

# NewMusicBox

In the 1st Person : January 2004

## Annea Lockwood in conversation with Frank J. Oteri beside the Hudson River

Tuesday, November 11, 2003  
1:00-2:30 p.m.  
Garrison, NY

Videotaped and transcribed by Randy Nordschow

### 1. Listening to the Environment

**FRANK J. OTERI:** This has got to be the most stunning physical environment that we've ever been in for a *NewMusicBox* conversation. It's sort of fitting because your music is all about the environment.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** A lot of it is. Not all of it, but a lot of it.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** It leads me to ask you, what is the best environment to hear music in?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** There's a mixed grab bag of parts to the answer... I like resonant spaces. I love listening to music and sound in resonant spaces. Sometimes it works; of course, sometimes it doesn't work at all. You know, I like doing installations—it's not the only thing I do by any means. I do quite a lot of concert music. But I love doing installations because those are spaces, essentially, in which the audience can come and go at will. So there is real freedom of movement, freedom of choice for the people who come to look and listen. Those are favorite setups. The best place to hear music though... Not in my car. *[laughs]*

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Do you think the process of listening to music is different from the process of listening to other things?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yes. There are a lot of differences, right? When I'm listening to music there's direct emotional input, sometimes very strong. I'm always scanning for textural ideas, structural ideas, neat little transitions, just nice line shaping—all of these things of course. And evaluating, unless I catch myself doing it and pull back and get myself to just listen. Music is very clearly human-to-human communication for me. Listening to other things, environmental things, is a very different experience. I don't know what to expect. I'm often surprised. When I'm listening to those sorts of sounds, I'm trying to listen my way into the nature of the phenomenon that's sounding. That's something other than myself and I'm curious about its being. This goes back to the very early years. When I was a student doing basically postgraduate work in Germany, studying electronic music, I remember one summer, everyday for awhile just picking up a particular stone and trying to figure out what that stone felt like, what it felt like to be that stone, what it feels like to be something other than human with a complete belief that there's an inherent being in all of those other phenomena. So when I'm working with rivers—and I'm once again working with a river—I'm trying to hear and sense and think my way into what the nature of a river is.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** In our world today we're surrounded by sound. Some people would almost say that we're polluted by sound, by sound we don't necessarily choose or want to hear. We're losing the ability to listen because we're so busy tuning things out instead of tuning in. This became a big part of the conversation I had a couple of years ago with Pauline Oliveros for *NewMusicBox*. Her music is all about the listening experience and what listening means. I feel in some way your work shares that aspect, but takes it in another direction in terms of just letting the sounds be.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yes, because if you don't let them be then you're—well, you can't help doing it, but you're superimposing human shaping and I'm superimposing my own understanding of what it is I'm listening to on it and I can no longer experience it directly. I can no longer enable other people to experience it directly. It's will o' the wisp because of course as soon as I start taping—as we all know the gear that I'm using shapes and filters the sound, and where I put the mic, and which sound excites me versus which sound seems less interesting to me—I'm making choices all the time. So I'm already filtering but as much as possible I like to get myself out of the way so that the phenomenon is coming directly to whoever is listening.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** I thought it was interesting that you said that when you're working on music versus an environmental thing, you'll shape it and then sometimes you'll find yourself shaping something and then you realize you're doing it, and then you stop doing it. I thought that was a very interesting comment about the creative process.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Letting a sound world be produces all sorts of really vibrant, wonderful sounds. In fact, they just emerge.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** In that sense then, is it music or is it something else?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** You know I sort of settled that one decades ago [*laughs*]...when I first read *Silence* and it's never bothered me since! [*laughs*] It's all sound to me. I don't think I make too much of the evaluative difference between music that is for designated players and an environmental/ambient sound world.

