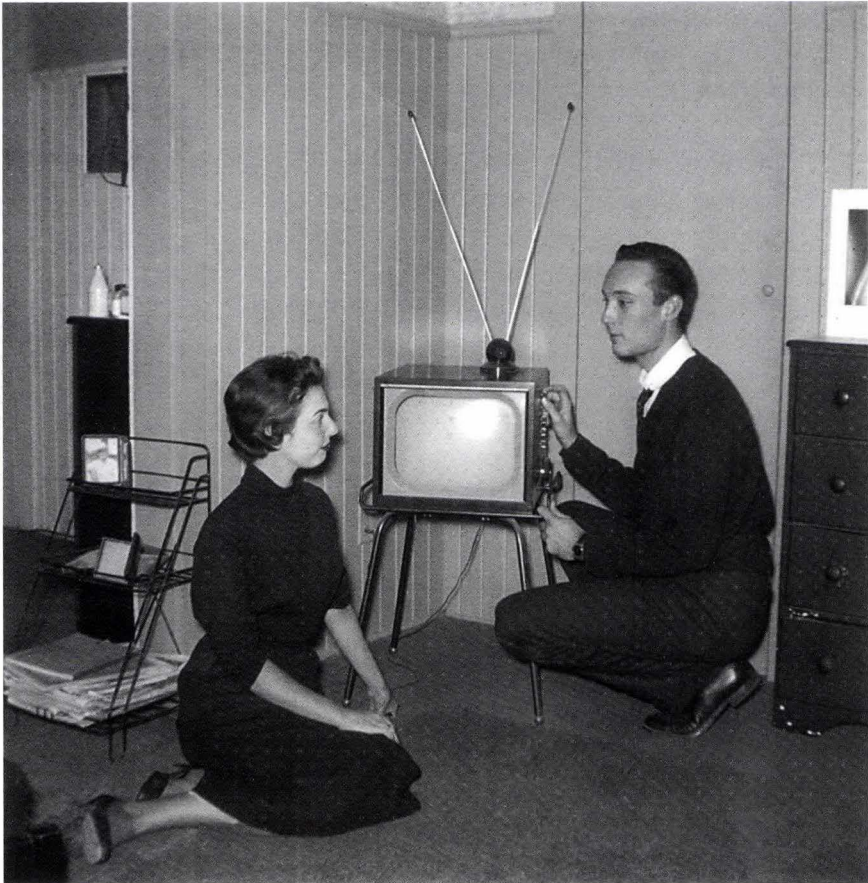


FIGURE 2.4

Charlotte Moorman and Tommy Coleman in their Buffalo apartment, ca. 1959.
Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of
Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

would dub “the problem that has no name” in her groundbreaking 1963 bestseller, *The Feminine Mystique*. In any case, when Charlotte did write back to Tommy, she was also gentle.

There are so many things I want to say to you, but I don't know how to say them. [...] I want you to know that I love you. I couldn't live as you want me to and as others want me to and therefore I am sure that you took this to mean that I don't love you. I do love you and I guess I always will. There has been some inner compulsion and force that has been driving me on to the point that it has been impossible for me to live as you would have me live. I really haven't been able to make a decision the past two years. I haven't wanted to hurt you and myself by breaking up our marriage if we really love each other. In this I have been honest.³⁰

Despite her ambivalence, Charlotte did not return to Buffalo. Before the end of 1962, Tommy would file for an annulment.

Years later, when Charlotte returned to Buffalo to perform in the *Inter-media '68* festival, she was surprised to see Tommy in the audience. They went out for a drink after the concert. “He's still in the same apartment and got to go to London, England, last summer and has a Volkswagen car,” she wrote her mother. “He hasn't changed much.”³¹ She agreed to see him again the next day, but stood him up for an interviewer from the Canadian radio station CJRN. Where Tommy was concerned, she hadn't changed much, either.

FROM 1959 THROUGH 1962, as Charlotte struggled to define herself, problems cropped up in every area of her life. Work was occasional at best. Her earned income fell from nearly \$3,000 in 1958 to under \$300 in 1960.³² She needed surgery for uterine fibroid tumors. Tommy paid her medical bills, and though he sent a little extra each month for expenses, she often begged cash from her friends, who then had to pester her to get their money back. Her constant fiscal crises forced her to pawn one of her bows, and

she came close to losing her cello, an eighteenth-century instrument she had acquired in 1956, because she could not keep up with her payments.³³

Charlotte's family also was in a chronic state of emergency during those years. Her grandmother was in her eighties and ailing, and her mother had become a violent binge drinker. Every few months Charlotte was summoned home in hopes that she would somehow take control of the situation, but all she could do was care for Mommye while fending off Vivian's drunken rages. In a long letter probably written to a lover, she gave a minute-by-minute account of how she tended to Mommye, cooked her meals, changed her bedding, tracked her bowel movements and sleep patterns, talked with doctors, and administered medications, all the while arguing with Vivian. "Mother came home [and] started drinking. [...] She called me a SOB etc and dumped out all of her drawers on the bed throwing things. [...] Mommye felt awful and couldn't get breath and felt sick. Mother kept coming in and saying cruel, loud things."³⁴ She ended the letter by asking her lover to send her a few Miltowns next time he wrote. She needed the tranquilizers to help her cope with both the drama of her mother's drinking and the boredom of extended visits that kept her away from her life in New York City. Finally, in mid-1962, Vivian was committed to Arkansas State Hospital for treatment of "paranoid personality with psychotic reaction," and her bank took over her affairs.³⁵ The house at 219 Rosetta was emptied. Mommye moved in with another daughter, Lola Burr.

That year, in effect, Charlotte lost both her family and her family home. She had no permanent residence in New York City either. Essentially homeless, she moved from one friend's apartment to another, hauling her cello and a large satchel of clothing around with her.³⁶ She spent one night with Joseph Byrd, a young composer from Kentucky who had arrived in New York City in 1959. He recalls meeting her sometime during 1961 at a string quartet concert.

[We] talked about the concert over coffee. [...] She told me that the night before she hadn't had any place to stay [and] asked if she could stay in my apartment. I said, "Charlotte, you can, but I only have one bed, a single bed, I don't have a couch or anything like that, and I sleep in the nude." She said, "I sleep

in the nude too, that's fine." So what I thought was going to be a very interesting sexual encounter, I found out wasn't. [...] There was no sex [...] but I must say, I didn't get much sleep that night. She turned over, spooned herself against me, took one hand and put it over her right breast, and that was how we slept. She slept well!³⁷

By way of explaining this unusual denouement, Byrd added, "Charlotte had a kind of sweetness that shone through everything." She appeared both innocent and utterly available, a quality that many men—including several of the artists who created works for her—found bewitching. Women noticed this, too. The artist and performer Letty Eisenhauer, who knew Charlotte in the early 1960s, recalls, "There was something both sensual and slovenly about her. Her lipstick was always a little smeared, or her clothes weren't on correctly. [...] It was] as though she had just been kissed, or someone had just buttoned up her shirt for her."³⁸

After Byrd married, Charlotte often stayed with him and his wife at their apartment near Columbia University. She also camped out with a former West End Avenue roommate, Dottie Rothschild. It was through Dottie's father-in-law, John Rothschild, that Charlotte met Alice Neel, a then-unknown painter who had been Rothschild's longtime lover.³⁹ In May 1959 Neel, who was intrigued by bohemian types, invited Charlotte to her Morningside Heights apartment and drew her portrait while she practiced cello.⁴⁰

Charlotte still had no permanent address in November 1962, when she received notice that Tommy had filed for annulment of their marriage. Court documents state the complaint in stark language: in order to "induce" Tommy to marry her, Charlotte had "fraudulently promised and represented that she intended to give up a professional career and maintain, provide, and furnish a home as a wife for her husband [...] and have children by the plaintiff."⁴¹ She devoted many hours to fighting Tommy's suit, not because she wanted to stay married but because she wanted a divorce instead of an annulment. Only with a divorce could she demand alimony.⁴² Her archive contains dozens of drafts of letters to her lawyers. She researched legal precedents, enlisted friends and doctors to testify on her



FIGURE 2.5

.....
Alice Neel, *Woman Playing Cello*, ca. 1959, pastel on paper, 29 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 22 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
© Estate of Alice Neel.

behalf, and produced a self-serving chronology of their relationship that she titled “Marriage of Charlotte & Tommy Coleman.” When Tommy was granted his annulment in late 1963, Charlotte immediately filed an appeal. During the summer of 1965 she learned she had lost. Her marriage was officially over.

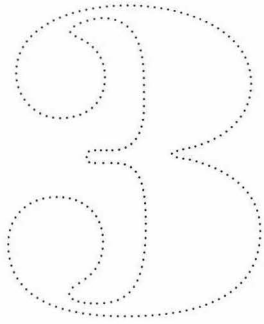
Years later she was able to make light of the breakup. “In college everyone voted us the perfect couple. After we got married we found out we weren’t. In fact, we broke up over a snowman. We were in Buffalo. [...] We were snowed in, and I said, ‘Well let’s go make a snowman.’ My husband said, ‘You don’t make a snowman with your wife.’ When he said that, I left. Who do you make a snowman with?”⁴³

Claude Kenneson, who was close friends with both Charlotte and Tommy during their time in Austin, agrees that they were mismatched. “His ambitions and hers were quite different,” says Kenneson. “He intended to be a first-class orchestral player. [...] He just wanted what he had, wanted to make it better. He was sort of ordinary in that respect. She had more imagination about what she could do, without actually being able to do it.”⁴⁴



FIGURE 2.6

Charlotte Moorman's snowwoman, Buffalo, New York, winter 1961–1962.
Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of
Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



Two Debuts

MOORMAN'S CAREER IN THE AVANT-GARDE DEVELOPED ORGANICALLY. ITS SHAPE WAS DETERMINED NOT BY STRATEGIC PLANNING—THE APPROACH SHE HAD USED TO FASHION HER CLASSICAL CAREER—BUT through a series of chance meetings and lucky breaks. The first came in late 1960. Kenji Kobayashi, a violinist from Juilliard with whom Moorman occasionally played chamber music, mentioned that before he returned to Japan he would like to have a recital at Town Hall, the most prestigious venue at which to make one's classical debut. Charlotte was always willing to help her friends; indeed, she sometimes made it her business to fix other people's problems, whether they had asked for her help or not. Arranging for a concert at Town Hall, which was regarded as a sort of junior Carnegie Hall, seemed a nearly impossible task. But she kept the idea in the back of her mind. After she met Norman Seaman a few months later, she began to see how it might be accomplished.

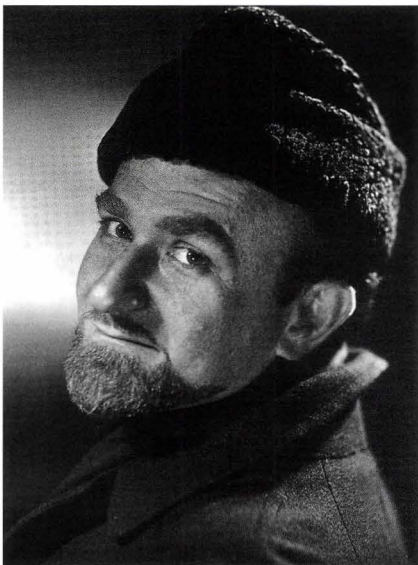


FIGURE 3.1

Norman Seaman, ca. 1960. Photo by D'Errico of New York. Courtesy *Musical America*.

Seaman was a native New Yorker who had a surplus of both energy and optimism. One of the most active impresarios in New York City, he had singlehandedly staged 115 events during the 1960–1961 season—a staggering number for a single season and far more than any other producer in the city.¹ He booked music halls, churches, coffeehouses, theaters, and libraries with classical, folk, jazz, and pop music, dramas, musicals, chorales, and opera. He devised clever ways to fill the seats and somehow managed to get most of his events reviewed. (Even in an era when newspapers thrived and every paper had a music critic, this was remarkable.) Seaman himself was unable to explain his success. “I don’t know where I got the energy to do all this,” he recalled. “I was on the phone all day, writing releases, fielding calls from all the people who wanted to do concerts.”²

Seaman had gotten his start in 1950 by organizing a recital for his brother Eugene, a gifted pianist who had a bad case of stage fright. Since then he had specialized in helping artists make their New York debuts. He had convinced several of the major concert halls to rent to him on a percentage basis, so he was able to waive his management fee, asking only that his artists buy a block of tickets to sell. The young musicians of New York flocked to his cluttered, one-room office on West 57th Street. He felt he was providing a service. "Of the hundreds of concerts I've presented by now," he told *New York Times* reporter Allen Hughes, "only a few would have been given otherwise, and that would have been a shame."³

Moorman met Seaman in January 1961, when she was called in to help settle a union dispute for the New York Orchestral Society, a cooperative chamber ensemble she had joined the previous year.⁴ Seaman, as producer of the concert under dispute, was at the meeting, and he watched as Moorman alternately charmed and shamed her colleagues into reaching a compromise. He was impressed by her negotiating skills and liked her lively, "salty" spirit, so when she approached him a few weeks later for help with Kobayashi's recital he said yes. Seaman set only one condition: she had to raise the \$900 they would need to stage the event.

For advice on how to do this, Moorman paid a visit to Beate Gordon, the adventurous director of performing arts at the Japan Society. She left their meeting with a list of prominent Japanese artists and culturati who might be solicited for donations. In March 1961 she called on sculptor Isamu Noguchi. "I sat all day in the lobby of his hotel, which was then the Great Northern," Moorman later told an interviewer. "It was snowing outside. [...] I had left notes for him saying I was waiting to meet him. This gentleman came up to me and said, 'Are you waiting to see me?' I said, 'If you're Noguchi, I am.'"⁵ After a brief conversation Noguchi promised to contribute one hundred dollars to Kobayashi's cause if she could find eight others to do the same, and he suggested some prospects. She convinced painter Kenzo Okada to sign on as well as the Honorable Masahite Kamayama, Japan's consul general. The Japan Society contributed \$250 and the Oasis Club one hundred.⁶ After a little more than a month of work, she met the goal. The concert took place at Town Hall on April 24, receiving a rave review in the *New York Times* the next day. Its success was surely buoying and must

have given Moorman a glimpse of her own potential as an impresario. In this sense, Kobayashi's debut was also Moorman's debut.

That spring Moorman became Seaman's informal apprentice. She could hardly have found a better mentor. He introduced her to concert hall managers and music critics all over town and taught her simple but ingenious strategies for keeping expenses down. At first she simply followed him around, learning by osmosis; later they developed a straightforward division of labor: he advanced the money, and she did the legwork. No one got paid, not even the artists, but everyone shared when there were profits (although this was rare). Seaman claimed that he made no money at his business. He did it, he said, because he liked helping artists.⁷ In this, he and Moorman were perfectly attuned.

Among the works Kobayashi performed at Town Hall was *Stanzas for Kenji Kobayashi*, a new composition by his friend Toshi Ichianagi, who had studied at Juilliard with Vincent Persichetti and also had worked with John Cage. Ichianagi was Kobayashi's accompanist on the new piece; the latter's "scratchy, sliding fiddle sounds" were complemented by the composer's energetic interactions with the piano's guts, which included showering the strings with thousands of tiny plastic beads.⁸ This produced a lovely, shimmering sound but left a mess inside the piano. After the concert Moorman and Seaman worked all night to remove the beads, a few at a time, using moistened Q-tips attached to long drinking straws.⁹

Ichianagi's piece would have fallen under the rubric of New Music, a catchall term that, at the time, was most easily defined by what it was not. According to a 1961 edition of the *Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music*, New Music comprised "the various radical and experimental trends in twentieth-century music [...] represented by such composers as Schoenberg and Stravinsky, in distinction from others more inclined to continue along the traditional lines of Romanticism, Impressionism, Nationalism, etc."¹⁰ By the mid-twentieth century many composers had followed Schoenberg and Stravinsky into this new territory, reevaluating and revamping the most basic elements of music, including melody, harmony, tonality, form, instrumentation, staging, and notation. In some cases these aspects were left undetermined or even abandoned; in others they brought into question the

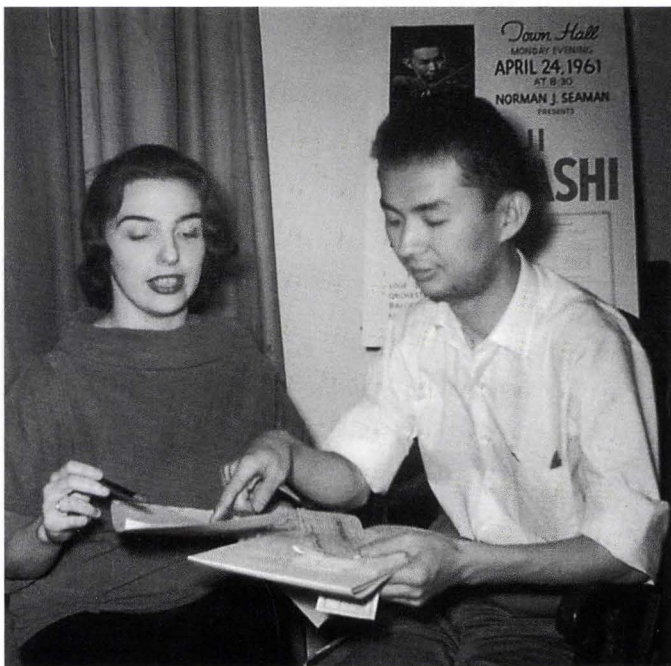


FIGURE 3.2

Charlotte Moorman and Kenji Kobayashi, New York City, 1961. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

very process of composition, the role of the composer, and the definition of what is and is not music.

During the 1960s Moorman would work with many of the decade's most important composers of New Music, including the German visionary Karlheinz Stockhausen, known for his groundbreaking work with electronic music and serial composition; Earle Brown, an American whose open-form, "mobile" compositions of the 1950s were inspired by the moving sculptures of Alexander Calder; and John Cage, a radical whose music drew on a vast range of sonic sources and often was composed using chance procedures. Cage would play the most important role in Moorman's extended career, but it was Kenji Kobayashi who introduced her to New Music. In the months leading up to his Town Hall recital, Moorman sometimes traveled downtown to listen to him play in Greenwich Village lofts and coffeehouses. On April 3, 1961, she went to the Village Gate, a nightclub at the corner of Bleecker and Thompson Streets that presented live music of all kinds. The program that night featured Kobayashi, Ichianagi and his wife, composer Yoko Ono, and pianist David Tudor, along with composer La Monte Young (on saxophone), violist Jacob Glick, violinist Lamar Alsop, and dancer Simone (Forti) Morris. Moorman watched—in wonder? confusion?—as Morris "read inaudible poetry as she hung upside [down] by her knees from a bar" and Ono performed a "dramatic poem" that featured the amplified sound of a flushing toilet.¹¹ Three weeks later, Moorman saw Kobayashi play a recent work by Cage at a Museum of Modern Art Composers' Showcase recital. During the piece, *26'1.1499" for a String Player* (1953–1955), Kobayashi "stroked with his bow a second violin, tied like a sacrificial victim to a kitchen stool, and kicked a battered, pathetic-looking metal wastebasket standing at his feet."¹² Later Moorman told Kobayashi, "As far as the cello is concerned, you've gotten me into a real contemporary music kick."¹³

Through Kobayashi, Ichianagi, and Ono, Moorman got a brief education in the avant-garde and an entrée into a vibrant and diverse community of artists and composers. For their part, some of Moorman's new downtown friends saw that she had engineered a successful recital for Kobayashi at a prestigious midtown concert hall and hoped she might do the same for them. And indeed she did: during the next eighteen months the team of Seaman

and Moorman produced solo concerts of music by Joseph Byrd, Richard Maxfield, and La Monte Young, as well as Ichiyanagi and Ono.¹⁴

Seaman remembers the day Ono appeared at his West 57th Street office. “She said Charlotte had told her to call. She showed me some of her work, which was very, very far out. I wasn’t familiar with that kind of conceptual art at the time. [...] In speaking with her, I realized that she had a background, and she had studied with Meyer Kupferman, who taught composition at Sarah Lawrence College. [...] I spoke to him about her and he [said he had been] very impressed—she was very imaginative and a woman with a great deal of integrity.”¹⁵

Works by Yoko Ono, the concert Seaman produced for her, took place on November 24, 1961, at Carnegie Recital Hall (a smaller concert stage within the Carnegie Hall building). It was Ono’s first major solo concert, and with it she established herself as one of the most inventive composers on the New Music scene.¹⁶ Each of the three works she presented was an expressive collage of sound, language, and movement performed by a cast that included composers Joseph Byrd, Philip Corner, Terry Jennings, and La Monte Young, poet Jackson Mac Low, visual artist George Brecht, filmmaker Jonas Mekas, and dancer Yvonne Rainer. Ono contributed her own extraordinary vocal work, which Jill Johnston described in the *Village Voice* as a virtuosic barrage of “amplified sighs, breathing, gasping, retching, screaming—many tones of pain and pleasure.”¹⁷ Most of the concert took place in near darkness. “[The concert] was a big moment for me,” Ono told an interviewer years later. “I thought if everything was set up in a lighted room and suddenly the light was turned off, you might start to see things beyond the shapes. Or hear the sounds that you hear in silence. [...] There are unknown areas of sound and experience that people can’t really mention in words. Like the stuttering in your mind.”¹⁸

Moorman served as production assistant for the event. Ono recalls paying her a salary of twenty-five dollars a week for the help; some copies of the program even list Moorman as “personal mgr. for Miss Ono.” Her duties included mailing invitations and running rehearsals. Philip Corner remembers that she was specifically charged with making sure an offstage toilet flush was perfectly executed.¹⁹ Moorman also helped recruit performers. The cast list includes one of her former Centenary classmates,

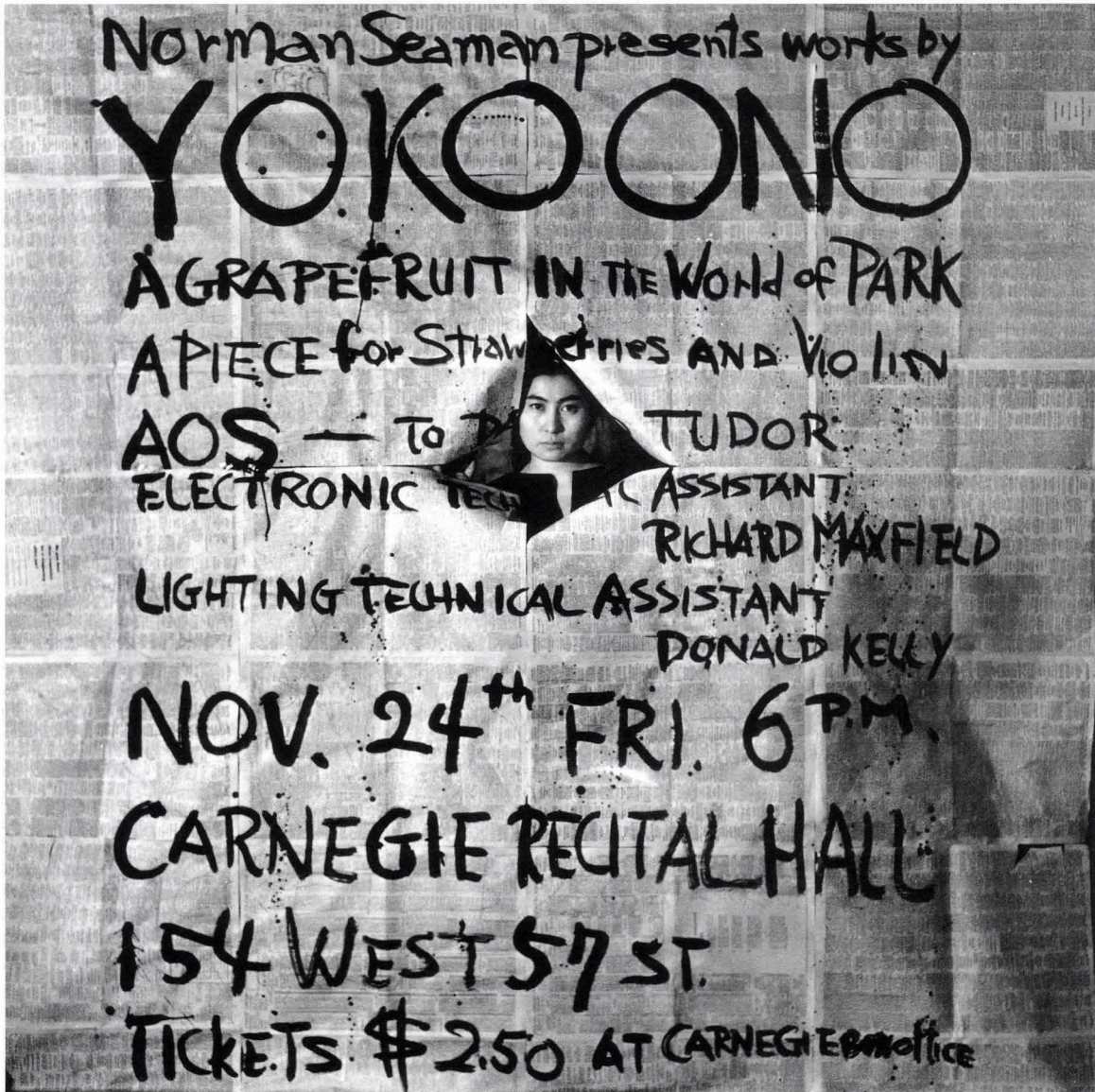


FIGURE 3.3

George Maciunas, poster for *Works by Yoko Ono*, with Yoko Ono, Carnegie Recital Hall, New York City, 1961, gelatin silver print, 9 ¹³/₁₆ × 7 ¹³/₁₆ in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift.

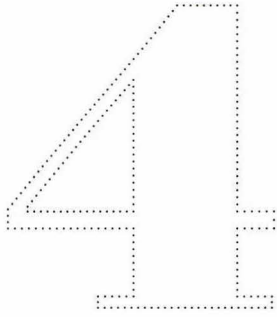
the pianist Edward Boagni, as well as her lover, the jazz double bassist Tom Golden. (Ono would later remember that the latter's amplified asthmatic breathing added an unusual timbre to one of the compositions.²⁰)

On the day of the concert Moorman decided that she wanted to perform, too. So Ono created a part for her in the program's opening number, *Of a Grapefruit in the World of Park*. Ono's method had been to give each performer personal instructions, which might conflict with the instructions given to another performer. "So quite often," Ono has said, "two performers struggled with each other to follow the instructions he/she had received." She has declined to reveal what she told Moorman to do, explaining, "They were personal instructions and it will remain that way."²¹ But Moorman often described the experience to others, including Calvin Tomkins of the *New Yorker*. "Seated on a toilet bowl on the stage at Carnegie Recital Hall that evening," he wrote, "with her back to the audience, and making 'non-cello sounds on her cello,' as the score indicated, Miss Moorman again had cause to wonder whether her long musical education was being properly applied."²²

During the course of their work on the concert, the two women became friends. Moorman even seems to have camped out at Ono's Upper West Side apartment occasionally. (This is probably the basis for Moorman's often-repeated claim—which Ono denies—that the two of them had once been roommates.²³) Over the next three decades their lives and work took wildly different paths, but Moorman nearly always cited *Works by Yoko Ono* as the crucial turning point in her career. "[Ono] really took time and explained to me the philosophy of the avant-garde [...] the attitudes [...] of dedication, seriousness, and dignity, somehow—a devotedness to it," Moorman told a friend in 1971. "[But] more than her words, I learned an awful lot by watching her perform."²⁴ Shortly before her death, Moorman told a reporter from the fanzine *Yoko Only* that she believed Ono to be one of the most important artists of the twentieth century. "She knows the rules, and breaks them. But the most important thing is that she makes new rules."²⁵



1978
PART TWO
QUEEN OF THE AVANT-GARDE
1962



A Vast New Sound World

IN MARCH 1962 MOORMAN FINALLY SETTLED INTO A PLACE OF HER OWN AT THE HOTEL PARIS, A SLIGHTLY SEEDY, HIGH-RISE RESIDENTIAL HOTEL AT 97TH STREET AND WEST END AVENUE IN MANHATTAN. HER room, which rented for \$23.75 per week, served as both office and bedroom, and was immediately crowded with her growing archive of posters, flyers, program mock-ups, photographs, reviews, and clippings—a paper history of her own career as well as those of her friends. There was so little space in her room that she sometimes retreated to the roof to practice her cello.

Although 1961 was Moorman's breakthrough year in the avant-garde, classical music was still her mainstay. It produced only a trickle of income, but it was all she had. So she watched the mail eagerly for postcards from Local 802 with the welcome news, "Dear Member: You have been selected

to play a CONCERT on ____.” In 1962 she performed Bach, Hindemith, Handel, and Tchaikovsky in churches, parks, high school auditoriums, and women’s clubs. She and two colleagues formed the Leonia Trio and made themselves available for dinners, teas, conventions, and weddings. Although interpersonal conflicts soon arose, she stuck with the trio for some time because, as she put it, “sometimes it brings in a little money!”¹ She got work as a pickup musician in the Balalaika Symphonic Orchestra and was hired as a ringer for a concert by the Doctors’ Orchestral Society, an amateur ensemble made up mostly of physicians. She even devised a scheme to play for the renowned cellist Pablo Casals at his home in Puerto Rico, hoping she could gain, and somehow leverage, his favor. (The trip seems to have fallen through.)² On the side, she and Norman Seaman produced concerts: violist Jacob Glick’s solo debut, recitals by Glick’s Silvermine Quartet, and an evening of Ree Dragonette’s poetry with music by the Eric Dolphy Quintet. The latter sold well, and there might even have been some profits to split had not the receipts, which Moorman carried out of Town Hall in a paper bag, been stolen at the postconcert party.³

In late 1962 she got a break. The celebrated conductor Leopold Stokowski hired her to play for his Symphony of the Air, whose concerts were broadcast live over the radio. Her first concert was January 18, 1963. Afterward, she was hopeful. “I was so proud to be the only female (other than the harpists) hired,” she wrote her family. “Most of the players were very nice to me. [...] The principal cellist, Roberto [*sic*] La Marchina (a fantastic cellist who was principal of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony) liked me and took me out to coffee after the concert. [...] I think things are looking up.”⁴ The pay was decent: after taxes and union dues were deducted, she earned \$65.02 for the evening’s work.⁵ But her first concert with the symphony was also her last: the orchestra disbanded in 1963.

Classical music provided her meager sustenance, but by the end of 1962 the avant-garde had become a craving she called “my habit.” To be sure, performing under Stokowski was an honor and sitting in the cello section with La Marchina a privilege. But for Moorman these experiences could not compare to the frisson of playing alongside La Monte Young when he famously burned his violin during a performance of Richard Maxfield’s “Concert Suite” from *Dromenon*, or the thrill of playing Earle



FIGURE 4.1

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Leonia Trio, ca. 1962. With Charlotte Moorman are Fred Margolies, violin,
and Eduardo Fornasiero, piano. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive,
Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern
University Library.

Brown's *December 1952*, a landmark in the history of graphically notated music, under the direction of Brown himself.⁶ Perhaps most exhilarating was her part in a solo concert of music by Joseph Byrd, the young composer with whom she had not quite had sex. At the recital, held March 9, 1962, she premiered Byrd's *Loops and Sequences*, an indeterminate succession of "tiny nuggets" of sound within two patterns of movement. It was the first piece of music ever composed for her and the recital was her debut as a soloist in an avant-garde composition.⁷ Not long afterward, Moorman used the ecstatic language of an addict to describe her attraction to the avant-garde. "I find in this music a sensuous, emotional, aesthetic, and almost mystical power which can be overwhelming."⁸

Moorman was a chronic storyteller with an entertaining collection of tales about her life, many of them repeated so many times that they were rubbed as smooth as lucky stones. Two of her favorite stories are set in 1962 and reveal the extent to which her musical tastes shifted during this year of transition. The first describes an epiphany she experienced somewhere in New Jersey, sometime that year; the details are vague but the emotional shock is sharply drawn. "I was playing the Kabalevsky cello concerto [op. 49, in G Minor] for the thirty-fifth time—it was Newark, or some New Jersey symphony. [...] I was sitting there doing the solo and [I started to wonder] if I'd turned off the gas in my apartment. I thought, 'Holy shit—if my mind can wander like this, so can the audience's.'"⁹

If she could not stomach the idea of performing the Kabalevsky for a thirty-sixth time, then the standard cello repertoire would not sustain her. She, and her public, would be bored, when what she wanted was for herself and her audience both to be thrilled. It must have been a sobering realization, but she told it as comedy: her work had become so rote and her concerts so unmemorable that her mind wandered, and she lost track of where she was. If it's Kabalevsky, this must be Newark ... or is it Jersey City?

The second story concerns La Monte Young, who invited Moorman to perform in a solo recital of his work at Judson Hall (now called CAMI Hall) in October 1962. One of the two pieces on the program, *Composition 1960 No. 7*, is an early example of Young's minimalist music whose score contains only one instruction: each instrumentalist is to play a perfect fifth, B and F sharp, and hold the fifth "for a long time." Moorman quickly realized

that the piece required virtuoso technique. “The bow changes had to be inaudible, it had to sound for one hour like a single sound. Needless to say, a sound never stays the same for one hour. ... [It was difficult] to hold down that B-F sharp, and the bow changes had to be exact and beautiful.”¹⁰ Knowing that her own cello could not produce the rich tones the composition deserved, she borrowed a rare Guarnerius for the occasion from the violinmaker George Schlieps, who attended the recital. “Poor man, he never respected me after that. He thought I was a complete mental case.”¹¹ The *New York Times*, too, found Young’s music “witless.” But for Moorman it was a revelation. “We held that fifth for sixty minutes. It was incredible, all the changes to hear.”¹² Playing music like Young’s, she felt liberated. “These composers have opened up a vast new sound world for the performer,” she wrote a few months later. “It is so vast that one hardly dares to enter it.”¹³

IN JANUARY 1963 Moorman began planning a debut recital for herself. Actually, she was planning two: a conventional Town Hall affair designed to establish her credentials in the classical world, and a concert of the experimental works she had begun to collect. She seemed to think she could prepare both programs for the spring—one in February and the other in April. For a woman who had needed a year to learn a single Brahms sonata, this was madness. But it was in her nature to overreach, so January 14 found her in her cramped room at the Hotel Paris drafting letters of request to prominent composers, most of whom she had never met. Karlheinz Stockhausen was sent this query: “I want to know if you’ve written anything for cello or if you would possibly consider writing something for [solo] cello, cello with another instrument, or, preferably, cello with electronic tape. I am criticized by some of my colleagues for playing ‘kooky,’ ‘far out,’ or ‘weird’ music, and since I will be the first cellist to play experimental music in a New York City Town Hall debut, I might as well be criticized for playing the best avant-garde music possible.”¹⁴ A similar letter to the Greek avant-garde composer Iannis Xenakis included this bit of flattery: “I want to meet artists that I admire, just as I would like to have known Brahms.”¹⁵ She received nothing from either man. Inevitably, she ran out of time and was forced to cancel the February date, leaving her with only one recital

to plan. Faced with a choice, she abandoned the traditional program altogether and cast her lot with the avant-garde.

On April 15, 1963, Moorman made her solo debut not in a midtown concert hall but in a Lower East Side loft with a program of experimental music. To assist her she gathered a group of New Music stalwarts that included her friends Joseph Byrd and Jacob Glick as well as the pianist David Tudor and the wunderkind percussionist Max Neuhaus, who had met Moorman somewhere on the freelance classical music circuit during 1961 or 1962.¹⁶ Philip Corner lent his loft at 2 Pitt Street for the occasion; Joseph Byrd wrote her program notes. Considering the whole—venue, program, players—it is clear that Moorman had not only dared to enter that vast new world of sound, she had leapt in head first—a choice that Neuhaus later characterized as professional suicide.¹⁷

She began her program with Anton Webern's atonal miniatures for cello and piano, *Drei kleine Stücke* (op. 11), written in 1914. The rest of her recital was devoted to contemporary work. She premiered Barney Childs's *Interbalances III* (1962). Tudor accompanied her in Earle Brown's *Music for Cello and Piano* (1955), and Corner assisted on his own *Complements I*, a piece for piano and cello whose minimal notation and complex instructions led Moorman to scrawl on the sheet music, "One long note with a lot of things happening to it!"¹⁸ She played Byrd's *Loops and Sequences*; debuted her interpretation of John Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player* (1953–1955); and performed Morton Feldman's hushed *Projection I* for solo cello (1950). She ended with La Monte Young's *Composition 1960 No. 13 to Richard Huelsenbeck*, in which Young effectively appropriates the entire history of music by directing the performer to "prepare any composition and then perform it as well as he can." Moorman chose Giovanni Battista Sammartini's Sonata in G Major, which became, in this context, a contemporary work in Baroque clothing.¹⁹

The only composition on the program to remain in her repertoire beyond 1963 was the Cage, an enormously difficult piece of music that would become her signature work. She had met Cage in April 1962 after a performance of his *Music Walk* at the 92nd Street YMHA; she had asked him then if he had written anything for cello, or if he would.²⁰ He answered by proposing she take a look at *26'1.1499"*, but it was not until

nearly a year later, when she began planning her debut recital, that she took his suggestion.²¹

In 1963 John Cage was the acknowledged guru to the New York artistic avant-garde. At fifty-one years old, he was known as a peerless musical inventor who had conceived a succession of radical ideas. His first musical experiments, in the late 1930s, were compositions for percussion that made use of unorthodox instruments such as boards, tin cans, bottles, and toy instruments. In 1940 he made his first prepared piano by inserting objects—pennies, screws, bits of rubber and weather stripping—between the strings of the piano, which dramatically altered the timbre of the notes. Cage called it “a percussion ensemble under the control of a single player.”²² In 1950, after noticing that he could hear his own circulatory and nervous systems at work even when inside an anechoic chamber (a theoretically silent room), he concluded that there is no such thing as silence.²³ He subsequently composed his most famous work, *4'33"*, the so-called “silent piece,” in which a pianist sits in front of his instrument for four minutes and thirty-three seconds without striking one key; ambient sounds are the only “music.” Through the 1950s, in an effort to excise personal taste and habit from his working process, Cage began using chance procedures to compose his music. At the end of the decade, in a lecture on experimental music, he indicated that his next move would be toward what might be called visual music. “Where do we go from here? Towards theater. [...] We have eyes as well as ears, and it is our business while we are alive to use them.”²⁴

Through his performances, public lectures, writings, and teaching, Cage had attracted a following of dancers, poets, composers, and visual artists in search of new aesthetic paradigms. Many of them took his course in Experimental Composition at the New School for Social Research in 1958, a class that helped spawn performance-based art forms such as Happenings and Fluxus. George Brecht, one of Cage’s students and an early participant in Fluxus, spoke for many when he called Cage “the great liberator.”²⁵

Cage’s *26'1.1499" for a String Player* was unlike anything Moorman had ever played. It is one of a series of independent works for various instruments that Cage wrote between 1953 and 1956 and informally titled *The Ten Thousand Things*.²⁶ The individual pieces—there are about a dozen—share



FIGURE 4.2

John Cage preparing a piano, ca. 1960. Photo by Ross Welser. Courtesy
The John Cage Trust.

a common structure, which Cage devised through the use of chance procedures. Each of the pieces can be performed whole or in part, separately or simultaneously. Cage thought of *The Ten Thousand Things* as unfixed and never-ending; its title is a phrase used in Taoist and Buddhist writings to connote the infinite material diversity of the universe.²⁷ Accordingly, any kind of sound was permissible and each performance unique.

The title *26'1.1499" for a String Player* immediately signals the unorthodoxy of Cage's approach. It begins with a number that is both ambiguous and absurdly precise: it could refer to either time (minutes and seconds) or space (feet and inches), but in either case would be near impossible to measure.²⁸ The title indicates, pointedly, that the piece is scored for string player, not stringed instrument. This is a reminder of the agency Cage's music gives to musicians, who must make various choices in order to perform his work. In this case Cage contributed the rhythmic structure—a length of time marked off in seconds—along with directions for tempo, dynamics, and bowing. His score indicates where to play single notes, double or triple stops, pizzicati, glissandi, and harmonics. It directs the performer occasionally to change tension on the strings, moving them in and out of tune (although the very notion of tuning is hardly relevant in a piece not based on traditional harmony). The score also includes a line for “sounds other than those produced on the strings” and offers a few suggestions for sources, including percussion instruments, whistles, and radios, but leaves the final choices up to the instrumentalist.²⁹ The score does all of this, but nowhere does it specify pitch. It is the performer's job to determine which sounds to make, following the composer's directions for when and how to make them. Cage's music requires enormous effort from performers, who must learn to interpret his idiosyncratic notation and, in the process, discard much of their traditional training, especially the notion that musical compositions are finished works of art that they must play as precisely as possible.

When Moorman began work on *26'1.1499"* she asked Cage for guidance. On January 14, 1963, she wrote him, “I wonder if you might have any time to discuss this composition with me and/or if there is a tape available of a previous performance. This would help me to understand, prepare, and perform it better.” She also asked to borrow a copy of the score since she

did not have twenty-five dollars to buy one of her own.³⁰ She seems to have had second thoughts about approaching Cage in this way, for she marked the draft “didn’t send,” and her later correspondence about the work is with David Tudor, the brilliant pianist who was Cage’s most trusted interpreter.

“I have the Cage piece,” she wrote Tudor in early 1963. “It is extremely difficult and I will need as much time as I possibly can get [to rehearse it].”³¹ In early April, not long before the recital, she reported: “After living with the Cage ‘Piece for String Player’ intensely for the past two weeks, I’m convinced that Cage is a genius. I’ve gone without a lot of sleep (without pills) and I get more and more excited about this piece instead of tiring of it as I would expect. I have checked and rewritten passages in every conceivable way (traditional notations etc.) to find in the end that his way is better. If I can just transmit my enthusiasm, awe and love for this piece to the audience.”³² She asked Tudor for suggestions on how she might produce the noncello sounds, but also proposed some of her own. “I’ve gotten some more ideas for the other instruments. I’ll paste rough sandpaper on the bottom of my shoe and rub it against another object covered with sandpaper. I’ll stretch a long, long rubber band from the tailpiece of my cello to the shoulder of my cello; I may blow up some balloons to be popped in the performance. I haven’t forgotten about the possibility of using a chain around my ankle. Do you have any idea where I might borrow an antique cymbal?”

For her recital Moorman decided to play a shortened version of the piece. She chose the first three segments, which represent nearly eleven minutes of music, because, as she told Tudor, she found these segments more “exciting” and “difficult” than the rest of the piece. Cage allowed for this kind of abridgment in the score, indicating where the cuts could be made and directing that the title be changed accordingly. In the end, however, Moorman had time to prepare only about three minutes of the work; thus her realization is listed in the program as *162.06" for a String Player*. Her interpretation survives on a recording she made in June 1963 to promote her work. It is a crisp, nuanced performance that gives a strong sense of the physicality of her playing and exploits all the sonic possibilities of the instrument. She begins the performance with two sharp knocks of different timbres and ends it with a faint squeak; in between, the cello squeals, roars, and chirps as her bow swoops and bounces; she blows a whistle,

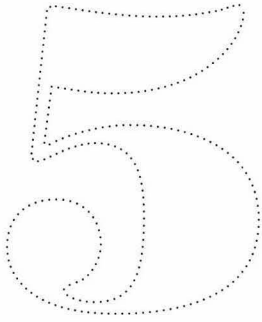


FIGURE 4.3

Charlotte Moorman and David Tudor perform Earle Brown's *Music for Cello and Piano* at Moorman's debut recital, New York City, 1963. Jacob Glick is at left. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

presses a buzzer, shuffles her sandpapered shoe, and tosses a cymbal onto the floor. She finishes in just over the specified 162.06 seconds.³³

Moorman owned a copy of the first annotated catalog of Cage's music, published in 1962, which includes an interview with Cage conducted by the composer Roger Reynolds.³⁴ She underlined certain of Cage's statements that perhaps articulate what she was feeling at this time in her life: "I am able to hear differently than I ever heard," for example, and "You see that there is something other than what you thought there was." And, tellingly for Moorman: "The things that it is necessary to do are not the things that have been done, but the ones that have not yet been done."



6 Concerts '63

IN EARLY 1963 MOORMAN TOOK PART IN THE YAM FESTIVAL, A MONTH-LONG SERIES OF CONCERTS, PERFORMANCES, EXHIBITIONS, AND HAPPENINGS HELD THROUGHOUT THE CITY DURING MAY (SPELLED backward, “yam”). The festival, as conceived by artists George Brecht and Robert Watts, had as its central event an all-night concert held at the Hardware Poet’s Playhouse, a so-called poet’s theater located above a hardware store in midtown Manhattan. Brecht and Watts asked Moorman, whose connections in both the New Music and experimental art scenes were already extensive, to organize the event. She chose nineteen works by thirteen composers, ranging from established figures such as Edgard Varèse, John Cage, and Karlheinz Stockhausen to younger artists such as Joseph Byrd, Philip Corner, and Malcolm Goldstein.¹ With some difficulty, she also recruited a small ensemble of musicians willing to learn the pieces

on short notice. The concert began at noon on May 11 with Cage's 4'33" and ended sometime the next morning with the percussive racket of Stockhausen's *Zyklus*.

The YAM concert escaped the notice of New York's music critics, but for Moorman it turned out to be essential practice for her next production, *6 Concerts '63*. The genesis of that event—the first of her fifteen avant-garde festivals—became one of her most often told tales. As she recounted it in 1970,

It started just because a friend, composer Earle Brown, arrived in New York from Rome, called me and said that a friend of his, Frederic Rzewski, had also arrived from Europe, and would I please help him to get a concert here in New York. Well, I was new in New York myself, but I said that all I could do would be to introduce Rzewski to a manager, Norman Seaman, that I knew. So off we went to talk to Mr. Seaman and he thought it was a great idea. He asked me why I didn't do an evening myself with David Tudor. [...] We talked some more and wondered why John Cage couldn't have an evening himself, and what about Edgard Varèse, and so within twenty minutes, we had a whole festival.²

Exactly when this conversation took place is not known. But by June 1963 Moorman was working out a program, drafting and redrafting it by hand, then typing and pasting up alternate versions using scissors and rubber cement. She eventually settled on a series of six concerts: the solo recital by Rzewski and one by herself; an evening of piano music performed by Cage and Tudor; an evening of electronic music; and two programs of works for piano, ensemble, and percussion. She and Seaman rented petite Judson Hall at 165 West 57th Street, which had been the site of several previous Moorman–Seaman productions. They scheduled their concerts on the most affordable dates available: Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the tail end of the summer, the doldrums of New York's musical season, when orchestras were on break and critics were looking for something to do. Seaman guaranteed the hall rental fee of \$130 and advanced cash for printing and mailing the programs. Moorman secured most everything else for free.

“Composers wrote new works and performed them,” she later recalled. “Their publishers donated music and tapes; the finest players in NYC gave their rehearsal and concert time; schools and individuals loaned equipment; and highly skilled engineers worked gratis on each program. We worked without pay in order to establish the Festival as an annual event.”³ She also had an idea to expand this first festival’s scope to include visual art. On August 3, shortly before the series opened, she wrote David Tudor: “How would the great painters Bob Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Bill de Kooning like to exhibit a show of their paintings at these concerts—not for sale, just to add prestige to the festival. If they would like to and their galleries didn’t object, I think it would be so wonderful for the concert audiences to get to see their work in addition to hearing the music of Cage, Brown, Feldman, etc.”⁴ It didn’t happen. But Moorman’s festivals would soon become known for their riotous diversity of media. It was apparently her idea from the beginning to surprise and educate her audiences with a commingling of artistic disciplines.

While she worked out the programs, Moorman puzzled over what to call the series. She and her friend Jacob Glick covered a half sheet of Hotel Paris stationery with scribbled ideas, some of them probably conceived after a few glasses of wine. “Musica Moderna,” “Conceptual and Non-Conceptual Music,” “Today’s Music—Now,” “Miscarriage of Tone Clusters,” “The Afterbirth of Music,” and “A Festival of New Sounds” were rejected. “Six Concerts of the Avant Garde” made it into type on draft versions of the program. (A poor speller, Moorman never hyphenated the term *avant-garde*). But since she and her friends wanted to avoid labels of any kind, they dropped *avant-garde* and decided on the terse and rather elegant 6 Concerts ’63.⁵ Its vagueness promised nothing in particular, allowing Moorman to include works that stretched the boundaries of musical form in several directions.

But *avant-garde* refused to go away. Newspaper editors, critics, and even the management of Judson Hall used it to describe the festival. Moorman said she had always disliked the term because it was nonsensical. “The works I perform are of this time. They’re performed in the present tense. How can they be ahead of their time?”⁶ And yet, after the first year *avant-garde* became a standard part of her festival titles. When she was asked to explain this, she said she’d been ordered to reinstate the term by the courts

after the festival was sued by an audience member whose hearing had been damaged by the extreme volume of the music. The case had been “thrown out of court,” Moorman said, on the condition she use *avant-garde* in future festival titles. Nothing in Moorman’s archive supports this story, but it was an appealingly dramatic way to explain how she had made her peace with a term she disliked. As she often said, “You’ve got to warn people that it’s not Mozart or Brahms they’re coming to hear.”⁷

6 Concerts ’63 opened on the warm, humid evening of August 20, 1963. About seventy-five people turned up to hear Frederic Rzewski perform four works for piano, none of which had yet been heard on a New York stage. The first two—one by Sylvano Bussotti and one by Rzewski himself—were pronounced “enormously dry and uninteresting” by Harold Schonberg, the bored *New York Times* critic who had recorded the number of audience members present that night.⁸ The third was the turbulent *Klavierstück X* (1961) by Karlheinz Stockhausen, after which six people “walked noisily out of the hall” as others giggled, applauded, and swore loudly.⁹ Rzewski’s final piece of the evening, Giuseppe Chiari’s Dadaesque *Teatrino* (1963), was dubbed “a solo insurrection” by *Newsweek*’s Jack Kroll. The *New York Herald Tribune* acknowledged the recital’s theatricality with a sneer: “Avant-garde piano music is decidedly something to watch—it might even get worse.”¹⁰

Judson Hall was packed the following evening for a concert by John Cage and David Tudor, during which Cage caused a sensation with his own *Variations III* (1962–1963). With contact microphones pinned to his body, he calmly went about mundane personal business such as putting on his eyeglasses, smoking a cigarette, writing a letter, and drinking a glass of water. The amplified sounds of his actions were broadcast over speakers that hung around the perimeter of the auditorium; his swallowing, which blasted full volume from the rear of the hall, was especially harsh. “Almost unbearable in its intensity,” wrote Ross Parmenter of the *New York Times*. “Every gulp a Niagara roar,” complained *Newsweek*. Many people, including the woman who later sued the festival, fled the hall, their eardrums throbbing. Those who remained gave the composer six curtain calls.¹¹

According to its score, *Variations III* is to be realized by “one or any number of people performing any actions.” Nowhere do the instructions

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FIGURE 5.1

Judson Hall placard for 6 Concerts '63. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

mention sound; they simply require the performer to act, and to count the acts as he or she does them, using a randomly generated system provided by the score. Cage meant to point out that, in his words, “we move through our activity without any space between one action and the next, and with many overlapping actions,” and that “all of this activity is productive of music.”¹² By performing these actions on a concert stage, Cage suggested that they be understood and received within conventional musical parameters even as he declined to draw any distinction between art and life. One member of the audience, a stockbroker, claimed to have been enlightened: “Now when I go to a cocktail party, I don’t just hear noise; I hear music.”¹³ But the critics were caustic, prompting Philip Corner to write a rebuttal in which he declared that *Variations III* “is not a joke. Unless it is (which it is) the sublime joke which includes all that is serious and sees their no-difference.”¹⁴

On Tuesday evening, September 3, Moorman showcased her own solo work in a recital of six compositions. She had played most of them at her Pitt Street recital the previous April. But the program also included two world premieres, and in hindsight it was the stark contrast between those two works that began to suggest the kind of performer Moorman would become. The first, *City Minds and Country Hearts*, was written by the maverick jazz artist Ornette Coleman and dedicated to Moorman, although it almost certainly was not written with her in mind; the “jazz feelin” called for in the score does not come across in a recording of Moorman’s performance.¹⁵

The second new work, Philip Corner’s *Solo with ...*, was written for her, and it was written to her strengths. As Corner well knew, Moorman was often late to her performances and sometimes finished her personal and musical preparations on stage. Corner’s score simply formalized this extramusical disorder. In his words, it “was a structure that [made] what happened anyway meaningful.”¹⁶ The score directs Moorman to tune and polish her instrument, shuffle through her sheet music, walk on and off stage, adjust her clothing, rummage in her handbag, clear her throat, scribble on her score, fuss with her bow, etc. She played one note: a forte pizzicato, plucked halfway through the piece. Then she returned to her stage business. Occasionally she was interrupted by short blasts of taped music that issued from an onstage loudspeaker. The score instructs her to give this mechanical heckler “dirty looks.”

Moorman sometimes referred to *Solo with ...* as “Corner’s Happening,” perhaps because it was less a piece of music than a visual work with sound accompaniment.¹⁷ Like Cage’s *Variations III*, Corner’s composition was theater-as-music that downplayed the distinction between art and life. It was also a prescient acknowledgment that Moorman’s ability—her virtuosity, even—lay outside traditional musicianship, and that the sight of her was fundamental to her work. At least one person in the audience that night understood what Corner had achieved. Morton Feldman, passing him in the aisle during intermission, told him, “You’re the only composer who knows how to write for Charlotte.”¹⁸

The centerpiece of Moorman’s September 3 program was Cage’s 26’1.1499” *for a String Player*. She had performed a three-minute section of the work at her Pitt Street recital, but for the festival she planned to play it in its entirety. In June 1963 she had asked David Tudor for help in working up the sections that were new to her. On his recommendation, she also played a portion of the piece for Cage. “[Mr. Cage] helped me so much,” she reported to Tudor. “I was nervous playing for the creator of the music, but also very grateful to have the opportunity.” She went on to offer a novel idea of her own. “I want to try making part (& possibly all) of the other instruments on tape and control its playing with my foot.”¹⁹

This would have been an inventive way to cope with the extraordinary demands of the piece, which requires precise choreography of hands and feet to make all of the sounds at the exact moment and for the exact length of time indicated on the score. (Tudor himself often used a stopwatch when performing Cage’s work.) But Moorman does not seem to have pursued the tape idea, perhaps because Cage made a counterproposal. “Mr. Cage mentioned that the piece could be played with you,” her letter to Tudor continues. “I’m more eager than ever to play it with you.”

She was referring to the possibility, detailed in Cage’s instructions for the piece, that one or more parts of *The Ten Thousand Things* might be played simultaneously. This is in fact what Moorman and Tudor decided to do: he would perform 34’46.776” *for a Pianist* (1954) while she played 26’1.1499” *for a String Player*. Cage’s idea is both subversive and nonintentional. Subversive because the pieces, when played together, overturn the traditional notion of a duet: the sections have no deliberate contiguity,

either musically or performatively; nonintentional because Cage doesn't insist on this subversion. Rather, he allows the performers to decide whether or not to construct such an "antiduet."

Moorman's appointment diary for 1963 is not among her papers, so it is not clear how many rehearsals she had, or intended to have, with Tudor before September 3. (Perhaps they had none; in theory, an anti-duet would not require any.) She performed it solo, however, on at least one occasion. On August 21 Movietone News sent a crew to Judson Hall to gather footage for its featurette *Avant-Garde Music—A New Composition*; they filmed Moorman playing the Cage, with the composer as acting as her assistant. She is the picture of a studious female student whose male mentor watches supportively over her shoulder, leaning forward occasionally to put a whistle to her lips, pass her a hammer, or turn the pages of the score.²⁰ But one photograph found in her archive, a still from the film, suggests a different narrative and hints at the liberties Moorman would later take with Cage's work. She projects confidence and power as she tosses a cymbal to the floor, while Cage melts into the background, literally in her shadow. Quite simply, she commands the stage.

There was only one review of Moorman's September 3 concert. Winthrop Sargeant, writing for the *New Yorker*, was polite, if dismissive. He confessed, "with some shame," that he was unable to tell one piece from another. "They all seemed to be made up of various hoots and swoops on the cello, with disconnected thumpings on the piano when it was present, and they all sounded like the work of the same creative mind." Of the Moorman-Tudor duet, he wrote:

Technologically, like most Cage works, this one was a lulu. Mr. Tudor, reading from a score that resembled a checkbook, was equipped with fifteen or twenty varieties of drumstick, and his piano with rocks—or objects that looked like rocks. Every once in a while, he would rise and peer into its interior, like a truck driver looking for a defective sparkplug. Both he and Miss Moorman blew whistles from time to time, and several children's balloons were burst with loud pops. At one point,



FIGURE 5.2

Charlotte Moorman performs John Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player*, with Cage as her assistant. Still from the Movietone News film *Avant-Garde Music* (1963). Film © ITN Source. Photo courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

Miss Moorman hurled a cymbal into the middle of the stage floor, where it landed with an imposing crash.²¹

Moorman probably was not disheartened by this review. But she felt that she had played the Cage poorly because she had not finished within the specified time. Although she relished the relative freedom experimental music gave her, at this early stage of her career she still wanted her performances, above all, to reflect the composer's wishes.²² Soon after the concert, she drafted an apology to Tudor:

You played so beautifully Tuesday evening. I am sorry that I played so badly. John Cage's piece is one of my favorite compositions in the entire literature—it really hurts that I ruined it. I never thought I would recover from my bad performance, but fortunately I've gotten some rest and I am playing like I wanted to that night. My mind is functioning and connected to my body once again. I am between 3 & 4 minutes overtime. Once I was only 1 minute over—using the indicated parts of my bow and following the dynamics. I only hope I will have another chance someday to play this beautiful piece with you.²³

She concluded, with something like self-confidence, "I have learned a lot being associated with you and John Cage in this festival. I've learned that art is strictly a question of individuality. I found myself forgetting all about punishments and all about rewards and all about self-styled obligations and duties and responsibilities and remembered one thing—that it is me—no one else—who determines my destiny and decides my fate." Perhaps because of her work with Cage and Tudor, she increasingly began to trust her own instincts as a performer; ironically, this led her further from Cage's intentions. This was certainly not the outcome Tudor had hoped for when he agreed to work with Moorman in *6 Concerts '63*. And though she repeatedly invited Tudor to take part in her later festivals, he never worked with her again.²⁴

As Moorman quickly turned *26'1.1499" for a String Player* into a full-blown visual and sonic spectacle, Cage and some of those in his immediate circle began to dismiss her interpretation—and her work in general—as

overly concerned with self-presentation. In September 1964, before attending one of her festivals, Jasper Johns told Cage bluntly, “C. Moorman should be kept off the stage. But I guess I’ll go again tonight.” Years later Johns said that he had disliked her work for as long as he could remember because he felt that her presence overshadowed the music she was performing. Merce Cunningham said, more gently, that he had seen her perform many times but couldn’t remember anything about the concerts except “the sight of her.”²⁵

Cage himself came to abhor the way she performed his piece but, according to Johns, was nevertheless fascinated by her devotion to it, which remained robust into the early 1980s. Her copy of the score serves as a colorfully layered record of her twenty-year-long relationship with the composition. Its covers are battered, and each of its eighty-five pages is annotated with a hash of scrawled notes, carefully drawn staves and tablatures, dynamic markings, collaged printed material, notes to herself, questions, and performance prompts of various kinds, many of them penciled in according to a color-coded system of her own design. It is like a love letter that has been labored over for hours. Moorman unwittingly predicted her long affair with the piece when she told Winthrop Sargeant, on the September evening in 1963 when she first performed it, “I’m not entirely in sympathy with the aesthetics of *all* this stuff, but I think the Cage work is going to *live*.”

6 CONCERTS '63 closed on Wednesday, September 4, with a grand group effort. John Cage, Earle Brown, and Alvin Lucier took turns conducting an ensemble that included Max Neuhaus, James Tenney, Frederic Rzewski, Moorman, and several others (including the festival’s only other female participant, Florence Wightman—a harpist!). The program included Brown’s *December 1952* (1952), Christian Wolff’s *For 5 or 10 People* (1962), and the world premiere of Morton Feldman’s *De Kooning* (1963). A few days later, William Bender of the *New York Herald Tribune* observed that 6 Concerts '63 had “whipped up suddenly and almost without warning, like a summer storm,”²⁶ a simile that suggests the clamor and unpredictable energy of the whole thing. Earle Brown told Bender, “I don’t think all of

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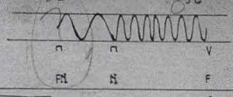
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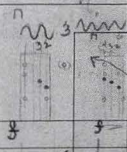
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The image shows two pages of handwritten musical notation for a string player. At the top, there are several boxes containing numbers: 128/108, 130/10, 133/73, 218, 136/16, 139/19, and a circled 7. Below these are two rows of vertical lines with small letters (V, F, W, B) and numbers (285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300) written along them. The main body of the page is filled with musical staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include 'WOOD' in the upper left, 'TEND EGGS' in a circle at the bottom left, 'FLOWERS COME' in a circle in the middle, and 'PAIK TURN' at the bottom right. There are also several instances of 'PANT' and 'N. PANT' written in circles. The notation is dense and includes many small details like slurs, accents, and performance instructions.

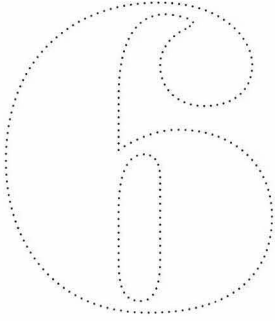
FIGURE 5.3

Two pages of Charlotte Moorman's annotated copy of the score for John Cage's 26'1.1499" for a String Player. © 1960 by Henmar Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission of C. F. Peters Corporation. Photos courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

the works performed were great, or that all of the performances were great. But a festival should present what is going on, and in this sense it was a success. We were offering a gallery concept, not a museum concept.”²⁷

The festival’s reverberations continued for several months after its conclusion. In October Moorman got word that WBAI, New York’s commercial-free, listener-supported radio station, wanted to air recordings of two of the concerts—the evening of electronic music and her own solo evening; she was also asked to write and tape introductory remarks for each program.²⁸ In January 1964 the glossy arts magazine *Show* ran a piece about the festival written by the young journalist Gloria Steinem and illustrated with glamorous portraits of Moorman, Cage, Brown, and others taken by the star fashion photographer Hiro.²⁹ The Movietone short was screened in Manhattan theaters and broadcast on television across the country. Moorman told Steinem that after the film aired in Little Rock, her mother telephoned to ask if this was really why she had slaved to send her daughter to Juilliard.

Throughout her career in the avant-garde, Moorman habitually exaggerated her family’s disapproval of the work she did. Doing so highlighted the distance she had traveled from her roots, and suggested how much she had sacrificed in order to pursue her mission. But her characterization of Vivian Moorman to *Show* was unfair. By 1963 Vivian stopped drinking and had resumed her correspondence with Charlotte; in September, after seeing the Movietone film on television, she wrote her daughter a letter that is the equivalent of a mother’s comforting embrace. “I believe I told you that your Sept. 3rd concert would go OK. I do not believe you have had a flop, honey—and I’m not prejudiced—just know what you *can do*.” She added, “Loved your hair long and you looked well on T.V. again. I was proud of you, you still talk a little like a Southerner, honey.”³⁰



A Beautiful Persuasion

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A STORY MOORMAN LOVED TO TELL. PERHAPS IT HAPPENED JUST THIS WAY.

IN JUNE 1964 SHE CALLED ON KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN, WHO was on an extended visit to the United States with his lover, the painter Mary Bauermeister.¹ Moorman told them that she wanted to mount a new production of Stockhausen's *Originale* (*Originals*) as the centerpiece of her second festival. He said yes, on one condition: she had to cast Nam June Paik. "What's a Paik?" she asked.² Stockhausen told her that Nam June Paik was the Korean composer who had performed in the Cologne premiere of *Originals*. He suggested she contact him in Europe.

Moorman went back to the Hotel Paris to compose a letter to Paik. Just as she was stepping into her room, the telephone rang. "Paik here," said the caller. "Where?" Moorman asked, momentarily confused. The caller replied

that he was in New York City and had heard that she was looking for him. Magically, Paik had appeared at precisely the moment she needed him.³

They met on June 12 at the Madison Food Shop, a luncheonette at the corner of 53rd Street and First Avenue, near the telephone answering service where Moorman sometimes worked. Moorman related that Paik agreed right away to take part in *Originals* and also proposed that they become partners. She wondered, “Why do I need him for a partner? [...] He was telling me [about] all these pieces he’d always wanted to do. He’d always wanted a beautiful girl to striptease, and he wanted me to play cello and take my clothes off. I just [couldn’t] believe I was sitting there talking to this Oriental man about these things. [...] But there was something about him. He was so strong, so serious, that I listened. We became partners. And now everything in the world has happened to us as a result.”

LIKE MOORMAN, PAIK was a classical music renegade. Born in Seoul in 1932, he developed an early interest in art and music that led him first to Tokyo, where he earned a degree in aesthetics, and later to Munich and Freiburg, where he did graduate work in composition and music history. In the mid-1950s he began writing music that used recorded sounds and electronics—an advanced practice to be sure, but one that would shortly be embraced by academe. He seemed headed for a respectable life teaching in a university somewhere. This would have pleased his family.

But in 1958 Paik encountered John Cage at the Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music. As Darmstadt’s guest artist that summer, Cage gave several performances during his week in residence and delivered lectures on his compositional use of chance operations, nonmusical sound, and indeterminacy.⁴ Paik recalled that he had approached Cage’s music “with a very cynical mind. [...] In the middle of the concert slowly, slowly I got turned on. At the end of the concert I was a completely different man.”⁵ He had found Cage’s music completely unpredictable, even boring, and as such a cleansing antidote to the highly determined music of the German composers with whom he had been studying. He was both disoriented and energized.

Immediately he set about revising his working method. Within a year he had finished *Homage to John Cage: Music for Audiotapes and Piano* (1959). Like his earlier works, this ten-minute piece featured snippets of taped and broadcast sounds, including news reports, a crying baby, jazz music, and Rimbaud's poetry. In this new piece he combined sounds with his own often violent actions, such as tipping over a piano, breaking glass, firing a pistol, bellowing in Korean, and driving a motor scooter onstage. During one performance of *Homage to John Cage*, he ran out, leaving the scooter running onstage. As the auditorium filled with carbon monoxide, the audience sat stunned, uncertain what to do. A few minutes later he returned, saying he'd been in a bar and forgotten about the scooter.⁶ His most infamous early work is *Étude for Pianoforte* (1960), which he ended by leaping into the audience and cutting off Cage's necktie and part of his shirt with a pair of long-bladed scissors. In 1962 he provoked a Düsseldorf audience by smashing a violin, throwing raw eggs at them, and stripping to his underwear while playing Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*. Earle Brown called Paik an "Oriental Kammerkrieg," a conflation of the German words *Kammermusik* (chamber music) and *blitzkrieg* (a surprise attack).⁷ Cage later said that he would think twice about attending another of Paik's concerts because "he generates a real sense of danger and sometimes goes further than what we are ready to accept."⁸

Homage to John Cage was Paik's first try at what he came to call "action music": an open musical framework (basically, a length of time) filled with a collage of sounds and provocative theatrics. The strategies he used—"constant surprise, disappointment, and extreme tedium"⁹—owe something to Cage and Zen as well as to Antonin Artaud's Theater of Cruelty, Richard Wagner's concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or "total artwork," and Dadaist collage. (Paik once described *Homage to John Cage* as "audible Schwitters," referring to the German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, known for his abstract collages.¹⁰) He referred to these works as music because he intended the sounds, rather than the actions, to be primary. Since he disliked repeating himself, no two performances of any piece were the same. He performed many of his action music pieces at the Cologne atelier of Mary Bauermeister, who later recalled the shock they produced. "[Paik] could play the piano fantastically. For example, he played Chopin—and at the moment when

we were all happily listening to Chopin, he suddenly banged his head on the keys and dashed all our expectations of ultimate ‘salvation through the classical and harmonious.’ And this destruction was ‘worse’ than Stockhausen’s radical world of sound.”¹¹

Stockhausen himself found Paik’s wildness so fascinating that he wrote a part for him in *Originals*. The composer’s first experiment with what he called “*musikalisches Theater*,” his term for works in which dramatic actions are conceived in musical terms, *Originals* was an exuberant mix of rich sound and bustling theatrics.¹² The show opened at Cologne’s Theater am Dom in October 1961 with a cast of twenty-one “originals”—the city’s most prominent avant-garde artists from all disciplines. Stockhausen’s biographer Michael Kurtz describes one of Paik’s performances: “Moving like lightning, he threw peas up at the roof over the audience, or straight at them. [...] He smeared himself all over with shaving cream, emptied a bowl of flour or rice over his head and jumped into a bathtub full of water. He submerged, then ran to the piano, began playing a sentimental salon piece, tripped over and banged his head several times on the keys. Paik’s absurd actions changed every day and made immediate use of any special situation.”¹³ His antics nearly caused the sponsoring Kulturverein to close down the show.¹⁴

In early 1963, after four years of writing action music, Paik announced that he would no longer compose or perform. Instead he would “expose” music in the form of objects. In March 1963, at his first solo exhibition, *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*, he showed four prepared pianos that pushed the idea beyond Cage and into absurdity, along with pull toys made from tin cans (*Instruments for Zen Exercise*); a wind chime made of kitchen utensils (*Zen for Wind*); and interactive installations of audiotape and LPs. He encouraged audience participation, explaining, “I am no longer a cook (composer) but a *feinkosthandler* (delicatessen owner).”¹⁵ In a private performance for the photographer Manfred Montwé, he demonstrated a new way to experience music: fellate a phonograph tone arm as it rides the grooves of a spinning vinyl LP.¹⁶

The show also included about a dozen “electronic televisions” that were scattered around the building’s garden. Paik had converted their broadcast images into abstractions through various alterations to their electronics.



FIGURE 6.1

Nam June Paik demonstrates *Listening to Music through the Mouth* at Exposition of Music—Electronic Television, Wuppertal, West Germany, 1963. Photo © Manfred Montwé.

In *Zen for TV*, for example, he disabled one of the set's deflection circuits, creating a single white line running across the middle of the screen. He then turned the set on its side. Some of the other TVs were connected to devices—a foot pedal, a radio, a microphone—that allowed visitors to manipulate the images. Paik understood these works not as sculpture but as “physical music”—a time-based art form, like music, but one with a visual or material manifestation.¹⁷

After the exhibition closed, Paik left Europe. He spent a year in Japan working with engineer Shuya Abe on another piece of physical music, *Robot K-456*. This was a human-sized, remote-controlled robot that walked, talked (via a recorded tape), moved its arms, spun its conical breasts, and, perhaps echoing Paik's pea-throwing in *Originals*, excreted dried beans.¹⁸ *Robot K-456* was also a proxy through which Paik continued to perform action music. “I thought of [the Robot] as a happening tool,” he said. “I thought it should meet people in the street and give one second of surprise. Like a quick shower. I wanted it to kick you and then go on. It was a street music piece.”¹⁹ The designation “K-456” is a reference to the Köchel numbering system used to catalog Mozart's works. Paik's teasing suggestion is that the robot is not just music but classical music that should be taken no less seriously than a work by Mozart.²⁰

In mid-1964 Paik decided to move to the United States, which seemed to him the best place to pursue his new interest in electronic art. He brought *Robot K-456* along, hoping to secure a performance for it at a museum or gallery in New York.²¹ In the mid-1960s the entry of Asian citizens into the United States was still regulated by a quota system; worried that he might not get a visa, Paik asked for help from two artist acquaintances. The Lithuanian filmmaker Jonas Mekas, who had been living in New York since 1949, signed a notarized affidavit in December 1963 guaranteeing that, if necessary, he would take financial responsibility for Paik after his arrival in the States. John Cage produced an all-purpose letter of support. “Mr. Nam June Paik is a distinguished composer of new music whom I have had the good fortune to know since 1958,” he wrote. “I will be glad to assume any responsibility, including financial responsibility, for him during his stay. His visit to the United States will be of great importance for new music.”²²



FIGURE 6.2

Nam June Paik, *Klavier Integral* (1958–1963), manipulated piano with various items, 53 ½ × 55 × 25 ½ in. Collection Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna. Photographed in the exhibition *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*, Wuppertal, West Germany, 1963. Photo © Manfred Montwé.

Despite what Cage implied, Paik did not plan to continue making music; he had come to New York to continue his sculptural work. He changed his mind only after meeting Moorman, because he saw that she could help him achieve an unrealized goal. For four years he had been looking for a way to introduce sex into classical music. He claimed its absence was a lamentable “historical blunder,” and he proposed to correct it by adding sex to his own action music.²³ This claim was an odd one, given that sex had been a not-uncommon theme in classical music and ballet for at least a century. He undoubtedly knew, for example, Richard Strauss’s 1905 opera *Salome*, with its scandalously erotic finale, and perhaps also Franz Schreker’s *Die Gezeichneten* (*The Branded*), a 1911 opera whose theme is sexual violence. But the sexuality offered up in these works is pure artifice. Perhaps this, for Paik, constituted the blunder, for what he sought to do was incorporate the performer’s naked body into the musical performance. In this way, he no longer simply alluded to the erotic but presented the real thing: the nude body as sensual *musique concrète*.

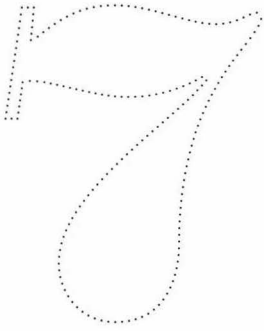
He had first tried to find a woman willing to perform a striptease as part of his composition *Etude for Pianoforte*, but he could find no one, not even prostitutes, who would agree. In 1962 he tried to engage a female pianist to play Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata* in the nude.²⁴ Again he could find no one, so instead he did it himself. He called the piece *Sonata quasi una fantasia*, Beethoven’s own marking for the piece; by adding a striptease to the work, Paik turned the original title into a humorous double entendre that eroticizes the musical form *fantasia*, or *fantasy*.

Later in 1962 Paik was briefly hopeful that he had found his partner in Alison Knowles, an artist who was associated with Fluxus. This loosely knit group of international artists, writers, performers, and composers came together in the late 1950s out of a shared desire to erode the boundaries separating artistic disciplines and encourage attentive appreciation of the events of everyday life. Paik had met Knowles during the early 1960s, when both took part in several Fluxus concerts staged in northern Europe. At that time Knowles was the only female member of Fluxus; Paik wrote *Serenade for Alison* for her. He said it was “an intellectual striptease.”²⁵ The score reads:

Take off a pair of yellow panties, and put them on the wall.
Take off a pair of white-lace panties, and look at the audience through them.
Take off a pair of red panties, and put them in the vest pocket of a gentleman.
Take off a pair of light-blue panties, and wipe the sweat off the forehead of an old gentleman.
Take off a pair of violet panties, and pull them over the head of a snob.
Take off a pair of nylon panties, and stuff them in the mouth of a music critic.
Take off a pair of black-lace panties, and stuff them in the mouth of the second music critic.
Take off a pair of blood-stained panties, and stuff them in the mouth of the worst music critic.
Take off a pair of green panties, and make an omelette-surprise with them.
(continue)
If possible, show them that you have no more panties on.

Knowles performed it twice, with her own modifications, before deciding it was not for her. “[The piece] made me isolate an aspect of myself and present it as if it was especially important. Meaning, the femaleness of my body. [...] [Emphasizing] the objectness of woman was not my way.”²⁶ She soon stopped performing the piece, and Paik gave up his search for a willing female partner.

Then he met Moorman. “Charlotte reawakened my interest in the performing arts, which I thought I terminated in 1962,” he said after her death. “I cannot thank her enough for this beautiful persuasion.”²⁷



The Feast of Astonishments

FESTIVAL OF THE AVANT-GARDE '64, MOORMAN'S SECOND CONCERT SERIES, OPENED ON AUGUST 30, 1964, AND RAN THROUGH SEPTEMBER 13. IT BEGAN WITH FIVE CONCERTS OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC and concluded with five performances of Stockhausen's *Originals* (1961). This time, Moorman scheduled her own solo concert for opening night, a declaration, perhaps, that the festival was now her event. Norman Seaman was still her financial backer, but her name now topped the program. From 1964 through 1980, when the festivals ended, her energy and vision alone were its driving forces.

Someone, presumably Moorman, made the decision to include two pieces in each of the festival's first five concerts. One of them was George Brecht's *Entrance Music/Exit Music*, as realized on magnetic tape by composer James Tenney.¹ *Entrance Music* begins with a barely audible white noise that

gradually changes, over the course of three minutes, into a simple sine tone. As the sound gets louder and louder, the stage lights dim, signaling the entrance of the first performer. The reverse happens at the end of the concert; this is *Exit Music*. The piece is a six-minute sonic journey from chaos to clarity and back again that places all the listener's attention, as Philip Corner has observed, on the process of change.²

Each night *Entrance Music* was followed by Paik's *Robot Opera* (1964), a brief, bawdy comic opera that served as a preamble to the evening's more serious fare. With Paik manning the controls from the wings, *Robot K-456* took a turn around the stage, flailing its limbs and twirling its breasts. Once it had shambled off, the concert could continue. Beginning each evening of the festival with the same two works was an inspired bit of programming. It gave the series a leitmotif—better, a theme song—that linked the sections of its desultory narrative and suggested the hand of an auteur who wanted the whole to have continuity and shape.

