

The Primer

The music and philosophies of

Pauline Oliveros

birthed new ways of listening and living through communal experiments and sui generis composition. **Louise Gray** provides a user's guide to her recordings, from Deep Listening to accordion drone. Illustration by **Savage Pencil**

In 1971, Pauline Oliveros, composer, accordionist, feminist, pedagogue and inventor of Deep Listening, was asked to supply an autobiographical paragraph to accompany *Sonic Meditations*, her collection of 11 (later, 25) texts published in the magazine *Source: Music Of The Avant-Garde*. "Pauline Oliveros is a two-legged human being, a female, lesbian, musician, composer among other things that contribute to her identity," she wrote. "She is herself and lives with her partner... in Leucadia, California, along with assorted poultry, dogs, cats, rabbits and tropical hermit crabs."

What does Oliveros mean by "She is herself"?

The full paragraph contains nothing of the usual biographical information that marks their owner's status within a conventional social order. Oliveros's playful responses refuse that game. Rather, they overturn the given order and issue an invitation to others to do so too. From her early beginnings as one of the few women in electronic and concrete composition to the establishment of the far-reaching practice of Deep Listening, Oliveros was always very much herself.

She was born in Houston, Texas, on 30 May 1932. Her father left when Oliveros was young, and she was raised by her mother and grandmother, both of whom taught music to provide for the household. She remembers this childhood listening: to two pianos being played simultaneously, as music lessons were in progress; to the sounds of insects, frogs, cars. After studying various instruments at school, she settled on the accordion, an instrument that she always viewed (with some approval) as an outsider instrument, not least because it barely featured in orchestral scores. Two presents from her mother – in 1947, a Sears Roebuck wire recorder, later followed by a Silvertone tape recorder – were, for Oliveros, entrées into a new world. This new technology was to prefigure her development not only of Deep Listening but also, from 1965 onwards, the Expanded Instrument System, a continually modified set of loops, delays and other sonic processing methods. After two years of compositional studies at the University of Houston, she moved to San Francisco State College to complete her degree. She studied with the composer Robert Erickson, who encouraged her interest in improvisation. The experience, she later said, was one of the milestones of her creative life. Oliveros soon established herself within San Francisco's experimental music communities. Close companions included Terry Riley (she played accordion on the premiere of Riley's *In C* in 1964), Loren Rush and, especially, Morton Subotnick and Ramon Sender. In 1961 Sender had built an electronic

studio, mostly using repurposed military equipment, in the attic of the San Francisco Conservatory and invited Oliveros to join him. From this, a series of concert programmes, Sonics, blossomed. It was here in 1961 that Oliveros was to present *Time Perspectives*, her first piece of tape music. A year later, Sender's attic studio moved and, joined by Subotnick, the San Francisco Tape Music Center was formed, with Oliveros very soon becoming a co-director. Despite its relatively short lifespan (it moved to Mills College, with Oliveros as its director, in 1966), the Center was a focal point on the US West Coast for experimental music.

At the SFTMC Oliveros earnestly began her compositional experiments with tape, delay and electronics. However, despite her close and fond relationships with Subotnick and Sender, she felt her outsidership, particularly as a woman, excluded from what she called the "boys' club" of technology. Oliveros was, to a great extent, a self-taught technologist and at least one composition's title, for example, *The Day I Disconnected The Erase Head And Forgot To Reconnect It*, reflects her trial and error learning. In 1962, she won the Gaudeamus Prize for *Sound Patterns* (1961), and with the prize money made her first trip to Europe, visiting the Contactorgaan Elektronische Muziek in Bilthoven and making contact with György Ligeti and Gottfried Michael Koenig, and driving to Stockholm to visit composers Jan Bark and Folke Rabe.

Back in San Francisco, Oliveros quickly became involved with a busy schedule of programmes that reinforced connections between new music, radical performance theatre and other media. The three day Tudorfest in early 1964 – devoted to David Tudor, and in particular his work with John Cage – was a hugely significant event. Tudor and Cage were inspirational figures to Oliveros: she watched their compositional risk taking keenly, but, more than that, she was impressed by their meticulous preparation, perseverance and listening abilities. There was some contact with San Francisco counterculture, but it was not much acted upon; Oliveros found listening mind-expanding in itself, and both she and Subotnick were concerned about Sender's liking for LSD.

When the Center transferred to Mills College in Oakland, California in 1966, Oliveros went with it on a one year post as director before moving to the University of California San Diego to teach electronic music, eventually becoming the director of its Center for Music Experiment and Related Research. She began developing what became Deep Listening in these San Diego years. *Sonic Meditations*, a series

of short, communal sounding and listening scores, were created for regular sessions with all-female improvising group The ♀ Ensemble. Oliveros brought in elements of tai chi to the exercises, and this holistic way of looking at breath and singing went on to become a feature point of all Deep Listening practices.

