

Curriculum Vitae

[Alvin Curran](#) has realized a long and fruitful career as a composer/performer/installation artist, writer, and teacher in the American experimental music tradition. Born in Providence in 1938, he studied with Ron Nelson, Mel Powell, and Elliott Carter at Brown and Yale, and has been living in Rome since 1964. His music, whether chamber works, radio-art, large-scale environmental theater, or solo performance, embraces all sounds, all spaces, and all people.

It all began with a fortuitous bang when Curran cofounded the group [Musica Elettronica Viva](#) with Frederic Rzewski and Richard Teitelbaum in Rome (1966). The MEV experience was his main focus until 1971, and continued in the form of concerts and [CDs](#), the latest of which ([Symphony No. 107 – The Bard](#)), was released by Black Truffle in 2023, until the deaths of his cofounders in 2021 and 2020 respectively.

In the early 1970s Curran began creating a poetic series of solo performance works for synthesizer, voice, taped environmental sounds and found objects: Songs and Views From the Magnetic Garden, Fiori Chiari Fiori Oscuri, Canti Illuminati, and The Works, performed all over Europe and the US and consolidating his commitment to a life in music including thousands of live performances, more than 35 solo and 80 collaborative [recordings](#), and music for films and TV shows. Later solo performances with samplers, midi grand pianos, keyboards, computers, acoustic instruments, and sounds of the whole world: [Electric Rags](#), [Shofar](#), [TransDadaExpress](#), [On Hearing the Brooklyn Bridge Sing in Yiddish](#), [Endangered Species](#), [the alvin curran fakebook](#).

Seeking out new musical spaces in the late 1970s, Curran created concert events to be given on lakes and rivers ([Maritime Rites](#)), parks, and quarries ([Tufo Muto](#)); large-scale structured improvisation works such as [Beams](#) for 30 or more mobile acoustic instruments (2005-), performed from Perth to Tel Aviv to Reykjavik, [Oh Brass On The Grass Alas](#) for 300 amateur brass-band musicians (Donaueschingen 2006), [Maritime Rites Tate](#) featuring the London Symphony Orchestra brass ensemble (2007), [Signage](#), a conduction for improvising orchestra (2012-), and [Musique Sans Frontières](#) (Glasgow 2016).

In the 1980s Curran extended this concept to create simultaneous radio concerts with live musicians in multiple countries ([1985: A Piece For Peace](#), [Crystal Psalms](#)), solo performances as described above, and radio works such as [Erat Verbum](#), [Un Altro Ferragosto](#), [I Dreamt John Cage Yodeling at the Zurich Hauptbahnhof](#), [On the Roads](#), [Living Room Music](#), [Achim Freyer Meets Don Giovanni at Checkpoint Charlie](#), and the [Maritime Rites](#) series for NPR, as well as striking sound installations, first in collaboration with visual artists ([Magic Carpet](#), [Floor Plan](#)) then solo: [The Twentieth Century](#), [Toto Donaueschingen](#), [Everybody Dreams Their Own Music](#), [Gardening With John](#), [Shin Far Shofar](#), [Torzam](#), and [others](#), not all of which have been [realized](#).

Throughout these electric-years Elliott Carter's lessons, along with Cage's, Feldman's, and Scelsi's, continued to exert their influence, with Curran steadfastly remaining a composer of "notes on paper." Among chamber works: [FOR CORNELIUS](#), [HOPE STREET TUNNEL BLUES](#), [DEAD BEATS](#), and the 14-part [INNER CITIES](#) series for piano, recorded by many pianists; the piano-violin-percussion trio [SCHTYX](#) dedicated to the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio; the string quartet VSTO; the saxophone quartet [ELECTRIC RAGS II](#), performed widely by the Rova Sax Quartet, [THEME PARK](#) for percussion quartet or solo percussion; [PITTURA FRESCA](#), a violin concerto for David Abel and the Paul Drescher Ensemble; [IN HORA MORTIS](#)

for chamber orchestra; [MUSIC IS NOT MUSIC](#) etc. for chorus SATB on texts by John Cage; [MAY I NOW](#) for cello, electric guitar, and percussion; [VIOLA VOILÀ](#) for 10 violas; [ROSE OF BEANS](#) for ensemble, [MALAPROMPTUS](#) for cello and piano; and [BRUTE BEAT BRUT BRUIT](#), for flutes, clarinets, piano, violin, cello, percussion, and rapper. Curran has had fruitful collaborations with choreographers and artists including [Vita Accardi](#), [Eric Baudelaire](#), [Umberto Bignardi](#), [Trisha Brown](#) (5 commissions), [Paolo Buggiani](#), [Rudy Burckhardt](#), [Jacob Burckhardt](#), [Yoshiko Chuma](#), [Clark Coolidge](#), [Willem de Ridder](#), [Theo Eshetu](#), [Molissa Fenley](#), [Pietro Fortuna](#), [Achim Freyer](#), [Wanda Golonka](#), [Melissa Gould](#), [Pierre-Alain Hubert](#), [Margy Jenkins](#), [Joan Jonas](#), [Kristin Jones](#), [Nancy Karp](#), [Paul Klerr](#), [Lucia Latour](#), [The Living Theatre](#), [Roberto Masotti](#), [Annabella Miscuglio](#), [Memè Perlini](#), [Alfredo Pirri](#), [Edith Schloss](#), [Ira Schneider](#), [Uli Sigg](#), [Antonio Trimani](#), [Claudia Von Alemann](#), and [June Watanabe](#).