On opening night, August 30, after *Robot Opera* had concluded, Moorman took the stage. She began her program with Earle Brown's *Synergy* (1952), an open-form composition that she played as a "trio" for live cello and two prerecorded realizations of the same piece. Next was Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player*. A recording of her performance, made for WBAI and preserved in her archive, reveals that her playing was both livelier and less crisp than in her previous versions. She incorporated many recognizable noises—cowbells, a fire engine siren, and the crash of shattering glass—that humanize the abstract, instrumental scratches, plunks, and plinks made on the cello. For some viewers, the sight of her performance on August 30 was as captivating as its sound. Raymond Ericson of the *New York Times* wrote, "Miss Moorman looked quite fetching ensconced behind a transparent gauze curtain and surrounded by colored balloons, her cello, gongs and assorted noisemakers. Her ability to draw unlikely sounds from her instrument was remarkable. No two glissandos were alike as the cello seemed to be sighing, whining or moaning. From time to time Miss Moorman struck some of the nearby bric-a-brac, broke a balloon, shot off a pistol or gave herself a Bronx cheer on a razzler."³

Ericson's only complaint was that the piece was "inordinately slow"—more than forty-one minutes long instead of twenty-six. William Bender

of the *New York Herald Tribune* agreed. “Program dragging terribly, hour late, must be off,” his review concludes.⁴ One of them went so far as to shout his objections from the back row, only to be admonished by composer Malcolm Goldstein. “Each sound has a life of its own,” he yelled out. “Let it live it.”⁵ Both Ericson and Bender left at intermission.

Because they left early, they missed what might have been Moorman’s best performance of the evening: Giuseppe Chiari’s *Per Arco* (*For the Bow*) (1963), written for cello and magnetic tape. The piece begins with five minutes of recorded “noises of war”—machine gun ratatat, whistling artillery shells, and thudding explosions, which Chiari had taped during a World War II skirmish between German and Italian forces. Next comes precisely one minute forty seconds of silence, after which the cellist is to “react to the noises.” Chiari’s language-based score directs the musician as a script might direct an actor. It begins with a backstory that explains the instrumentalist’s motivation. This reads, in part: “[The cellist] must enter a state of inertia, but not one of resignation or indifference. Hidden in him there is a nervous force. He no longer believes in sound. He does not remember the taut positions of an instrumentalist. He is a man who, after a destruction, finds himself with two objects. Cello & bow—survivors like him—& touches them almost unconsciously.”⁶ In the precisely choreographed “reactions” that follow, the cellist is directed to strike, clench, jerk, knock, drag, and crush the cello, bow, and strings with fingers, elbows, palms, and arms. These violent outbursts are separated by exhausted pauses. The expression is one of profound despair.

When the piece premiered in 1963, in Palermo, one audience member had the impression he was listening to “plants growing up out of the ravaged earth.”⁷ But Moorman’s performance impressed two (male) critics as less an antiwar statement than a highly sexualized encounter with her cello. “She did all kinds of naughty things to her cello,” wrote Leighton Kerner in the *Village Voice*. “A contact microphone attached to the cello amplified every caress and stroke and rub that she gave the instrument. In fact, Miss Moorman seemed to be in such a passionate state that one wondered if Mr. Chiari’s work might better have been named ‘Lady Chatterley’s Cello.’” Faubion Bowers, writing for the *Nation*, was more pointed. “After the bombing, soldiers and sex.”⁸

Moorman had approached Chiari at Stockhausen's suggestion, writing on July 31, 1964, to ask for music she could play in the festival. On August 6 he had airmailed three scores. She chose *Per Arco*, and in less than one month was able to prepare a fully realized and highly idiosyncratic interpretation.⁹ In a way that playing Brahms and Kabalevsky had not, performing Chiari's emotive composition came naturally to her.

THE NEXT EVENING'S concert, a program of electronic music, sold out, and each night thereafter dozens of people had to be turned away at the door. The daily comedy of *Robot Opera* continued, now relocated to the sidewalk along West 57th Street, in front of Judson Hall. Inside, what Faubion Bowers called a "feast of astonishments" continued. The concert on September 1 featured new works by members of ONCE, an Ann Arbor-based group that had begun its own festival of New Music in 1961. At Moorman's invitation, ONCE founders Gordon Mumma and Robert Ashley had programmed an evening that featured, among other works, the New York premiere of George Cacioppo's *Casseopia* (1962) and world premieres of Mumma's *Hornpieces* and Ashley's now-legendary *The Wolfman*, twenty minutes of screaming and howling into a microphone at lacerating volume, accompanied by electronic feedback and a tape recording of a boiler factory in operation.¹⁰ The next night's program, conducted by James Tenney, was devoted to the music of Edgard Varèse; the packed house of "young intellectuals" gave the composer a roaring ovation when he took the stage to introduce his works.¹¹ On September 3 there was a smorgasbord of experimental music and Fluxus fancies, with works by Christian Wolff, Stefan Wolpe, and Morton Feldman sharing the bill with Joe Jones's *Mechanical Quartet* (clacking children's pull toys) and George Brecht's *Exhibit 27*, an audience free-for-all involving nylon rope and Styrofoam balls.

The *New York Times's* music critic Howard Klein wrote an enthusiastic review of the September 3 concert that ended with this: "The festival seems to be a part of the city's musical life, for there are already plans for one next year. [...] No matter how forced some of the attempts may seem, or how senseless some of the antics, the festival is a good thing. If nothing

else, it transplants Village cabaret happenings to an uptown concert hall. And the uptowners should know what's happening to music."¹²

HISTORY HAS LINKED Moorman and Paik to Fluxus, and properly so; even though they often strayed far from Fluxus aesthetic and performative strategies, they were still closer to Fluxus than not. But George Maciunas, the self-appointed chairman of Fluxus, was not inclined to inclusivity. During the early and mid-1960s, as he worked to define for himself precisely what Fluxus was, he issued a steady stream of directives, manifestoes, and policy letters listing the rules for membership and excommunicating those who did not comply. Moorman was almost immediately cast out and became, at least in Maciunas's mind, his number-one art world rival.

Their feud began over *Robot K-456*. Sometime during 1964 Paik had promised Maciunas that the robot could make its debut under the Fluxus banner. But after Moorman entered his life Paik began to change his mind, for she seemed more interested in helping him than in staking a claim on his work. When Moorman learned that he wanted the robot to perform at a museum, for example, she assembled a promotional scrapbook and sent letters of introduction to curators she knew (and those she didn't). When no invitations materialized, she offered to present it in Festival of the Avant Garde '64. Since Moorman's event provided much higher visibility than anything Maciunas had to offer, Paik made a strategic decision. "Charlotte Moorman wanted it as the opening piece of her festival ... or for a possible concert at MoMA ... and I cancelled robot participation to Maciunas and diverted to Moorman ... I still feel sorry to George that I gave away premiere [...] At that time my family allowance was dwindling ... and I had an eminent need to finance my Video, which I saw as the chance of a century ... Therefore I feel I was justified to make a tactical compromise."¹³

Maciunas blamed Moorman for this breach. In his mind, she had not only stolen *Robot K-456* but was also poaching "his" Fluxus artists—Dick Higgins, Jackson Mac Low, Ay-O, and George Brecht, as well as Paik—and thus undermining his efforts to build an international Fluxus collective. Before Festival of the Avant Garde '64 opened, Maciunas informed Moorman

that several artists would not be taking part in it because they were Fluxus and she was not. Then he told the artists in question that they would be kicked out of Fluxus if they defied him.¹⁴ Higgins was outraged. Paik announced his resignation from Fluxus.¹⁵ Then they, and most of the others, went ahead and performed with Moorman anyway.

Moorman was not without ego, and she, too, could be territorial. She was furious at composer Charles Morrow, for example, when he tried to start his own avant-garde music festival in 1965 and recruited John Cage and Edgard Varèse for his advisory board.¹⁶ But her deepest pleasure was being of service to art and artists. “Charlotte didn’t say, ‘What are you doing? Does it fit in with my program?’” recalls artist Larry Miller. “Instead, she would say, ‘What do you need?’”¹⁷ Says Philip Corner, “She was doing [the festivals] for us. She was very sincere about it. That touches me very much.”¹⁸

For his part, Maciunas continued to grumble about Moorman’s activities well into the 1960s. His dislike of her was so deep and so firm that, after his death in 1978, their many mutual friends debated whether or not they should invite Moorman to perform at his funeral. They did, and she did, even though some wondered whether their old friend’s “ashes might tremble” in his grave.¹⁹

MOORMAN SAVED ORIGINALS for the final five concerts of Festival of the Avant Garde '64. Often called “Stockhausen’s Happening,” *Originals* is a full-on visual and aural cacophony, with eighteen scenes and a cast of twenty-one whose actions are loosely specified but precisely timed. “POET enters and reads work for one minute” is a typical stage direction. The actions happen simultaneously in various zones of the space while Stockhausen’s own composition *Kontakte* (*Contacts*) (1958–1960), scored for piano, percussion, and electronic tones, provides an undercurrent of crashing sound. *Originals* is an enormously complex work, and

FIGURE 7.1

Some of the cast in Charlotte Moorman’s production of Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Originals*, Festival of the Avant Garde '64, New York City, 1964. Clockwise from top center: Moorman, Allan Kaprow, Allen Ginsberg, Max Neuhaus, Robert Breer, Jackson Mac Low, David Behrman, Olga Adorno Klüver, Nam June Paik, Gloria Graves, Robert Delford Brown. Photo © Dan McCoy/Rainbow.



Moorman's production was its American premiere. In retrospect, it is astonishing that she chose to take it on. But as a producer she was still young, with a beginner's optimism. The production's success must have only reinforced her sense that, with enough effort and devotion, there was nothing she could not do.

The Cologne production of *Originals* had been underwritten by the Theater am Dom through a commission initiated by producer Arthur C. Caspari. Moorman had no financial backing. She had only Norman Seaman, who once again guaranteed the hall rental and hoped to make his money back on ticket sales. She tried to raise funds but in the end had to rely on gifts—of time, permissions, space, printing, props, sheet music, and even postage. During this period Seaman came to have “mystical faith” in her ability to scrounge favors. “[People] would say, ‘This can’t be done,’ and I would say, ‘Charlotte will do it.’”²⁰ There was really no mystery to her technique; it was a mix of charm, tenacity, and very good manners (she sent mountains of thank you notes) bolstered by a passionate belief in the value of her cause. This simple magic was apparently hard to resist.

At the invitation of Mary Bauermeister, Allan Kaprow took charge of the artistic aspects of *Originals* and agreed to play the part of Director.²¹ Moorman functioned as producer and took the role of String Player. “We are working hard on preparations for *Originale*,” she wrote Stockhausen on July 8, 1964. “Last Thursday, David Behrman finished translating [the score into English]; Tuesday, Mary [Bauermeister] finished correcting and checking his translation plus translating the footnotes & introductory remarks; and today, Mapleson reproduced it. James Tenney is very eager to learn the piano part to *Kontakte*. Mary said I should write you and ask you to please send me the music for it so Tenney can learn it. Also you mentioned you’d send a tape required in the performance.”²² On August 13 she wrote to thank him for the score and tape, and gave him an update:

Kaprow is still using your copy of “Texte II” with Mary’s [photographs] of your Cologne production to show to prospective backers. Our feelings are that we’ll have an excellent production without money, but we’re still trying to get some. [...] Judson Hall is being very cooperative with all our unusual

demands. Carroll Musical Instruments have loaned all the percussion instruments needed. [...] I've enclosed some brochures for you. I hope you like them. Next we'll have 1,000 big posters to place all over town. I've mailed out 3,000 brochures this week. Paik folded, Behrman stuffed, and I addressed. After no sleep for 52 hours, Mary, like an angel from heaven, left me hundreds of gummed, addressed labels that I had only to stick on envelopes—she's fantastic.²³

Allan Kaprow assembled most of the cast, a mix of poets, musicians, composers, and visual artists who more or less played themselves. Among them were James Tenney as Pianist, Max Neuhaus as Percussionist, and Alvin Lucier as Conductor. Allen Ginsberg played the Poet. Composer David Behrman was Sound Engineer; the three Actors were Dick Higgins, Jackson Mac Low, Gloria Graves, and (for one night only) Jill Johnston. Robert Delford Brown, and later Ay-O, played the Painter. Olga Adorno Klüver and Letty Eisenhauer were Models, and Paik reprised the part written for him (Composer-Actions). Norman Seaman volunteered his grandson to play the Child. The score also called for a "Caretaker (from Zoo) with Ape," a casting challenge that Kaprow delegated to Moorman. Not only did she find one—a chimpanzee named Priscilla, owned by Robert Deitch's Kiddie Zoo in Fair Lawn, New Jersey—she even convinced Deitch to bring Priscilla into the city for all five shows, and to do it at no charge.

Originals opened on Tuesday, September 8, 1964. As audience members arrived on that pleasant late-summer evening, they found a small band of picketers blocking the entrance to Judson Hall. The protesters carried signs with slogans such as "Fight Musical Racism!" and passed out flyers that blared, "Picket Stockhausen Concert! The first cultural task is publicly to expose and FIGHT the domination of white, European-U.S. Ruling-Class Art! [...] Stockhausen—Patrician Theorist of White Supremacy: Go to Hell!" The protest was staged by Action Against Cultural Imperialism, a group led by the artist Henry Flynt. On the picket line with him was, among others, George Maciunas, who shared Flynt's Marxist politics and his scorn for "ruling-class Art."²⁴ He also, no doubt, relished the chance to disrupt one of Moorman's events.

When Norman Seaman arrived at Judson Hall that evening, he was alarmed to see Allen Ginsberg on the picket line. Seaman recalled, "I went over to him and said, 'Allen, what the hell's going on? Why didn't you tell me you're not going to be [performing]?' He told me, 'I'm coming in. I'll be in before 8:00.' I said, 'What are you doing picketing?' He said, 'This is all part of the Happening. George [Maciunas] is a friend of mine. I'm not going to walk by and ignore him. So I'm marching, but when it comes time for me to go inside I'll be there.'"²⁵ Ginsberg had thought the protest was somehow part of the event, and so did others. Oliver Daniel, who represented Stockhausen at BMI, assumed it was a clever publicity stunt and winked at Seaman as he walked into the hall.²⁶ Even Harold Schonberg, the *New York Times* music critic, was confused. He reported that some bystanders told him the picketers were part of the show, while "others said no, including the picketers, but nobody believed them."²⁷ Dick Higgins later wrote: "Some of the Fluxus performers (myself, for instance) had to pass through a picket line of other Fluxus artists, who were denouncing the performance as cultural imperialism. This was grossly embarrassing, and it discouraged much of the camaraderie of the earlier times of Fluxus forever."²⁸ For her part, Moorman brushed off the attempted boycott. "We're more concerned with our own artistic production than with answering their manifestoes," she told a reporter.²⁹

Inside Judson Hall, the show went on as planned. The space had been transformed into what the *Voice* called "a beautiful shambles."³⁰ A tall scaffold draped with streamers of aluminum foil occupied one wall; from this perch the director watched the action and called out instructions. Folding chairs for the viewers were arranged on the stage and around the hall in clusters, facing in different directions. Scattered among the islands of chairs were myriad props and musical instruments, including a piano, drums, gongs, racks of clothes, a movie screen, a washtub, cameras, a box of toys, light stands, a ladder, an oil drum, and tape recorders. A pair of white hens clucked in a cage. A very large clock hung at the center of the space, placed there to help the performers keep time.

With the audience sitting and standing in groups all over the hall, no two individuals would have seen the same ninety-four-minute show. In a review for the *National Herald*, Harry Kiamopoulos neatly evoked both

his experience of *Originals* and the difficulty of describing its succession of unrelated, overlapping scenes.

It's really quite impossible to create literary order out of it all. How, for instance, can I tell you about the girl who in the course of changing costumes kept stripping down to black panties and half-bra and connect this bit to a toga-clad actor reading Greek drama thru an electric megaphone? How can I connect actors tossing rotten apples at the audience with the jazz saxophonist in the balcony playing a long-range duet with a cellist in the orchestra? How can I sensibly tell you about beatnik poet Allen Ginsberg reciting while another man at some distance squirted shaving lather over himself and proceeded to take a bath with his suit on?

Do you think it's easy to connect a drummer who changes from his tuxedo to red leotards—while playing—with a chimpanzee banging oriental gongs? How does one reconcile the weird, “outer space” sonic effects reverberating dynamically and rising to tremendous crashing crescendos, with a Bach excerpt played by a cellist dangling from the balcony? Where do I bring in the actors shouting newspaper items, laughing hysterically in chorus, lying on the floor en masse, taking flash pictures of the audience and voicing such interpolations as “Johnson's a fake, but he's better than Goldwater,” and “Let's legalize pot”? Do you think it's easy to describe the colorful and fluid lighting effects, the surrealist motion picture beamed on a corner screen, and the lithe, scantily clad girl performing her precarious acrobatics while barely clinging to the steel scaffold high over the audience?³¹

The dangling cellist—Moorman—is mentioned in nearly every review of *Originals*. She must have been an extraordinary sight: a buxom, begowned woman playing Bach from on high, her dark hair falling over pale, plump shoulders. “Like a Della Robbia cherub,” marveled Alan Rich in the *New York Herald Tribune*.³² On at least one night Moorman contrived to be

raised and lowered from the balcony on a backless plank-and-rope swing manned by two assistants, a dangerous stunt not required by the score. It turned out to be only the first of many times that Moorman set aside her fear of heights for the sake of a performance.

Artist Carolee Schneemann, who had an unscripted part in the show and also made some of the costumes and props, recalls how she helped Moorman create a second unforgettable image during *Originals*.

She hated her dress. It was catching on the cello, she didn't like the shape of it, she didn't know what to wear. We were backstage. [...] I think it was a rehearsal. I said, "Why don't you just take your dress off? Leave it here till you come back down. I'm going to wrap you in a sheet and you'll look like a flying angel." She said, "But it's going to fly open!" I said, "It'll be fine, you'll be really beautiful, you'll look like a Rubens." She said, "No, I'm too fat, I don't want to be naked up there." I said, "All right, it'll flutter, and some of your body will show." But I draped it so that it unraveled and fell off as she went up the rope with the cello. [...] It was astonishingly beautiful, naked Charlotte with the white sheet fluttering down as she's playing the cello. [...] When she came down, she said, "That felt wonderful!"³³

Moorman did not use this bit during any of the five performances. Instead she devised a variation on Schneemann's idea: on opening night, after one of her offstage costume changes, she reappeared in a tightly wrapped gauze dress, underneath which she was "startlingly nude."³⁴ This was a significant moment. *Originals* was the first performance in which Moorman acknowledged that her body and her instrument were not just tools for making music but powerful visual elements, whether she was hanging from a balcony or nude under gauze. She had moved very far indeed from the classical music convention in which the performer's body disappears in a cloak of black clothing.

Oddly, Moorman did not give Schneemann credit for the idea. Instead, during an interview conducted in 1973, she said that Allan Kaprow had



FIGURE 7.2

Charlotte Moorman in Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originals*, Festival of the Avant Garde '64, New York City, September 1964. Photo by Fred W. McDarrah/ Getty Images.



FIGURE 7.3

Charlotte Moorman and the chimp named Priscilla in Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originals*, Festival of the Avant Garde '64, New York City, 1964. Photo © Estate of Fred W. McDarrah.

insisted she perform seminude.³⁵ There is no record that Kaprow ever confirmed or denied this. But nudity had never been one of his artistic concerns. Schneemann, on the other hand, had been exploring sexuality and the body in her work for several years. In *Eye Body* (1963) she had integrated her nude, paint-smeared self into an environment of her own wall constructions and paintings, and in 1964 she had debuted *Meat Joy*, an erotic rite that involved near-naked performers and assorted raw meats. Her story about Moorman's nude debut is much more plausible than Moorman's own. But Kaprow, not Schneemann, was the director of *Originals*. He was also a man. This made for a convenient dodge. If her male superior told her to do it, how could she refuse?

This was the first of many times during her career that Moorman sidestepped responsibility for her behavior by claiming that she had only been following a man's instructions. Because she was otherwise so powerful and independent a personality, her deference is both unexpected and disappointing, especially given the courageous work of peers such as Schneemann and, later, Hannah Wilke. Perhaps Moorman found it thrilling to publicly expose her naked body but was also ashamed to be thrilled. "He made me do it" provided both permission and absolution for her behavior.

ORIGINALS WAS A MAJOR event in New York City's 1964 musical season. It was the American premiere of a large-scale work by a respected, if controversial, European composer. Every show sold out. The *New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune* each ran two stories, and several smaller papers sent critics. The *Village Voice* published three articles plus a photo spread by Fred McDarrah. Moorman somehow persuaded critics from leading national magazines *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *Nation* to attend. (According to Max Neuhaus, she simply showed up at publishers' offices and told them they had to review the show, so they did.³⁶) A couple of weeks after *Originals* closed, Johnny Carson invited her to appear on *The Tonight Show*, where she performed about three minutes of her Cage solo.³⁷ She had not been able to achieve more than average competence as a classical musician, but on the New Music scene Moorman was beginning to look like a star.

IN OCTOBER 1964, Earle Brown wrote to Moorman from Paris. Alluding to the grand spectacle of *Originals*, he asked, “So what else is new, now that you’re the Cecil B. de Moorman of the music world?”³⁸ Brown’s affectionate jibe referred to Cecil B. De Mille, the famed director of Hollywood filmic extravaganzas. Brown likely meant the comment as a compliment, perhaps impressed that Moorman had pulled off an event of such complex and spectacular proportions, and done it mostly on her own. Perhaps Brown understood, even before Moorman herself did, that it would become her mission to bring experimental art to an audience as broad as any that Hollywood could command.

We do not know what Moorman thought of Brown’s remark. We do know that when, during the course of preparations for Festival of the Avant Garde ’64 Edgard Varèse dubbed her the “Jeanne d’Arc of New Music,” she was delighted. She explained to her grandmother, “He calls me [that] because I pioneer so much new music.”³⁹ But Varèse’s likening implied much more than bravery. Joan of Arc was a national heroine of France, a saint of the Roman Catholic Church, a girl whose idealized portrait circulated on coins and stamps and whose biography was taught to schoolchildren throughout the Western world. Hers was a life of heroism in service of a righteous cause. Moorman seized the nickname and never let go.

In her meditation on the life of Joan, novelist Mary Gordon reflected on her position in the popular imagination. “We do not call her up as a type of victim. We call her up as one who held back nothing. [...] She came from nowhere and gave everything. She pitted herself against those who were far better endowed than she.”⁴⁰ Moorman, too, held back nothing, but she sometimes is called up as a type of victim. Like Joan, she was arrested in the course of doing her work and convicted after an absurd trial. Some find an even bleaker alignment between them: premature death due to the fanatical pursuit of a self-assigned mission.

But in 1964 Moorman was still innocent of this connection. In 1964 the romance of being Joan had nothing to do with suffering and everything to do with the power of faith. Vita Sackville-West wrote of Joan, “[Her] all-pervading forcefulness sprang from the intensity of her inner persuasions. It was her single-mindedness which enabled her to inspire

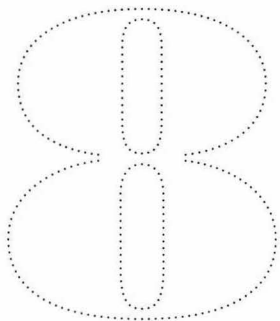


FIGURE 7.4

Charlotte Moorman with Edgard Varèse at his Greenwich Village home, New York City, September 1963. With them are (left to right): unidentified, Morton Feldman, Frederic Rzewski. Photo by William Lovelace © Daily Express. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

disheartened men and to bend reluctant princes to her will. [...] She was able to carry them along by the almost physical force of her inner convictions.”⁴¹ So, too, Moorman’s spirited campaign to advance the cause of New Music attracted a band of followers, and even a prince or two. Her enthusiasm was infectious and her commitment beyond question. Says one who knew her well: “She had no doubts.”⁴²

Neither Joan of Arc nor Charlotte Moorman deigned to do what was expected of them—housewifery, childrearing, and other ordinary avocations of women. (Said Joan, “There are plenty of other women to perform them.”⁴³) Instead, both felt called to do otherwise, and each had the nerve to heed her call. As Edgard Varèse must have sensed, this was their essential similarity.



Salt and Pepper

DURING THE WINTER OF 1964–1965 MOORMAN PLAYED HER FIRST, AND ONLY, FULL SEASON WITH THE AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. FOUNDED IN 1962 BY LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI, WHO WAS ALSO ITS conductor, the ASO was often called a “youth symphony” because fully a third of its players were students between eighteen and twenty-five years old.¹ But the programs were ambitious, and Stokowski’s renown made it a prestigious appointment. It was not a full-time position—musicians were paid by the concert—so throughout that winter Moorman supplemented her income by playing the occasional chamber music job and answering telephones at Billie’s Registry, a booking agency for performers.

During that same winter Paik, who had stayed on in New York City, began writing new works for her. The first, *Pop Sonata*, might have debuted as early as October 16, 1964, at the Philadelphia College of Art. Moorman and

Paik were invited to take part in *Snow with an Ending*, the closing events for the Swiss conceptual artist Dieter Roth's first solo exhibition in the United States. Information about this event is scant, but Jim McWilliams, a graphic design instructor at the college and later a close friend of Moorman's, recalls that her performance included a striptease that was stopped in progress by a nervous security guard.²

Moorman did perform *Pop Sonata* on January 8, 1965, at the New School for Social Research in New York City, as part of a one-night concert/exhibition of Paik's work that was meant to introduce his ideas to his new American public.³ Its main components were a group of three robots, including *Robot K-456*; live performances by poet Carol Berge and artist Mieko Shiomi; and "an orchestra of television sets" whose pictures, tuned to the regular Friday night broadcast shows, were variously distorted through electronic and other means. Audience members were encouraged to interact with the televisions by using the large magnets Paik had provided; when placed on and around the sets, they caused shifting, abstract patterns to bloom on the screens. One fellow bested Paik at his own game: he fiddled with the knobs on one of the sets until he successfully tuned in a basketball game.⁴

For the reviewers, at least, Moorman stole the show with her performance of *Pop Sonata*. The piece has two parts: Play a few measures of J. S. Bach's Suite no. 3 in C Major for solo cello. Remove an item of clothing. Repeat. Moorman shed jewelry, shoes, stockings, skirt, blouse, and at least four pairs of panties before she lay down on the floor to finish the piece, her cello atop her like a lover. The composition is a transposition of Paik's *Sonata quasi una fantasia* in which the male stripper has been replaced by a female and the Beethoven piano sonata by a similarly hoary work for cello.

Paik titled the composition *Pop Sonata* in honor of his new partner, whom he thought of as "a typical American girl."⁵ It was also, of course, a reference to the cultural moment. In 1965 Pop was the going thing in America. Pop Art was the perfect metacommodity for a culture that encouraged the furious consumption of goods. There was pop music and pop psychology; there was even what might be called pop sex. Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* was an instant bestseller upon its publication in 1962; early James Bond films featured women with names such

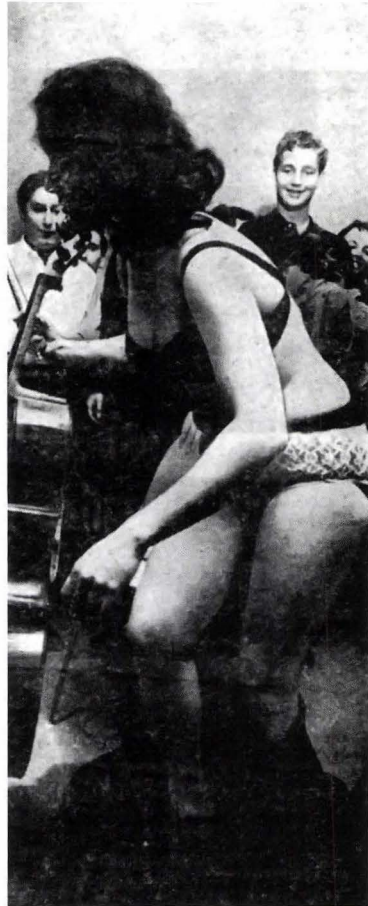


FIGURE 8.1 AND FIGURE 8.2

Charlotte Moorman performs Nam June Paik's *Pop Sonata* at *Nam June Paik: Cybernetics Art and Music*, New York City, 1965. Photos by Larry Mulvehill. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

as Pussy Galore and Honey Ryder; and in 1964 designer Rudi Gernreich introduced the monokini, or Topless Bathing Suit, which inspired Carol Doda's infamous topless dance act at San Francisco's Condor Club.⁶ In *Pop Sonata*, Paik used sex to turn Bach into a parodic live sex show for the cultivated consumer classes. (Shortly after the New School event Paik made a revision to the piece: he had Moorman perform behind a gauze curtain, backlit by a spotlight. This transformed her into a silhouette and made the viewing experience one of clandestine voyeurism. He retitled this soft-core version *Sonata for Adults Only*.)

Backstage at the New School, before she even had a chance to get dressed after the performance, Moorman was approached by *Newsday* columnist Mike McGrady. He wanted to know why: Why had Paik written music to undress by? And why had she "gone along with the gag?" Moorman sidestepped the first question effortlessly with this: "Paik knows he can't improve on Bach's music. It would be wrong to change perfection. But what he can change is the presentation." As for the second query, she both asserted the seriousness of the work and refused responsibility for it. "I'm a serious musician. I had nothing to say about the routine at all. That was the work of the arranger, Nam June Paik. As an interpreter of serious music, I have to carry out what he writes down. It may seem like a joke to you, but it's actually quite difficult. It's hard enough to play serious music properly. It's even harder when you have to undress to it." Someone yelled out another question. "Hey kid, does your mother know what you're doing?" "Oh, no," she answered. "Back home in Little Rock I'd be burnt at the stake for doing this."⁷ Moorman was never fazed by skeptics. In fact, she felt that when her work shocked an audience, "then there's a valid reason for performing it, more so than just my enjoyment or the quality of the work. [The audience] really needs that piece."⁸ Working with Paik allowed Moorman to deliver what the public needed.

Moorman didn't emphasize her contributions to Paik's compositions until much later in her life. But even this first work of theirs bears her imprint. *Pop Sonata*'s essential final image—a woman and her lover/cello consummating their ecstatic union on the floor, in classic missionary position—was based on an improvisation Moorman had made a few months earlier during a performance of *Originals*. Stockhausen's score directs the

performers to sit in the audience when they are not onstage. But one evening Moorman couldn't find an empty seat, so she lay down on the floor with her cello and performed while flat on her back. Adapting this motif for *Pop Sonata* might have been her idea, or it might have been Paik's. Regardless, a pattern for their symbiotic working relationship had emerged: Moorman's onstage audacity fueled Paik's imagination, and his ideas pushed her to take greater and greater risks.

Shortly after the New School concert, in February 1965, Jim McWilliams invited Moorman and Paik to be part of an experimental music series he had started at the Philadelphia College of Art. Actually, he invited Paik, but when Moorman found out she wrote to ask if she could have a solo evening, too. McWilliams said yes, offered her fifty dollars plus travel expenses and dinner, and asked her to choose her own program. "As far as I am concerned," he told her, "the wilder the better."⁹ Moorman decided to repeat the solo evening she had prepared for Festival of the Avant Garde '64, with the addition of two new pieces. Earle Brown, whose *Synergy* was on the program, wrote an encouraging note from Paris. "Play well you clown! (that's, CLOWN—in the appreciative sense)."¹⁰

The first of the premieres was *Human Cello*, a short action conceived by Paik and inserted into Moorman's realization of Cage's 26'1.1499" for a *String Player*. At a given point in the piece Moorman put her cello aside, and Paik, who had stripped to the waist, knelt between her thighs and stretched a single cello string taut along the length of his back. He pressed his face into her bosom as she slapped, plucked, and bowed the string, thumping him soundly on the back once or twice as if he were her instrument.

As an image, *Human Cello* is an inversion of *Le violon d'Ingres* (*Ingres's Violin*) (1924), Man Ray's iconic collage in which a sensuous photograph of a woman's nude back is transformed by the artist's addition of two f-holes. Man Ray's work fuses beauty, sex, voyeurism, and music; *Human Cello* does all of this, and adds mild sadomasochism to the mix. John Cage made a point to disown this addition to his composition. "Paik's involvement with sex, introducing it into music does not conduce towards sounds being sounds," he declared. "I am sure that his performance with Charlotte Moorman of my 26'1.1499" for a *String Player* is not faithful to the notation, that the liberties taken are in favor of actions rather than sound events in

time.”¹¹ Leaving aside Cage’s puzzling characterization of *Human Cello* as “his” performance, the observation is correct. Privileging bodily actions over sounds was exactly the point of *Human Cello*, as it was in all of the works Paik wrote for Moorman. As for the thumps she made on his back, Paik quipped, “Imperialist American should hit yellow man.”¹² Considering that Paik conceived *Human Cello* in 1965, the year that the U.S. finally revised immigration policies that had largely excluded Asians, his comment seems in retrospect both droll and caustic. Moorman later recharacterized *Human Cello* as straightforward political commentary when she told a reporter, “By playing on Paik I demonstrate how we Americans are oppressing the Vietnamese.”¹³

In Philadelphia that February, Moorman and Paik premiered a second new work, *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*. Composed by Paik for his new partner, its sequence was simple: after playing the first several measures of Camille Saint-Saëns’s “The Swan,” Moorman put down her cello and walked across the stage to a large oil drum that was, unbeknownst to the audience, filled with water. Then she carefully climbed a stepladder to the rim of the drum, where she perched briefly before lowering herself feet first into the water until she was completely submerged. Dripping wet, she returned to her seat to finish “The Swan.” (She always protected the back of her cello with plastic; in later performances of this and other unconventional works, she substituted a student cello for her own instrument.)

“The Swan” is the penultimate, and best-known, movement of Saint-Saëns’s *Carnival of the Animals* (1886). Written for solo cello with two-piano accompaniment, its sweet, flowing melody is meant to evoke the graceful movement of the bird as it glides on the water. In 1905 the legendary Russian prima ballerina Anna Pavlova used the piece in her signature solo dance, “The Dying Swan,” a romantic meditation on the mystery of life and death. In 1936 Pavlova’s dance was itself famously reinterpreted by the eighteen-year-old figure skater Sonja Henie. “The Swan” was even mastered by Clara Rockmore, the Lithuanian virtuoso of the theremin. It is still a standard in student cello recitals; Moorman herself had been playing it since at least 1953 when, as a college sophomore, she performed it in a hotel ballroom in Shreveport, Louisiana, for a concert to benefit the



FIGURE 8.3

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik perform *Human Cello* as part of John Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player*, Düsseldorf, West Germany, 1966. Photo by Reiner Ruthenbeck © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

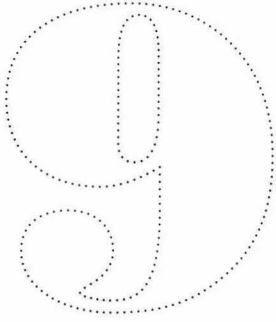
Ouachita Chapter of the Navy Mothers Club. By the 1960s “The Swan” had become, through no fault of its own, classical music kitsch, akin to Mozart’s *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* or Brahms’s *Lullaby*. That, of course, is exactly why Paik chose it. He later said that he followed a standard procedure when composing for Moorman: “I take very clichéd classical music and put some salt and pepper in.”¹⁴

That night in Philadelphia, *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns* was saved for last, and its particulars were kept secret from the audience; it was the only piece for which no program notes were given. It was obviously meant to be a surprise, and it was—to Moorman and Paik as well. The local papers reported: “During her performance, Miss Moorman astonished her audience by [...] jumping into a water-filled tank. Emerging from the tank, the dripping artist hit her head on a [ceiling] pipe, opening a cut over her eye, but, undaunted, she completed the concert. [...] As she rose to take a bow, blood streamed down her forehead and spilled onto her cello. Bravos were shouted by the milling audience while Miss Moorman was given first-aid by a nurse.”¹⁵ It was a dramatic finish that might have put some viewers in mind of Pavlova’s “Dying Swan,” except that the blood was real and Moorman was not blessed with a ballerina’s grace. Paik was delighted by the misadventure. “Beautiful, beautiful!” he cried.¹⁶

In calling the piece a “variation,” Paik pointed to a musical form in which a given melody is re-presented with modifications such as ornament, additional melodies, or altered harmonies. He began with Saint-Saëns’s original, which tries to evoke, musically, a swan gliding on water. Paik’s variation parodied Saint-Saëns’s imitation of a sound by incorporating an actual watery sound: the splash produced when Moorman took a dip.¹⁷ *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns* has become emblematic of Paik and Moorman’s performative collaborations, perhaps because she brilliantly deployed two of his action-music strategies: surprise (the dunking and its aftermath) and disappointment (her fractured treatment of “The Swan”).

Moorman performed the piece at least fifty times, more than any other work in her repertoire. Shortly before she died, Paik acknowledged her dedication to the composition with a gift: a porcelain figurine of a lovely female cellist dressed in a long, yellow gown with frilly décolletage,

a wide-brimmed hat, and tiny silver slippers. When a switch is flipped she draws her bow across the strings, and a tinny rendition of “The Swan” issues from the music box concealed beneath her cushioned bench. Paik turned the figurine into a found-object sculpture by signing it with his name and the title *Portrait of Charlotte Moorman*.¹⁸ Given to Moorman in 1991, when her body was nearly overwhelmed by cancer and she had long since stopped performing, this sentimental object depicts her as eternally young, eternally pretty, and forever playing “The Swan.”



A Typical American Girl

BY AUTUMN 1964, JUST A FEW MONTHS AFTER MEETING MOORMAN, PAIK COULD ALREADY ENVISION A TOUR WITH HIS NEW PARTNER. HE BEGAN MAKING INQUIRIES OF HIS FRIENDS IN EUROPE, DESCRIBING his ideas and asking for help arranging concerts. To the French critic Pierre Restany he wrote, “Now I am planning a [...] tour with a Robot which talks, walks, bows, shits, fucks, etc. and with a real girl, a progressive, aggressive, talented, famous cellist who can do every ‘comédie humaine’ with Cello. It will be great pleasure if we can ‘DO’ it at Galerie J.” He told the Swedish composer Karl-Erik Welin, “We have many brilliant new ideas, perhaps Stockholm high brow will talk about our journey until 1970.” Composer György Ligeti received this assurance: “[Moorman’s] playing is not merely a transposition of [David] Tudor technique to the cello. It has more presence of character.” By this Paik meant to acknowledge the very aspect



FIGURE 9.1

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik on tour, mid-1960s. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

of her playing—the power of her onstage personality—that made it impossible for her to perform Cage as precisely as Tudor did. So that Ligeti would not misinterpret his enthusiasm, he added, “P.S. Charlotte is not my so-called girlfriend.”¹

By spring 1965 Paik had pieced together a string of eight engagements over two months, beginning in Iceland. On May 14 Moorman wrote her mother a note from Reykjavik explaining where she had gone: “My invitation to Europe came through so late that I didn’t have time to write you. I just was able to get my passport, the small pox shot, and pack in a big rush! As it was I nearly missed my plane! Pianist-composer Nam June Paik wrote to radio stations and art galleries how well I play modern music and they in turn arranged a tour that pays our transportation and food and rent and when possible a small fee!”² Moorman had not traveled farther abroad than Canada, which she had visited while on tour with the Manhattan Concert Orchestra in 1958. She had never before needed a passport.

Their appearance in Iceland had been arranged through artist Dieter Roth, who was then living in Reykjavik. He had recommended Paik and Moorman to Musica Nova, an association of composers and musicians formed in 1959 to introduce modern music to Icelanders.³ Prior to the concert the city’s principal newspaper, *Morgunblaðið*, ran a preview article that emphasized Moorman’s classical credentials, accompanied by a photograph that showed her posed demurely with her cello and Paik seated at a grand piano in the background. The article allowed that “new and curious” music would be played, but there was no mention of striptease or water barrels or shaving cream or pistols. The citizens of Reykjavik were therefore not prepared for what they saw and heard on Monday evening, May 17, at a modest hall known as the Lindarbær.

“Clownish Antics in Lindarbær,” reported the *Morgunblaðið* the next day. “The woman played the cello and then climbed up into a barrel and disappeared into it. A while later she came out of the barrel, soaking wet, and started playing the piano [*sic*] again. The Korean dropped his pants on stage, sat down on a chair, and turned slowly in circles while music was played from a tape.” The reporter’s deadpan conclusion: “Entrance to this unusual show cost fifty kronur.” As talk of the concert spread, Musica Nova was denounced, and its members watched with dismay as the progress they

had made familiarizing Icelanders with contemporary music was undone in just a few days. Eventually the group felt compelled to take an extraordinary step: it published an open apology calling the concert “an unforeseeable accident” and begging the public to believe that Paik and Moorman’s work did not reflect the mission of Musica Nova.

Moorman would have known nothing of this. The day after the concert she wrote a friend blithely, “Our concert shocked everyone—they’ve never seen anything so modern!”⁴ And by the time the Reykjavik affair was at full boil, she and Paik had long since left for Paris.

IN 1965 THE American Center in Paris occupied a grand, colonnaded building on Boulevard Raspail in Montparnasse. Founded in 1931, the center promoted the arts through concerts, lectures, readings, and performances; it also provided a gathering place for the thousands of American expatriate writers and artists who had crowded into Montparnasse since the 1920s. Moorman and Paik were to appear there on May 21 as part of the 2nd Festival of Free Expression, an eight-day event organized by the artist Jean-Jacques Lebel. They had intended to perform *Robot Opera* on the street in front of the center. But *Robot K-456*, still in its packing crate, had disappeared “in the international air labyrinth” on the way from Iceland to France.⁵ So they moved their act indoors and did a program similar to the one they had done in Reykjavik.

In Paris, and throughout the tour, *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns* was their grand finale. On the one hand, this was a purely practical decision. Had it been in the middle of the program, Moorman would have had to finish the concert with her hair and gown soaking wet. But in Paris they made an adjustment to the piece that redoubled its visual impact. Paik told the story in a eulogy written in 1992 for Moorman’s memorial service:

[The] American Center was on the left bank and our hotel was near Pigalle on the right bank. When we finished the rehearsal it was 6:30 and our show was to start at 7:00 pm. Charlotte suddenly said, “Oh, I have to go back to the hotel. I have to fetch

my black formal.” I was at a loss. It takes two hours to cross the Seine and come back at the rush hour, and how can you get a taxi during rush hour to start with? But Charlotte, a very demanding woman, kept insisting. ... I could foresee our debut concert in Paris would be a disaster. It would begin at 9 pm, two hours after the announced time. The impatient and spoiled crowd of Paris *intelligenti* will go home. Then my eyes caught something at the corner of the greenroom. There was a huge roll of clear plastic drop cloth which [artist] Ben Vautier brought here as a prop for the next evening.

I pointed it out. “How about that?” “What?” She could not guess what I said. I repeated: “This is your formal.” “Oh, no,” she screamed, quite perplexed. I noticed a very quick change of her expression—in a split second I sensed something was clicking in her mind—feminine mystique. Shyness, shame, success, *succès de scandale*, again her southern upbringing. Her mother at Arkansas, again *da capo*, opening and closing. ... Her vacillation went up and down in waves in a very short time. Many years later, I analyzed Greta Garbo’s facial complexion and found that she can become a virgin, then a whore, then a saint, and back to a virgin many times in a split second. I sensed that that kind of tension was passing through [Charlotte’s] mind in this fateful second—after all it was 1965. Even toplessness was forbidden everywhere in the world including the Paris strip joints, much less full nudity. It was not easy but she crossed the Rubicon. In order to hide her shyness she drank straight scotch. When she stepped out there was a roar of applause, so she drank more, played some more, drank more, got more applause. She fell backward on the makeshift stage. On that day she got enlightened. She had been a rather stiff performer, self-conscious with a great amount of stage fright. But this baptism of nudity, uproar, and straight scotch opened a new nerve center, which made her a sensitive and inspiring performer.⁶

Although Paik implied that the Paris performance of *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns* was Moorman's first seminude performance, it was not, and he knew it: he had seen her swathed in gauze in *Originals* and watched her strip at the New School. But he still took credit for pushing her across some personal Rubicon of modesty, shame, and Southern decorum—in other words, for getting her mostly naked in public—and thus for transforming her from a “stiff” performer into a “sensitive and inspiring” one. His story is both a Pygmalion myth and a garden-variety fantasy about a virgin who turns sluttish after an encounter with a virile partner. To be sure, many women were still trapped in these tired narratives in 1965, and in this regard male artists certainly behaved no better than other men. And Paik had a stake in his position as the architect of their work. “Charlotte becomes better and better in every concert,” he wrote to John Cage. “Many people preferred Charlotte’s performance of your 26’1.1499” to my performance of my own piece. In Paris, even difficult connoisseurs like Heinz-Klaus Metzger or Earle Brown liked her performance extremely. I was very happy because I had the responsibility of having recommended her ... some people blamed me for nepotism but now everything is O.K.”⁷

Despite Paik’s story, there is no evidence that Moorman was ever embarrassed by her transparent gown. The evidence suggests, on the contrary, that she liked it. A letter written in June, at the end of their tour, describes only the satisfaction she felt when the crowd, which had greeted her with a “‘let’s see what she can do’ attitude,” erupted in bravos after her performance.⁸ After Paris, cellophane was her garb of choice whenever she performed *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*. She said later that it “felt like a snowsuit. [...] I felt totally clothed. The fact that you could see completely through it didn’t bother me.”⁹

Directly across the street from the American Center was Montparnasse Cemetery, resting place for many of the district’s artists and intellectuals. Baudelaire and Brancusi are buried there; so is Camille Saint-Saëns. Had he seen Moorman perform his “Swan,” he might have shuddered. But another of the cemetery’s denizens is Kiki de Montparnasse, artist’s model, cabaret singer, and, during the 1920s, the best-known bohémienne in Paris. *She* would have applauded.



FIGURE 9.2

Charlotte Moorman performs Nam June Paik's *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns* at *24 Hours*, Wuppertal, West Germany, 1965. Photo © Ute Klophaus. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

FOLLOWING THEIR CONCERT in Paris, Moorman and Paik performed in Cologne, Frankfurt, and Aachen before arriving in Wuppertal on June 5 to take part in the now-legendary performance festival *24 Stunden (24 Hours)*. Its organizer, the gallerist Rolf Jährling, had converted his home into a performance space and invited six artists—Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock, Eckhart Rahn, Tomas Schmit, Wolf Vostell, and Paik/Moorman (who counted as one)—to perform in separate rooms for a full twenty-four hours. A seventh artist, Ute Klophaus, documented the event in photographs. Paik described *24 Hours* as a “buffet concert” in which the audience moved from room to room, sampling performances as they pleased.¹⁰ He and Moorman were assigned a large reception hall; to fill the twenty-four hours they planned to play an expanded version of their touring program—eleven compositions in all, including their standards by Cage, Chiari, and Paik himself.

Jährling had timed *24 Hours* to end at midnight on June 6, the twenty-first anniversary of D-day, but only two artists, Vostell and Moorman, directly acknowledged the date in their performances.¹¹ In *Die Folgen der Notstandsgesetze (Consequences of the Emergency Laws)*, Wolf Vostell commented on the post-World War II provisos imposed on Germany by the Allies. He lay on the floor sticking straight pins into slabs of raw meat while other performers—gagged, bound, and wearing gas masks—regarded the audience impassively from inside glass vitrines. For her part, Moorman gave an impassioned performance of *Per Arco*. In an essay written for the *24 Hours* catalog, she described the experience. “I have played Chiari’s *Per Arco* in many countries, but this time I have quite a strange feeling because I am in the German country that is bombing Italy in the tape. Do you recognize your sound? Vietnam, Dominican Republic, Mississippi!!! I cannot keep from crying.”¹² She later told Chiari, “*Per Arco* went the best I’ve ever played it. I’ve always tried to hold back the tears as I hear the tapes, but this time I didn’t hold back.”¹³

The image of a woman weeping in reaction to war is a powerful motif in twentieth-century art; think of Picasso’s *Guernica* or Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage*. But even in West Germany, on the anniversary of one the most famous battles of World War II, Moorman’s tears could not offset the erotics of her performance. “[Miss Moorman] stroked the wood of the cello she



FIGURE 9.3

Charlotte Moorman performs Giuseppe Chiari's *Per Arco*, Asolo, Italy, ca. 1975. Photo by Mario Parolin. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

gripped between her knees as if it were the skin of a lover, sensually, as if in a trance,” wrote one critic. “Then suddenly she convulsed and collapsed on the instrument.”¹⁴ Both sex and violence have been intrinsic to war for millennia; this might be why she kept *Per Arco* in her repertoire for the rest of her career. As she sometimes noted sadly, the piece never lost its topicality.

As their tour continued, Moorman’s rendition of the Cage piece became more and more sexually suggestive. By the time she performed it at *24 Hours* it included, in addition to the *Human Cello* segment, the popping of inflated condoms, live screams, and the taped sounds of cats in estrus and her own orgasmic moans.¹⁵ *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns* also had a new, darkly funny erotic motif. Instead of sitting on a chair to play “The Swan,” Moorman perched on the back of an assistant who had gotten down on his hands and knees to receive her cellophanned backside. A second assistant lay at her feet holding the cello’s endpin in his mouth. The tableau was an absurd sadomasochistic ménage à trois that cast the cellist as dominatrix, the weight of her body supported by one submissive and her endpin-cum-spiked heel thrust into the mouth of the other.

Paik was probably the author of this idea. Earlier that spring, while setting up their tour engagements, he had written to a friend about his “new action music with Charlotte—with sex and sadism.”¹⁶ In the year since he had met her, in fact, Paik had made enormous progress on his project to correct what he called the “historical blunder” that had kept sex out of classical music. Striptease, voyeurism, nudity, and sadomasochism had all found their way into the compositions he wrote for her. During their European tour he also had revived a piece he’d written for himself, *Étude platonique* (1961–1965), in which he alternately banged a piano keyboard violently with his head or forearms and sat silently on a stool, posed like Rodin’s *The Thinker* but with his pants pulled down and his bare ass facing the audience. All of these works feature one or more of his action music strategies—surprise, disappointment, tedium—but they also depend heavily on humor. Humor kept Paik’s sex-in-music from being merely salacious and allowed him to be serious but not pretentious. He explained his embrace of low comedy with characteristic self-deprecation: “I come from very poor country, and I am poor. I have to entertain people every second.”¹⁷



FIGURE 9.4

Charlotte Moorman performs Nam June Paik's *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1966. Photo by Lars Hansen © Polfoto, Copenhagen.

Paik and Moorman's performative style reinforced the burlesque humor of his some of his compositions. Onstage they bickered and fussed. He was often at wits' end because she was often late or disorganized; when he wandered offstage in the middle of a concert, she would screech at him to come back. Their partnership has been called "an artistic marriage made in heaven: infectious good humor, high spirits, anarchistic comic confusion."¹⁸ Indeed, accounts of their concerts sometimes make them sound like the Lucy and Ricky Ricardo of the avant-garde. When Paik and Moorman's audiences weren't booing or yawning, they were often laughing with delight.

In mid-June they ended their tour in West Berlin with two concerts at the Galerie René Block and two outdoor performances of *Robot Opera*. Then Paik returned to the United States alone, and Moorman continued on to Florence. Giuseppe Chiari had arranged for her to perform at the third festival of the artists' collective Gruppo '70. Afterward, she wrote to John Cage: "I missed Paik, but [the Italians] did a great job. [Composer Sylvano] Bussotti turned pages in your piece for me & took his shirt off and let me hit him—he did a perfect job. Chiari was excellent in Toshi's [Ichiyangi] *Duet II*. The Galleria owner closed the concert when she saw me in my cellophane formal. [...] By the time I explained that I could wear clothes, she'd sent the audience home!"¹⁹

Paik and Moorman's tour was not a financial or critical success. But it was their first substantive work together, and the European avant-garde was smitten. Most of them knew Paik from his work in Cologne and already appreciated his eccentric brilliance. Moorman, with her wide-eyed but utterly serious approach to her work, was a very pleasant surprise to many. Shortly after their tour ended, Wolf Vostell wrote to her in New York: "I'm remembering very much your presence and performances here with N.J.P. It was wonderful and you have both to come back soon. [I've sent you] some newer texts of my last Berlin Happening and the Wuppertal

FIGURE 9.5

Charlotte Moorman performs John Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player*, Florence, Italy, 1965. A shirtless Sylvano Bussotti looks on. Photo by Carlo Alberto Schiavi. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



[performance]. Maybe perhaps you could publish something or read it or perform it. I have confidence in your way to interpret and how[ever] you do it, it is alright!”²⁰ Bazon Brock wrote her, too, implicitly including her when he referred to the work “we all are doing” and calling himself her “centraleuropean malelove.”²¹ Valdis Abolins, a Latvian artist whose back had served as Moorman’s seat during their Aachen performance of “The Swan,” wrote a review of the evening that concluded with a wish: “If all the children are good and eat their porridge, [Paik and Moorman] will return to Germany in autumn.”²²

For Moorman, the tour was a turning point. She confided to Jacob Glick: “So much has happened. My tour is nearly over and I am more convinced about my philosophies, hopes, and dreams than ever.”²³ She wasn’t specific about what those were, but the evidence of her life makes it clear what she meant. Her commitment to the avant-garde was now absolute.

10

Festival of the Avant Garde '65

BARELY A MONTH AFTER SHE RETURNED FROM EUROPE, MOORMAN OPENED HER THIRD FESTIVAL. IT WAS BY FAR THE MOST AMBITIOUS EVENT SHE HAD YET CONCEIVED: THIRTEEN CONCERTS, SPREAD OVER three weeks in August and September, that amounted to an omnibus sampler of the latest in poetry, dance, film, New Music, jazz, electronic music, and Happenings. For the first time the festival was not restricted to music but embraced multiple performative mediums. This would become its standard format. Not coincidentally, 1965 was the last year Moorman staged the festival in a concert hall.

During the previous two festivals, to ensure that they always had a full house, Moorman and Seaman had given away more tickets than they sold. As a result, Seaman had lost money on the first two festivals, so he declined to advance any cash for the third.¹ Without his financial backing, Moorman

was forced to raise the money herself. She estimated the budget at nearly \$9,000, including about \$2,500 in artists' fees.²

In May 1965, just before she left on her European tour, she had written to the Edgar M. Leventritt Foundation, a small family fund that supported classical music projects and ran a respected annual competition for violinists and pianists. This was her first grant application. It read, in part:

My concern is to bring before the public the newest and best of experimental works, both American and International. This policy has been followed with enormous success by the Museum of Modern Art's traveling American pop art show, Merce Cunningham's world tour, the Living Theatre, and the Whitney Museum's 1965 sculpture show. Such programs, when presented here and abroad, have awakened widespread interest in the avant-garde. [...]

There are many twentieth-century series which supposedly encompass all trends, from the conservative to the most radical. In reality, they weigh toward the already established, conservative artists, with very little new, experimental work. It is historically important that the avant-garde get as fair a hearing as is possible in our culture. Only after the public has been exposed to it can it accept it or reject it.³

The Leventritt Foundation turned her down. So did the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, the Fromm Music Foundation, and the John Hay Whitney Foundation. Eventually, Moorman produced the festival on a patchwork budget of small cash gifts, loans, and donations of time, services, and materials. She had no money herself, but after 1965 she nevertheless took personal responsibility for festival expenses. She never did recover her fiscal footing. But atop the printed program for the third festival is the phrase "C. Moorman Presents." For her, that alone might have been worth giving up financial stability for the rest of her life.

Moorman's application to the Leventritt Foundation not only affirmed her commitment to new art; it also explained her curatorial method. The

only requirement for participation in the festivals, she wrote, was “the quality of the work, not the reputation of the artist; thus young, unknowns are given an equal chance for performance.” In areas where she felt unable to judge the quality of the work, she found guest curators. For the third festival, for example, after deciding to include a jazz evening, she turned to Don Heckman, an alto sax player and jazz composer who had performed with the Happenings artists Al Hansen and Allan Kaprow and was friendly with Karlheinz Stockhausen. Moorman and Heckman had worked together during *Originals*, improvising cello-saxophone duets from opposite ends of Judson Hall. “There was nothing in her playing that indicated any familiarity with jazz,” Heckman recalls, and he had the impression she knew very little about current developments in the genre.⁴ Yet she wanted the festival to cover all aspects of experimental art, so she asked Heckman to choose a program. He brought in a group of musicians then working on the cutting edge of the jazz idiom: vocalist Sheila Jordan, the Jimmy Giuffre trio, and the Charles Lloyd quartet, as well as his own ensemble, the Don Heckman-Ed Summerlin Improvisational Jazz Workshop. Heckman continued to curate festival jazz programs for several years; similarly, beginning in 1966 Moorman turned over the film and video programming to filmmakers, including Robert Breer and Jud Yalkut.⁵

Upward of eighty artists from all corners of the experimental art scene took part in Festival of the Avant Garde '65. The six evenings devoted to a single artistic genre would by themselves have offered a comprehensive look at current aesthetic trends. The film evening included short works by Stan Brakhage, Robert Breer, Bruce Conner, Jack Smith, and Stan Vanderbeek, while the poetry evening featured the Dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck, along with Robert Filliou and Jackson Mac Low, reading their own and others' works. An evening of electronic music presented works by James Tenney, Gordon Mumma, and Richard Maxfield, as well as Steve Reich's *Livelihood* (1964), a collage of sounds collected while the young composer was on the job as a taxi driver. (When the tape was not returned to him afterward, he vowed to think more carefully about participating in Moorman's festivals again.⁶) On another evening, Judson Dance Theater choreographers Judith Dunn, Beverly Schmidt, Lucinda Childs, and James



FIGURE 10.1

Some of the artists who took part in Festival of the Avant Garde '65. Front, left to right: Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Philip Corner, James Tenney. Back, left to right: Takehisa Kosugi, Gary Harris, Dick Higgins, Judith Kummerle, Kenneth King, Meredith Monk, Al Kurchin, Phoebe Neville. Photo © Steve Schapiro.

Waring performed their own works and Carolee Schneemann premiered *Noise Bodies*, a duet in which she and Tenney “played” the metal objects hanging on one another’s costumes.

Besides these media-specific programs, two concerts were devoted to individual composers of note. Opening night, August 25, featured Nam June Paik’s action music, including Moorman’s cellophane-clad version of “The Swan” (critics found it trite rather than shocking) and *Étude platonique*. (It was stopped by house management before Paik could bare his backside.)⁷ The other monographic program presented works by Erik Satie, the French composer whose music John Cage had championed since the late 1940s. This concert earned the best reviews of the festival, which is not surprising considering that all the reviewers who covered the festival that year were music critics. (This would soon change.) Perhaps for the same reason, Paik’s concert was brutally panned. Afterward he sent John Cage a letter. Pasted in its margins were tiny squares of newspaper cut from the reviews, with the most caustic bits underlined (“lacked any spark of originality, sensitivity, or talent”; “never has any festival begun on such a low note”). He invited Cage, “Please, enjoy very bad N.Y. Times review of my concert.”⁸

Repeating the pattern she had begun with *Originals*, Moorman closed the festival with five performances of a theatrical work by a major composer. This year she chose John Cage’s *Theater Piece* (1960), which was paired each night with an experimental intermedia work by Philip Corner, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, Takehisa Kosugi, or Jackson Mac Low. (Kosugi made his American debut at this festival, a coup that incensed George Maciunas, who had planned to feature him in a Fluxus concert later in the month.)⁹ To further emphasize the broad embrace of her event, Moorman set up a small exhibition at the back of Judson Hall that included a selection of international avant-garde publications, a musical sculpture by Joe Jones, and three of Paik’s altered televisions.

Of all the boisterous events that unfolded at Judson Hall that week, those of September 7 had the most effect on the future of Moorman’s festival. On that evening, Cage’s *Theater Piece* was followed by Allan Kaprow’s *Push and Pull* (1963), an audience-participation event first presented at New York’s Museum of Modern Art during *Hans Hofmann and His Students*, a

1963 exhibition celebrating the painter's legacy as a teacher. (Kaprow, one of Hofmann's pupils, titled his piece for Hofmann's well-known theory of visual dynamism on a two-dimensional surface.) At MoMA, Kaprow filled a two-room space with furniture, crates, and other items, which viewers were invited to rearrange. "People had fun," art historian Jeff Kelley has written. "They enjoyed the deliciously indecorous permission to make a mess."¹⁰ Since the Happening took place inside a major museum and involved only materials provided by the artist, the mess was a relatively polite one.

Kaprow asked Carolee Schneemann to devise and direct her own realization of *Push and Pull* for Moorman's September 7 concert. That night, the performance became frighteningly indecorous.¹¹ Schneemann recalls:

I requested the audience to use a forty-minute [intermission] by going out to 57th Street to bring back soft materials with which to construct an environment of two rooms. The artists at the festival erected two three-sided rooms with windows cut in them while the audience was away. The next thing I knew someone was running up the back stairs yelling, "There's three paddy wagons out front and forty police coming up through the box-office." The audience had gone on a rampage, pulling hubcaps off cars, tearing at neon signs. To give people permission to do something we considered inventive and constructive was for them the freedom to attack the ordinary fixtures of their culture. They streamed back past the police—with whom we were negotiating a truce—with all this crud, and there weren't ten out of eighty able to cooperate on building anything at all. Or, if two people started to put materials together in some shape, five others would kick, slam, chop, tear it apart. There was one rather old woman in a yellow linen suit balanced on broken two-by-fours, just banging away with pots and pans and bits of debris. The artists were in terror.¹²

When the audience began to smash the mirrored-glass panels inside Judson Hall, Schneemann understood that she had to clear the house. She

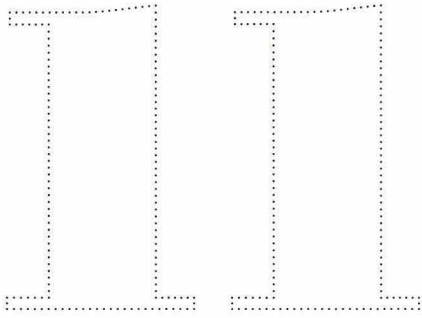
turned out all the lights and announced over a microphone that everyone had to leave.¹³ The house manager, who had been roused from his bed during the fracas, shut down the festival until a meeting could be held the next morning. On September 8, Schneemann wrote in her journal, “First call from Paik—CONCERTS ARE CANCELLED! Shock & confusion, anger moves to a sort of relief—we’ll be free of the mad, relentless work. But feel I have to act, am directly responsible. Alison [Knowles] calls: do nothing; possibility of a suit for damage to hall. [Dick] Higgins speaks to me, says ‘keep your name out of it.’ Charlotte calls—says, ‘don’t go to loft, stay in Jim’s [Tenney] apartment, let him answer the phone’; she is with lawyers and managers of Judson Hall.”¹⁴

Moorman convinced the lawyers and managers to let the show go on, but she had to sign a document promising not to “perform any act or theatre piece that will provoke a disturbance in the audience leading to an undisciplined or uncontrollable condition.” The managers also required that future festival programs include “no further audience participation activities” and made Moorman promise that “the hall will be used in a manner that will not lead to further damage.”¹⁵

Kaprow was disappointed when he heard about the melee. It seemed to confirm his feeling that the public was not “ready” for Happenings because they could not be relied upon to interact in a constructive, creative way.¹⁶ Schneemann remembers it as a frightening and destructive situation in which she confronted uncontrollable human aggression. Moorman’s recorded accounts, on the other hand, do not mention broken glass or anarchy; in her telling, the audience had been well behaved. “Everyone was so good—they took the piece [of trash] they had brought and took it back out of the hall again. So [the police] couldn’t arrest us—they wanted to, but they couldn’t.”¹⁷ Schneemann says this kind of revisionism was typical of Moorman. “You would have an immense disaster of some kind and she would tuck it under her skirts and move on.”¹⁸

One of Moorman’s most often repeated claims was that after *Push and Pull* her festival was banned from returning to Judson Hall. There is no evidence that this is true; the agreement she signed on September 8 does not address future events. Moorman did move the next year’s festival to

Central Park, probably because it better suited the mixed-media events she had begun to present and because the park was rent free, which reduced her expenses and eliminated the bother of tickets. But it made a far better story to say that her outlaw festival had been kicked out of polite concert hall society. Artist Eiko Otake, part of the dance duo Eiko & Koma and a close friend of Moorman's during the 1980s, characterizes Moorman's outlook this way: "Artist as catastrophe, artist as vagabond, artist as self-destructive. [...] She was very proud that art is dangerous, that art is non-profit to the end."¹⁹



Johnny Carson and Coca-Cola

DURING THE 1960S *THE TONIGHT SHOW* WAS TAPED AT 30 ROCKEFELLER CENTER, THE SLEEK ART DECO BUILDING ON WEST 49TH STREET THAT HOUSED NBC STUDIOS. FIVE NIGHTS A WEEK JOHNNY CARSON, the show's affable host, invited viewers to listen in on his late-night conversations with all manner of fascinating people: movie stars, theatrical and literary personalities, politicians, musicians, and artists. Carson, it has been said, "nudged the big city's permissiveness onto network television," conveying New York's sophisticated glamour even as he jokingly lamented its crowds and garbage and crime.¹

Because he fully understood the entertainment value of the outré, Carson often invited avant-garde artists to appear on *The Tonight Show*. Moorman had appeared for the first time in late 1964, after *Originals* nudged her into the New York cultural spotlight. On January 20, 1966, she made her second

appearance on the program, along with four other performers of the moment: Jan Peerce, a lyric tenor with the Metropolitan Opera; Salome Jens, who had recently starred in *The Fool Killer* with Anthony Perkins; Judi Rolan, whose credits included the *Dean Martin Show* and NBC's musical variety show *Hullabaloo*; and the comedian Dick Cavett.

After Carson delivered his monologue and introduced a Budweiser beer commercial, the house band launched into a crashing, dissonant send-up of avant-garde music and Moorman made her entrance. During her six-minute tête-à-tête with Carson, he asked about her European tour, the Parisian performance in cellophane, and her confrontation with the police during *Push and Pull*. Then he asked, "Does it bother you if people become amused when you're performing, or if they laugh?" Moorman gave what would become her standard answer to this question. "I would like it better if they understood what I'm doing and if they got real enjoyment from what I'm doing. But if they laugh out of embarrassment or lack of exposure, that's really not my problem. I'm not going to go home and kill myself."² In her answer there is a nod to John Cage, who had performed his *Water Walk* (1959) on the game show *I've Got a Secret* in 1960 and, when warned that the audience might laugh, had responded, "I consider laughter preferable to tears."³ But Moorman's answer frames the question in terms of life and death. Her engagement with art was passionate, and one she would not permit the public to arbitrate.

After her chat with Carson, Moorman stepped to the stage to perform. For occasions like this she had developed a very short version of the Cage piece, which she called *4'1.1499" for a String Player*. This was a highly theatrical and technically incorrect abridgment consisting of the most visually dramatic portions of the piece. Moorman fired a cap gun, threw a cymbal to the floor, banged on various metal objects, and played a record of the Beatles' 1965 hit "Rock and Roll Music." As she was playing, she explained what she was doing: "John Cage likes all sounds, the ugly and the beautiful. So in this piece he has one line for a non-musical sound." The sheet music rested on a stand in front of her, and functioned, like her floor-length gown and even her cello, to designate her performance as serious music. But these props also served to increase the apparent absurdity of what she was doing. Carson served as her assistant; each time he turned



FIGURE 11.1

Nam June Paik, video still from *Variations on Johnny Carson vs. Charlotte Moorman*, 1966. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

to the camera to raise a dubious eyebrow, laughter flared. For her finale he handed her a hammer, which she used to shatter a large pane of glass with one forceful blow.

Moorman appeared on many talk shows during her career, and they all proceeded in more or less the same way. Some of her friends criticized her for letting herself be mocked. After she played the Cage on the *Merv Griffin Show* in 1967, the composer Kenneth Werner wrote her: “I hate to see you get stepped on, Charlotte, and that’s what goes on every time you do that piece. [...] I really feel sick when audiences like those for [Merv Griffin] and Johnny Carson conceal their fear and unfamiliarity with new music by laughing at you. But you do the piece, get laughed at, most of those people think it’s a put-on, and you come back for more. How can you take it?”⁴

Werner missed the point. Talk shows are a codified discourse. Guests understand that, in exchange for a few minutes to plug their latest project on national television, they must submit to some teasing by their host. Carson was bound to make a laughingstock of Moorman, and she knew this was part of the game.

The avant-garde has always been defined by its distance from popular taste; the greater the distance, so the logic goes, the greater the innovation. Moorman was out to change that formula by bringing the audience and the art closer together, and she continued to perform on television because doing so served that mission. A decade and a dozen talk shows after her first appearance on *The Tonight Show* she told a reporter: “Television has its limitations but it’s worth putting up with the limitations because you know you are reaching so many people. [The viewers] don’t know who I am, or what I’m doing. So you put up with that misunderstanding and that block between you and try to perform extremely well for the millions of people who recognize what you are doing, see the sincerity, and get something from it.”⁵

Carolee Schneemann also was invited to perform on *The Tonight Show* during the mid-1960s—“Be sure to work Johnny into the happening,” she was told⁶—so she has firsthand understanding of the talk-show genre’s need “to entertain by making something contemptuous so that everybody else feels smart.” She acknowledges that Moorman found the fame garnered by an appearance on national television “intoxicating.” Nevertheless, she believes that Moorman was “the victor” over Carson and others like him because “[her] work is sublime and significant, and exceeds the foolishness and contempt of TV entertainers.”⁷

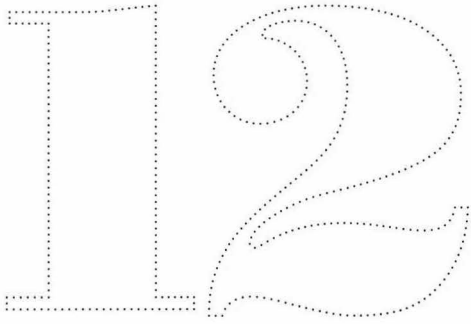
IN FALL 1965 Paik, hoping to arrange a tour of Scandinavia with Moorman, wrote to the Danish composer Henning Christiansen. “Charlotte is ‘FIRED’ by Stokowski’s American Symphony because she played my piece ‘nude.’ Therefore money-problem is vital.”⁸ Paik must have heard of the firing from Moorman herself; it was a story she often told to emphasize how much she had sacrificed for her avant-garde work. But it wasn’t true. Moorman’s papers reveal that she played several dates with the American

Symphony Orchestra during the 1965–1966 season, including two Christmas concerts and a series of six “Teenage Concerts” in February and March. Moreover, according to a close friend of Stokowski’s, the conductor didn’t give a damn what his musicians did offstage, and probably would not have dismissed Moorman even if he’d been pressured to do so by his board.⁹ If Moorman had less work from the ASO than she would have liked, it was probably because of her chronic lateness. Her contract for the Teenage Concerts bears this handwritten warning from David Katz, the orchestra’s associate conductor and personnel manager: “Charlotte—This contract is offered to you with the clear understanding that if you are late *at all* you will be dismissed.”¹⁰ We all define ourselves by our behavior. Moorman desperately needed the work, but she was less and less interested in doing it.

Moorman’s “money problem,” however, was indeed vital. Her classical work still paid very little, in the range of fifteen to forty dollars per concert. It was difficult to get enough jobs to cover her living expenses, never mind the cost of organizing an annual festival. To address her ongoing financial crisis, Moorman wrote pleading letters to Maestro Stokowski asking for more engagements. She sought an agent to promote her avant-garde work, and almost signed with General Artists Corporation after it got her an appearance on NBC’s *Today Show*. She also began bartering. In exchange for her appearance in a concert sponsored by the Philadelphia College of Art, Jim McWilliams agreed to design and print the posters for her fourth avant-garde festival.¹¹

Paik had his own financial challenges. In late 1966, after he and Moorman had performed at the Rhode Island School of Design, he wrote the organizer asking to be reimbursed for ninety-seven dollars in expenses. (They had received no payment for the concert itself.) “As you see, the life of ‘performing artists’ is very very ‘unrewarding,’ and we are in constant danger of starvation,” he wrote. “Without 200000% of idealism and zeal, no one can be a performing artist, and someone has to do this job. It is almost KAFKAian situation.”¹² Even when they did earn some money, Paik often gave the entire amount to Moorman. Knowing how they struggled to make a living in those days, it is easier to understand Moorman’s willingness to be mocked by the likes of Johnny Carson: guests on *The Tonight Show* were paid \$320.

In the spring of 1966 Moorman devised an inspired moneymaking scheme: she decided to create a television commercial for Coca-Cola, starring herself performing *26'1.1499" for a String Player*. This is not as far-fetched as it might sound. By 1966 references to Happenings, hippies, Be-Ins, and youth culture in general had begun to appear in advertisements for all kinds of products. Moorman had some notoriety as an avant-garde musician and several appearances on national television to her credit. Her realization of the Cage piece now included the amplified sounds of her swallows as she drank from a bottle of Coke. Since she considered her interpretation of *26'1.1499" for a String Player* “very American—a kind of pop music,” she would have found perfect synchronicity in the marriage of Cage and Coke, that most American of drinks.¹³ To produce her commercial, she enlisted two filmmakers—one of them Jud Yalkut, whom she had met through Paik—to shoot footage of her performance and edit it into a sixty-second spot, with the tagline “When Things Are Happening, Things Go Better with Coke.”¹⁴ Judging from the number of fragments and variant edits that exist in Moorman’s archive, she and Yalkut must have spent many hours on the project. However, it was still unfinished when she left for Europe in June 1966, and after her arrest in 1967 the project was abandoned. Her bills, for the most part, remained unpaid.



The Unexpected Is Not a Threat

ON JUNE 14, 1966, MOORMAN, PAIK, AND ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SIX POUNDS OF LUGGAGE TOOK OFF FROM J.F.K. AIRPORT BOUND FOR VENICE, THE FIRST STOP ON THEIR SECOND EUROPEAN TOUR. THEIR promotional materials promised everything, and nothing. “What’s happening? NAM JUNE PAIK, CHARLOTTE MOORMAN, you, birth, death, love poems, television shows, murder, spring, flowers, war, and income tax are happening and you will get as much as you are tuned up to get.”¹ They planned to open their tour on June 18, opening night of the 33rd Venice Biennale, with what Paik called a “commando-style Happening.” Jud Yalkut joked, “The 89-kilo caravan is probably a happening all by itself.”²

The Biennale is a kind of Olympic games for the arts—a storied and prestigious venue at which invited nations (there were thirty in 1966) present work by their most prominent artists. Plans for the 1966 American

Pavilion had been embroiled in controversy for months. No one could agree on how best to represent the American art scene. Publisher Harry Abrams spoke for many when he declared that “only the most avant-garde work” should be sent to Venice; he was echoed by a gallerist who told the *New York Times*, “Europe doesn’t want our stale news.”³ Bureaucrats wrangled, curators resigned, and the art world worked itself into an uproar until, eventually, four commercially established painters were chosen to carry the flag: Helen Frankenthaler, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jules Olitski. In this context, Paik’s plan to interrupt the Biennale’s opening festivities has a whiff of his salt-and-pepper strategy: injecting a surprise into the otherwise ho-hum.

Near midnight on June 18, as hundreds watched from the Ponte di Rialto, he and Moorman came floating up the Grand Canal in a gondola, pausing in the spotlights mounted on the bridge’s balustrade to perform Cage’s 26’1.14.99” *for a String Player* while Ay-O showered them with rose petals. Then they played Paik’s *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*. In an inspired nod to their locale, they substituted the Grand Canal for the usual oil drum of water. (“My idea,” recalled Paik, “but I was shocked when she went in.”⁴) Apparently Moorman’s jump did not appear purposeful. The *Gazzettino di Venezia* reported, “Eventually Charlotte fell into the water (everybody was sort of expecting it). There were a few challenges to bring her back into the boat but in the end the cellist managed—quite inelegantly—to climb back aboard.”⁵ (Since she did not swim well, she had been secured to the gondola by a rope.) Then Paik jumped in, too, and *Gondola Happening* was over. Accompanied by wild applause and cheers from the crowd, which included Peggy Guggenheim, Roy Lichtenstein, and Leo Castelli, their boat glided away from the Rialto toward the Biennale’s opening party. Afterward, unable to find a vacancy in any hotel, Moorman and Paik slept on the cold marble steps of the Galleria dell’Accademia, surrounded by their suitcases and crates of equipment and both still damp from their dip in the canal. The *Oggia di Venezia* called the event “an exceptional coupling of the antique (the gondola) and the ultramodern (the music).”⁶ Moorman called it a great success artistically and a loss financially, and immediately added the story to her repertoire of tales about her artistic derring-do.⁷



FIGURE 12.1

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik in *Gondola Happening*, Venice, Italy, 1966. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

On the recommendation of Giuseppe Chiari, Moorman and Paik had been booked at the Feltrinelli bookstore in Rome. Its proprietress, Agnese De Donato, had warned Moorman beforehand that all references to the female body must be suppressed during the concert. So she dropped *Sonata for Adults Only* from the program, performed “The Swan” in black velvet rather than cellophane, and omitted from the Cage her usual reading from a Tampax instruction flyer. Although she was always more than willing to conform to local standards, she told a reporter she was puzzled: “The Italians are so natural when it comes to everyday life, but when it comes to the concert hall they put more restrictions than anyone else. I’m totally confused about their morals.”⁸ Often Moorman was like a precocious child who is able to pinpoint the hypocrisy of adults with an annoying lack of empathy for the nuances that guide their choices.

Moorman told the same reporter that she hoped to do one more concert before she left Rome: a performance for Pope Paul VI. “I understand this is a hip Pope. We’d like to do the Cage for him.” Paik had suggested the idea after learning that his friend Jed Curtis, one of the gadabout Fluxus crowd, was living in Rome and had developed a friendship with a Vatican librarian. “Paik thought of the whole thing as kind of a joke,” recalls Curtis. “I don’t think Paik would have been able to talk his way in, but I thought Charlotte could probably do it.”⁹ He remembers taking Moorman to the Vatican, but since he could not accompany her into the pope’s chamber, she had to tell him about the meeting afterward, over a glass of wine. Her story, as Curtis remembers it: “There were some Swiss Guards and three or four cardinals hanging around. She was the only performer. [...] Of course His Holiness was sitting on his throne. She came in with her cello, then she immediately took her top off. [...] She didn’t get very far, maybe one and a half buttons, and the Swiss Guards were on her, and His Holiness disappeared. The guards were livid. [...] They had her physically ushered out.”¹⁰

Could Moorman really have believed she would be allowed to strip in front of the pope? Curtis says yes. “It was the ’60s, the age of limitless possibilities. [...] All kinds of things were inconceivable, and yet we were doing them.”¹¹ Apocryphal or not, the story positions Moorman once again as a crusader, one who would not hesitate to confront the (celibate) male spiritual leader of the Catholic Church with a naked female body if it advanced

her cause. Like everyone else, the pope would get only as much as he was tuned up to get.