"Deep Listening is listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you're doing," Oliveros once offered as a definition. In truth, what started as a compositional strategy turned into an approach, a way of being. Listening practices were never abstractions but, rather, activities tied to making communities and advocating peace. For Oliveros, a globalist as opposed to exclusive way of listening with a goal expanded creative and social consciousness, thereby radically adding to the implications of John Cage's 4'33".

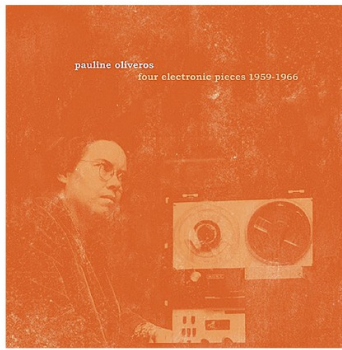
Oliveros's output was prolific. Throughout her adult life she composed, performed and toured; she taught and ran Deep Listening retreats with her partner (and later wife), the poet and writer Ione, and dancer/movement expert Heloise Gold. Oliveros wrote books (*Software For People*, a collection of texts, is a good place to start), essays and newspaper articles (her 1970 *New York Times* article, "And Don't Call Them 'Lady' Composers", is a tour de force). In 1985, she founded the Deep Listening Institute which in 2014 became the Center for Deep Listening at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York. Since her early days in San Francisco, collaboration and improvisation (both with others and with herself) had been central to much of her works.

She died on 24 November 2016 at her home in Kingston, New York. Her last visit to London happened that June when she was guest composer at the Deep Minimalism festival at St John's Smith Square. The festival's launch coincided with the result of the referendum that ended the UK's membership of the European Union, when the outside streets near the Houses of Parliament were full of news crews from around the world. In this atmosphere of deep shock, Oliveros closed the festival by leading a capacity audience in her *Tuning Meditation*. Its instructions are simple: "Using any vowel sound, sing a tone that you hear in your imagination. After contributing your tone, listen for someone else's tone and tune to its pitch as exactly as possible." The score ends: "Sing warmly." For Oliveros, Deep Listening was always about community, and that evening she created a community out of some 600 shattered audience members. She said afterwards that it was the best version of the piece she had ever conducted.

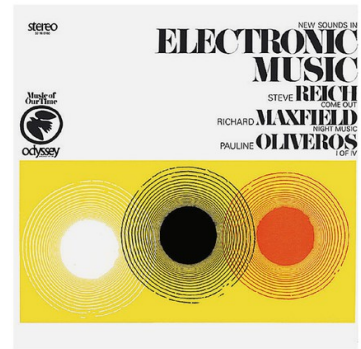




Pauline Oliveros, *Reverberations: Tape & Electronic Music 1961-1970* (2012)



Pauline Oliveros, *Four Electronic Pieces 1959-1966* (2008)



Steve Reich/Richard Maxfield/Pauline Oliveros, *New Sounds In Electronic Music* (1967)

Pauline Oliveros

Reverberations: Tape & Electronic Works 1961-1970

Important 12×CD 2012

Four Electronic Pieces 1959-66

Sub Rosa CD 2008

Until the massive *Reverberations* box set, released in Oliveros's 80th year, came along, those wanting access to the composer's early electronic work had to hunt out Sub Rosa's album. Containing four works – *Mnemonics III* (1965), *V Of IV* (1966), *Time Perspectives* (1961) and *Once Again/Buchla Piece* (1966) – Sub Rosa's release covers the basics, but it is *Reverberations* that is very much the definitive statement on this period. (*Once Again/Buchla Piece* is the only composition from the Sub Rosa album that does not appear on *Reverberations*. The album was re-released in 2018 with a slightly changed title to *Early Electronic Works*). It is possible that *Time Perspectives*, Oliveros's first composition for tape, began as early as 1959, although the generally published date is 1961. A 20 minute, four-channel work that used the Silvertone recorder given to her by her mother, its technology included mics, small objects vibrating on a wooden wall and cardboard tubes used as filters. Recorded in her home studio, the bath is used as a reverberation chamber and, in some of the long tones captured, one hears a nascent interest in drones. The sound of laughter at various points – of Oliveros and her then girlfriend – punctuate the recording and give an atmosphere of playfulness. In performance, Oliveros improvised on the playback of each of the four channels and used the tape recorder settings to manipulate the timings.