## 2. Music vs. Other Types of Sound

**FRANK J. OTERI:** You went to the opera last night. We had this long conversation before we began filming about going to the Met to hear *La Juive*. That's a very different listening experience than sitting here in this gazebo alongside the Hudson River where you recorded the Hudson River, and your recording of the Hudson River was issued on CD the same way *La Juive* would be issued on a CD.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Right.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** How are they different? Or are they different?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Well, the difference is the content.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** But you listen the same way?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** If I'm willing to put out the energy to just listen, right... If I'm willing to give that energy then I can listen to them the same way. Sometimes I find myself getting very caught up listening that way to singers, for example. I find myself listening to tiny, little details in the voice, the physicality of the voice as an entity. Then I'm listening very much the way I listen to the Hudson and hear that little motor on the other side of the river, which we just heard [*laughs*]. For

me it's a matter of energy, and I lost energy last night at the Met. I knew they'd drain my energy eventually *[laughs]*!

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Whereas the Hudson River never does.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** It doesn't. It really never does because it can surprise me at anytime. It often does, you know.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Yesterday I put the Hudson River CD on in the office and it was quite a listening experience!

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** So you listened to this spot, but of course it sounded different that day. *[laughs]*

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Yes, of course. It was an amazing thing because it totally transformed the room. You put on a recording of a piece of symphonic music and, yes, it can transform the room, but there is an inherent separation it has just by being readily perceivable as music, it's something playing in the background detached from reality. In large measure music has become an ambience people use to accompany their lives. What was so interesting is that these sounds that are around us, that are our ambience were anything but ambient. It took over the room. We couldn't work. We were listening. It totally took over.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Now that is interesting. And why do you think that was?

**FRANK J. OTERI:** It was really powerful. It was interesting when you were saying that you'll hear a singer and hear different patterns in the voice and start paying attention to those physical properties that are beyond the notes, that are really timbral differences from human to human, which would be analogous to hearing the river. You'll hear the motor going by that we just heard, and that's a time-based event. So in a sense, that's like an instrument coming in and then going out. I was starting to hear rhythms in the river. I was starting to hear syncopations. Maybe it's because I'm trained in listening to music as opposed to listening to sound, but maybe it isn't?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** It's those things about water that first got me working with it. Yes, the complex layers of rhythms and the complex layers of pitch and frequency and so no—it's really complicated! I think water is one of the most complicated sounds I've ever come across and it still fascinates me. I started working with it many years ago...

*[train whistle blows]*

**FRANK J. OTERI:** And that was a wonderful chord. Oh, it's on the other side.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** It's probably a freight train. Freight trains run on the other side of the river. *[train whistle blows again]* Isn't it a great sound?

**FRANK J. OTERI:** It's a 9th chord of some type isn't it.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Umm hmm. *[train whistle blows again]* Perfect! A lovely resonance with it...

**FRANK J. OTERI:** I don't think that sound is sonic pollution. But there are definitely sounds in New York City that are sonic pollution.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Oh, I have a very hard time with Muzak. Similarly, I have a hard time with the car radio. I catch myself turning it on when I'm tired while driving. I drive in and out of New York City frequently and it's in the background of my consciousness and suddenly realize that I've been listening to Mozart, and Brahms, and Hummel [*laughs*] and so on, as background for the last 25 minutes, which is not really where I think they ought to be. But Muzak in restaurants is a real irritant.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Yeah, I think we had some smooth jazz at lunch. When we first walked in I thought, oh, this is annoying. But then when we sat down, I suddenly didn't notice it. But it didn't go away.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Do you know that phasing in and out of concentrated attention which we give phenomena is protective of us anyway? It's habituation, right? We habituated to that soundtrack very fast and we were interested in other things. It went into our bodies and we weren't consciously hearing it. That allowed us to refocus our attention. If we had been trying to concentrate on our conversation with each other, the taste of the food, the background music, whether or not it was raining again outside—all of that simultaneously would have diffused our attention beyond the point of interest in a way.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Except zoning out sound can become a problem. You were just saying that you were listening to Brahms as background music. I think we as a society have gotten to this point where just about everything is background music. And to put on a piece of music in the office, it inevitably will be background music. And that's why putting the Hudson River on yesterday was so powerful. Here is this thing, which on an old-fashioned 19th century level isn't music at all. But it did what a giant orchestral piece was supposed to do, and maybe can no longer do for our ears because we've become numb to it. Has something gone wrong with the way that we listen as a society?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** I think that we're basically devaluing music. We've been doing it for so long we are no longer aware of the association between music and trance states for example, at least in the West. Most of us, unless we are practicing Sufis, are very rarely in a situation in which trance is associated with music. Most of us don't even know that it ever has been. I think we've devalued music's intimacy and connection to the body. What Pauline is doing is invaluable. She and others are pulling the body back into our awareness of sound. You can't say that we've detached music from religion because many of us have not. People like myself have though. I don't practice any religion. I make no direct association between music and religion. I make every association in the world between what I hear and the way I experience the world, but not in terms of formal religion. But there is a process of increasing narrowness of concept, I think, as to what music is to us and what it can do for us. It's a real paradox because simultaneously music is constantly playing in people's lives.