ON JULY 11 Moorman and Paik left Italy to begin the second leg of their tour, a two-week circuit of five cities in northern and central West Germany. They had worked up an ambitious mixed-media program that included action music, film, electronic music, and minimal Fluxus-style events. Paik titled the program *As Boring as Possible*. A typical evening lasted five hours.

What exactly comprised *As Boring as Possible*? The list of works changed in each city, but a summary of the concert Moorman and Paik gave in West Berlin on July 15, 1966, gives a sense of what audiences experienced. The program opened with George Brecht's *Symphony no. 4* (1964 or 1965), in which a performer plays an LP recording of country and western star Roy Acuff singing "Fireball Mail."¹² This was followed by *Electronic Moon* (1966), a film by Jud Yalkut of one of Paik's altered television sets. The film's image was so subtle, says Yalkut, that "when you tried to print it, it disappeared."¹³ After the recorded music and the nearly invisible film, Moorman performed a couple of numbers, including *Instrumental Music*, which Takehisa Kosugi had written for her in 1965. In this thirty-minute duet, she played a bit on her cello, then froze in place while Paik traced the outline of her shadow on paper or fabric hanging on the back wall and then cut out the silhouette. Moorman played the cello, and Paik played the scissors; both made the music.

The program continued with more live performance. In a reworking of *Sonata for Adults Only* that became their new standard for the piece, Moorman stripped behind a sheer curtain that also served as a projection screen for Robert Breer's short experimental film *Fist Fight* (1964). In Dick Higgins's *Cello Sonata* (1966), a duet for Moorman and Paik, a large box was brought onstage; a sign tacked to the box read, "Do you believe Charlotte Moorman is inside this box?" Paik rolled around onstage inside a barrel for a time, as violently as possible, then removed the box from the stage without revealing that Moorman and her cello were, indeed, inside. The program ended with two short films: the Paik-Yalkut collaboration *Cinema Metaphysique I* (1966), which was mostly silent and mostly blank; and

Yalkut's $P + A - I = K$ (1966), which documented Paik's performance, sculpture, and altered televisions. Throughout the evening, Brecht's *Symphony no. 4* was inserted between compositions so that Roy Acuff's twangy vocals served as a kind of sonic palate cleanser.

Five hours of lassitude punctuated by desultory bursts of absurdist frenzy and plotless films. Five hours without harmony, melody, resolution, or any semblance of a narrative arc. There were delays because of technical failures. It was difficult to tell when one piece ended and the next began, or even to discern the line between preparation and performance. Not surprisingly, critics loathed the program. A reviewer in Frankfurt likened it to an ambulatory con game perpetrated by a pair of professional hucksters. In Düsseldorf one writer declared it dead, repetitious, and meaningless. Another ended his review by quoting a departing audience member who called out, "What you have done here is shit!"¹⁴

People do not usually come to a concert expecting to be bored. Dedicating one's performance to tedium, then, seems an almost insulting inversion of the unwritten contract between a performer and his audience. But *As Boring as Possible* was the fulfillment of Paik's most basic musical, and even spiritual, ideas. In 1959 he had defined his action-music strategies as "constant surprise, disappointment, and extreme tedium." In the same letter he explained what he meant by tedium: "Like Proust, Palestrina, Zen, Gregorian Chant, mass, Paris café, life, sex, and dog who looks into the distance."¹⁵ (In Cologne, Paik changed the title of the program to *In Search of Lost Metaphysics*, a joking reference to the supposed tedium of reading Proust.) Later Paik expanded his list of boring things to include Noh theater, Gertrude Stein's prose, Andy Warhol's films, Cage's music, baseball, and life insurance, thus recasting boredom as a pleasurable suspension of time spent reading, sitting, watching, or listening.¹⁶ ("Life insurance" is the one joke in his list.) Boredom is also a sort of spiritual freedom. "Acquisitiveness in time means loving only exciting stuff, a desire to be entertained every second," Paik told an interviewer in 1974. "If you give up acquisitiveness in time, you should be bored and enjoy boredom."¹⁷

On the evening following their West Berlin presentation of *As Boring as Possible* they explored tedium from a different angle, with a staging

of Erik Satie's *Vexations*. This eccentric work consists of a short musical theme, about one minute long, which is to be repeated eight hundred forty times. A full performance takes over fourteen hours. Satie probably composed *Vexations* around 1900, but it was not performed until 1963, when John Cage organized a relay team of ten pianists to play it at the Pocket Theater in New York's East Village. A succession of critics from the *New York Times* had covered the concert in two-hour shifts. One of them wrote, "Time meant nothing, and the listener floated in a suspended animation as seconds flowed into minutes with the idiot repetition of beat after beat." Another noted "the paradox of being irritated and hypnotized by the music at the same time."¹⁸

With the assistance of René Block, their West Berlin host, Paik located four pianists willing to join him and Moorman in performing Satie's piece. At around twelve-thirty a.m., at the Forum Theater on the Kurfürstendamm, the German concert pianist Lissa Bauer led off the marathon. Some time and several pianists later, Moorman entered to take her turn. She was topless. Paul Moor of the Berlin daily *Die Zeit* described the moment. "Miss Moorman took her place during the second shift—accompanied by a loud gasp from those who were still awake—in a long formal skirt, shoes, long brown hair, and not much else." The sight of her must have been a jarring visual irruption for an audience lulled to near-stupefaction by the repetition of Satie's brief theme and dreamy harmonies. When Moor questioned Moorman later about her decision, she told him: "Satie liked nudity. When they put on his ballet *Relâche* in 1925 in Paris, Marcel Duchamp had to undress completely. Paik believes that performing *Vexations* [this way] is in the spirit of Satie. When I left New York John Cage bet me that I wouldn't do it. Now he owes me a hundred dollars."¹⁹

This stunt was almost certainly conceived by Paik. It advanced his program of adding sex to music and is a fine example of his practice of inserting a rude surprise into a historical piece of music. But if interrupting Bach with a striptease was a poke at the bourgeoisie, sending a topless pianist out to play part of *Vexations* was an impertinence aimed squarely at the avant-garde. More precisely, it was aimed at John Cage. It was not the first time Cage had been the target of Paik's humorous attacks. But this



FIGURE 12.2

Charlotte Moorman reenacts her performance of Erik Satie's *Vexations*, Cologne, West Germany, 1966. The magazine *Der Spiegel* commissioned the photograph after Moorman performed the piece in Berlin. Photo © Ute Klophaus. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

multipurpose prank not only took a swipe at Satie's most ardent champion, it also deflated the importance of the evening, which had been announced as a "European Premiere." "Topless Satie" was Paik's own clever vexation.

It was also the kernel of an idea that Paik would soon turn into his most infamous collaboration with Moorman, *Opera Sextronique*. After her arrest in 1967, he wrote a tongue-in-cheek chronicle that describes her journey into toplessness. He composed the piece in Moorman's voice:

1966 Summer, West Berlin, Café Frolence, overlooking K-damm, where the dream of fabulous 'twenties' are still wandering through the tawdry post-cold-war prosperity. I and Nam June were masterminding the Music Marathon, the European Premiere of Erik Satie's proph[etic] work "Vexations." [...] I was deadily worried about the performance by six pianists from five countries (West Germany, Austria, England, U.S.A., and Korea). I had not touched piano [since] I graduated Juilliard with C- with the mercy of my poor teacher. [Can] I match the other runners, especially attractive blonde from Berlin?

Paik looked at me: "Your brunette is nice, but so is Ilse's blonde. Your lips are voluptuous, but some feel Ilse's thinner lips are more sexy. Ilse's style is not so grand, but so is your figure à la Rubens. [Placing] your piano technique contra professional concert pianist Ilse is like saying I am boxing against Muhammad Ali. But—But—your bosom is granite, like the heavyweight champion's. Play topless!!!!"²⁰

For Paik, playing topless was Moorman's secret weapon, her knockout punch. His narrative goes on to describe the moment he was inspired to deploy that weapon in a new piece. "Passing through East Germany's grey buildings and quiet 'car-less' streets, Paik pondered, 'If there is progress in society and progression in mathematics, then why not the progressive progression in music????' Thus the 'Opera Sextronique' was born. Lightless—topless—bottomless—sideless—backless—all-less—no-less (with fur coat)."

A preliminary sketch of that fateful work, with the crudely suggestive title *Cello Sonata Opus 69*, was debuted in Aachen two days after the Satie

performance.²¹ Topless and with her head wrapped in gauze, Moorman played the popular German Christmas carol “Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht” (“Silent Night”). As she played, she donned a series of cheap masks and sunglasses over the gauze. Perhaps Paik was not satisfied with the piece, for they did not perform it again until the following February, in New York City, in a revised, expanded version he called *Opera Sextronique*.

The German leg of their 1966 tour is notable for one other addition to Moorman’s repertoire, Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece* (1964). In this work, the performer—usually, but not necessarily, a woman—sits or kneels before the audience, dressed in her best clothing. A large pair of dressmaker’s shears lies next to her on the stage. To begin the piece, she or an assistant invites the audience to come onstage and snip off a piece of her clothing. She remains motionless throughout. She may end the performance at any time.²²

Ono understood *Cut Piece* as a reversal of the usual exchange between performer and spectator. “Instead of giving the audience what the artist chooses to give,” she has written, “the artist gives what the audience chooses to take.”²³ Although conceived well in advance of second-wave feminism, the piece forecasts that movement’s concern with the politics of power, passivity, and violence. Art historian Kristine Stiles has observed that *Cut Piece* exposes “the reciprocity between exhibitionism and scopic desires, victim and assailant, sadist and masochist [and] the voluntary and incisive potential of the gaze to puncture and wound.”²⁴ In performance, *Cut Piece* becomes a fraught exchange that unexpectedly reveals more far about the audience than the artist.

Moorman had seen Ono perform *Cut Piece* in its New York debut in March 1965 and had been impressed by “the elegance, the drama, the seriousness of the whole thing.”²⁵ Undoubtedly, it was Moorman’s idea to add it to their tour program, although she quickly discovered the work’s emotional hazards. In a photograph taken during her second performance of *Cut Piece*, in Aachen on July 25, 1966, Moorman’s face is stony and her neck tense as two men snip at her dress while Paik, who had issued the invitation to cut, stands nearby watching. In Frankfurt the following night, the audience stripped her nearly naked before Paik stopped the piece.²⁶

Moorman understood the violence implicit in *Cut Piece*, even though her claim that she “could be raped onstage” was melodramatic.²⁷ But, as her

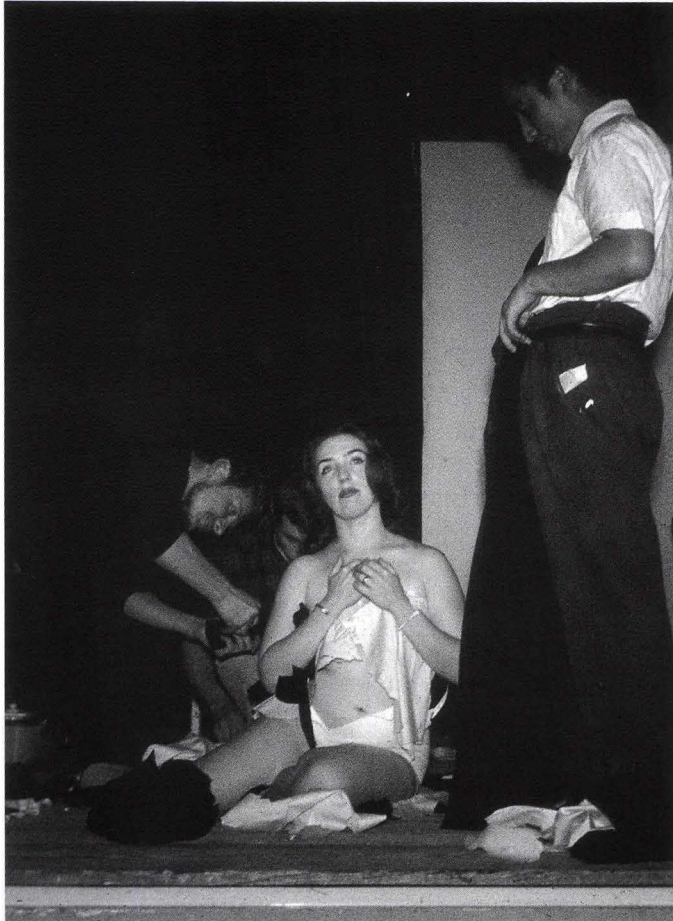


FIGURE 12.3

Charlotte Moorman performs Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* as Nam June Paik looks on, Aachen, West Germany, 1966. Photo by Kenneth Werner. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

promotional materials noted, “To Miss Moorman and Mr. Paik, the unexpected is not a threat ... it is welcome.”²⁸ So she did not dwell on the occasional aggressions she endured during *Cut Piece*, but instead recalled the kindnesses. “Sometimes people cut little cuts, sometimes big cuts. Sometimes they make a valentine, a flower ... It’s endless the lovely things that people do,” she told a reporter in 1989. “They often give me a little kiss after they cut.” She went to say that she had saved “all the remnants from all the gowns I have worn during *Cut Piece* and one day I will give them to Yoko.”²⁹ Moorman did save them, but she never gave them to Ono. Instead, she kept the many bags of fabric scraps in a closet in her loft, where they were found after she died.

THE FINAL CONCERT of Moorman and Paik’s 1966 tour was hosted by the Düsseldorf Art Academy, the most progressive art school in West Germany. Among its faculty members was Joseph Beuys, the charismatic sculptor and performer who had, by 1966, emerged as Germany’s leading artistic light. Paik had known Beuys since 1961 and had introduced him to Moorman in 1965, when all three had participated in *24 Hours*. Now Beuys invited them to present a concert of their work at the Art Academy. One of Beuys’s students, Jörg Immendorff, handled the organizational details on behalf of the Cultural Division of the General Student Committee, the concert’s official sponsor.

On July 28, 1966, more than five hundred people crowded into the school’s auditorium, a large room with moveable seats and no stage. The program was an expanded version of *As Boring as Possible* that included performances by Beuys and Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, at whose Galerie 22 Paik had cut off John Cage’s tie in 1959. Wilhelm began the evening with a prolix, nonsensical parody of standard introductory remarks. It was indeed tedious, but as Wilhelm warned the audience, boredom was “the evening’s title, its watchword.”³⁰ Next, Moorman and Paik presented selections from their repertoire that ranged from the full, twenty-six-minute version of the Cage to a short work by La Monte Young in which Moorman simply opened a canning jar and released several butterflies in the auditorium

(*Composition 1960 No. 5*). True to form, the evening stretched into the wee hours; they finally finished at one-thirty a.m.

Johannes Stüttgen, another of Beuys's students, was newly enrolled in the academy and remembers the concert as his introduction to "an entirely new form." In his recollection, Moorman was the star performer, while Paik and Beuys played secondary roles as accompanist and assistant.³¹ Nonetheless, the concert has entered the art historical canon not because of Moorman's work but because of Beuys's. On that night he performed for the first time a now-iconic piece, *Infiltration Homogen for Grand Piano—The Greatest Contemporary Composer Is the Thalidomide Child*. The action was simple: Beuys and a group of students pushed into the center of the room a grand piano that had been tightly encased in heavy, gray felt. The room fell quiet as Beuys pinned a red fabric cross to the felt. He then donned wax earplugs, placed a quacking tin duck near the foot of the piano, and let its works wind down while he drew diagrams on the nearby blackboard.³² Typically for Beuys, the iconography is complex. The piece alludes to a culture in crisis—the red cross signifies emergency—as well as the relationship between creativity and suffering and the silencing of disabled people. Thalidomide, prescribed during the late 1950s to relieve pregnant women's serious morning sickness, caused birth defects in thousands of children and still is considered one of the major pharmaceutical disasters of the twentieth century. The importance of this sober work in Beuys's career has overshadowed the manner in which it was debuted: as a kind of intermezzo in Moorman and Paik's lighthearted celebration of birth, death, love poems, television shows, murder, spring, flowers, war, income tax, and boredom.³³

After the concert Moorman and Paik stayed on in Düsseldorf for a time as guests of Joseph and Eva Beuys, who had a home and studio at Drakeplatz 4 in the city's Oberkassel district. In between parties, shopping, and sight-seeing, Moorman and Paik took part in an event known as *Frisches* (*Fresh Things*) at the home of Jörg Immendorff and his then wife, Chris Reinecke. There, Moorman and Paik did their only documented performance of Yoko Ono's *Bag Piece* (1964), a work that calls for two performers to get in a large bag together and carry out various activities, including (perhaps) taking off and putting on their clothing. Moorman recalled:



FIGURE 12.4

Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman (under cloth) perform Takehisa Kosugi's *Instrumental Music*, Düsseldorf, West Germany, 1966. Joseph Beuys stands at left, manning the spotlight. Photo by Reiner Ruthenbeck © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

We got in this bag, and Paik got the giggles. We're supposed to undress and supposedly start making love. Well, he got the giggles so bad he couldn't get erect. It was so funny. Nobody in that elite, snobbish, cream-of-the-crop art world in Europe—no one knows that we're in the bag laughing our heads off [...] I guess it must be difficult, you know, with all those sounds and people making their noises and tittering [like] they do, to carry out intercourse. But I get so wrapped up in a performance that I'm going to play that performance [...] no matter what. Except I have to admit that when Nam June Paik starts giggling it is a deterrent! I must admit that I laughed my head off—we were shaking, but they couldn't hear us, we were holding our mouths and giggling and stuffing our hands in our mouths so people wouldn't know. They saw us shaking around and they saw all these sensual movements and they had no idea what we were doing in that bag. After a while we gave up and put our clothes back on and came out of the bag.³⁴

Her story raises an often-asked question: Was there a love affair? Many assumed so. Joseph and Eva Beuys had thought as much, giving up their own bedroom to Moorman and Paik during their stay. An essay in the journal *Der Spiegel*, written after her topless Satie performance, referred to Moorman as Paik's *Freundin*, or girlfriend.³⁵ At *Frisches*, their suggestive tumbling in *Bag Piece* only strengthened the impression that they were a couple. Im-mendorff, for example, recalled that they had performed in the bedroom under a white sheet,³⁶ a memory that might reflect his erroneous assumption (or fantasy) about what they were doing. Unless, of course, Moorman's own recollection is the incorrect one.

Moorman and Paik both were coy on the topic of their sexual relationship. When Paik was asked the question by a reporter in 2002, he answered, "One night in Germany. In a car. Parked."³⁷ When Moorman was queried in 1982, she responded, "We do not have a physical, sexual, sensual relationship. We have a sensual relationship in our performances, but we've never had sex." Then she quickly backtracked. "Maybe you should cut that out—that would be bad press. [...] Let's leave it a mystery—let people wonder."

28.7.1966

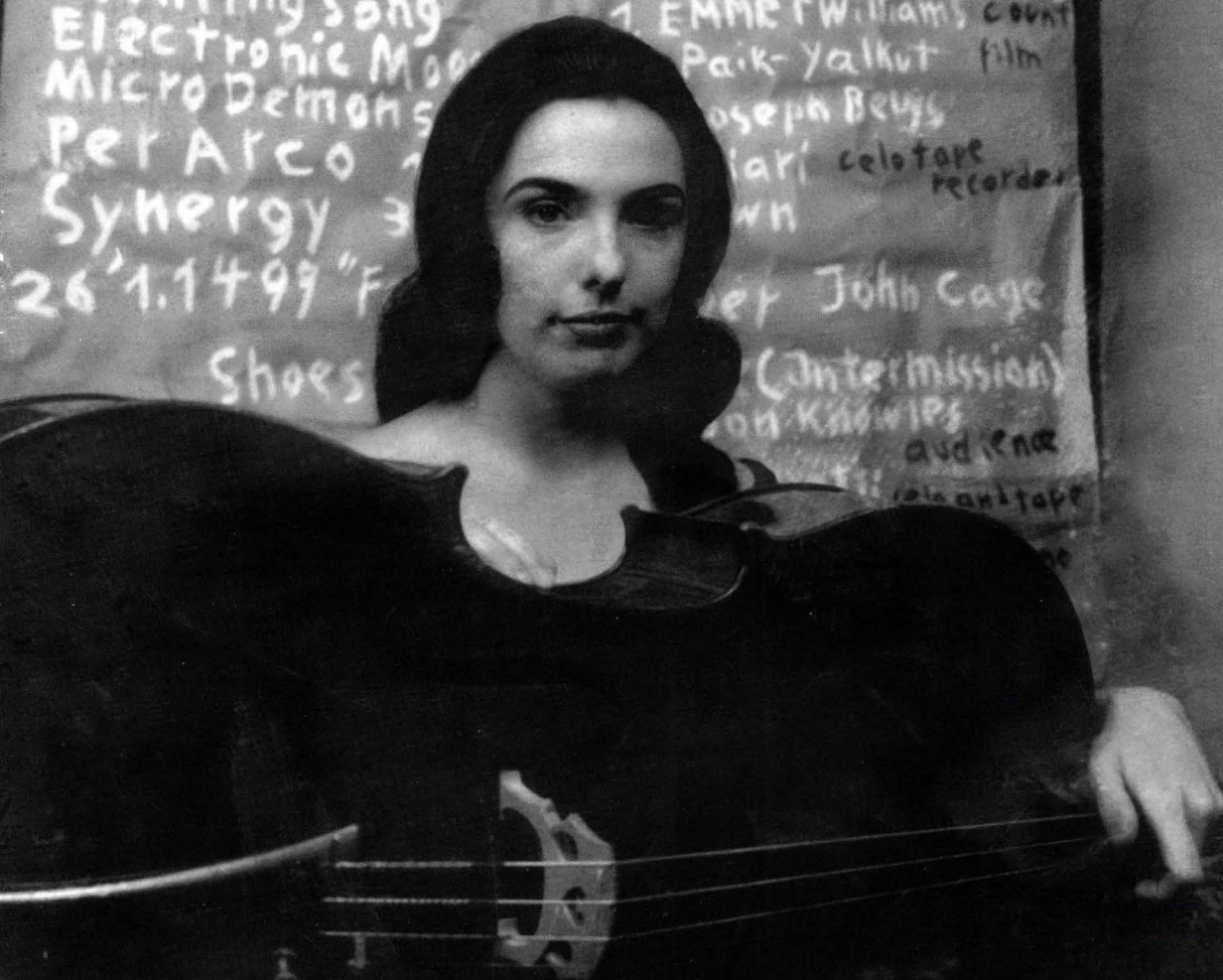
20⁰⁰ Uhr

Konzert

Jean Pierre Wilhelm
Charlotte Moorman
NAM June Paik
Joseph Beuys

Programm

Entrance Musik	3. Brecht-Tenny tape
Division the cross	Joseph Beuys
composition 1960 Nr. 5	03 La Monte Young
counting Song	1. EMMET Williams count
Electronic Music	Paik-Yalkut film
Micro Demons	Joseph Beuys
Per Arco	lari celo tape recorder
Synergy 3	own
26'1.1499" F	et John Cage
Shoes	(Intermission)
	John Knowles
	audience
	film on tape



Then she reversed herself again, implying that they might have had sex, had the conditions been right. “We’ve slept together many times, because the places we’ve performed had no money and they would give us the one bed or the one hotel room. But Paik sleeps in his shoes and this thing [a shawl] around his stomach. And I have a few idiosyncrasies myself: I sleep in my socks. There are a few things that are a real turnoff!”³⁸

When all the evidence of both their lives is taken into account, it seems unlikely that they were ever lovers. But in the end, one has to say about Moorman and Paik’s sexual relationship what Jörg Immendorff said of *Bag Piece*: “No one knows what they did.”³⁹

THEIR TOUR OVER, Paik decided to stay in Europe to prepare for an exhibition in Stockholm, where he would debut his first video sculpture, *TV Cross*. Moorman would have stayed, too, but she had to return to New York to organize the annual avant-garde festival. So on August 6 she left Europe alone, hauling nine pieces of luggage that bulged with souvenirs—including a pair of Lederhosen she’d acquired in Düsseldorf—and great quantities of newspapers with reviews of their concerts. Joseph Beuys had to sit on her suitcases so that she could latch them.⁴⁰

FIGURE 12.5

Charlotte Moorman in front of the poster for her concert in Düsseldorf, 1966. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

13

Avant-Garde in Central Park

IN AUGUST 1966, THREE WEEKS AFTER SHE RETURNED FROM EUROPE, MOORMAN APPLIED FOR AND RECEIVED A PERMIT TO STAGE A “CONCERT-HAPPENING-FESTIVAL” AT CENTRAL PARK’S CONSERVATORY POND. THE event’s purpose, she explained on the application form, was to present “the newest artworks—music, jazz, films, happenings—in the most beautiful park in the world.” Its audience, she wrote, would be nothing less than the entire city of New York.¹

Moorman had been working to establish a broad, general audience for experimental art and music since 1963, when she conceived her first festival. She certainly was not the only artist of the time who wanted her work to have an impact outside the art world, but she had set herself a unique challenge: she wanted to make cutting-edge art accessible to the public while still creating a useful platform for her community of artists. Sensing

that a solution would not be found in old structures, either historical or architectural, she moved the festival out of Judson Hall and into the open. From 1966 on, the city's public spaces were her concert halls. Everyone was welcome, and no tickets were required.

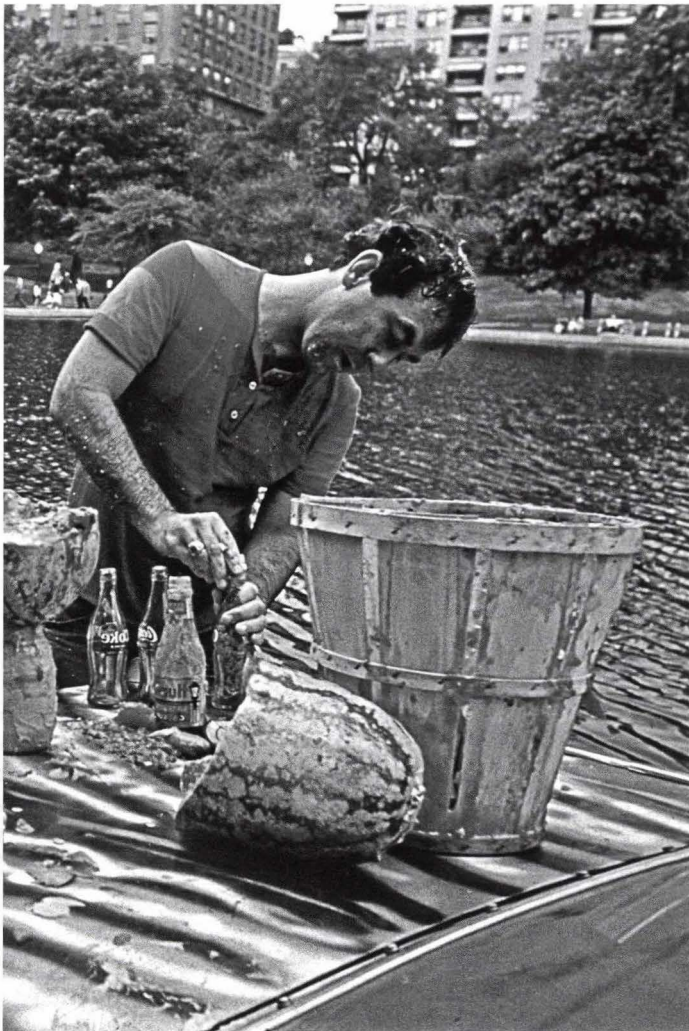
Moorman later said she had wanted to stage her event in Central Park as early as 1964 but had been refused permission by Newbold Morris, the city's parks commissioner. When the liberal Republican John Lindsay was elected mayor, she was able to revisit her idea. Like many New Yorkers, she was excited by the idea that Lindsay might be able to revitalize the ailing city. "He is fresh and everyone else is tired," wrote columnist Murray Kempton.²

As his new parks commissioner Lindsay appointed thirty-four-year-old Thomas P. F. Hoving, then curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's medieval collections at the Cloisters. Hoving was an energetic, brilliant, opinionated man who had a doctorate in art history and got around town on a Czech-made Jawa motorcycle. During his single year as commissioner, his office buzzed with plans to expand, restore, and beautify the city's parks, transforming them from derelict, dangerous places into exciting destinations for families and tourists. Hoving had a vision of the city parks as open, accessible stages for all kinds of free entertainment, including experimental art. "I feel very strongly in favor of entertainment, spot things—the things we have been doing, you know—from the 'happenings,' painting happenings, all the way up to music festivals," he told the *New York Times*.³ So Moorman got her permit from Hoving's office, although she had to promise to close her festival down at midnight (she had wanted a twenty-four-hour event) and ban any art that included nudity or "heavy politics."⁴

If Central Park was the city's communal backyard, diminutive Conservatory Pond was its playground. With its model sailboat house and statues of Alice in Wonderland, the Mad Hatter, and Hans Christian Andersen, the pond offered itself as a place for fantasy, games, and magic. The locale perfectly suited Moorman, who had herself only tentatively embraced adulthood. Indeed, as festival maven she was not so much Joan of Arc as Peter Pan, leading her band of avant-garde Lost Boys and Girls on a new adventure each year. Jazz musician Don Heckman participated in the festival year after year for a simple reason: "It was fun!"⁵

The 4th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival took place on Friday, September 9, 1966. The program offered essentially the same mix of music, poetry, jazz, film, dance, and Happenings as it had in 1965. But in an outdoor setting, all of these things could happen at once. The change transformed the festival from a sequential, one-work-at-a-time experience into an immersive environment through which each visitor could move at his or her own pace. The program began at six a.m. with Yoko Ono's *Sunrise Event*—according to Moorman, “it consisted of watching the sun come up”⁶—and slid into evening with a two-hour presentation of films by Robert Breer, screened inside a collapsible vinyl hemisphere constructed near the pond by Charles Frazier. In between, many other things happened. Alison Knowles shaved Dick Higgins's head (Higgins's *Danger Music no. 2*). Takehisa Kosugi floated a balsa wood-and-paper grand piano across the pond in his *Manodharma Concert*. A skywriting plane banked and looped overhead in a performance of Cage's *Variations III*.⁷ Don Heckman performed a version of *Cut Piece* in which he stood inside a large black bag and placed a pair of scissors on the ground nearby—a tacit invitation to passersby to cut. (They did, eventually freeing him from the bag.⁸) Joe Jones pedaled around the pond on his homemade *Music Bike*. Kids tossed balloons inside Frazier's dome and rolled tires down a hillside in Allan Kaprow's happening, *Towers*. Dancers and musicians performed among the crowd.

Most of this went off without trouble, although two pieces briefly aroused police attention. In *American Picnic*, Jim McWilliams and one of his students, Robert Burrige, consumed hot dogs, watermelon, and soda until they vomited. Disgusted spectators complained to the cops, who asked Moorman to stop the performance, and she almost did. Later she explained why she had let it go on. “He wasn't doing anything wrong! We agreed to no politics, we agreed to no nudity, this was a good piece—a strong piece, but a good piece—and Jim is a very fine artist, and I was not going to stop it.”⁹ So Moorman pretended to be nauseated by the smell of the vomit and unable to approach the scene. Since the cops were feeling queasy too, they let McWilliams's picnic—a covertly political piece about American over-consumption—run its course. Later that evening, Geoffrey Hendricks was almost cited for littering after he waded into Conservatory Pond and dumped a garbage pail full of flowers into the water (the piece was titled *Dumping*). Noticing the



commotion, Moorman grabbed a microphone and summoned him immediately to the other side of the pond to perform in Kurt Schwitters's *Class Struggle Opera*. The police let him go.¹⁰ In both cases it was only Moorman's quick wit that kept the artists from being issued citations. But perhaps the officers would not have pressed matters anyway. The *Times* reported that one of them shrugged off the misbehaviors, saying, "You gotta understand these people, gotta be enlightened."¹¹

Class Struggle Opera, written by the German Dadaist Schwitters in 1924, was given its world premiere during the Central Park festival.¹² Its simple plot divided the cast into two factions who alternately shouted "Up!" and "Down!" at each other for one hour; clever staging had one group perched on stepladders as they yelled. Schwitters's opera was one of several works Moorman programmed that year to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Cabaret Voltaire, the Dadaist club in Zurich. Dadaism's playful, subversive "antiart" stance, its focus on performance, and its emphasis on mixed media all were consonant with Moorman's own work. Linking her festival to Dada surely offered many viewers a way to understand the often-absurd spectacle taking place in Central Park. In addition to the Schwitters opera, the festival included two classic films by Hans Richter (chosen by Robert Breer¹³) and a reading by Richard Huelsenbeck, the renowned German Dadaist, who was then a psychoanalyst practicing in New York and had also taken part in Moorman's 1965 festival. Huelsenbeck explained to a reporter his elation about the event: "You are taken out of the planned, ideological world in which you live and put into a world of improvisation and spontaneity, where many things happen at once. [...] The New Dadaism may seem idiotic but it is really a very healthy response to our collectivized, technological times."¹⁴

FIGURE 13.1

.....
Karl-Erik Welin's *Manzit*, performed by George Jeffers, trombone; Charlotte Moorman; James Tenney, piano; and (behind piano lid) Don Heckman, clarinet, 4th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, Central Park, New York City, 1966. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

FIGURE 13.2

.....
Jim McWilliams performs his *American Picnic*, 4th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, Central Park, New York City, 1966. Photo © Robert BurrIDGE.

When Moorman wasn't showing Thomas Hoving around or mediating problems between the artists, the public, and police, she performed four solos at the festival. In Paik's *Zen Smiles* she handed out five thousand pennies to audience members, each of them delivered with a smile. She performed an excerpt from Wolf Vostell's *Morning Glory* (1963), in which the *New York Times* is to be sprinkled with French perfume and pepper and whirled in a blender; the resulting purée is then buried in a flower garden while sneeze powder is tossed in the air.¹⁵ Moorman, who knew how to engage a crowd, only did the blender bit, which she later added to her increasingly anarchic version of *26'1.1499" for a String Player*. In Giuseppe Chiari's *Fuori (Outdoors)* she sat alone on a temporary stage floating in the pond, bowed her head, and listened with great concentration to the sounds around her. She mimicked some of them. There were long periods of silence between her utterances. The piece was so quiet that it almost went unnoticed. "I don't believe anybody realized I was performing," she told a reporter.¹⁶ This apparently did not suit her, as she never performed *Fuori* again.

Most significant of Moorman's performances was the premiere of a work written for her the previous summer by Joseph Beuys. *Infiltration Homogen for Cello* was a transposition of the piano piece Beuys had premiered in Düsseldorf during her and Paik's 1966 concert there. Paik later recalled that during their stay, Moorman had asked Beuys for a new piece, and he had given her this one.¹⁷ This was extraordinary, since Beuys had never before written a piece for a performer other than himself, and he never did again.¹⁸ Moorman debuted the piece on the pond's floating stage, assisted by Takehisa Kosugi. He sat cross-legged holding the cello, which was encased in a loose-fitting flannel bag Moorman had had sewn for the occasion. She approached the cello slowly, knelt before it, and pinned two strips of red fabric on the flannel to form a cross.¹⁹ This brief, solemn work remained in her repertoire for two decades.

As a public, multimedia, outdoor art event attended by thousands, Moorman's Central Park festival was virtually unprecedented. The European festivals in which she had taken part—Rolf Jährling's *24 Hours*, Jean-Jacques Lebel's Festival of Free Expression, Giuseppe Chiari's Gruppo '70 Festival—had given her ideas about what was possible, but they had been staged in galleries, theaters, or cultural centers and advertised mostly to



FIGURE 13.3

Charlotte Moorman performs Wolf Vostell's *Morning Glory*, 4th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, Central Park, New York City, 1966. Photo © Estate of Fred W. McDarrah.

the art world. Fluxus events and Happenings were important precedents for her festivals and often were staged outdoors, but they were not aggressively marketed to the general public (or to anyone, for that matter). The collaborative group USCO had been making immersive sound-and-light environments since 1964 in its communal studio in upstate New York, where their audience was by necessity very limited. The events most comparable to Moorman's, and that preceded hers by two years, were produced by ONCE, the Ann Arbor-based group led by Robert Ashley and Gordon Mumma. ONCE had begun an annual festival of avant-garde music in 1961 that started as a concert hall series but soon expanded to include dance and multimedia Happenings. Like Moorman, the members of ONCE sought a broad, general audience for their work; but, like USCO, attendance at their events was limited by the smaller size of their community.²⁰ Moorman's festival was the culmination of all these precedents, and her events in turn laid the foundation for dozens of similar arts and music festivals that exist today, from all-night mixed-media spectacles such as *Nuit Blanche* to New York City's monthlong annual showcase of live art, Performa.

The Central Park festival marked a dramatic shift in both the production strategy and audience reception of Moorman's festivals. Likewise her creative ethos, which once had been circumscribed by traditional classical music and now embraced Dada, Neo-Dada, New Music, electronic music, Fluxus, Happenings, conceptual art, *musique concrète*, spoken word, jazz, film, modern dance, architecture, and their many hybrids and mutations. Her path from Bach to Schwitters to Cage to Schneemann was rapid, but she absorbed everything she encountered, and then, through the medium of her body and the filter of her exceptional somatic intelligence, she helped give birth to other new forms.

ON SEPTEMBER 8, 1966, the eve of the Central Park festival, Moorman found herself once again completely broke. She needed carfare to get across town to the park the next day, so she went downstairs to the Hotel Paris lobby with a roll of five-cent stamps and asked the night clerk if he would buy them for cash. He gave her five dollars for the roll. When she returned from the festival she found the stamps in her mailbox along with a note

from the clerk, whose name was Frank Pileggi, saying he couldn't possibly accept the stamps but that she should keep the five dollars. "That's when I knew he was special," Moorman recalled.²¹ Some time later she wrote Frank's name in her appointment diary for September 8. She used red ink to emphasize the pivotal importance of their meeting.

In 1963, while Moorman's marriage to Tommy Coleman was being dissolved, her psychotherapist wrote an affidavit in which he asserted that she had clung to her husband for longer than she should have because "their being married acts as a protection against her fear of being alone."²² The evidence of her life—there are few gaps in her romantic history—suggests the prescience of this statement. During the early 1960s Moorman had had several lovers, but they were all, in one way or another, unavailable: one was a drug addict, others were married. She saw that Frank was different. Not only was he available, but he also would take care of her, and on her terms. Frank later told a friend that after he and Moorman met, "I didn't have any choice. She picked me. She told me so. She just took me."²³

He was twenty-six years old to her thirty-three. He had long sideburns and a sultry sensuality that made people think of Elvis Presley. They became lovers—voraciously so, according to Moorman—and he soon began showing up at her performances. He was a surprise to her friends. "When Frank came on the scene it was a semi-shock to everybody," says artist Letty Eisenhower. "He was young, and he was cute, and here is this woman who's a tiny bit zaftig, and who's always looking as though she needs to have her lipstick put on straight and her clothes adjusted, and she's with this guy who's very sexy-looking."²⁴

Frank came from a close-knit, working-class Italian-American family. His father, Vincent Pileggi, was born in Calabria and worked in New York City's garment trade as a steam presser; his mother, Rose, raised Frank and his sister, Connie, in her parents' Brooklyn home. After he dropped out of high school Frank served briefly in the Merchant Marine, then hoppedscotched around the globe with a buddy. (In those days a restless young man could still catch a freighter to Tangiers.) He returned to New York in late 1965 or early 1966 and took a job as the night desk clerk at the Hotel Paris.

Frank seems to have been adored by everyone who knew him. "Frank was the god of the [Pileggi] family," says his friend Kate Shore. "He was a

caregiver to a lot of people. Not just Charlotte, but his sister and his nieces—everybody went to Frank. Frank had the answers, Frank could fix it.”²⁵ He was a good cartoonist, an enthusiastic teller of jokes, and a skilled raconteur with perfect comic timing. (Facility with language ran in his family: he was first cousin to the screenwriter Nicholas Pileggi and second cousin to the journalist Gay Talese.) A complete extrovert, Frank seemed to be everyone’s friend and thought nothing of striking up a conversation with strangers. He and Charlotte “were dynamic together,” recalls Carolee Schneemann. “His kind of romantic Brooklyn energy, her Southern, swirling, over-the-top chatter. They both made a lot of agitation wherever they went.”²⁶ In Frank’s clipped Brooklynese, Charlotte’s name became “Shahlit”; in later years, when he was nursing her through cancer, she called his name in one elongated syllable that had all the vocal color of a drawling, plaintive prayer.

14

Topless Cellist

ON FEBRUARY 7, 1967, A FURIOUS MIDWINTER BLIZZARD BURIED NEW YORK CITY UNDER A FOOT OF SNOW, LEAVING MOUNTAINOUS DRIFTS IN THE STREETS AND DRAGGING BITTER COLD ALONG IN ITS wake. Most of the city's seven million inhabitants huddled indoors for a day or two, leaving the streets silent but for the clinking of tire chains and the rasp of plows on pavement. Though she loved winter weather, Moorman probably spent much of February 7 in her room at the Hotel Paris. She was scheduled to perform on February 9 and was only midway through the laborious task of addressing invitations to some three hundred of her friends and press contacts. The centerpiece of the program was Paik's *Opera Sextro-nique*, a revised, expanded version of *Cello Sonata Opus 69*, which they had premiered in Aachen the previous summer. The new version required her to perform topless, then bottomless, and finally completely nude.

Moorman was aware that public nudity was a contentious issue in Manhattan during the winter of 1966–1967. In November the enterprising

manager of a midtown nightclub, the Crystal Room, had put two waitresses to work wearing nothing above the waist except a pair of pasties. After an outcry, Mayor John Lindsay had promised to ban topless waitresses (even though he admitted that his own feelings about the matter were “just like those of any other man”¹), and within the week the women and their male manager had been arrested for indecent exposure and creating a public nuisance. On January 13, after a two-day trial, a trio of judges had to concede that although they found the situation “sordid” and “vulgar,” the Crystal Room had not violated any existing laws.² The club’s owner immediately put the bare-breasted waitresses back to work, along with six topless go-go girls. Lindsay vowed that the city would not rest until the scourge was eliminated, complaining to the *Times*: “There is nothing of artistic or cultural value in this sort of thing. It isn’t even bad burlesque.”³

On November 16, 1966, just as the city was in an uproar over topless waitresses, Les Ballets Africains arrived in town. The troupe of traditional Guinean dancers was preparing for its engagement at the Barrymore Theater when a minor city official stopped the show, citing a seven-year-old order banning the company from performing in New York because its dancers had once appeared on stage topless. Mayor Lindsay was again asked to intercede, but this time he came down in favor of toplessness. He revoked the old ruling the next day, opining that nakedness was permissible in this case because it was part of a cultural tradition and therefore had artistic merit. Nevertheless, on opening night the dancers of the Ballets Africains played it safe and performed with their upper bodies covered.⁴

The city’s response to these two cases had thoroughly muddied the waters around the issue of public nudity. Defining when an act had “artistic merit” was difficult, to say the least; the class and racial double standards of the era were also clearly at play in Lindsay’s decisions. New York City was not alone in its confusion. In early 1967 the sexual revolution was well underway in America. The naked female body was on public view not just in nightclubs and theaters but also in Playboy Clubs, fashion shows, girly magazines, burlesque houses, avant-garde art events, and Love-Ins all over the country. No one was quite sure how to regulate all of this exposure, or even whether it should be regulated at all.

In February 1967, as Moorman prepared for her own topless appearance, the Crystal Room case was still unresolved. She had thought it prudent to consult her lawyer, Jerald Ordovery, for advice. Ordovery was the art-world attorney who had been recommended to her by Allan Kaprow to sort out the post-*Push and Pull* dispute with Judson Hall. He was familiar with the Crystal Room and Ballets Africains decisions, and he kept up with the avant-garde, so he knew that several nude and seminude performances had proceeded without incident in New York City during the recent past, notably Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris's naked chest-to-chest shuffle in *Waterman Switch* (1965). Ordovery, like many others in the art world, assumed that the city was uninterested in policing nudity when it occurred in obscure avant-garde events. Still, during his meeting with Moorman and Paik he advised them to protect themselves by making the concert a free, "by invitation only" event. Before they left his office he also gave Moorman his home phone number, just in case there was any trouble.⁵

Opera Sextronique was to be presented in a small theater space in the basement of the now-demolished Wurlitzer Building at 125 West 41st Street, one block from Times Square. Since late 1965 the two-hundred-seat theater had been operated by the artist-run Film-Makers' Cooperative, which was anxious to expand the audience for experimental film and had leased the space in part because of its location in midtown Manhattan near the theater district.⁶ The program at the Film-Makers' Cinematheque, as they called the space, was wide-ranging, featuring the current stars of the underground filmmaking scene, such as Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, and Gregory Markopoulos, as well as classic films by Fritz Lang, D. W. Griffith, and others. Andy Warhol's *The Chelsea Girls* had premiered there in September 1966 and played to sold-out houses for two weeks before moving further uptown for an extended run. The space was normally programmed seven nights a week. But for this one evening Jonas Mekas, one of the founders of the Film-Makers' Cooperative and a friend of Moorman and Paik's, had offered them the Cinematheque (also known as the 41st Street Theater) rent-free.

The streets were still slick with packed snow on the afternoon of February 9, when Moorman lugged her cello outside and caught a taxi to the theater. She and Paik had one more rehearsal before the show that evening, and they

still needed to work out some of the lighting and staging details with Takehisa Kosugi, who would be assisting them. The event was a mixed-media program similar to the one they had toured in Europe. *Opera Sextronique* was to be the opening number; they also planned to present the Paik-Yalkut film *Cinema Metaphysique*; Kosugi's *Organic Music* (the performer breathes, purposefully); and James Tenney's electronic composition *Phases (for Edgard Varèse)*. As it had been in the past, the grand finale would be Paik's *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*.

At some point during the bustle of the afternoon, the day began to veer terribly off course. There are many versions of what happened that evening and in what order, and Moorman's accounts are consistently the most dramatic. In "An Artist in the Courtroom," an essay she cowrote with Paik and Frank Pileggi during the months after her arrest and trial, she claimed that "an army of uninvited policemen"⁷ had arrived at around six-thirty, while they were rehearsing, and demanded entry, telling her that she had better not go ahead with the performance or they would take her off in a paddy wagon.⁸ "I told them this was a private, invitation only performance, to which one replied, 'This badge lets me into any licensed theatre.' At that time, I did not know that it was within my rights to demand a search warrant. I tried to explain that this audience was invited, an audience of artists and intellectuals, where no one could buy a ticket, Paik and I were not being paid, we were doing this to show our new work to our friends. [...] The police continued by disrupting our organization and taking our guest-list attendants back stage to ask them questions about concert preparations."⁹

Officer Michael Mandillo told a more benign version. He testified in court that he and four other plainclothesmen had entered the building at around nine o'clock, spoken briefly to a young woman at the theater door, and then sat down in the auditorium to wait for the show to begin.¹⁰ Whatever the details, Moorman was deeply rattled by the presence of the police:

We called our lawyer, Jerry Ordovery, and said, "Is there any problem doing this piece legally? Because we're here rehearsing at the Filmmaker's Cinematheque and there are police here." He said, "No, as long as you don't plan to fornicate on stage, you're OK." [...] But I was curious why they were there, because

I wasn't used to having them around when we rehearsed [...] and just seeing the police scared me. So I called a few important people and they told us not to worry, that the Ballets Africains had performed in Manhattan a few weeks before and they had been able to perform topless. [...] So whichever way you looked at it, we were OK.¹¹

None of this drama was visible to the audience. Eyewitnesses reported that the mood in the theater was jovial, as Moorman's invited guests stood in the aisles puffing on cigarettes while they waited for the show to start, and old friends waved to one another across the room. A few people giggled at the "square-looking, heavysset men" they immediately pegged as cops.¹² But since the theater was full—all two hundred seats in the house were occupied, and more people stood in the aisles—Moorman and Paik decided to go ahead. At around nine-thirty all of the house and stage lights were extinguished, and the first aria of *Opera Sextronique* commenced in the smoky darkness.

The packed house waited expectantly for something to happen. After three long minutes, the silence was finally broken by a recording of a Buddhist gong chime.¹³ Immediately, Moorman entered from the wings. All the audience could see in the darkened theater was her twinkling "electric bikini," which was actually not a bikini at all but three just-big-enough triangles of fabric taped over her breasts and crotch, each fitted with fifteen tiny, six-volt light bulbs. The whole arrangement was wired so that the bikini could be switched on and off by remote control. Paik flashed the lights "intermittently and rhythmically" with the gong music as she moved toward her chair at an almost imperceptible pace, taking five minutes to walk the eight-foot distance.¹⁴

The gong music ceased as she sat down and, still in darkness, began to play an excerpt from Jules Massenet's romantic *Elegy* (1872). At this point Paik, dressed in a business suit, moved to the piano to accompany her while Kosugi took over the light controls for the bikini, which winked and flashed at the audience through the end of *Elegy*. When they finished, Paik approached the edge of the stage and called into the darkness, "Is it all right, Mr. Policeman, may we go on?" The audience answered with cheers and cries of, "Yes, beautiful, go on," so they did.

“Come out topless,” instructs the score for the second aria. At around ten o’clock the stage lights came up and Moorman made her entrance clad only in a floor-length black skirt and black flats. This aria, too, began with a three-minute prologue: a tape of the computer-generated *International Lullaby* (1966) by Max Mathews, a Bell Labs engineer and pioneer of synthesized sound whom Paik had met through James Tenney. Mathews’s piece, which collages a traditional Japanese lullaby with Franz Schubert’s “Cradle Song,” was followed by Moorman and Paik’s fractured version of Brahms’s familiar “Lullaby.” After playing two bars of the piece, they stopped so that Moorman could reach into the battered suitcase next to her for a new disguise—a gas mask, perhaps, or sunglasses, a cloth cap, or cheap carnival mask. The suitcase also held a violin and a bunch of fresh flowers, which she used as “prepared bows.”¹⁵ After repeating this sequence several times, Paik taped a battery-powered toy propeller to each of Moorman’s nipples. An audience member later recalled that these whirling pasties made a pleasant clattering sound when she leaned close to her cello.¹⁶ She concluded *Aria 2* by tossing her flowers into the audience.¹⁷

The third aria was to have been performed “bottomless in a football jersey and helmet” to a Beatles song.¹⁸ But before she could exit to shed her skirt, the police decided they had seen enough. Moorman recalled the chaotic scene:

The plainclothesmen walked up on stage as I was acknowledging the applause of the audience, saying, “It’s a raid, you’re under arrest.” [...] The audience began yelling, “Dirty cops!” Paik turned to the audience and asked, “Can anyone help us?” Everyone wanted to help, but no one knew what to do. I begged the policemen to let me dress and pack my cello and electronic equipment before taking me away, but they refused. In their haste to protect my invited audience from the sight of a bare bosom, they damaged my 175-year-old cello and caused me to lose hundreds of dollars worth of equipment. A friend of mine was able to put my jacket over my shoulders, but it wasn’t until the police had dragged me and my instrument 125 feet through the crowd that they allowed me to put my cello in its case.¹⁹



FIGURE 14.1

With Nam June Paik manning the controls of her "electric bikini," Charlotte Moorman prepares to make her entrance in Aria 1 of *Opera Sextronique*, New York City, 1967. Photo by Hy Rothman/NY Daily News via Getty Images.



FIGURE 14.2

Charlotte Moorman performs Aria 2 of *Opera Sextronique*, New York City, 1967.
Photo by Hy Rothman/NY Daily News via Getty Images.



FIGURE 14.3

Nam June Paik attaches battery-powered propellers to Charlotte Moorman's breasts in *Aria 2 of Opera Sextronique*, New York City, 1967. Photo by Hy Rothman/NY Daily News via Getty Images.

The writer David Bourdon, an editor at *Life* magazine and the friend who draped the jacket over Moorman's shoulders, remembered the evening with a story that evokes the deep mistrust that separated the police and much of the artistic community during the mid-1960s: "The audience began to boo the police, who thought it prudent to close the curtain. [...] I wanted the audience to see what was going on, so, with a helper, I opened the curtain. This encouraged audience members, who refused to leave the theater, to noisily express their disapproval. For a while, the curtain repeatedly opened and closed, as opposing factions gained control of it. [...] By now, the stage was jammed with reporters and photographers. The audience was booing and heckling, which prompted the cops to call for backup. Eight more carloads of police—in riot helmets—sped to the scene to maintain order."²⁰

Moorman and Paik were hustled outside through the snow and taken, in separate cars, to the Midtown South precinct station on West 35th Street. One prominent audience member, Milton Fox, who was then editor in chief at the Harry N. Abrams publishing house and had attended the concert with his wife and daughter, later wrote a letter of protest to Mayor Lindsay in which he described the "degrading procession through the snow" and concluded, "I don't remember when I've felt so ashamed."²¹

OPERA SEXTRONIQUE IS related to *Sonata for Adults Only* and other works Paik wrote for Moorman in which a sexualized intervention disrupts a familiar piece of classical music. Paik later explained that he had composed the piece according to his usual methods. "The ground principle of my work is a 'collage technique,' that is, the superposition of various, sometimes conventionally heterogeneous elements," he wrote, and pointed out that Aria 1, for example, merged "Massenet's *Elegy* [...] and the mysterious light [from the bikini] with equally mysterious eternal womanhood."²²

Though it conformed to Paik's basic principles, *Opera Sextronique* was far more complex than anything he had previously written for Moorman. As the designation "opera" suggests, it was a mix of music (although without vocals), light, scenery, costumes, props, and movement. At forty-five minutes, it was also relatively long. Its risqué faux-French title cleverly

conflates electronics, high art, and erotics, a trio of themes enunciated by computer music, Brahms, Massenet, and nudity. The printed invitation for the concert is an avant-garde pinup that features a cheesecake shot of Moorman mid-striptease, holding her cello as she steps out of her skirt, her voluptuous body overflowing black bra and panties. The image is over-printed with a text in which Paik explains his concept:

After three emancipations in 20th century music, (serial-in-deterministic, actional) ... I have found that there is still one more chain to lose ... that is ... PRE-FREUDIAN HYPOCRISY. Why is sex a predominant theme in art and literature prohibited ONLY in music? How long can New Music afford to be sixty years behind the times and still claim to be serious art? The purge of sex under the excuse of being "serious" exactly undermines the so-called "seriousness" of music as a classical art, ranking with literature and painting. Music history needs its D. H. Lawrence its Sigmund Freud.²³

As much as Paik was joking here, he was also serious. He understood his work as part of a historical continuum that included isolated esoteric experiments meant to expand music's embrace to include other sensory data. In one of the many drafts that exist for the essay "An Artist in the Courtroom," Paik linked *Opera Sextronique* to two works by the early-twentieth-century Russian composer Alexander Scriabin: *Prometheus* (1910), a symphonic synthesis of sound, light, and theater, and the unfinished *Mysterium*, which was, in Paik's words, "a total theatrical spectacle including music, dance, speech, smell, and light with a cast of 2000." He also cited as precedent a treatise on an "ocular harpsichord" imagined (but never built) by Louis Bertrand Castel, an eighteenth-century Jesuit monk. Castel's plan described a keyboard linked to panes of colored glass that were illuminated by candle-light when a key was struck.²⁴ Paik quipped that his innovation in *Opera Sextronique* "was to make a color organ with nude lady's organ itself!! Can you imagine [a] more consequent combination? And how many colors and keys have our woman's eternal organ!!!"²⁵

FOR A WHILE, Moorman professed to be baffled by the events of February 9. “How or why these plainclothesmen came I’ll never know,” she wrote.²⁶ Later in her life she developed the theory that her arrest was due, essentially, to nothing more than bad luck. She claimed that the police had been in the habit of randomly checking in on the proceedings at the 41st Street Theater because it had been the site of an infamous run-in between the avant-garde and the law: the seizure in March 1964 of Jack Smith’s controversial film *Flaming Creatures*, which was later banned as obscene in the state of New York. According to Moorman, February 9 was simply one of the nights the cops decided to drop in to see what was going on. “I have it on good authority!” she insisted.²⁷

Although this hypothesis includes one of Moorman’s dramatizing con-
flations of fact—Smith’s film had in fact been confiscated at the New Bowery
Theater on the Lower East Side—it is not completely implausible. During
the mid-1960s the NYPD was actively monitoring avant-garde film ven-
ues for obscenity and had shut down several screenings and arrested the
projectionists. However, the evidence strongly suggests that the police had
come to the 41st Street Theater on February 9 expressly to attend *Opera
Sextronique*. Officer Mandillo testified that he and his cohort had been sent
there because the department had been “informed that a performance
was being held [at that location], the topless [...] and bottomless perfor-
mance.”²⁸ Moorman herself was probably responsible for the leak. She had
hardly been secretive about their plans. At least one of her friends, the
Village Voice photographer Fred McDarrah, remembers getting a phone call
from her before the concert. “Freddie, come on over,” she told him, “I’m
going to be naked.”²⁹ The titillating event poster had been mailed out to
dozens of press contacts, and additional copies were distributed on the day
of the event with this teaser on the back: “Miss Moorman will play topless,
bottomless, etc.”³⁰ It isn’t hard to imagine an enterprising journalist re-
ceiving this communiqué and alerting the police in hopes of stirring up
another risqué story about topless female performers.

No matter how the news of their concert made its way to members of
the New York Police Department, it remains unclear why Moorman was
singled out for arrest and prosecuted by the courts for public toplessness, a



FIGURE 14.4

Charlotte Moorman being taken to a squad car after her arrest, New York City, 1967. Photo by Hy Rothman/NY Daily News via Getty Images.

“crime” that had been formally invalidated by city authorities twice during the previous three months. As Moorman formulated the question, “How can New York City condemn in my work what it condones and applauds in others?”³¹ Four decades later even Ernst Rosenberger, Moorman’s defense attorney, is at a loss for an explanation. His best guess is that her arrest “was, as are so many things, a product of the time.”³² It was 1967. Americans—even sophisticated New Yorkers—were conflicted about sex. As the tabloid *Daily News* quipped, *Opera Sextronique* was too much even for Fun City.³³

At the Midtown South precinct station, Moorman was fingerprinted and had her mug shot taken. Not long after she arrived she was outraged to see that Paik, looking bedraggled and frightened, had also been brought in. (“That’s like bringing Beethoven in there! You just don’t do that!” she fumed.³⁴) A clique of audience members had trudged through the snow after them and now crowded into the station, collecting \$200 for legal expenses and signing a hastily drawn-up petition: “We, the audience of the Cinematheque, February 9, 1967, for the Paik-Moorman concert, petition the responsible authorities to release Miss Moorman from their custody and allow her to continue her activities.”³⁵ The police responded to this feeble demand by booking both perpetrators on misdemeanor charges under Section 114.0 of the Penal Law of the State of New York, which prohibited “willfully and lewdly exposing [one’s] person, or the private parts thereof, in any public place.” The pair was then transferred to the Manhattan Detention Complex, a massive jail on Centre Street in lower Manhattan known as the Tombs.

After the passage of time had softened its hard edges, Moorman’s night in jail became one of her favorite stories. She repeated it dozens of times, often playing it for laughs and working in as much scatological and titillating detail as she could. She had been humiliated when a policewoman ordered her to squat, naked, over a toilet and then searched her body cavities with gloved fingers; she had been indignant when her bulging handbag, a kind of portable office, was ransacked and purged of cold medicine, Kotex,

FIGURE 14.5

Nam June Paik, one page from the score for *Opera Sextronique* (1967).
© Nam June Paik Estate. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

and loose scraps of paper (the latter, she said, were not garbage, but “valuable names and addresses for my mailing list.”³⁶); and she had been terrified when taken to a cell, where she joined four other female inmates for the night. Moorman must have quizzed them about their crimes, for she related that her companions had included a prostitute, an addict who had been caught stealing a fix from a pharmacy, a thief who had been picked up for shoplifting at Macy’s, and a woman who had stabbed her husband during a fight. The latter, Moorman reported, “kept banging her head against the bars and saying, ‘I hope he’s dead, the son of a bitch, I hope he’s dead.’”³⁷

Then the women asked Moorman why she was there. “I was so confused, I said, ‘Well, I played the cello partially nude.’ Then the one that had [stabbed] her husband started [pulling] my hair and said, ‘What’s a cello?’ [...] I was scared to death. [...] They didn’t know what a cello was. I understood what Macy’s was, and the husband and the drug store and all that, but they didn’t understand what I had done.”³⁸

She meant the story to make this point: there was no equating her crime with theirs. She was an artist. Being locked in the Tombs with petty thieves, junkies, hookers, and would-be murderesses was deeply depressing and unsuitably *déclassé*. “I cannot find the words,” she wrote later, “to express my sadness that [all my] years of work and devotion to my art have been soiled by this ugly experience.”³⁹

After a guard happened by and broke up the fight, Moorman sat miserably “with the other women criminals” until five-thirty the next morning, when she and Paik were taken to Night Court for arraignment.⁴⁰ About twenty-five of their friends were there, having waited all night to offer moral support. One of them had recruited Rosenberger, a noted civil liberties attorney, to defend the pair. After hearing the evidence, the judge dismissed all charges against Paik and he was released. Moorman was formally charged with indecent exposure and released on her own recognizance until her hearing, set for February 15.⁴¹ The stakes were real: if convicted, she could be sentenced to a year in prison.

More wet snow was falling on Manhattan when Moorman finally walked out of the Tombs at 6:30 a.m. on February 10. Riding home in a taxicab, she heard the story of her arrest on the radio. By the end of the day, she would be known throughout the city as “the topless cellist.”⁴²

15

The People v. Moorman

MOORMAN'S INITIAL REACTION TO HER ARREST WAS DISBELIEF. SHE COMPARED IT TO THE SHOCK OF LEARNING, AS A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD, THAT HER DADDY HAD DIED.¹ SHOCK SOON TURNED TO PANIC AND shame, and during the days immediately following her arrest she drafted a note to Frank Pileggi. They had been lovers for a few weeks, and *Opera Sextronique* was the first of her concerts he had attended. "I am trying to understand how you must feel hearing those accusations and not really believing in the avant-garde and if my work is really of any value," she wrote. "I am grateful for all you've done but need you now more than ever. So if you don't believe in what I'm doing let me know and I will give it up. I obviously haven't achieved too much if the police can do this to me."²

As usual, her crisis of confidence was temporary. Within the week she had regained her balance, and on February 14, a few days before her hearing

(which had been rescheduled for the 17th), she bought a bottle of champagne. It was Valentine's Day, she was in love, and she probably was confident that charges against her would be dropped. Why not celebrate? Paik was less sanguine. On the morning of the hearing, as they chatted quietly in a corridor of the criminal court building, he confessed to Moorman that he was frightened. "I prayed last night for the first time in my life," he told her.³

Both now looked to Ernst Rosenberger for salvation. Moorman had not met him until her appearance in Night Court on February 10, but she could not have asked for a more suitable and sympathetic lawyer.⁴ A tall, mustachioed thirty-five-year-old who dressed in professorial tweeds, Rosenberger was well known among the New York avant-garde as an activist and advocate for the disenfranchised. His clients included Ed Sanders, leader of the activist rock band the Fugs, who had been charged in 1966 with propagating obscenity through his journal, *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, and several of the Mississippi Freedom Riders, to whom Rosenberger had donated his services during the early 1960s. His progressive politics were tempered by a studious and moderate approach to the law (he would go on to become a justice on the New York State Supreme Court), and his presence added sobriety and weight to her case.

As it turned out, even Moorman's distinguished lawyer could not keep the hearing from degenerating into a comic prelude to what was later described as "the oddest and certainly one of the most ludicrous trials ever held in Manhattan."⁵ Proceedings were called to order at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, February 17, in the same Centre Street complex of which the Tombs was a part. The presiding judge, Milton Shalleck, heard testimony from only one witness, arresting officer Michael Mandillo; the rest of the morning was taken up by an extended discussion between Rosenberger and the prosecutor, Assistant District Attorney Gino Gallina, about the interpretation of Section 1140. They disagreed over whether or not a woman's breasts could legally be considered "private parts" and discussed precisely how much of Moorman's had been exposed. The judge wanted to determine the size of her cello (and thus how wide she had had to spread her legs) and touted his extralegal expertise in matters of toplessness. "I spent the better part of a year down in the South Pacific," he informed the court. "You don't have to tell me what exposure is."⁶ Gallina called *Opera Sextronique* "a

sick publicity stunt” and insinuated that the invited audience could well have included “nudists, dressed in clothes, in a controlled nudist situation.”⁷ According to the *New York Post*, the proceedings were “punctuated by audience gasps, giggles, and guffaws.”⁸ After four hours, Judge Shalleck reserved his decision on the motion to dismiss charges, and ordered both attorneys to file briefs by March 10.

During the hearing, Rosenberger asked the judge for a speedy resolution to the case because “until this matter is disposed of, [my client] is out of work.” With her usual dramatic flair, Moorman had added piteously, “No one will hire me!”⁹ Well, not exactly. Paying jobs were scarce, but Moorman stayed very busy throughout that unsettled spring; if she wasn’t ubiquitous, she certainly was not invisible. Within a few days of the hearing, on February 22, she was back onstage with Paik at the East Village church St. Mark’s-in-the-Bowery for a concert of “music and happenings” by Scandinavian avant-garde artists. She gave dozens of interviews to the press, which had begun to pursue her vigorously as soon as she was released from jail. Invitations rolled in from television talk shows. She did the *Bruce Morrow Show*, a TV variety hour hosted by the voluble New York disc jockey known to legions of teenagers as Cousin Brucie. She appeared on the Boston-based *Al Capp Show*, and on the late-night *Alan Burke Show*, where she discussed the dangers of censorship with the director Otto Preminger.¹⁰ On March 14 she and Paik traveled to Philadelphia to present an evening of Kosugi’s compositions, and on March 19 they showed up on an NBC television special devoted to Marshall McLuhan. Those idle enough to have turned on their sets at four o’clock on a Sunday afternoon might have seen an astounding seventy-five-second segment in which Moorman played *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*, her nipples and buttocks clearly visible through her transparent cellophane wrap. “First time complete nudity on network TV,” she noted proudly in her records, and it might well have been.¹¹

Her biggest prize that spring was the *Merv Griffin Show*. On the afternoon of March 21 she went to Griffin’s studio on West 44th Street to film her second appearance on his talk show—eight minutes in front of a national audience. Her short version of Cage’s *26'1.1499" for a String Player* included a new motif, *Bomb Cello*, in which she played a military surplus training bomb fitted with strings and a pickup microphone.¹² Comedian

Jerry Lewis was Griffin's cohost that night. Moorman upstaged him at every turn with sweetly delivered requests such as, "Could you please help me hold my bomb?" When Lewis appealed to Griffin for help—"Did anyone tell her I'm a movie star?"—Moorman commanded him to kneel in front of her with his face buried in her bosom and his back to the camera. He did, as if to concede that he was, at that moment, not a movie star but merely her instrument, her *Human Cello*. These were her eight minutes, and she sparkled. She got paid, too: the standard Griffin guest fee was \$265.¹³

Media appearances were only one part of her strategy to garner sympathy for her situation. Sometime in early February, Paik issued a plea to their friends. "PLEASE, H E L P IMMEDIATELY!!! WE ARE IN THE WORST CRISIS IN OUR LIFE. THERE IS NO EXAGGERATION IN THIS STATEMENT. WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE DESPERATELY!!! Charlotte Moorman and I were arrested on Feb. 9th in Cinematheque at the middle of the concert. ESPECIALLY CHARLOTTE MOORMAN was brutally mishandled by the police. [...] PLEASE, WRITE A PROTEST LETTER TO LINDSAY MAYOR [*sic*] as soon as possible, not later than March 31."¹⁴ Paik suggested a few talking points and urged writers to "state your social position [so] that Lindsay's secretary gives weight to your letter."

A few dozen of their friends responded. Claes Oldenburg denounced the arrest as "a notorious example of police interference with artistic freedom."¹⁵ The German artist Tomas Schmit penned an extended lament about the "extremely absurd and oppressive" situation.¹⁶ Others reproached the city for its provincialism, sniffed that this kind of thing would never have happened in Europe, and sadly remarked that the avant-garde community had now lost all respect for New York as an advanced cultural center. Here is artist and critic Douglas Davis: "Has all reason deserted the city, to say nothing of wit? As one who hailed your election, I pray not."¹⁷ He was not the only one who expected the mayor—a young, liberal Republican with progressive ideas on social policies—to somehow make the whole thing go away. But Lindsay remained silent on the affair.

While her friends appealed to the mayor's office, Moorman herself wrote to the editorial staff of the *New York Times*, comparing her situation to those of censored artists James Joyce and Michelangelo, and asking, vaguely, for the newspaper's help. None of this had any effect. No editorials ran in

the *Times*. Mayor Lindsay directed his secretary to forward all correspondence about the matter to the police department, which responded to the writers with a form letter. On April 11, as Moorman's trial was about to begin, she wrote to Jerald Ordovery: "Things look very gloomy. At a time like this it is much easier to give up than it is to fight for what I believe in, but somehow I'll continue the fight."¹⁸ Gloomy? Perhaps for a moment, but Moorman was temperamentally incapable of remaining gloomy for very long. She had come to believe that the sheer force of her desire could work magic. Indeed, she was so certain she would win her case that she had refused to consider any alternatives to a trial, such as pleading guilty to the charge for a reduced sentence.¹⁹ She persisted in believing, right up until the moment Judge Shalleck read his decision on May 9, that she would be exonerated. It could not, would not, be otherwise.

AT NINE-THIRTY on the morning of Tuesday, April 18, in a fifth-floor room in the Centre Street criminal court building, Judge Shalleck called the trial to order. Over the next week he would hear testimony from a dozen witnesses; scrutinize Paik's score and Moorman's electric bikini; and debate excruciatingly fine points of law with both attorneys. Neither side made its case well, and the trial transcripts read like a bedroom farce in which no one knows the true identity of anyone else and hapless confusion begets comedy. Such dramas usually end with a harmonious resolution; sadly for Moorman, hers did not. Instead, the entire cast left the courtroom on April 24 with their prejudices and misconceptions intact.

For prosecutor Gino Gallina, Moorman's performance in *Opera Sextro-nique* was a simple, prima facie case of lewd behavior that he could understand only as an erotic enticement. The thirty-two-year-old Gallina had handled the Crystal Room topless waitress case for the city, and he was still smarting from the loss. Trial transcripts sketch an impatient, volatile man given to malapropisms and weird leaps of logic; the *Village Voice* sniggered that his suits were cheap, his hair was oiled, and "his Dick Tracy teeth were bared."²⁰ For Gallina, the only salient facts in the case were Moorman's nakedness and the public nature of the venue in which she had bared her bosom, so his strategy on the morning of April 18, when he was asked to

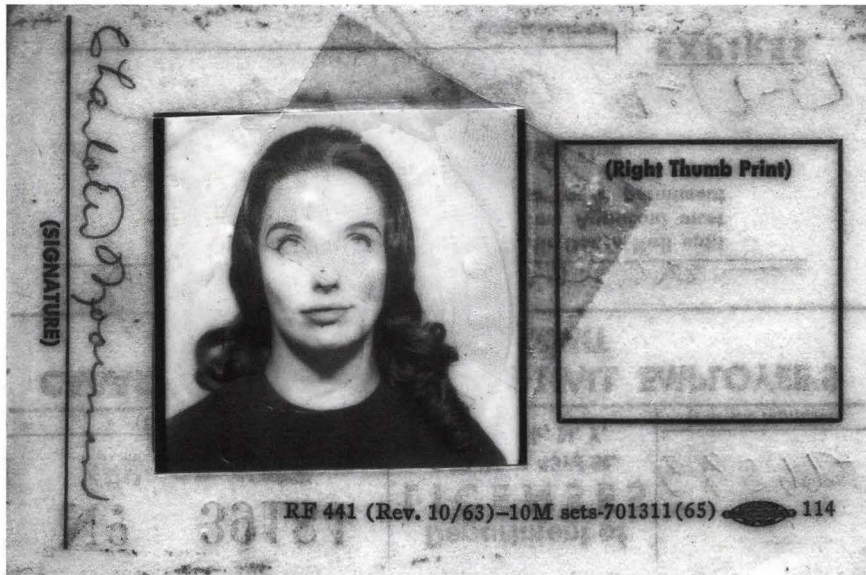


FIGURE 15.1

On April 18, 1967, the day her trial began, Charlotte Moorman applied for and received a license to perform as a cabaret artist. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

call the trial's first witnesses, was simply to ask the arresting officers to tell the judge what they had seen and where they had seen it. The *Voice* reported: "Three rather scruffy policemen discoursed on Bach and cellos bowed with violins, flowers, and such, masks and modern art forms. Confusion entered the case here and never left it."²¹

For Ernst Rosenberger, the case concerned a fundamental Constitutional right: freedom of speech. The pretrial brief he had submitted to Judge Shalleck was a concise and measured argument that Moorman should

not be tried at all because she had committed no crime.²² The legal definition of private parts, he said, referred only to the genitals, and since there was no statute in place barring a woman from exposing her breasts, Moorman had not broken any law by doing so. In any case, there had been nothing lewd about *Opera Sextronique*. Moorman was an artist whose right to express herself was protected under the First Amendment.

Having (he believed) established these points up front, Rosenberger's trial strategy focused on larger issues than nipples and areolae. He crafted a four-part approach meant to establish the artistic integrity of his client and prove that, in spite of the nudity it contained, *Opera Sextronique* had redeeming social value. First he would screen a short film of Moorman performing Arias 1 and 2 of *Opera Sextronique*, which Jud Yalkut had shot just days before the trial began. Rosenberger hoped that after seeing it, the judge would better understand the context for Moorman's nudity.²³ Next, character witnesses would vouch for the defendant's artistic seriousness, and Moorman herself would testify as to her education, her classical training, and her goals as a self-defined "mixed media artist." For his coup de grâce, Rosenberger had four experts—cultural critics and writers—who were ready to swear that *Opera Sextronique* was art, not smut, and that Moorman's nudity had redeeming social value.

Rosenberger's plan immediately began to go wrong. On Tuesday afternoon, the first day of the trial, Judge Shalleck refused to admit Yalkut's film as evidence because it did not document the specific performance for which Moorman had been arrested.²⁴ Instead, the audience watched a short clip of the topless bits in Aria 2 that had been filmed at the concert by a CBS news crew. Moorman later complained that it was "too short, had no sound, and could not possibly represent my work in its total artistic context."²⁵ A reporter remarked that the screening had "seemed to turn the afternoon session into stag night."²⁶ After brief testimony from photographer Peter Moore about the questionable accuracy of the photographic evidence that had been introduced, the first day of the trial was over.²⁷

Gallina had rested the People's case after the policemen's testimony, so Wednesday, April 19, belonged to Rosenberger. Once again, things did not go as planned. Moorman was first to take the stand, clad demurely in a long-sleeved, black knee-length dress. She was not, in Rosenberger's

mild assessment, as strong a witness as she could have been.²⁸ The *Village Voice* reported that she had “haggled, over-talked, and was constantly indignant.”²⁹ She refused to concede even the smallest of points, and her ramblings led the discussion into absurd culs-de-sac that ended in general laughter, usually at her expense. After Gallina brought her to tears by suggesting that she was no different than the exhibitionist who exposes his penis on Fifth Avenue, Judge Shalleck called a recess.

The afternoon was reserved for Moorman’s character witnesses, Margaret Heyer and Al Carmines. Heyer, a personal friend of Moorman’s, was a married woman with two children, one of whom was serving in Vietnam. Carmines was the pastor of Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, where Moorman had often performed. Rosenberger must have hoped that these embodiments of motherhood, patriotism, and Christianity would wrap Moorman in their respectable embrace. Instead, during his cross-examination, Gallina invoked all the bogeymen of the era by insinuating that Heyer was Moorman’s lesbian lover and Carmines a Communist counterculture guru.³⁰

Moorman said “things took a turn for the better” on Thursday, April 20, when her expert witnesses were called to the stand.³¹ Trial transcripts do not support this claim. Her experts agreed that *Opera Sextronique* was art, but they found it difficult to explain why. John Gruen, art critic for the *World Telegram Tribune* and author of a book about the East Village art scene, insisted blandly that the piece was significant simply because of its novelty. (“One must forge ahead.”) The composer and music critic Carman Moore—who was also covering the case for the *Village Voice*—understood Paik to be “tweaking the nose” of a hypocritical society in which sex was both fetishized and reviled. The composition was clearly a work of art, he said (though he was quick to add, “I’m not saying it’s a masterpiece or anything”), and as a work of art, its redeeming social value could be assumed. David Bourdon was effectively silenced by an extended volley of objections from both attorneys and repeated interjections from the judge. Finally, *Newsweek* editor Jack Kroll contributed the rather abstruse idea that *Opera Sextronique* was a “plastic situation” of which Moorman’s nudity was only one necessary element.³²

Rosenberger had given his experts an impossible assignment. The few cogent thoughts they had managed to articulate under Gallina’s inane and

assaultive questioning had only pointed up the difficulty of contextualizing new works of art. Moorman complained, “The judge just doesn’t understand,” but, considering the confused testimony he heard, Shalleck cannot really be blamed for that.³³ Even Moorman couldn’t explain Paik’s work. She could only repeat that she was certain *Opera Sextronique* was important. “Paik is doing something for the future,” she later told an interviewer. “They didn’t understand Chopin and Liszt at first, either. They won’t understand Paik for sixty years.”³⁴

In the late afternoon of April 20, Rosenberger rested his case. Gallina, perhaps eager to have the final word, asked that the trial be extended for one day so he could call his own expert witnesses to rebut the testimony of Gruen, Moore, Bourdon, and Kroll. Judge Shalleck consented, with the stipulation that they finish by noon Monday, and court was adjourned.