Pauline Oliveros

Electronic Works 1965-1966

Paradigm CD 1997

Bye Bye Butterfly, from this Paradigm Discs collection that also includes the lengthy *Big Mother Is Watching You*, is nothing less than an eight minute, two channel detonation of 19th century operative tropes of female passivity and a refusal to be audible only in the name of sacrifice and tragedy. The starting point for Oliveros was an aria from Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Oliveros had got into the habit of working at the SFTMC's studio through the night (being alone made it safer to make mistakes, she said) and the LP happened to be in the room. Using two scillators,

reel-to-reels, a pair of line amplifiers in cascade, plus a turntable, it incorporates Butterfly's "Act I" aria in which she's calling to her girlfriends. The atmosphere is light, and perfidious Pinkerton is nowhere in sight. Oliveros's *Butterfly* is not a recognisable facsimile of Puccini's, and this is the point. Electronic noise and delay systems mean that experience of abandonment and betrayal are forever held in abeyance. The title puns on "Bye Bye Birdie", a musical number popular in the 1960s. Musicologist Martha Mockus suggests both songs as linked in the evocation of a woman/butterfly "getting pinned" – the sexual metaphor is obvious – and sees in Oliveros's composition a lesbian reframing of heterosexual desire. Certainly, this work is an early example of a rescue mission that Oliveros was to recapitulate in *To Valerie Solanas And Marilyn Monroe In Recognition Of Their Desperation* (1970) and the book *Sonic Meditations* (1974), which are both explicitly feminist strategies for tackling the silence of women in musical and public life.

Steve Reich/Richard Maxfield/Pauline Oliveros

New Sounds In Electronic Music

Odyssey/Columbia LP 1967

Between leaving the San Francisco Tape Music Center (SFTMC, by now at Mills College) in 1966 and taking up a new post at University of California San Diego, Oliveros was invited to spend some time in the electronic music studio of the University of Toronto (UTEMS). This was a big deal: UTEMS had equipment that the other studio could only dream of, and, moreover, it was a space in which Oliveros could push forward the experiments that she had started, the year before in San Francisco. *I Of IV* is one of five live improvisations which were made in a single day in July 1966. That there is a fifth piece in the IV series is a typical example of Oliveros's prankster humour. For *II-V Of IV*, go to Important's *Reverberations* boxed set.

As her first commercial release, *I Of IV* was always close to Oliveros's heart. Released alongside Richard Maxfield's *Night Music* and Steve Reich's *Come Out*,

Pauline Oliveros, early 1960s



this was – at a shade over 20 minutes – the longest of the three tracks by far. Oliveros made it using 12 Hewlett Packard square-wave generators, a reverb unit and an eight second tape delay, and a keyboard as a switching device that allowed her to toggle through sounds. Beginning with what sounds like sinewaves overlaid with fleeting tones, *I Of IV* has huge sonic range. 11 of the 12 generators were tuned to an output above 20 kHz, a reading that hovers at the top end of human hearing, whereas the remaining generator was working at sub-audio levels. Historically, *I Of IV* points both backwards and forwards. On the one hand, Oliveros is using technology to experiment with the electronic production of combination tones, something she was familiar with from her days of accordion playing; on the other hand, the generators were producing the sonically rich drones that she would later play with on other works and sonic media, and it marked a new engagement with wider practices of listening.

Pauline Oliveros

Alien Bog/Beautiful Soop

Pogus CD 1997

Don Buchla had supplied an early version of his modular synthesizer – the Buchla Box 100 series – to the SFTMC, but it was during her year at Mills College that Oliveros began to learn the new system. Adding a tape delay system to be used with the synth, *Beautiful Soop* (1966) and *Alien Bog* (1967) are two of the best known in the *Bog* series (four others are included on *Reverberations*). Offering voltage-controlled synthesis, the Buchla Box was a game-changer for musicians working in this field: it was more compact than earlier equipment, and the transistors inside the machine (then a new technology) opened the range of sounds available. Oliveros preferred the older technology, which allowed for a certain amount of unpredictability in the results. *Soop* uses poems from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*, adding a new level of strangeness to the texts, as swooping flutters of sounds circulate, and the sounds are thrown from one stereo channel to another. *Alien Bog* also teems with life, although it moves at a slower tempo in depicting a profound depth of life, all expressed by a sparkling electronic fauna.

Around the same period, Oliveros took to a Moog synth to make *A Little Noise In The System*, whose harsh sounds and staccato interference



Pauline Oliveros and the ♀ Ensemble performing in Rancho Santa Fe, California 1970

stand in antithesis to *Soop*. These electronic works predate the first publications of Deep Listening scores. Oliveros was by now beginning to transfer her attention to different types of music, much of it to be based around the expansive thinking that characterised Deep Listening.