### 3. Valuing Acoustic Space

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Well, it's interesting because what the environmental movement talks about—preserving the landscape, preserving our natural resources—it's all really done with a visual vocabulary. It's not done with a sonic vocabulary. And yes, this is a spectacular place that we're in because of the green on the ground, and the tress, and the color of the leaves that are turning on this cold autumn day, but just as much because of the sound of that water. That splashing that completely distracts me right now. All I want to do is hear that sound and watch it and see how it's able to make that sound.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Well, listen to it. Yeah, give yourself time.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** For me, someone who grew up in the middle of New York City where every sound was pretty much humanly manufactured, this is unusual. Yet we're only an hour away by train. How do we preserve the sonic environments that are pristine and are in danger? This is hardly a pristine environment. There are human structures surrounding us and trains going by, but you know, what are places where sounds are naturally occurring that shouldn't be interfered with?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** There are very few left. There are actually a lot of people concerned with the protection of sonic space, of acoustic space. There is a museum in Oakland which is focused entirely on that. Hildegard Westerkamp, a wonderful electroacoustic and environmental composer based in Vancouver, her work is constantly nudging us about sound pollution and sound in its pristine environments, and so on. Those are just two of very many examples of people who are perturbed, who are disturbed, and who are working on this. Let me go back, I just wanted to return to something that we were following a little earlier. There is this curious paradox between how a lot of people seem to need to have a constant flow of music going through their bodies—wearing earphones, carrying Walkmans around, and so on, all over the place. This has been going on for a long time—simultaneously a very clear need and habituation, and seemingly a real diminution of perception of that sound stream that's going in. Perhaps the music is going into the body and soothing and aligning various processes in the body more than it is stimulating the conceptual mind, or bypassing it.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** What's so strange about the Walkman phenomenon is here you have people who on the one hand are spending more time listening, and they're spending less time listening because they are not at all aware of the sounds that are around them. They're creating their own environment. It's essentially like walking around with a blindfold that might have your favorite painting on it, if you could somehow illuminate it, and you see that instead of the world that is around you. Maybe you get to know that painting very well, but you're zoned out to what is really going on.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** And this has been going on for a long time. Ruth Anderson, another composer, and myself started teaching a course at Hunter College years ago called Experience of Music. Rather than teaching standard repertoire, we decided to focus on people's environment and also focus on the music in their familial backgrounds, which were of all sorts of different ethnicities. When we started working with them on the environment, we got them to keep listening journals. There were people who have been walking around their neighborhoods in Brooklyn with Walkmans on for a long time who took their Walkmans off and suddenly started noting that they could hear birds in their neighborhood. They hadn't been aware that there were any birds in their neighborhood, for example [*laughs*]. It was a revelation, a wonderful revelation. People were hearing all sorts of things with the greatest attention and sensitivity. It was lovely. The world came back. The sound world came back to them. And then there was one extraordinary entry from a woman who had been, like everybody else, shutting out subway noise, and had had sort of seeped into her other experiences of sound. As you say, she was shutting down her ears progressively more and more. She trained herself to stop the subway vibration at her elbows so it didn't even reach her ears. She swore that she could stop the sound at her elbows. So it no longer bothered her hearing system, at least not as far as her brain was processing sound. She liberated herself from the subway and started opening her ears up again and started listening to all sorts of other things. That was extraordinary, so then the whole class tried to train itself to eliminate subway sounds and cut it off at the elbow.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** And this is a music appreciation class?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yeah, we had great fun doing it.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** How did the administration of the school respond to a class like that?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** We taught it for several years. I think they were intrigued. It was an alternative way of tackling the whole topic, of course, and students liked it. It was fine. We had a lot of fun.