That weekend, at Hunter College Playhouse on the upper east side of Manhattan, the choreographer Anna Halprin and her troupe of eight dancers got naked onstage in *Parades and Changes* (1965). “They undress. I mean they remove every last stitch of clothing, and boys and girls together are as rip-roaring naked as berries,” marveled the *New York Times* dance critic Clive Barnes.³⁵ Performances on both Saturday and Sunday were allowed to proceed without interruption, although the dancers were alert to the possibility of police interference. Halprin’s biographer, Janice Ross, writes that Barnes and his *Herald Tribune* counterpart, Walter Terry, conspired to protect the troupe by “ensuring that their reviews would not appear until the following Monday, when the company would be on its way [home to California].”³⁶

On Monday morning, before going downtown to court, Moorman picked up the *Times* and saw Barnes’s review. Immediately, she reached for the telephone to call the powerful critic—whom she had never met—and ask for his help.³⁷

The final day of testimony seems to have unfolded like an episode of *Perry Mason*. According to Moorman, Clive Barnes “rushed down to court in a violent storm” after learning of her predicament, determined to rescue her. The transcripts reveal that Barnes’s remarks actually were reserved and almost perfunctory. But he did his job: He confirmed that Halprin’s dancers had been nude on stage but had not been arrested. This established that

Section 1140 was not being enforced consistently. Moorman had been denied equal protection under the law.

Prosecutor Gallina objected to Barnes's testimony, and while he was pestering Judge Shalleck to strike it from the record, someone else "rushed" into the courtroom with important news. Robert Kahn, a colleague of Rosenberger's, had noticed a piece in Saturday's *Times* reporting a change in the penal code that made toplessness legal in the context of "a play, exhibition, show, or entertainment." Governor Nelson Rockefeller had signed the bill on April 21, and it would become law in thirty days.³⁸ After a hasty conference with Kahn, Rosenberger revised his concluding remarks to argue that Moorman was being tried under a lame-duck statute.

Monday's developments erased the comic aftertaste left by the previous week's testimony, and now it was the prosecution's case that seemed absurd. Gallina had even failed to locate any expert rebuttal witnesses over the weekend. As the lawyers wound things up, Moorman was jubilant. It was clear in her mind that "THE CASE WAS CLOSED."³⁹ In the face of this new evidence the judge would surely decide to acquit her. What else could he do?

At sixty-one years of age, Judge Milton Shalleck was a full generation older than Rosenberger, Gallina, and Charlotte. He had been a Criminal Court judge since 1962 and, according to Rosenberger, "thought of himself as quite erudite [...] one of the bright figures on the bench."⁴⁰ Previous to his appointment, he had served as counsel for a number of government programs, including President Harry Truman's South Pacific Commission, an assignment that had taken him to the islands of Micronesia, Melanesia, Fiji, and New Caledonia, where he had received his vaunted education in "exposure."

The general consensus among Moorman and her friends was that Shalleck had been "good-humored, legally incisive, and had taken the trouble to inform himself" on the avant-garde in preparation for the case;⁴¹ he seemed, in a word, sympathetic to the defense. But on May 9, when the principals gathered in the courtroom to hear his decision, Judge Shalleck did what few had expected him to do: he found Moorman guilty. Her performance had been lewd and in violation of local community standards of decency. She would be judged for what she had done—exposing her breasts in a way that

might “attract individuals eager for a forbidden look.”⁴² He disliked being “compelled” to condemn someone “weak enough thoughtlessly to succumb to ill-considered influences” and did not think it necessary to send her to prison, so he suspended her sentence. The *Times* reported that Shalleck cited Moorman’s “immaturity” as a factor in his decision; the *Voice* said she was spared because it was her first offense.⁴³ Rosenberger is more cynical about the reason Shalleck convicted Moorman but did not send her to prison. “That judge, being who he was, had gotten what he was looking for from the case. He was looking to see himself in print.”⁴⁴

Shalleck did indeed see himself in print, copiously so. His opinion, which he read aloud to the packed courtroom on May 9, runs in excess of ten thousand words and was published in its entirety in the *New York Law Journal* on May 11.⁴⁵ This magnum opus begins with a piquant consideration of the “puzzling” state of contemporary culture, which Shalleck composed in the style of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. The exercise clearly amused him and was a convenient cloak for his scorn for artists (“bearded, bathless ‘Beats’”), young people (“sack-clothed, open-toe sandaled, draft-card burning, ‘long-hairs’”), and the liberal press (“a mighty vocal minority”). Regarding Moorman’s transgression, he speculated facetiously that Pablo Casals would not have been as great a cellist had he performed without his pants, and concluded absurdly that topless cellists could not be artful because he had never seen one described in classical painting, poetry, or prose. “I wonder if anyone has,” he mused. “Perhaps, then, the breast in those milieux is not artful.”

His introduction was an extended flourish that was no doubt meant to establish him as a witty and cultivated amateur of the arts. In the sober second half of his opinion, he got down to business. In sixty-three stern, airless paragraphs, he cited thirty-two case precedents that supported his decision to convict. Moorman’s topless performance had been obscene, and the community was not at present comfortable with obscenity, and there was nothing that he, a reasonable and thoughtful man, could do about it.

A news photo of Moorman, taken (according to the caption) “after she received suspended sentence,” shows her slack-jawed and staring, apparently dumbfounded by the judge’s astounding decision.⁴⁶ Later she offered her own,

more concise, opinion: Shalleck's words "constitute the Judge's resignation from the second half of the twentieth century and display a contempt for artistically creative people which long antedates my trial."⁴⁷

She got it right. Her conviction was neither a victory for Gino Gallina nor a loss for Ernst Rosenberger. It was a product of the prejudices with which Shalleck had entered the courtroom. These, and not the evidence, had driven his decision. His opinion makes it clear that he was not offended by toplessness. (Like Mayor Lindsay, he was clearly in favor of that.) Instead, what Shalleck objected to was the defense's claim that the topless performance in *Opera Sextronique* was art. For the judge, there was nothing exalted about Paik's composition; it was a satire, a burlesque, a rude and painful tweaking of society's nose that had overstepped the boundaries of decent behavior. He felt certain that a majority of the citizens of New York City—"the community"—would agree. Sexism also played its part. The judge was an old man with old-fashioned ideas, and Moorman confused him. In his experience, if a woman took her clothes off in front of an audience, a striptease was in progress; alternately, when a well-groomed young lady appeared on stage in an evening gown with a cello, one could look forward to an artistic experience of the highest order. Moorman didn't deliver on either promise. Even in the courtroom she did not perform as expected. She was not deferential, she was not reasonable, and she certainly was not contrite.

Litigation seems to discourage nuanced thinking in favor of absolutism, and this case was no different. Only Jack Kroll, one of Rosenberger's expert witnesses, had conceded publicly that *Opera Sextronique* was tricky to pin down. "There's no need for me to confess this," he admitted on the witness stand, "[but] I was physically aroused by the sight of Miss Moorman that night. It might be fifteen years [ago] that I was in the same predicament, that I was physically attracted to Lili St. Cyr, and had the same reaction."⁴⁸

Kroll said what no one on the defense team wanted to acknowledge: *Opera Sextronique* was sexy. He had had the same carnal response to Charlotte Moorman, mixed media artist, as he had had to Lili St. Cyr, the celebrated stripper and burlesque artiste. Indeed, Paik had planned it that way. It was, after all, his stated goal to spice up music with sex, and in this case he underlined his intention by choosing a Times Square venue in which to make the marriage. Imagine their audience making its way to the 41st Street

Theater past a buffet of sleazy strip clubs and girlie shows with their tantalizing come-hither broadsides and flashing marquees. The context makes it clear. *Opera Sextronique* was not an artistic corrective to smut. It was art that aspired, in part, to bring the audience, at least the heterosexual males, to a state of sexual urgency and alertness.

Kroll's testimony suggests that *Opera Sextronique* had been, in one very basic way, successful. Judge Shalleck was not completely off the mark when he speculated that Moorman's self-exposure had been "born not of a desire to express art, but to get the vernacular 'sucker' to come and be aroused."⁴⁹ His error was in assuming that the two goals were mutually exclusive.

"IF ONLY I could have reached my mother and grandmother before they read that their only child had been arrested. Imagine their shock and pain!" Moorman wrote in "An Artist in the Courtroom."⁵⁰ In truth, she had had plenty of time to warn her family. Her arrest was not reported in the Little Rock newspapers until February 11, thirty-six hours after the fact. But the media had begun to pursue the Moorman soon after her arrest, and she had spent the day telling her story to reporters instead.

So Vivian Moorman had learned of her daughter's ordeal indirectly, perhaps not until she picked up the *Arkansas Gazette* on February 11 and turned to page three. "New York's Topless Cellist (She's from Little Rock) Arrested before Big Finale," blared the headline; the two murky photographs that accompanied the story were proof of Charlotte's shame.⁵¹ Soon afterward, ninety-two-year-old Lillie Edna Kelly began to have health problems, and some in the family were quick to blame Charlotte for her grandmother's decline. Vivian stood by her daughter. "I've been told you caused [Mommye] shock," she wrote. "Bunk. [Mommye] and I love you and we won't be bothered about the talk."⁵² The talk did not subside. For years afterward, eyebrows in Little Rock were raised at the mention of Charlotte Moorman.

Elsewhere, the Topless Cellist story faded quickly. During the spring of 1967, the public had other things on its mind. Soldiers were dying every day in Vietnam, and the New Left was promoting sedition in protest of the escalating war. New York Mafia families were realigning and more violence

seemed unavoidable. Dwight Eisenhower was in the hospital with abdominal cramps; Elvis Presley had married Priscilla in Las Vegas. There were only scattered newspaper reports on the conclusion of Moorman's case. A handful of columnists, including the *New York Times*'s Russell Baker, held forth on the judge's opinion, and *Newsweek* ran a short account under its "national affairs" banner. A few pop culture memes surfaced briefly, including a touring Topless String Quartet (which turned out to be a jape dreamed up by the professional hoaxer Alan Abel) and an all-girl topless rock band, the Ladybirds, which opened a two-week engagement in July 1967 at the infamous Crystal Room.⁵³ Then it was over.

Not for Moorman. For a couple of months she was consumed by preparations for her appeal, which she and Rosenberger had immediately announced to the press. She wrote to reporters, critics, and anyone else she thought might publicly take up her cause, asking their help in locating images "combining nudity and musical instruments" with which to rebut Shalleck's opinion, and helpfully including a blueprinted facsimile of the "painfully sad document" itself.⁵⁴ She must have gone through reams of paper drafting the thirty-three page apologia "An Artist in the Courtroom," a patchwork of news reports, letters, and text that she intended to publish in Ralph Ginzburg's magazine *Fact*.⁵⁵ Written in collaboration with Paik and Frank Pileggi, it is a confused piece of work that does a poor job of answering Shalleck's points but effectively conveys Moorman's hurt, anger, and bewilderment about the whole affair.

Well into 1969, Moorman was still talking about how she might "help my appeal case," but by then she seems to have been doing nothing more than talking.⁵⁶ Rosenberger was confident they would win and frustrated by her stalling. One night he ran into her at Max's Kansas City, a Manhattan nightclub popular with artists, and pressed her to move forward by signing an affidavit of indigence. "I said to her, 'If you just sign this paper we can go ahead with the appeal.' She said, 'Well, I need a notary.' I said, 'You can find a notary in most any drugstore in New York.' She said, 'But it costs twenty-five cents.' I said, 'Charlotte, you can come to my office and I'll do it.' She said, 'All right,' but she never did, and in a sense she resisted the appeal altogether, so there was none."⁵⁷

Moorman apparently had become comfortable with the status quo. Her persecution had been painful, but it was over, she was free, and her misdemeanor conviction now looked like a badge of honor. True, she had been tagged with a ludicrous and reductive nickname, but she was philosophical about that, assuring herself, “Time has a way of adjusting matters and placing values where they belong.”⁵⁸ She would be judged not by Milton Shalleck but by history.

She began talking about her case in larger terms. She revised her bio to include the grandiose statement, “Miss Moorman and Mr. Paik were recently in an important New York law case testing the limits of artistic censorship.”⁵⁹ She claimed that her case had been instrumental in changing those laws and even let it be said that her arrest had been engineered solely to provide an opportunity for Governor Rockefeller to take a stand on the issue.⁶⁰ This last claim is dubious. The bill signed by Rockefeller on April 21, 1967, was not an affirmation of free speech, but a ban on topless waitresses. To make it clear that the ban applied only to topless waitresses, the bill included an exemption for women who exposed their breasts while “entertaining or performing in a play, exhibition, show, or entertainment.”⁶¹

But there is some truth to Moorman’s claim about the importance of her case in the fight against censorship. Ernst Rosenberger feels that the publicity surrounding *Opera Sextronique* was one of the factors—though by no means the only one—that led to changes in New York City’s “prevailing community standards” regarding public nudity.⁶² Still, Moorman’s case seems to have brought up the rear in the fight against regulation of individual citizens’ bodies by the state. By late 1967, nudity was becoming more common on New York City stages. In August, for example, the Film-Maker’s Cinema-theque—the very venue at which Moorman had been arrested—presented *After the Third World Raspberry*, a mixed-media show featuring music, a light show, and topless female dancers. In his review for the *New York Times*, Vincent Canby treated the nudity not as a scandal but as simply one aspect of a complex piece.⁶³ And in October 1967 the musical *Hair*, which included a nude scene, opened off Broadway at Joseph Papp’s Public Theater. From there, public nudity had only a short distance to travel before reaching the mainstream.

16

Raisins in the Audience Dough

“PLEASE, PLEASE SOMEHOW SPEAK TO THE *DAILY NEWS* AND BEG THEM TO WRITE WITH MORE RESPECT,” MOORMAN WROTE TO HERBERT HALBERG ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1967. SHE HAD JUST READ A STORY in the paper reporting that Halberg, commissioner of Marine and Aviation for the city of New York, had approved a request from the Topless Cellist to stage the 5th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival aboard a working Staten Island ferryboat. The writer of the piece was only mildly critical of the decision. But the story led Councilman Matthew Troy, Jr., of Queens, to declare that he would “move heaven and earth” to cut funding to Halberg’s department unless the decision were reversed. The *Daily News* tried to stoke the controversy with three more stories and an editorial, but Halberg stood by his decision.¹

Every day, thousands of commuters cross New York Harbor between Manhattan and Staten Island on the city’s fleet of ferryboats. That Moorman

had persuaded Halberg to allow her to use the largest and newest of the boats, the *John F. Kennedy*, was extraordinary, especially in light of her late, local notoriety. But Halberg, like Thomas Hoving, was a recent appointee to Mayor Lindsay's cabinet. He had progressive ideas about enlivening the city's waterfront, and in a sense he was ready to say yes to Moorman even before she asked. Once she did ask, he could not refuse her. "She was so effervescent. She could interest anyone within the radius of a mile in her ideas, and make them love it," says a friend.² Says another, "She would start talking about her ideas and she would go on a kind of whirl. [...] She was irresistible!"³

Just before midnight on Friday, September 29, nearly six thousand people waited to board the *John F. Kennedy* at Whitehall Ferry Terminal on Manhattan's southern tip. Half of them were still standing on shore when the boat pushed off, full to capacity, for the festival's first five-mile run across the harbor. As the ferry chugged into the open water under a sky still unsettled from heavy rains the day before, Allan Kaprow's *Noise (for Ferryboat)* provided the opening fanfare: a series of ten-second blasts from an ensemble of car and boat horns, including the *JFK*'s foghorn.⁴ Soon, the fireboat McKean pulled alongside with its hoses up and on, the spray illuminated by the play of colored lights. This gorgeous, floating fountain was *Water Curtain II* by Ken Dewey, who was in the *JFK*'s wheelhouse directing the McKean's crew by radio. A quarter moon hung in the sky as tugboats slipped by and buoys blinked. The McKean fell away, and the Statue of Liberty loomed in the darkness ahead. When they reached Staten Island, everyone disembarked, and the docks were briefly aswarm with old and new passengers pushing through the turnstiles to pay the nickel fare for the trip back. By the time the festival ended, at around ten o'clock the next evening, the *JFK* had made some twenty round trips.

About one hundred fifty artists took part in this raucous mobile party.⁵ There was avant-garde jazz on the bridge deck, again organized by Don Heckman: continuous two-hour sets by vocalist Sheila Jordan, the Jimmy Giuffre trio, Sun Ra with his Astro Infinity Arkestra, and Heckman's own group. One level below, a makeshift cinema had been constructed in an interior cabin by covering the windows with paper. As the dark waters of New York Harbor slapped against the ferry's hull, Michael Snow's now-iconic

film *Wavelength* was given its first fully public screening, part of a program curated by Jud Yalkut that also included films by Stan Brakhage, Takahiko Imura, George Kuchar, and a dozen others.⁶

On the open decks there was activity and noise everywhere. Carolee Schneemann built a series of small caves from pink foam rubber (*Night-crawlers II*). Takehisa Kosugi and Nam June Paik strapped radios to their wrists and created “spatial electronic music” by tossing a transmitter back and forth (*Catch Wave*).⁷ Jackson Mac Low did a spoken-word performance (*24 Hour Peripatetic Version on the Word Ferryboat for Charlotte Moorman with Feedback*). Jim McWilliams and three friends, dressed in wetsuits, miner’s headlamps, and red face paint, slithered along the boat’s deck “imitating the crawl motions of snakes” (*Slow Dance on the Ferry*).⁸ Moorman performed a piece by the French artist Robert Filliou by rolling a matchbook up the length of Herbert Halberg’s body. “You are thirty-five matchbooks tall,” she announced. He grinned and told reporters, “This is my first happening.”⁹ After sunset she performed Paik’s *Amelia Earhart In Memoriam*, which involved fluorescent fingernail polish, strobe light, and sparklers.¹⁰ But most of time she skittered around the boat “like a mother hen, making sure that all her artists were still grooving,” and “keeping everything in a state of continuous improvisation.”¹¹

Despite Moorman’s claim that “heavy politics” was banned from the festivals, there was plenty of explicitly political art on board the *JFK* that day. It would have been hard to suppress after the tumultuous spring and summer of 1967. Race riots had erupted in Detroit, Newark, and other urban hot spots. Thousands marched in New York, San Francisco, and elsewhere to protest the escalation of the Vietnam War by President Lyndon Johnson. Moorman herself had taken part in Angry Arts Week, a series of concerts, lectures, films, symposia, and happenings held in New York in January 1967 through which artists aimed “to speak through their own work to dissociate themselves from U.S. policy in Vietnam.”¹² She played her emotive interpretation of *Per Arco*, one of a handful of works in her repertoire that she considered to have political content.¹³

The events of Angry Arts were meant to be “a real artistic protest, rather than a political protest of artists.”¹⁴ So, too, were many of the pieces presented during the ferryboat festival. Raphael Montañez Ortiz, then known as Ralph

Ortiz, drew a huge audience when he projected an image of the Statue of Liberty on a sheet of paper and then slashed at it with a razor and dribbled it with blood. He was accompanied by two tape recorders, one playing sounds of heartbeats and breathing, and the other a report on U.S. immigration policies. Variouslly called *Melting Pot* and *Operation Liberty*, the piece was a comment on what Ortiz called inequalities in the country's immigration quotas.¹⁵ Elsewhere in the ferry Philip Corner staged a sort of flower power tableau in which the military—played by Corner, with army jacket and rifle—faced down the counterculture, represented by a young woman with a bunch of flowers. Love won the battle: when the woman threw a flower at Corner, he dropped his gun and collapsed. In the cinema, Paul Sharits's *Piece Mandala/End War* (1966) alternated monochrome frames in red and blue with images of a couple making love. Outside, on the upper deck, the multimedia artist Lil Picard performed "a political piece disguised behind lollipops."¹⁶ She handed out cans of peas and oversized lollipops to the spectators while the three-man Magic Theater rock band played her *Ballad of Sweet Peas (Peace) and Lollypops*. The song's lyrics could have been written by a stoned Dr. Seuss: "We have no Peace but Lollypops/That's sad, man, that's sad/We eat the Pops and have bad teeth and also/have no Peace/How sad how dad how sad/We have no peace but Lollypops and we can eat Sweet Peas." When a reporter from the *New York Post* asked Moorman what the festival was all about, she said, "We're just trying to express ourselves. And show our new work. Our generation, with the assassination of Kennedy, the war, the bomb—well, in times like this you just can't expect the kind of art you had before."¹⁷

The Staten Island Ferry festival was a success by several measures. It drew a huge audience—thirty thousand people by Moorman's count, double the number who had attended the Central Park festival.¹⁸ Nearly two dozen stories ran in the local and national press. This was excellent publicity, so it almost didn't matter that none of the reporters treated the festival as serious art. Instead, they cast it as the latest far-out hippie Happening, amusing but inconsequential. Even the *New York Times* headlined its story, "The Night the Hippies Invaded the Staten Island Ferry." Moorman found this infuriating. She had taken pains in her press release to stress the serious purpose of the festival and establish the academic credentials of the

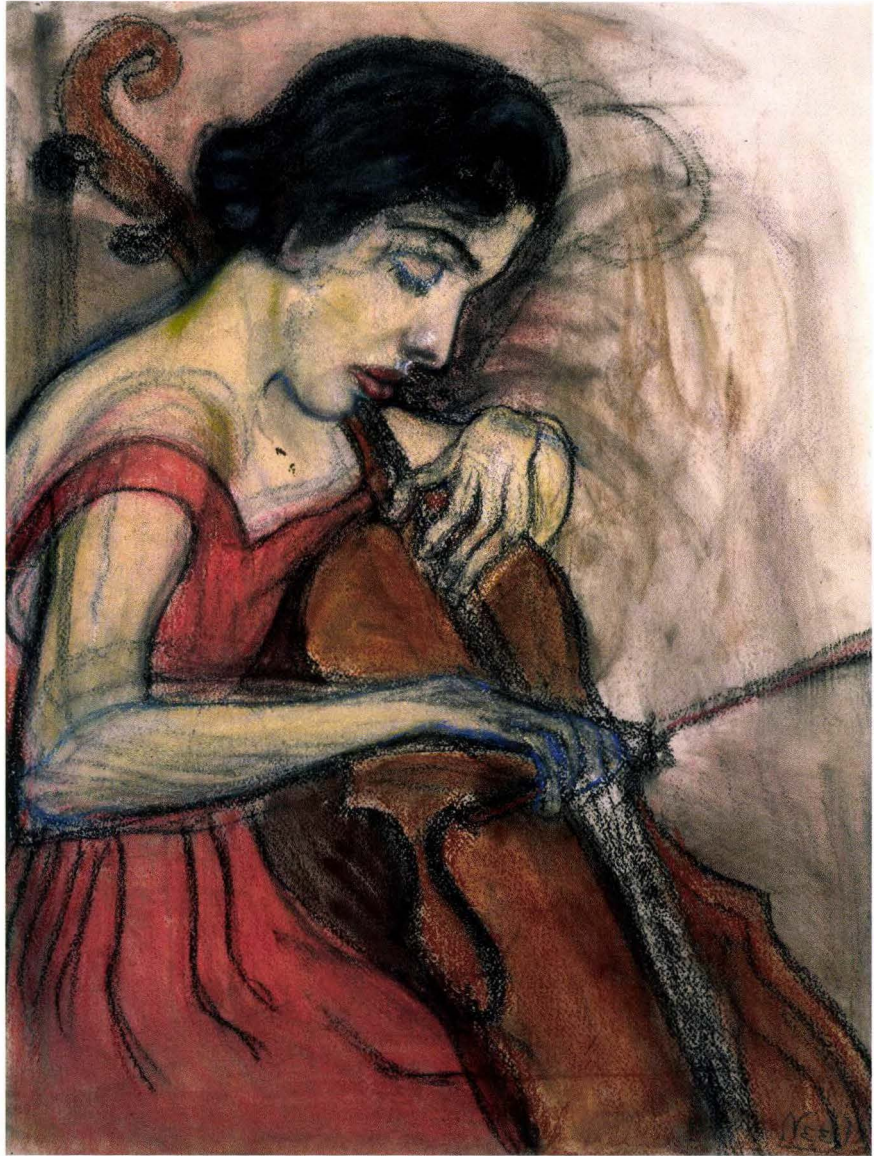


PLATE 1

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Alice Neel, *Woman Playing Cello*, ca. 1959, pastel on paper, 29 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 22 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
© Estate of Alice Neel.

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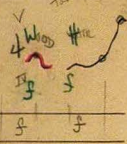
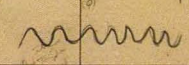
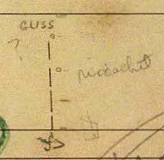
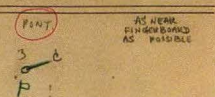
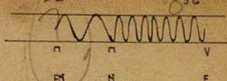
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TIN CAN
PUT AWAY DOWN

BALLOON
BOMB BALL

BUZZ

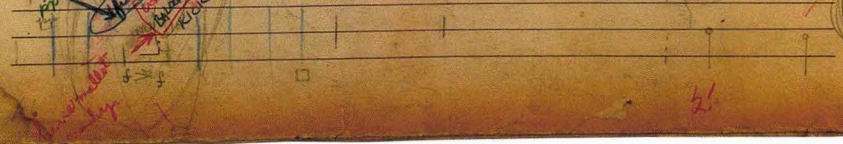
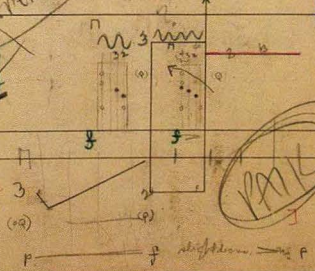
WIND
WINDY

WIND

PUT EGGS ON

all
SANDY LEWIS
BOMB

SNAP
1 + 7
PP
WINDY
BOMB
KICK MIKE



2!

This image shows two pages of a handwritten musical score for John Cage's piece "26'1.1499" for a String Player. The manuscript is heavily annotated with red and black ink. At the top, there are several boxed-in numbers: 128, 130, 133, 136, and 139, with smaller numbers below them (108, 110, 113, 116, 119). A circled number "7" is in the top right corner. The score consists of multiple staves with musical notation, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Numerous annotations are present, such as "WOOD" written vertically, "PANT" in circles, "FLOWERS COME" in a circle, "TEED EGGS" in a circle, "PAIK TURN" in a circle, and "VS 3". There are also various arrows, lines, and other markings throughout the score, indicating performance instructions or corrections.

PLATE 2

Two pages of Charlotte Moorman's annotated copy of the score for John Cage's 26'1.1499" for a String Player. © 1960 by Henmar Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission of C. F. Peters Corporation. Photos courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

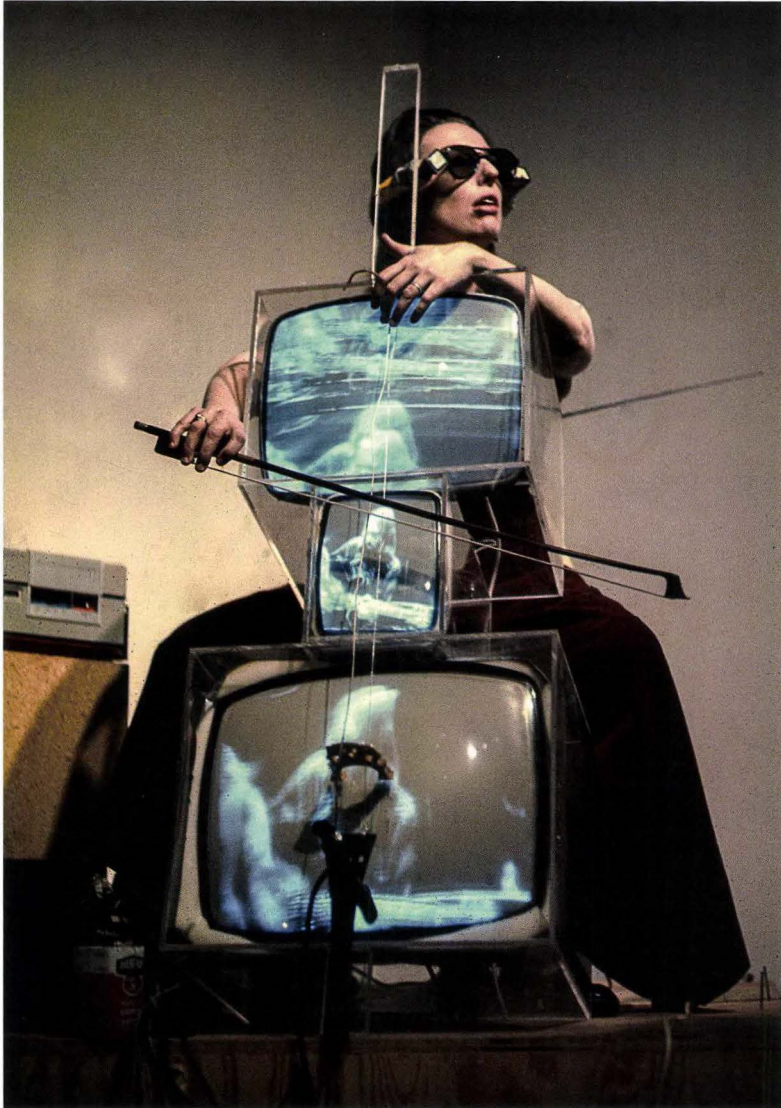


PLATE 4

Charlotte Moorman performs on Nam June Paik's *TV Cello*, New York City, 1971.
She wears Paik's *TV Glasses*. Photo © Takahiko Imura.



PLATE 5

Charlotte Moorman performs Nam June Paik's *Zen Smiles*, Asolo, Italy, 1974.
Photo by Mario Parolin. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering
McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



PLATE 6

Charlotte Moorman's setup for a performance of John Cage's *26'1.1499"* for a *String Player* at WNET-TV studio, 1973. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



PLATE 7

Charlotte Moorman performs Jim McWilliams's *Ice Music for Sydney*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1976. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Kaldor Public Art Projects.



PLATE 8

Charlotte Moorman performs Jim McWilliams's *Sky Kiss*, Sydney, Australia, 1976. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Kaldor Public Art Projects.

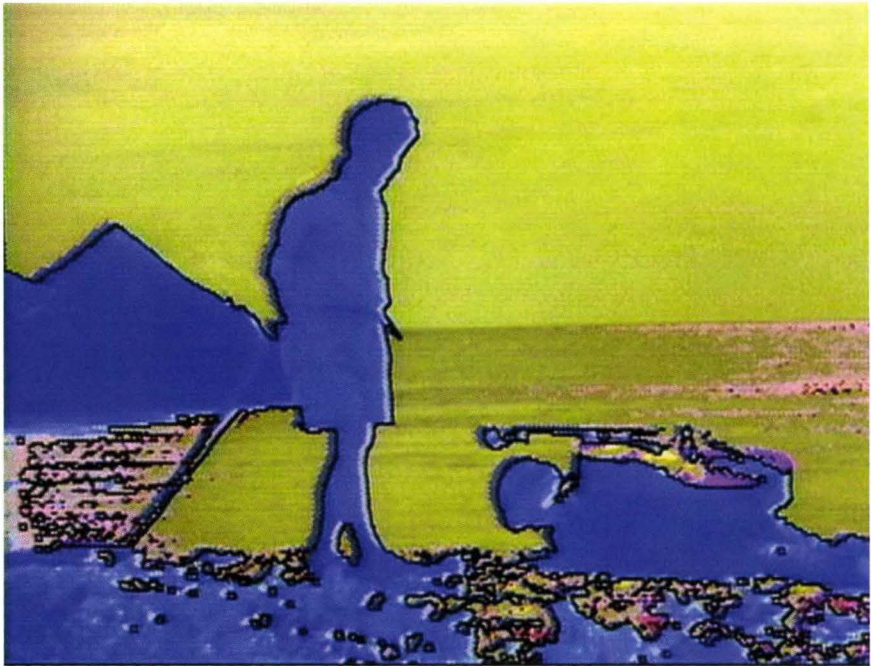




PLATE 9

Nam June Paik with Charlotte Moorman, *Guadalcanal Requiem*, 1977, re-edited 1979. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

PLATE 10

Ay-O, *Rainbow Environment no. 11*, 13th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, World Trade Center, New York City, 1977. Photo © Ay-O.

PLATE 11

Child of the Cello, Emily Harvey Gallery, New York City, 1990, installation view. Left to right: *TV Bra*, *Syringe Cello*, *Bomb Cello* (with a "prepared bow" of red flowers on the floor), *Infiltration Homogen for Cello*, and three *Neon Cellos*. Photograph: courtesy the Emily Harvey Foundation.

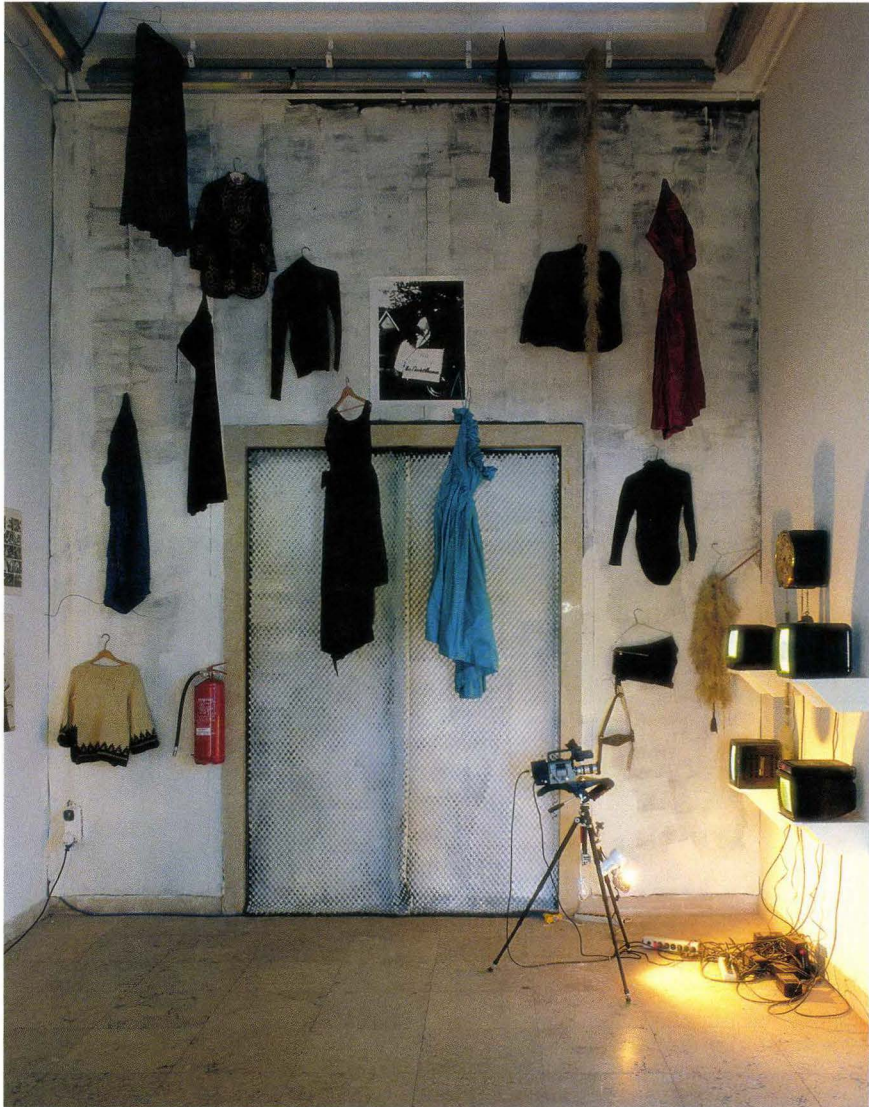


PLATE 12

Nam June Paik, *Room for Charlotte Moorman*, 1993. Installed in the German Pavilion at the 45th Venice Biennale. Photo © Roman Mensing, artdoc.de.

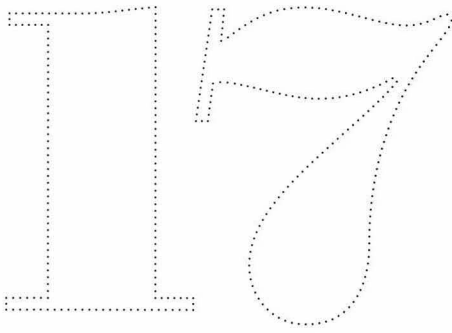
participating artists. Complaining to Commissioner Halberg about the coverage, she sounds almost priggish. "There is no connection between hardworking, serious, responsible artists [and] drug-taking people with no homes or work!" she wrote.¹⁹ But in 1967, anyone who did not conform was assumed to be part of the counterculture. Moorman grumbled, but she clipped every one of the articles for her scrapbook.

As a festival, the fifth was a step forward for Moorman. None of her previous events had been such a perfect marriage of all the forms she knew: interactive Happenings, formal musical concerts, and liminal Fluxus events that seemed to hover between art and life. On the ferryboat, she also found a way to bring together artists from all corners of the experimental art scene, even those who might have preferred not to work together (especially in such close quarters) because of ideological differences about their art. With this festival Moorman became the matchmaker, the networker, the knitter of the avant-garde. These metaphors purposely suggest traditionally female work to emphasize that her approach was organically different from that of George Maciunas, Wolf Vostell, Dick Higgins, and other male event organizers of the day. These men spent a lot of time arguing about who was doing what, how they were doing it, and which labels should or should not be applied to a given artist's work. Moorman had no interest in this. She was neither given to debate nor concerned about situating her work within a complex theoretical framework. Her goal, to bring advanced art to a wider public was basic and broad, and she always kept it in sight. "I'm very bored with the concept that art is for a few people, the chosen few. [...] I have a secret love for reaching people who don't get to museums or concerts normally. [...] I'm very interested in fun and not making art such a snobbish, mysterious thing," she told a friend in 1973.²⁰

There could not have been a better venue than the Staten Island Ferry for realizing this goal. Used by both tourists and commuters, the ferry was integral to the flow of city life and commerce. The boats were a moving architecture with a regularly shifting audience that navigated New York Harbor, a spectacular scenic space. On the ferry, the festival became intertwined with the experience of living in the city. As Moorman put it, "I think it's important we play on the ferry and everywhere else people can come to see that we're not underground anymore."²¹ Jim Tenney felt the event made concrete

“something explicit in the Fluxus movement of a few years ago, with an explosive throwing out of contexts, away from the works, blurring the distinction between art and everything else. It almost doesn’t make sense to talk about art in such a situation.”²²

Jackson Mac Low found a more homely way to describe the comingling of art and life: “The festival was a good way to do pieces right down in the audience, the pieces like raisins in the audience dough.” For Commissioner Halberg the festival was emblematic of the city’s renewed vitality: “New art, new performers ... this is what New York is all about.”²³



Destruction in Art

IN SEPTEMBER 1966 AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF SOME ONE HUNDRED ARTISTS TOOK PART IN THE DESTRUCTION IN ART SYMPOSIUM (DIAS), HELD IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT LONDON AND conceived as a showcase of art that focused on destruction as a key process in its creation. Practitioners of “destruction in art,” as the strategy was termed, aimed to point up the extreme violence of modern life while affirming the centrality of creativity (art) in changing social and political conditions. The intellectual and organizational force behind DIAS was Gustav Metzger, a German artist who had defined autodestructive art in a series of manifestoes begun in 1959. Closely linked to his own experience of violence as a child in Nazi Germany and an adult during the Cold War, destruction in art was for Metzger both a demonstration of humankind’s power to destroy itself and a mirror of the “compulsive perfectionism of

arms manufacture—polishing to destruction point.”¹ The 1966 symposium was an early embodiment of his ideas and their growing influence within a small sector of the avant-garde.

London audiences were treated to a wide range of destructions during DIAS, many of them carried out in public locations. As one of the opening events, the Canadian artist Robin Page, surrounded by reporters and curious onlookers, spent half an hour hacking a large hole in the concrete basement floor of the counterculture bookstore Better Books. Later in the month, Viennese actionist Hermann Nitsch staged a section of his ongoing *Orgies Mysteries Theater*, a ritualistic drama involving a lamb carcass and vials of red paint simulating blood. English artist Barry Flanagan built a sand sculpture in the aisle of a theater, forcing audience members to destroy his work as they took their seats. At the London Free School Playground, which had been bombed during World War II, Al Hansen blew up a motor scooter and Yoko Ono performed her *Shadow Piece*, in which she alluded to the war dead by tracing participants’ bodies as they lay on a length of cloth stretched over the ground. On the final evening, English artist Mark Boyle did a slide-projection event in which slides documenting DIAS artists and their works were left in a projector so long that they melted.² (One essential aspect of destruction in art was the achievement of its own demise.)

Ralph Ortiz, who demolished a piano with a sledgehammer during DIAS, later wrote his own manifesto, in which he declared, “Destruction theater is the symbolic realization of those subtle and extreme destructions which play such a dominant role in our everyday lives, from our headaches and ulcers to our murders and suicides. To realize our destructions within the framework of our art is to finally rescue ourselves and civilization from the havoc reaped by our depersonalized war psychologies.”³ Although some found it paradoxical that artists would protest violence by perpetrating violence, practitioners like Ortiz believed that their work could have a healing effect on viewers by administering a homeopathic dose of real violence within the symbolic discourse of art.

In early 1968, Ortiz joined a small committee of artists who wanted to stage a New York version of DIAS. The group, which also included Al Hansen, Lil Picard, Jean Toche, and Jon Hendricks, decided to begin with a preview evening that would present a sampler of ideas and artworks that

fell under the destruction rubric.⁴ DIAS Preview, as it is known today, took place in late March 1968 in the walled garden behind Judson Church, where Ortiz, Hendricks, Picard, and a handful of others staged simultaneous actions and installations. *Village Voice* critic Jill Johnston later described the scene as “a bazaar [with] spectators milling around, passing from one set-up to another.”⁵ Among the participants was Hermann Nitsch, who happened to be in New York that week; he strung up a bloody lamb carcass to represent his *Orgies Mysteries Theater*. Lil Picard toasted plastic bags full of feathers on a charcoal burner. Bici Hendricks (Jon Hendricks’s then-sister-in-law) gave out ice picks and invited people to stab at a large block of ice with a U.S. flag frozen inside it. A bed of raw eggs surrounded the ice, which made for a double destruction: in order to chip at the ice, one had to step on the eggs.⁶

For their contribution, Ortiz and Jon Hendricks devised a mock “race war” between two chickens, one black and one white, that represented the opposing forces of “White Power and Black Power.” They planned to climb the tree in which they had tethered the chickens and make war by flinging insults and cow’s blood at one another, eventually smashing the birds to death as each swung his chicken at the other while shouting “White Power, Black Death” or “Black Power, White Death.”⁷ But before they could start the action, two spectators intervened. Michael Kirby, an actor, author, and theorist of avant-garde performance, and John Wilcock, a member of the radical anarchist group Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers, cut the chickens down and released them over the wall in an act that was itself a “destruction” aimed at their colleagues’ work. Forced to improvise, Hendricks and Ortiz attacked the tree instead. They sawed off two of its limbs, poured the cow’s blood on the cuts, and laid an American flag in the pool of blood beneath the tree.

Moorman had been invited to take part in DIAS Preview. Her contribution was to be Paik’s *One for Violin Solo*, in which the performer stands behind a table, grasps a violin by its neck with outstretched arms, raises it very slowly until it is directly overhead, then swiftly and violently smashes it against the table, shattering it to bits. Moorman should have performed in the garden with everyone else. But she arrived at Judson Church very, very late—so late, in fact, that by the time she got there Hendricks and the others had given up waiting and moved everyone indoors for a panel

discussion, the second portion of the preview. No one could blame them. But when Moorman was told that she had missed her chance to perform, she made such a fuss that they directed her to a table at the front of the room and told her to go ahead, asking only that she be quick about it.

Paik himself, as well as George Maciunas, had performed *One for Violin Solo* in New York City during the mid-1960s, so when Hendricks announced Moorman's piece, many in the audience knew what was coming. She had barely begun the action when a young man, desperate to save the violin from ruin, tried to stop her. She pushed him away and resumed her performance. Then, just before the climactic finish, another man shoved his way forward. Jill Johnston described what happened next in the *Village Voice*:

Charlotte was angry. She demanded to know who he was (translated: who the hell do you think you are?). He said he didn't want her to break the violin. "By breaking a violin, you're doing the same thing as killing people." [He said] something about giving it to a poor kid who could use it. Attempting to go on with the piece she said, "This is not a vaudeville routine" and "this is not an audience-participation piece." But he persisted and I think Charlotte slapped his face and suddenly there was a tragedy in the making and shock waves in the air and terrific agitation all around. Someone suggested he give her his coat in exchange for the violin. He removed his coat but she wouldn't have any of it. I was inspired by this suggestion and found myself hollering in the din: GIVE IT TO HIM. Charlotte accused her intruder of being as bad as the New York police. He announced that "we are sitting down and refusing to allow this violin to be broken." He forthwith stretched himself out on the table in front of her. [...] It happened very fast and there are probably as many versions of the climax as the number of people who were there. As I saw it, Charlotte's tormentor sat up and was sitting on the edge of the table and at some moment turned to face her at which point with malice aforethought she bashed him on the head with the violin and the blood was spilled.⁸

Johnston's report went on to consider the abundant ironies of a situation in which a symposium on destruction in art was visited by spontaneous interpersonal violence, raw emotion, and actual human bloodshed.

During the month following the fracas, artists debated the incident in a series of letters and statements published in the underground newspaper *East Village Other*. Saul Gottlieb, the Marxist-leaning artist and activist whose head Moorman had bashed, wrote a long piece in which he denounced her behavior. His chief complaint was not that she had injured him (although he did sneak in a nasty comment comparing her to a Mack truck) but that the violence of her act seemed to him ineffectual, and therefore pointless. Art alone, he argued, could not bring about real social change. "The DIAS people are two years behind the times—the time for purely SYMBOLIC destruction is over," he wrote. "Does viewing actual destruction of violins, chickens, dead meat, produce 'catharsis' in the audience, a kind of Pasteurization, or does it enrage people *against* the performers, as happened (not only to me) on March 21st?" Other writers held forth on destruction in art, revolution, counterrevolution, compromise, animal rights, and the most socially beneficial uses of lamb meat and violins.⁹

Real-world violence put an end to the squabble. By the time Gottlieb's piece appeared in *East Village Other*, Martin Luther King, Jr., had been assassinated in Memphis. Out of respect for Dr. King, the DIAS USA festival, which had been scheduled for three weeks in April and May, was canceled.¹⁰

18

Dear Charlotte

IN LATE 1967, MOORMAN FACED ONE OF HER PERIODIC FINANCIAL CRISES. SHE WAS MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS IN DEBT FOR EXPENSES ACCRUED DURING THE CENTRAL PARK AND STATEN Island Ferry festivals. At least three of her creditors had filed civil suits against her: Steinway & Sons for the rental and transport of one grand piano, Profile Press for the printing of six thousand posters, and IBM for the rental of an electric typewriter and dictating equipment. More suits were threatened and summonses served. She took to not answering her telephone. She could not turn to her family for help. Vivian Moorman had gotten control of her drinking problem, but she had never returned to work; her second husband, Fay Hollbrook, whom she had married in late 1965, was an out-of-work engineer. The couple had no telephone, no car, and no savings. Vivian's letters to Charlotte are heavy with details of their fiscal

problems and punctuated with rueful assurances that they would help her if only they could. Occasionally, she slipped a dollar bill into the envelope.

Paik tried to help by asking his wealthy friends for help. The Philadelphia art collector Audrey Sobol received this request:

Charlotte Moorman is again in grave danger of being locked up in the cell ... this time not for her far-out performances, but because of her devotion to OTHER people. Her creditors, of two years festivals are clamoring for her debts to them and are trying to put her in jail as early as next week. I cannot see, that my closest art-partner be injailed because of the debts, which she did not spend even single cent for her self ... and artistic community cannot stand by here ... while she is again punished by the law, because of her service for the avantgarde art [...] For your donation to Charlotte, I can do whatever counter-service you wish. You can pick up any of my art-objects (which I am making with great care that it not be destroyed for a very very long time, and it [can] not be duplicated). [...] Of course we are ready to play free at your garden party or so. ... Anyway, believe me that I would do all the service to you, whatever I can [if] Charlotte's one more legal battle is saved by your generosity.¹

Whatever Sobol's response was, it did not solve Moorman's problem, and eventually Jerald Ordover had to arrange for her to pay off her debts in installments. (He also counseled her to register the festival as a nonprofit organization to shield herself from further lawsuits, but she did not follow his advice until 1971.) Inevitably, she fell behind on payments and new lawsuits were brought.

So she threw herself a benefit concert. *Mixed Media Opera* took place on June 10, 1968, at Town Hall. Moorman promoted the event as a fundraiser to help with legal expenses related to the *Opera Sextronique* affair. The press release included a minihistory of the arrest and trial, and the mailer, designed by Jim McWilliams, featured a photograph of Moorman taken just before her arrest, with the phrase "benefit for legal expenses" superimposed over one bare breast like a censorship bar. On the mailer's

verso are quotes from artists and journalists deploring her arrest. There is no mention of her prosecution for the nonpayment of bills for piano rental and poster printing.

The program she and Paik devised was similarly themed. It featured the world premiere of *Opera Sextronique*'s third and fourth arias, the "bottomless" and "nude" sections that she'd been unable to perform because of her arrest. Also on the bill were the *Variations on a Theme by Robert Breer* (a version of the striptease *Sonata for Adults Only*); a bit of the Cage piece for string player; a collaborative video-film piece by Paik and Jud Yalkut; and a miscellany of other works, including Paik's own *Simple* and one in which Moorman played the theme from *Dr. Zhivago* on a cello with Day-Glo strings.²

As a fundraiser, the event was an utter failure. Only \$300 was raised against expenses of twelve hundred.³ Critically it was an even bigger flop. The *New York Times* review was gentle but mocking. *Village Voice* critic Carman Moore, who was a friend of Moorman's, noted that the star seemed nervous, her intonation was faulty, and the many technical problems and long, empty stretches between pieces "made the evening seem terribly sloppy."⁴ The most vicious assessment of the evening came from Alan Rich, a former *Times* music critic who was now writing for the new weekly magazine *New York*. He declared that *Mixed Media Opera* had been "abominably prepared and presented and that was a disaster beyond the degree to which ordinary bad concerts are disastrous." Moreover, he declared, Moorman was a mediocre cellist who compared unfavorably to "dedicated and skilled" musicians like David Tudor, and her incompetence was hurting the cause of New Music rather than helping it. He wished she would go away. "Miss Moorman has been doing her thing now, or variations thereof, for several years and I think it is high time she stopped."⁵ Frank Pileggi stepped in to defend his lover with a letter to *New York*'s editor that concluded, "I do question Mr. Rich's ideals in devoting his talents, however modest (is that the right word?) to the cause of reviewing and informing. It is misguided and destructive. It is very sad."⁶ The magazine did not publish the letter.

The Town Hall concert marked a turning point for Moorman. Not because of bad notices or new debt—these were nothing new—but because the concert provoked Paik to write her a letter that would change the course of

her career. “Dear Charlotte: It was a great pleasure to read sympathetic review in N.Y. Times,” he began brightly. Then he launched into his main topic.

Now it is time for you to take off for a next big goal. Despite great difficulties, which every reformer should encounter, as a whole our 4-year collaboration was a successful one. We achieved an important goal—to put sex, the most important fact of our life and death, into music, which lacked this element even in the music of John Cage, who tried to be “as natural as possible.” [...] I think we widened the Cagean concept considerably, therefore no wonder that orthodox Cagean[s are] jealous about this achievement. They lost a historical chance. Although you paid bitterly, it is a fortune that a 30-years old performer became a music-historical symbol. D.H. Lawrence and Freud also suffered bitterly. [...]

Now I consider my job essentially finished, and will let you continue this important task and let you enjoy the slowly but definitely coming fruits. I will take up again to compose two piano-electronic pieces, which was interrupted about 1962. It requires quite much mental training. Its essence is “how to replace one fortissimo with many pianissimo.” I postponed this task in 1962 to pursue electronic experiments. [...] I am already 36, and as an artist time is ripe enough to get on with the most important task. [...] I have to get on to the next work, which only I can play, and for which I have to work at least for the next two years, besides doing electronical experiments, and other writing commitments ... and for a concert of this sort, I have to prepare for many many months ... and of course, on the day of performance, I cannot be the stage manager of any other person. [...]

Outwardly things will not change radically ... I will fulfill whole my commitment to you—one more European tour, one West coast tour. I will be your pianist for one more season, that is, until 1969 summer ... I will keep composing colorful Cello

pieces at least one a year, very probably more, for a long time to come. Socially I will defend you as much as before.⁷

He went on to suggest that Takehisa Kosugi take his place as Moorman's performing partner and artistic advisor, and that Frank Pileggi serve as her stage manager and financial support. ("Any man who is lucky enough to be the lover of world-famous, young, and pretty Charlotte Moorman should be ready to let you keep your modest hotel room and eat of couple of hamburgers a day.") Finally, he assured her that she would become a "more diversified artist" by working with others. "It is very normal, and healthy, that we have to have a freer artistic relationship—financial squeeze is not the excuse for artistic stagnation. [...] Anyway, don't worry. Change will be slow and gentle."

Moorman noted the receipt of this letter in her appointment diary. Her reply, if she made one, is not among her papers. She probably was surprised by Paik's wish to pull back from their partnership, but in hindsight it seems almost inevitable that he would do so. He had been ready to give up performance when he met Moorman in 1964. The accident of their collaboration had allowed him to realize a longstanding goal—to infuse music with sex—but their work together had not superseded his interest in electronics. Early in 1965, he had begun to exhibit his altered television sets in New York City, first at the New School for Social Research and later at commercial galleries including Galeria Bonino and the Howard Wise Gallery. He purchased a Sony portable half-inch videotape recorder the moment they became available in the United States and was quickly convinced of video's revolutionary potential. On October 4, 1965, at the first public screening of his videotapes, he passed out a leaflet in which he declared, "Someday artists will work with capacitors, resistors, & semi-conductors as they work today with brushes, violins, & junk."⁸ In the mid-1960s his videos and altered TVs began to be included in museum shows devoted to the new medium, notably *Art Turned On* at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (1965) and *Light/Motion/Space* at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (1967). In 1967, he received a grant of \$13,750 from the Rockefeller Foundation to study the educational uses of electronic media.⁹ By mid-1968, when

Paik wrote his goodbye letter to Moorman, he was already recognized as a pioneer in the young art of video.

All of this left little time to continue a relationship with Moorman that was time-consuming as well as expensive. Paik had spent thousands of his own dollars on their work together and had covered most of the expense related to the Town Hall benefit.¹⁰ He never showed any resentment about supporting Moorman and her work financially. But his family had stopped supporting him in 1966.¹¹ His work brought in some income but it was very expensive to fabricate, and he was not wealthy. Most important, Paik felt it was time to change direction in his work. “Around 1960 I never asked people about my performance because I knew whether I was good or bad ... it was bad, or mostly bad, except for two occasions ... therefore no applause made me happy,” he wrote Moorman. “Now I am courting applause ... proof of the middle-aged, middle-talented, middle-class artist ... I decided to stop my corruption NOW, or else I will be lost forever. [...] I felt definitely, in Town Hall concert, that my artistic sensibility is that of Neo-Dada of 1960. It is outmoded ... although it might be still popular with big audiences, so-said IN crowd had left this stage long before.”¹² He clearly felt that performance needed to shift to the outskirts of his artistic practice.

As he had promised, Paik continued to appear onstage with Moorman through the end of 1969. After that, the nature of their collaboration shifted. They performed their classic pieces together when invited to do so, but Paik did not write any new action music for her. Instead he built several video sculptures for her use, including *TV Bra* and *TV Cello*, and featured her performances in many of his videotapes, including the iconic *Global Groove* (1973). For her part, Moorman performed worldwide with these new video sculptures and also enriched her repertoire with works by other composers, many of them written for her. By end of the decade, she was no longer merely one half of a two-person act, but a celebrated, sought-after solo artist.

FIGURE 18.1

Bill Sontag, poster for Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik's performance at the Spring Arts Festival, University of Cincinnati, 1968. © Bill Sontag. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

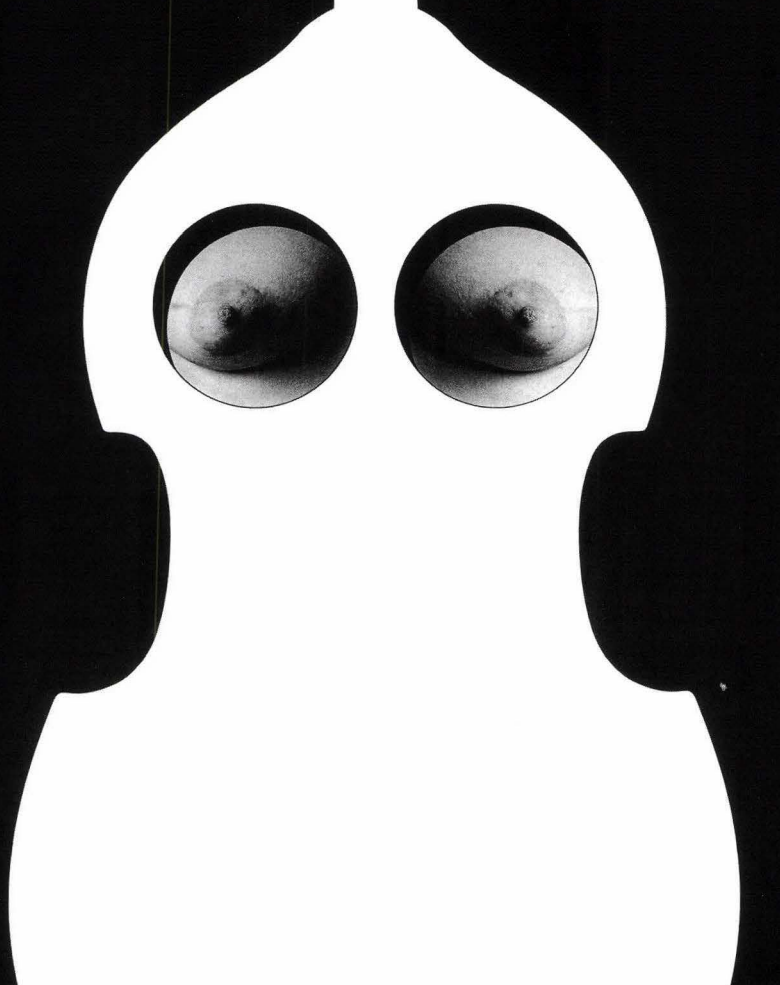


**Nam
June
Paik**

**& Charlotte
Moorman
April 1**

Action-Music
8 pm, Wilson Auditorium
Admission 2.50, Students & Faculty 1.00
Tickets will be available at the door
or in advance at the
University Center Ticket Office 475-4553

Spring Arts Festival
University of Cincinnati



During this second phase of their work together, Paik seems to have considered Moorman as artistic raw material or a sort of found object, albeit one of iconic status. Moorman felt somewhat “depersonalized” by his attitude. In 1975 she told the *New Yorker* writer Calvin Tomkins, “Sometimes I feel Paik doesn’t really think of me as Charlotte Moorman. He looks on me as a work of his.”¹³ But their attitudes toward one another continued to evolve, and by 1977 Paik was able to acknowledge Moorman as cocreator of the video *Guadalcanal Requiem*, which they had shot while on their final tour together in the South Pacific. In 1980, speaking of her work with her former partner, Moorman said, “All these piece are half-mine. That’s what the world finally has realized now. In performance these are not Nam June Paik pieces, but Nam June Paik/Charlotte Moorman pieces. They are collaborations.”¹⁴ Stepping away from an intensive relationship with Paik had perhaps freed her to think of herself differently—not just as an interpreter or muse or festival producer, but as an artist whose creative work took shape “in performance.”

19

It Isn't Music, It's Mixed Media

ABOUT TWO HOURS AFTER SUNSET ON SEPTEMBER 14, 1968, FIFTEEN FLATBED TRUCKS STOOD IDLING NEAR THE INTERSECTION OF WEST 100TH STREET AND CENTRAL PARK WEST DRIVE IN MANHATTAN. Strobe lights, neon tubes, fog machines, and flags had transformed the trucks into illuminated, kinetic floats. September 14 was not a holiday, but the trucks—along with a motley assortment of other vehicles and a large number of costumed pedestrians—were part of a parade.

It got going at around 10:00 p.m., led by a stilt walker dressed in long strips of silver Mylar. There was a poetry float and a jazz float and a sculpture-in-progress float. A Volkswagen bus painted over with blue sky and white clouds beamed images out its back door onto a white sheet held by walking assistants. Five thousand people lined the parade route to watch the cavalcade pass by. Lights flashed and portable generators hummed as the parade wound in and out of the park, accompanied by uniformed cops

and a ragtag band of kids. Around midnight it pulled up near Columbus Circle at the park's southern edge. According to the *New York Times*, it was "not quite a circus, not quite a Mardi Gras, not quite a nightmare."¹ It was the 6th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival.

In 1966 Moorman had brought advanced art into the public sphere with her Conservatory Pond festival. Since then, public art actions had mushroomed. In concert with the times, many of them were politically engaged, guerrilla-style provocations that often earned the performer a citation, if not an arrest. Moorman's style, on the other hand, was decidedly not oppositional. She pursued partnerships with the same corporate, government, and law enforcement bodies that many of her peers denounced. For this, her sixth festival, she convinced the new commissioner of Parks and Recreation, August Heckscher, to grant her a parade permit. She secured not one but two corporate sponsors: Hertz provided flatbed trucks for the floats, and Con Edison, New York's electric utility, supplied all the necessary electrical power. She arranged for a police escort. (Police protection for the avant-garde!) She actively courted the media with a press preview—a festival first—held on the roof of the Hotel Paris. Con Ed even produced a sixty-second promotional spot for the parade that ran during television broadcasts of Yankees and Mets baseball games.²

According to the festival press release, one hundred fifty artists took part in the parade. Among them was Allan Kaprow, who composed "a metallic ballet" for thirty oil drums painted in Day-Glo colors that were rolled down the street. Les Levine, a self-described "media sculptor," mounted ten neon tubes of different sizes vertically around the perimeter of his truck. The sky-painted Volkswagen bus was Geoffrey Hendricks's contribution. Don Heckman programmed the jazz float with acts such as the Robin Kenyatta Quintet and the Marc Levin Ensemble. Jean Toche, a Belgian artist and activist, lashed himself to a cross he had constructed on his float; a sign posted near him read "Chicago," a reference to the violent confrontations between police, National Guardsmen, and demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention just three weeks earlier. The police found Toche's float so offensive that they forced him to pull out midway through the parade.³

For her contribution, Moorman debuted *Sky Kiss*, a new work by Jim McWilliams. The piece called for her to play her cello in midair while wearing

a parachute harness attached to enough helium-filled balloons to raise her and her instrument into the air. McWilliams describes the concept as a simple one: he wanted to sever the connection between the cello's endpin and the floor. "I had the idea that Charlotte could play [...] the first cello that would be suspended in air," he says. "It wouldn't be grounded."⁴ He told Moorman that he also wanted to create a new image of the kiss, which he claimed was the most-depicted erotic act in the history of art.⁵ *Sky Kiss*, then, was a levitation that freed both the musical instrument and its player, who drifted aloft to meet some disincarnate lover. The image is indeed a new one in art history, as well as a lovely revision of an iconic painting: Man Ray's *A l'heure de l'observatoire: les amoureux* (1933), in which a woman's disembodied lips hover seductively in the sky.

Although later realizations of *Sky Kiss* would be among Moorman's finest achievements, this first performance was not a success, either technically or artistically. McWilliams's vision of a pristine, platonic, musical kiss did not hold. Moorman, who had never been a minimalist, chose to debut the piece dressed in a superheroine's costume of flaming red leotard, tights, and a satin cape. While aloft, she played not ethereal avant-garde music but pop tunes with an aerial theme, such as "Up, Up, and Away" and "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze."⁶ McWilliams had underestimated the amount of helium necessary to keep Moorman and her cello aloft, an error that was made worse after a bystander popped one of the balloons. So Moorman did not float gracefully above the crowd but bobbed up and down on the air currents like a kite that won't quite take off. She often had to use her feet to relaunch herself. Photographs taken that night show her dangling awkwardly a few feet above ground, surrounded by assistants who alternately pulled and pushed her along. She traveled like that for about two miles, from 95th Street to Columbus Circle, until she finally was set down and her balloons were released into the sky. Even with all the problems, she said that *Sky Kiss* was one of the most wonderful sensations she had ever had.⁷

During the 1970s, when he was Moorman's regular collaborator, McWilliams often skipped her performances of his work. "I couldn't deal with [the gap between] my image of what I thought it should be, and how she would end up interpreting it."⁸ Moorman did have a tendency to overdo, but always



FIGURE 19.1

Charlotte Moorman debuts Jim McWilliams's *Sky Kiss*, 6th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, Central Park West, New York City, 1968. Photo © Estate of Fred W. McDarrah.

in service of pleasure, humor, and visual spectacle. These features made entry into her work a painless process, for both the uninitiated and the insider. Jill Johnston, who reviewed the festival for the *Village Voice*, described Moorman “floating down the street past the procession blowing kisses to all of her cheering artists. [...] She’s a cross between Lady Godiva, the Pied Piper, a female Orpheus, and a host of winged mermaids. She’s really just Charlotte being superbly and supremely ridiculous.” The festival as a whole, Johnston wrote, “was all good fun and it came off remarkably well, and it adds to my accumulating wish that all power politics be replaced by a condition of continuous festival.”⁹

FOUR DAYS AFTER the festival Moorman boarded a BOAC flight for London, where she planned to meet Paik for their final European tour. For two months he had been writing her to finalize plans for the tour. He had received no replies. “Are you crazy?” he wrote in midsummer. “Why not write? I’ll change London concert [...] to Paik one-man show if you don’t send cable IMMEDIATELY.” This was followed by: “I am outraged of your no-letterism. I don’t know what to do. Don’t complain later of whatever decision I would make.” On August 5 he implored, “BE DEPENDABLE” and directed her to write him every three days and let him know “the state of your passport and festival date.” She did not. On August 10 he fairly shouted at her: “How can I do any business in this state of CHAOS?” Perhaps suspecting that her love affair had distracted her from her work, Paik warned her not to bring Frank. “DON’T come with any male friend from New York,” he wrote. “If I see you arriving with somebody else in the airport I’ll cancel whole thing and fly back to New York [on] the next plane.”¹⁰

She finally booked a flight. Frank stayed home, and Charlotte wrote to him every couple of days. Her letters were irritable and fretful. She missed him. She and Paik were squabbling. She didn’t like ale or potted meat. It rained a lot. Everything looked “dull.”¹¹ There were some glamorous moments, such as the night she met Norman Mailer at a party in his honor, and her visit to the London Playboy Club, which had awarded her a celebrity key, and the half hour she spent with Yoko Ono at EMI’s Abbey Road studio, where Ono’s lover John Lennon and the rest of the Beatles were recording the song “Happiness Is a Warm Gun.”¹² Charlotte described these diversions



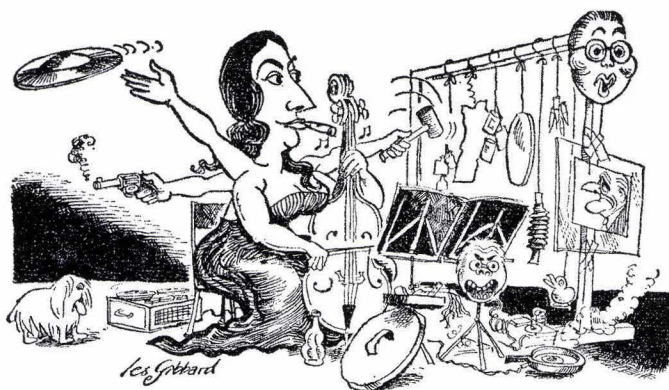
FIGURE 19.2

Charlotte Moorman performs Takehisa Kosugi's *Chamber Music*, Düsseldorf, West Germany, 1968. Photo by Thomas Tilly. Courtesy Archiv Künstlerischer Fotografie der rheinischen Kunstszene.

to Frank in colorless prose that lacked the thicket of exclamation points with which she usually crowded her letters. In the fall of 1968, London was swinging, but Moorman was not in the mood.

Because of her “no-letter-ism” Paik had only been able to arrange one concert, at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts on September 23. They did a version of *Mixed Media Opera* that included works by Cage, Ono, Chiari, Brown, and Paik. Moorman also performed Kosugi’s *Anima 2* (1962), also known as *Chamber Music*. The score reads, “Enter into a chamber which has windows. Close all the windows and doors. Put out different part of the body through each window. Go out from the chamber. The chamber may be made of a large cloth bag with door and windows made of zippers.” In early 1968 she had talked about the piece with a writer from the Venezuelan journal *Zona Franca*. “Certainly the blue bag is my chamber. The sound is produced by the cello and my body inside the chamber, as well as the sound of opening and closing the zippers.”¹³

Chamber Music was a marvelously versatile piece that Moorman would perform dozens of times during the next two decades. Sometimes the piece



Charlotte Moorman, cellist: See “Explosion of New Music.”

FIGURE 19.3

Les Gibbard, caricature of Charlotte Moorman’s performance at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. Published in *Sunday Telegraph* (London), September 22, 1968. © Les Gibbard. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

verged on the occult, as when she waved her bow over the ground as if she were wielding a divining rod. Other times, as when she opened a zipper to reveal a glimpse of bare foot or naked ass or lock of hair, the chamber became a bedroom and the performance a seductive striptease. “People always ask [Kosugi] ‘How can this be music?’” Moorman told *Zona Franca*. “And people constantly ask me if I consider it music. Well, I don’t call it music. The only explanation I like is that it is mixed media.”

Moorman’s London program also included Cage’s *26’1.1499’’ for a String Player*. Critic Edward Greenfield, writing for the *Guardian*, described her performance on that late September evening:

The cello emits a few unearthly groans, but even these subside when the bow is thrown away to be replaced by a bunch of irises. The cello itself gets replaced when Miss Moorman plays an electronic wire stretched over Mr. Paik’s back, but these central events get submerged by the much-publicised array of incidentals—the banging of dustbin lids, the amplified sound of “Coca-Cola” gurgling down Miss Moorman’s throat, the frying of eggs on a picnic stove, the intrusion of steamer-sirens, doorbells, babies’ rattles, squeakers and so on. For the serious-minded anxious to draw a political moral, Miss Moorman finally gets down to playing a bomb, cellowise.

This is all fun, and the periodic superimposed screenings of previous performances showed that on occasion Miss Moorman can make it even more fun than last night.¹⁴

What had she done in those previous performances? She had sometimes used an amplified telephone to call Cage (or some other luminary or, failing that, the local weather line) “so the audience could hear your voice.”¹⁵ She had hoisted to the ceiling a skinned chicken on a rope and then fired her pistol at it. In later years, her performances gained in sensuality. She once zipped and unzipped the fly on a pair of men’s wool trousers, the sound amplified “to the level of a train blast,” and followed that by undoing the zipper on her own gown to bare a breast. Another time she ate the leaves and petals of a rose, with gusto.¹⁶

Even friends who delighted in such effervescence acknowledged that Moorman had misinterpreted Cage. “She thought [his] pieces were full of freedom,” said composer Franz Kamin. “Well, they weren’t.”¹⁷ Cage himself complained privately that Moorman had been “murdering” his piece “all along.”¹⁸ He was even more aggressive in this comment: “The striking thing was to take this piece of mine [26’1.1499” for a String Player] and play it in a way that didn’t have to do with the piece itself. I didn’t like it at all. My publisher said, ‘The best thing that could happen for you, would be that Charlotte Moorman would die.’”¹⁹ On the other hand, Cage gave her credit for being “the first to realize the absolution of performance and music.”²⁰ Moorman had loosened the ties between her performance of a piece and the piece itself. In the case of Cage, the ties became very loose indeed, but she did not sever them; this would have been fatal to her identity. A journalist once asked her why she always performed with her cello even though she did not always play it. “I’m a cellist, and I must always bear that in mind,” she told him.²¹

Moorman and Paik’s London show sold out, so a second show was added five days later. They used the time between to socialize, meet with press, and make appearances on the BBC television shows *Late Night Lineup* and *How It Is*. Soon, they had been in London for nearly three weeks, and Moorman couldn’t wait to get home to Frank. But Paik needed to earn some cash for his flight back to the United States, and he wanted her to continue their tour in West Germany. She sensed that “leaving Paik here alone would be the last straw,” so on October 4 she reluctantly accompanied him to Düsseldorf.²²

“I’m in rainy Germany,” she wrote Frank that night. “Paik has been calling everybody & he can get some money & [he says] we should play a private performance of *Opera Sextronique* which wouldn’t be bad for my case [the appeal of her conviction] but I really didn’t bring enough stuff and it would cost money to prepare.”²³ They did it anyway. Joseph Beuys made Paik a gift of eighty Deutsch Marks; with another two hundred from their old friend Rolf Jährling, who had organized *24 Hours*, they had enough to buy or rent the necessary props and equipment.²⁴ Thus it happened that Moorman publicly performed all four arias of *Opera Sextronique* for the first time in Düsseldorf, on October 7, 1968.

The concert took place at Jörg Immendorff and Chris Reinecke’s experimental performance space Lidlraum and was announced as a benefit. Among

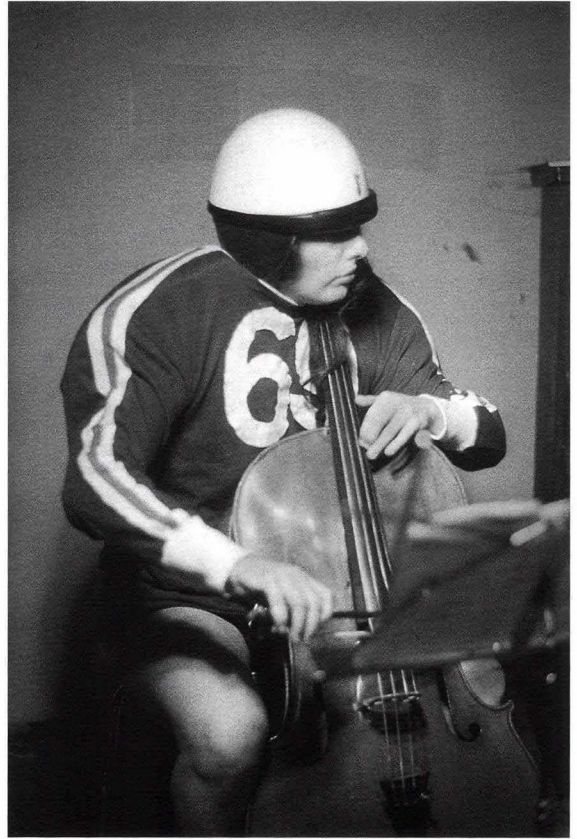


FIGURE 19.4, FIGURE 19.5, AND FIGURE 19.6

Charlotte Moorman performs Nam June Paik's *Opera Sextronique*, Düsseldorf, West Germany, 1968. Left to right: Aria 2, Aria 3, Aria 4. Photos by Thomas Tilly. Courtesy Archiv künstlerischer Fotografie der rheinischen Kunstszene.



the one hundred people who gathered in the small theater that night was Ralph Blumenthal, the *New York Times*'s correspondent in West Germany. Blumenthal described the electric bikini in Aria 1 and the battery-powered propellers of Aria 2, which were "attached to [Moorman's] breasts with flesh-colored adhesive tape." In Aria 3, he wrote, "she performed in a football jersey with number 69 and shoulder pads and a motorcycle helmet. She was [...] naked below the waist." In Aria 4, "Miss Moorman played a four-foot bomb as if it were a cello while a projected movie cartoon, 'Pin Cushion Man,' flickered against her naked body. Instead of a bow she used a saw, which she finally broke by smashing it against the metallic 'bomb.'"²⁵ Her serious demeanor ruled out giggles from the audience, which was, Blumenthal reported, subdued.

ON FEBRUARY 21, 1969, Lillie Edna Kelly died at age ninety-three. Charlotte flew to Little Rock on February 23 and wrote Frank the next day from Hope, Arkansas, where Lillie Edna had raised her five children and would now be buried. "Mommye is gone. She was beautiful. [...] I'm walking down the streets she went down. Please don't let anything happen to you. I love you."²⁶ At the funeral home Charlotte insisted that her grandmother's casket be left open so she could take cut a lock of hair and take some photographs.²⁷ She carried the pictures with her for months, sometimes startling friends by pulling them out and exclaiming, "Isn't she beautiful?"²⁸

Charlotte stayed in Little Rock for ten days. Her postcards to Frank are reports from an emotional battle zone where she was both openly despised and obsessively loved and could not comfortably be who she was. Her aunt Lola abused her, telling her flat out that she had killed Lillie Edna. Her stepfather, Fay, berated her. "Fay said I need psychiatric care and I'm a fool to be wasting my time with the silly trash I'm doing and he was ashamed when he saw me on the 'Tonight Show' and he told mother she was insane."²⁹ Charlotte fell prey to their illogic. Her archive contains this note, undated but clearly written retrospectively: "February 21, 1969 my Mommye died after a long illness resulting from my conviction. My tumors started growing. I quit everything for a while." In her appointment diary, she noted the death by blacking in the space for February 21 with a ballpoint pen.