Pauline Oliveros

To Valerie Solanas And Marilyn Monroe In Recognition Of Their Desperation

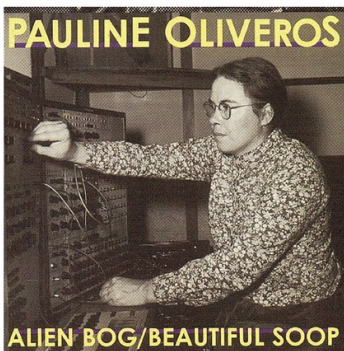
Roaratorio LP 2011

In June 1968, the writer Valerie Solanas had shot and wounded Andy Warhol and one other person at Warhol's studio, The Factory. It is uncertain whether Oliveros had read Solanas's manifesto for SCUM – The Society For Cutting Up Men – before the attack, but she had identified in its furious prose Solanas's profound alienation from any possibility of gender parity. Oliveros was deeply opposed to violence – the development of her *Sonic Meditations* was testament

to this – but she recognised that Solanas “had something to say”, even if she said it forcefully. Asked by the composer Miya Masaoka for a 2002 interview in *The San Francisco Bay Guardian* to name “three milestones in her artistic development”, Oliveros cited Solanas's manifesto next to studying composition with Robert Erikson and encountering a Fluxus score (possibly Yoko Ono's *Water Piece*).

In one of the most unlikely pairings of all time, Oliveros coupled Solanas with Marilyn Monroe, who killed herself in 1962 – the shooter and the film star, the anti-heroine and heroine – in a work that recognised that social injustice could, literally, drive people mad. *To Valerie Solanas And Marilyn Monroe* is a 1970 work that has equity embedded in its structure. Scored for any group larger than six, each performer is asked to choose a pitch, hold it for a suitable duration and then to pick up tones that the other performers are making, a method that Oliveros uses often in her group pieces. The conductor – in as much as there is a conductor – gives cues via operating coloured lights and basic hand signals, and balance is key. “If a player is too loud,” says the score, “it is the responsibility of the ensemble to raise the general dynamic level.”

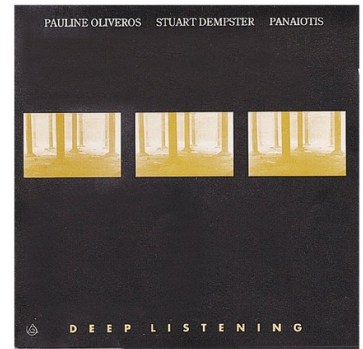
This LP contains two performances of the work. The first is its 1970 premiere delivered by a 14-piece ensemble at Hope College, Michigan; the second dates from 1977 with a 43-piece orchestra from Wesleyan University. Because only the parameters of the score are fixed, each version is completely different, and the staging of this piece is possibly more important than archival recordings, although this album captures a hugely important work at a significant historical moment. Later performances include a Tate Modern event in London conducted by Claudia Molitor, staged as part of Her Noise: Feminisms And The Sonic in 2012, which made links between feminist discourse in various media, and a



Pauline Oliveros, *Alien Bog/Beautiful Soop* (1997)



Pauline Oliveros, *To Valerie Solanas And Marilyn Monroe In Recognition Of Their Desperation* (2011)



Pauline Oliveros/Stuart Dempster/Panaiotis, *Deep Listening* (1989)



Pauline Oliveros, *The Well & The Gentle* (1985)

2013 film installation of the work by visual artists Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, asking how sound and light might articulate queer knowledge.

Pauline Oliveros/Stuart Dempster/Panaiotis
Deep Listening

New Albion CD 1989/Important CD 2020

The Deep Listening Band
Troglodyte's Delight

¿What Next? CD 1990

The Ready Made Boomerang

New Albion CD 1991

Dunrobin Sonic Gems

Deep Listening Institute CD 2014

On 8 October 1988, Oliveros (accordion), Stuart Dempster (trombone/didgeridoo) and Panaiotis (vocals) clambered down a manhole and so gained access to the Dan Harpole Cistern at Fort Worden State Park in Washington to play and record a

session of improvised music. Not yet constituted as Deep Listening Band, although they soon went on to adopt the name, Dempster had told Oliveros and Panaiotis, who were playing in San Francisco, to come out to Seattle to try the space out. Oliveros was immediately attracted by the sonic qualities that this space offered. Originally a two million gallon water storage facility owned by the US military, the cistern was a cathedral for experiments with resonance. At nearly 60 metres in diameter, several metres underground, and featuring a 45 second sonic reverb that danced around the cistern's supporting pillars and ricocheted from its walls, the empty tank thus allowed the musicians to improvise not only with one another, but also with their own tones, and crucially, the space itself. Given the majestic wonder that characterises the slow tones of the four improvis on *Deep Listening*, it's small wonder that Oliveros nicknamed the space the "Cistern Chapel".