#### 4. Becoming a Composer

**FRANK J. OTERI:** So, to backtrack a bit to your own training, which is very different than this alternative training that you were offering these students, when did you first decide that you were going to be this thing called a composer? It's sort of a strange, outside-of-normal-society concept.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Oh, early on, I think when I was in my early teens and I've had a lot of encouragement all of my life. I had a mother who composed, she didn't do it a great deal and didn't do it fully professionally, but she composed. That wasn't uncommon with women. She did it in a practical fashion. She composed for the people she was working with, and she was doing choreography and all sorts of things in school environments. I had a father who was passionate about music. He knew the repertoire inside out, knew all the performers...the sort of things I don't know [*laughs*]. He knew all of that. I never really got into it that deeply. He knew it all! I started getting music lessons very early on. I moved away from the traditional direction for women and started on piano and I was lucky to have a piano teacher who encouraged me to compose. Her husband had a little string orchestra, so I got to play with the orchestra and write for it. So by the time I was twelve, I was getting this sort of experience. Then the musical establishment in my very musical city, which was Christchurch, New Zealand, gave me a lot of support. So to decide to be a composer was not an opposed decision. There wasn't anything I really had to push against except the norm for women in New Zealand at that time. I was born in '39, so the norm in the early '50s and late '40s was pretty much like it was for many women here: marrying, having kids, and so on. I decided to do none of that [*laughs*]. Composition is going to absolutely be a fulltime life.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Studying in Darmstadt must have been worlds apart from the community of music you had been nurtured into in New Zealand or the things we've been talking about today. Dealing with music in the environment and getting people to listen to sounds around them is really an ecumenical way of looking at the world. Darmstadt, or at least the mythology of Darmstadt, is this totally cerebral, academic, avant-garde, overly complex, brainy, anti-ordinary folk music. Yes? No?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Mixed! [*laughs*] It was never academic for me. I was there in 1961 and '62, or else '62 and '63, I don't quite remember. I was there the year after the last time Cage was there. I was also there, I think, the first time that La Monte Young was there, that was my first year. My composition professor in England, Peter Racine Fricker, had told me to go there. It was great advice. He was dead on target. It wasn't in the least bit academic. It was funny. I was there at the point at which total serialism was total! And simultaneously, because of Cage as much as anything, aleatoricism was coming in. There were these two camps battling it out which was really great fun to observe. I owe La Monte and Cage a lot, and later on Pauline. One of the first things I experienced at Darmstadt was on the one hand Boulez talking about durational serialism, and on the other hand La Monte pushing furniture slowly around a room—pushing a table around the room as I recall [*laughs*], which was wonderful! I love it! I veered in that direction within just a couple of years or so.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** So were you writing total serialist music?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** No.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Never?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** I was looking at it quite hard. It interested me a lot but it didn't feel like my language. I was writing atonally. I had been writing atonally for a long time. I still, when I work with pitches, tend to prefer atonality. It just feels like my native pitch language. But serialism, that degree of structural control, didn't interest me much. I get very intrigued by the point at which I feel a piece takes over my plans and subverts them and changes them, and the piece moves on in its own direction and becomes semi-independent, which is of course fantastical thinking in a way, right? Delusory thinking, or delusional! *[laughs]* Except, as they say, it's what happens to a piece that is then coming from a level other than conscious deliberation. I get interested when a piece does that. I never could feel that with serial procedures there was really a lot of room for that. I'm sure it's there but I never could find a way to bring those two ways of thinking about working together.