20

TV Bra

ON SEPTEMBER 7, 1968, ONE HUNDRED MEMBERS OF THE NEW YORK RADICAL WOMEN GATHERED ON THE BOARDWALK IN ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY. THEY HAD COME TO PICKET THE MISS AMERICA PAGEANT to protest female enslavement to what they called “ludicrous beauty standards.”¹ The rally had a playful spirit. Stink bombs were thrown, a goat was crowned Miss America and paraded outside the convention hall, and a large bathing-beauty puppet was auctioned off. At the center of the action was a “Freedom Trash Can” into which the women tossed the implements of their enslavement: high-heeled shoes, girdles, false eyelashes, hair curlers, and brassieres. “Liberation now!” they shouted. The organizers had intended to set the trash afire, but they did not, calling the action instead “a symbolic bra-burning.”²

Paik had a nose for the absurd, especially when it concerned sex, women, pop culture, and mass media. Within months of the purported bra-burning he had devised a new piece for Moorman, *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969). No Maidenform, Paik's bra was an ungainly assemblage of two small television picture tubes encased in plexiglass boxes, one for each breast, which were held on Moorman's body by wide, transparent vinyl straps and safety pins. It was uncomfortable—she complained about its weight (nearly six pounds) and the heat it generated—and she worried about the high-voltage wires attached to the backs of its picture tubes, which carried between five and ten thousand volts of electricity over her bare skin.³ When Paik strapped her in for the first time, he said, “It’s very likely you won’t be electrocuted.”⁴

There were several options for its operation. The TV sets could be tuned to broadcast television or display prerecorded tapes; they could also show a live, closed-circuit image captured by Paik as he walked among the audience with a video camera. (“Putting the audience’s faces on my brassiere,” was Moorman’s description of this method.⁵) When Moorman wore *TV Bra* she improvised “abstract sounds” on her cello and altered the television pictures in various ways.⁶ Sometimes she taped magnets to her wrists, which distorted the video images as she moved her arms; other times, she used a microphone to pick up the cello sounds, which were then transformed into optical signals that disturbed the television pictures.⁷

Moorman debuted the piece on May 17, 1969, in a five-hour performance at the opening of the exhibition *TV as a Creative Medium*, organized by Howard Wise for his gallery on West 57th Street. By all accounts it was a dazzling show, with two darkened rooms of TV sets that glowed with kaleidoscopic colors and abstract video fantasies. The sight of her in that gallery of unmanned machines must have been startling. Bathed in the eerie glow of cathode-ray tubes, she and her cello were an earthy oasis of flesh, hair, sweat, wood, and catgut. The *TV Bra*, by contrast, comprised a pair of electronic pasties that streamed intangible, almost magical energy. Together these two aspects transformed Moorman into a female shaman for the McLuhan age, an era when technological gadgets were not the ubiquitous bodily prostheses that they are today.



FIGURE 20.1

Charlotte Moorman with Howard Wise at the opening of *TV as a Creative Medium*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York City, 1969. She wears Nam June Paik's *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

According to its title, *TV Bra* was made for a “living sculpture.” Was Paik thinking of himself as Pygmalion, the mythic sculptor who fell so deeply in love with his statue that the gods brought her to life? Perhaps; he had once described topless Moorman as a “live Greek female torso sitting still at a cello.”⁸ But during the 1960s, the concept of a “living sculpture” was in vogue among artists aiming to confuse the boundaries of art, life, and commerce. Early in the decade the Italian artist Piero Manzoni had sold “magic bases,” portable pedestals that turned anyone who stood on them into a human sculpture. For a fee, he would also sign your body and issue a certificate declaring you a work of art. In 1962, during the Festival of Misfits, the French artist Ben Vautier lived for three weeks in the storefront window of London’s Gallery One as a “Living Sculpture” who could be purchased for two hundred fifty pounds. And in 1969, the British collaborative team Gilbert and George coated themselves with bronze paint and stood motionless for a time on a staircase in a Dutch museum.

TV Bra belongs to this aesthetic species, but its central theme was the link between human beings and their machines. “The real issue implied in [the fusion of] ‘Art and Technology,’” Paik wrote in the Wise Gallery exhibition brochure, “is not to make another scientific toy, but how to *humanize* technology and the electronic medium, which is progressing rapidly—too rapidly.”⁹ In *TV Bra* he accomplished this through a doubling in which Moorman’s body became a television screen and televisions stood in for parts of her body.

While *TV Bra* was a serious work of art, it was also a send-up—of bra-burnings, “Living Bras” (a then-current ad slogan for Playtex brassieres), and widespread worries that excessive time in front of the “boob tube” was breeding an infantile population addicted to “electronic breastfeeding.”¹⁰ Moorman expanded the parody by making it her habit to don the bra onstage, as part of the performance. Because it was too heavy and awkward to put on by herself, she always had an assistant, usually male. This resulted in an unlikely vignette: a man laboring to help a woman put on her bra rather than take it off. (At the Wise Gallery exhibition her assistant was Paik’s teenaged nephew Ken Hakuta. He remembers that Moorman’s breasts were the first he had ever seen, and that Paik “threw an absolute fit” when he found out what had transpired.¹¹)

In July 1969, Moorman took *TV Bra* to Washington, D.C., for the opening of the Corcoran Gallery's *Cybernetic Serendipity*, another of the growing number of exhibitions to explore the conjunction of communication, science, and art. The cocktail party preview was on July 16, the day that Apollo 11 was launched on its historic moon-landing mission. Moorman performed that evening and later wrote to *New York Times* critic Grace Glueck about the experience: "I'm so sorry I couldn't stop performing Paik's *TV Bra* to speak to you before you left. But I was performing for the most marvelous cross-section of people—computer experts, men who build missiles, mothers and their children, NBC and Metro Media TV, *Popular Photography* magazine, artists, tourists, etc.—with the space takeoff program on each breast. They asked such things as what I thought the future of TV and art is? How my *TV Bra* worked mechanically? What is the connection of the space flight and my *TV Bra*? etc. I always play so they can see the whole work, but afterwards I'm happy to answer their questions."¹² Whenever Moorman wore the *TV Bra*, she became her own tour guide. She peppered her performances with explanatory chat and sometimes even answered questions while she was playing. She was earthy, approachable, and charming. "Like a hostess at a Texas barbeque," recalls one viewer.¹³

TV Bra was the first new work Paik made for Moorman after her arrest. Clearly it was a response to that incident; *TV Bra* both restored her modesty and relieved her of the designation "topless." (Never mind that the bra actually encouraged prurience by compelling spectators to stare at her breasts.) More broadly, *TV Bra* was the culmination of Moorman and Paik's five-year-long project to conjoin sex and music. As an object, it perfectly encapsulates Paik's artistic goals, Moorman's brilliance as a performer, their personal history, and its cultural context. In hindsight, *TV Bra* almost seems inevitable.

Moorman adored the piece. She believed it was Paik's finest work and said that wearing it was "a great, great feeling, so pure and romantic."¹⁴ During the 1970s she performed *TV Bra* more than any other piece in her repertoire, so much so that it became an attribute nearly equal in importance to her cello. When she became too ill to use it any longer, she put it on a shelf in her loft, and she and Frank watched the *David Letterman Show* on its tiny



FIGURE 20.2

Charlotte Moorman performs Nam June Paik's *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* at Art Gallery of New South Wales, 5th Kaldor Public Art Project, Sydney, Australia, 1976. Photo by Kerry Dundas © Art Gallery of New South Wales.

sets.¹⁵ Only when she was near death and desperately in need of cash did she agree to sell it.¹⁶

TV Bra initiated the second phase of Moorman and Paik's relationship, and for that alone it would be notable. It also is a signal work in the history of video art, an unprecedented fusion of sculpture, moving imagery, performance, sound, and popular culture. Without Moorman's body, spirit, and cello, however, *TV Bra* is considerably diminished. As she put it, "*TV Bra* is one third of [the piece], I'm one third of it, and my cello is one third of it. When we're all together, the work is complete."¹⁷

21

A Mini World's Fair

MOORMAN'S SEVENTH FESTIVAL, HELD IN AUTUMN 1969, WAS BORN OF A GRAND IDEA BUT WAS NEARLY DONE IN BY LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS AND CROSS-CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDING. SHE LATER SAID that it was "one of the most terrible undertakings I've ever had to do."¹

She had wanted to stage the event on Ellis Island but could not get permission.² She settled instead on two outcroppings in the East River: Wards Island, where for a century the city had buried its paupers and housed the criminally insane; and tiny Mill Rock Island, an unpopulated knob in the treacherous river channel known as Hell's Gate. She promoted the festival as a "mini World's Fair." (Her inspiration was probably the 1964 New York World's Fair in Queens, which she had attended as part of a ninety-four-piece orchestra that performed in the rain on opening day.³) She imagined her own world's fair as an international exposition of avant-garde art in

which works would be sorted by each artist's country of origin and displayed in a series of "beautiful parachutes."⁴ She also decided that the festival should run for a full week, from September 28 through October 4.

World's Fairs seek to dazzle visitors with acres of historical recreations, cultural treasures, and futuristic, technological marvels. The 1964 fair had included, for example, a NASA exhibit of rockets and satellites and a modernist, open-air pavilion called "The Tent of Tomorrow." Moorman's idea to imitate this format aligned with her personal mission to present advanced ideas in the arts to a broad public. But her plan was overly ambitious and her choice of site unfortunate.

Wards and Mill Rock Islands were lovely spots, with waterfront parks and spectacular views of Manhattan's skyline. But jurisdiction over the islands was in 1969 so complex that Moorman needed fifty-three permits from ten separate municipal and federal agencies ranging from the New York Department of Ports and Terminals to the Federal Aviation Administration.⁵ It was also physically difficult to get to the islands. Wards Island was accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists via a footbridge that crossed the river near East 103rd Street, but materials and artworks that could not be hand-carried over this bridge had to be brought in by boat. Mill Rock Island could be reached only by private watercraft.

Once the festival began, there were more complications. The city had trouble getting electricity to the islands, so many of the works remained silent and dark until nearly halfway through the week. The weather was damp and windy. Some of the artist's works were intimate performances that were ill served by the festival's duration and expansive space. Others failed because they were too large and complex. German sculptor Ernst Lurker's *Blooming Inflation*, which was to have been a ninety-foot-tall tower topped by a bunch of balloons thirty-six feet in diameter, was beset by technical problems and only partially erected when the backer pulled out of the project, leaving Lurker with an unfinished work and several thousand dollars of debt. Moorman's own performance, the debut of Yuki-hisa Isobe's *Balloon Ascension*, almost did not happen. For six days running she attempted to rise up over Wards Island in a Montgolfier-style hot air balloon. Each day, the launch was foiled by wind or rain or the absence of photographers to document it. She finally got airborne on the festival's

last day. But the composition, which consisted solely of the ascent, was a bland idea in which the balloon was more the star than Moorman, and the performance is not among her best.⁶

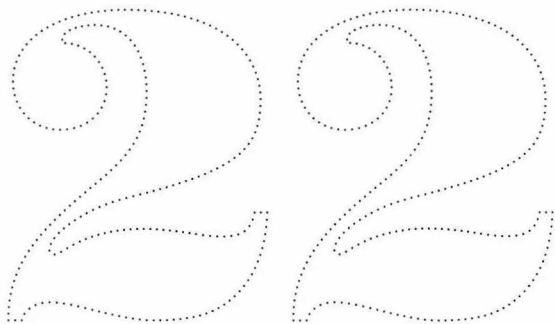
The festival's principal access point, the footbridge at 103rd Street, began on the Manhattan side at a low-income housing project in Spanish Harlem, which in 1969 was one of the most impoverished and violent neighborhoods in New York City. Much of its largely Puerto Rican population lived in squalid tenements where gang warfare, arson, and drug abuse were features of daily life. Local kids who lived near the footbridge used it to gain access to Wards Island Park, whose green space and playing fields they considered their territory. When the festival moved in, many of the youth reacted with destructive energy. Sculptures were damaged and destroyed, or dismantled and used as projectiles. Several were stolen. At one point during the week Moorman herself was threatened with a shovel. Some of the artists, unwilling to risk the loss of their works, packed up and left soon after the festival had begun.⁷ There was no money to hire guards, so a day or two into the event Moorman decided she should stay up all night, every night, to protect the remaining electronic and video equipment. For support she brought Victor, the mixed-breed dog she and Frank had just adopted, and a bottle of amphetamines.⁸

Moorman probably had not expected this sort of trouble. On the contrary, she had been excited to reach a new audience. She wanted interaction with a segment of the city's population that many New Yorkers would rather have ignored. She had even planned to translate some of the artists' printed materials into Spanish to accommodate the neighboring community.⁹ After the festival, she brushed aside criticism of the kids. Their assaults, she asserted, were nothing more than "normal play behavior. [...] It's romantic and arrogant to think that they were rebelling against us."¹⁰ Festival artist Jean Toche elaborated on this idea in an open letter to the public that read, in part:

We artists had invaded an island, which was the only park and playground for the neighborhood Puerto Rican kids, and had imposed upon them something totally alien: the products of a white, arrogant decadent Kultur, and an abstract and totally

irrelevant language called “Art.” [...] How can you possibly justify to a kid who has to sleep in a half-burned down neighborhood, in rooms covered with poisonous lead walls and rats all over the place, that a [Buckminster Fuller] dome was built not to sleep in but to project abstract lines-and-dots-type of films or to show light boxes? The only constructive point of the festival is that it forced a lot of people to cross that section of Harlem and maybe realize for the first time in their lives what it is to have to live in a ghetto. It also brought forth strikingly the absolute necessity for the artist to become more relevant to his environment.¹¹

Toche’s letter expressed his passionate engagement with social equality in the strong language typical of the late 1960s. What makes his and Moorman’s comments notable is not their tone, but their sensitivity to the diversity of the local audience, which marks the 1969 festival as an early example of community outreach, a practice that is now taken for granted in the arts. Today, many artists and their agents are keen to engage a broader public. But few would consider siting an artwork or staging an event in a public space without first soliciting the opinions of those who use that space. The moral of the Wards Island festival was a difficult one for Moorman to accept: not all audiences necessarily wanted what she had to offer.



Getting By, with a Little Help

ACCORDING TO THOSE WHO KNEW HER, MOORMAN HAD EXTRAORDINARY PHYSICAL PRESENCE. OFFSTAGE AND ON, SHE WAS POSSESSED OF A SUPERCHARGED ENERGY THAT WAS SEXUAL AND PLAYFUL AND calamitous all at once. She swept into a room “like a meteor.”¹ Her performances were fueled by this vitality and by her willingness—even need—to give everything she had to her audience. It is not surprising that a person so physically oriented would be hyperaware of her health. Woven through Moorman’s correspondence is an inventory of her illnesses and accidents, large and small. Reading her letters one learns that she suffered from toothache, flu, migraine, gastric ulcers, menstrual cramps, and “galloping crud”; that she sustained at various times a broken nose, cracked ribs, and torn ligaments. She was injured in car and taxicab crashes. Her eardrums collapsed. She had her gallbladder removed. Before her cancer diagnosis

in 1979, she probably had no more physical problems than the average person. But because she reported on so many of them, so often, and in such detail, some of her friends still have the impression that she was sick all her life.

Moorman had planned to marry Frank Pileggi in November 1970. But in September, she was told she needed surgery to remove uterine fibroid tumors. Since she had no health insurance, Frank suggested they marry right away so he could add her to his policy. They were wed on September 14 in a civil ceremony in the chapel of the Manhattan Municipal Building and spent their wedding night in a honeymoon suite on the tenth floor of the Waldorf Astoria. On September 16 Moorman wrote her mother to tell her she'd married.² Then she checked into New York Hospital, where she remained for two weeks.

Moorman had hoped to stage her 1970 avant-garde festival aboard a battleship, which she would get out of mothballs near Haverstraw, New York, and float downriver, stopping at several ports for a few hours at a time before arriving in Manhattan.³ But there was no festival in 1970. She said later that it had been cancelled because of her surgery, which had itself been necessary because of overwork and exhaustion.⁴ No doubt she was wrung dry after seven furiously paced and financially precarious years of work and travel. But fibroid tumors probably were not the reason for the event's cancellation. There is no evidence among her papers that she had done any planning at all for the battleship festival before entering the hospital in September. The festivals were demanding and exhausting. Moorman simply needed a break, so she took one.

On November 4, Moorman left for West Germany. She had been invited to perform in Cologne for the opening of *Happening & Fluxus*, an exhibition organized by the Swiss curator Harald Szeemann. Now considered a landmark in the history of performance art, the show was the first large-scale attempt to examine (if not explain) the new genre. It presented a curatorial conundrum: how does one mount an exhibition in which there are no conventional art objects? Szeemann's solution was to make a show of documentation such as posters, programs, photographs, and artifacts. Live performance was presented during a three-day-long opening festival. Allan Kaprow, Al Hansen, Geoffrey and Bici Hendricks, Carolee Schneemann,



FIGURE 22.1

Frank Pileggi and Charlotte Moorman on their wedding day, September 14, 1970, New York City. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



FIGURE 22.2

Charlotte Moorman with (left to right) Allan Kaprow, Wolf Vostell, and Rafael Vostell in Cologne, West Germany, during *Happening & Fluxus*, 1970. Photo © Werner Krüger. Courtesy The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (980063).

and Moorman (without Paik) came over from the United States; Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Ben Vautier, and Wolf Vostell were among the invited Europeans.

The weekend was fraught with infighting and tension. Egos began to clash almost immediately. After police removed part of Vostell's installation—a pregnant cow that was expected to give birth during the run of the exhibition—some artists demanded that the show be canceled. Factions formed; they bickered and postured and boycotted one another's events. Kaprow later called festival a "sea of misleading hostilities."⁵

Moorman had arrived in Cologne without Frank, still tender from her surgery and carrying doctors' orders to eat three hot meals a day and rest unless she was performing. She brought the *TV Bra* and the Beuys felt, and performed a new work by Paik, *Peace Sonata*, in which she crawled across the stage on her belly, dressed in military fatigues, with her cello tied to her back as if it were a weapon.⁶ It was 1970, a year of violent antiwar demonstrations and bombings and marches that killed and wounded dozens on American college campuses. *Peace Sonata's* message, as delivered on Moorman's body, was simple. Make art, make music. But do not make war.

During opening weekend Moorman was asked by Viennese artists Otto Muehl and Hermann Nitsch to participate in their performances. So she sat in with the "noise orchestra" that accompanied Nitsch's *36th Action*, and she droned one note for twenty minutes, in the nude, during Muehl's *Manopsychotic Ballet (Part 2)*. Offstage Nitsch and Muehl were solicitous. "They are real good to me and carry my cello and insist that I sit down," she reported to Frank.⁷

She tried to stay clear of the protests and boycotts. She just wanted to do her work. She was still healing, and she needed rest. But over the weekend she began to get offers to perform in other cities, and she could not refuse. So on November 13, she left for Berlin for an engagement at the René Block gallery. On the night she arrived, her abdominal incision opened. She was bleeding profusely when Carolee Schneemann, who was also in town to perform at René Block's, took her to a Berlin emergency room. The doctors told Moorman she should be admitted to the hospital.⁸ Instead, she performed on November 15 at Block's gallery and went to Brussels the next day for a concert at the Electro-Acoustic Studio.

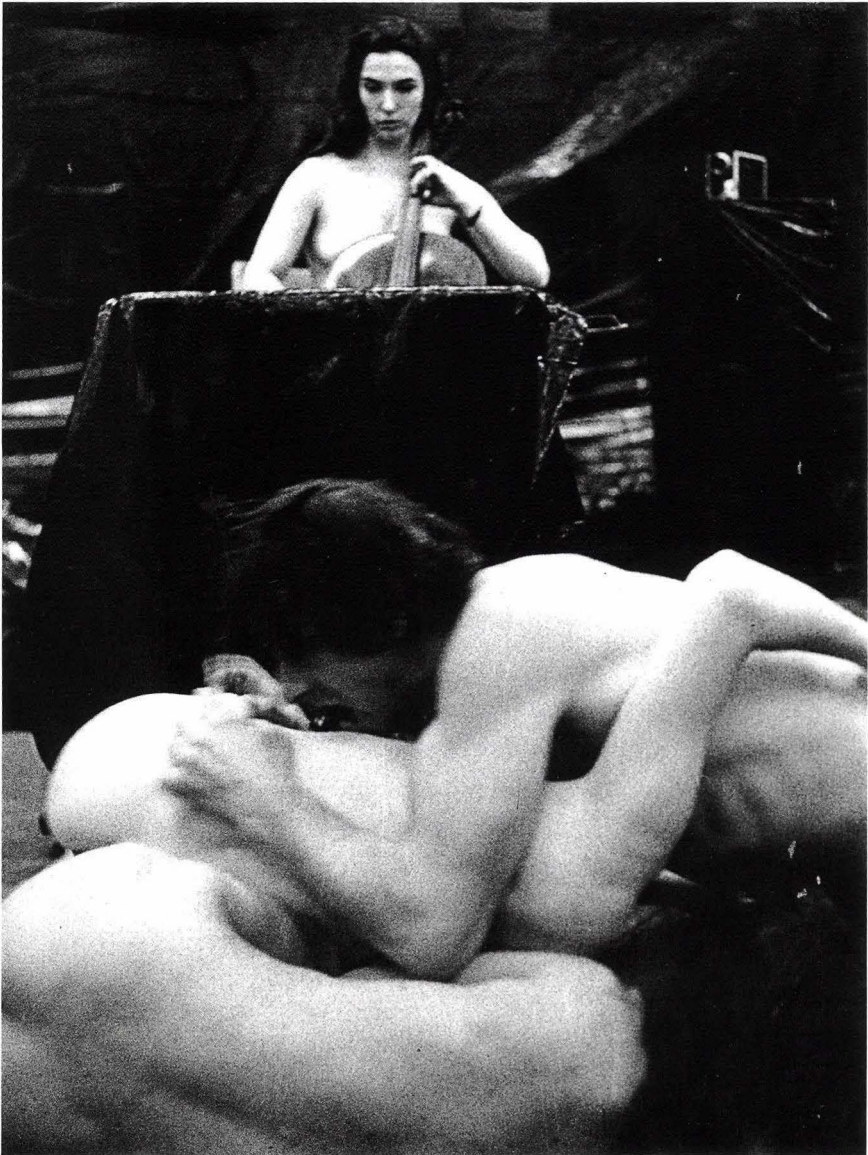


FIGURE 22.3

Moorman performs in Otto Muehl's *Manopsychotic Ballet (Part 2)*, Cologne, West Germany, 1970. Photo by Hanns Sohm © Archiv Sohm/Staatgalerie Stuttgart. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

Frank joined her in Cologne on November 18, her 37th birthday, and they spent the next month traveling Europe together. Charlotte met Frank's extended family in Calabria. Just before Christmas, the newlyweds flew home with gifts they'd bought their families at Kaufhof, a department store in Cologne.

ON MAY 12, 1971, Moorman wrote to her lawyer. "Dear Mr. Ordovery, I am in terrible trouble!" she began. "You are the only person that can help me."⁹ She went on for several paragraphs about how frightened she was, the civil court summonses she had been served (and those she had dodged), and how desperately she wanted to, but could not, pay her overdue medical bills. (Frank's insurance had not covered all the expense of her surgery.) Enclosed with the letter was a batch of bills that totaled about two thousand dollars.

Ordovery had been Moorman's lawyer since 1965. He had come to dread her annual postfestival telephone call and the frantic pleas for help that resulted from her habit of ignoring financial realities.¹⁰ Since there was no festival in 1970, he should have had a break. Instead, he patiently set about negotiating yet another payment plan with Moorman's creditors. Once again, she fell behind on repayment.

Moorman seems not to have asked Yoko Ono for help. No letters to that effect exist in her archive. But in July 1971, Moorman received a check for \$5,000 from Ono Music, Inc. She cashed it and then spent hours drafting a suitable thank you to her old friend. She was grateful for the money but also embarrassed to be among the horde of destitute artists—"vultures," she called them—who were turning to Ono for money now that she was married to John Lennon.¹¹ At around the same time the check arrived, Ono apparently asked Moorman for assistance organizing concerts of her work on college campuses.¹² Here Moorman was ambivalent. "I could do a great job for you seven months every year," she wrote Ono. "Three months I must devote to my festival and two months spread out I perform in various cities. As you know, they very seldom pay, but my work is important."¹³

A regular paycheck would have eased many of the stresses that bedeviled Moorman on a daily basis. But she seems to have turned down this

chance for financial stability. Granted, it is hard to imagine her as a successful employee—she was habitually late, excessively stubborn, and careless with her things. Handbags and appointment diaries were particularly vulnerable. She also once was threatened with legal action when, in the course of a job stuffing envelopes, she lost the entire card list for the letter “T” of her client’s mailing list.¹⁴ Perhaps Moorman was uncomfortable with the prospect of working in Ono’s shadow. More likely, she said no because she was convinced that the world needed her work. Nothing should interfere with her ability to deliver that work to her audience.

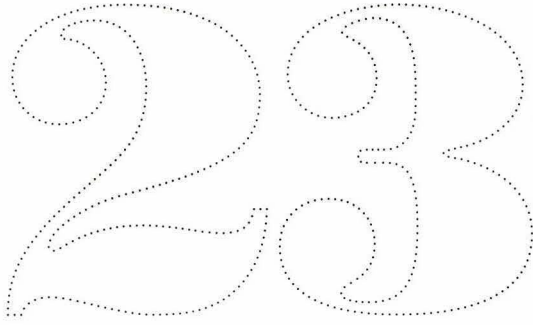
In autumn 1971, Moorman did work briefly for Ono. The Everson Museum in Syracuse had organized *This Is Not Here*, which was billed as a ten-year retrospective exhibition of Ono’s work in all media. Moorman handled promotion, a skill she’d learned during her years with Norman Seaman and honed over the course of organizing seven festivals. She composed the press release and counseled Ono to have it printed on museum letterhead to avoid the appearance that the Beatles’ company, Apple, had financed the whole thing. “The world must know that the Everson Museum is presenting you,” she wrote Ono sternly. She offered to hand-address the releases and send them to all six hundred names on her festival mailing list (“including, of course, the choice ones”). She lunched with her friends in the press to talk up the show.¹⁵ Throughout, Moorman was touchingly protective of Ono, who during the early years of her marriage to Lennon was viewed by many as a corrosive, talentless dragon lady who had broken up the Beatles, and who in late 1971 was engaged in a battle with her ex-husband Anthony Cox for custody of their daughter, Kyoko. Moorman wrote to Ono, “I never want to be harmful to you. [Some people] think that girls who show their tits stay together in this world—this could hurt your image with a judge or court. But you should be protected from the evil that people do. [...] So in explaining what I think you are about, I purposely guard a part of you so that they can’t kill you.”¹⁶

This Is Not Here was on view for only nineteen days, from October 9 through October 27, 1971. Although it has since become a seminal event for historians of Ono’s work, it did little to change the public’s image of her, perhaps because she figuratively disappeared behind the more than one hundred “guest artists” (including Lennon) and the many collaborative and

audience participation pieces she included. Even the works credited to Ono alone were instruction pieces to be completed by the viewer. She showed a row of empty flowerpots, for example, under the title *Imagine the Flowers*.

On the other hand, Ono had been clearly articulating her ideas to the press since 1967, when she came to the world's attention as John Lennon's lover. By the time of her Everson Museum exhibition she could tell the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, "Anyone can be an artist. It doesn't involve having a talent. It involves only having a certain frame of mind, an attitude, determination, and imagination. [...] The job of an artist is not to destroy but to change the value of things. And by doing that, artists can change the world into a Utopia where there is total freedom for everybody. That can be achieved only when there is total communication in the world. Total communication equals peace. That is our aim. That is what artists can do for the world!"¹⁷

Ono's ideas often were lost in the pandemonium that surrounded her celebrity. Much later, she remembered *This Is Not Here* as a turning point. "That was the end of the kind of quiet conceptual games I was playing. I simply lost interest in it."¹⁸ She turned her attention instead to art with a broader appeal, including music, film, and activism. It would be nearly two decades before she had another solo museum show.



The Liberation of TV

WHILE SHE WAS WORKING WITH ONO ON *THIS IS NOT HERE*, MOORMAN ALSO WAS PLANNING HER NEXT FESTIVAL. TWO YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE THE UNSUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT ON WARDS ISLAND, but its lessons were still fresh in her mind. So she made some changes. To protect electronic equipment from the weather, she decided to move the festival indoors for the first time since 1965. To conserve her energy and maximize her audience, she limited the event to twelve hours on a single day. But nothing else about the event shrank. According to the press release, two hundred artists were expected to show works in twenty-three different media, from the usual—sculpture, video, jazz—to the unclassifiable.

Moorman had a knack for finding just the right promotional hook for her festivals, whether it was the fiftieth anniversary of Dada or the World's Fair. For her eighth festival she chose a location with legendary status in the

history of art: New York City's 69th Regiment Armory. In 1913 the building had housed the Armory Show, a massive exhibition of avant-garde painting and sculpture that introduced cubism, postimpressionism, pointillism, and other advanced European styles to America and is considered a watershed for the development of twentieth-century art in the United States. Half a century later, in 1966, the Armory was the site of *9 Evenings: Theater and Engineering*, a series of dance, music, and theater works that was the first large-scale collaboration between artists and engineers. It was rather brilliant of Moorman to hitch her eighth festival to this wagon train of experimental art, performance, and technology. In her mind, the connections were justified. In a grant proposal for the Armory event, she asserted that the festival "has over the years achieved an undisputed reputation as one of the most significant and internationally acclaimed cultural events presented in this country."¹ The little bit of hyperbole in her statement doesn't contradict her claim. By 1971, Moorman's avant-garde festival had become an eagerly anticipated event on New York's cultural calendar. Many of those who attended the Armory festival remember it as one of her finest.

The 69th Regiment Armory runs the length of Lexington Avenue between 25th and 26th Streets. The festival took place in its drill shed, a huge, barrel-vaulted structure with open floor space of thirty-four thousand square feet and a ceiling height that tops one hundred fifty feet. In Moorman's floor plan, the perimeter of this cavernous space is marked off into small rooms earmarked for individual artists and the central space is left open for installations and environments—a functional design very reminiscent of a trade show.² The event itself was far less orderly than her drawing suggests. As Moorman put it, "There was confusion and beauty just like in life."³

The confusion began immediately. At precisely twelve o'clock noon on November 19, 1971, as the festival was opening for business, a black limousine pulled up in front of the Armory and discharged a tall bearded man in an immaculate white suit. Throngs of fans screamed and snapped his picture as he hurried into the Armory. One minute later, John Lennon and Yoko Ono arrived in a tiny red Datsun. They entered the building almost unnoticed, while the crowd's attention was still fixed on the imposter. This



FIGURE 23.1

Overview of the 8th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, 69th Regiment Armory, New York City, 1971. Center left, Otto Piene's *Red Rapid Growth*; right, Shirley Clarke's *Video Ferris Wheel*; foreground right, Yoko Ono's *Amaze*. Photo © Estate of Fred W. McDarrah.

was *Fame Exchange*, a work by Joey Skaggs, artist, prankster, and media critic. He was the man in the white suit; he had hired the limo and the fans and, with Moorman's help, timed his arrival to coincide exactly with that of Lennon and Ono.⁴

Moorman had included Ono's works in her festivals since 1965, but until 1971 Ono herself had always been out of the country and unable to attend. Now back in New York City, she became one of Moorman's festival faithful. At the Armory, she and Lennon showed several pieces each in the generous space allotted them. Lennon contributed *Baby Grand Guitar*, a sculptural guitar the size of a piano, and *Wind Piece*, in which a string ensemble, unseen in one of the Armory's balconies, played a fractured version of a late Beethoven quartet while their sheet music was blown back and forth by a swiveling fan.⁵ Ono's contributions included the environment *Amaze*, a sixteen-foot-square labyrinth of clear Plexiglas with a porcelain toilet in the mirrored cubicle at its center. Ono had a longstanding interest in light as a sculptural material, and *Amaze* is surely related to her 1965 idea for a house that could be seen "only with the particular prism effect created by the sunset."⁶ But as a glass house that offers only minimal privacy for even the most personal of physical acts, *Amaze* must also be seen as a metaphor for the quality and conditions of Ono's life as a superstar.

Ono and Lennon brought an incalculable measure of glamour to the 1971 festival. But even without them there would have been no shortage of spectacle. "The Armory looked like a combination trade show, circus, and high-school Christmas fair," wrote Fred McDarrah in the *Village Voice*. Turning slowly near the center of the space was the forty-five-foot-tall *Video Ferris Wheel* by Shirley Clarke. Each of its twelve seats was equipped with a video monitor that displayed images from two cameras, one mounted on the Ferris wheel and the other operated by a cameraman who "created instant replay sensations of falling, flying, and rotating." Clarke called the ride "the Ultimate Trip [...] you get stoned up there."⁷ Among the live performances were *Mayonnaise*, the mixing of same from scratch ingredients by the impeccably turned out art critic Gregory Battcock, and *Ring Piece*, in which Geoffrey Hendricks meditated silently for the full twelve hours of the festival atop a six-foot-tall mound of dirt in the exact center of the Armory.

Moorman had opted not to turn on the building's interior lights, so the Armory was illuminated only by lighted and electronic sculptures.⁸ These included a "video-kinetic environment" by the media artists Woody and Steina Vasulka; projected television images by a group of Yale students who called themselves PULSA; and Douglas Davis's *Images from the Present Tense II*—one hundred television sets, running without picture or sound. "In a dark space, huddled together, like a swarm of deadly mechanical insects, turned away from themselves, humming," Davis wrote in his proposal. "For meditation, sleeping, watching; or bring a set and add to the growing mass."⁹ Compressed, lively, and participatory, the festival was, according to the *New York Times*, "a breathless, enjoyable walkaround for the many hundreds of people who attended."¹⁰

The Armory festival took place the day after Moorman's thirty-eighth birthday. She had always been coy about her age, but she never let her birthday pass without some kind of celebration. This year, for the festival's grand finale, she popped out of a huge, tiered plywood sculpture made up to resemble a cake. Entitled *The Second Coming of Charlotte Moorman*, the piece cast Moorman in several of her many roles: star soloist, prophet of the avant-garde, stag party sideshow, and beaming birthday girl. Written by Jim McWilliams, it was typical of the confections he composed for Moorman during the 1970s, the decade during which he became her chief artistic partner.

SOMETIME DURING 1971, Moorman told Paik she would like to have a TV cello. "He thought that was reasonable," she recalled. "What I expected him to do was go buy a student cello, an old one at a pawn shop, and cut three holes and insert the tubes, elongate the wires, and I'd have a TV cello. That's not what he did at all."¹¹

Indeed not. What Paik did was make one of the most remarkable objects of his career. Its design was simple. He removed the picture tubes from three television sets and placed them in variously sized Plexiglas boxes stacked to resemble a cello, added a rectangular length of Plexiglas at the top to suggest the peg box and neck, and at the bottom fixed a traditional cello

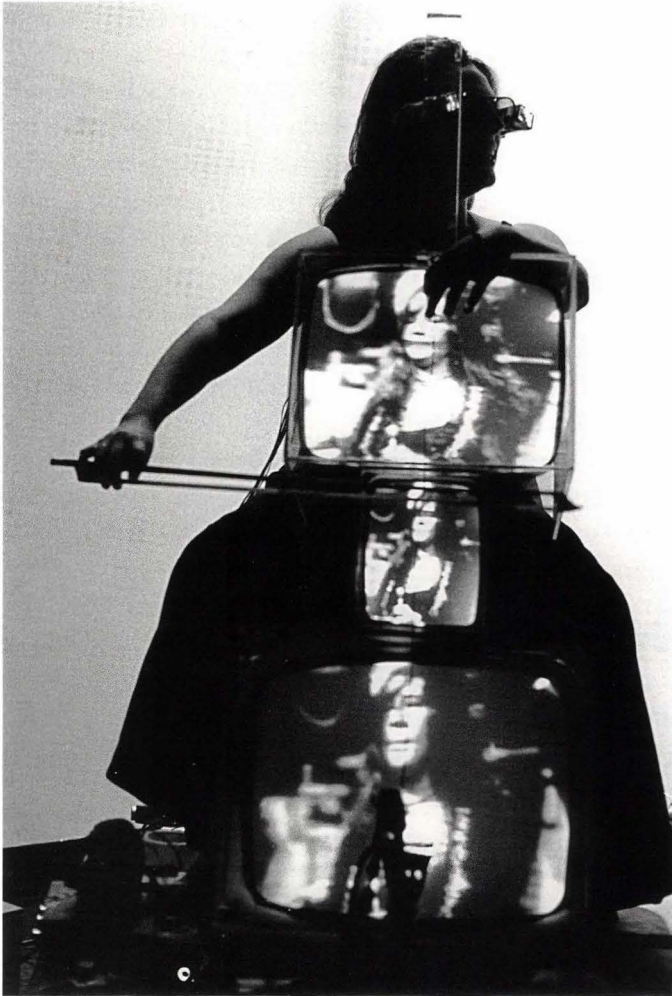


FIGURE 23.2

Charlotte Moorman debuts Nam June Paik's *Concerto for TV Cello and Videotapes*, Galeria Bonino, New York City, 1971. She wears Paik's *TV Glasses*. Photo © Thomas Haar.

tailpiece. A single string stretched the length of the stacked TVs. The television cases and their electronic innards were concealed beneath a low platform on which Moorman sat. She played *TV Cello* with a standard cello bow; a pick-up microphone amplified the sounds she made, and her bow movements distorted the images on the monitors, which might be broadcast television, prerecorded videotape, or live closed circuit shots of the performance itself. That was it. Moorman often quipped that, with *TV Cello*, Paik had made the first advance in cello design since 1600.¹²

TV Cello was premiered at the Galeria Bonino in New York City on November 23, 1971, a cold, windy Tuesday just before Thanksgiving. The occasion was the opening of *Electronic Art III*, an exhibition of Paik's latest electronic works. Its two major components were a "video environment" in which Moorman performed *Concerto for TV Cello and Videotapes*, and the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer, the product of a two-year collaboration between Paik and the electronic engineer Shuya Abe. The synthesizer caused television images to swirl, melt, bend, shimmer, or bloom into intricate Lissajou patterns and kaleidoscopic colors. Paik called it "a real-time video piano" for "instant TV making," and he was on hand that evening to demonstrate its magic.¹³

Paik predicted that the video environment would accomplish an even more wondrous feat: "liberation of TV from the TV box."¹⁴ Moorman was at the center of the environment. Along with *TV Cello*, she wore *TV Glasses*, plastic aviator sunglasses with thumbnail-sized sets taped at each temple. Two videotapes, without sound, appeared alternately on Moorman's cello and on the wall behind her. In one, the pop star Janis Joplin belted out a song, and in the other John Cage performed his 1969 composition for piano, *Cheap Imitation*.¹⁵ Think of it: three iconic performers, one live and two virtual, whose bodies all have been transformed by video. Cage and Joplin were rendered silent and reduced to light ("cheap imitations"), while Moorman's flesh-and-blood corpus accomplished the liberation Paik had predicted: her skin became a projection screen and her eyes both received images and transmitted them.

TV Cello was a collaboration between Moorman and Paik—not because she was part of the work, although she certainly was essential to its visual

and conceptual success, but because she conceived the idea for the piece, and then suggested important changes to Paik's original design. Photographs reveal that, sometime in late 1971, not long after its debut, the instrument was given a second string and a cello bridge, which helped to keep both strings taut. Moorman had insisted on these modifications, even though Paik worried that the additions would obscure his video images.¹⁶ In 1973, a version of the cello built for her use in Europe was fitted with four strings, and when yet another *TV Cello* was constructed, in 1976 in Sydney, the strings were connected to four functional tuning pegs on the sides of the fake peg box. These changes must have made *TV Cello* easier to play; perhaps they also made it more interesting to listen to. Certainly they made it look less like a stack of television sets and more like a cello, and in turn less easy to classify as either sculpture or musical instrument. And though *TV Cello* is properly known as a work by Paik, Moorman's contributions nudged the piece toward a more conceptually complex morphology.

In all its forms, *TV Cello* made astonishing noises. A recording of a 1982 performance in Chicago is a maelstrom of electronic crashes, howls, shrieks, and squawks. "The instrument has a certain kind of sound we call TV tone," Moorman often explained. "We are not concerned with the melody but rather with that sound."¹⁷ Yet all of her experience on the traditional cello was brought to bear when she played it, from the controlled chaos of Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player* and high emotion in Chiari's *Per Arco*, to her spectacular presentation of self in McWilliams's *Sky Kiss*, her hostess manner in *TV Bra*, and, not least of all, the meticulous bow control she had learned from Leonard Rose. The sum of all these parts was spellbinding. "You couldn't walk away from a *TV Cello* performance humming a tune," remarks filmmaker Elliot Caplan, who saw her play in New York in 1982. "But you would never forget it, ever."¹⁸

FIGURE 23.3

Charlotte Moorman performs on Nam June Paik's *TV Cello*, New York City, 1971. She wears Paik's *TV Glasses*. Photo © Takahiko Iimura.

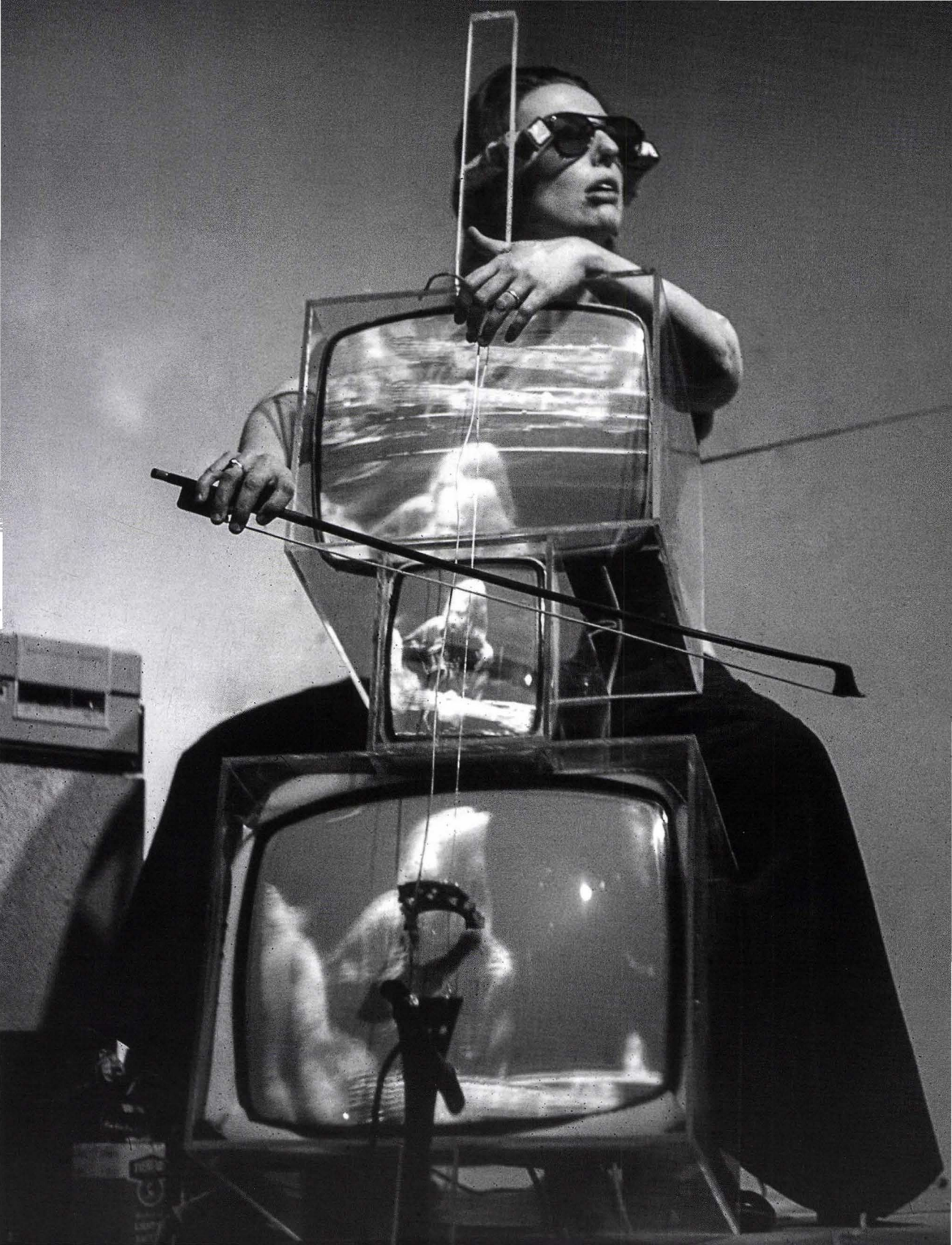




FIGURE 23.4

Charlotte Moorman discusses Nam June Paik's *TV Cello* with John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Galeria Bonino, New York City, 1971. Photo © Thomas Haar.

AFTER MAKING MOORMAN a brassiere, sunglasses, and cello—intimate objects all—Paik made her a bed. She had had surgery in May 1972 to remove gallstones; Paik’s idea was that a *TV Bed* would allow her to perform and rest at the same time.¹⁹ The piece is nothing more than a standard wooden bedframe with a grid of identical television sets in place of its mattress and box springs. The sets are positioned with their screens facing the ceiling, and all play the same image (broadcast TV, prerecorded videotape, or live closed-circuit footage). A pane of glass or Plexiglas laid across the sets makes a level playing surface.²⁰ To perform on it, Moorman kicked off her shoes, lay face up on the expanse of televisions, and noodled on her cello, which lay on her abdomen.

TV Bed premiered on June 29, 1972, at the Kitchen, an artist-run video and performance space that had begun in the kitchen of the Mercer Arts Center in Greenwich Village. As Moorman lay on the bed and Paik accompanied her on the piano, they were joined by actor Stuart Craig Wood. He wore only a bathrobe, which was open to reveal a tiny, glowing television set tied around his waist. Wood held the TV in front of his genitals like a fig leaf as he struck a pose in imitation of Michelangelo’s *David*. Media historian Edith Decker-Phillips understands *TV Penis* as an act of irreverence comparable to Marcel Duchamp’s addition of a beard and moustache to a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*.²¹ Certainly Michelangelo + television is a collage of the same type as Beethoven + striptease or Saint-Saëns + sado-masochism, and in that sense echoes Duchamp’s alteration of a treasured work of art. But when shown with *TV Bed*, *TV Penis* becomes part of a surreal domestic tableau in which television is omnipresent yet unthreatening. Had Wood joined Moorman in bed, Paik suggests, their lovemaking would have been mediated by technology, and technology would in turn have been “humanized.” Video art was “not just a TV screen and tape,” Paik later told an interviewer. “It is a whole life, a new way of life.”²²

Like much of Paik’s work, *TV Penis* is a serious joke. If one thinks of his *TV Glasses* a version of the novelty “X-ray glasses” used by boys who were hoping to see through girls’ clothing, then *TV Penis* could be its sinister cousin, a device for visually penetrating a woman’s deeper secrets. Paik had once imagined this scenario from the other direction, too. A visitor to



FIGURE 23.5

Charlotte Moorman performs on Nam June Paik's *TV Bed*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, 1972. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Everson Museum of Art and Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

his studio during the late 1960s reported seeing “a box containing a TV set that peeps through the vaginal opening of a photographed vulva.”²³

When Paik was asked about the meaning of *TV Bed*, he answered obliquely by describing his concept of “tele-fucking,” an act that would be consummated by means of a sophisticated electronic scanning system that could deliver, through one’s television, a range of sensory data about one’s lover, including his or her voice, image, temperature, moisture level, pulse rate, and body pressure. In this fantasy, the body is replaced by technologically transmitted data, but the sexual experience is only slightly less visceral. Paik proposed, with tongue only partly in cheek, that tele-fucking might be powerful enough to end the Cold War. “Global promiscuity is the easiest guarantee for the world peace,” Paik explained. “If 100 top Americans have their tele-fuck-mates in U.S.S.R. (100 top Russians’ wives), we can sleep a little bit safer. Video art is an art of social engagement, because it deals with energy and peace.”²⁴

24

Ice Music for London

DURING THE 1970S, FRANK TOOK OVER AS CHARLOTTE'S MANAGER, WHICH IS TO SAY THAT HE BECAME HER ADVISOR, HANDLER, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, TRAVELING COMPANION, AND CHAUFFEUR, AS well as her husband and lover. It is not an exaggeration to say that he gave Moorman his life. She took it, and not always gracefully. In August 1975, after Frank lost his job at the Hotel Paris, she told Howard Wise, "I'm glad he's fired, because the festival needs him FULL TIME."¹ But Frank relished his role as her supporter, and he told friends that he finally felt he was involved with something important.² "It filled his spirit and his psyche," says Carolee Schneemann. "He chose this."³ Their friends are unanimous on one point: without Frank, Charlotte would have floundered.

Moorman tended to surround herself with male admirers, assistants, and collaborators, especially during the 1970s, when she became a diva

among the avant-garde. Her closest artistic bond during that decade was with Jim McWilliams, the graphic designer, printmaker, book artist, performer, and composer who had written *Sky Kiss* for her. Like Paik, McWilliams considered Moorman a malleable artistic material. “Charlotte Moorman with Cello is the perfect medium,” he wrote in 1974.⁴ As his syntax suggests, he thought of her and her instrument as a single entity. Nearly all the works he wrote for her during the decade of their collaboration were essentially images. Any sounds produced were incidental.

That Moorman chose a visual artist as her next collaborator might have been intuitive or it might have been accidental, but it was fitting, since her performances privileged actions over sounds, as John Cage had so often lamented. By the early 1970s, Moorman also had lost interest in performing traditional music and gradually had allowed her technical skills to atrophy. In December 1972, she performed at a memorial service for artist Ken Dewey, who had died in a plane crash that summer. For this somber occasion she chose to play Sammartini’s *Sonata in G Major*, a Baroque composition that had been in her repertoire for more than a decade. She played so badly out of tune that Jackson Mac Low, who was at the memorial, later remarked on it to a friend. Intonation was apparently not the only one of her skills to wither. During the 1970s, she eliminated most of the technically challenging avant-garde compositions from her repertoire, including works by Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, and Toshi Ichiyangi. Even Cage’s *26'1.1499" for a String Player* was semiretired, with only eight documented performances after 1970. Franz Kamin, a classically trained composer who knew Moorman during the 1970s, recalled, “She didn’t practice. She said she didn’t want to practice. In fact, not practicing this classical music was definitely part of what she was doing. It was deliberate.”⁵ Moorman had developed a very different sense of what her work was about and which skills she needed to do it. She often pointed out that there were dozens of cellists in New York who could play traditional music, and play it well. But, she said, “no one else is doing what I’m doing.”⁶

McWilliams had already given Moorman a signature work in *Sky Kiss*. In 1972, he gave her another: *Ice Music*. She debuted it in London at the International Carnival of Experimental Sound (ICES), a “Woodstock of the

aesthetic vanguard” organized by composer Anna (Anne) Lockwood and her then-husband, actor and journalist Harvey Matusow.⁷ ICES unfolded over a three-week period with performances that spanned the spectrum from John Cage’s *HPSCHD* (1967–1969)—a piece for harpsichords, tape, and projections—to a mixed-media show of mime, film, and rock music presented by Stomu Yamashta’s Red Buddha Theater.⁸ Lockwood remembers that she asked Moorman to perform “something of hers, rather than something of Paik’s.”⁹

On August 17, even though she had not fully recovered from her gallbladder surgery, she traveled to London with Frank and fellow performers Geoffrey Hendricks and Steven Varble.¹⁰ She carried only verbal instructions for McWilliams’s new piece, *Ice Music for London*. He rarely wrote down his scores; often, he simply called Moorman, described a new piece, and told her how to realize it.¹¹ This time he had directed her to make a full-sized cello out of ice and play it until it melted. She was to do this in the nude, with a garland of fresh flowers around her neck. McWilliams imagined the piece “would [last] forever. [The ice] would just melt, and she would be left with nothing.”¹² The subject of *Ice Music*, then, is time. With the passage of time ice melts, flesh shrivels, flowers wilt, and music is made. Always, eventually, both performer and audience are left with nothing.

In London, Lockwood oversaw the construction of the ice cello. Working on short notice and without specific instructions from McWilliams, she had to improvise. She borrowed a soft cello case (a hard one was not to be found) and stuffed it with ice cubes. She then convinced the owners of Marine Ices, a sorbet and ice cream company whose factory was across the road from the concert hall, to store it in one of their freezers. This imprecise casting method resulted in an object that was only vaguely cello-shaped. “Charlotte was not happy when she saw it,” remembers Lockwood. “But she gamely played it anyway.”¹³ To do so, she used a narrow length of clear Plexiglas as a bow.

Carman Moore traveled to London to review the festival for *Saturday Review*. He had always been a fan of Moorman’s work, and his review singles out *Ice Music for London* as one of the festival’s emotional high points.



Miss Moorman came to the stage, threw aside her cape, grandly ripped the hospital bandages from her healing side, and snuggled up to her accustomed spot where the cello's back and fingerboard meet. Sound there was: the sound of water dripping ... from time to time the sound of ice falling off in a chunk ... sub-threshold sounds of bow on ice. She shuddered without showing it for the hour or so that elapsed before the instrument finally fell away into water and cubes. It was a virtuoso performance, legendary in proportion. Few could top Miss Moorman's piece for those qualities that are pure in the avant-garde.¹⁴

Moorman performed *Ice Music* six more times during the 1970s, but after London she never played another ice cube cello. Instead, she hired professional ice sculptors to carve a more naturalistic instrument, sometimes sending a paper pattern for them to follow.¹⁵ She always performed it nude, as McWilliams had specified, even though holding ice against one's bare skin for hours can be dangerous as well as painful. "No one must worry about me. I take a prescribed antihistamine to keep from getting frostbite," she wrote to one of her hosts, artfully prompting both concern for her safety and admiration for her courage.¹⁶ She taped pads on her left hand and inside her knees to protect her skin from the ice. Her breasts also came into contact with the ice, but those she left exposed. She understood that she could wear shoes, a lei, and pads on her hands and knees and still be considered nude. But she could not cover her breasts. So she suffered the cold. In later performances she used electric space heaters to melt the dense, carved ice cellos more quickly, but this was less a cautionary

FIGURE 24.1

Charlotte Moorman performs Jim McWilliams's *Ice Music for London*, International Carnival of Experimental Sound, London, 1972. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



FIGURE 24.2

An ice cello in front of the Harold Rivkin Gallery, Washington, D.C., before Charlotte Moorman's performance of Jim McWilliams's *Yellow Ice Music for Washington*, 1973. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

measure than an artistic one. Melting produces dripping sounds, which she preferred to the harsh chipping noises made by her plastic bow.¹⁷

Ice Music certainly requires courage, endurance, and strength—the naked cellist spends an hour or more chopping at a block of ice, from a seated position, until she destroys it—but Jim McWilliams says he didn't intend this composition to be dangerous or difficult. As he got to know Moorman better, however, he came to believe that she enjoyed “suffering for her art,” so many of his later works offered at least the possibility of physical injury.¹⁸ Frank later told an interviewer that his wife was “terrified of everything in life, but if you tell her it's a performance, she'll do anything.”¹⁹

25

A Southern Girl in Black

MOORMAN HAD NOT WORKED WITH NORMAN SEAMAN SINCE 1964, BUT SHE STILL OCCASIONALLY CALLED ON HER FORMER MENTOR FOR HELP. ONE DAY IN AUTUMN 1972, SHE TELEPHONED HIM. SHE wanted to stage her next festival on the *Alexander Hamilton*, a Hudson River side-wheeler that had been retired the previous year. She thought Seaman might have some contacts in city government who could help her secure the loan of the boat. As it happened, he did: John Lindsay's deputy mayor, Ed Morrison. Seaman recalled:

I called him up and said, "Can you do anything about getting permission [for] this avant-garde festival, this wonderful thing Charlotte Moorman is running? She needs to use that boat." He said, "Well, I might be the one who could do something about

it, if something could be done. But I'll tell you, it can't be done. [...] The city just doesn't let people use it." So I called Charlotte and said, "I spoke to Ed Morrison, he's pretty high up, he's assistant to the mayor, and he said it can't be done." She said, "What's his number?" I gave her the number.

About a week later I got a call from Ed Morrison. He says, "My God, where did you find this woman?" I said, "What happened?" He said, "She called me up and I told her I'd spoken to you already and that it can't be done. Instead of trying to convince me to do it, she began to talk of how she was going to do it. She spoke as if I had told her yes. [...] The next day I got another call from her. [...] She had people who were going to do this and that, people who were going to get security for her—she'd taken care of everything. She's been reporting to me on this now for about three days. [...] What's going on here? I told her she can't do it." I said, "Well, she's a very tough woman and she's very dedicated to what she's doing. You know she's not making any money at it. And all I can tell you, Ed, is—she won't stop. You're probably going to have to get the police out to stop her from going aboard."

Then I called Charlotte and said, "What are you doing? Ed Morrison said it can't be done." She said, "Oh, he's just saying that because he's under pressure. You know how these things are. He knows it should be done. He knows what the right thing is, and he'll do it." And sure enough, he began to pull every string he could to get out from under the barrage, and he finally got permission for her to use the South Street Seaport. [...] It was kind of an approach she had, never to accept a denial.¹

That Moorman could convince anyone to do her bidding was the legend among her friends. Said one "She not only moved bureaucratic mountains, she made the bureaucrats dance for her like obedient circus elephants."² Seaman's story about how she got the *Alexander Hamilton* for the ninth festival is one among many such tales. But, in truth, Moorman was not always successful. The most ambitious part of her plan, to take the boat up the

Hudson to Albany and Poughkeepsie for a one-day festival in each city, never came off. The *Alexander Hamilton* needed a tugboat to help it up the river and back, and she could not get the loan of a tugboat. She got the backing of the mayors of both Albany and Poughkeepsie, and she pled her case to a string of increasingly powerful state politicians, including Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Senator Jacob Javits. But the tugboat could not be had. Moorman never publicly admitted this defeat; instead, depending on her audience, she blamed lack of funding, insurance problems, or poor weather. An occasional failure does not negate her many successes. But Moorman preferred the legend that she was invincible. And so it stood. Perhaps Giuseppe Chiari meant to acknowledge the legend with his contribution to Moorman's 1973 festival, a text that declares, "ART IS EASY. Charlotte Moorman says ART IS EASY."³

The 9th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival took place on October 28, 1972, aboard and around the *Alexander Hamilton*, which was docked at Pier 16 at the city's South Street Seaport Museum. The museum was not a trove of objects but a collection of historic buildings and vessels clustered around the Fulton Fish Market, which was then located on Manhattan's southeast waterfront. It was the most romantic site Moorman had yet chosen for the festival, one that conjured both New York's history as a working port city and the leisurely river cruises popular during the 1920s. After 1965, each of her festival sites had a distinct ambience, to which she urged participating artists to respond when developing their pieces. This was not just an occasional or incidental strategy, but part of her annual process; as a result, the works in the festivals of those years were overwhelmingly site-specific.

Filmmaker Storm De Hirsch documented the ninth festival in a silent, ten-minute, Super 8 film that argues implicitly for the critical importance of site.⁴ Her camera lingers on ships' masts and skeins of net silhouetted against a cloudy sky, on flags flapping in the breeze and water lapping against the pier. A few birds drift by; someone hoists a sail; a seaplane lands in the river. Dancers move across a deck. De Hirsch punctuates these small events with shots of the city's jagged skyline and the majestic Brooklyn Bridge, which loomed just north of the seaport. The film is a synesthetic marvel whose images alone convey the odors, feel, and noises

of the waterfront—water, birds, salt, fish, damp. Because De Hirsch shot it with a handheld camera, it has a quality almost like cursive handwriting. In fact, she called the film a “cine-sonnet,” and it is as much a love poem to the waterfront as it is a document of the festival.

Moorman’s own performance was a piece of site-specific drollery composed for the occasion by Jim McWilliams. *A Water Cello for Charlotte Moorman* premiered after dark, on the pier next to the *Alexander Hamilton*.⁵ Water from the East River was pumped into a large Plexiglas tank dramatically illuminated by four blue spotlights. Moorman, wearing a helmet, oxygen tank, and Day-Glo orange diving suit, entered the tank and slipped underwater, where for five minutes she plucked and bowed some inaudible tune on a student cello painted orange and covered in plastic. Then she climbed out.

Water Cello exploited the festival’s context by casting Moorman as, variously, a trained aquatic mammal performing for its keep; a Cousteau-like explorer pushing at the edges of the known world; and a specimen on display in a watery vitrine. Since a performance artist can be all of these things, though usually minus the water, McWilliams’s piece was at once comical and penetrating. (It also deftly alluded to a well-known piece in Moorman’s repertoire, Paik’s *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*.) In his review for *Newsweek*, Douglas Davis called *Water Cello* “neoclassic and romantic, confined and unrestrained—a high-water mark of the season.”⁶

The ninth festival took place just ten days before the 1972 presidential election. The incumbent, Richard Nixon, was being challenged by George McGovern, a liberal Democrat who promised to end the Vietnam War immediately. The campaign had been a malicious one and many Americans were feeling both enraged and disenfranchised as Nixon cruised toward what would be a landslide victory. (Later, it was revealed that his aides had committed the Watergate burglary during the campaign.) But even at this heated moment, Moorman did not retreat from her usual festival ban on “heavy politics.” Artists John Giorno and Les Levine remember her telling them specifically, “Do not express your conscience on the war.”⁷ To them and others, speaking out against the seemingly endless conflict seemed both necessary and right, and it rankled to be told by one of your peers to hold your tongue. So Giorno and Levine dropped out of the festival, as



FIGURE 25.1

Charlotte Moorman performs Jim McWilliams's *A Water Cello for Charlotte Moorman*, 9th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, South Street Seaport, New York City, 1972. Photo © Estate of Fred W. McDarrah.

did Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche, although the latter two acknowledged that, despite Moorman's prohibition, "the Festival is still one of the freest forums of expression in our otherwise repressive society."⁸

To Moorman it made sense to silence a few artists in order to preserve the festival for the many, a strategy that was both radical and conservative. In an astute review of the festival for the *Village Voice*, Carman Moore wrote admiringly of Moorman's style: "She deserves credit no matter what happens to the direction freak arts may take. Nothing stops her—not the police, not ill health, not the regular avant-garde's aversion to festivals and straight-world publicity. She every year gets a marvelous location for the festival, and in lean years her hustling of the straight world for some concessions to the arts may amount to the freshest (and most hopeful, perhaps) aspect of the avant-garde idea."⁹ It is hard to imagine Moorman pitting "the freak arts" against "the straight world." To her, this would have constituted a false distinction, because she herself was an enthusiastic member of both groups. As such she was always also an outsider. Effective diplomats often are.

BY 1972, MOORMAN'S festival was an established New York institution regularly covered in the national and international art press. She was seen as an expert in a variety of fields—avant-garde music, performance art, video art, and censorship, to name a few—and often was invited to speak at seminars and symposia on these and other topics. She began to receive foundation support and got her first grant in 1972, an apparently unsolicited award of \$5,000 from the Cassandra Foundation given to help further her individual artistic work.

She continued to perform with Paik, but during the 1970s she was more often booked as a soloist. Invitations came from festivals that might well have been modeled on her own, such as the 1973 Bochumer Kunstwoche, a weeklong art and performance event held in a shopping center parking lot in Bochum, West Germany, and Projekt '74, a summerlong series of video, performance, and music events co-organized by the Kunsthalle Köln and the Kölnischer Kunstverein, both in Cologne, West Germany. In summer 1974, she traveled to the northern Italian town of Asolo, where she performed in

sidewalk cafés and a local vineyard. In 1975, she was invited to Caracas for a video art festival and to Madrid to present a solo program at the Galleria Vandes. She performed in galleries and on college campuses in Illinois, New York, Washington, D.C., and New Jersey. Her decade-long relationship with the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) began in 1975, when she performed *TV Cello* at Art Transition, a conference organized by a team that included artist Otto Piene.

At most of these events, Moorman played the works by Cage, Paik, Ono, Kosugi, and Beuys that had made her an iconic figure on the experimental performance circuit. But she also expanded her repertoire with new works by Jim McWilliams, who by then was making pieces only for her. (Indeed, as he recalls, “She was a bit jealous and would have been annoyed if I had worked with anyone else.”¹⁰) In *C. Moorman in Drag* (1973) she wore a Pablo Casals mask and pantomimed playing part of a Bach solo cello suite to a recording of Casals performing the piece. McWilliams says the composition’s operative idea was “make-believe,” but the composition also functions as a tribute. Casals was so well known during the 1970s that he was “a sort of Pop cellist,” as McWilliams put it. Casting Moorman as his avant-garde doppelgänger proposed that she was as celebrated a virtuoso in her world as Casals was in his. The work’s title is a carnival barker’s call to “See Moorman in Drag!” but also a punning acknowledgment that in this performance she will only be seen, not heard.

Other McWilliams compositions of the period seem to continue Paik’s sex-in-music project, but with a twist. Paik’s aesthetic use of Moorman’s body was certainly inventive, but it was aimed, conventionally, at heterosexual male viewers. Some of McWilliams’s compositions, on the other hand, alluded to his own identity as a homosexual by lampooning forms of live entertainment popular with gay men. In the Casals masquerade, Moorman became a costumed, lip-synching drag queen; in *Crotch Music* (1973) she starred in a live, male sex show. The latter began with Moorman’s request for male volunteers from the audience to join her onstage and line up, facing the audience. Unzipping each man’s pants in turn, she inserted a phallic object—a plush snake, a plastic hot dog, a tube sock stuffed with newspaper, an American flag on a stick—then sat down and stroked her cello strings with an enormous dildo while the men stood at attention



FIGURE 25.2

Charlotte Moorman begins a performance of Takehisa Kosugi's *Chamber Music*, Arte de Video Festival, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Caracas, Venezuela, 1975. Photo © Pascual De Leo. Courtesy Margarita D'Amico.



FIGURE 25.3

Charlotte Moorman performs Nam June Paik's *Zen Smiles*, Asolo, Italy, 1974. Photo by Mario Parolin. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

behind her. McWilliams says that the piece was inspired by Moorman's frank and frequent remarks to him about the pleasures of fellatio. *Crotch Music* remade their discussions as a cartoonish sexual fantasy whose star has a lineup of priapic males available for her amusement.¹¹ The broad humor in these two works succeeded because Moorman performed them as she performed everything: with intense, unsmiling focus. Her approach also complemented Paik's mischievous wit; he once remarked that in another cellist's hands, *TV Cello* and *TV Bra* would have become merely gimmicks.¹²

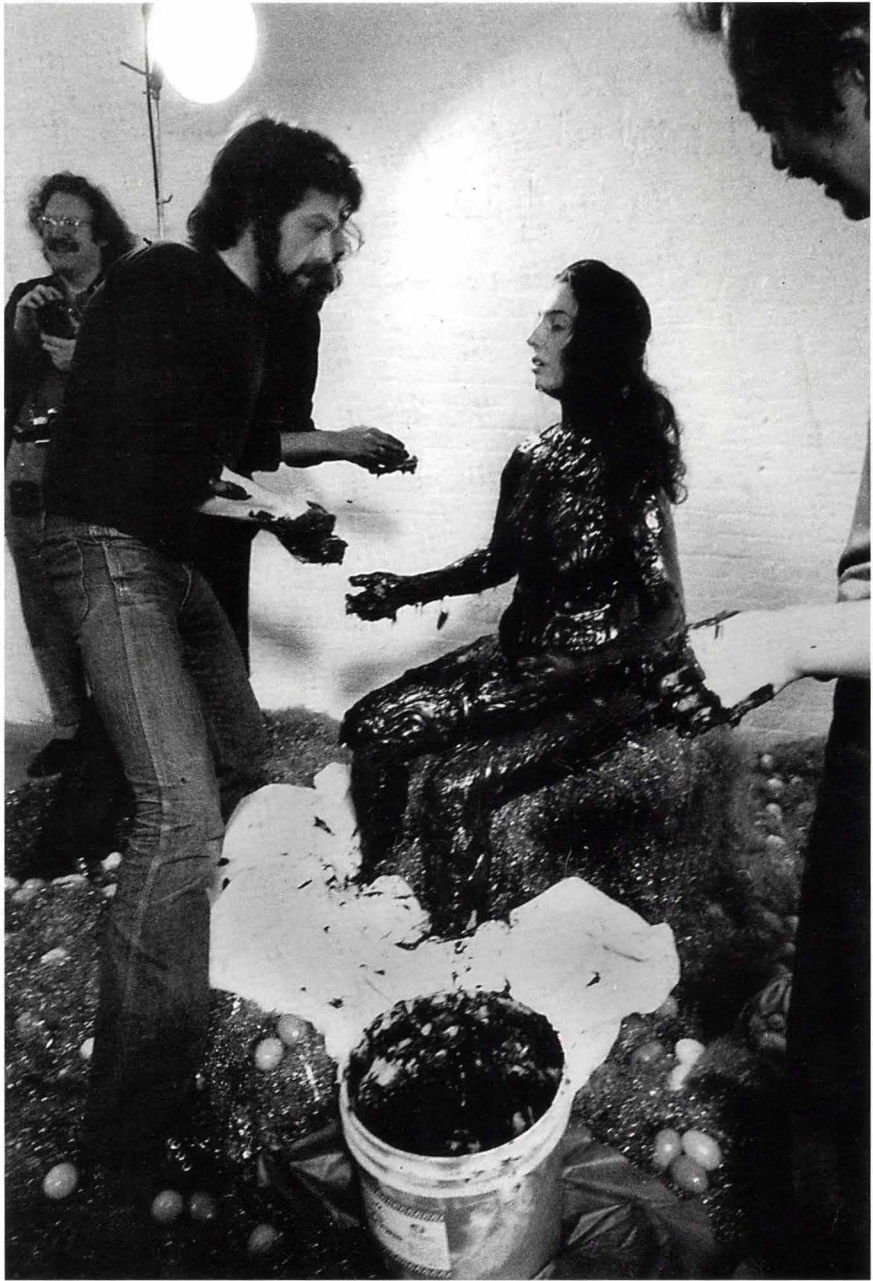
In April 1973, McWilliams announced plans for another project, *The Ultimate Easter Bunny*, a life-sized chocolate cast of Moorman, in the nude, holding her cello. For \$200 one could purchase either the dark or milk chocolate version, with or without nuts ("all edible," he said with a wink). McWilliams hired a designer to make the mold and oversee the casting process, and he hoped to have the edition ready in time for the Easter holiday.¹³ On the surface, this was lighthearted fun. But in an interview with the *Village Voice*, McWilliams hinted at a darker subtheme when he quipped, "What could be more appropriate than a Southern girl in black?"¹⁴ He did not say "blackface," but his remark evokes the humiliating masquerade of racial "passing" and hints that *The Ultimate Easter Bunny*, like *C. Moorman in Drag*, is a meditation on the bitter rewards of disguising one's authentic self. As a gay man McWilliams would have understood this; he has said that Moorman was a pivotal figure in his life because she treated his homosexuality as a nonissue, which enabled him eventually to do the same.¹⁵

McWilliams was unable to raise money for fabrication of *The Ultimate Easter Bunny*, so the piece remains a gourmand's fantasy.¹⁶ Instead, Moorman did a live version of the concept. Retitled *Candy*, it was realized on April 22, 1973, Easter Sunday afternoon, at the Clocktower Gallery in lower Manhattan. A bed of green cellophane grass strewn with jellybeans and candy eggs transformed the space into an oversized Easter basket. At its center was Moorman, nude and seated as if for a concert, holding a student cello she had borrowed for the occasion. Jud Yalkut videotaped the proceedings as Frank and a small group of friends slathered her and the instrument with twenty pounds of chocolate fudge supplied by a nearby pastry shop.¹⁷ (The soles of her feet, a bit of her buttocks, her armpits, and



FIGURE 25.4

Charlotte Moorman performs Jim McWilliams's *C. Moorman in Drag*, ca. 1973. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



the back of her neck were left bare so that her skin could breathe.) After they had dusted her with a layer of coconut flakes, she sat motionless while Peter Moore shot a series of photographs. That was all. *Candy* was an image—an absurd, hallucinatory tableau—through which Moorman once again proved her performative stamina and nerve. The piece might also be seen as the grandmother of certain feminist artworks that link the body with food, often specifically chocolate. Karen Finley's *We Keep Our Victims Ready* (1989), for example, is an impassioned performance about violence against women that concludes with the artist smearing her naked body with chocolate; Janine Antoni's bitten and chewed chocolate sculptures of the 1990s comment on body image and cultural perceptions of femininity.

Moorman's relationship with second-wave feminism is far more complex than such simple correspondences might imply. On the basis of her work alone, she could be seen as a spirited, forceful, daring protofeminist who had retaken charge of her own body and sexuality through an astute *détournement* of traditionally feminine wiles such as charm, flirtation, and naiveté. During the early years of the women's movement, this was apparently how she was regarded. In 1969, the writer Cindy Nemser, who was researching an article for *Arts* magazine, asked Moorman and a handful of other female artists to reflect on discrimination against women in the art world.¹⁸ During the 1970s, as feminist consciousness became more

FIGURE 25.5

Frank Pileggi coats Charlotte Moorman with chocolate fudge for Jim McWilliams's *Candy*, New York City, 1973. Peter Moore is at left; Ay-O is at right. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

widespread, Moorman was occasionally invited to take part in festivals and exhibitions of women's art, including one at Womanspace, the now-iconic exhibition space in Los Angeles devoted solely to women's work.¹⁹ In 1975, the Swiss feminist art journal *Die Löwin* (*The Lioness*) included Moorman in an issue on women performers that also featured Lynda Benglis, Valie Export, Yoko Ono, Gine Pane, and Carolee Schneemann.²⁰ It seems that at least a few feminists, for at least a while, considered Moorman one of their own.

But Moorman's offstage behaviors and beliefs suggest that she was a conservative, or at least a traditionalist, in matters of sexual politics. She unashamedly declared her preference for the company of men. She even told a friend that she thought men were smarter than women, and, with the exception of Yoko Ono and Carolee Schneemann, better artists.²¹ She defied feminist antiporn dogma by agreeing to appear at the New School as a guest artist for Michael C. Luckman's 1974 class "Pornography Uncovered, Eroticism Exposed."²² Her attitude about using nudity in her work was especially backward, considering the times. By the 1970s, many women were strategically using their own naked bodies in their work as part of a nascent feminist aesthetic that attempted, as Schneemann has said, to "reposition and critically analyze the conventions that denied us history and trivialized our meanings and materials."²³ Moorman had no such goals. Instead, she went on record to say that when she performed nude she was just doing what she had been told by a composer, director, or other male authority figure.

It wasn't that Moorman was against feminism. She was just uninterested in it, as she was uninterested in ideology and politics of any kind. Does Moorman's personal apathy about feminism mean that her work cannot be discussed in a feminist context? Perhaps not. Art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau has written: "Whether a woman artist personally describes herself as a feminist is now somewhat beside the point. What is far more important is what the work is doing, how it operates, whether exceeds, disturbs, destabilizes, or puts in question its commodity status as trophy, decoration, or fetish."²⁴ Moorman's performative work certainly accomplished some or all of these things. At the very least, it defied conventions of classical music performance that had stood for centuries, such as the notion that (female) instrumentalists should be neutral conduits for

the music of (usually male) others, or that the open expression of sexuality is out of place in classical performance.

The operative word in Solomon-Godeau's remark might be "now." Today, thanks to the work of Schneemann, Ono, and other women artists, the concerns and strategies of a feminist aesthetic are an accepted part of contemporary discourse. It is now possible to look back at the 1970s and identify women whose work contributed to the development of that aesthetic, even if they did so unintentionally. Moorman herself was not a feminist. But her work proposes models for women's artistic authorship and expression that could, and perhaps should, be understood as feminist.