Deep Listening Band would, in various line-ups, go on to make 15 albums from 1989–2014. The band, Dempster wrote in his sleevenotes to *Dunrobin Sonic Gems* (2013), came about partly by accident, and Oliveros said they were named from the literal deep locations in which they played. Panaiotis left in 1993, and Dempster and Oliveros often included guest musicians. Vocalist Julie Lyon Balliett and percussionist Fritz Hauser joined the original trio for *Troglodyte's Delight*, recorded on location at the Tarpaper Cave in New York's Catskills. Panaiotis, both vocalist and sound designer, remembers the mosquitoes that swarmed around the musicians; Dempster recalls the mists rolling into the cave, which was big enough for sound engineers Bob Bielecki and Connie Kietlyka to drive their station wagon into it. The cave itself contributes splashes of water to the sounds, and these are imitated by Balliett's skittering vocals and Hauser's wood-block beats.

They returned to the Cistern Chapel two years later to record *The Ready Made Boomerang* – John Cage had written a mesostic of that title in 1989, after he had heard *Deep Listening* and lauded the record's "full reaching of sounds with sounds", so Oliveros and colleagues dedicated the album to him. Opening track "Balloon Payment" very much introduces the chapel as a performer in its own right; the eardrum-shakingly loud noise that launches the album is not a crash of cymbals, but a balloon being popped. The slow, exploratory tones of *Deep Listening* are here replaced by sharper notes from guests Thomasa Eckert (voice) and William O Smith (clarinet). While "Geocentric", the last track on this album recaptures much of the majesty of *Deep Listening*, the smooth tones of the earlier album are missing, replaced instead with new sonic explorations.

Oliveros was mindful that normal playback equipment is incapable of giving listeners a true experience of the sounds of the Cistern Chapel itself, so in 2012 Jonas Braasch, her colleague at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, created a simulation of the chapel's acoustics. DLB celebrated that first improvisation's 25th anniversary at a concert at the Dunrobin Sonic Gym in Ottawa. The resulting album, *Dunrobin Sonic Gems*, is introduced

with a poetic invocation by the poet and writer Ione, but there is a sombre note to the slow, thumping percussion that ends the album, perhaps reflecting the death of collaborator David Gamper, who passed away unexpectedly in 2011.

Pauline Oliveros

The Well And The Gentle

hat ART 2×LP 1985

This double album spans several of Oliveros's collaborative relationships. *The Well* had begun life as a collaboration with choreographer Deborah Hay and, once recorded, underwent several iterations. Some of the scales used by Oliveros were suggested by a hexagram from the I Ching, which, in turn allowed musicians to take several decisions.

Most of this album is taken up with the original recording made by the nine-strong contemporary music ensemble Relâche, but its real beauty lies in solo versions of some of the pieces that Oliveros made for accordion and voice. "A Love Song", recorded in an underground water cistern in Cologne in 1984 a few months after the other recordings, not only predates the making of *Deep Listening*, but stands alone as an echoing, reverberating cry of longing.

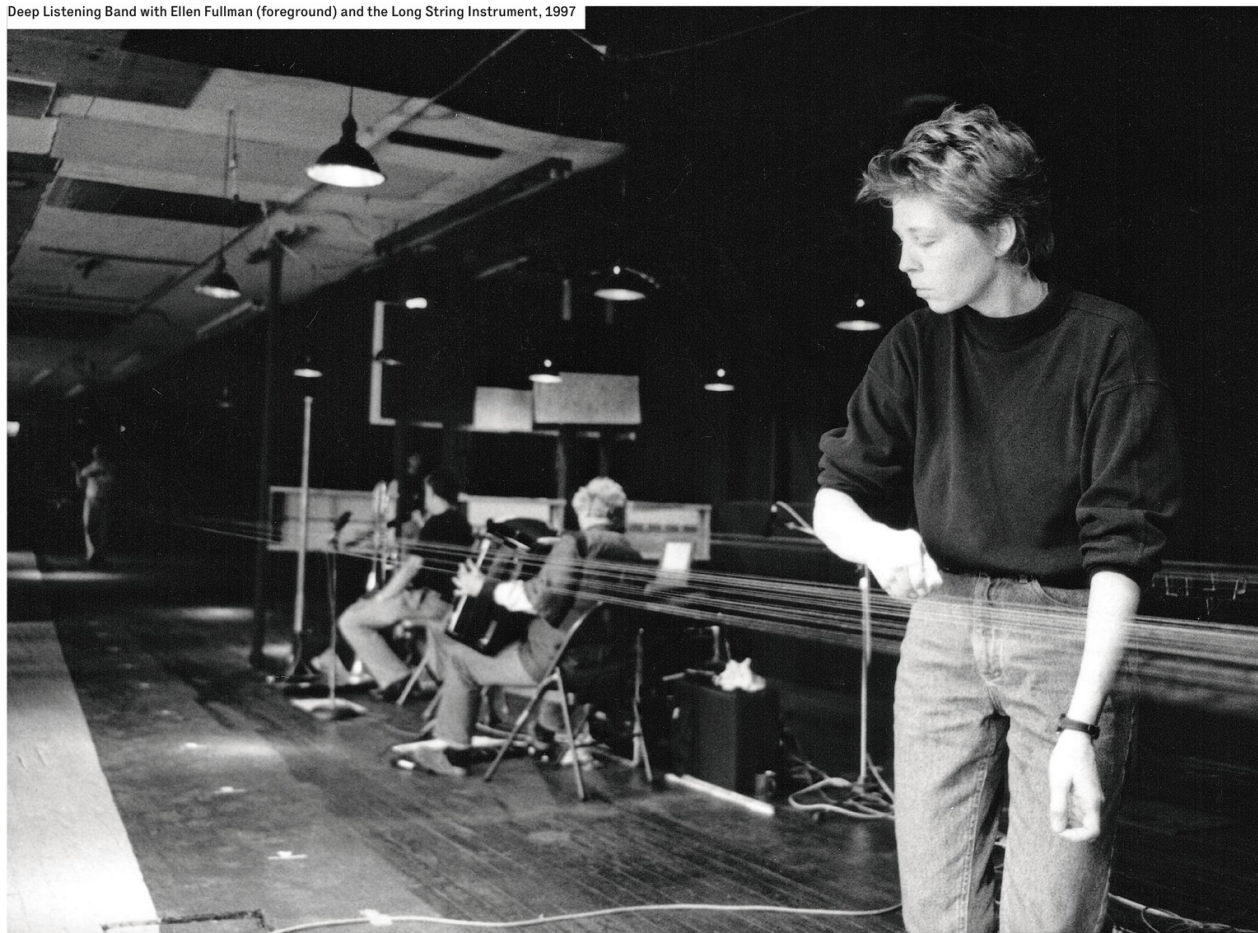
Deep Listening Band & The Long String Instrument