## 5. The Glass Concert

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Well, this comment about letting a piece write itself really reminds me of the comment you made at the beginning of this conversation about picking up a rock and imagining being that rock. I mean the Glass Concert piece is a phenomenon. And certainly in your work, more than in the work of most composers, pieces exist as phenomena even more than they exist as individual pieces. I'm thinking of, obviously, *A Sound Map of the Hudson River* and the Glass Concert. Those aren't so much musical compositions in the sense of beginning-middle-end as they are phenomena. As I was listening last night I thought: these aren't about rhythm. Yes, there's pitch content in them and inadvertently harmonic content in them, but that's not what they're about. They are purely about timbre. They're about sound.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Basically, I intended the Glass Concert to be anti-composition *[laughs]*: nothing to do with musical structuring, everything to do with asking people to listen beyond language. By that time I was thinking of instrumental and vocal musical norms as being very much about language and expectation—expectation denied, expectation fulfilled—because the language is familiar, and the body is trained by the language, and all of that stuff. Instead of wanting to plug people into that, and those kinds of sound resources, I was just one of a whole cluster of people wanting to suggest, as Cage and other people started us thinking, that any sound is potentially interesting or many, many, many sounds outside the musical universe are really interesting to listen to no matter where they come from. But that can only be done if you switch off expectations, and if you switch off any connection to drama, or even musical flow. Although, I'm back with musical flow right now, *[laughs]* but at that point I was trying to bounce listeners and myself out of those comfortable worlds and pull them into really hearing in the instant, hearing immediately. So, the Glass Concert starts off in total blackness. There is no connection between one sound event and the next sound event—one set of glass tools, so to speak, and what happens with the next set of glass tools. The thing I loved about glass was that I could only roughly predict what sorts of sounds would come from a combination of a glass rod with a little edge to it along one side, rolling down a glass pane on glass bricks with everything resonating. And what would happen if I tilted the glass pane slightly more/slightly less. There was only rough predictability to that, but the details would shift and change from one time to the next time. So for me it was a very open-ended experience. Eventually we threw theater lighting onto the glass, which is really beautiful and immediately iridescent, and things took on a visual dimension as well. Glass Concert was very useful to me because it shifted my mind about sound, music, and all these issues. It really made me start thinking very, very differently.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** It's so interesting hearing it with early 21st century ears. This is a record from the late 1960s. I heard it, and to me it does sound like other sounds that are in music. It sounds like electronic music.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** By now, yeah.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** But it isn't electronic music, it was all done acoustically. I thought it was funny when you said you switch off expectations. The switch off/switch on metaphor comes from electronics. It's become so much a part of our language. We use these words and they just become second nature to us, whereas in the '60s they were only starting to be second nature to us. So many composers who are interested in the environment and the sounds around them tend to use electronics. This would seem, to an outsider, perhaps contradictory. The most antithetical thing to this tree is a machine that you plug in.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** They're both running on electrical energy in a way. The tree has its own energy forms creating its processes. It has long seemed to me that electronics are a portal to the acoustic environment—an essential portal if you want to share what you hear, as opposed to sitting down by the river by oneself or with a few other people and listening, which I also love to do, and taking the experience away internally but not anything that you can directly share. As long as you want to share the sounds that are emerging at any one time or any one place with other people, I can't see how else you could do it other than through electronics. And beyond that, of course, there are all the issues of what you do with it now that you've got it in digital form these days. So then, what do you do with these bits? How do you modify the original sound beyond the modification that the mic imposes on it, for example? How much further do you go?