26

Cecil B. De Moorman

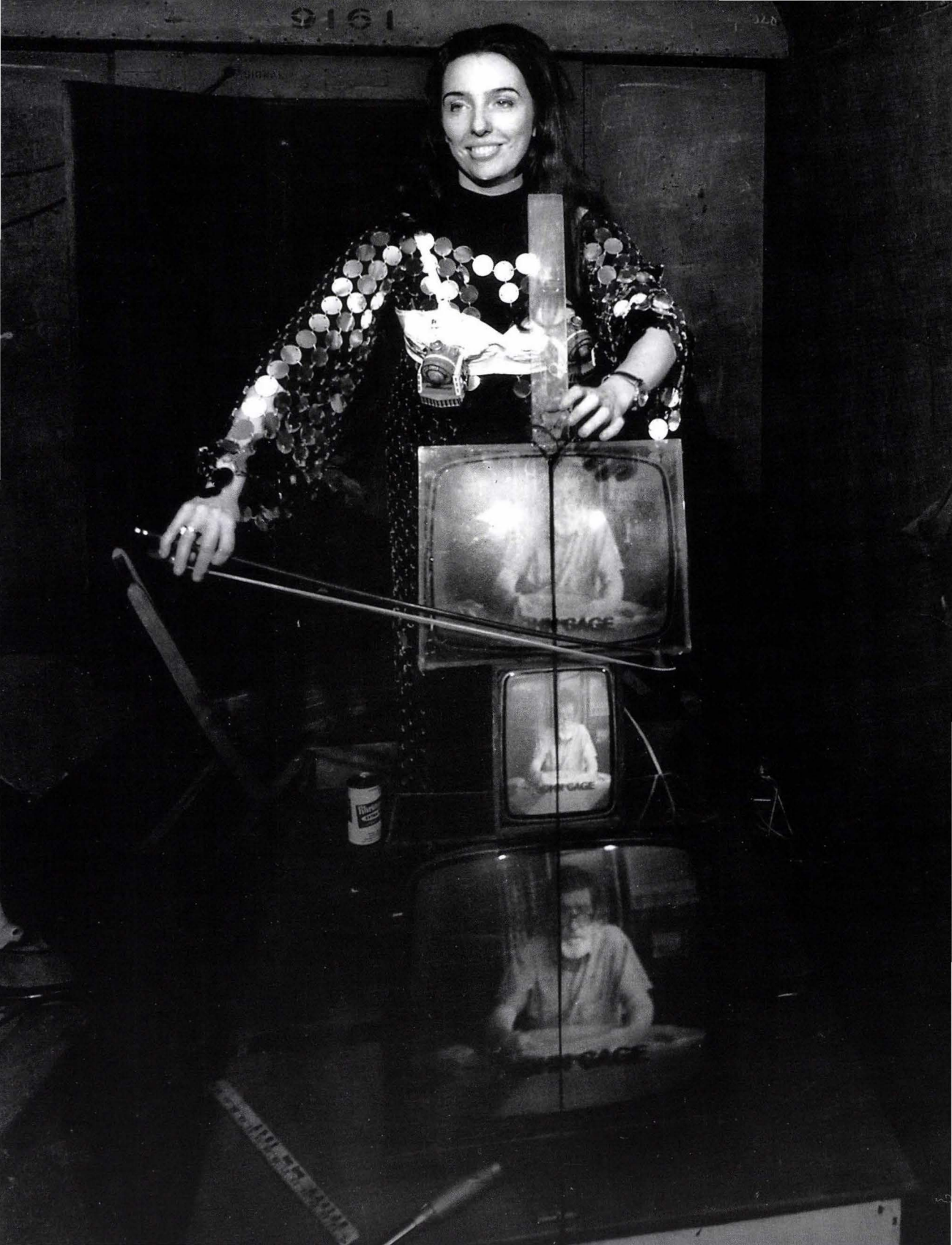
DURING THE 1970S, MOORMAN'S FESTIVALS BECAME FLAMBOYANT AFFAIRS. THEY WERE STAGED IN PROGRESSIVELY LARGER AND MORE EXTRAVAGANT VENUES AND WERE EVEN MORE ROBUSTLY SUPPORTED by local corporate and government bodies, despite a crushing recession that nearly brought New York City to ruin. In 1973, she convinced a knot of recalcitrant bureaucrats at three different agencies to give her the use of twenty baggage cars and two tracks at Manhattan's Grand Central Terminal. The next year, the owners of the New York Jets football team buckled under her insistent requests to stage the festival at Shea Stadium. And, in 1975, she took over Floyd Bennett Field, the historic Brooklyn airfield where record-breaking flights by Howard Hughes and Amelia Earhart had begun and ended. When even these marvelous sites began to seem pedestrian, she revived her dream of putting the festival in motion. For several

years running she pestered officials at Braniff Airlines for a plane so that the festival could visit Chicago, or Los Angeles, or Dallas, or Amarillo. She pitched a “Festival Train” with stops in Buffalo and Syracuse, and she even imagined commandeering the 1976 Bicentennial Barge to move the festival up the Hudson from New York to Albany. “I would give a concert on the moon, if they would let me,” she told a reporter in 1972.¹

The event expanded along with its site. The first festival, in 1963, had featured the work of a mere twenty-eight artists. By the time she staged the final festival in 1980, the number had swelled to six hundred fifty. More artists meant more artworks and bigger budgets. In 1973, the electrician’s bill alone was \$10,000.² Some critics felt that her emphasis on spectacle came at the expense of conceptual rigor; others were more frustrated by the festivals’ amoebic growth. Dick Higgins, one of the five hundred artists who took part in the 1975 Floyd Bennett Field event, wrote her a wistful postfestival note with suggestions for a few changes. “Make it small, like when it all began,” he wrote her. “To avoid the Art Mart atmosphere which sometimes has happened.”³ Alison Knowles pointed out that the need for more space had sometimes pushed the festival to areas so far-flung—Queens, or the outer edge of Brooklyn—that fewer artists and visitors wanted to make the trip.⁴ Howard Wise, Moorman’s patron, adviser, and fiscal agent during the 1970s, urged her, “Charlotte—think small! It’s not how many artists you can squeeze in—it’s how well their work can be displayed and whether we can AFFORD it.”⁵

FIGURE 26.1

Charlotte Moorman performs on Nam June Paik’s *TV Cello* inside a boxcar at the 10th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, Grand Central Terminal, New York City, 1973. Paik also designed her “train bra.” Photo © Ivan Spane. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



Thinking small was not Moorman's style. She would not have conceded the very sensible point that both artists and audiences might better be served by less rather than more. So the festivals grew, and Moorman traded organizational precision for the hot, combustible energy of near-anarchy. She was always confident she had made the better choice.

During the 1970s, her festival performances, all imagined by Jim McWilliams, also gained in showmanship. Many required acts of sheer nerve that would not have been out of place under a circus tent. Though most of these performances never came off, Moorman's reputation for valor in service of art was not diminished because everyone knew she would have done them if only she had been able. She could not get permission from officials at Grand Central Terminal to do *Train Cello*, in which she and her instrument were to be lashed to the front of a moving locomotive as it careered through a paper barrier.⁶ Instead, she played *TV Cello* inside a baggage car. At Floyd Bennett Field, bad weather forced the cancellation of *Music for Helicopter and Cello*, in which Moorman, sporting a pair of angel wings, was to have been lowered onto the field from a hovering chopper to play a short musical selection, after which she would discard her cello and wings and fly off in the helicopter, like a goddess who had touched down briefly to mesmerize the earthbound.⁷ She did manage to perform *Flying Cello* at Shea Stadium, but only just. For this piece, two trapezes were erected on the playing field. A cello was tied to one of them; Moorman, outfitted in a spangled purple cape and conical feathered hat, was boosted onto the other. Assistants then set both swings in motion. Advance publicity promised that when Moorman and her instrument met in midair, music would "blast" throughout the stadium. But she couldn't quite reach the cello with her bow, and in the end she managed only to land one kick on the instrument.⁸

This exuberant visuality was not limited to the festivals. During the 1970s her setup for Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player* also became gaudier, with a brightly colored, inflated plastic clown leering from one side of the stage and a large photograph of the composer himself smiling beatifically on the other. Kitsch? Perhaps. But by the mid-1970s, contemporary art had long since been reinvigorated by imagery from popular culture; today, contemporary art has become a farrago of mass media, fashion, design, marketing,

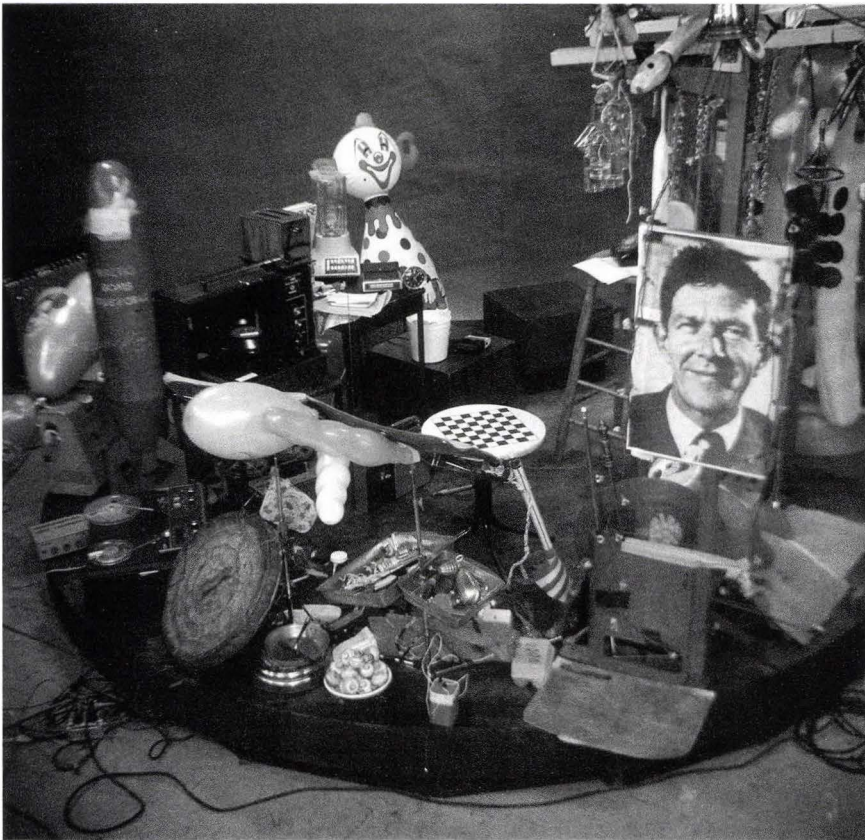


FIGURE 26.2

Charlotte Moorman's setup for a performance of John Cage's *26'1.1499'' for a String Player* at WNET-TV studio, 1973. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



FIGURE 26.3

Charlotte Moorman with Yoko Ono, 10th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, Grand Central Terminal, New York City, 1973. Photo by Tyrone Dukes/The New York Times/Redux.

new technology, old-fashioned craft, popular entertainment, and kitsch. At the forefront of this eventual admixture, Moorman did her mad, joyous work.

Many of Moorman's festival regulars from the 1960s continued to participate during the 1970s. Ay-O, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Geoffrey Hendricks, Alison Knowles, Carolee Schneemann, Jud Yalkut, and Yoko Ono were regularly listed on her festival posters throughout the decade. John Cage took part nearly every year, although often in absentia. At Shea Stadium, for example, his text piece *Happy New Ears* was displayed on the scoreboard in right field. Nam June Paik could almost always be counted on to conceive a new piece for his former partner's events. In 1975, he proposed to set off firecrackers so that the rhythm of their explosions spelled



FIGURE 26.4

John Cage, *Happy New Ears* (1963), as realized at the 11th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, Shea Stadium, New York City, 1974 (detail). Otto Pieni's *Silver Rainbow* is installed on the field; visible in the seats is a portion of Nam June Paik's *Boxes for Box Seats*. Photo © Catherine Skopick.

out the words “video art” in Morse Code—a work that succinctly alluded to the wartime history of Floyd Bennett Airfield and wryly used an ancient technology to celebrate a new one. At the 1977 festival, he showed *TV Environment with Fish* (later retitled *Video Fish*), eight color monitors showing tapes of swimming fish, each placed behind a tank full of real fish.⁹ Doves of younger artists joined in the festivals during the 1970s, too, attracted by Moorman’s increasing renown as well as the chance to work alongside their better-known colleagues. In 1973, for example, more than half the three hundred artists who participated were new to the festival.¹⁰

Open, free, accessible, and celebratory, Moorman’s festivals of the 1970s were representative of the time, when closed systems in many realms

of American life began to open up to wider membership. In the art world, this shift was manifest in a network of ad hoc, low-budget arts spaces and organizations that sprang up during the late 1960s and 1970s. Run largely by artists for artists, these groups—including the Art Workers’ Coalition, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the women’s cooperative A.I.R., and the Kitchen—were conceived in a spirit of activism. They gave voice to artists who had been marginalized by major institutions, allowed artists to take control of their own exhibitions and sales, and privileged freedom of expression over curatorial control and market demands. The history of the alternative arts movement has so far omitted Moorman’s festival, even though it was an early, catalytic example of this grassroots phenomenon.¹¹ The exclusion has been noted by some of her contemporaries. “She grew a community around her,” says composer Charles Morrow. “By making events like [the festivals] she was part of the soil from which the alternative arts movement grew.”¹² Carolee Schneemann attributes Moorman’s critical neglect to the same chaotic energy that made her achievements possible: “She was treated like a wild, improvisatory, penniless, entrepreneurial girl. Had she been a guy, this would have had such authority and weight to it, because through her will and crazy vision she created the avant-garde community, the most extensive one that we have. But she did it like a crazy girl.”¹³

Although the festivals got bigger during the 1970s, Moorman kept her administrative operation small and family-like. Festival headquarters was located in her apartment, a third-floor walk-up in a modest building on West 46th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, a one-block neighborhood known as Little Brazil for its many Brazilian shops and restaurants. After she and Frank married, they had moved into the apartment with their dog, Victor, and the massive accumulation of paper and objects that Moorman called her archive. Once she had started to collect a paper archive, it had overwhelmed every place she lived; by the late 1970s, she claimed, the accumulation weighed ten tons.¹⁴ She made no distinction, physical or otherwise, between her life and her work. “Wherever she was, was cluttered, just engulfed by clutter,” remembers Jim McWilliams. “When she moved to West 46th Street, within months there were just paths through it.”¹⁵ The three-room flat was so crowded that Frank often joked that he

had go outside to change his mind.¹⁶ Sometime during 1974, Yoko Ono and John Lennon had begun sending Moorman a monthly stipend of \$175, ostensibly for promoting Ono's book *Grapefruit* and performing Ono's compositions.¹⁷ Now Moorman put some of that money toward the rental of a second unit on the fifth floor of their apartment building, where she set up shelves and cabinets to store her archive and equipment.

In the early years, Moorman had managed the festival mostly on her own, or with the help of Frank and one or two friends. During the 1970s, her reputation attracted a larger group of volunteers, whom she mustered every year to do the laborious work of telephone calling, envelope stuffing, and typing necessary to stage the festivals. They, too, worked out of the 46th Street apartment, and often they had nowhere to sit but atop piles of paper. No one seemed to mind. "The Festival cannot run like a machine or an oil company," Moorman explained to a colleague. "It runs on love and it works."¹⁸

Juan Tomás Crovetto met Moorman in autumn 1972. He was a young dancer who had just arrived in New York from Madrid and was keen to connect with the avant-garde art scene. On the recommendation of a friend, Crovetto wandered down to the South Street Seaport festival and was quickly drawn into Moorman's orbit. "I intended to work for [her for] three hours, and I ended up living with her," he says. "I felt so guilty—they really needed help."¹⁹ He moved in with the archive, sleeping on a cot jimmied in between the mountains of paper. Moorman tended him as if she were his house-mother. "She came upstairs with a tray and gave me dinner every night. [...] Mainly the diet was lentil soup from a can, cheap hot dogs that [she] cut into little pieces like a banana, white bread, maybe crackers. [...] She ate that a lot, too."²⁰

Crovetto was dazzled by the art-world star power of her guests. Paik, Christo, and Jeanne-Claude were regulars. At least once Yoko Ono brought John Lennon for a tête-à-tête dinner with Charlotte and Frank on their tiny roof patio. (For all her reputation as a welcoming hostess, Moorman did not cook and she did not fuss over the food she offered her guests. "The wine and cheese she'd serve were close to poisonous," says one friend.²¹) Crovetto also remembers the laughter. "The situations we were in were often very comical," he says. "[Visitors] expected the Avant Garde Festival to be a big thing, and to see their faces when they saw the apartment! And

of course the dog was fucking everybody. Anyone who came in, he would come and fuck their leg. [...] It was always a comedy, and she would laugh a lot.”²² “She was a trip,” says another friend. “It was like hanging out with the Marx brothers.”²³

Like many small organizations, the Avant Garde Festival owed its continued existence to the passionate energy of its founder. Moorman managed each of the fifteen festivals herself, from concept through cleanup. During the 1970s she kept fat, three-ring binders stuffed with correspondence, artists’ proposals, maps, permits, insurance contracts, invoices, press releases, letters of support, and copious scribbled notes made during her nearly constant telephone conversations. She often was absurdly thorough. She claimed, for example, to have attended twenty-one baseball games at Shea Stadium (with Frank, who was an avid sports fan) so that she could measure and map its every corner, the better to situate each artist’s work in its ideal location.²⁴ She also was willing to commit minor crimes to make the festivals happen. She forged signatures, lied to bill collectors and insurance companies; bought electronic equipment and returned it after the festival for a full refund, and made midnight raids on the mimeograph machines, postal meters, and printing presses at her friends’ places of employment. After one of those friends gave her an official U.S. State Department seal he had found in a midtown dumpster, she began using it to emboss festival documents.²⁵ She was also more than willing to use her wiles to manipulate powerful men. Sid Frigand was director of public affairs at the Metropolitan Transit Authority when Moorman came to see him about Grand Central Terminal. “Charlotte was so charming, with her Southern drawl,” he recalled. “She exuded an energy. She flirted. [...] It was kind of an act. Her accent would fade and come back as she needed it to. You knew you were being manipulated, but you didn’t care.”²⁶

“She flirted.” This alone set Moorman apart from most of her female peers in the art world. During the 1970s, flattery and flirtation were despised as remnants of an oppressive past when women had had to imply sexual availability to get anything at all accomplished. The rules of heterosexual engagement were changing, and many men were uncertain how to interact with women. Moorman’s willingness to engage in an old-fashioned discourse—along with her girlish enthusiasm, traditional appearance, and,



FIGURE 26.5

Charlotte Moorman at work on the 15th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival in her New York City loft, 1980. Photo © Gisela Scheidler.

when necessary, feigned helplessness—suggested that she was a woman they could understand. That she was also the Topless Cellist only made her more fascinating. She was too ingenuous to be called Machiavellian, but Moorman lived by his credo. Where her festivals were concerned, the end justified the means.

Many participants consider the festivals critical to their own careers and even to the era. The “art mart atmosphere” that Dick Higgins found distasteful was precisely what made them essential viewing for so many artists during the 1970s. They were a low-stakes chance to try out new ideas, and an opportunity to get out of the studio and find out what your peers had been working on. For composer Franz Kamin, the festivals were “the single most important thing I saw the whole time I was in New York.” Jud Yalkut believes that they were “totally unique—there was nothing else on that scale,” and Carman Moore credits them with making avant-garde art into “something people could read about in *Time* magazine.”²⁷

If the festivals were an annual smorgasbord for both artists and the public, they were also Moorman’s artwork, an event score for herself that demanded virtuoso improvisational skills and was different each time she performed it. If one judges by the amount of energy and time she put into archiving and recording the history of the festivals, they were the aspect of her work on which she placed the most importance. In a remembrance published in the *Village Voice* after her death, poet Mitch Highfill called the festivals “brave, grandiose, and loony” and Moorman herself “the most effective arts organizer New York has ever known [...] A brilliant and powerful woman who turned expectations inside out.”²⁸

AFTER HER GRANDMOTHER’S death in 1969 Moorman did not visit Little Rock again for six years, but she continued to correspond with her mother. Beginning in the early 1970s, Vivian’s letters began to show evidence of physical and mental decline. Her handwriting, once as flowing and flawless as a schoolmarm’s, became shrunken and shaky, the lines trailing off into tiny, illegible squiggles. Her syntax became disjointed and her thoughts incoherent. Moorman must have suspected that her mother was ill. Still, she stayed away from Little Rock until she was invited to perform *Sky Kiss*

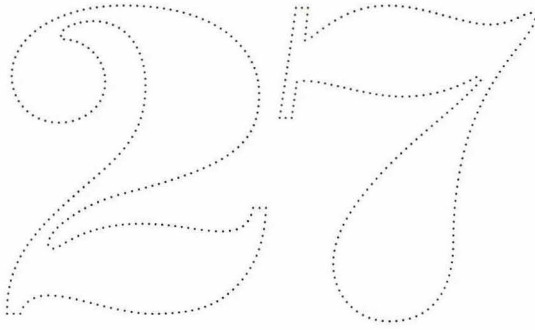
during a 1975 city festival.²⁹ During that trip, she spent an afternoon with her mother that left her guilt-ridden. She wrote Frank: “Mary Ellen (a cousin) drove me to see Mother and Lola—they are both so sick—after this visit I’ll never see Mother again, I’m afraid—I’m such a bad daughter—it is good that I’ve never been blessed with children—I don’t deserve them. I can’t bring her back to life, she has nothing. Only you can tell me what is real. Mommye tried to teach me, but I was too selfish.”³⁰

In 1978, Vivian had a near-fatal stroke and was admitted to Hillhaven nursing home. She was unable to walk or talk.³¹ Her husband, Fay, also infirm, was living in a boarding house, so it fell to Charlotte to clear out her mother’s apartment. In November 1978 she and Frank drove their Volkswagen Beetle to Little Rock and loaded it with as much as it could carry. The few boxes that would not fit into the car she left with a neighbor.

She never came back to retrieve them, and she never saw her mother again.³² Vivian died on January 24, 1981, but Charlotte did not learn of her death until eight months later, when Jerald Ordovery told her. He had been reviewing documents related to the settlement of the estate of Lola Burr, Charlotte’s aunt, and noticed that among the expenses deducted from the estate was a charge of three dollars for a copy of Vivian Moorman’s death certificate.³³

Since Fay Holbrook was Vivian’s next of kin, he was no doubt notified of his wife’s death. But he did not inform his wife’s only child. Being in poor health himself, perhaps he was not able to call Charlotte. Perhaps he did not feel inclined to make the effort, or did not know how to reach her. Harder to explain is why no one in the extended Kelly family called, either.

Charlotte tracked down what details she could about her mother’s death. Among the papers in her archive is a sheet of notes bearing this sad poetry: “Bad shape sent over from Hillhaven—St. Vincent’s hospital—social worker—tube feeder—mortician—administrative disposition—pneumonia—Drummond Funeral Home—Bureau of Vital Statistics—piece together what like for mother.”



South Pacific

IN SPRING 1976, MOORMAN AND PAIK MADE THEIR LAST MAJOR INTERNATIONAL TRIP TOGETHER, TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC. THEY HAD BEEN INVITED TO AUSTRALIA AS A DUO BY THE TEXTILE MAGNATE JOHN KALDOR, who in 1969 had begun curating a series of Art Projects that focused on contemporary, process-based work. But Paik didn't arrive in Sydney until four days after Moorman, by which time she had already held a press conference, made two television appearances, and given five concerts, with Takehisa Kosugi, who had come over from Japan, filling in as her assistant. Moorman was clearly the headliner. After his arrival, Paik stayed happily in the background, preparing for an exhibition of his sculpture, videos, and drawings at Sydney's Art Gallery of New South Wales.¹

Moorman captivated the Australian media. During her Sydney press conference, after John Kaldor himself had helped her into *TV Bra*, she chatted

with reporters, feeding them one engaging quote after another. “There have been a couple hundred pieces written for me, and some of them are not so good. But the *TV Bra* wears well,” she said. And: “[The customs officials] couldn’t put a value on my *TV Bra*. They weren’t the least bit interested in my very fine cello; they said it was a personal possession. Well, I ask you, what’s more personal than a girl’s bra?”² During the next three weeks, the media followed Moorman’s every move and she was a constant presence in the papers. Reports detail how, on a sunny afternoon in Adelaide’s Elder Park, she performed *Flying Cello*, the trapeze stunt first performed at Shea Stadium in 1974, and how she shivered through an outdoor performance of *Ice Music for Adelaide*.³ Kaldor vividly recalls her performance of *Candy* on a Sydney day so warm that the chocolate fudge melted off her skin, and her climb to the roof of Sydney’s Art Gallery of New South Wales to play Mieko Shiomi’s *Cello Sonata* (1972)—a soundless, nearly motionless work in which Moorman was to dangle a cello from the end of a fishing pole while sitting on the tallest peak available.⁴

Most dramatic was her performance of *Sky Kiss*. For nearly an hour she floated above the Sydney Opera House plaza, held aloft by eighteen brightly colored helium-filled balloons. Her costume included a feathered headdress with two pointed peaks meant to echo the shape of the Opera House roofs, and a white satin cape with marabou trim. Frank and a group of students from Alexander Mackie School of Art manned the guy lines; as they maneuvered Moorman up and down the front stairway of the Opera House and across the plaza, she laughed, waved, blew kisses, and called out greetings to the crowd of two thousand who stood about watching her drift and bob in the wind. Some of them might have heard her plucking randomly at the strings of her cello, which was tied to her harness and amplified, or they might have caught snippets of her rendition of Jimmy Webb’s breezy love song “Up, Up, and Away.” The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the event’s finest moment was a visual one: “Before rounding the western corner of the Bennelong Restaurant [...] Miss Moorman, silhouetted against the sun and the Harbour Bridge, was suddenly escorted by four seagulls and two blue and red kites, streaming tentacles at their tails.” She was lowered to earth near a stand of olive trees at the southern edge of the terrace.⁵



FIGURE 27.1

Charlotte Moorman performs Mieko Shiomi's *Cello Sonata* on the roof of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, 1976, as part of the 5th Kaldor Public Art Project. Photo by Kerry Dundas © Art Gallery of New South Wales.



FIGURE 27.2

Charlotte Moorman performs Jim McWilliams's *Ice Music for Sydney*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1976. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Kaldor Public Art Projects.

Moorman would perform the piece several more times during the 1980s, but she always considered the Sydney *Sky Kiss* her finest. The site was spectacular, and though she had risen only about fifteen feet in the air she had felt voluptuously buoyant, almost weightless. Most marvelous of all, the performance was graced by a near-magical synchronicity. *Sky Kiss* took place on April 11, which that year was Palm Sunday. While Moorman was aloft outside the Opera House, Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* was being performed inside. She reported with delight that "people came out at intermission [...] and they really thought they were seeing a vision because I was floating by outside."⁶

Had Moorman's career taken the conventional path, she too might have been confined inside the Opera House that day, dressed in the equivalent of widow's weeds, her cello firmly anchored to the floor as she played Bach. Instead she was outdoors, playing her cello in the air and laughing as she floated free of her earthly ties, a celebrant of life and love and art. "[*Sky Kiss*] is such a happy piece," she later said. "No one ever has bad thoughts, they never want to shoot me down or give me any harm. It just makes us all very, very happy."⁷

THE DAY AFTER her performance of *Sky Kiss*, Charlotte, Frank, and Nam June left Sydney for the Solomon Islands. They planned to spend ten days on Guadalcanal, the largest of the islands and the site of an extended World War II naval campaign. Guadalcanal is a rocky, volcanic outcropping ringed by coral reefs that lies about one thousand miles off the northeast coast of Australia. Rugged peaks rise in its interior, and flat, sandy beaches form its shoreline. More than thirty years after the conclusion of the military campaign that made it infamous, the island was still strewn with the debris of modern warfare: crashed planes, abandoned tanks, rusted helmets, empty artillery shells, offshore shipwrecks. Human remains lay unclaimed in the rain forest.

Paik was interested in Guadalcanal's role in military history and had gotten permission from the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs to shoot footage there for a documentary video. His idea was to explore the physical and emotional vestiges of the war. "We are going



to [...] stay for a while in Guadalcanal, you know, to see what is left thirty years later,” he told a reporter just before he departed New York. “Charlotte will play her cello in the caves and in the jungle—in what we find there.”⁸

They landed at Honiara airport on April 12. Two days later their equipment was released from customs and they began a week of videotaping at notable military sites. On Red Beach, where U.S. marines had first come ashore, Moorman sat on the strand and played the energetic prelude from Bach’s Suite no. 3 for solo cello. She did Takehisa Kosugi’s *Chamber Music* near a concrete stele erected at the site of a late-campaign battle high on Mount Austen. Paik assisted her in Joseph Beuys’s *Infiltration Homogen for Cello*, which they performed on the wing of a wrecked bomber they had stumbled upon in the jungle.⁹ One sultry afternoon, she crawled through the surf in a military uniform and helmet, her cello strapped on her back, to perform Paik’s *Peace Sonata*.

Midway through the week, on April 19, they staged a “cultural exchange program” at King George School.¹⁰ The event, a sort of mini-*Mixed Media Opera*, included a screening of Robert Breer’s short film *Fist Fight*; a speech by Paik; and Moorman’s performances of *Chamber Music*, *TV Bra*, and two classical pieces, Saint-Saëns’s “The Swan” and Massenet’s “Elegy.” Video footage of the program shows Moorman in fine hostess form. She chats, laughs, and encourages the gangly young men nearest her to come closer so that they can see themselves on the *TV Bra*’s tiny monitors. Later she wrote a friend, “*TV Bra* was the first time the natives ever saw television!”¹¹

FIGURE 27.3

Charlotte Moorman performs Jim McWilliams’s *Sky Kiss*, Sydney, Australia, 1976.
Photo © James Ashburn. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering
McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.



FIGURE 27.4

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik perform Joseph Beuys's *Infiltration Homogen for Cello*, Guadalcanal, 1976. Photo by Frank Pileggi. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

She was thrilled to serve as an envoy for the avant-garde in this remote corner of the earth.

The video that resulted from their visit, *Guadalcanal Requiem* (1977/1979), collages Moorman's performances with historical footage of World War II battles and interviews with Japanese and American veterans as well as Solomon Islanders. Its antiwar message is not stated explicitly but is impossible to miss. The veterans show their battle scars and recall the hellish sounds and sights of war. Locals describe a vast section of jungle where the dead still lay; their stories are intercut with animated images of skulls and dead bodies. Woven through these tales of psychic and physical trauma, Moorman's solitary performances are a soothing leitmotif. She appears with her cello

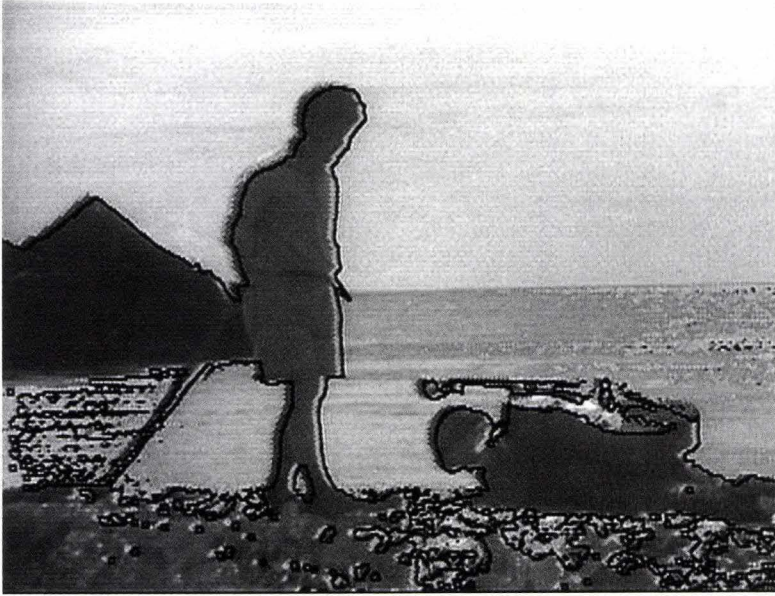


FIGURE 27.5

Nam June Paik with Charlotte Moorman, *Guadalcanal Requiem*, 1977, re-edited 1979. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

at the most accursed spots on the island and then deploys her art as if she is attempting to exorcise wartime ghosts. She is the muse of peace.

In one of the video's most powerful scenes, Moorman performs *Peace Sonata* while Paik drags a halved violin behind him (a realization of his 1961 piece *Violin with String*). They move toward each other, American and Asian, just as they had done thirty years before on these same beaches. But this time, art mediates the encounter rather than greed or hate or nationalistic fervor. The performance sequence is colorized and synthesized, then intercut with historical footage of bombs dropping from airplanes. The latter is run in reverse so that the planes appear to be sucking the bombs back into their bellies. A requiem is a musical plea for the peaceful repose

of the dead, but *Guadalcanal Requiem* concerns itself as well with the living. In the press release announcing the premiere screening of the video, Paik wrote that the piece laments “the human fates which seem to create an enemy from a friend, or a friend from an enemy, often without principles or scruples.”¹² In this video, peace is both visualized and enacted, and the present confronts the past.

After they returned from the Solomon Islands Moorman seems to have been in a retrospective mood. In November 1976, she turned forty-three years old. She had spent the past fifteen years working as an experimental artist. She could look back at her career and see that it had a distinct shape, that she had made a contribution, and that the histories of her work and her festivals should be preserved. That year, she asked the Rockefeller Foundation for funds to continue her creative work and to assist with storage of her archive. “I am currently housing the history of an important faction of the Avant Garde in an apartment which must be vacated by the end of this year. [...] I must find an adequate space and pay the necessary fees that will be required. These important documents must be accessible to artists, students, scholars, press, etc. wishing to do research on the Avant Garde,” she wrote.¹³ She was awarded \$4,000 for her creative work but nothing for the archive. (Storage fees fell outside the foundation’s funding guidelines.)

A few weeks after she got the check, a heavy spring rainstorm sent water gushing through the roof of their apartment building. Some of the archive was lost; the rest was soaked. Moorman ended up using her Rockefeller money to buy shelves and tarpaulins and hire assistants to help with the laborious work of drying the wet papers.¹⁴ The following summer, she, Frank, and Victor moved to a loft at 62 Pearl Street, a nineteenth-century Federal-style building on a historic block in lower Manhattan. The archive went with them. When she died fourteen years later, the loft still housed her history.

In 1976, Paik, like Moorman, had been thinking about the past. He was forty-four years old. The Everson Museum in Syracuse had mounted the first full survey of his work, in 1974, and the Kölnischer Kunstverein had followed in late 1976 with a more comprehensive exhibition, accompanied by a scholarly catalog containing essays, a biography, and reprints of his scores and letters.¹⁵ In Cologne for the exhibition, Paik was photographed

in front of buildings important to his career, including Mary Bauermeister's atelier, where he had cut off John Cage's tie in 1959, and the Aachenstrasse studio where, in 1962, he had secretly begun working with electronics.

It was during this backward-looking period that Moorman and Paik conceived *From Jail to Jungle*, a program celebrating their work together from 1967 (jail) to 1976 (the Guadalcanal jungle). Paik paid nearly \$4,000 to rent Carnegie Hall for the evening of February 10, 1977, virtually ten years to the day after their arrest.¹⁶ According to his concept for the program, Moorman would open with a performance of a new opera he would compose for the occasion; this would be followed by a dramatization of her arrest and trial, written by Paik in collaboration with director Steve Jobs. After an intermission, the evening would conclude with the premiere screening of *Guadalcanal Requiem*.

The day before the concert Moorman told Paik she wouldn't perform his new opera. Instead, she wanted to play the full, 1967 version of *Opera Sextronique*, which had never been seen in New York. Paik argued with her. "Times [had] changed and in this new era of permissiveness, the original version [of *Opera Sextronique*] would neither shock nor soothe in any artistic way," he later wrote. "I insisted on playing the new work but to no avail. I protested that even Mozart cannot write a new opera in one day. In any case I complied ... and the result?"¹⁷

Reviews were poor. The *Times* called it tedious and moralistic. Cast member David Bourdon, who played himself in the dramatization and wrote about the experience for *Art in America*, pronounced the show "a bomb if there ever was one."¹⁸ Paik didn't mind bad reviews. What he minded was repetition. But Moorman remained in thrall to her own history. *From Jail to Jungle*, conceived by Paik as a thoughtful reconsideration of the past, was reduced to a vapid reenactment of it.

28

A Condition of Continuous Festival

NEW YORK CITY'S WORLD TRADE CENTER WAS OFFICIALLY DEDICATED IN APRIL 1973. FOR A FEW MONTHS AFTER THAT, ITS TOWERS WERE THE WORLD'S TALLEST BUILDINGS. TO PERFORMERS AND ADVENTURERS of a certain stripe, they were also the world's biggest stage. In 1974, the French aerialist Philippe Petit walked a cable strung between the roofs of the twin towers. In 1975, an unemployed Vietnam vet named Owen Quinn parachuted from the top of the south tower. And on May 26, 1977, George "the Human Fly" Willig used grappling hooks and suction cups to scale the south tower's facade.

Moorman claimed to have had her eye on the World Trade Center as a festival site well before any of these stunts had taken place. She said she'd been interested since 1964, when architectural plans for the complex were unveiled to the public.¹ After the dedication ceremony in 1973, she began

seeking permission, but nearly four years passed before she was given access. She was exultant. “This is the most beautiful and prestigious location we’ve ever had,” she wrote to Howard Wise a few months before the event. “I won’t even be heartbroken if the festival can’t travel to another city this year!”²

The 13th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival took place on June 19, 1977, inside the World Trade Center and on its outdoor plaza. Moorman estimated that thirty thousand visitors made the trip to Lower Manhattan on that sunny Sunday afternoon. The event offered the by-now-expected mix of performance, video, holography, music, dance, inflatables, streamers, and installation works, many of them ambitiously scaled. Vera Simons, artist and hot air balloon specialist, brought a diaphanous, eighty-foot-tall helium-filled sculpture for the lobby of the south tower. In the same lobby, Paul Wagoner and Lowry Burgess of MIT flew *Air Dolphin*, a remote-controlled, fourteen-foot-long Mylar blimp. Jim McWilliams drew a *Mean-dering Yellow Line* up the entire length of the north tower by installing a blinking light—the kind used by road construction crews—in one window on each of its 107 floors. In the sky, high above the twin towers, a skywriting plane traced an ephemeral greeting: “Love to the Avant-Garde Festival from John and Yoko.”

Tucked into a corner on the floor of the north tower’s lobby, *The Two Smallest Video Pieces in the World*, by Andrew Gurian and Raymond Dobbins, suggested that bigger was not always better. One tiny video monitor, its screen divided in half by a paper mask, displayed two live images of the same picture postcard of the Empire State Building, which had been New York City’s tallest structure until the completion of the World Trade Center. With its doubled image, the monitor evokes the coin-operated binoculars on the Empire State Building’s eighty-sixth floor observatory, as well as the old-fashioned stereoscopic devices used to view pictures of exotic locales. Many New Yorkers were not immediately fond of the twin towers, Gurian among them.³ In this piece, he and Dobbins paid homage to the grand old building and took a jibe at the bland new one, whose twin towers suggested that two of a thing was always better than one.

Ay-O’s *Rainbow Environment no. 11* (aka *Cleanse Manhattan or Towers Love*) offered a different sort of corrective to the towers’ looming presence.⁴ The artist dyed his sheets, shirts, and trousers in rainbow colors and hung



FIGURE 28.1

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Ay-O, *Rainbow Environment no. 11*, 13th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival,
World Trade Center, New York City, 1977. Photo © Ay-O.

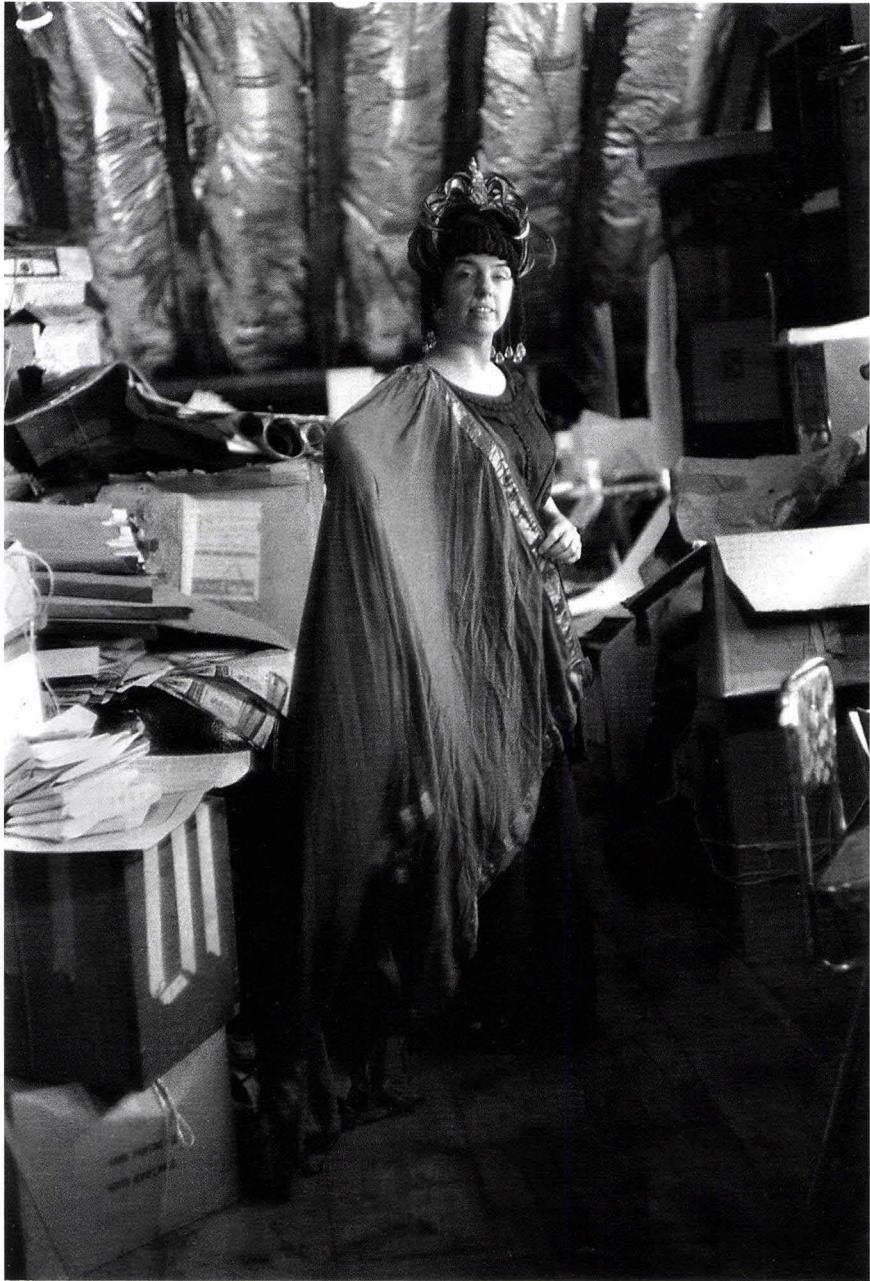
them on a rope. He then stretched this gaudy clothesline between the twin towers. The operation sounds more difficult than it was; Port Authority officials insisted it couldn't be done without heavy machinery. But Ay-O's simple solution was to send an assistant to both towers' forty-first floors, which were reserved for mechanical systems and had windows that opened. Each assistant dropped a rope to the ground. Ay-O tied one end of his clothesline to each rope, and the assistants pulled it into place between the towers.⁵ With laundry hanging between them, the monoliths evoked a pair of Brooklyn tenements and were instantly humbled, domesticated, and feminized. Ay-O's piece was a reminder that international commerce is inextricably linked to the daily labors of individual people, including the thousands of workers who toiled inside the towers themselves.

Moorman's last festival of the 1970s, the fourteenth, was held on May 20, 1978. It did not take place in New York, but in Massachusetts. The organizers of the 2nd Annual Cambridge River Festival had invited her to collaborate and she accepted, snug in the promise of "a beautiful space along the Charles River and all kinds of help from the students, and all kinds of equipment."⁶ According to the event's press release, festival day would begin with a dawn reveille from all the city's church towers and continue with "mini-celebrations" in city parks, squares, and streets. Festival parades from the four quadrants of Cambridge would then converge at Magazine Beach, on the banks of the Charles. "For many years, it has been the hope of the Festival to travel to another community," she wrote in a call for artist's proposals. "This year the City of Cambridge has provided the opportunity and the setting, and this dream will finally become a reality."⁷

Many of Moorman's regular festival artists made the trek from New York or sent works to be installed. Yoko Ono contributed *46 Reflections from Dawn to Knight*, forty-six mirrored crosses on which viewers were instructed to make a wish when the sun hit a mirror. Geoffrey Hendricks rowed a boat

FIGURE 28.2

Charlotte Moorman in her Pearl Street loft, New York City, 1978. She models the peacock-feather headdress and cape she wore in Jim McWilliams's *Cambridge Special for Charlotte, Elephant, and Cello* at the 14th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1978. Photo © Margarita D'Amico.



back and forth across the Charles River for twelve hours running in a work titled *Shore Line*, a tribute to the recently deceased George Maciunas.⁸ Choreographer Marilyn Wood and her troupe danced in the public spaces of the Cambridge Hyatt Regency Hotel, and Otto Piene led a collaborative project by a contingent of artists from MIT, whose campus was nearby.

As usual, not all of the pieces were realized as planned. Andrew Guri-an's *Video Cleopatra* [aka *The Egyptian Queen*] was to have been a sculpture made of dozens of video monitors stacked to resemble a reclining Cleopatra, which he wanted to float down the Charles River on a barge. To obtain the necessary video equipment, Moorman stayed awake into the wee hours so that she could telephone Japan during the business day; she intended to ask the CEO of Sony Corporation to lend the monitors. She finally was connected with Sony headquarters, but only managed to speak to the night watchman. Needless to say, he did not authorize the loan.⁹

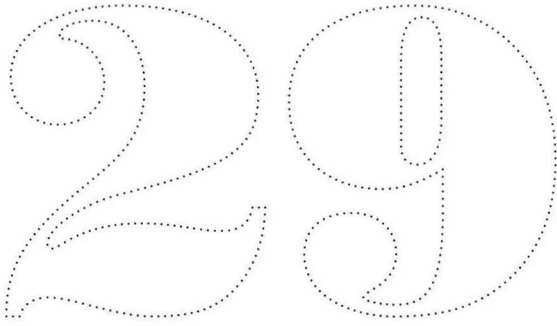
Moorman's own piece, *Cambridge Special for Charlotte, Elephant, and Cello*, also did not come off as planned. Jim McWilliams, who composed it for the occasion, imagined Moorman dressed as Cleopatra and seated atop an elephant, floating on a barge down the Charles River to the festival grounds. (The riverfront site apparently conjured the Egyptian queen in more than one mind.) But the elephant was unable to heave its bulk onto the barge's deck and Moorman was forced to take the land route, accompanied by a police escort.¹⁰ McWilliams's risible but loving tribute to the queen of the avant-garde is unremarkable but for the fact that it turned out to be her last performance in her own festivals.

Although many of the participating artists enjoyed the experience, Moorman was unhappy with the results, which she blamed on her Cambridge colleagues. Later she told an interviewer, "The people in Cambridge were very happy, they loved the pieces [in the festival], and I'm happy about the pieces they saw, but I can't forget the pieces they sabotaged."¹¹ In several long, testy letters to her collaborators, she detailed every perceived broken promise, mixed message, undelivered piece of equipment, and unreimbursed expense.¹² Moorman had, of course, had all the same problems in her own festivals, but those mistakes had been hers. Perhaps her dissatisfaction arose partly from this shift in the balance of power. In Cambridge, for the first time in fourteen years, Moorman had not been in charge.

BY THE END of the 1970s, Moorman understood herself as an artist rather than merely an interpreter and presenter. In 1978 she applied for and received a \$7,500 fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts for a project that she described vaguely as a mission to “take video etc. to Central America.”¹³ (She never made the trip.) She also applied for a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship to produce her own “Environmental Sculpture for Cello, Video, Film, Laser, Helium, Projections, Water, Fire, and Performers” on the George Washington Bridge. “This work would be installed in the air space, water, and on parts of the bridge itself,” she wrote. “[It] would be presented several times during a one-week period and would be free to the public. [...] I propose also to include a broadcast via public television as an integral part of this environmental sculpture.” She made a point to say that the piece was her own creative work and would not be part of an avant-garde festival.¹⁴ The plan is a sketchy but tantalizing pastiche of seemingly everything Moorman had seen and done in her fifteen years’ involvement with experimental art. But the Guggenheim panel passed her over. Soon afterward she became ill, and did not further pursue the idea.



1991
PART THREE : LIVING WHILE DYING
(1979)



A Piece, of Sorts

MOORMAN FOUND THE LUMP ON A THURSDAY NIGHT IN MARCH 1979. SHE HAD BEEN WATCHING TELEVISION AND HAPPENED TO SEE A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BREAST self-examination. So that evening she checked herself while taking a shower and found what was unmistakably a lump in her left breast.¹ At two-thirty the next afternoon she was sitting in the office of surgeon Thomas F. Dillon. He told her he wanted to operate the next day. Most likely, he proposed what was then a common procedure: the single-stage biopsy-mastectomy, in which a woman entered the operating room for a biopsy having agreed in advance to have the breast removed if the lump proved malignant. Moorman walked out.²

That evening, she began calling friends for advice. Within three days she had collected the names of six New York surgeons; the address and

phone number of the American Cancer Society; and the titles of recent books by two women who had also been stricken by breast cancer: *First, You Cry*, by Betty Rollin, and *Illness as Metaphor*, by Susan Sontag. On March 16, after a mammogram and biopsy had confirmed that her tumor was malignant, she met with Dr. Jerome Urban, a prominent surgeon whose mastectomy patients included Happy Rockefeller, the widow of former vice president Nelson Rockefeller. In 1949, Urban had pioneered the super-radical mastectomy, a procedure in which the breast and chest muscle below it are removed, along with fatty tissue, axillary lymph nodes, internal mammary nodes, and, in some cases, parts of the sternum and rib cage. It was thought that the prophylactic removal of all that tissue would reduce the odds that cancer would recur. (He once said, “Lesser surgery is done by lesser surgeons.”³) By 1979, however, this theory had been disproved and the super-radical was rarely performed. Even Urban abandoned it in favor of the radical mastectomy, an only slightly less draconian operation.

Moorman wanted Urban as her surgeon, but only if he would agree to leave her chest muscles intact. As a cellist, she needed them; she also needed them because she intended to have breast reconstructive surgery.⁴ Urban agreed, and a modified radical mastectomy was scheduled for March 27 at New York’s Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, which was then considered “the best place on earth” to be treated for breast cancer.⁵

Moorman coped with her cancer in the same way she coped with every difficult situation she faced: with a combination of blind faith and obsessive, pragmatic action. For several weeks in spring 1979, she filled the pages of her appointment diary with the names of doctors, medical procedures, hospitals, and alternative treatments. She met with oncologists, surgeons, radiologists, a gastroenterologist, and an endocrinologist. She and Frank drove to Vermont to consult a doctor who used a new procedure known as hyperthermia, in which high temperatures were used to shrink tumors. She read *Let’s Get Well* by the health-food advocate Adele Davis, and considered trying an “anticancer” diet devised by the maverick Finnish physician Paavo Airola. She contemplated taking laetrile, a glycoside extracted from apricot stones that had long been touted as a cure for cancer.

For someone who had decided to fight his or her cancer, none of this would have been unusual. But Moorman did something else that was unusual:

she decided to approach her cancer treatment as a performance. Almost immediately after her diagnosis, she began to discuss with friends the idea of an educational film that would document her mastectomy, radiation therapy, and breast reconstructive surgery. It would begin with Moorman performing on the cello before her surgery, and end with her back at work, wearing *TV Bra* on her refashioned bosom. Since the film's purpose was to "give other women and their families courage through such a crisis," she wanted it to have a happy ending.⁶

The project was also a way for her to dissociate from what was happening to her body. She was frank about this. She told friends that she considered the film "a piece of sorts" and said, "If I know I'm performing, I'll be okay."⁷ After all, even though she was terrified of heights she had strapped on her harness and left the ground for *Sky Kiss*; though she could not swim, she had dived into the Grand Canal for Paik's "Swan." Moorman believed that she could tolerate anything, even cancer, if she knew she was performing. Her friends understood this. Artist Andor Orand, who photographed and audiotaped many of her tests, procedures, and conversations for the planned film, says he knew that his job was "not so much to document a mastectomy, but to give Charlotte emotional support. [...] She needed aesthetic distance from the pain and ordeal she went through. That, and friends around."⁸ As the film was never finished, perhaps what Orand describes was its real purpose.

Moorman's left breast was removed on March 27, 1979. Ten days later her right breast was biopsied and found to be cancer free. That summer she underwent the then-standard postsurgical treatment, a five-week course of radiotherapy.⁹ In Andrew Gurian's film footage of the final session, on August 16, 1979, Moorman asks questions of her doctor and is alternately playful, directorial, and submissive. But with her documentarians behind her, she does not appear frightened.¹⁰

Because of Moorman's illness, there was no avant-garde festival in 1979. But in 1980 she went back to work. It did not take her long to reach maximum speed. In February, she performed with Paik at the Guggenheim Museum's First Intermedia Art Festival. During April and May, she had solo engagements at Northern Illinois University, MIT, and the University of Maryland. In September, she took part in Tel-Hai 80, a four-day

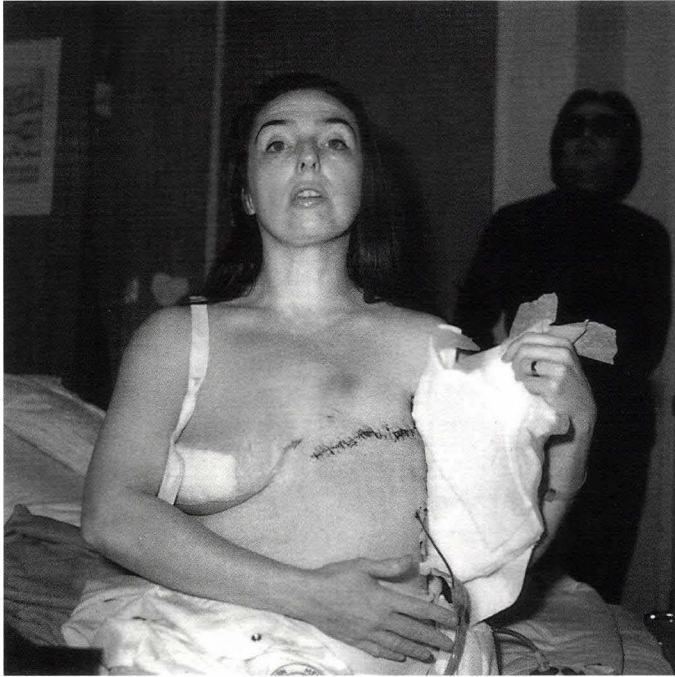


FIGURE 29.1

Charlotte Moorman shows her mastectomy incision, New York City, 1979.
Frank Pileggi is in the background. Photo © Andor Orand.

contemporary art festival and conference held in the mountains of Upper Galilee in Israel. That same month she made her conducting debut in Cologne, leading an ad hoc ensemble in the world premiere of Paik's *Sinfonie no. 6* (1972–1980), a piece in which twenty string players take turns making sounds with one bow. In Cologne, she also gave one of her last performances of Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player*.

In 1980 Moorman redoubled her efforts to document her career. She collaborated with artist Fred Stern on a video interview in which she recounts the history of the avant-garde festivals, mostly through picaresque tales of misadventure that end in triumph. She began compiling a complete bibliography on her festivals and a history of her work with Paik, two formidable tasks that entailed studying twenty years of appointment diaries and digging through her massive accumulation of programs, photographs, and press clippings. She interviewed Ay-O and Takehisa Kosugi in preparation for a book on the festivals, which she planned to produce in collaboration with her friends Barbara and Peter Moore. Like so many of her projects from this period, the book was never finished.

As she worked to record her history, she also continued to dream up ideas for future festivals. In 1980, she was awarded \$10,000 by the New York State Council on the Arts for a festival to be held “under, above, and on the Brooklyn Bridge, using the nearby buildings for indoor installations.” In 1982 she won a grant of \$7,500 from the National Endowment for the Arts to stage a festival at Belmont Racetrack, where art would be installed on “the track, grassy infield, paddock, interior levels, electronic Totalisator Board, closed circuit video systems, and surrounding grounds.” She applied to the NEA again in 1983, this time for a festival to be held in and around Lincoln Tunnel.¹¹

None of these ideas was realized, either. Her fifteenth and final festival took place on July 20, 1980, at Manhattan's cavernous Passenger Ship Terminal on the Hudson River at West 55th Street. Moorman was delighted when the city's Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, Henry Geldzahler, decided to name July 20 “Avant-Garde Festival Day.” Mayor Edward Koch issued an official proclamation, which Geldzahler himself hand-delivered to Moorman at the festival.¹² This civic recognition was fitting for an event

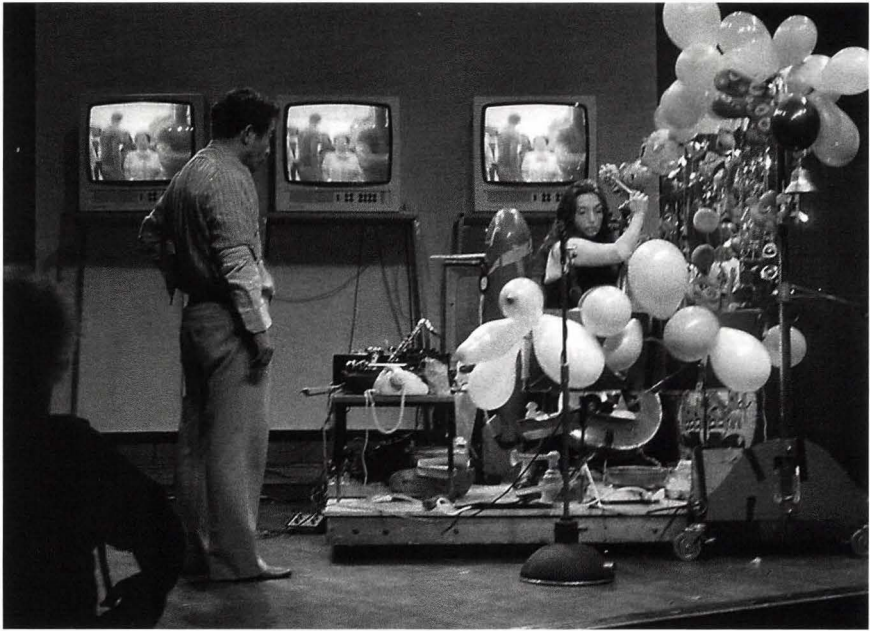


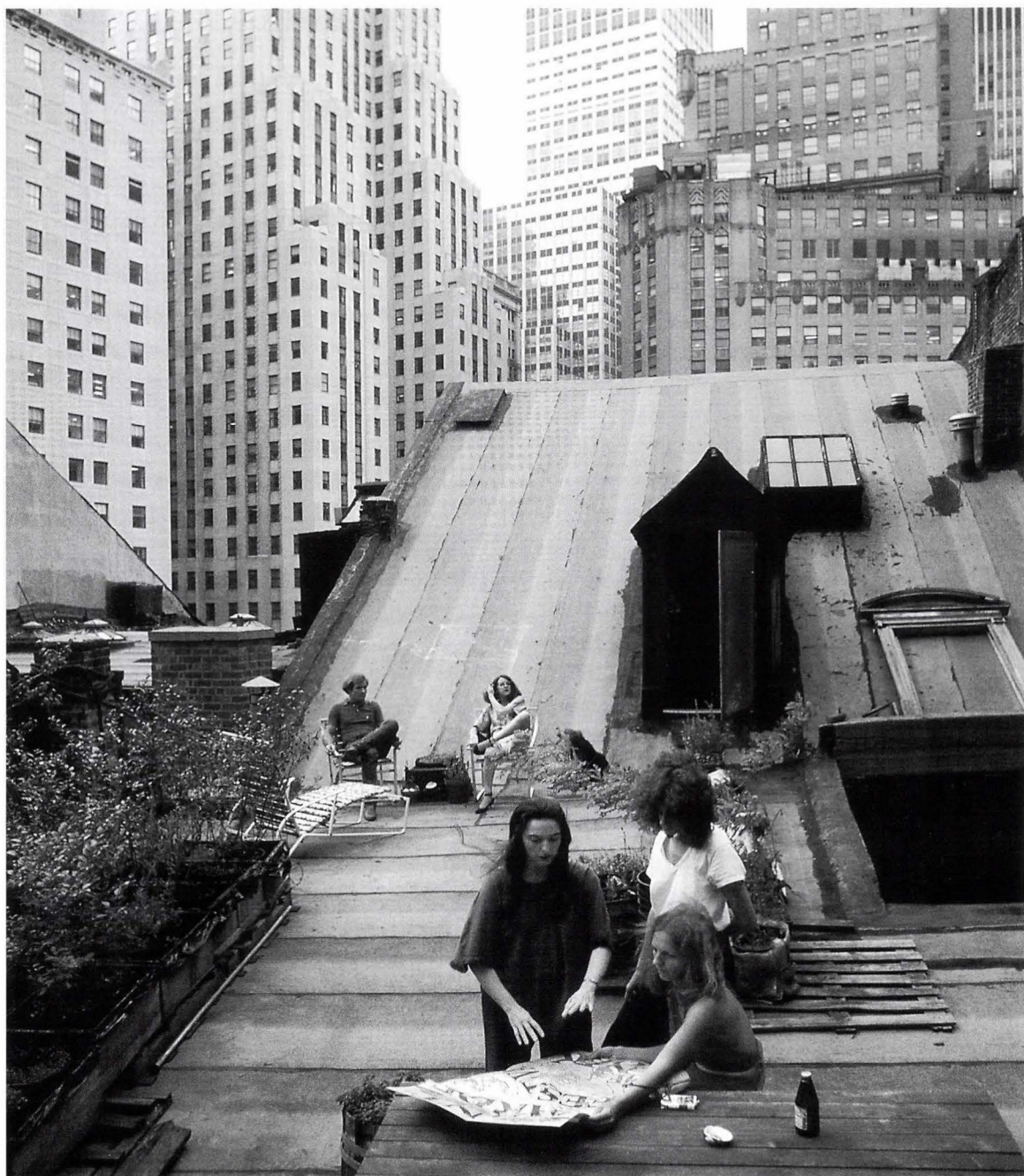
FIGURE 29.2

Charlotte Moorman performs John Cage's *26'1.1499'' for a String Player*, Cologne, West Germany, 1980. Nam June Paik is at left. Photo © Erik Andersch.

so closely identified with New York. Since no one knew that the 15th festival would be the last, it was also weirdly well timed.

ON NOVEMBER 16, 1981, Moorman discovered a lump in her right breast. She did not have it biopsied until nine months later because she feared she might need another surgery that would interfere with her work schedule. She was eager to keep her commitment to perform at the Whitney Museum of American Art, which was planning a retrospective of Paik's work for spring 1982. Moorman had agreed to a demanding schedule of thrice-weekly in-gallery performances on *TV Cello*, and she did not want to miss her chance to star on the stage of a major New York museum. Filmmaker Elliot Caplan, who was then working as a researcher for the Whitney exhibition, recalled that she insisted on playing, no matter how poorly she felt: "There were always dramas about when she [would be] there and everything we had to do to keep her propped up, so to speak. On a good day she would be in charge and anticipate the problems and figure things out and move herself. On a bad day she would be sick, nauseous, slightly dehydrated, and a little bit out of it. [...] People would have to run out of the museum and get her things, Frank would be very nervous and upset, then she would kind of rally. [...] I'm sure that [during that spring] her whole day would be about getting to the Whitney on time (but it was never on time) and performing to whatever extent she could. It gave her meaning, it gave her strength."¹³

After the Whitney show closed, she scheduled the biopsy. Two days beforehand she and Frank threw a party on the roof of their Pearl Street loft for a crowd of guests that ranged from jazz legend Ornette Coleman to six-year-old Sean Ono Lennon, who attended with his bodyguard. (Ono herself spent the evening at a midtown recording studio working on her album *It's Alright*.¹⁴) Moorman performed two of Ono's compositions, *Cut Piece* and *Mend Piece*. Both were poignant choices for the occasion. *Cut Piece* must have evoked her recent mastectomy; one guest recalls the care with which the audience snipped at her clothing, seemingly mindful of the missing breast.¹⁵ (She had never gotten around to having breast reconstructive surgery.) In *Mend Piece* the performer smashes a vase and distributes the shards



to the audience, whose members agree to come together in ten years to reassemble the broken vessel. If *Cut Piece* reenacted the wounding of Moorman's body, *Mend Piece* proposed that collective action by her friends could restore her to wholeness, however imperfect.

The biopsy results were dire. The lump in her breast was benign, but the cancer had spread to her lymph nodes. Her doctors now urged her to try chemotherapy, but she refused. She had severe gastric ulcers, and she told Dr. John Olichney, a hematologist who had taken over as her primary physician, that she did not want to have "a hole burned in her stomach." She told her friends she had refused treatment because she was afraid of losing her hair.¹⁶ Moorman was not vain. But she understood that her long, luxurious hair was essential to the traditional feminine image she presented onstage. Since she intended to keep working, she needed to keep her performing body as intact as possible. So Dr. Olichney treated her with injections of interferon, a tumor-fighting protein, and prescribed Percodan for pain. Not much more could be done for her.

During a visit to her hospital room after the test, Paik reassured her that in at least one sense, she was immortal. She copied his remarks into her appointment diary. "Video is stronger than anything. Video guarantees eternal life—that is most important thing."¹⁷

FIGURE 29.3

Charlotte Moorman and festival volunteers on the roof of her Pearl Street loft, New York City, July 1980. Photo © Gisela Scheidler.

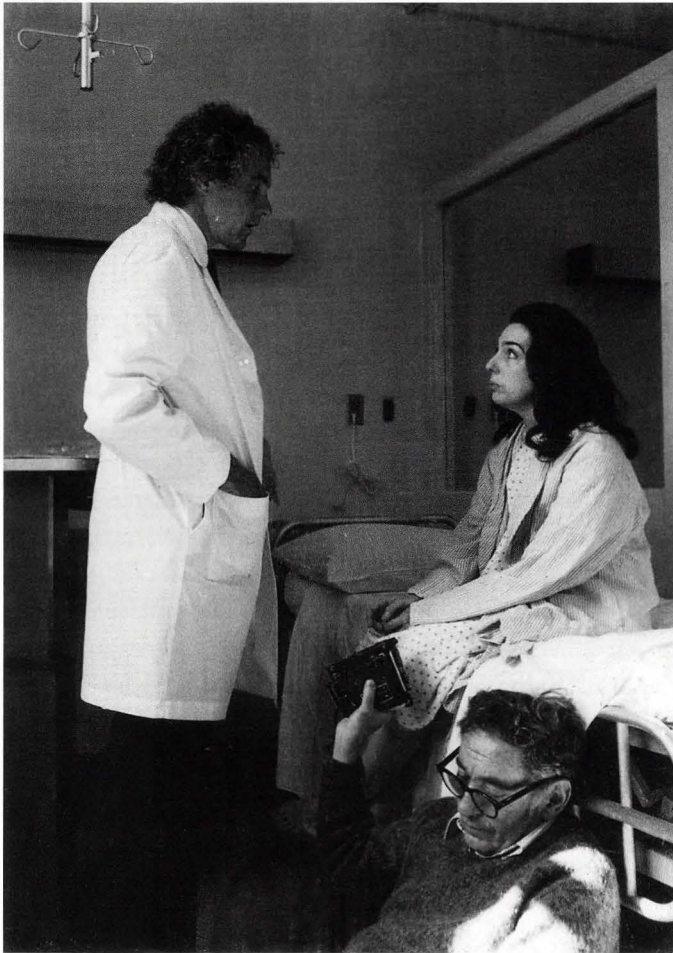


FIGURE 29.4

Charlotte Moorman confers with Dr. John Olichney, New York City, 1979.
Filmmaker Si Fried records their conversation. Photographer unknown.
Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of
Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

MOORMAN WAS ABLE to remain moderately active for about two more years. She understood that those years might be among her last, so she made a point of indulging herself. She and Frank enjoyed box seats at the opera, caviar, and expensive champagne. They went out to concerts, Broadway shows, and chic, upscale restaurants and clubs.¹⁸ They spent a week on Ibiza, two weeks at a friend's home on the Greek island of Hydra, and many weekends with friends on Fire Island.¹⁹ They frequented casinos in Atlantic City. They had no money for any of these extravagances. They had always been destitute, and Moorman's medical expenses had pushed them even deeper into poverty. So the luxuries, as well as the necessities of rent and food and medications, were paid for with help from the couple's extended network of friends. Some of them sent monthly checks. Others gave Moorman artworks to sell. Still others organized benefit concerts or arranged for short-term medical insurance or pulled strings to get her grants from foundations that assisted artists in need.

By late 1984, the cancer had spread further. "This past month we have had no time to write or call any of our friends, socialize, do business, etc.," Frank wrote to a friend. "In fact, we have done nothing but go to doctors, hospitals, worry, and cry. In mid-September Charlotte had a bone scan. A tumor on her breastbone is positive. The cancer is in her bone."²⁰ Bony metastases are known to be very painful, but they do not mean that death is imminent. A robust immune system can keep cancer cells confined to the bone, sometimes for years. Moorman lived with her disease for seven more years. But her longevity came at a cost. In the course of managing her pain, she became a morphine addict. She made no secret of it. Frank often administered her shots in public, under the table in a restaurant, for instance, or backstage before a performance. "She was very accepting of the narcotics and her addictive state," recalls John Olichney. "It seemed to suit her, in a sense. [...] Whatever she needed [to stay alive], she would do."²¹

Gradually, inevitably, her world shrank. Her last five years were dominated by the rhythms of her pain. She required an injection of morphine every two hours or so, night and day. The shots were like a bass accompaniment to the rest of their lives, which consisted mainly of doctor appointments, telephone calls, meals, sleep, and T.V. Frank became her full-time



CAPT. STARN'S
RESTAURANT AND BAR
ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY



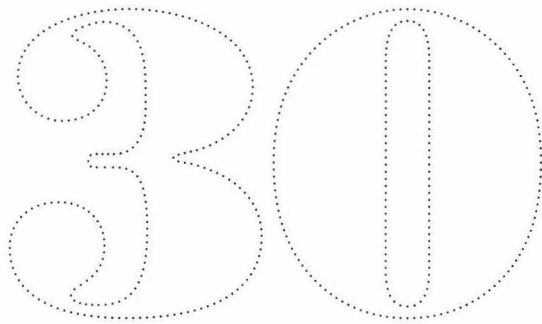
CAPT. STARN'S
RESTAURANT AND BAR
ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY

FIGURE 29.5 AND FIGURE 29.6

Souvenir matchbooks from Frank Pileggi and Charlotte Moorman's visit to Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 1979. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

nurse. Exhausted by caring for her, he was often ill himself. Their friends helped in myriad small ways—a gift of cash, a ride to the airport, a stop at the pharmacy to pick up (and pay for) her medication. Two close friends during those last years were artist Christian Xatrec and his wife, Emily Harvey, who ran a gallery in SoHo where Harvey showed the work of Fluxus artists. The couple lived near Frank and Charlotte's loft, and Xatrec visited often, bringing groceries once or twice a week and spending time with Charlotte so that Frank could take a break.²² Xatrec would sit on the bed next to her (the mess was so extreme that there was nowhere else to sit) and they would talk into the night, mostly about art and sex.

Privately and publicly, Moorman was candid about her fear of death. In a 1986 interview with National Public Radio's Scott Simon, she cried as she told him how terrified she was. "I wake up in the middle of the night and I'm so thankful I'm still alive and so thankful that Frank is there. It's really so corny, but those are my thoughts, to touch Frank. I just touch him sometimes and he doesn't know why I touched him. I'm just so lucky and so scared and I just don't want to die. I want to live."²³



Sky Kiss

MOORMAN'S CAREER HAS SOMETIMES BEEN LABELED TRANSGRESSIVE. THIS IS NOT INACCURATE, ALTHOUGH PERFORMING IN THE NUDE WAS NOT HER SIN. BY THE TIME SHE DID THAT, IT HAD BEEN DONE many times before. Instead, Moorman was a transgressor in the broadest sense. Her life and work did not conform to any acceptable standards of behavior for a woman. Social conservatives found her vulgar. Feminists recoiled at the way her work perpetuated old-fashioned gender codes. Some artists, even those who considered themselves her friends, regarded her later work as fatuous kitsch. There was no orthodoxy to which she conformed. In America there is no more honorable way to transgress than to be a nonconformist, and in this sense Moorman's fall from nearly everyone's grace can be understood as proof of her utter originality.

But there is one aspect of her transgression that is still difficult for many to accept, and that is the way she conducted her death. She did not go quietly

or privately. As she had performed her illness, so she performed her death. There were the many concerts during which she confronted audiences with her dying body. There were private appearances such as her mastectomy anniversary parties and her rooftop rendition of *Cut Piece*. There were the desperate, protracted phone calls to friends, and the incessant reporting of all her symptoms. If she had done one of these things, or even two, she might not have offended. But she did them all, and she kept on with the grim performance for years. She would not let her friends turn away.

Moorman had never drawn boundaries between her life and work, so in that sense it is not surprising that she treated her terminal illness as “a piece of sorts.” But consider the difference between her intuitive, improvisational performance of death and the work of women who set out purposely to turn their bodily traumas into art. When the French artist Orlan had emergency surgery in 1978, she brought along a film crew and insisted on being conscious throughout because, as she later explained, “What was happening to my body was of profound interest to me.”¹ In 1992 the American artist Hannah Wilke, in collaboration with her husband, Donald Goddard, created *Intra-Venus*, which documents Wilke’s physical transformation during the last stages of lymphoma. Both Orlan and Wilke’s projects fall into a category of feminist performance that art historian Kristine Stiles has described as “actions that narrate and visualize suffering [and] describe the unspeakable conditions that can be woman’s interior life.” It is urgent, Stiles says, for these women “to communicate the interior reality to someone else, to materialize it.”² Orlan and Wilke’s actions did this through considered works of art; Moorman communicated her reality in the same impulsive way she had lived the rest of her life.

Moorman did not consider her last decade to be an extended performance. Only the planned film was conceived as a work, but its purpose was not aesthetic or ideological or even cathartic. In Moorman’s mind, the film was simply a way “to make something positive out of this damn fiasco,” something that could help other women and their families navigate the medical complexity and mortal fear that came with a cancer diagnosis.³ Still, just as Moorman’s fifteen festivals can now be seen as a score she composed and performed for herself, so her last decade of activities, both onstage and off, can be understood as a performance. None of it was neatly



FIGURE 30.1

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Child of the Cello, Emily Harvey Gallery, New York City, 1990, installation view.
Left to right: *TV Bra*, *Syringe Cello*, *Bomb Cello* (with a "prepared bow" of red flowers on the floor), *Infiltration Homogen for Cello*, and three *Neon Cellos*.
Photograph: courtesy the Emily Harvey Foundation.

cordoned off from the rest of her life as artwork. It was just that Moorman had come to believe that if she were to stop performing, she would die.

During her last two years she was immersed in preparations for *Charlotte Moorman: Child of the Cello*, a retrospective exhibition of her career that opened at the Emily Harvey Gallery on February 24, 1990. The show featured *TV Bra* and *TV Cello*; photographs and videos of her performances; posters for all fifteen Avant Garde Festivals; and even a framed proclamation from Manhattan borough president David Dinkins that declared January 11, 1989, “Charlotte Moorman Day.”

In 1990, exhibitions devoted to performing artists were still unusual, especially when mounted by a commercial gallery. When Xatrec first mentioned the idea to Moorman, she was puzzled. “How can I have an exhibition?” she asked him. But once the project was underway, he says, “she was almost savoring it as a process. I do believe that this kept her going.”⁴ A gallery show was not unthinkable; Moorman had been making cello-themed sculptural objects for about ten years. Paik had encouraged her in this direction, arguing that her career and her image had attained enough historical luster to be marketed and sold in physical form. Most of the works she made were silhouettes of her instrument/alter ego—she called them “shadows of my cello”—cut from paper, Plexiglas, wood, and other materials.⁵ There was *Neon Cello*, made of opaque black Plexiglas outlined in bright neon tubing, and the sentimental *Cello with Child*, a violin encased in a cello-shaped box of clear Plexiglas that she showed next to a photograph of herself as a chubby, smiling toddler.⁶ *Syringe Cello*, aka *Needle Cello*, was made of used hypodermic needles (she had hundreds) glued to flat pieces of clear Plexiglas. Each *Syringe Cello* is essentially a self-portrait that marries her past, her present, her body, and her disease; Moorman made them herself in a painstaking process that could be called a performance in its own right.⁷ The exhibition also included *Bomb Cello* (1984), a sculptural edition published by gallerist Carl Solway that was based on the bomb Moorman had used since the mid-1960s in *26'1.1499" for a String Player*.

On opening night Moorman, looking every bit the star in a loose jacket made from hundreds of shimmering silvery discs, performed for a throng of devoted friends.⁸ She played *TV Cello* with assistance from Geoffrey Hendricks and Takako Saito, and she was joined by Paik for *Human Cello*. In

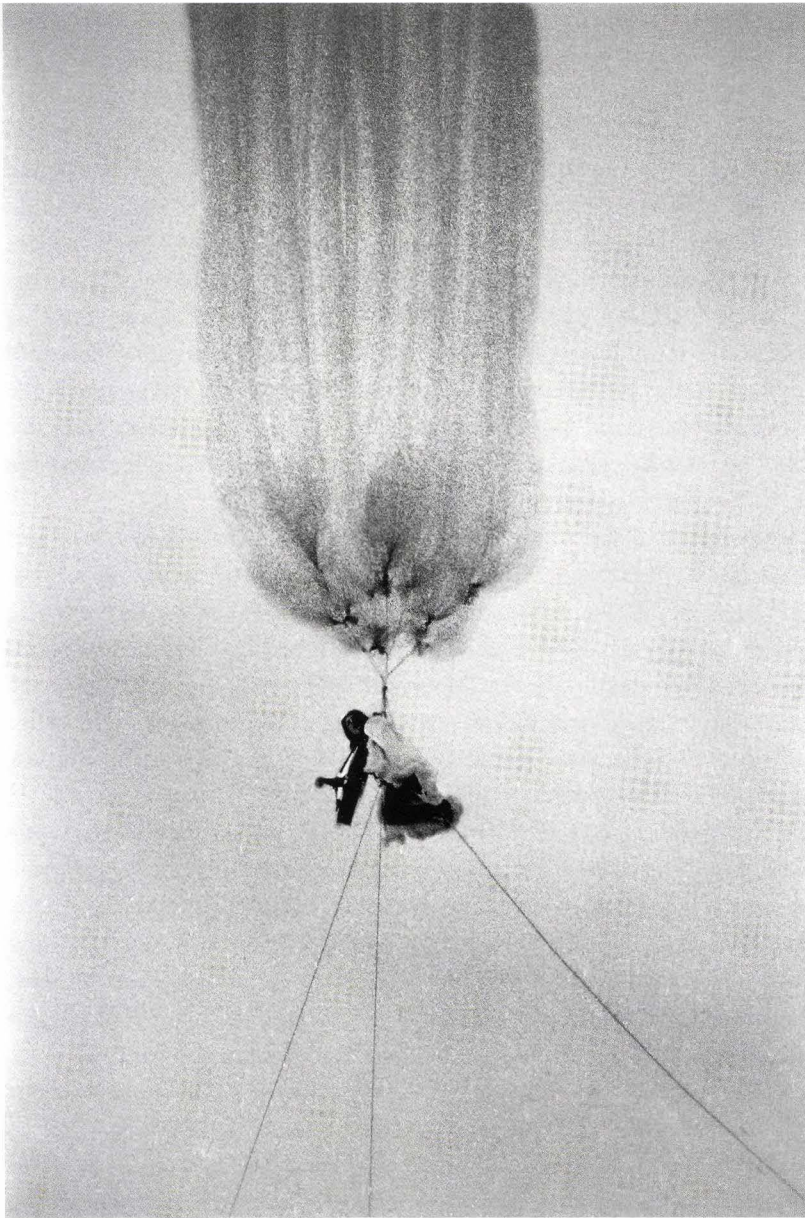


FIGURE 30.2

Charlotte Moorman performs Jim McWilliams's *Sky Kiss* over the Danube River, Sky Art Conference 2, Linz, Austria, 1982. Photo © Manfred Leve.

video footage shot at the opening by the artist Larry Miller, her body is gaunt and stooped, her eyes puffy, and her forehead deeply lined. But her voice is strong as she greets her friends and entertains the crowd with tales of her eventful career. Critic Gretchen Faust, who wrote the show's only review for *Arts* magazine, saw a vigorous artist who still commanded the stage with joyous energy. "[Moorman] seems as brassy, stylish, straightforward, and bold as her reputation would have one imagine. [...] Throughout the performance [on *TV Cello*] Charlotte keeps in contact with the audience while performing a sort of devoted, controlled attack on her instrument, slapping and plucking the strings and soundboard as she offers additional bows to those who want to contribute to the performance. The sound is percussive and sporadic but has an internal drive and logic. There is no rarified atmosphere or audience 'split,' as Charlotte keeps up a constant dialogue, talking, relating anecdotes, recollecting experiences with friends from the audience."⁹

Christian Xatrec speculates that no one had really expected her to perform that night. "I have the feeling that she was already buried by a lot of people," he says.¹⁰ A few of Moorman's friends found the performance so disturbing that they felt compelled to leave before she had finished. Perhaps it seemed to them desperate that Moorman had decided to take the stage. Perhaps it even seemed rude that she would subject others to the sight of her, when she had once been the picture of hearty, fulsome physicality and was now so morbidly diminished.

