

ANNTRACK. I've always liked composing on trains. The moving landscape as a metaphor for sound lines up perfectly in my mind with the changing soundscape, and with the movement of composed music. Varèse liked the metaphor of colliding bodies in space. I like the thrum-thrum of the wheels on the track. Going up through New England, as things get more rural, there are more level-grade-crossings, requiring, by the time you get to Vermont that the train's whistle sound almost continuously. Rather than fight it, I notated it. Some parts of *AnnTrack* mirror the engineer's very human honking gestures. And there are Doppler effects from the sounds reflected by differently shaped valleys through which the train passes. Also, two different chords from two different engines form a large part in the harmonic structures of *AnnTrack*. But though I find inspiration in train travel, and believe passionately in a functioning "national passenger railway system," *AnnTrack* is about music. It is composed for, and dedicated to Ann. [DG]

ORCHESTRA for me is two things: (1) a massed sound made by many instruments of the same type; (2) the dimensional factor of having more than one type of instrumental family which complexly combines with the massed sound. Neither the chamber orchestra (single or double instruments from each family), nor the current interest in huge assemblages of one type whether trombones or electric guitars, flute choirs, etc. are really orchestras by my lights though they may make beautiful music. The latter types obliterate the dimensional idea by which things can play off against each other the way light does on a multi-sided solid, or the way antiphonal choirs, call and response music, and dialectical symphonies operate and entrance us. With the Flexible Orchestra we keep the massed sound by having one large instrumental section. To keep the play among different sections, we include representatives from other parts of the orchestra as we know it. [DG]

CELLOS. I seem to like them. When I was a graduate student in composition and performance at UCSD in 1968 there were two cellists among our motley crew of youngish musician/composers helping to change the nature of American contemporary music. The two figured prominently in the four movement piece for fourteen players which I began then. When the whole was finally finished and performed at the Vermont Composers Conference (1973 and 74), the two resident cellists were from the famous Vermont Finckel family of cellists. And one of them, Michael is in this, the first incarnation of the Flexible Orchestra: twelve cellos, three winds. We will keep cellos as the "massed sound" for another year, and stimulate more repertory for the group, though after that it may be hard for me—given the grand sound of a cello section—to be "flexible" enough to move on to, perhaps, trombones or flutes, violas or even clarinets as the basic choir. But flexibility is what the classical orchestra lacks: and this is even a bigger problem to me than the well-known ones of high cost, wavering audiences, VIP-soloists and conductors, stale repertory, and recently, over-the-top brochures.... For, to change the basic sound of the orchestra is to open an entirely new vista to the imagination. One political idea of the Flexible Orchestra is that different communities will have different resources to make the single section of one instrumental type. Perhaps double basses in Cincinnati, or trumpets in San Francisco. The other idea is that flexibility will prevent the same format from being deployed without a break for two hundred odd years as we have seen with the unchanging Symphony Orchestra. For more about the Flexible Orchestra idea, see my "Letter from Vienna" www.frogpeak.org/fpcp/letterfromvienna.html. [DG]