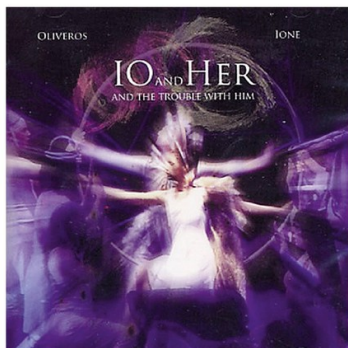
Suspended Music

Periplum CD 1997

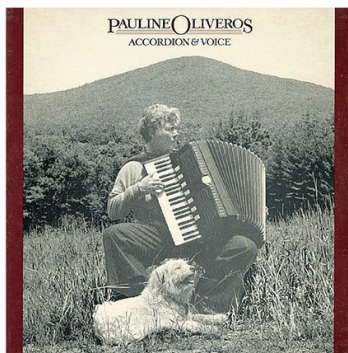
In 1980 Ellen Fullman, fresh out of college, made a big impression on Oliveros during the New Music America festival in Minneapolis. Fullman, who had not yet begun the long string experimentations which led to the invention of her signature Long String Instrument, was busy performing *Streetwalker*, a soundwalk in which Fullman wore a clanging, amplified metal skirt, as she ambulated through the city's red light district. The pair kept in touch and in the early 1990s, Fullman, by then living in Austin, Texas, received a postcard from Oliveros reading, simply, "Let's collaborate!" Oliveros's *Epigraphs In The Time Of AIDS* and Fullman's *TexasTravelTexture*, the two works which are collected on the album *Suspended Music*, were recorded on 12 November 1994, at Fullman's Candy Factory studio. The album's title is a reference not only to the horizontal wires of Fullman's Long String Instrument but the fact that Deep Listening Band (here, Oliveros, Dempster and Gamper) were sitting on a specially constructed stage below which Fullman, Elise Gould and Nigel Jacobs played the Long String Instrument.

Deep Listening Band with Ellen Fullman (foreground) and the Long String Instrument, 1997

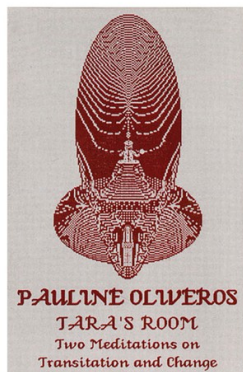




Pauline Oliveros & Ione, *Io And Her And The Trouble With Him* (2008)



Pauline Oliveros, *Accordion & Voice* (1982)



Pauline Oliveros, *Tara's Room* (1987)

Gamper, aided with software by Panaiotis, had used an electronic processing environment that Oliveros called the Expanded Instrument System (EIS) to set up the mics and other equipment used here, although the sounds on this album are all acoustic. *Suspended Music* is an album of large sounds, hugely dynamic and thrilling. It is also a work of memorialisation. *Epigraphs In The Time Of AIDS* is dedicated to Oliveros's brother Peter, who had died from AIDS related illness (an excerpt of *Epigraphs* also appeared on Deep Listening Band's 1995 album *Tosca Salad*). Ione had written the text – “you are the one” – that Oliveros sings on it. For all the sound of *Epigraphs*, it's also a gentle and moving work of loss and mourning.