Just as Moorman had performed her illness, so she had enacted her death. *Sky Kiss*, a favorite of hers during the final decade of her life, allowed her repeatedly to transcend earth and float gently into the firmament. In the context of her illness, the piece became a visual metaphor for her passing, and even embodies the kind of death we all might prefer—a peaceful, painless disappearance into the sky. As a little girl back in Little Rock, Moorman had once run away after a fight with her mother. She headed for the zoo because, as she later said, "I had always wanted to live in the birdhouse. It was beautiful, all that glass."¹¹ *Sky Kiss* became her clear, airy escape.

Charlotte Moorman died on November 8, 1991, ten days shy of her fifty-eighth birthday. Frank tossed her ashes into the water and sky on the beach at Fire Island.¹²

Epilogue

On her deathbed at Roosevelt Hospital, Charlotte motioned for Frank to lean close. She had something to tell him, but her voice was weak. He expected her to whisper some final endearment. Instead, she said, “Don’t throw anything away.” These were her last words to him. He laughed as he told the story to a friend.¹

Moorman had been an accumulator all her life. The influx of stuff had continued even during her last months when, bedridden and bored, she became a frequent shopper through the television network QVC. Her purchases ranged from clothing, costume jewelry, and knickknacks to an entire home gym.² Moorman’s last words referred, of course, not to the mess of their personal effects but to the archival history of her career. It is an extraordinary collection of material, and she was right to insist that it be saved, but it had become nearly buried within the utter derangement of the Pearl Street loft. So while Frank did, in fact, throw a lot of things away, he honored Charlotte’s last wishes by enlisting Barbara Moore and Andrew Gurian to extract from the clutter anything that had historical or aesthetic value. The documents they rescued became the Charlotte Moorman Archive, which was eventually sold to Northwestern University Library. They also identified seventeen artworks by Paik, Christo, Beuys, Ono, Moorman, and others, which were sent to Sotheby’s for auction.³

Frank planned to use the proceeds from the auction to move into an apartment on Roosevelt Island and finally begin to live his own life, free of financial worry.⁴ But two days after the sale, on June 26, 1993, he died during emergency heart surgery at St. Vincent’s Hospital.⁵ He was buried in his only suit.

WITHIN HOURS OF Moorman's death Nam June Paik began paying tribute to her memory. He started by writing to Grace Glueck, the *New York Times* critic who had so often reviewed their work. "Charlotte Moorman has just passed away after long bout with cancer. Illness is for her not a metaphor, but a source for energy and fighting spirit, which she did not lose to the last day. When I met her first in New York, a beautiful summer day in 1964, she confided to me that she had had a uterus tumor operation, and she will not have a long life. Everything must be done presto, presto." He goes on to tell Moorman's life as a tragicomic opera, dwelling on her ill health and her hardships as if she were the avant-garde's own *La Bohème*. "She had to disconnect her telephone line to avoid the creditors and she and Frank lived in the loft WITHOUT any heater in a specially cold snowy winter," he wrote. "She had just hot water to shower. Sometimes she did not have money for Tampax. Still she put up a gorgeous smile for the press and performed all over the world." In this sweet, sentimental eulogy one sentence stands out. "I believe she belongs to only a handful of women artists who shaped the sensibility of [19]60–90."⁶

During the decade after Moorman's death, Paik paid her near continuous homage. At the 1993 Venice Biennale, he created *Room for Charlotte Moorman*, a cryptlike space lit by the glow of video monitors and hung with articles of her clothing. In 1994, during a festival in New York's Washington Square Park, he dressed in Korean shaman's garb—a long white robe and tall, black, brimmed hat—and performed for her a *kut*, a traditional ritual for the dead, by lighting a series of candles on a piano that doubled as an altar.⁷ He made new versions of *TV Bed* and *TV Cello*; two "video robot" portraits; and a sculptural tribute comprising stacked oil drums and video footage of Moorman's dunk in "The Swan." He coproduced *Topless Cellist*, a thirty-minute video on her life and work.⁸

Privately he also kept her memory close. Eight years after her death, a yellowed copy of her *New York Times* obituary was still taped to his studio wall.⁹ In the photograph published with the notice, she is wearing *TV Bra*.



FIGURE E.1

Nam June Paik, *Room for Charlotte Moorman*, 1993. Installed in the German Pavilion at the 45th Venice Biennale. Photo © Roman Mensing, artdoc.de.

THERE IS THE question, often voiced by their friends, as to whether *TV Bra* caused Moorman's death. The question cannot be answered. But when a Topless Cellist is struck down prematurely by breast cancer, it is tempting to create a narrative that links the profession with the disease. Several of Paik's friends, for example, say that he was convinced Moorman's cancer had been caused by his video sculptures (and, by extension, he himself). Some of the video engineers who worked with Paik see her cancer as empirical confirmation of their suspicion that television radiation can be lethal. A few of her female friends read her situation as a parable about the hazards of a sexist culture in which women's bodies are blithely used by men as testing grounds for new drugs, technologies, and medical procedures. Others imagined that divine judgment had struck her down. Moorman told a reporter she had received letters from "religious Christians" who told her that breast cancer was a fitting punishment for such a shameless sinner as herself.¹⁰ A secular version of this accusation came from Jill Johnston, whose obituary in the *Village Voice* implicitly blamed Moorman for her illness by calling her a "valiant victim" of her life's work.¹¹

Moorman's doctor, John Olichney, is doubtful that *TV Bra* caused her cancer. "It's always hard to say definitively 'no' when anybody brings up the possibility that something caused something," he says, "because each person in front of a *TV Bra* is different. That means if there is some type of extra radiation that is emitted and you are prone to [cancer], it is potentially possible. But if you were to take one thousand people and put *TV Bras* on them, I would be very surprised if there was a higher incidence of breast cancer than with one thousand placebos."¹²

There is some scientific basis for the notion that *TV Bra* might have been responsible for Moorman's death. Televisions made during the 1960s contained cathode ray tubes (CRTS), which during the course of their operation produce low-intensity ionizing radiation comparable to the kind used in medical X-rays. By the 1960s, ionizing radiation had long been known to be carcinogenic, so television manufacturers installed a thick sheet of leaded glass behind the screen of each set; they also cautioned viewers to sit well away from their TVs to avoid being exposed to stray X-rays. In 1967, General Electric was forced to recall 90,000 color sets when it was discovered

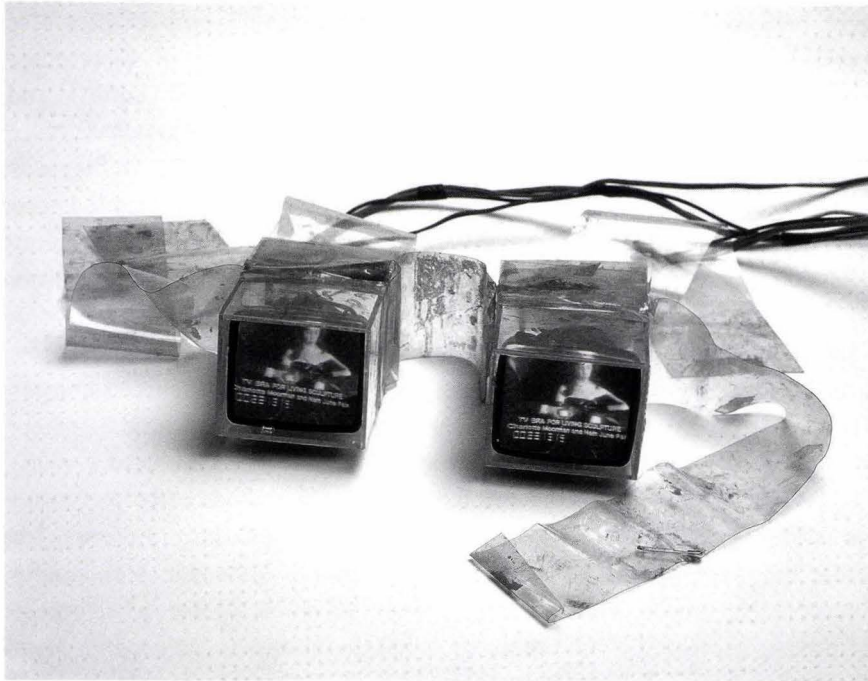


FIGURE E.2

Nam June Paik, *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969), cathode ray tubes, televisions, rheostat, foot switches, Plexiglas boxes, vinyl straps, cables, copper wire. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. T.B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1991.

that, because of mistakes made during assembly, the TVs emitted excessive radiation from their screens. The story was widely reported—*Time* magazine, for example, ran an article entitled “X-Rays in the Living Room”—and the American public began to associate television sets with cancer.¹³

TV Bra, made in 1969, consists of little more than two CRTs in Plexiglas boxes. Like all other TVs of that era, its screens are fitted with leaded glass barriers, but its sides and backs are not. Every time Moorman slipped into *TV Bra* and turned it on, she was, in effect, placing two miniature X-ray machines directly on her breasts and irradiating herself. She did this at least forty-two times between 1969, when she debuted the piece at the Howard Wise Gallery, and 1979, when she got her cancer diagnosis. If her performances during that decade averaged one hour each, her total exposure would have been forty-two hours. That sounds like an awful lot of X-rays.

As John Olichney pointed out, it is hard to prove cause and effect in any situation. Yet so many of Moorman’s friends seemed certain *TV Bra* was her killer that I began to wonder if it were possible to get closer to an answer. Physicist Nelson Christensen agreed to test *TV Bra* at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, which owns the piece. What he found was surprising. Wearing *TV Bra* for one hundred hours would have exposed each of Moorman’s breasts to a maximum of 200 microsieverts of radiation, which is only half the amount delivered by a single, standard mammogram.¹⁴ In other words, Moorman would have had to wear *TV Bra* five times more often than she actually did to receive the equivalent of one mammogram’s worth of X-rays. Although scientists are still debating the safety of mammography, Christensen’s findings seem to put to rest the possibility that *TV Bra* was especially dangerous to wear.

Moorman never publicly admitted to worrying about *TV Bra*’s effect on her health, even when she was asked directly. In 1976 she told a reporter, “Fortunately, there is little or no radiation from the back of the tubes.”¹⁵ In 1982, while performing on *TV Cello* in Chicago, she answered the same question posed by an audience member. “I would have to sit here for about ten thousand years to get enough rads [to get sick],” she said.¹⁶ As it turns out, she was probably right on both counts. But privately, perhaps spooked by her friends’ concern, she had doubts. During the 1980s, when asked by an acquaintance about the etiology of her illness, she said, “I don’t know,

they don't know." Leaning over as if she were playing an invisible cello, she continued. "But I think it was everything, this, all of this ..."¹⁷

THE WHITNEY MUSEUM of American Art hosted a private memorial for Moorman on February 15, 1992. The date was chosen because Valentine's Day was her favorite holiday. From her correspondence it seems that she celebrated it year round. She often drew capacious hearts around handwritten messages, and she sent some of her notes on frilly paper doilies cut into heart shapes. She signed her letters "I love you," whether she was addressing a close friend, a family member, or just an acquaintance. Her friends will say that she fairly overflowed with affection and enthusiasm. Moorman herself declared that she had lived her life with "extreme passion, extreme sex, extreme beauty."¹⁸ For that, she had no regrets.

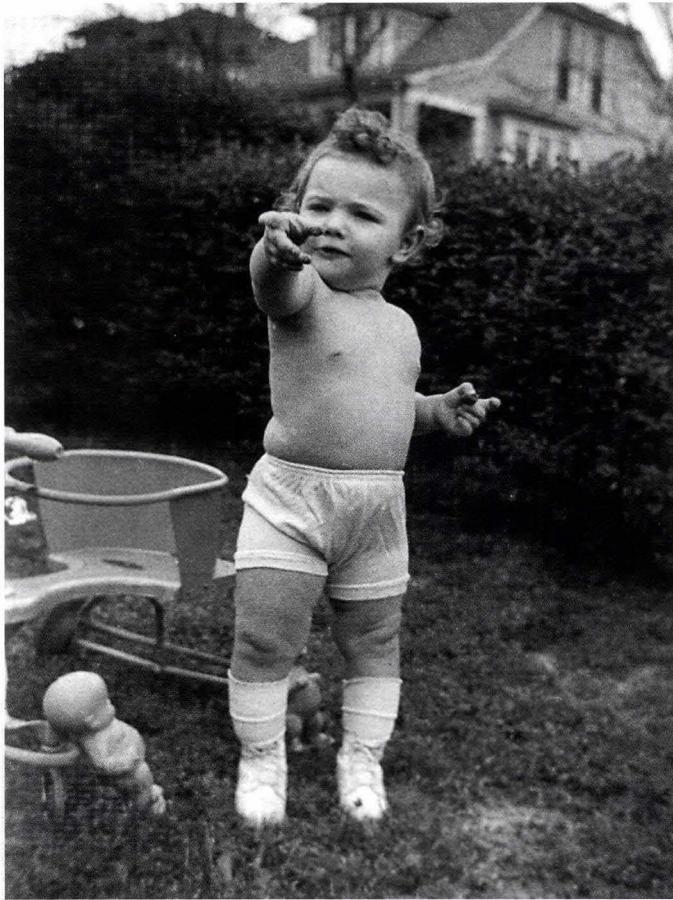


FIGURE A.1

Charlotte Moorman ca. 1935. Courtesy Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library.

Appendix

AVANT-GARDE FESTIVALS

Note: Festival names listed here are taken from each event's official poster or program, although variant names are found in other published and unpublished documents. Running times for festivals after 1965 also are taken from the posters, although the events almost certainly did not consistently follow the planned schedules. Selected reviews are listed for each festival.

For the first five festivals, titles of works performed are listed (with dates, when I could determine them). Titles are given exactly as they appear on the programs, with only obvious typographical errors corrected, although many were published under different titles. Works actually performed at the events may have differed from those listed on the programs.

After the fifth festival, programs were not produced every year; those that do exist often are no more than lists of names, so they have not been included here. All festival-related documents referenced are contained in the Charlotte Moorman Archive.

6 CONCERTS '63

1963

August 20, 21, 27, 28, September 3, 4

Judson Hall, 165 West 57th Street, New York City

REVIEWS

.....
Marjorie Rubin, "Everything Is Instrumental in a Way-Out Concert," *New York Times*, Aug. 17, 1963; Winthrop Sargeant, "Musical Events: It Just Is—or Is It?" *New Yorker* 39, no. 30 (Sept. 14, 1963): 122; Gloria Steinem, "Music Music Music Music," *Show* 4, no. 1 (Jan. 1964): 57–60.

WORKS INCLUDED

- Bertram Baldwin, *Nursery Fable with Exegesis* (1961–1962)
David Behrman, *From Place to Place*
Luciano Berio, *Omaggio a Joyce* (1958)
George Brecht, *Concerto for Orchestra* (1962) [appears on some programs but not on others]
Earle Brown, *December 1952* (1952)
Earle Brown, *Music for Cello and Piano* (1955)
Earle Brown, *Times Five* (1963)
Sylvano Bussotti, *Pour clavier* (1961)
John Cage, *34'46.776" for a Pianist* (1954) and *26'1.1499" for a String Player* (1953–1955),
performed simultaneously
John Cage, *Variations II* (1961) and *Variations III* (1963), performed simultaneously
Giuseppe Chiari, *Teatrino* (1963)
Ornette Coleman, *City Minds and Country Hearts* (1962 or 1963)
Philip Corner, *Solo with ...* (1963)
Mario Davidovsky, *Study no. 2* (1962)
Franco Evangelisti, *Incontri de fasce sonore* (1956–1957)
Morton Feldman, *De Kooning* (1963)
Morton Feldman, *Projection I* (1950)
Morton Feldman, *Two Piano Piece* [possibly *Two Pianos*, 1957]
Toshi Ichianagi, *Music for Piano #2* (1959–1961)
Toshi Ichianagi, *Music for Piano #4* (1959–1961)
Toshi Ichianagi, *Sapporo* (1962)
Mauricio Kagel, *Antithèse* (1962)
Alvin Lucier, *Action Music for Piano* (1962)
Richard Maxfield, *Bhagavad Gita Symphony Chapter XI* (1963)
Bo Nilsson, *Quantitäten* (1958)
Bo Nilsson, *Schlagfiguren* (1956)
Henri Pousseur, *Scambi* (1957)
Frederic Rzewski, *Dreams* [possibly *Study II (Dreams)*, 1961]
Dieter Schnebel, *Visible Music*
Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Klavierstück X* (1954/1961)
Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Zyklus* (1959)
Toru Takemitsu, *Coronata for Pianists* [possibly *Corona for Pianists*, 1962]
James Tenney, *Ergodos /3/4* (1963)
Edgard Varèse, *Interpolation of Déserts* (1953–1954)
Christian Wolff, *For 5 or 10 People* [possibly *For 5 to 10 Players*, 1962]
Christian Wolff, *Sonata* (1957)
Iannis Xenakis, *Orient Occident* (1960)
La Monte Young, *Composition 1960 no. 13* (1960)

FESTIVAL OF THE AVANT GARDE '64

1964

August 30, 31, September 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13

Judson Hall, 165 West 57th Street, New York City

REVIEWS

Raymond Ericson, "Avant-Garde Music Festival Opens," *New York Times*, Aug. 31, 1964; Alan Rich, "Stockhausen's 'Originale,'" *New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 9, 1964; Faubion Bowers, "A Feast of Astonishments," *Nation* 199, no. 8 (Sept. 28, 1964): 172–175.

WORKS INCLUDED

Kuniharu Akiyama, *Music of the Stone*

Robert Ashley, *The Wolfman* (1964)

Bertram Baldwin, *11 Rigit Signs with Replica Providing a Schema for an Alembic*

David Behrman, *Milwaukee Combination* (1964)

Luciano Berio, *Visage* (1961)

Michael von Biel, *Two Piano Piece III* [possibly *Für Klavier III*, 1960–1961]

George Brecht, *Exhibit 27*

George Brecht/James Tenney, *Entrance/Exit Music* (1961)

Earle Brown, *Synergy* (1952)

John Cage, *26'1.1499" for a String Player* (1953–1955)

George Cacioppo, *Casseopiea* (1962)

Giuseppe Chiari, *Per Arco* (1963)

Philip Corner, *Moving Piece* (1961)

George Crevoshay, *4ptpc*

Mario Davidovsky, *Synchronism #1* (1962)

Morton Feldman, *The King of Denmark* (1964)

Morton Feldman, *Two Instruments* (1958)

Luc Ferrari, *Tautologos II* (1961)

Lukas Foss, *Unfinished Untitled*

Malcolm Goldstein, *Ludlow Blues* (1963)

Toshi Ichiyonagi, *Duet II* [possibly *Duet for Piano and String Instrument*, 1961]

Terry Jennings, *Piece for Cello and Saxophone* (1960)

Joe Jones, *Mechanical Quartet*

György Ligeti, *Articulations* (1958)

Alvin Lucier, *Composition for Pianist and Mother* (1964)

Jackson Mac Low, *The Long Hot Summer* (1964)

Richard Maxfield, *Electronic Symphony* (1964)

Robert Moran, *Interiors* (1964)

Gordon Mumma, *Hornpieces*

Nam June Paik, *Etude for Piano*

Nam June Paik, *Robot Opera* (1964)
Henri Pousseur, *Trois visages de Liège* (1961)
Frederic Rzewski, *Phi* (1963)
Carl Spelbring, *Pause*
Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Originale* (1961)
Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Plus-Minus* (1963)
James Tenney, *Ergodos II* (1964)
Edgard Varèse, *Density 21.5* (1936/1946)
Edgard Varèse, *Intégrales* (1925)
Edgard Varèse, *Ionisation* (1929–1931)
Edgard Varèse, *Octandre* (1923)
Edgard Varèse, *Poème électronique* (1958)
Bruce Wise, *Music for 3* (1964)
Christian Wolff, *Duet II* (1962)
Christian Wolff, *Septet* (1964)
Stefan Wolpe, *Form for Piano* (1959)
Iannis Xenakis, *Diamorphoses* (1957)

FESTIVAL OF THE AVANT GARDE '65

1965

August 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, September 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

Judson Hall, 165 West 57th Street, New York City

REVIEWS

Howard Klein, "Music: 'A Happening' Opens Festival," *New York Times*, Aug. 26, 1965;
Warren DeMotte, "The Charge of the Avant-Garde," *Villager* (New York, NY), Sept. 2, 1965;
Leighton Kerner, "Peter Pan and Dada," *Village Voice*, Sept. 16, 1965.

WORKS INCLUDED

Dance/Performance/Mixed Media

John Cage, *Theater Piece* (1960)
Lucinda Childs, *Screen* (1965)
Philip Corner, *Solo Music and More* (1962)
Judith Dunn, *Astronomy Hill* (1963)
Al Hansen, *Time-Space Drama*
Dick Higgins, *Celestials (for Bengt af Klintberg)*
Dick Higgins, *Graphis no. 131*
Dick Higgins, *Long Constellation #10*

Allan Kaprow, *Push and Pull* (1963)
Takehisa Kosugi, *Anima 7* (1962)
Takehisa Kosugi, *Manodharma*
Jackson Mac Low, *The Pronouns—A Collection of 40 Dances—For the Dancers* (1964)
John H. McDowell and James Waring, *Lecture Demonstration #7*
Yoko Ono, *Touch Poem* (1963)
Benjamin Patterson, *Lawful Dance* [possibly *A Very Lawful Dance for Ennis*, 1963]
Beverly Schmidt, "Tidbit" from *Interiors*
Carolee Schneemann, *Noise Bodies* (1965)

Film

Stan Brakhage, *Fire of Waters* (1965)
Robert Breer, *Fist Fight* (1964)
Bruce Conner, *Vivian* (1964)
Len Lye, *Color Cry* (1952–1953)
Len Lye, *Free Radicals* (1958)
Ron Rice, *Chumlum* (1964)
Barbara Rubin, *Allen for Allen London*
Jack Smith, *Overstimulated* (1960)
Stan Vanderbeek, *Breath Death* (1964)

Music

Robert Ashley, *The Wolfman* (1964) [magnetic tape portion only]
David Behrman, *Way*
George Brecht, *Symphony #4* (1964 or 1965)
Sylvano Bussotti, *Sensitivo #7* (1959)
Giuseppe Chiari, *Don't Trade Here* (1965)
Philip Corner, "Andante Cantabile" from *Lucinda's Pastime* (1962)
Morton Feldman, *Vertical Thoughts II* (1963)
Jacob Glick, *Mandolinear*
Malcolm Goldstein, *Illuminations from Fantastic Gardens* (1964)
Toshi Ichiyanagi, *Nagaoka* (1964)
György Ligeti, *Lecture "The Future of Music"*
Alvin Lucier, *Elegy for Albert Anastasia* (1961–1963)
Richard Maxfield, *Night Music* (1960)
Gordon Mumma, *Sequence of Epoxy* (1965)
Nam June Paik, *Etude Platonique*
Nam June Paik, *Omaggio a Cage* (1959)
Nam June Paik, *Piano Etude*
Nam June Paik, *Prelude in D Minor* (1963)
Nam June Paik, *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns* (1965)
Benjamin Patterson, *Septet* [possibly "Septet" from "Lemons," 1961]
Steve Reich, *Livelihood* (1964)
Frederic Rzewski, *Composition for Two Performers*

Erik Satie, *Gnossienne I* (1890)
Erik Satie, *Relâche* (1924) [performed with a film by Rene Clair]
Erik Satie, *Sports et divertissements* (1914)
Erik Satie, *Trois gymnopédies* (1888) [performed as accompaniment to three dances, by Philip Corner and Yvonne Rainer, under the title *Three Satie Spoons*]
James Tenney, *For Two*
James Tenney, *Phases* (1963)
Wolf Vostell, *Chinatown* (1965)
Christian Wolff, *For 1, 2 or 3 People* (1964)
Stefan Wolpe, *Piece in Two Parts* [possibly *In Two Parts for Six Players*, 1962]
Jazz performed by the Jimmy Giuffre Trio, Heckman–Summerlin Jazz Workshop, Sheila Jordan, Charles Lloyd Quartet

Poetry

Readings of unspecified poetry by Luciano Berio, Bazon Brock, Robert Filliou, Ludwig Gosewitz, Hans G. Helms, Richard Huelsenbeck, Jackson Mac Low, Yoko Ono, Lamberto Pignotti, M.C. Richards, Dieter Rot, Tomas Schmit, Kurt Schwitters, Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, Edgard Varèse, Emmett Williams

4TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1966
September 9, 6:00 a.m. to midnight
Central Park, New York City
Conservatory Pond

REVIEWS

.....
Dan Sullivan and Richard F. Shepard, "Avant-Garde Day in Park Goes On and On," *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1966; *Village Voice*, "Avant Garde in Central Park," Sept. 15, 1966; Douglas M. Davis, "The Long, Long Day of Dadaism: What's Happening in Avant-Garde," *National Observer*, Sept. 19, 1966.

WORKS INCLUDED

.....
Robert Ashley, *A Slice of Life* 1962
Joseph Beuys, *Cello Sonata* (1966) [aka *Infiltration Homogen for Cello*]
George Brecht, *Symphony #4* (1964 or 1965)
Robert Breer, *Blazes* (1961)
Robert Breer, *Breathing* (1963)
Robert Breer, *Fist Fight* (1964)

Robert Breer, *Homage to Jean Tinguely's Homage to NY* (1960)
Robert Breer, *Horse over Teakettle* (1962)
Robert Breer, *Inner and Outer Space* (1960)
Robert Breer, *Jamestown Balloos* (1957)
Robert Breer, *A Man and His Dog Out for Air* (1957)
Robert Breer, *Pat's Birthday* (1962)
Bazon Brock, *Me* (1965)
John Cage, *Variations III* (1963)
Giuseppe Chiari, *Fuori* (1964)
Christo, *Empaquetage of a Statue*
Bill Dixon and Judith Dunn, *Dew Horse* [other documents suggest that the piece they performed was *Groundspeed*, 1967]
Charles Frazier, *Toy*
Jacob Glick, *Cross-cut East*
Ludwig Gosewitz, *Vol*
Pietro Grossi, *smf2*
Al Hansen, *3 Events*
Gary Harris, *Staccato en plein air*
Don Heckman, *Jazz Morning Improvisation* (1966)
Hans G. Helms, *Fa:m' Ahniesgwow* (1959)
Bici Hendricks, *If*
Bici Hendricks, *Washing Event*
Geoffrey Hendricks, *Dumping* (1964-1966)
Geoffrey Hendricks, *Sky Kite*
Dick Higgins, *Danger Music no. 2* (1961)
Dick Higgins, *Dick and His Little Wagon*
Richard Huelsenbeck, *We Hardly Had ...* [possibly the poem "We Hardly"]
Toshi Ichiyanagi, *Environment*
Takahiko Iimura, *Dada '62* (1962)
Takahiko Iimura, *Why Don't You Sneeze* (1966)
Joe Jones, *Music Bike*
Allan Kaprow, *Towers* (1966)
Alison Knowles, *Shoes of Your Choice* (1963)
Takehisa Kosugi, *Manodharma Concert*
Shigeko Kubota, *Peeping into the Balls*
Larry Loonin, *A Museum*
Larry Loonin, *Please*
Ralph Lundsten, *EMS 1* (1966)
Jackson Mac Low, *Asymmetries, Gathas, and Sounds from Everywhere* (1966)
Jim McWilliams, *American Picnic* (1966)
Barbara and Peter Moore, *A Blessed Event* (1966)
Robert Moran, *Park Music*
Gordon Mumma, *Atlantic City 1962*
Max Neuhaus, *American Can* (1966)

Leo Nilson, *Aurora* (1966)
 Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece* (1964)
 Yoko Ono, *Sunrise Event*
 Nam June Paik, *Zen Smiles*
 Benjamin Patterson, *It's Vital!* (1965)
 Benjamin Patterson, *Night Kite*
 Lil Picard, *Curtain Events*
 Lamberto Pignotti, *Visual Poetry*
 Raffaele, *Beethoven's Head*
 Ely Raman, *Floating Light*
 Hans Richter, *Ghosts before Breakfast* (1928)
 Hans Richter, *Rhythms* [possibly *Rhythmus 21*, 1921]
 Dieter Roth, *Manifesto*
 Frederic Rzewski, *Zoological Gardens*
 Tomas Schmit, ...
 Kurt Schwitters, *Class Struggle Opera* (1924)
 Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, *Spatial Poem no. 3* (1966)
 Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Telemusic* (1966)
 Elaine Summers, *Ballet in the Park*
 James Tenney, *Ergodos I* (1963)
 James Tenney, *Ergodos II* (1964)
 James Tenney, *Phases* (1963)
 Wolf Vostell, from *Morning Glory* (1963)
 Robert Watts, *Oraculum* (1966)
 Karl-Erik Welin, *Manzit* (1966)
 Emmett Williams, *Counting Song no. 11*
 Emmett Williams, *Duet* (1964)
 Stefan Wolpe, *Form*
 Stefan Wolpe, *Lecture*
 Stefan Wolpe, *Second Piece for Violin Alone* (1966)
 La Monte Young, *Composition 1960 No. 3* (1960)
 Unspecified works by Carol Berge, Earle Brown, Marion Brown Ensemble, Philip Corner,
 Burton Greene Group, Heckman–Summerlin Quintet, Sunny Murray's Unlimited
 Acoustical Unity, Carolee Schneemann, Cecil Taylor Group, USCO

5TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1967

September 29–30, 11:30 pm to 11:30 pm

John F. Kennedy ferryboat

During regularly scheduled trips between Manhattan and Staten Island, New York City

REVIEWS

Leticia Kent, "Almost Freaking Out on the Staten Is. Ferry," *Village Voice*, Oct. 5, 1967;

Elenore Lester, "The Night the Hippies Invaded the Staten Island Ferry," *New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1967; Jud Yalkut, "Crossing the Great Water," *Westside News* (New York, NY), Oct. 19, 1967.

WORKS INCLUDED

Film

Stan Brakhage, *Songs* (1964–1967)

David Brooks, *Letter to D.H. in Paris* (1967)

David Brooks, *Winter* (1966)

Bob Cowan, *Evocation* (1966, rev. 1969)

Bob Cowan, *River Windows* (1966)

Ed Emshwiller, *George Dumpson's Place* (1965)

Ed Emshwiller, *Than's* [possibly *Thanatopsis*, 1962]

Matt Hoffman, *Response*

Takahiko Iimura, *White Calligraphy* (1967)

George and Mike Kuchar, *Eclipse of the Sun Virgin* (1967)

Francis Lee, *Le Bijou*

Francis Lee, *Filmmakers Showcase* (1963) Carl Lindner, *Detonation*

Carl Lindner, *Skin*

Jim McWilliams, *TV Kiss for Nam June Paik*

Mike Noll, *Computer Generated Ballet*

Nam June Paik/Jud Yalkut, *Video Tape Study #3* (1967–1969)

John Schofill, *Die* (1966)

Paul Sharits, *Piece Mandala* (1966)

Sheil=kama Productions, *Feeding Time*

Sheil=kama Productions, *The Banquet*

Michael Snow, *Wavelength* (1967)

David Wise, *Triple Splice* (1967)

Jud Yalkut, *Turn Turn Turn* (1966)

Jud Yalkut, *Us Down by the Riverside* (1966)

Additional unspecified films by Robert Breer, Bruce Baillie, Scott Bartlett, Shirley Clarke,

Victor Grauer, Dick Higgins, Peter Kubelka, George and Mike Kuchar, Charles Levine,

Ivan Mairakoff, Charles Rotmil, Mark Sadan, Ben Van Meter, and Stan Vanderbeek

Jazz

Performances by Deedee Favreau Trio, Jimmy Guiffre and John Stauber, Don Heckman–Ed Summerlin Jazz Workshop, Sheila Jordan, Robin Kenyatta Quintet, Jerry Peskin-Randy Kaye Quartet, Sun Ra and his Astro-Infinity Arkestra, Perry Robinson and the Unio-Trio

Music/Performance/Mixed Media

Eric Andersen, *Opus 39* (1961)
Billy Apple, *Neon*
Robert Ashley, *Atlanta*
Ay-O, *Rainbow Streamer*
Ay-O, *Statue in Rainbow*
Joseph Beuys, *Piano Piece*
Charles Boone, *Constant Comment*
George Brecht, *Drip Music* (1959)
Robert Breer, *Movie Box*
Sylvano Bussotti, *Paik's Piece*
John Cage, *Variations III* (1963)
John Cage, *Variations IV* (1964)
Giuseppe Chiari, *Fuori* (1964)
Henning Christiansen, *Springen*
Philip Corner, *New Piece* (1967) [the piece performed was *Message Prelude*]
Ken Dewey, *Water Curtain II*
Anthony Gnazzo, *Times One*
Malcolm Goldstein, *Sheep Meadow*
Malcolm Goldstein/Carol Marcy, *Cheng Hsieth Fragment*
Malcolm Goldstein/Carol Marcy, *Shasta*
Pietro Grossi, *sfm2*
Al Hansen, *Baker's Dozen*
James Hardy, *TV Personage*
Gary Harris, *Electricism #4*
Gary Harris, *Electricism #5*
Bici Hendricks, *Field Trip*
Bici Hendricks, *Matrix*
Bici Hendricks, *Stamping*
Geoffrey Hendricks, *Balloon*
Geoffrey Hendricks, *Cloud-Cloud*
Geoffrey Hendricks, *Sky Kite*
Hi Red Center, *Cleaning Event* [possibly *Street Cleaning Event*, 1964]
Dick Higgins, *Symphony*
Dick Hogel, *Festival Piece*
Toshi Ichyanagi, *Life Music* (1966)
Ken Jacobs, *Skyline*
Ray Johnson, *Bruce Conner Piece*

Joe Jones, *Music Machine*
Allan Kaprow, *Noise (for Ferryboat)* (1967)
Bengt af Klintberg, *Orangerimusik* (1963)
Arthur Koepcke, *Piece #90*
Takehisa Kosugi, *Catch Wave* (1967)
Jean-Jacques Lebel, *Wise and Lebel Interview*
György Ligeti, *Piano Piece*
Alvin Lucier, *North American Time Capsule '67*
Ralph Lundsten, *EMS 1* (1966)
William Maginnis, *Shapes*
Max Mathews, *International Lullaby* (1966)
Max Mathews, *Swansong* (1967)
Jim McWilliams, *American Cannibalism* (1967)
Jim McWilliams, *Slow Dance on the Ferry* (1967)
Robert Moran, *L'après-midi du Dracoula* (1966)
Jan W. Morthenson, *Wechselspiel I* (1960)
Max Neuhaus, *A Piece for New York Harbor 1967*
New Brunswick Audio-Visual Society, *Banquet and Other Events*
Leo Nilson, *Aurora* (1966)
Yoko Ono, *Water Piece*
Ralph Ortiz, *Melting Pot*
Nam June Paik, *Amelia Earhart In Memoriam*
Nam June Paik, *Check or Money Order*
Nam June Paik, *Electronic Television*
Nam June Paik, *Video Tape Study*
Julio le Parc, *Pulsating Light*
Lil Picard, *Sweet Peace (Peas) Lollipops* (1967)
Benjamin Patterson, *Untitled*
Raffaele, *Beethoven's Head*
Ely Raman, *form er991067*
Ely Raman, *1396 Diamonds*
Frederic Rzewski, *Zoological Gardens*
Carolee Schneemann, *Nightcrawlers II* (1967)
Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, *Falling Event* (1963)
Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, *Water Music* (1964)
Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Telemusic* (1966)
Santaru Tanabe, *Noise*
James Tenney, *Collage I*
James Tenney, *Collage II*
James Tenney, *Dialogue*
James Tenney, *Ergodos I* (1963)
James Tenney, *Ergodos II* (1964)
James Tenney, *Noise Study* [possibly *Analog # 1 (Noise Study)*, 1961]
James Tenney, *Phases* (1963)

Jean Toche, *Impossible Telephone*
Jean Toche, *Mattress*
Yasunao Tone, *Clap Piece*
USCO, *Lower East Side and Present Environment*
John Vansaun, *Bubble Machine*
Frank Lincoln Viner, *Extensible Multiple Tetrahedron*
Wolf Vostell, from *Kleenex* (1962)
Robert Watts, *Stick-ons* (1967)
Karl-Erik Welin, *Manzit* (1966)
Kenneth Werner, *Second Loop Invention*
Kenneth Werner, *Sonata #5*
La Monte Young, *Composition 1960 No. 15* (1960)

Poetry

Bazon Brock, *The Guard Dies*
Robert Filliou, from *Ample Food for Stupid Thought* (1965)
Ludwig Gosewitz, *Finger Poem*
Lamberto Pignotti, *Visual Poetry*
Tomas Schmit, *Third Class Reader*
Emmett Williams, *Cellar Song for 5 Boys* [possibly *A Cellar Song for Five Voices*, 1958]
Readings of additional unspecified poetry

6TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1968
September 14, 7:00 p.m. to midnight
Central Park West and Central Park West Drive, New York City

REVIEWS

New York Times, "Bride in a Gown and Gas Mask Leads a Festival-Parade Here," Sept. 15, 1968; Jill Johnston, "The Avant-Garde Has a Float-In," *Village Voice*, Sept. 19, 1968.

7TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1969

September 28–October 4, 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. each day

Wards Island and Mill Rock Island, East River, New York City

REVIEWS

Ron Rosenbaum, "Avant Garde Fest: Art or Vandalism?" *Village Voice*, Oct. 9, 1969; Grace Glueck, "Art for Your Ear," *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1969.

8TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1971

November 19, noon to midnight

69th Regiment Armory, 68 Lexington Avenue, New York City

REVIEWS

Fred W. McDarrah, "Avant Garde Festival: Down to His Last Mouse," *Village Voice*, Nov. 25, 1971; Carman Moore, "That Festival Was Needed," *Village Voice*, Dec. 9, 1971; [Calvin Tomkins], "Festival," *New Yorker* 47, no. 47 (Jan. 8, 1972): 26–27.

9TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1972

October 28, noon to midnight

Alexander Hamilton riverboat, South Street Seaport, New York City

Pier 16

REVIEWS

Tom Buckley, "Electrified Spaghetti on Avant Garde Fete Menu," *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1972; Annette Kuhn, "Avant Garde Festival: The Underwater Cellist: 'Push Her Further Down!'" *Village Voice*, Nov. 2, 1972; Mary Breasted, "Ms. Moorman's Water Music," *Saturday Review* 55, no. 49 (Dec. 2, 1972): 18.

10TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1973

December 9, 1:00 p.m. to midnight

Grand Central Terminal, New York City

Lobby and twenty baggage cars parked on tracks 34 and 35

REVIEWS

Michael T. Kaufman, "When Festival Is 10, Is It Avant-Garde?" *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1973; Lee Sheridan, "City Collectors Participate in Avant Garde Festival," *Daily News* (Springfield, MA), Dec. 17, 1973.

11TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1974

November 16, 1:00 p.m. to midnight

Shea Stadium, Flushing Meadows, Queens, New York

REVIEWS

Richard F. Shepard, "With Left Bank in Right, Avant-Garde Fete Is Far Out," *New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1974; Robin Reisig, "In Which Charlotte Moorman Attempts to Play Her Cello on a Trapeze and Succeeds in Kicking It, Thereby Making a Sound," *Village Voice*, Nov. 21, 1974.

12TH ANNUAL AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL OF NEW YORK

1975

September 27, 1:00 p.m. to midnight

Gateway National Recreation Area/Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, New York

REVIEWS

Alan M. Kriegsman, "A Gorple Grows in Brooklyn," *Washington Post*, Sept. 29, 1975; John Rockwell, "Stunts and Space Liven 12th Avant-Garde Fete," *New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1975; Annette Kuhn, "12th Annual Avant-Garde Festival: Can You Tell the Eccentricity from the Art?" *Village Voice*, Oct. 6, 1975.

13TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1977

June 19, noon to midnight
World Trade Center, New York City

REVIEWS

New York Times, "Avant-Garde Artists Create Weird Sights at Twin Towers," June 20, 1977;
Gregory Battcock, "Avant Garde Festival," *Soho Weekly News*, June 23, 1977.

14TH ANNUAL NEW YORK AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL

1978

May 20, noon to midnight
North bank of Charles River, Cambridge, Massachusetts
In conjunction with the 2nd Annual Cambridge River Festival

REVIEWS

Gerald Marzorati, "Everyone and Every Walk a Work of Art," *Soho Weekly News*, May 25, 1978; Helen Weaver, "IT & T(P): Woodstock Tipis House Cosmophones and Spectraphones at 14th Annual Avant Garde Festival," *Woodstock Times* (Woodstock, NY), June 15, 1978.

15TH ANNUAL AVANT GARDE FESTIVAL OF NEW YORK

1980

July 20, noon to midnight
Passenger Ship Terminal, 711 Twelfth Avenue, New York City
Berths 5 and 6

REVIEWS

Ari L. Goldman, "Avant-Garde Art: Reactions Mixed," *New York Times*, July 21, 1980; Albrecht Goetze, "Zaghafte Schritte ins Neue," *Art/Das Kunstmagazin* 11 (Nov. 1980): 96-106.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the endnotes.

AIC

“An Artist in the Courtroom” (1967), an essay by Charlotte Moorman, with contributions from Nam June Paik and Frank Pileggi. May refer to the typescript copy or any of several handwritten drafts. If a page number is given, reference is to the typescript copy.

Cello Anthology

Charlotte Moorman Cello Anthology. Milan: Alga Marghen, 2006. Boxed set of four compact disc recordings and an unpaginated booklet. The latter includes an essay by Gisela Gronemeyer entitled, “Seriousness and Dedication: The American Avant-Garde Cellist Charlotte Moorman.”

CM

Charlotte Moorman

CM Chron

Charlotte Moorman’s handwritten chronology of her work with Nam June Paik covering the years 1964–1981 (ca. 1981)

CMA

Charlotte Moorman Archive, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library, Evanston, IL

Decker-Phillips Paik Video

Edith Decker-Phillips, *Paik Video*. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Arts, 1998

EHFA

Emily Harvey Foundation Archives, New York, NY

NJP

Nam June Paik

NJPA

Nam June Paik Archives, Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, DC

FP

Frank Pileggi

Stern

Fred Stern, "Charlotte Moorman and the New York Avant Garde: A Brief History by Fred Stern." Videotape interview, shot on Apr. 23, 1980, Baltimore, MD

Trans

Court Reporter's Minutes for *People of the State of New York vs. Charlotte Moorman*, Feb. 17, 1967 and April 18-24, 1967

Varble

Stephen Varble, "Interview with Charlotte Moorman on the Avant-Garde Festivals," in Geoffrey Hendricks, ed., *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University 1958-1972*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2003, 173-180. The interview was conducted in 1973.

Videa 'n Videology

Rosebush, Judson, ed. *Nam June Paik: Videa 'n Videology 1959-1973*. Syracuse, NY: Everson Museum of Art, 1974

Whitney

Charlotte Moorman in conversation with Andrew Gurian, Kit Fitzgerald, Elliot Caplan, Michael Lytle, Nam June Paik, Frank Pileggi, and others. The interview was conducted to gather information for Paik's retrospective exhibition at Whitney Museum of American Art. Audiocassette, recorded August 1982, New York City

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. A DVD of CM's appearance on the *Mike Douglas Show* is in the EHFA.
2. CM quoted in John Gruen, *The New Bohemia* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1967), 169.
3. CM in conversation with Franz Kamin, summer 1973. Digital recording. Author's collection, courtesy Franz Kamin.
4. Larry Miller, interview with the author, Nov. 13, 2002, New York City.
5. See Decker-Phillips Paik Video, p. 146, n. 245.
6. Stéphane Aquin, "Interview: Carolee Schneemann," in *Global Village: The 1960s* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2003), 160.
7. Exceptions include Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2011) and Holly Rogers, *Sounding the Gallery: Video and the Rise of Art Music* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013).
8. Benjamin Patterson, interview with the author, Nov. 16, 2003, Wiesbaden, Germany.

CHAPTER 1

1. The Charlotte Moorman Archive (CMA) is part of the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library, Evanston, Illinois.
2. CM, "Grandmother," high school essay, Oct. 27, 1950. CMA.
3. CM, answers to a questionnaire from the New York Psychiatric Institute Treatment Center, ca. May 1959. CMA.
4. CM in conversation with astrologer Irene Klopfer, Feb. 13, 1983. Audiocassette, CMA. Here and throughout, ellipses not in brackets appear in the original material quoted; bracketed ellipses indicate the author's edits.
5. Nora Ephron, "Off-Beat Cellist," *New York Post*, Feb. 16, 1967.
6. Julianne Morley Honey, telephone interview with the author, June 9, 2005.
7. CM, "My Symphony Work," high school essay, Sept. 28, 1949. CMA.
8. Arkansas State Symphony Assoc., "Instructions for Guild Membership Drive," mimeographed sheet, 1949. CMA.
9. Lucy Purvis Hughes, e-mail message to the author, July 20, 2005.

10. The sanatorium's monthly newsletter, *Sanatorium Outlook*, documents James Moorman's admission in Aug. 1935 and discharge in Dec. 1936, but nothing between.
11. CM in conversation with an unidentified astrologer, Nov. 7, 1982. Audiocassette, CMA.
12. Recollections are from classmates Richard Clark, e-mail message to the author, Aug. 2, 2005; Sara Edwards Wilson, e-mail message to the author, Aug. 2, 2005; Harrison Pittman, telephone interview with the author, June 13, 2005; and Joanne Eberle, telephone interview with the author, June 6, 2005.
13. Julianne Morley Honey, interview with the author, June 14, 2005, Little Rock, AR.
14. Julianne Morley Honey, interview with the author.
15. Richard Jennings, telephone interview with the author, July 28, 2005.
16. See Margaret Ray, "The Southernaires," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 28, 1950; and *Tiger* (Little Rock High School newspaper), "Hostess to Induct 29 New Members at Dinner Dance," Sept. 22, 1949, Little Rock Central High School Archives.
17. *Arkansas Democrat*, "Parade Opens City Cleanup," Apr. 20, 1952, and *Arkansas Gazette*, "Beauty Parade Will Open Fete for Picking Finalists Tonight," June 13, 1952.
18. Attributed to FP by his niece Deborah Hoyt, interview with the author, May 7, 2005, Staten Island, NY.
19. Centenary College, *Gentlemanly Speaking*, student handbook (1953–1954 ed.), 20. Centenary College of Louisiana Archives and Special Collections.
20. Bill Teague, telephone interview with the author, June 17, 2005; John Shenaut, telephone interview with the author, facilitated by his wife Frances, July 5, 2005.
21. CM [to Lillie Edna Kelly], Nov. 7, 1952. CMA.
22. Dorothy Walters, telephone interview with the author, July 1, 2005.
23. Joe Dobie, telephone interview with the author, June 27, 2005; Noel Tipton, telephone interview with the author, June 21, 2005.
24. Richard Jennings, telephone interview with the author.
25. CM to her mother and grandmother, Nov. 22, 1954. CMA.
26. John Shenaut, telephone interview with the author.
27. Noel Tipton, telephone interview with the author.
28. In addition to the Brahms, her program included Beethoven, 7 Variations in E flat major on "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*; Ernest Bloch, *Méditation Hébraïque*; Gabriel Fauré, *Elegy*; Maurice Ravel, *Pièce en forme de Habanera*; and Camille Saint-Saëns, *Allegro appassionato* in B minor, op. 43.
29. *Arkansas Gazette*, "Little Rock Girl Graduates Under Shreveport Music Grant," May 26, 1955. CM's draft of the news release is in the CMA.

CHAPTER 2

1. Claude Kenneson, telephone interview with the author, June 30, 2008.
2. *Ibid.*
3. University of Texas, "College of Fine Arts," booklet, ca. 1952, unpaginated. CMA.
4. Claude Kenneson, telephone interview with the author.

5. Recollections about CM's skills and work habits are from fellow Britt students Phyllis Young, telephone interview with the author, July 7, 2008, and Claude Kenneson, telephone interview with the author. Works on her recital program were Boccherini's Cello Sonata no. 1 in A Major; Kabalevsky's Cello Concerto no. 1 in G Minor, op. 49; and Brahms's Cello Sonata in F Major, op. 99.
6. Claude Kenneson, telephone interview with the author.
7. Marie Yaeger, "Symphony Guest Outstanding," *San Antonio Light*, Mar. 18, 1957.
8. Claude Kenneson, telephone interview with the author.
9. Columbia Artists Management, "Press Book for Leonard Rose," Sept. 1955. Juilliard School Archives.
10. Tommy Coleman to Vivian Moorman, June 14, 1957. CMA.
11. CM [to her mother and grandmother], July 5–6, 1957. CMA.
12. Claude Kenneson, telephone interview with the author.
13. See "Confidential Information" and "Placement Document," CM's file, Juilliard School Archives.
14. Nancy Streetman, telephone interview with the author, Dec. 16, 2007.
15. See CM's transcript, Juilliard School Archives.
16. Joanne Zagst Feldman, telephone interview with the author, Jan. 2, 2008.
17. Carol Tatian, telephone interview with the author, Jan. 18, 2008.
18. Vivian Moorman to CM, Jan. 24, 1958. CMA.
19. Joanne Zagst Feldman, telephone interview with the author.
20. CM, "Marriage of Charlotte & Tommy Coleman," undated typescript [late 1962]. CMA.
21. Joanne Zagst Feldman, telephone interview with the author. See also *Kilgore News Herald* (Kilgore, TX), "Moorman-Coleman Vows Read in New York," undated clipping. CMA.
22. "Placement Document," CM's file, Juilliard School Archives.
23. Joanne Zagst Feldman, telephone interview with the author.
24. Charles Hunter, telephone interview with the author, July 18, 2008.
25. Ann Curtis Gilbert, "Women in the Big Five Orchestras: An Exploratory Study of the Factors Affecting Career Development" (PhD diss., University of Akron, 1994), 51; Allen Hughes, "One Is Avant-Garde, the Other No Gentleman," *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 1966.
26. See "BPO Musicians 1958–1959," <http://www.music.buffalo.edu/bpo/px-5859.htm>.
27. See CM's appointment diary for the week of June 21, 1959. CMA. Other details come from CM's letters to her mother and from "Marriage of Charlotte & Tommy Coleman." All CMA.
28. Tommy Coleman to CM, posted July 7, 1961. CMA.
29. CM [to Tom Golden], July 22, 1961.
30. CM to Tommy Coleman, undated [early 1960s]. CMA.
31. CM to her mother and grandmother, Mar. 20, 1968. CMA.
32. CM, note listing her and Tommy's respective incomes for 1958 through 1960, undated [ca. 1963]. CMA.
33. When CM purchased her cello she was told it had been made by Lockey Hill, one member of a renowned British family of stringed-instrument makers. However, Andrew Gurian, coadministrator of CM and FP's estate, reports that when he and Barbara Moore sold CM's cello after her death they were told it was not a Lockey Hill. They sold it through the dealer Charles Rudig, who told them that the intentional and unintentional misrepresentation of the

origins of instruments was widespread, and that certificates and labels affixed to the interiors of instruments mean little. Rudig believed that CM's cello was, like those made by Lockey Hill, English-made and from the late eighteenth century, and he proclaimed it a fine instrument—but not a Lockey Hill. Gurian, e-mail message to the author, June 4, 2012.

34. CM [to Tom Golden?], Sept. 6, 1960. CMA.

35. See J. P. Thompson, "Physician's Statement," July 17, 1962, and "Order no. 3895," Aug. 6, 1962, two of the documents filed with Pulaski County in support of Vivian Moorman's commitment. CMA.

36. Joseph Byrd, telephone interview with the author, May 28, 2008.

37. Ibid. The quote by Byrd later in the paragraph is also from this interview.

38. Letty Eisenhauer, interview with the author, Nov. 15, 2007, New York City.

39. Joel Rothschild, interview with the author, Nov. 12, 2007, New York City.

40. In previous publications, Neel's portrait of CM has been dated 1955. However, evidence suggests it was probably done in 1959. CM was still a student in 1955; she did not move to New York City until 1957. Moreover, CM's appointment diary for 1959 contains this note on May 11: "Pose Alice Neel/Practice."

41. "Action for Annulment of a Marriage," submitted by Tommy Coleman's attorney Sheldon Hurwitz to the New York State Supreme Court, Erie County, Nov. 19, 1962. CMA.

42. CM to her mother and grandmother, Nov. 5, 1963. Presumably, Tommy wanted an annulment for the same reason.

43. CM, interview with Albert Goldman, 1984. Audiocassette, CMA.

44. Claude Kenneson, telephone interview with the author.

CHAPTER 3

1. Allen Hughes, "Impresario on \$37.50," *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1960.

2. Norman Seaman, telephone interview with the author, May 30, 2004.

3. Hughes, "Impresario on \$37.50."

4. Most of my information about their meeting comes from my telephone interviews with Norman Seaman on May 30, 2004, May 23, 2005, and Aug. 5, 2005.

5. Stern. In this interview CM rounds up the expense amount to \$1,000, but correspondence from 1961 gives the figure as \$900.

6. CM to Koto Matsudaira, Mar. 29, 1961. CMA.

7. Norman Seaman, telephone interview with the author, May 30, 2004.

8. Eric Salzman, "Kenji Kobayashi in Debut Recital," *New York Times*, Apr. 25, 1961; Francis D. Perkins, "Kenji Kobayashi Heard in Violin Recital Here," *New York Herald Tribune*, Apr. 25, 1961. Ichiyanagi's score for the violin part is published in Alexandra Munroe, *Japanese Art after 1945: Scream against the Sky* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 237.

9. Norman Seaman, telephone interview with the author, May 30, 2004.

10. Willi Apel and Ralph T. Daniel, *Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1961), 191.

11. The concert was *An Evening of Contemporary Japanese Music and Poetry*, Apr. 3, 1961; Ono performed *Of a Grapefruit in the World of Park*. Description and quotes in the text are from the review by Ross Parmenter, "Contemporary Japanese Offering at the Village Gate Proves Unusual Fare," *New York Times*, Apr. 4, 1961, and *New York Times*, "Concert and Opera Programs This Week," Apr. 2, 1961.
12. Raymond Ericson, "Assorted Sounds Heard in Showcase," *New York Times*, Apr. 21, 1961. CM mentions having attended the concert in an undated letter to John Cage. CMA.
13. CM to Kenji Kobayashi, Jan. 13, 1963. CMA.
14. The concerts were: *Toshi Ichianagi, Composer*, May 14, 1961; *Works by Yoko Ono*, Nov. 24, 1961; *Richard Maxfield: New Electronic Works*, Feb. 23, 1962; and *Music of Joseph Byrd*, Mar. 9, 1962, all at Carnegie Recital Hall; and *Music of La Monte Young*, Oct. 12, 1962, Judson Hall. CM performed in both Byrd and Young's recitals.
15. Norman Seaman, telephone interview with the author, May 30, 2004. It will probably never be clear exactly how Seaman, Ono, and CM met one another. Seaman remembered that CM introduced him to Ono, while Ono, in the foreword written for this book, implies that Seaman introduced her to CM. However, in an e-mail message to the author, June 25, 2005, Ono described her meeting with CM in yet a third way. "I was married to Toshi [Ichianagi] and friends with Kenji Kobayashi. Both Toshi and Kenji were studying at Juilliard School of Music. [...] Charlotte was famous in Juilliard for getting jobs for musicians. They all owed to Charlotte for that. [...] They all loved her. I met her through Kenji when I was visiting Juilliard."
16. For a detailed discussion of *Works by Yoko Ono*, see Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese Women Artists in New York* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2005), 89–91.
17. Jill Johnston, "Life and Art," *Village Voice*, Dec. 7, 1961.
18. Jonathan Cott and Christine Doudna, eds., *The Ballad of John and Yoko* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Rolling Stone Press Book, 1982), 121.
19. Philip Corner, e-mail message to the author, July 10, 2008. The CMA contains several pages of rehearsal notes and a cast list for the concert, most in CM's hand.
20. Cott and Doudna, *The Ballad of John and Yoko*, 121. Although Ono doesn't name Golden, he suffered from asthma and was very likely the performer she recalled.
21. Yoko Ono, e-mail message to the author, June 27, 2005.
22. Calvin Tomkins, "Video Visionary," *New Yorker* 51, no. 11 (May 5, 1975): 56.
23. Yoko Ono, e-mail message to the author, June 25, 2005. CM's appointment diaries include the cryptic phrase "Hide—Yoko" several times during November and December 1961. Presumably, she was not hiding Ono but hiding at Ono's apartment. CM was often in debt during this period of her life and might have been trying to avoid her creditors. Joseph Byrd, who knew both women during this period, also doubts Moorman's claim. "I don't think Yoko would've accepted a roommate," he has said. "She didn't need to, either." Byrd, telephone interview with the author, May 28, 2008. See also CM's comments about this in an interview with Albert Goldman, audiocassette, CMA.
24. CM in conversation with Jud Yalkut, 1971. Audiocassette, CMA.
25. CM quoted in an interview with Paul Taylor, *Yoko Only* 25 (summer 1989): 10.

CHAPTER 4

1. CM, handwritten note on a Leonia Trio flyer, undated [ca. 1962]. CMA.
2. Bobbie Forster, "Little Rock 'Cellist to Play for Casals," *Arkansas Democrat*, Dec. 27, 1962.
3. Norman Seaman, telephone interview with the author, May 23, 2005.
4. CM to her mother and grandmother, Feb. 7, 1963. CMA.
5. A copy of her check from the Symphony Foundation of America is in the CMA.
6. The concerts were, respectively, a benefit for *An Anthology* at the Living Theater, then located at Sixth Ave. and 14th Street, Jan. 8, 1962; and *Music in Our Time 1900–1962*, at the 92nd St. YM-YWHA, Mar. 21, 1962. Event programs are in the CMA.
7. *The Music of Joseph Byrd*, Mar. 9, 1962. The date of *Loops and Sequences* is unclear. The program for Byrd's recital dates it to Dec. 1961. However, a program note written by Byrd for CM's recital at 2 Pitt Street on Apr. 15, 1963, dates the piece to 1962. The score itself is undated. All CMA.
8. CM, introduction to the WBAI radio broadcast of *6 Concerts '63*, undated handwritten sheets [1963]. CMA.
9. Whitney.
10. Stern.
11. CM in conversation with Franz Kamin, summer 1973. Digital recording. Author's collection, courtesy Franz Kamin.
12. Howard Klein, "Concert Devoted to La Monte Young," *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 1962; CM in conversation with Franz Kamin.
13. CM, introduction to the WBAI radio broadcast of *6 Concerts '63*.
14. CM to Karlheinz Stockhausen, Jan. 14, 1963. CMA.
15. CM to Iannis Xenakis, undated [Jan. 1963]. CMA.
16. Max Neuhaus, telephone interview with the author, July 11, 2008.
17. "She had decided to specialize in contemporary music. In those days, it was kind of a form of musical suicide—it was much less accepted to perform contemporary music than it is now." Max Neuhaus, telephone interview with the author.
18. CM's annotated copy of the score is in the CMA. The score is undated but the piece was probably composed in the 1950s. Philip Corner, telephone interview with the author, May 21, 2008.
19. This sonata has since been reattributed to Martin Berteau.
20. CM to John Cage, Jan. 14, 1963, CMA. The concert she had attended was *Music in Our Time*, Apr. 4, 1962, at which the piece was performed with Jill Johnston as *Music Walk with Dancer*. See Alan Rich, "Pollikoff Offers His Fifth Concert," *New York Times*, Apr. 5, 1962.
21. Later in her life CM told interviewers that she had performed Cage's *26'1.1499" for a String Player* for a Juilliard faculty jury, presumably at the end of her year of study there. See, for example, Stern; and Barbara Moore, "Charlotte Moorman: Eroticello Variations," *EAR Magazine* 12, no. 3 (May 1987). This has been difficult to verify. The Juilliard School's archive contains no information about so-called exit exams because it is the school's policy to shred all such records. CM would presumably have had her exit exam in 1959, when she left Juilliard, but my research suggests that she did not know about the Cage piece until 1961, when she heard Kobayashi perform it at MoMA, and that she did not prepare it for performance until

early 1963. Assuming that she did not invent the story altogether, the exit exam most likely took place in 1963. It might even have been the Pitt Street recital itself, or she might have repeated that recital for the committee.

22. Kenneth Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 32.

23. Cage often told the story of his visit in 1950 to the anechoic chamber at Harvard University. See, for example, John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1973), 8.

24. Cage, "Experimental Music," in *Silence*, 12.

25. Silverman, *Begin Again*, 136.

26. For an analysis of the project, see James Pritchett, "The Development of Chance Techniques in the Music of John Cage, 1951–1956" (PhD diss., New York University, 1988).

27. David Revill, *The Roaring Silence* (New York: Arcade, 1992), 178.

28. In an unpublished 1973 interview with Calvin Tomkins, Cage explained that he titled the works this way "so as to make ambiguous whether it's time or space. With my music on magnetic tape you can see that you can't tell whether it's time or space because seconds are also inches." Quoted in Silverman, *Begin Again*, 125.

29. From Cage's instructions for the piece, published with the score and reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Breaking the Sound Barrier: A Critical Anthology of New Music* (New York: Dutton, 1981), 143.

30. CM to John Cage, Jan. 14, 1963. CMA.

31. CM to David [Tudor], undated [early 1963]. CMA.

32. CM to David [Tudor], undated [Apr. 1963]. CMA. Additional quotes in this and the following paragraph are also from this letter. The David Tudor Papers, Getty Research Institute, contains a slightly different version of this letter that CM mailed to Tudor and is dated Apr. 10, 1963.

33. The vinyl recording is in the CMA.

34. John Cage and Robert Dunn, *John Cage* (New York: Henmar Press, 1962). CM's copy is in the CMA.

CHAPTER 5

1. The other composers on the program were Luciano Berio, Earle Brown, Barney Childs, Morton Feldman, Terry Jennings, Christian Wolff, and Paul Zukofsky. Arlene Rothlein performed Zukofsky's *No. 7 for a Dancer*. Yvonne Rainer is also listed as a participant, but with no specifics as to what she did. See the YAM Festival flyer "Maytime" and the typescript concert program "Yam Festival," both CMA.

2. CM quoted in Jud Yalkut, "Evolution of the New York Avant-Garde Festival," undated typescript [1970]. CMA.

3. CM, "History of the Annual Avant Garde Festival of New York," typescript, Aug. 1980. CMA.

4. CM to David [Tudor], Aug. 9, 1963. Getty Research Institute, David Tudor Papers, box 57, folder 2.

5. Stern. This title appears on the printed programs for the concerts; the handwritten sheet of title ideas is in the CMA.

6. Varble, 173.
7. Stern.
8. Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: Frederic Rzewski at the Piano," *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1963.
9. Gloria Steinem, "Music Music Music Music," *Show 4*, no. 1 (Jan. 1964): 58.
10. [Jack Kroll], "Is It Music?" *Newsweek* 62, no. 10 (Sept. 2, 1963): 53; John Gruen, "Far-Out Concert, Stupefying Boredom," *New York Herald Tribune*, Aug. 21, 1963.
11. Ross Parmenter, "Music: Avant-Garde Sound Mosaic," *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1963.
12. John Cage, interview with Michael Kirby and Richard Schechner, *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (winter 1965): 64–65; Cage to Edward Downes, Mar. 31, 1965, John Cage Collection, Northwestern University Music Library.
13. Steinem, "Music Music Music Music": 59.
14. Philip Corner, "A Larger View of Some Recent Concerts," in *Philip Corner: FLUXstuff*, vol. 1 (Lebanon, NH: FrogPeak Music, 2008): 141.
15. Coleman told musicologist Benjamin Piekut that he thinks he wrote *City Minds* sometime during 1962 or 1963, and that he had already written it before dedicating it to CM. This is borne out by the handwritten score, which bears a dedication to "Miss Moreman" that seems to have been added later, since it is written in a different color ink than other notations on the sheets. Piekut, e-mail message to the author, July 30, 2008. Although Coleman intended the solo cellist to be backed by a jazz rhythm section, CM performed it unaccompanied. The recording of her performance can be heard at <http://radiom.org/detail.php?omid=AM.1970.11.26>. Coleman's score is in the CMA.
16. Philip Corner, telephone interview with the author, May 21, 2008. On programs for some of her European concerts during the 1960s CM used the title *Preparation Music* for this piece, possibly because she could not procure the necessary loudspeaker. A copy of the score for *Solo with ...* is in the CMA.
17. CM, handwritten notes regarding 6 Concerts '63, undated [1963]. CMA
18. Philip Corner, telephone interview with the author.
19. CM to David [Tudor], June 3, 1963. Getty Research Institute, David Tudor Papers, box 57, folder 2.
20. Cage apparently assisted CM only for the filming of the Movietone short, which took place on the afternoon of Aug. 21. See [Jack Kroll], "Is It Music?" At the festival performance on September 3 James Tenney served as her assistant. A copy of the Movietone film is in the CMA.
21. Winthrop Sargeant, "Musical Events: It Just *Is*—or *Is It*?" *New Yorker* 39, no. 30 (Sept. 14, 1963): 122.
22. CM wrote Earle Brown, for example, on June 2, 1963, "There is a wealth of variety possible in [your composition] *Synergy*, but I want [my performance] to be within the bounds of good taste & above all I want to play the piece the way you want it played." CMA.
23. CM to David [Tudor], Sept. 7, 1963. Getty Research Institute, David Tudor Papers, box 57, folder 2.
24. Her letters inviting Tudor to contribute to the 10th, 12th, and 15th festivals are in the Getty Research Institute, David Tudor Papers, box 57, folder 2.
25. Jasper Johns to John Cage, Sept. 1, 1964, John Cage Collection, Northwestern University; Jasper Johns, interview with the author, June 4, 2002, Sharon, CT; Merce Cunningham, interview with the author, Mar. 16, 2004, New York City.

26. William Bender, "A Composition That Lasts All Night," *New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 8, 1963.
27. Earle Brown quoted in *ibid.*
28. The electronic music concert was first aired Oct. 19, 1963; CM's solo evening on Nov. 2, 1963. Handwritten copies of her introductory notes are in the CMA.
29. Steinem, "Music Music Music Music," 57–60.
30. Vivian Moorman to CM, Sept. 25, 1963. CMA.

CHAPTER 6

1. See CM's appointment diary for June 3, 1964. Stockhausen had a visiting professorship at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and spent Jan. through June 1964 in the United States. Michael Kurtz, *Stockhausen: A Biography*, trans. Richard Toop (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 129–130.
2. Stern. Unless otherwise noted, information and quotes in this and the following two paragraphs are also from this source.
3. NJP remembered their first encounter differently. He recalls that CM telephoned Alison Knowles, with whom he had worked in Europe, and asked her to let NJP know that CM needed him for *Originals*. NJP quoted in David Ross, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," in Toni Stoos and Thomas Kellein, eds., *Nam June Paik: Video Time—Video Space* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 62.
4. The lectures, under the group title "Composition as Process," are included in John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1961), 18–56.
5. NJP in the videotape *Nam June Paik Edited for Television* (1975), quoted in Decker-Phillips Paik Video, 25.
6. Michael Nyman, "Nam June Paik, Composer," in John G. Hanhardt, ed., *Nam June Paik* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982), 82.
7. Earle Brown, "Planned Panichood," in La Monte Young, ed., *An Anthology* (New York: La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, 1963), unpaginated.
8. John Cage, *For the Birds* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981), 167.
9. NJP to Wolfgang Steinecke, May 2, 1959, in Edith Decker, ed., *Nam June Paik: Niederschriften eines Kulturnomaden* (Cologne: DuMont, 1992), 51–52. Translation by the author.
10. NJP to Wolfgang Steinecke, Dec. 8, 1958, in Decker, *Niederschriften*, 49. Translation by the author.
11. Mary Bauermeister, "Cage Minus Stockhausen or Stockhausen Minus Cage. Final Victory Is Assured. Memories of Nam June Paik," in Wulf Herzogenrath and Andreas Kreul, eds., *Nam June Paik: There Is No Rewind Button for Life* (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen, 2006), 41–43.
12. See Robin Maconie, *Other Planets: The Music of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 218–225.
13. Kurtz, *Stockhausen*, 116.
14. The most offensive part of his performance, according to Mary Bauermeister, was his wasteful use of rice and flour. "The Kulturverein got very agitated because you simply didn't

throw food around at a time when people were still going hungry.” Bauermeister, “Cage Minus Stockhausen,” *No Rewind Button for Life*, 42.

15. NJP, “About the Exposition of the Music,” *de-coll/age 3* (Dec. 1962), unpaginated.
16. See “Recollections on the Exposition of Music: Manfred Montwé in Conversation with Susanne Neuburger,” in *Nam June Paik: Exposition of Music—Electronic Television, Revisited* (Vienna: Museum of Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, 2009), 101.
17. NJP, “Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television,” 1963, reprinted in *Videa 'n Videology*. See also his essay “New Ontology of Music” in the same volume.
18. Wulf Herzogenrath reports that *Robot K-456* originally had both breasts and a sandpaper-and-flint penis, but that the latter was removed in Japan to avoid any suggestion of androgyny, and because it seemed in bad taste. See Herzogenrath, “The Anti-Technological Technology of Nam June Paik’s Robots,” in *Nam June Paik Video Works 1963–88* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1988), 19ff.
19. NJP quoted in Douglas Davis, *Art and the Future* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 149.
20. K. 456 in Mozart’s catalog is Piano Concerto no. 18 in B-flat major, sometimes called the “Paradis.”
21. In July 1964 CM wrote at least two letters on NJP’s behalf to this effect. CMA.
22. Mekas’s affidavit is in the NJPA and reproduced in John G. Hanhardt and Ken Hakuta, *Nam June Paik: Global Visionary* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Museum of American Art, 2012), 179; John Cage [to whom it may concern], Mar. 15, 1964, CMA. NJP’s letter to John Cage, undated [1964] is reprinted in *Videa 'n Videology*, unpaginated.
23. NJP, “Charlotte Moorman: Chance and Necessity,” undated typescript [1992], 5. EHFA.
24. Calvin Tomkins, “Video Visionary,” *New Yorker* 51, no. 11 (May 5, 1975): 58.
25. Alison Knowles, interview with the author, Nov. 16, 2002, New York City.
26. *Ibid.*
27. NJP, “De-Composition in the Media Art,” in Klaus Bussmann and Florian Matzner, eds., *Nam June Paik: Eine DATA Base* (Munich: Hatje Cantz, 1993), 19.

CHAPTER 7

1. The concept was Brecht’s; at his request, Tenney realized it as a sound piece. James Tenney, interview with the author, July 20, 2005, Valencia, CA.
2. Philip Corner, “A Larger View of Some Recent Concerts,” in *Philip Corner: FLUXstuff*, vol. 1 (Lebanon, NH: FrogPeak Music, 2008), 140.
3. Raymond Ericson, “Avant-Garde Music Festival Opens,” *New York Times*, Aug. 31, 1964.
4. William Bender, “Notes on Strange Goings-On,” *New York Herald Tribune*, Aug. 31, 1964.
5. Faubion Bowers, “A Feast of Astonishments,” *Nation* 199, no. 8 (Sept. 28, 1964): 173.
6. The sections quoted here are included in a typed draft of CM’s introduction to a WBAI broadcast of her Aug. 30 recital. However, these sections are missing from CM’s copy of the *Per Arco* score. Text and score are both in the CMA.
7. Bowers, “Feast of Astonishments,” 174.

8. Leighton Kerner, "Buzz, Buzz," *Village Voice*, Sept. 3, 1964; Bowers, "Feast of Astonishments," 174.
9. CM to Giuseppe Chiari, July 31, 1964; Chiari to CM, Aug. 6, 1964. Both CMA. The other two scores were *La Strada* ("a world premiere for you") and *Qualche Oggetto* of 1964. CM's annotated copy of the score is in the CMA.
10. The composer David Behrman suggested to CM that ONCE be invited. CM to Gordon Mumma and Robert Ashley, June 15, 1964. CMA.
11. See William Bender, "Lovers of Varèse Fill Judson Hall for Sounds of the Machine Age," *New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1964; and Howard Klein, "Music: Varèse Concert," *New York Times*, Sept. 3, 1964.
12. Howard Klein, "Music: Avant-Garde Festival Closes," *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 1964.
13. NJP to Gilbert Silverman, Nov. 5, 1986. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
14. Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego: San Diego State Univ. Press, 1998), 159. See also Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, eds., *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas 1931–1978* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 107.
15. CM to Karlheinz Stockhausen, Aug. 13, 1964. CMA.
16. CM to Jacob Glick, undated. CMA. Morrow scrapped the idea partly because of CM's displeasure. Charles Morrow, telephone interview with the author, Mar. 23, 2007.
17. Larry Miller, interview with the author, Nov. 13, 2002, New York City.
18. Philip Corner, telephone interview with the author, May 21, 2008.
19. Geoffrey Hendricks, interview with the author, May 3, 2005, New York City. See also Geoffrey Hendricks, ed., *a V TRE EXTRA* (Fluxus Newspaper no. 11, 1979).
20. Norman Seaman, telephone interview with the author, May 30, 2004.
21. Allan Kaprow, e-mail message to the author, facilitated by his assistant Tamara Bloomberg, Apr. 20, 2006.
22. CM to Karlheinz Stockhausen, July 8, 1964. CMA. Behrman's translation was based on the version of *Originale* published in Stockhausen's *Texte zu eigenen Werken, zur Kunst Anderer, Aktuelles*, vol. 2 (Cologne: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1964), 107–129.
23. CM to Karlheinz Stockhausen, Aug. 13, 1964. CMA.
24. Although the text on the flyer has been attributed to George Maciunas, music historian Benjamin Piekut argues that Henry Flynt was its author. See Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2011), 91–92.
25. Seaman, telephone interview with the author.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: Stockhausen's 'Originale' Given at Judson," *New York Times*, Sept. 9, 1964.
28. Williams and Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 107.
29. CM quoted in Susan Goodman, "Anti-Art Pickets Stockhausen," *Village Voice*, Sept. 10, 1964.
30. Leighton Kerner, "Originale," *Village Voice*, Sept. 24, 1964. Peter Moore's film *Stockhausen's "Originale": Doubletakes* (1964) can be viewed online at http://www.ubu.com/film/stockhausen_originale.html.

31. Harry Kiamopoulos, "On the 'Avant-Garde' Front," unidentified clipping. CMA. A note on the clipping in CM's hand suggests that it ran in *National Herald* during Aug. 1964. *Originals* did not open until Sept. 8, but Kiamopoulos's story suggests that he might have been present at a rehearsal rather than a performance.
32. Alan Rich, "Stockhausen's 'Originale,'" *New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 9, 1964.
33. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author, June 1, 2003, New Paltz, NY.
34. Bowers, "Feast of Astonishments," 174.
35. Varble, 173.
36. Max Neuhaus, telephone interview with the author, July 1, 2008.
37. The show aired on Sept. 25, 1964. CM Chron. notes that she performed Cage's *162.06* "for a String Player."
38. Earle Brown to CM, Oct. 2, 1964. CMA.
39. CM to [Lillie Edna Kelly], Aug. 5, 1964. CMA.
40. Mary Gordon, *Joan of Arc: A Life* (New York: Penguin, 2008), xx.
41. Vita Sackville-West, *Saint Joan of Arc* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, Doran, 1936), 203, 356.
42. Jim McWilliams, interview with the author, July 18, 2005, San Diego, CA.
43. Sackville-West, *Saint Joan of Arc*, 8.

CHAPTER 8

1. American Symphony Orchestra, "Teenage Concerts at Carnegie Hall," series program, Oct. 1965. CMA.
2. Jim McWilliams, telephone interview with the author, July 27, 2009. See also the interview with McWilliams in Dirk Dobke, *Dieter Roth in America* (London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 2004), 61–63.
3. The event was *Nam June Paik: Cybernetics Art and Music*. CM likely made the connection between NJP and the New School by introducing NJP to the composer Frank Wigglesworth, an associate of Varèse's who taught at the New School. See NJP to Wigglesworth, Nov. 12 and 18, 1964. CMA.
4. See *Village Voice*, "Paik Shows TV at New School," Jan. 7, 1965; and Mike McGrady, "Going to a Happening," *Newsday*, Jan. 30, 1965.
5. NJP to György Ligeti, undated [Mar. or Apr. 1965]. CMA.
6. For more on this topic, see Arthur Berger, "Varieties of Topless Experience," *Journal of Popular Culture* 4, no. 2 (1970): 420.
7. McGrady, "Going to a Happening."
8. CM in conversation with Jud Yalkut, 1971. Audiocassette, CMA.
9. Jim McWilliams to CM, Dec. 11, 1964, and Jan. 12, 1965. Both CMA.
10. Earle Brown to CM, Feb. 10, 1965. CMA.
11. John Cage, "More on Paik," in Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *John Cage Writer* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 156.
12. NJP in Larry Miller, *Charlotte Resounding*, VHS, 1998. Author's collection. A reedited version of this video is available through Electronic Arts Intermix, New York.

