

Stuart Dempster (b. 1936)

. . . and I don't know where to start! (2016-17)

In memory of Pauline Oliveros (1932-2016)

All present chant the bold phrases/sentences below.

“Conductor” reads everything else.

Oh, where to start... Having known and worked with Pauline for over 60 years, the memories are many and come in a minor flood. What to select?

Is it the composition student at San Francisco State? In the 1950s Pauline was abandoned by most of her male peers when it was time for her piece to be played in Dr. Otey's Composers Workshop? Not all abandoned her - Terry Riley and Loren Rush remained and, after the first time when I thought class was over, I remained as well (I wasn't even a composer at the time).

Is it her support of various minority groups? Those of gender, human rights, race, sexual orientation, and others? She was outspoken about these issues at a time, 1950s and 60s in particular, when these matters were largely repressed.

Is it "And don't call them 'Lady' Composers"? In pdf that can be found online?

Is it her many wonderful books? "Software for People" or "The Roots of the Moment" or "Sounding the Margins" and others?

Is it Deep Listening - the focus of much of the past 30 plus years? There ought to be a book on this and, by golly, she wrote "Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice" (full disclosure, I wrote the foreword for it).

Or the marvelous recordings by Deep Listening Band that I was also performing in? (a further disclosure)

Would it be her work in organizing the development of AUMI (Adaptive Use Musical Instruments) for children, or anyone with disabilities?

Is it her playfulness in listening? In life? Watching her connect to and play with children or playful adults is instructive.

Oh, yes, would it be all the wonderful music she has composed? Improvised? Her interest in collaboration?

How about her amazing large-form pieces with her incredible life partner lone?

Is it the extensive catalog of various recordings she has made of her solos, duos, trios, and so on as well as large groups?

Or her astonishing electronic music?

Is it the amazing, extensive tours, solo and otherwise, that she has accomplished over so many decades?

How about the legacy of Deep Listening Certificate Holders? There are well over 60 the last time I checked. Full disclosure, I am one albeit Honorary. And if Pauline were leaning over my shoulder she would say "Ornery..."

Is it her humor? Her quick wit and puns? Her deadpan look making a funny?

Is it her amazing mentoring abilities? It shows up in her teaching at various colleges, institutes, and universities. Mills, RPI, and UCSD come to mind.

And all I am trying to do is start!

Program note:

This piece came about when, about three days after Pauline Oliveros passed on to her next Deep Listening journey, journalist Geeta Dayal asked me to submit "a few words" – due by the next morning - for the purpose of her article/obituary for Frieze Magazine. Very much at a loss over Pauline's death and a little frustrated as to where to start, her request prompted me to dash out some information, and later on it became a score. I have lightly edited it, but hope that it comes across as fresh as it was in the moment. This bit of writing actually allowed me to realize not only the scope of Pauline Oliveros' life and impact – indeed, reverberation – but it also allowed me to grasp the depth and significance of our own over 60 year relationship of having known each other and worked together.

Stuart Dempster
5 January 2017

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