The financing of artist projects such as this one is often forgotten once the works are made. Throughout her career, Oliveros made sure to pass on the knowledge gained of grant-writing applications to help younger artists. This kind of support was part of her approach to pedagogy and, in her hands, a feminist strategy to help women artists to crack open the system. This was the case here. Oliveros helped Fullman write the funding application for what became *Suspended Music*, then wrote another for Deep Listening Band's own application. An applied version of Deep Listening in this instance might look towards social justice.

Pauline Oliveros & Ione

Io And Her And The Trouble With Him

Deep Listening Publications DVD 2008

Interactions between gods and mortals in Greek mythology rarely end well, and the story of Io (princess, beloved of Zeus, turned into a cow) is no different. Ever since her *Postcard Theater* project with artist Alison Knowles in 1974, Oliveros had an interest in what she called “the theatre of substitution”, in which stories were retold or recast as a way of redressing wrongs and directing attention. *Io And Her* continues this strategy. Working with Ione, Oliveros contributed music to what the couple called a “dance-opera in primeval time”. Io's mooing is transformed into vowels that spell out her freedom. Using a syncretic approach to myth – ancient Egypt is also pulled in here, too – Oliveros and Ione understand that foundational stories hold power and, by reimagining them, sexist tropes can be discarded. *Io And Her* is part of a movement that includes, in the field of literature, the recent retellings of myths from writers such as Madeline Miller, Pat Barker and Natalie Haynes.

Reynols

Pauline Oliveros In The Arms Of Reynols

White Tapes MC 1999

If you ever need a reminder that avant garde musicians live in the real world, then there's the story of the unlikely pairing of Oliveros and the Argentinian band Reynols. Visiting Buenos Aires in 1992 to conduct a week of Deep Listening seminars, Oliveros noticed “a couple of intense and punkish looking young men – Alan Courtis and Roberto Conlazo”. Her recollections, written for the *Leonardo Music Almanac* in 2007 (and reprinted in *Sounding The Margins*), detail what happened next. The two men, two thirds of Reynols, turned up at a solo accordion concert, made a pirate recording “right under [my] nose” and then, at a goodbye party, serenaded her, badly, on brass instruments that they couldn't play.

Oliveros, who had a taste for the outrageous, loved them. Giving permission for the band to remix the tape from that solo concert, the album was nearly titled *Deep Heavy Metal Listening*. The result is heavy, and it is deep, but the curious thing is that, inside the mayhem, there's a sense that this is also a guitar-shredded, fuzzed up homage to some of Oliveros's early electronic works. A long delayed 1999 live collaboration, *Half A Dove In New York, Half A Dove In Buenos Aires*, which chronicles Reynols and Oliveros performing together via the medium of internet link-up, has just received a long-delayed 2022 release.

Pauline Oliveros

Accordion & Voice

Lovely LP 1982

Accordion & Voice, Oliveros's first solo album, stands alongside *Deep Listening* as one of the ur-texts of her work. The album features two 22 minute tracks, “Horse Sings From Cloud” (it began as a *Sonic Meditation* dedicated to Linda Montano in 1975) and “Rattlesnake Mountain” (1982) – the first work was reprised in 1983 on her second solo album *The Wanderer*, in the form of a quartet with bandoneon (Oliveros), accordion (Julia Haynes), concertina (Montano) and harmonium (Heloise Gold). In “Horse Sings From Cloud”, Oliveros's voice (singing long tones) and accordion come together, both instruments breathing together in a calm and calming way. There are slow changes within the piece – it features none of the quick riffs that appear on “Rattlesnake Mountain” – but the flow between states feels continuous. A recent version of “Horse Sings From Cloud” from Ensemble O (Musica Nuvolosa, Sub Rosa CD 2022), captures something of that smoothness. It's possible to see this album as a statement that encapsulates the developing Deep Listening practice: there is a holistic, almost ritual attention, to sound here and the transitions within it predate later work. Oliveros's first two albums, which came out on Lovely Music, have been reissued in contemporary editions by Important Records.