Among performers of his music: [Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio](#), [Alter Ego](#), [Arditti Quartet](#), [Ars Ludi](#), [Bang on a Can Allstars](#), [BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra](#), [Marco Blaauw](#), [Bruce Brubaker](#), [Eve Egoyan](#), [Ensemble Modern](#), [Fred Frith](#), [Frankie Hi NRG](#), [Group 180](#), [EAR Unit](#), [Huddersfield Choral Society](#), [IATO Orchestra](#), [Iceland Symphony Orchestra](#), [Joan Jeanrenaud](#), [Kronos Quartet](#), [Joan La Barbara](#), [Joelle Leandre](#), [Yvar Mikhashoff](#), [Maria Monti](#), [Pauline Oliveros](#), [Ursula Oppens](#), [Paul Drescher Ensemble](#), [Relache Ensemble](#), [Rova Sax Quartet](#), [Frederic Rzewski](#), [St. Paul Chamber Orchestra](#), [Soldier Quartet](#), [San Francisco Chamber Players](#), [Kathleen Supove](#), [SWR Symphony Orchestra](#), [Aki Takahashi](#), [Valentin Garvie's Valensemble](#), [Reinier van Houdt](#), [Daan Vandewalle](#), [the West Point Band](#), [William Winant](#), [Mia Zabelka](#).

Curran has taught at Rome's National Academy of Theater Arts, [Mills College](#), and the [Mainz Hochschule für Musik](#), and during invited residencies at institutions such as Oberlin College, the [Universität der Künste Berlin](#), and [The Hague Royal Conservatory of Music](#). He has published numerous articles, including in the [New York Times](#), clocked thousands of live performances, and made more than thirty-five solo and eighty collaborative recordings. Daniela Tortora edited the book [Alvin Curran: Live in Roma](#) (Die Schachtel 2010), and in 2015 Curran self-published [the alvin curran fakebook](#), an illustrated compendium of more than 200 mostly notated pieces.

Recent highlights: the disintegrating installation at Zerynthia's No Mans Land [Pian de Pian Piano](#) (2017, 2018, 2024); [Passi](#), with visual artist Alfredo Pirri; recordings of [Irrawaddy Blues](#) (2017), [Dead Beats](#) (2018), [Endangered Species](#) (fractured standards, 2018), [Drumming Up Trouble](#) (2022), and [Achim Freyer Meets Don Giovanni at Checkpoint Charlie](#) (2022); [Omnia Flumina Romam Ducunt](#) (2018-19), which turned Rome's Baths of Caracalla into a vast musical instrument; [Der Goldene Topf](#) with Achim Freyer (2019); [Sonora Desert](#) with Muta Imago (2021); collaborations with video artist [Eric Baudelaire](#) ([When there is no more music to write](#), [The Glove](#), [Walked The Way Home](#)); [Footnotes](#), a sound installation for the Pierpaolo Pasolini centenary exhibition (2022-23); [Footnotes 1.2](#) for the Munich Music Biennale and [1.3](#) for the Venice Music Biennale; Residencies at [Spike Island](#) and [Bergen Kunsthall](#) (2022); performances with [Daan Vandewalle](#) in Belgium, with Marcus Schmickler in Rome and Naples, and with the [Ostravska Banda](#) in Ostrava; a [premiere](#) by Nicholas Isherwood and Daan Vandewalle in Bologna (2023); [Hear Alvin Here](#), a musical autobiography (MACRO museum, Rome 2023); [Una Voce Poco Fa](#), a sound installation for [the centenary of Maria Callas](#) (2023-24); [For M.G. the Movie](#) and [Rogues](#) featured on tour by the Trisha Brown Dance Company (2023-24).

Best-known works: [For Cornelius](#), [Hope Street Tunnel Blues](#), and the [Inner Cities](#) cycle for piano; [Schttyx](#) for piano-violin-percussion trio; [VSTO for string quartet](#); [Theme Park](#) for percussion solo or quartet; [Electric Rags 2](#) for saxophone quartet; [Oh Brass on the Grass Alas](#);

the [Maritime Rites concert series](#); [Crystal Psalms](#) and [Maritime Rites](#) for radio; [Gardening with John](#) sound installations; solo performance pieces from [Songs and Views from the Magnetic Garden](#) ([description](#); [performance](#)) and [Canti Illuminati](#) ([description](#); [performance](#)) to [Endangered Species](#).

Selected prizes and awards: [DAAD](#) (1963-4, 1986-7, 2018), [Ars Acustica International Prize](#) (1989), [Prix Italia](#) (1988), [Premio Novecento](#) (Pisa 1993), [Leonardo Award for Excellence](#) (1995), [Guggenheim Foundation](#) (2004), [Ars Electronica](#) (2004), [Experimental Music Studio Freiburg](#) (residencies 2006, 2007), [ZKM Karlsruhe](#) (2010), [Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Fellowship](#) (2011), [Yale Oral History American Music project](#) "Major Figure in American Music," [Harvard's Elson Lectureship](#) (2012), [Bearn's Prize](#), [BMI award](#) (1963), [National Endowment for the Arts](#), [Logos Award](#) (1975), [Fromm Foundation](#) (Harvard University), [Hass Family Award](#) (San Francisco), [Ars Electronica](#) 2004, [Phonurgia Nova](#) 2005 ("I Dreamt John Cage Yodeling in the Zurich Hauptbahnhof"), [Artists Council](#) 2011, juror for [Civitella Ranieri Fellowship](#), [Sonic Arts award](#), [Premio Internazionale Arti Sonore](#), consultant for the [American Academy in Rome](#) 2016-.

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