13. Genrikh Borovik, "Adventures of a Cello: Notes on American 'Avantgardism,'" pt. 2, *Literary Gazette* (Moscow) 7, no. 4242 (Feb. 18, 1970); 15. Translation by Yelena Kalinsky.
14. NJP, interview with Jason Weiss, *EAR Magazine of New Music* 9 (fall 1985): 37.
15. The first two sentences in the quote are from an unidentified clipping from a Philadelphia newspaper, CMA; the second two are from James Felton, "Lady Cellist Splits Head in Modern Version of 'Swan,'" *Evening Bulletin* (Philadelphia), Feb. 27, 1965.
16. CM Chron.
17. The water sequence was based on the one NJP performed in his piece *Simple* (1961), in which he took a bath or shower while fully dressed. He also wrote a piece in 1962 for Alison Knowles in which she was to get into and out of a bathtub. Knowles says she doesn't remember the piece and "certainly never performed it." NJP, interview with the author, Sept. 27, 2002, New York City; Knowles, interview with the author, Nov. 16, 2002, New York City.
18. The work was sold at auction on June 24, 1993. For a reproduction, see Sotheby's, "Contemporary Art Including Property from the Charlotte Moorman Estate," 135.

CHAPTER 9

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1. NJP to Pierre and Janine [Restany], undated [ca. spring 1965]; NJP to Karl-Erik Welin, undated [ca. spring 1965]; and NJP to György Ligeti, undated [March or April 1965]. Translations by the author. All CMA.
 2. CM to Vivian Moorman, May 14, 1965. CMA.
 3. See Jon Proppé, "Nam June Paik Shocks Icelandic Audience in 1965," *Icelandic Art News: A Bimonthly Web Journal*, issue 8 (www.artnews.is). CM and NJP's host during their stay in Iceland was composer Atli Heimir Sveinsson. Unless otherwise noted, all my information about this concert comes from Proppé's essay.
 4. CM to [Jacob Glick and family], May 18, 1965. CMA.
 5. This explanation was printed in the program for their concert in Paris. CMA. Paik later retrieved the robot in Luxembourg, where it had been mistakenly shipped.
 6. NJP, "Charlotte Moorman: Chance and Necessity," undated typescript [1992], 2–3. EHFA.
 7. NJP to John Cage, undated [ca. May 1965]. CMA.
 8. CM to Jacob Glick, undated [June 1965]. CMA.
 9. Whitney.
 10. NJP, *Beuys Vox 1961–1986* (Seoul: Won Gallery and Hyundai Gallery, 1986), 31.
 11. During his action *und in uns ... unter uns ... landunter* Joseph Beuys made several indirect allusions to his service in the German air force as a radio operator, including, for example, writing the wartime emergency code "PAN XXX ttt" on a small blackboard.
 12. CM, "Cello," in *24 Stunden* (Itzehoe-Vosskate, Germany: Hansen and Hansen, 1965), unpaginated.
 13. CM to Giuseppe Chiari, June 13, 1965. CMA.
 14. Michael Mirus, "Maden in Moderner Kunst," *Der Mittag* [early June 1965]. Undated clipping in CMA. Translation by the author.
 15. CM, "Cello."

16. NJP to [Arthur] Koepcke, undated [spring 1965]. NJPA, box 2, folder 20.
17. NJP quoted in Calvin Tomkins, "Video Visionary," *New Yorker* 51, no. 11 (May 5, 1975): 77.
18. Daryl Chin, "Nam June Paik: Some Reminiscences, March 1993," in Klaus Bussmann and Florian Matzner, eds., *Nam June Paik: Eine DATA Base* (Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1993), 158.
19. CM to John Cage, undated [July 1965]. CMA.
20. Wolf Vostell to CM, July 13, 1965. CMA.
21. Bazon Brock to CM, undated [fall 1965]. CMA.
22. Valdis Abolins, "Gedanken zu einem Konzert," *Aachener Prisma* 13, no. 5 (July 1965): 15–17. Translation by the author.
23. CM to Jack [Glick], undated [June or July 1965]: CMA.

CHAPTER 10

1. Varble, 174.
2. CM to the Leventritt Foundation, May 19, 1965. CMA.
3. Ibid.
4. Don Heckman, telephone interview with the author, Sept. 18, 2009.
5. Breer curated the film program in 1966; Yalkut took over in 1967. During the 1970s, the artist Shridar Bapat sometimes curated the video programs.
6. William Duckworth, *Talking Music: Conversations with John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and Five Generations of American Experimental Composers* (Cambridge, MA.: Da Capo Press, 1999), 299.
7. Leighton Kerner, "Peter Pan and Dada," *Village Voice*, Sept. 16, 1965.
8. NJP [to John Cage] [1965], John Cage Collection, Northwestern University Music Library.
9. Takehisa Kosugi, interview with the author, Nov. 6, 2005, Minneapolis, MN.
10. Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2004), 82.
11. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author, June 1, 2003, New Paltz, NY. See also Schneemann to CM, Sept. 26, 1980. CMA.
12. Schneemann quoted in Bruce McPherson, ed., *More Than Meat Joy: Performance Works and Selected Writings*, 2nd ed. (Kingston, NY: McPherson & Co., 1997), 92.
13. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author.
14. Quoted in McPherson, *More Than Meat Joy*, 93.
15. Formal agreement between CM and Columbia Artists Management Inc., Sept. 8, 1965. CMA.
16. Kaprow expressed this in an interview with art historian Kristine Stiles in the early 1980s. Stiles, e-mail message to the author, May 17, 2012.
17. CM, interview with Harvey Matusow (1969), compact disc recording, Cello Anthology.
18. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author. To CM's discredit, her accounts of *Push and Pull* omit any mention of Schneemann's involvement in the production.
19. Eiko Otake, interview with the author, Oct. 6, 2008, Minneapolis, MN.

CHAPTER 11

1. Sam Roberts, "Johnny Carson's Long Symbiosis with New York," *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 2005.
2. Details about the broadcast are from a program schedule, CMA, and from NJP's altered videotape, *Variations on Johnny Carson vs. Charlotte Moorman* (1966). Unaltered archival footage of the program does not seem to exist. It is rumored that during the 1960s the network reused its stock of videotapes, thus erasing their contents.
3. A video of Cage's appearance may be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSulycqZH-U>.
4. Kenneth Werner to CM, July 3, 1967. CMA.
5. CM quoted in Bruce Wiener, "When Charlotte Performs, Things Just Seem to Happen," *Syracuse New Times*, Jan. 20, 1972.
6. Dick Schapp, "What's Happening?" *New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 24, 1966. Schapp reported that Schneemann had wanted to perform her piece *Water Light/Water Needle*, but the program's producers canceled her appearance because the piece was too expensive to stage.
7. Schneemann's comments in the paragraph are from an interview with the author, June 1, 2003, New Paltz, NY.
8. NJP to Henning Christiansen [undated]. CMA.
9. Nancy Shear, telephone conversation with the author, Nov. 5, 2007.
10. David Katz to CM, Jan. 24, 1966. CMA.
11. CM to her mother and grandmother, Apr. 12, 1966. CMA.
12. NJP to Daniel Robins, Dec. 3, 1966. CMA. The concert in question took place on Nov. 25, 1966, as part of the opening events for the exhibition *Kinetic and Programmed Art* at RISD's museum.
13. See CM, "Cello," in *24 Stunden* (Itzehoe-Vosskate, Germany: Hansen and Hansen Verlag, 1965), unpaginated. NJP expressed the same sentiment when he quipped, "Cello & Garbage-can-top is like Frank & Beans." NJP, "The Confession of 'topless' (?) Cellist," undated typescript [1967], NJPA, box 14, folder 1.
14. Jud Yalkut, e-mail message to the author, July 7, 2009. Yalkut provided additional details about the project in an interview with the author, Mar. 19, 2007, Waynesville, OH. Copies of the "Coke commercial" footage are in the CMA.

CHAPTER 12

1. "Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik," promotional materials, undated typescript [1966]. Walker Art Center Archives. The phrase "you will get as much as you are tuned up to get" seems to have been borrowed from artist Al Hansen. See his book *A Primer of Happenings & Time/Space Art*, (New York: Something Else Press, 1965), 21.
2. Jud Yalkut to CM, July 21, 1966. CMA.
3. Both Abrams and the unnamed gallerist are quoted in Grace Glueck, "Art Notes: Biennale, Bye Bye?" *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1966.
4. NJP, interview with the author, Sept. 27, 2002, New York City.

5. *Gazzettino di Venezia*, "A Mezzanote sotto i riflettori: L'happening a Rialto si è concluso con un bagno," July 19, 1966. Translation by Casa Italia.
6. *Ogggia a Venezia*, "Su gondola 'Happening' musica ultramoderna," July 18, 1966.
7. CM to Hank [Stohl], undated [July 1966], CMA. CM's stories never mentioned NJP's jump, probably because to do so would have diluted the drama of hers. Paik's is mentioned in two contemporary news reports: *Gazzettino di Venezia*, "A Mezzanote sotto i riflettori," and Jeanne Molli, "Beauty of Tediousness Performed: Joan of Arc of New Music Leads Happening in Rome," *New York Herald Tribune* (Paris), July 5, 1966. His jump could be understood as a version of his piece *Simple* (see chapter 8, note 17).
8. CM quoted in Molli, "Beauty of Tediousness Performed."
9. Jed Curtis, telephone interview with the author, Apr. 26, 2008.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. George Brecht described *Symphony no. 4*, presumably to CM, in a handwritten, undated letter/score. CMA.
13. Jud Yalkut, interview with the author, Mar. 19, 2007, Waynesville, OH.
14. Reinhard Oehlschlägel, "Budenzauber für Intellektuelle: Nam June Paiks Unterhaltung durch Langeweile," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 30, 1966; *Rheinische Post*, "Musik beim Eierbraten: Das Happening 'So langweilig wie möglich' in der Kunstakademie," July 30, 1966; and Wolfgang Breuer, "Striptease, Rühreier und ein Happening," *Neue Ruhr/Rhein Zeitung*, July 30, 1966. Translations by the author.
15. NJP to Wolfgang Steinecke, May 2, 1959, in Edith Decker, ed., *Nam June Paik: Niederschriften eines Kulturnomaden* (Cologne: DuMont, 1992), 51. Translation by the author.
16. NJP, "Norbert Wiener and Marshall McLuhan," in *Videa 'n Videology*.
17. NJP and Paul Schimmel, "Abstract Time," *Arts* 49, no. 4 (Dec. 1974): 53.
18. *New York Times*, "Music: A Long, Long, Long Night (and Day) at the Piano," Sept. 11, 1963.
19. Paul Moor, "Musik, die immer mehr in die Nähe von Theater rückt," *Die Zeit*, July 22, 1966. Translation by the author. CM and NJP's staging of *Vexations* took place on July 17, 1966.
20. [NJP], "The Confession of 'topless' (?) Cellist," undated typescript [1967], CMA. Small changes to punctuation, spelling, and word order have been made for clarity.
21. "Cello Sonata op. 69" is also the title of Beethoven's most often played work for solo cello; thus NJP's title is yet another erotic double entendre. The Aachen concert was recorded and has been issued as a compact disc in *Cello Anthology*.
22. The 1966 performance score is published in Kevin Concannon, "Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*: From Text to Performance and Back Again," *PAJ* 90 (2008): 82.
23. Yoko Ono, "If I Don't Give Birth Now, I Will Never Be Able To," *Just Me! The Very First Autobiographical Essay by the World's Most Famous Japanese Woman* (Tokyo, 1986), 34–36. Cited in Concannon, "Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*," 89.
24. Kristine Stiles, "Cut Piece," in *YES YOKO ONO* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 158.
25. CM in conversation with Jud Yalkut, 1971. Audiocassette, CMA.
26. Oehlschlägel, "Budenzauber für Intellektuelle." Translation by the author.
27. CM in conversation with Jud Yalkut.
28. "Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik," [1966]. The phrase "the unexpected is not a threat" seems to have been borrowed from artist Al Hansen. See note 1 above.

29. CM, interview with Paul Taylor, *Yoko Only* 25 (Summer 1989): 11.
30. A ten-page typescript of Wilhelm's speech, with his handwritten annotations, is in the CMA.
31. Johannes Stüttgen, interview with the author facilitated by Petra Richter, Nov. 18, 2003, Düsseldorf. Stüttgen recalled that Beuys managed the spotlight during Kosugi's *Instrumental Music*, for example, and recorded on a blackboard the number of spectators CM counted during her performance of Emmett Williams's *Counting Song*.
32. Published descriptions of Beuys's piece vary. See, for example, Uwe Schneede, *Joseph Beuys: Die Aktionen* (Ostfildern-Ruit bei Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1994), 112–117, and Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz, and Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works* (New York: Barron's, 1979), 135–138.
33. See Susanne Rennert's essay on this concert in Renate Buschmann and Stephan von Wiese, eds., *Fotos Schreiben Kunst-Geschichte* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 2007), 62–65.
34. CM in conversation with Yalkut, 1971. In this interview CM says that the performance was at Jean-Pierre Wilhelm's apartment, but the evidence strongly suggests that she misremembered. Wherever it was held, *Frisches* also featured actions by Wilhelm, Joseph Beuys, René Block, Franz-Erhard Walther, and others. Jörg Immendorff, interview with the author, Nov. 22, 2003, Düsseldorf.
35. Eva Beuys, interview with the author, Nov. 20, 2003, Düsseldorf; and "Satie: Grosse Nachtmusik," *Der Spiegel* 31 (July 1966): 75.
36. Jörg Immendorff, interview with the author.
37. Joyce Wadler, "The Grandfather of Video Art, Still a Bit Naughty," *New York Times*, July 10, 2002.
38. Whitney. According to Paik's nephew Ken Hakuta, Paik wore a shawl known in Japanese as a *haramaki* around his waist. See Ken Hakuta, "My Uncle Nam June," in John G. Hanhardt, *Nam June Paik: Global Visionary* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2012), 20.
39. Jörg Immendorff, interview with the author.
40. Eva Beuys, interview with the author.

CHAPTER 13

1. "Application for a Permit" and "Permit," both Aug. 1966. CMA. The permit was approved on August 24.
2. Joyce Purnick, "Metro Matters: Remembering a Mayor, Faults and All," *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 2000.
3. *New York Times*, "Hoving Will Head Joint City Agency," Aug. 15, 1966.
4. Allen Hughes, "One Is Avant-Garde, the Other No Gentleman," *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 1966.
5. Don Heckman, telephone interview with the author, Sept. 10, 2009.
6. CM quoted in Douglas M. Davis, "The Long, Long Day of Dadaism: What's Happening in Avant-Garde," *National Observer*, Sept. 19, 1966.
7. CM wrote Cage before the festival, "Since I couldn't reach you, I went ahead and gave your *Variations III* score to the Pepsi Cola skywriting plane with the hopes that they will perform your work in the sky for part or all of the festival." Undated letter, CMA. It is not clear from the letter

who conceived the idea to have it performed by a plane. Douglas Davis mentions seeing the performance in “The Long, Long Day of Dadaism.”

8. Don Heckman, telephone interview with the author.
9. CM in conversation with Harvey Matusow (1969), compact disc recording in *Cello Anthology*. McWilliams also had an official permit that gave him leave to “cook and eat until sick.” See Howard Smith, “Scenes,” *Village Voice*, Sept. 15, 1966.
10. Geoffrey Hendricks, interview with the author, May 3, 2005, New York City.
11. Dan Sullivan, “Avant-Garde Day in Park Goes On and On,” *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1966.
12. CM’s source for the Schwitters score seems to have been either Wolf Vostell or Tomas Schmit. See Vostell to CM, July 13, 1965, and Schmit to CM, undated [1966]. Both CMA.
13. The films were *Rhythms* and *Ghosts before Breakfast*. Breer also suggested films by Duchamp, Leger, Man Ray, and others, but only the Richter films appear on the festival program. Bob [Breer] to CM, Aug. 17, 1966. CMA.
14. Richard Huelsenbeck quoted in Davis, “The Long, Long Day of Dadaism.”
15. The full score is reproduced in Helmut Heissenbüttel and Otto Friedrich Walter, *Vostell: Happening & Leben* (Neuwied and Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1970), 286–292.
16. Davis, “The Long, Long Day of Dadaism.”
17. NJP, *Beuys Vox 1961–1986* (Seoul: Won Gallery and Hyundai Gallery, 1986), 37.
18. This was confirmed by Eva Beuys, interview with the author, Nov. 20, 2003, Düsseldorf.
19. When Beuys learned that CM had used flannel for the covering rather than felt, he was quite angry. He quickly had a new cello cover made from the heavy German felt he used in his sculptures and other works and sent it to CM. For him, thin flannel lacked the physical properties—warmth production and sound absorption—that were critical to the meaning of *Infiltration Homogen for Cello*. Mario Kramer, *Joseph Beuys: Klang und Skulptur* (Darmstadt: Verlag Jürgen Häusser, 1995), 89.
20. The history of USCO has been explored by Michel Oren in “USCO: ‘Getting out of Your Mind to Use Your Head,’” *Art Journal* 69, no. 4 (winter 2010): 76–95. The activities of ONCE have been examined by Richard S. James in “ONCE: Microcosm of the 1960s Musical and Multimedia Avant-Garde,” *American Music* 5, no. 4 (winter 1987): 359–390.
21. CM in conversation with Takehisa Kosugi, Mar. 28, 1980. Audiocassette, CMA.
22. Thomas J. Aiello, affidavit submitted to the New York State Supreme Court, Erie County, Sept. 27, 1963. CMA.
23. Attributed to FP by Christian Xatrec, interview with the author, Nov. 14, 2007, New York City.
24. Letty Eisenhauer, interview with the author, Nov. 15, 2007, New York City.
25. Kate Shore, interview with the author, Nov. 7, 2007, New York City.
26. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author, June 1, 2003, New Paltz, NY.

CHAPTER 14

1. *New York Times*, “Lindsay Keeps Distance over Waitresses’ Attire,” Nov. 11, 1966.
2. Jack Roth, “Topless Waitress Ruled Legal Here,” *New York Times*, Jan. 13, 1967.

3. Seth S. King, "Lindsay Assails Topless Attire and License Official Follows Up," *New York Times*, Jan. 14, 1967.
4. See *New York Times*, "Mayor Approves Semi-Nude Ballet," and Clive Barnes, "Dance: Les Ballets Africains Opens at Barrymore," both Nov. 17, 1966. The latter, a review of the performance, reports that the dancers covered themselves after receiving a telephoned request to do so, purportedly from the License Commission.
5. Jerald Ordovery, interview with the author, May 29, 2003, New York City.
6. Vincent Canby, "Underground Movies Find Showcase on 41st Street," *New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1966.
7. AIC, 2.
8. AIC.
9. AIC, 2–3.
10. Mandillo testified in the hearing on Feb. 17, 1967, and during the trial on Apr. 18, 1967. This account is gleaned from information he gave to the court on both dates, as reported in Trans.
11. Stern.
12. David Bourdon, "A Letter to Charlotte Moorman," *Art in America* 88, no. 6 (June 2000): 84.
13. CM identified the record as Folkways FR8980, which included the Japanese composer Eihiji's *Morning Ceremony*. AIC, 4.
14. *Ibid.*
15. During her trial CM told the court that when she bowed her cello with the flowers she produced "little soft magic sounds." Trans. Apr. 19, 1967, 50.
16. Bourdon, "Letter to Charlotte Moorman," 84.
17. See Ernst Rosenberger, "Defendant's Memorandum of Law" [Feb.–Mar. 1967], 2. Jerald Ordovery papers.
18. Stern. CM also says that the fourth, concluding, aria would have been played "totally nude behind a bomb."
19. AIC, 6.
20. Bourdon, "Letter to Charlotte Moorman," 84.
21. Milton S. Fox to Mayor John Lindsay, Feb. 16, 1967. CMA. Theater manager Monica Zullo was issued a summons for violating fire code by allowing patrons to stand in the aisles and smoke, but she was not arrested. John McGee and Robert Carroll, "Halt Show, Barely in Time," *Daily News*, Feb. 10, 1967.
22. NJP, untitled, undated text, probably a partial draft of AIC. NJPA, box 1, folder 1.
23. Spelling and punctuation are given exactly as they appear on the poster. The photograph on the poster was taken by Peter Moore on Feb. 4, 1966, in the living room of his 36th Street apartment. His wife Barbara Moore's contemporaneous notes refer to the photo shoot as "set-ups for *Opera Sextronique* poster." Barbara Moore, e-mail message to the author, Apr. 21, 2008.
24. NJP, undated draft of AIC.
25. *Ibid.*
26. AIC, 2.
27. Whitney.
28. Trans. Feb. 17, 1967, 5.

29. Fred McDarrah quoted in Jerry Tallmer, "Fred McDarrah, 81, Photographer of Beat Generation," *Villager* 77, no. 24 (November 14–20, 2007).
30. One such poster in the CMA has this text on the reverse (spelling and punctuation are given exactly as written): "Omaggio a Sigmund Freud/Tonight, 9 PM, Film Cinematheque, 125 W 41st St, NYC/Charlotte Moorman will play Opera Sextronique by Nam June Paik/'Music needs it DH Lawrence, its Sigmund Freud'/Miss Moorman will play topless, bottomless, etc./ She will also play Mr. Paiks 'Variations on a Theme by Saint Saens,' in which she plays the 'Swan' in a cellophane gown.—Dives into a tank of water, and finishes the piece dripping wet/ The program will end with Mr. Paiks newest films/Leading avant garde composers Takahisa Kosugi and Jud Yalkut will assist in this concert."
31. AIC, 31.
32. Ernst Rosenberger, interview with the author, Aug. 5, 2004, New York City.
33. McGee and Carroll, "Halt Show, Barely in Time."
34. Whitney.
35. AIC, 6–7. The figure of \$200 is mentioned by Gordon Brown in "The Home Front War," *Arts* (summer 1967): 61.
36. AIC.
37. Stern.
38. CM in conversation with an unidentified guest during a New Year's Eve party at the home of filmmaker Si Fried, probably 1977. Audiocassette. Author's collection, courtesy Si Fried.
39. AIC, 2.
40. AIC.
41. The hearing was set for February 15 but did not take place until February 17. *Trans. Apr. 18, 1967*, 2.
42. AIC. The first newspaper story to use the term "topless cellist" seems to have been Ralph Blumenfeld, "The Cellist Dropped Her Top," *New York Post*, Feb. 10, 1967.

CHAPTER 15

1. AIC, 6.
2. CM to FP, undated [1967]. CMA.
3. Howard Smith, *Village Voice*, Feb. 23, 1967.
4. Rosenberger does not remember who called him to ask that he represent CM; he speculates that there was someone in the audience on February 9 who knew him and placed the call. Interview with the author, Aug. 5, 2004, New York City. Jerald Ordovery chose not to handle her case because he had very little experience with criminal cases. Interview with the author, May 29, 2003, New York City.
5. Paul O'Neil, "Nudity," *Life* 63, no. 15 (Oct. 13, 1967): 114.
6. *Trans.* Feb. 17, 1967, 35.
7. *Ibid.*, 51.
8. Joseph Feurey and Judy Michaelson, "Topless Cellist Tries on the 1st Amendment," *New York Post*, Feb. 17, 1967.

9. Trans. Feb. 17, 1967, 59.
10. The *Bruce Morrow Show* was taped Mar. 4 and broadcast on Mar. 11, 1967, on ABC; the *Alan Burke Show* was both taped and aired on Mar. 20, 1967, on NBC; and the *Al Capp Show* was taped on Apr. 4 and broadcast on Apr. 14, 1967, on ABC.
11. CM Chron. CM and NJP's segment of the program, "This Is Marshall McLuhan: The Medium Is the Massage," was filmed Feb. 7, two days before her arrest.
12. The genesis of *Bomb Cello* is unclear. It might have been suggested by NJP, who had used a bomb filled with candy in Cage's *Theater Piece* during Festival of the Avant Garde '65.
13. George Gent, "Merv Griffin: He Doesn't Aim for the Jugular," *New York Times*, June 11, 1967.
14. NJP's typewritten flyer is reproduced in facsimile in Wulf Herzogenrath, ed., *Nam June Paik Fluxus/Video* (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen, 1999), 117. Quoted here as written, with only spelling corrected.
15. Claes Oldenburg to John Lindsay, Feb. 13, 1967. CMA.
16. Tomas Schmit to John Lindsay, Mar. 31, 1967. CMA.
17. Douglas Davis to John Lindsay, Mar. 6, 1967. CMA.
18. CM to Jerry [Ordovery], Apr. 11, 1967. Jerald Ordovery papers.
19. Ernst Rosenberger, interview with the author. Because of attorney-client privilege, Rosenberger could not be specific about the alternatives he offered CM.
20. Howard Smith, *Village Voice*, Feb. 23, 1967. Gallina was apparently reckless as well. During the 1970s he went on to represent a roster of drug dealers, hit men, and gangsters, including the notorious heroin kingpin Frank Lucas. In 1977, after agreeing to testify before a grand jury investigating the Genovese Mafia family, he was shot to death as he stepped out of his car on a Greenwich Village street corner.
21. Carman Moore, "A Critic in Court: The People v. Moorman," *Village Voice*, Apr. 27, 1967.
22. Ernst Rosenberger, "Defendant's Memorandum of Law" [Feb.-Mar. 1967]. Jerald Ordovery papers.
23. Yalkut does not recall specifically when or where it was shot, but CM's appointment diary for Apr. 17, 1967, includes the notation "10 - 4 Film - Cinematheque," which suggests that it was made at the 41st Street Theater on the day before the trial began. Other documentary evidence supports this thesis.
24. Jud Yalkut, interview with the author, Mar. 19, 2007, Waynesville, OH.
25. AIC, 15. The CBS film has apparently been lost.
26. Moore, "A Critic in Court."
27. The trial transcript for April 18 has not survived intact. Press accounts do not mention Peter Moore's appearance, but CM's records indicate that he testified for the defense on April 18 (see her appointment diary for the date, and AIC, 15). A short typescript section of what appears to be his testimony exists in the CMA. This was almost certainly copied from the original transcript for use in a later reenactment of the trial. But the excerpt is also incomplete, so it remains unclear what Rosenberger hoped to gain from Moore's testimony.
28. Ernst Rosenberger, interview with the author.
29. Moore, "A Critic in Court."
30. Trans. Apr. 19, 1967, 70-71. Both CM's appointment diary and the AIC mention appearances on Apr. 19 by her character witnesses. Carmines' testimony appears in the Apr. 19

transcript (which seems to be intact), but Heyer's does not. One could assume that her appearance was scrapped for some reason, except for this passage in "An Artist in the Courtroom": "DA Gallina continued his insulting demeanor with my next witness, a long-time friend and mother of three children, two married and one serving his country in Vietnam, by insinuating a lesbian relationship with me." AIC, 17. Perhaps this latter exchange took place during an off-the-record conversation of some kind.

31. AIC, 17.

32. John Gruen testimony, Trans. Apr. 19, 1967, 77–115; Carman Moore testimony, Trans. Apr. 20, 4–26; David Bourdon testimony, Trans. Apr. 20, 1967, 27–78; Jack Kroll testimony, Trans. Apr. 20, 79–137.

33. Edward Kirkman and Donald Singleton, "Judge: Barechested Bach Is Bacchanalian," *Daily News*, May 10, 1967.

34. Paul O'Neil, "Nudity," *Life* 63, no. 15 (Oct. 13, 1967): 116.

35. Clive Barnes, "Dance: The Ultimate in Bare Stages," *New York Times*, Apr. 24, 1967.

36. Janice Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2007), 193.

37. See Clive Barnes, "Don't Move!" *Financial Times* (London), May 17, 1967.

38. See Moore, "A Critic in Court," and AIC, 21. The article Kahn had seen was Richard L. Madden, "Topless Waitresses Taboo," *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 1967. In spite of this change in the law, the *Times* reported in May that charges had been filed against the Halprin troupe and a summons obtained but not served. *New York Times*, "Coast Dancers Face Court for Stripping If They Return," May 13, 1967.

39. AIC, 21.

40. Ernst Rosenberger, interview with the author.

41. Moore, "A Critic in Court."

42. All quotes from Milton Shalleck, "People & Co., v. Charlotte Moorman," *New York Law Journal* 157, no. 91 (May 11, 1967). CMA.

43. Jack Roth, "Topless Cellist Is Convicted Here," *New York Times*, May 10, 1967; *Village Voice*, "Moorman Guilty, Suspend Sentence," May 11, 1967.

44. Ernst Rosenberger, interview with the author.

45. His decision was also published in the "The Case of the Topless Cellist," *Cavalier* 17, no. 11 (Sept. 1967): 77–82.

46. Kirkman and Singleton, "Judge: Barechested Bach is Bacchanalian."

47. AIC, 26.

48. Trans. Apr. 20, 1967, 123.

49. Shalleck, "People & Co., v. Charlotte Moorman."

50. AIC, 10.

51. "New York's Topless Cellist (She's from Little Rock) Arrested before Big Finale," *Arkansas Gazette*, Feb. 11, 1967.

52. Vivian Moorman to CM, Mar. 19, 1967 (CMA).

53. See Roth, "Topless Cellist Is Convicted Here"; *Rochester Times-Union*, "'Topless' Verdict with a Wallop," May 15, 1967; Bud Collins, "Will Excess Spoil Charlotte Moorman?" *Boston Globe*, May 17, 1967; Russell Baker, "Observer: Seated One Day at the Cello," *New York Times*, May 14, 1967; Gordon Brown, "The Home-Front War," *Arts* 41, no. 8 (summer 1967): 61; and "Law: Bare Majority," *Newsweek* 69, no. 21 (May 22, 1967): 42. On topless memes, see Alan

Abel, *The Confessions of a Hoaxer* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970); and Thomas Pugh, "Topless Rockers Roll Right In," *Daily News*, July 12, 1967.

54. See, for example, CM to Grace Glueck of the *New York Times*, May 15, 1967. CMA.

55. "An Artist in the Courtroom" was solicited by Ginzburg, a notorious New York-based publisher of erotica who had apparently been following the story in the news. On Apr. 22, 1967, he wrote CM, "What happened at the trial? And when can we expect the manuscript?" (CMA). CM didn't deliver it until the middle of July, by which time *Fact* was about to fold. Ginzburg then planned to include it in his new journal, *Avant-Garde*, a bi-monthly that promised readers "an orgasm of the mind." But he never did. Its tale of injury to an artist by "the system" would have been perfect for the muckraking *Fact*, but its humorless tone probably was not quite right for *Avant-Garde*. The essay has since been published in *Cello Anthology*.

56. CM to Jerald Ordovery, June 24, 1969. CMA.

57. Ernst Rosenberger, interview with the author.

58. AIC, 30.

59. CM, "Biographical Material," undated typescript [1971]. CMA.

60. FP offered this theory in an interview with Scott Simon for "Morning Edition," National Public Radio, broadcast Aug. 2, 1986. Audiocassette. Author's collection, courtesy Andrew Gurian.

61. Richard L. Madden, "Topless Waitresses Taboo," *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 1967. The bill had been passed by the state legislature on Apr. 1, 1967.

62. Ernst Rosenberger, interview with the author.

63. Vincent Canby, "Mixed-Media Message Flashes in a Times Square of the Mind," *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 1967.

CHAPTER 16

1. See the following *Daily News* stories: Owen Fitzgerald, "City Gives Topless Cellist a Ferry for Art Festival," Sept. 21, 1967; "Nut-Gathering Season," Sept. 22, 1967; Edward O'Neill, "Protest of Ferry by Once-Topless Gal," Sept. 22, 1967; William Federici, "City Throws in Waterworks for Arty Ferry Festival," Sept. 28, 1967; and "Cellist's Topless Number 'Too Serious' for Ferryboat," Sept. 29, 1967. CM's letter to Halberg is in the CMA.

2. Barbara Wise in Nam June Paik, Howard Weinberg, and Stephen Vitiello, *Topless Cellist: Charlotte Moorman*, videotape, 1995.

3. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author, June 1, 2003, New Paltz, NY.

4. Kaprow, who was not in New York for the festival, asked NJP to coordinate the performance of the piece. An incomplete score in the CMA bears this note from Kaprow: "Nam June: Here is the program for the Happening. I'm sorry it was so hastily written, but there was little time. Forgive me for all the work I must leave to you. If you cannot do it, don't worry, I'll understand. Good luck!"

5. Jim McWilliams remembers CM telling him that her inspiration for the ferryboat event was the 1965 Wuppertal festival *24 Hours*, in which audiences moved freely through a multiroomed space to sample simultaneous performances by a range of artists. McWilliams, interview with the author, July 18, 2005, San Diego, CA.

6. *Wavelength* is on the printed program for the festival film screenings (curated by Jud Yalkut) and CM always claimed it had premiered at the festival. However, Michael Snow's records do not make mention of the festival. Art historian Elizabeth Legge reports that *Wavelength* was first screened for a small group of friends "and its significance was immediately recognized." Legge says the group included NJP; perhaps he then recommended it to CM or Yalkut for the festival program. See Legge, *Michael Snow: Wavelength* (London: Afterall Books, 2009), 13. It is interesting to note that *Wavelength*'s final image, a still photograph of water shot by Snow, depicts the bay off South Ferry. Thanks to Jud Yalkut and Bruce Jenkins for their assistance with this history.
7. CM, "5th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival," undated news release [1967]. CMA.
8. See Jim McWilliams's handwritten notes on the piece. CMA.
9. Elenore Lester, "The Night the Hippies Invaded the Staten Island Ferry," *New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1967. The Filliou piece is not titled on the program, but listed as being "from [Filliou's book] *Ample Food for Stupid Thought*."
10. This handwritten note by NJP describes *Amelia Earhart In Memoriam*: "Charlotte plays Hoffman's Bacharelle (fully dressed). Light dims out completely. Audience sees only cello strings, bow, and Charlotte's fingernails glowing with different fluorescent colors. She continues playing/after a while a strobe light begins to flicker, which adds intensity. Strongly amplified cello sound also flickers. She ends with several sparkling lights fire works (if possible). In cooperation with Jim McWilliams and Jud Yalkut." CMA.
11. First quote from Richard Nusser, "Ferry Rides Out Art Festival," *Staten Island Sunday Advance*, Oct. 1, 1967; second quote by Christo in *Topless Cellist: Charlotte Moorman*.
12. *Village Voice*, display ad, Jan. 26, 1967. Moorman played in a concert called "Avant-Garde Musicians Dissent," Jan. 31, 1967, at Loeb Student Center, New York Univ. Event program is in the CMA. For additional information on Angry Arts Week see Julie Ault, ed., *Alternative Art New York, 1965–1985* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minn. Press, 2002), 17–19.
13. For a 1969 issue of *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde*, CM was one of twenty musicians and composers asked to respond to this question: "Have you, or has anyone, ever used your music for political or social ends?" She responded that she had, because "I've wanted to reach people," and gave five examples: *Per Arco*, Cage's 26'1.1499" *Seconds for a String Player*, Ono's *Cut Piece*, and Paik's *Opera Sextronique* and *TV Bra*. See Larry Austin and Douglas Kahn, eds., *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde 1966–1973* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2011), 216–217.
14. Don McNeill, "Week of the Angry Arts Protest of the Artists," *Village Voice*, Jan. 26, 1967.
15. Maxine Sitts, "Hippies Reign on Art Cruise," *Staten Island Advance*, Sept. 30, 1967.
16. Jud Yalkut, "Evolution of the New York Avant-Garde Festival," undated typescript [1970]. CMA.
17. Jay Levin, "Where It's Happening—On the Hippiest Ferry," *New York Post*, Sept. 30, 1967.
18. CM, "History of the Annual Avant Garde Festival," typescript, Aug. 1980, CMA. Presumably the collection of fares would have made it possible to get a rough attendance figure. How she had counted the audience in Central Park is unclear.
19. CM to Herbert Halberg, Sept. 21, 1967. CMA.
20. Varble, 179.
21. CM quoted in Levin, "Where It's Happening."

22. James Tenney quoted in Jud Yalkut, "Crossing the Great Water," *Westside News*, Oct. 19, 1967. The quote by Jackson Mac Low in the next paragraph is also from Yalkut's article.
23. "Avant Garde Festival Features Fun on the Ferry," *Surveyor* (New York) 1, no. 4 (Nov. 1967): 31.

CHAPTER 17

1. Gustav Metzger, "Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art," 1960, reprinted in Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, eds., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996), 401–402.
2. Details about DIAS London are from Kristine Stiles, "The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium and the 'DIAS' Affect," in Sabine Breitwieser, ed., *Gustav Metzger. Geschichte Geschichte* (Vienna and Ostfildern-Ruit: Generali Foundation and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 41–65. For more on Ono's extensive contributions to DIAS, see Stiles, "Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS)," in *YES YOKO ONO* (New York: Abrams, 2000), 168–171.
3. Ralph Ortiz, "Destruction Theater Manifesto—Destruction Realizations Part 1 Part 2" (1967). Originally published in *Twelve Evenings of Manipulations* (New York: Judson Gallery, 1967); reprinted in *Aspen 6A* (winter 1968–1969).
4. Jon Hendricks, interview with the author, Nov. 13, 2002, New York City.
5. Jill Johnston, "Over His Dead Body," *Village Voice*, Mar. 28, 1968. The event probably took place on Mar. 22. Johnston's article says it happened on Friday, Mar. 21, but in 1968 Mar. 21 fell on a Thursday. *CM Chron* dates it to Mar. 22.
6. Johnston, "Over His Dead Body," and Jon Hendricks, interview with the author.
7. Ralph Ortiz, "Statement," *East Village Other*, Mar. 29–Apr. 4, 1968. The planned piece was titled *Henny Penny up in the Tree*. See also Jon Hendricks's untitled essay at http://www.judson.org/images/Judson_House_65_Jon_Hendricks.pdf.
8. Johnston, "Over His Dead Body."
9. Saul Gottlieb, "Yesterday Whitehall, Tomorrow the Finch Museum," *East Village Other*, Apr. 5–11, 1968. See also Jean-Jacques Lebel, "An Artist with Balls Is Worth Two in the Gallery," *East Village Other*, Mar. 22–28, 1968, and statements by Ralph Ortiz, CM, and Jon Hendricks, *East Village Other*, Mar. 29–Apr. 4, 1968.
10. CM to Ralph Ortiz, Apr. 14, 1968. CMA.

CHAPTER 18

1. NJP to Audrey Sobol, Oct. 30, 1967. CMA.
2. Carman Moore, "Appealing Toplessness," *Village Voice*, June 20, 1968.
3. CM to Jerald Ordover, June 22, 1968. CMA. A contract between CM and Norman Seaman indicates that he assisted her with a loan and small contribution, but most of the expenses were her responsibility and seem, in the end, to have been paid by NJP.

4. Donal Henahan, "Miss Moorman in Football Togs Plays in 'Mixed Media Opera,'" *New York Times*, June 11, 1968; Moore, "Appealing Toplessness."
5. Alan Rich, "Miss Moorman's Thing, or: Nudity Is No Cover," *New York* 1, no. 14 (July 8, 1968): 50, 52.
6. FP to [editors of *New York*], July 19, 1968. CMA.
7. NJP to CM, June 14, 1968. CMA. Minor errors in spelling and grammar have been corrected for clarity.
8. NJP, "Electronic Video Recorder," reprinted in *Videa 'n Videology*.
9. Marita Sturken, "Private Money and Personal Influence: Howard Klein and the Rockefeller Foundation's Funding of the Media Arts," *Afterimage* 14, no. 6 (Jan. 1987): 11. NJP wrote an essay on the topic while in residence at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. The text, "Expanded Education for the Paperless Society," is reprinted in *Videa 'n Videology*.
10. NJP, "Intermedia '68 Account," undated typescript [summer 1968]. CMA.
11. Ken Hakuta, interview with the author, May 2, 2005, New York City.
12. NJP to CM, June 14, 1968. CMA.
13. Calvin Tomkins, "Video Visionary," *New Yorker* 51, no. 11 (May 5, 1975): 75.
14. CM in conversation with Gisela Gronemeyer, 1980. Cello Anthology.

CHAPTER 19

1. *New York Times*, "Bride in a Gown and Gas Mask Leads a Festival-Parade Here," Sept. 15, 1968. See also Jill Johnston, "The Avant-Garde Has a Float-In," *Village Voice*, Sept. 19, 1968, and Michael T. Kaufman, *In Their Own Good Time* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1973), 186–211.
2. Douglas Cummins to William Dillon, Sept. 10, 1968. CMA.
3. Information in this section comes from CM's press release for the 6th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival; Jean Toche to John Lindsay, Sept. 15, 1968 (both CMA); and Jean Toche, interview with the author, Feb. 7, 2010, Staten Island, NY.
4. Jim McWilliams, interview with the author, July 18, 2005, San Diego, CA.
5. CM in conversation with Vin Grabill, 1982. VHS. CMA.
6. Lester Abelman, "Topless Cellist to Elevate Her Act," *Daily News*, Sept. 14, 1968.
7. Varble, 178. During McWilliams's first attempt to levitate CM, on Mar. 9, 1968, in Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square, she never got off the ground. See Jeremy Heymsfeld, "Up, Up and Away Out?" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Mar. 11, 1968. The two managed a more successful *Sky Kiss* for a 1975 event in Little Rock, but CM's best realizations were done in the 1980s in collaboration with Otto Piene, who in late 1968 had sent a performer aloft on hot-air balloons for the WGBH program "The Medium Is the Medium." See openvault.wgbh.org. It was Piene's technical skill that made *Sky Kiss* work; however, he and CM agreed that they should continue to use McWilliams's title. Otto Piene, interview with the author, Groton, MA, Apr. 15, 2007.
8. Jim McWilliams, interview with the author.
9. Johnston, "The Avant-Garde Has a Float-In."
10. All letters are NJP to CM; unless otherwise noted, all are undated. All CMA.

11. CM to FP, Sept. 29, 1968. CMA.
12. Mark Lewisohn, *The Beatles: Recording Sessions/The Official Abbey Road Studio Session Notes 1962–1970* (New York: Harmony, 1988), 157.
13. CM quoted in “La Vanguardia en Musica,” *Zona Franca: Revista de literatura e ideas* 4, no. 56 (Apr. 1968): 40–42. Translation from the Spanish by Patricia Ohmans. The interview with CM, NJP, and Earle Brown was conducted in English by an unidentified writer and translated into Spanish by Eduardo Morreo for publication in this journal.
14. Edward Greenfield, “Charlotte Moorman at the Institute of Contemporary Arts,” *Guardian* (London), Sept. 24, 1968.
15. CM to John Cage, Mar. 22, 1968. CMA.
16. The zipping and unzipping is detailed in Genrikh Borovik, “Adventures of a Cello: Notes on American ‘Avantgardism,’” pt. 1, *Literary Gazette* (Moscow) 7, no. 4241 (Feb. 11, 1970): 13. Translation by Yelena Kalinsky. The rose-eating can be seen in Jud Yalkut’s videotape 26’1.1499” for a *String Player* (1973).
17. Franz Kamin, interview with the author, Mar. 11, 2005, St. Paul, MN.
18. John Cage to Bernard Turetsky, Oct. 29, 1967. John Cage Collection, Northwestern University Music Library.
19. Cello Anthology, unpaginated booklet, note 19. Cage made his statement during an interview in New York City on Dec. 7, 1991, barely one month after CM’s death.
20. Cello Anthology, unpaginated booklet, note 28.
21. Mike Scammel, “A Soviet View of Charlotte Moorman and the Avant-Garde,” *Studio* 180, no. 924 (July 1970): iv. Scammel’s piece summarizes Genrikh Borovik’s two-part essay “Adventures of a Cello: Notes on American ‘Avantgardism,’” *Literary Gazette* (Moscow), Feb. 11, 1970 (part 1) and Feb. 18, 1970 (part 2).
22. CM to FP, Oct. 1, 1968. CMA.
23. CM to FP, Oct. 4, 1968. CMA.
24. CM to FP, posted Oct. 7, 1968. CMA.
25. Ralph Blumenthal, “Naked Cellist Completes Her Concert in Germany,” unidentified clipping [*New York Times News Service*]. CMA.
26. CM to FP, Feb. 24, 1969. CMA.
27. CM to FP, Feb. 27, 1969. CMA.
28. Judith Bettina to the author, Apr. 20, 2006. The photographs are in the CMA.
29. CM to FP, Feb. 28, 1969. CMA.

CHAPTER 20

1. Charlotte Curtis, “Miss American Pageant Is Picketed by 100 Women,” *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1968.
2. Robin Morgan quoted in *ibid.*
3. Video engineer and NJP consultant C.T. Lui estimated the voltage. Interview with the author, Nov. 13, 2007, New York City.
4. CM Chron., note for May 17, 1969.

5. CM to Billy [Klüver] and Julie [Martin], Sept. 27, 1973. CMA.
6. During a press conference in Sydney, Australia, on Mar. 21, 1976, CM said, "Paik doesn't want me to make any recognizable traditional music, only abstract sounds." DVD courtesy Stephen Jones.
7. See Clare Crawford, "She Dreamt She Went to Work in Her TV," *Washington Daily News*, July 16, 1969; and Decker-Phillips Paik Video, 124. During the twenty years CM used *TV Bra* it was at different times connected to various configurations of radios, video cameras, batteries, microphones, foot pedals, rheostats, amplifiers, and other devices.
8. AIC, 5.
9. NJP, "TV Bra for Living Sculpture," reprinted in *Videa 'n Videology*.
10. The phrase "electronic breastfeeding" comes from a review of NJP's exhibition at the Galeria Bonino by John O'Connor, "Moving into X-Rated TV," *New York Times*, Mar. 14, 1976.
11. Ken Hakuta, interview with the author, May 2, 2005, New York City.
12. CM to Grace Glueck, undated [July 1969]. CMA.
13. David L. Wilson, e-mail message to the author, Aug. 21, 2008.
14. Calvin Tomkins, "Video Visionary," *New Yorker* 51, no. 11 (May 5, 1975): 70.
15. Scott Simon, "Morning Edition," National Public Radio, broadcast, Aug. 2, 1986. Audiocassette. Author's collection, courtesy Andrew Gurian.
16. Both *TV Bra* and *TV Cello* were acquired by Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, in Oct. 1991.
17. CM, Sydney press conference, Mar. 21, 1976.

CHAPTER 21

1. Varble, 178.
2. CM to Jerald Ordovery, July 7, 1969. Jerald Ordovery papers.
3. CM to Lillie Edna Kelly, Apr. 28, 1964. CMA.
4. CM to Jerald Ordovery, June 24, 1969. CMA.
5. *Village Voice*, "Scenes," Sept. 25, 1969.
6. See Ron Rosenbaum, "Avant Garde Fest: Art or Vandalism?" *Village Voice*, Oct. 9, 1969.
7. Rosenbaum, "Avant Garde Fest: Art or Vandalism?"
8. *Ibid.*
9. CM to Yoko Ono, undated [1969]. CMA.
10. Glueck, "En Avant!"
11. Jean Toche quoted in Glueck, "En Avant!"

CHAPTER 22

1. John Hanhardt, interview with the author May 4, 2005.
2. CM to Vivian Moorman, posted Sept. 16, 1970, CMA. Their honeymoon suite, CM wrote, had "a gigantic bed and a panoramic view."

3. CM had conceived this plan by the time of the Ward's Island festival in Sept. 1969. Jud Yalkut, "Evolution of the New York Avant Garde Festival," undated typescript [1970]. CMA.
4. Varble, 178.
5. Allan Kaprow quoted in Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2004), 163.
6. *Peace Sonata* was originally titled *New Piece for Charlotte*. It began to appear on CM's event programs as *Peace Sonata* during the 1970s.
7. CM to FP, Nov. 8, 1970. CMA.
8. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author, June 1, 2003.
9. CM to Jerald Ordovery, May 12, 1971. Jerald Ordovery papers.
10. Jerald Ordovery, interview with the author, May 29, 2003, New York City.
11. CM to Yoko Ono, Aug. 14, 1971. CMA. A copy of the check, dated July 12, 1971, is in the CMA. It is not clear who, if anyone, asked Ono to assist CM.
12. CM's archive does not include any written offer from Ono to engage her services, paid or unpaid. But that she made such an offer can be inferred from statements included in CM's many undated drafts of the Aug. 14 letter. For example: "I'm very flattered that you think I can organize college *Grapefruit* concerts. [...] Let's talk when you have more time—I want to help you and do a great job!" [*Grapefruit* is the title of Ono's book of event scores.]
13. CM to Yoko Ono, undated draft [July/Aug. 1971]. CMA.
14. Audrey Michaels to CM, July 17, 1965. CMA.
15. CM to Yoko Ono, Oct. 3, 1971. See also a copy of the press release CM sent to Vivian Moorman with this note: "Hi Mother, Yoko and I've known each other for years. I wrote this for her big exhibit this weekend. I'm mailing it out now. (She's paying me to do it.)" Both CMA.
16. CM to Yoko Ono, undated [July/Aug. 1971], CMA. Ono had publicly, and scandalously, "shown her tits" on the cover of the 1968 album *Two Virgins*, a collaboration with Lennon.
17. *Syracuse Post-Standard*, "Yoko Explains Her Art: 'Bored with Artists Who Make Big Lumps,'" [Oct. 1971]. Lenono Archive.
18. *Village Voice*, "Yoko Ono at the Whitney: Age of Bronze," Feb. 7, 1989.

CHAPTER 23

1. CM, "Eighth New York Avant Garde Festival, Charlotte Moorman, Director," undated typescript [1971]. CMA.
2. CM's Armory festival layout might have been inspired by the installation of Harald Szeemann's exhibition *Happening & Fluxus*, a series of "booths" for the display of individual artists' documents and objects. CM's floor plan sketch for the Armory festival is in the CMA.
3. CM to Harry Van Arsdale, Jr., Dec. 1, 1971. CMA.
4. Fred McDarrah, "Down to His Last Mouse," *Village Voice*, Nov. 25, 1971. Skaggs thinks that Lennon and Ono probably did not know about the performance ahead of time. Skaggs, telephone interview with the author, July 12, 2012.
5. Carman Moore, "That Festival Was Needed," *Village Voice*, Dec. 9, 1971.

6. Yoko Ono, "Pieces Dedicated to George Maciunas, the Phantom Architect" (1965). See Joan Rothfuss, "Amaze," in YES YOKO ONO (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 140. *Amaze* was designed and built in collaboration with George Maciunas and premiered in Oct. 1971 at the Everson Museum exhibition *This Is Not Here*.
7. McDarrah, "Down to His Last Mouse." The description of Clarke's piece is also from this article. Andrew Gurian, who worked with Clarke during the 1970s, recalls that *Video Ferris Wheel* also displayed "prerecorded tapes of Hollywood movies and stock footage of people falling from great heights" but he has been unable to verify his recollection. Gurian, e-mail message to the author, June 4, 2012.
8. [Howard Smith], "Scenes," *Village Voice*, Oct. 21, 1971.
9. Douglas Davis, proposal for the 8th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, undated [1971]. CMA.
10. Richard F. Shepard, "Avant Garde Festival Held at Armory," *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1971.
11. CM in conversation with Vin Grabill, 1982. VHS, CMA.
12. See, for example, CM's comments in NJP's videotape *Global Groove* (1973).
13. "Nam June Paik: Video Synthesizer Plus," *Radical Software 2* (1970), reprinted in *Videa 'n Videology*. NJP had shown an early version of the synthesizer at the 8th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival. The festival press release (CMA) titled it *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About TV and Were Afraid to Do*.
14. Galeria Bonino, *Nam June Paik/Charlotte Moorman*, undated news release [Nov. 1971]. CMA.
15. "Nam June Paik," *Art News 70*, no. 9 (Jan. 1972): 20. Cage's *Cheap Imitation* began as a two-piano arrangement of Socrate, Erik Satie's 1918 work for voices and orchestra, which Cage composed as accompaniment for a solo dance by Merce Cunningham. When Satie's publisher refused to give Cage permission to use the arrangement, he avoided committing copyright infringement (and paying fees) by drastically altering Satie's original: he changed all the pitches and reduced the piece to a single line played on one piano. Hence the title *Cheap Imitation*. See James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), 162–166. Thanks to D.J. Hoek for directing me to this history.
16. CM talks about their disagreement on the compact disc recording "TV Cello." *Cello Anthology*.
17. *Advertiser* (Sydney), "Tonight She Will Play an Ice Cube," Mar. 22, 1976.
18. Elliot Caplan, interview with the author, Oct. 9, 2005, New York City.
19. "Paik made me the *TV Bed* because I was recovering from major surgery. Very uncomfortable bed!" *CM Chron*, June 29, 1972.
20. See CM's description and drawing in a letter to René Block, Aug. 19, 1973, CMA. At least two other *TV Beds* were made. In a 1976 version, a wooden box was constructed for the "mattress" of TVs and another, upright box containing two TVs served as headboard. See the undated instruction drawing by FP [1975], CMA. A 1991 version includes eighteen monitors on an antique cast iron bedframe. In lieu of CM's body, NJP placed two dolls on the bed, one of them a crawling soldier that evokes her performance of *Peace Sonata*. See the photograph of this version in Wulf Herzogenrath, *Nam June Paik Fluxus/Video* (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen, 1999), 158.

21. Decker-Phillips Paik Video, 139.
22. NJP quoted in Paul Schimmel, "Abstract Time," *Arts* 49, no. 4 (Dec. 1974): 52.
23. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1970), 308.
24. NJP quoted in "Nam June Paik with Charlotte Moorman: Videa, Vidiot, Videology," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *New Artist's Video: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), 127.

CHAPTER 24

1. CM to Howard Wise, Aug. 14, 1975. CMA.
2. Norman Seaman, telephone interview with the author, May 23, 2005.
3. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author, June 1, 2003, New Paltz, NY.
4. Jim McWilliams, "Flying Cello," promotional flyer, undated [1974]. CMA.
5. Franz Kamin, interview with the author, Mar. 11, 2005, St. Paul, MN. Mac Low made his remark to Kamin.
6. Mark Finston, "Busted and Unbowed," clipping from *Cavalier* magazine, undated [ca. 1973]. CMA.
7. During the 1950s Matusow was widely despised for informing on his left-wing colleagues to the FBI and to Joseph McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee. After serving three years in prison for perjury, Matusow moved to England and became involved with the avant-garde.
8. Carman Moore, "International Carnival of Experimental Sound," *Saturday Review* 55, no. 45 (Nov. 4, 1972): 64–66.
9. Annea Lockwood, interview with the author, Apr. 30, 2009, Northfield, MN.
10. CM, unpublished essay about her work with Geoffrey Hendricks, undated handwritten sheets [ca. 1973]. CMA.
11. Jim McWilliams, interview with the author, July 18, 2005, San Diego, CA. The title *Ice Music* was always changed to reflect the city in which she played it, although the work itself remained the same, with one exception: *Yellow Ice Music for Washington* was performed on an ice cello infused with yellow food coloring.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Lockwood, interview with the author.
14. Moore, "International Carnival of Experimental Sound," 66.
15. CM to Marta Minujin, Apr. 8, 1973; CM to John Kaldor, Jan. 28, 1976. Both CMA.
16. CM to Marta Minujin, Apr. 8, 1973, CMA. A note in CM's appointment diary on Mar. 7, 1973, reveals that the drug she used for this purpose was Phenergan.
17. Neil Jillett, "Chilly Cellist," *Herald* (Melbourne), Mar. 27, 1976.
18. Jim McWilliams, e-mail message to the author, Dec. 24, 2009.
19. FP, interview with Scott Simon for "Morning Edition," National Public Radio, broadcast Aug. 2, 1986. Audiocassette. Author's collection, courtesy Andrew Gurian.

CHAPTER 25

1. Norman Seaman, telephone interview with the author, May 30, 2004.
2. Sid Frigand, remarks written for CM's memorial service at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Feb. 15, 1992, and read in absentia by David Ross. DVD, EHFA.
3. Giuseppe Chiari to CM [1973]. The declaration was his proposal for the 10th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival. CMA.
4. See Martyn K. E. Green, "Storm De Hirsch: Independent Filmmaker," *Super-8 Filmmaker 2*, no. 1 (Jan./Feb. 1974): 26–27. The film is titled *Charlotte Moorman's Avant Guard Festival #9*.
5. CM's performance at the festival has been identified in some publications as *The Intravenous Feeding of Charlotte Moorman*. However, according to McWilliams, that title belongs to another, unrealized idea for CM's festival performance in which "intravenous liquid" was to be pumped in and out of her cello. (He got the idea after visiting CM in May 1972 while she was in the hospital recuperating from gallbladder surgery.) McWilliams says that the piece CM performed at the festival was, instead, an alternate concept in which she would play while submerged in a tank of water. Confusion has been sown by various documents in the CMA, which list both titles and several ideas, and suggest that McWilliams's concept evolved as the festival was being planned. But the most often used description of the piece in CMA materials reads, "A *Water Cello for Charlotte Moorman*, played in a tank of water pumped from the Hudson and East Rivers," which suggests that the piece should be known by that title. McWilliams, interview with the author, July 18, 2005, San Diego, CA; see also several typescript documents entitled "Plans for the 9th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival," all CMA.
6. Douglas Davis, "Art—the Season—Keeping Its Cool," *Newsweek* 80, no. 21 (Nov. 20, 1972): 116.
7. John Giorno and Les Levine, "The Avant-Garde Festival Has Sold Its Soul for a Boat Ride up the Hudson," news release, undated [Oct. 1972]. CMA.
8. Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche to Howard Wise, Nov. 10, 1972. CMA.
9. Carman Moore, "The Avant-Garde in Dry Dock," *Village Voice*, Nov. 9, 1972.
10. Jim McWilliams, e-mail message to the author, Dec. 23, 2009. Other quotes in the paragraph are from Jim McWilliams, interview with the author, July 18, 2005, San Diego, CA.
11. McWilliams, interview with the author.
12. NJP and Paul Schimmel, "Abstract Time," *Arts* 49, no. 4 (Dec. 1974): 52.
13. *Village Voice*, "Scenes," Mar. 29, 1973.
14. *Ibid.*
15. McWilliams, interview with the author.
16. Jim McWilliams, telephone conversation with the author, July 27, 2009.
17. *Village Voice*, "Scenes," May 3, 1973. Yalkut's videotape is entitled *The Chocolate Cello* (1973). The fudge was made for the occasion by Savoia Pastry Shop.
18. Cindy Nemser to CM, Dec. 31, 1969, CMA; Nemser, telephone interview with the author, Apr. 22, 2012. CM seems not to have responded to Nemser's letter.
19. CM's documented participation in so-named women's events is limited to two: the Women's Video Festival, held in New York at the Kitchen in 1973, and the Women's Music Festival, at Mills College, Oakland, in 1974. Her archive contains invitations to take part in

three others, which she apparently ignored: the 1973 Women for Women Festival of film and video; a 1974 exhibition at Womanspace in Los Angeles; and a 1978 project at Women's Studio Workshop.

20. *Die Löwin* (Bern) 6 (Dec. 1975).

21. Andrew Gurian, e-mail message to the author, June 4, 2012.

22. The class was advertised as an exploration of the "political, economic, moral, legal, artistic, and psychological aspects of pornography as well as the issues raised by the Supreme Court's latest antiobscenity ruling." *Village Voice*, Sept. 20, 1973.

23. Carolee Schneemann, interview with Stéphane Aquin in *Global Village: The 1960s* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2003), 162.

24. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Feminism's Long March," *Art in America* 96, no. 6 (June/July 2007): 67.

CHAPTER 26

1. Mary Breasted, "Ms. Moorman's Water Music," *Saturday Review* 55, no. 49 (Dec. 2, 1972): 18.

2. Robert F. Lange to CM, Nov. 30, 1973. The bill was paid by Howard Wise. Wise to Lange, Dec. 7, 1973. Both CMA.

3. Dick Higgins to CM, Dec. 8, 1975. CMA.

4. Norman Kaplan to CM, Oct. 29, 1975. CMA.

5. Howard Wise to CM, Sept. 2, 1975. CMA.

6. Jim McWilliams, interview with the author, July 18, 2005, San Diego, CA.

7. FP, "Music for Helicopter and Cello," diagram and instructions, undated [1975]. CMA.

8. Robin Reisig, "In Which Charlotte Moorman Attempts to Play Her Cello on a Trapeze and Succeeds in Kicking It, Thereby Making a Sound," *Village Voice*, Nov. 21, 1974.

9. See Gregory Battcock, "Avant Garde Festival," *Soho Weekly News*, June 23, 1977; and NJP, "TV Environment for the World Trade Center," typescript proposal, Feb. 10, 1977, CMA. It should be noted that CM often listed artists on her posters even when she knew they did not plan to participate. Big names were part of her bona fides; they also drew audiences.

10. CM, "Final Report on the Tenth Annual Avant Garde Festival," undated [1973]. CMA.

11. For example, *Alternative Art New York 1965–1985* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2002), a history of artist-run spaces and organizations edited by Julie Ault, does not mention CM or her festivals.

12. Charles Morrow, interview with the author, Sept. 13, 2005, Minneapolis, MN.

13. Carolee Schneemann, interview with the author, June 1, 2003, New Paltz, NY.

14. CM to Howard Klein, Sept. 9, 1979. "My recent mastectomy surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital has made me realize the urgency to get things in order with my Archive," she wrote. "I know where most everything is, [but] Frank occasionally gets lost in the 20,000 pounds of paper weight." CMA.

15. McWilliams, interview with the author.

16. MaryAnn Hoyt, interview with the author, May 7, 2005, Staten Island, NY.

17. See CM to Yoko Ono, invoice “for services rendered,” undated [1976]; and CM to Yoko Ono, Sept. 28, 1976. Both CMA.
18. CM to Pamela [Worden], Apr. 16, 1978. CMA.
19. Juan Crovetto, telephone interview with the author, Dec. 3, 2008.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Andrew Gurian, e-mail message to the author, June 4, 2012.
22. Crovetto, telephone interview with the author.
23. Barbara Lapcek, telephone interview with the author, Feb. 23, 2008.
24. Howard Smith and Brian van der Horst, “Scenes,” *Village Voice*, Oct. 24, 1974; Crovetto, telephone interview with the author.
25. Si Fried, interview with the author, Oct. 6, 2005, New York City.
26. Sid Frigand, interview with the author, May 3, 2005, New York City.
27. Franz Kamin, interview with the author, Mar. 11, 2005, St. Paul, MN; Jud Yalkut, interview with the author, Mar. 19, 2007, Waynesville, OH; Carman Moore, interview with the author, Mar. 29, 2006, New York City.
28. Mitch Highfill, “The Bare Facts,” *Village Voice*, Jan. 14, 1992. In 1980 Highfill took part in the 15th festival as organizer of the event’s poetry readings.
29. The event was “Celebration,” organized by the choreographer Marilyn Wood. It began July 22, 1975, and culminated on July 25 with CM’s performance of *Sky Kiss*.
30. CM to FP, July 26, 1975. CMA.
31. CM to Inge [Baecker], Oct. 21, 1978. Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels.
32. George Wimberly, interview with the author, June 8, 2005, Little Rock, AR. CM left the boxes with Wimberly; in 2006 he donated them to the CMA.
33. CM to Jerry [Ordovery], July 19, 1981; FP to Jerry [Ordovery] [ca. Sept. 1981]. Both Jerald Ordovery papers. CM’s claim that the discovery of her mother’s death was a surprise is supported by notations in her appointment diaries and by her historical willingness to go to her mother in times of crisis.

CHAPTER 27

1. The exhibition was on view Apr. 1–7, 1976, and included *TV Garden*, *TV Buddha*, *TV Bra*, *TV Bed*, and *TV Cello*. See Rhana Davenport, “A Transgressive Duet: Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman in Australia in 1976,” *Art & Australia* 43, no. 1 (spring 2005): 88–93; and Sophie Forbat, ed., *40 Years: Kaldor Public Art Projects* (Sydney: Kaldor Public Art Projects, 2009), 110–121. According to CM Chron, a separate exhibition was mounted in Adelaide at the Art Gallery of South Australia, but it consisted only of the portfolio of photographs *Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik* published by Edizioni Pari e Dispari.
2. First quote from a videotape of the press conference, courtesy Stephen Jones; second quote from Lyndall Crisp, “Charlotte Puts on a Swell Double Feature,” *Australian* (Sydney), Mar. 20, 1976.
3. Brian Gill, “Cello in Three Acts,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), Mar. 24, 1976; Neil Jillet, “Chilly Cellist,” *Herald* (Melbourne), Mar. 27, 1976.

4. John Kaldor, telephone interview with the author, July 22, 2009. Shiomi's score, written for the 1972 Avant Garde Festival at South Street Seaport, reads: "White painted cello is hung by pole over water as apart as possible from the ship (if this piece is performed at other place, cello has to be hung from the highest place possible). Orchestra (including electric sound & chorus) plays the notes which consist of Gg major. [sic] Constantly massive chord is preferable. Cello might resonate to it inaudibly, but at least will perform its own solo movement." Shiomi to CM, posted Dec. 18, 1972. In her documented performances, CM seems to have ignored the requirement for an orchestra.
5. This account of the performance is based on *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Flying High with Strings Attached"; *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), "Flight Notches Up an Aussie First for Charlotte"; and *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), "Off to Cloud 9 with Her Cello," all Apr. 12, 1976.
6. CM in conversation with Vin Grabill, 1982. VHS, CMA.
7. Ibid.
8. NJP quoted in Ingrid Wiegand, "Great Paik and Little Fishes," *SoHo Weekly News*, Mar. 11, 1976.
9. NJP, *Beuys Vox 1961-1986* (Seoul: Won Gallery and Hyundai Gallery, 1986), 37.
10. CM Chron, Apr. 19, 1976.
11. CM to Jerald Ordovery, undated [summer 1976]. CMA. Her claim could well be true; according to its website (www.sibconline.com.sb) the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Company, which operates the nation's only television station, was not established until 1976.
12. *From Jail to Jungle* news release, undated [Feb. 1977]. CMA.
13. CM to Howard Klein, Dec. 17, 1976. CMA.
14. FP to Howard Klein, undated [1977]. CMA.
15. The catalog is *Nam June Paik, Werke 1946-76 Musik-Fluxus-Video* (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1976).
16. Carnegie Hall Corporation to NJP, "Invoice," Feb. 11, 1977, CMA. See also NJP, "De-Composition in the Media Art," in *Nam June Paik: Eine DATA Base* (Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1993), 19.
17. NJP, "De-Composition in the Media Art."
18. Robert Palmer, "Topless Raid Against Cellist is Re-Created," *New York Times*, Feb. 12, 1977; David Bourdon, "A Critic's Diary: The New York Art Year," *Art in America* 65, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1977): 74.

CHAPTER 28

1. Annette Kuhn, "No Human Flies Need Apply," *Village Voice*, June 13, 1977.
2. CM to Howard Wise, Sept. 9, 1976. CMA.
3. Andrew Gurian, e-mail message to the author, June 29, 2010.
4. Ay-O, "Rainbow Environment # 11," artist's proposal, May 19, 1977. CMA.
5. Ay-O, interview with the author, Apr. 26, 2002, New York City. See also "The Art of the Matter," unidentified newspaper clipping about the festival. CMA.
6. Stern.

7. CM, "Plans for the 14th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival," a call for proposals, undated [1978]. CMA.
8. Moorman dedicated the whole festival to Maciunas's memory. Text on the back of the festival poster includes this line: "The 14th Annual Avant Garde Festival of New York is dedicated to Fluxus, Inc., and its founder, George Maciunas."
9. Andrew Gurian, e-mail message to the author, Sept. 2, 2006.
10. Helen Weaver, "IT & T(P)," *Woodstock Times*, June 15, 1978.
11. CM in conversation with Jan van Raay, April 9, 1979. Audiotape courtesy Andor Orand.
12. See CM's correspondence with Ronald Fleming and Pamela Worden. CMA.
13. CM to Jerry Ordovery, undated [1978]. Jerald Ordovery papers. The NEA panel that recommended her for the grant included the artists Bruce Nauman, Robert Irwin, and Peter Campus, and the performing arts scholar RoseLee Goldberg.
14. CM, project description for Guggenheim Foundation fellowship application, undated [1978]. Jerald Ordovery papers. She received a letter of rejection on Mar. 19, 1979. CMA.

CHAPTER 29

1. Andrew Gurian, interview with the author, May 2, 2005, New York City. Gurian cautioned that the story was his memory and he couldn't be certain of the circumstances. But this entry in CM's appointment diary for Mar. 8 corroborates his memory: "Lump! TV—Self examination!"
2. Ibid. Dillon was the same surgeon who had removed CM's uterine fibroid tumors in 1970.
3. Barron H. Lerner, "The Annals of Extreme Surgery," *New York Times*, Aug. 29, 2011.
4. CM, telephone conversation with Andor Orand, Apr. 6, 1979. Audiocassette, courtesy Andor Orand.
5. James S. Olson, *Bathsheba's Breast: Women, Cancer, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2002), 135.
6. CM to Robert Rauschenberg, July 6, 1979, CMA; and CM, conversation with FP and Andor Orand, Apr. 11, 1979. Audiocassette, courtesy Andor Orand.
7. CM, telephone conversation with Andor Orand, Apr. 6, 1979; and Sid Frigand, interview with the author, May 3, 2005.
8. Andor Orand, interview with the author, May 6, 2005, Princeton, NJ.
9. During the late 1970s the standard treatment for breast cancer was surgery followed by radiation therapy. Chemotherapy was reserved for women whose lymph nodes also were cancerous. Olson, *Bathsheba's Breast*, 139 and 173.
10. Andrew Gurian shot 16mm film and Andor Orand audiotaped the session. Film and audio are both in the CMA.
11. CM's grant proposals are in the CMA.
12. CM to Edward Koch, Aug. 22, 1980. CMA.
13. Elliot Caplan, interview with the author, Oct. 9, 2005, New York City. The Whitney exhibition *Nam June Paik* was on view in NYC April 30–June 27, 1982, and at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Sept. 11–Oct. 24, 1982.
14. *New York Post*, "As Yoko Cuts Album, Snip in Time Keeps Sean Busy," Aug. 25, 1982.

15. Gurian, interview with the author.
16. John Olichney, interview with the author, Oct. 7, 2005, New York City; Gurian, interview with the author.
17. See CM's appointment diary for Aug. 26, 1982, CMA. Paik often used to say, "You are not allowed to die on video"—a reference, art historian Ina Blom points out, "not just to the storage capacity of videotape but also to the eternal liveness of its signaletic material." See Blom, "Two Chairs in the Museum," in Peter Eeley, ed., *The Quick and the Dead* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2009), 71.
18. Olichney, interview with the author; Barbara Lapcek, telephone interview with the author, Feb. 23, 2008. See also CM's appointment diary for 1979. CMA.
19. The home on Hydra belonged to Barbara Lapcek; the Fire Island home belonged to Si and Mildred Fried.
20. FP to Francesco Conz, Oct. 15, 1984. CMA.
21. Olichney, interview with the author.
22. Christian Xatrec, interview with the author, Nov. 14, 2007, New York City. Xatrec was careful to point out that FP had not asked him for this favor, but the respite was so clearly helpful that Xatrec made it a routine.
23. CM, interview with Scott Simon for "Morning Edition," National Public Radio, broadcast Aug. 2, 1986. Audiocassette. Author's collection, courtesy Andrew Gurian.

CHAPTER 30

1. Stuart Jeffries, "Orlan's Art of Sex and Surgery," *Guardian* (London), July 1, 2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/jul/01/orlan-performance-artist-carnal-art>. Later, in 1990, Orlan began *The Reincarnation of St. Orlan*, a project in which she underwent nine cosmetic surgeries, all captured on video, that were designed to transform her features into a composite of the feminine ideal as represented by male artists. Her brow was altered to resemble that of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, for example, and her chin reshaped to look like Botticelli's *Venus*.
2. Kristine Stiles, "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions," in Paul Schimmel, ed., *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), 272.
3. CM, telephone conversation with Andor Orand, Apr. 6, 1979. Audiocassette, courtesy Andor Orand. See also CM [to whom it may concern], a request to film her "experience with breast cancer," Apr. 9, 1979. CMA.
4. Christian Xatrec, interview with the author, Nov. 14, 2007, New York City.
5. Her idea to make cello silhouettes was inspired by Takehisa Kosugi's *Instrumental Music*, in which her shadow was cast on large sheets of paper and fabric, then cut out by an assistant. CM in conversation with Kosugi, Mar. 28, 1980. Audiocassette, CMA.
6. Early in 1980 CM told a few friends that she was considering getting pregnant so that FP would not be alone after she died. "She said this on many occasions. She often lived in not exactly the real world." Andrew Gurian, interview with the author, May 2, 2005, New York City.

7. In an audiotaped phone message to Emily Harvey on Feb. 18, 1989, CM talks about the making of a *Syringe Cello* for the French collector Marcel Fleiss. She says that the fumes from the glue had made her temporarily blind, but that she had gotten some goggles so she could finish the job. "I'm doing it all myself. I insist on putting every single syringe on it so that wonderful man Fleiss has something I absolutely did all by myself. I don't want him to think I had somebody helping me." Audiocassette, EHFA.
8. See Larry Miller, *Charlotte Resounding*, video, 1998. Available through Electronic Arts Intermix, NY.
9. [Gretchen Faust] "Charlotte Moorman," *Arts Magazine* 64, no. 10 (summer 1990): 101.
10. Xatrec, interview with the author.
11. CM in conversation with astrologer Irene Kloepfer, Feb. 13, 1983. Audiocassette, CMA.
12. Barbara Moore and Andrew Gurian, interview with the author, Nov. 9, 2007, New York City.

EPILOGUE

1. Barbara Moore, conversation with the author, Feb. 6, 2010. She related the story as FP told it to her.
2. Andrew Gurian remembers that CM bought the gym, or a large portion of one, for FP. E-mail message to the author, June 4, 2012.
3. Northwestern University acquired the archive in 2001. The auction, "Contemporary Art Including Property from the Charlotte Moorman Estate," was held at Sotheby's London on June 24, 1993. The felt covering CM had used to perform Beuys's *Infiltration Homogen for Cello* was sent to Sotheby's but withdrawn before the sale after the Beuys estate contacted Sotheby's and declared itself unable to authenticate the piece. The felt remains unsold and is the object of an ongoing dispute between the estates of Beuys and FP (which inherited the entire CM estate). The issue, in short, is whether or not the felt covering in CM's possession at the time of her death is an artwork by Beuys or an artwork by CM. The coadministrators of the FP estate, Barbara Moore and Andrew Gurian, argue the former. They have collected evidence for their case in a dossier assembled by Bound & Unbound, New York, 2000. The position of the Beuys estate and its advisors is that the work Beuys made for CM was the composition, not the object with which she performed the composition, despite the fact that two other "felt cellos" exist in private collections and have been exhibited and traded as sculptural works by Beuys. Eva Beuys, interview with the author, Nov. 20, 2003. For further information see Wolfgang Feelisch to Sotheby's, June 8, 1993; Eva Beuys to Tobias Meyer, June 23, 2003; and Tobias Meyer to Eva Beuys, July 1, 1993, all in the Bound & Unbound dossier.
4. Ernie Shore, interview with the author, Nov. 7, 2007, New York City.
5. Deborah Hoyt, interview with the author, May 7, 2005, Staten Island, NY.
6. NJP to Grace Glueck, Nov. 8, 1991. NJPA, box 2, folder 19. CM had had surgery to remove uterine fibroid tumors in 1962, two years before she met NJP. Her second myomectomy was in 1970. Her friends often conflated her cancer with her chronic uterine fibroid tumors, perhaps because CM herself was sometimes vague about the facts of her illnesses. She had had

tumors all her life; all of them caused her emotional trauma. The details of type and timing were, in a sense, irrelevant.

7. Daryl Chin, "SeOUL NYmAX and FLUXFEST," *PAJ* 16, no. 3 (Sept. 1994): 57.

8. *TV Bed* (1991) is in the Thomas Wegner collection, Hamburg; *TV Cello* (2003) is in the Nam June Paik Estate. The video robot portraits, both titled *Charlotte Moorman* date from 1991 (Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University) and 1995 (private collection, Korea). *Oil Drums, Hommage à Charlotte Moorman* (1964/1991) is in the Schulz Collection, Berlin. The video was coproduced with Howard Weinberg. The works dating from 1991 might have been made and sold before Moorman's death to raise money for her medical expenses.

9. See the photograph in John Hanhardt, *The Worlds of Nam June Paik* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2000), ii–iii.

10. CM, interview with Scott Simon for "Morning Edition," National Public Radio, broadcast Aug. 2, 1986. Audiocassette. Author's collection, courtesy Andrew Gurian.

11. Jill Johnston, "Remembering Charlotte Moorman," *Village Voice*, Dec. 10, 1991.

12. John Olichney, interview with the author, Oct. 7, 2005, New York City.

13. "Electronics: X Rays in the Living Room," *Time* 90, no. 5 (Aug. 4, 1967): 62.

14. Nelson Christensen, e-mail message to the author, July 18, 2012. To perform this very informal test, Christensen turned on *TV Bra's* power, let it warm up thoroughly, then placed dosimeters near the side and back of one of its CRTs. These were left in place for about six hours. Using the resulting numbers, along with data about the CRTs amperage and voltage obtained from a television supplier's website, he calculated the *TV Bra's* maximum dose as 2 microsieverts (μSv) per hour for each CRT. In his calculation, Christensen used the conservative figure of 400 μSv as the dose of a standard mammogram; according to some sources it can be as high as 700 μSv . For amperage and voltage figures see <http://www.omnivisionusa.com/monitors/replacement-crt/crt-monitors/industrial-crt-monitors-pdf/SL-Replacement-Mono-6-in-CRT-n-drwg-0512.pdf>.

15. CM, press conference, Sydney, Australia, Mar. 19, 1976. Video courtesy Stephen Jones.

16. CM's comments can be heard on the compact disc recording "TV Cello," *Cello Anthology*.

17. Brian Morton, "Candy-Coated, Gravity-Defying, Streamline Baby," *Wire* 283 (Sept. 2007):

26. Morton writes that notes from his conversations with CM were undated, but their talks took place during "her later years." In 1976 CM spoke to Gregory Battcock about her fear of "television radiation." See his essay "Disaster in New York," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *New Artists Video: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), 133.

18. CM in conversation with an unidentified astrologer, Feb. 2, 1982. Audiocassette, CMA.

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