Pauline Oliveros

Tara's Room

No label MC 1987

Subtitled *Two Meditations On Transition And Change* and dedicated to those bereaved by war, this magisterial album develops ideas that come out of *Accordion & Voice*, especially in relation to gradual change and modulation of tone. Initially self-released on cassette in 1987 and also available on a 2004 Deep Listening edition, the (Green) Tara of the title is a female bodhisattva associated with compassion, healing and wisdom through endurance. “The Beauty Of Sorrow”, for accordion in Just Intonation and delays used as part of the Expanded Instrument System, is closest to “Horse Sings From Cloud” in its long tones. The title track is a multitracked work on which one hears, far away, Oliveros chanting the Tara mantra – “Om Tara tu Tara tu ray swaha” (“I prostrate to Tara the liberator, mother of all the victorious ones”). Above we hear tones and overtones, rustlings, whistles, percussive bumps, raspings. While there is a delirious proximity to a concrete piece, “Tara's Room” takes its listeners on a long journey through the listening imagination. As with much of Oliveros's work, this piece is a place where much intersects. □

Pauline Oliveros collaborator **Ione** has continued their mission to connect communities and listeners after her partner's death. By **Vanessa Ague**



Ione (left) and Pauline Oliveros performing at Kanazawa 21st Century Museum of Art, Japan, 2005

Deep Listening is a process that encourages us to open our ears to all there is to hear. That's what Pauline Oliveros's longtime life and creative partner Ione (sometimes styled IONE), a writer, playwright and director in her own right, tells me over a Zoom call from her home in Kingston, New York. As we talk, there's a clang in my living room. Ione immediately homes in on the sound, picking up on it along with my voice. "What was that?" she asks. "That was an interesting sound." I reply that it was a plate hitting a table, I think. "It was just for us," she says with a laugh. "It was Pauline in the other room."

Throughout more than three decades together, Ione and Oliveros worked on many multidisciplinary projects uniting Ione's texts with Oliveros's music. Their works, and Ione's solo art, often explore themes of colonialism and gender. *Njinga The Queen King*; *The Return Of A Warrior*, for example, tells the story of Njinga, a 17th century Angolan leader, diplomat and freedom fighter who wore her father's attire to be able to rule. Another large part of Ione and Oliveros's practice is a desire to support other artists and unite a global community.

Her work extends across artistic mediums, but she's dedicated much of her time to writing. She describes herself as always having great observational skills and being a lover of books. One of her early memories is finding her grandmother's girdle when she misplaced it, and there's a couple of paragraphs about this in a journal she wrote at age ten. "It says a lot about me," she says. "[It's] my

writer's eye, describing my situation, my inner and outer life."

In the 1970s, Ione spent a brief period in Europe with her former husband and three children. While living there, she eagerly looked out the window, watching the mailman drive down the roadway to her farmhouse in a little yellow truck. But he never had any letters for them. "As soon as we left the States it was like we didn't exist any more," she says. So she started collecting the letters they had and turned them into a magazine called *Letters Magazine*.

That magazine launched her freelance writing career, which led to her writing for publications like *The Village Voice*. Freelance writing, a notoriously low paying job, wasn't easy, especially for someone who needed to support herself and her children. On the plus side, it did open creative doors. While she was writing, she discovered the 1868 diary of her activist and author great-grandmother, Frances Ann Rollin. These writings inspired Ione's 1991 memoir, *Pride Of Family, Four Generations Of American Women Of Color*.

Ione met Oliveros in the 1980s while she was working on her writing projects. They started collaborating on improvised text-music works that expanded Ione's practice. "It was a real gift to me," she says. Instead of focusing on narrative-like traditional spoken word, she improvised texts based on her surroundings. That Oliveros was an encouraging person helped Ione become more uninhibited with her art: "If you are supported in who you really are, then that helps you to create fully."

Oliveros and Ione dreamed of forming a worldwide community with their art, a dream that Ione continues today: in 2020, she led *The Worldwide Tuning Meditation* on Zoom, a guided meditation encouraging participants to notice their surroundings. Over Zoom, it reached more than 4000 people on all continents. "I realised that that was exactly what Pauline had in mind," Ione says, describing Oliveros as a futurist. "We always knew there's going to be a bigger one and that was it."

The recent years since Oliveros's death have been busy for Ione. At Mills College she recently performed *Pauline Dreams: A Sonic Dream Mandala*, a video and performance featuring *The Worldwide Tuning Meditation* and *Sounds From Childhood*. She has also been helping to make an intimate documentary, *The Story Of Pauline Oliveros*, which is forthcoming. Ione is also continuing her opera practice: for Irish National Opera in 2021, she and composer Karen Power created a six minute piece on the theme of isolation and how to be in touch with the environment; she's presently preparing another opera using VR.

The undercurrent binding these projects together is a desire to support people's growth through art. That desire bonded Ione with Oliveros from the start, and continues to drive her practice today. It is about observing how change shapes our lives and helps us become who we are; and how art can reflect and examine that. After all, "evolution, it's what we're doing here on this planet", concludes Ione. □ ionedreams.us

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