**FRANK J. OTERI:** But you don't use synthesizers, magnetic tape...

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** It's where I would have gone if I hadn't started the Glass Concert work. I probably would have gone in that direction. I mean I've done some of it, but it has never been a passion. I think instead of synthesizing complex sounds, I went off on a different track of looking for complex sounds which are preexistent. So that pulled me away from synthesis.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Those glass pieces, if someone wanted to reconstruct the Glass Concert from the '60s, could it be done now? Are there materials...

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** I gave away the glass! [laughs] I've been carrying these huge wooden cases with big panes—I mean one of the panes, a beautiful gong like piece, was 6' x 6'. It's sort of a facetious response, but it's true. I had these in a basement for years taking up a huge amount of space. I wasn't going to reconstruct the Glass Concert myself. I'd moved on, you know. So, I gave all the glass away. Essentially the glass for the Glass Concert could be reconstructed by anybody who made a connection to a glass manufacturer and started assembling all sorts of raw glass basically.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** And you have scores of some type for these pieces?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Oh yeah, the Glass Concert was published in *SOURCE* Magazine number 5, if I recall. It's just a series of instructions: use this sort of glass, put it on this sort of surface, and do this with it or that with it, mic it, and see what happens.

## 6. Piano Transplants

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Well, I want to talk about another work of yours published in *SOURCE* Magazine, the other early work of yours that put you on the world's avant-garde musical map so to speak. And that was setting fire to a piano.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Oh. [laughs]

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Which might also seem completely contradictory to the spirit of the environment, but is actually an environmental piece.



**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** How so?

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Because you're treating the piano as a physical object in space and time.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** There are 4 different Piano Transplants. There is the piano burning, which is where it started. Then there is a piano that for many years—I don't know if it's still intact—has been slowly drowning in a small pond in Amarillo, Texas on the ranch of Stanley Marsh III. There were 3 pianos, 2 upright and a little baby grand—all the pianos were defunct, no soundboards and so on—that I had in my garden in Ingatestone in Essex, England for about 3 or 4 years or so, just before I left, from the early '70s to '73. Then there's the hypothetical, improbable, impossible last one, which is to anchor a concert grand—a big black beast of a piano, so to speak—with a sea anchor at the high tide mark on the California coast at the Henry Cowell Redwoods, which was devised for an Italian show of impossible pieces. Then Jane Campion realized it in my own home territory. *[laughs]* In *The Piano* there was a piano anchored off the west coast of my island.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Now, to bring this back to sound—the 3 pianos in England, those are the ones that were buried, yes?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yeah, at various angles like the Titanic going down and various other things.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Now, what do those sound like, those pieces?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** The three pianos in England were playable for quite a long time. The soundboards got even worse and so the sound got sort of fainter and thinner and tawnier. Of course they went wonderfully out of tune very fast.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** In the process of burial, did it sound like anything? Was there an auditory component to the visual/performance art process of the burial?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** With both the drowning piano and the pianos in the gardens I don't remember that there was particularly. It was hard work digging trenches to bury them in. And the piano in the pond we lowered very gently from the back of a truck. About six of us were around just lowering it very slowly into the pond, so slowly that there wasn't any particular sound from that.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** So the idea was not to make a sound even? To do it gently so that there wouldn't be a sound.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** The idea in the pond was to keep the piano upright, if possible *[laughs]*—very practical—so we didn't have to fuss around with it under water and push the thing up had it fallen on its back—very, very sort of practical.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Did anyone ever go down into the pond and try to play it once it was in place?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** You know it was a very shallow pond. It was perfect. It had a clay bottom, which was very hard. It was about a foot deep, and it was going to sink very slowly, which is what actually happened. I last heard about it maybe 15 years ago when it was still making some sound amazingly.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** But the burning piano was about sound, wasn't it?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** The first piano transplant was all about sound, the piano burning. After that it became just my love of surreal juxtapositions as much as anything—impossible objects in improbable places. But the first one was about the sound of heat. I had been working with a choreographer in England, Richard Alston, for a while. We decided that we'd put together a work called *Heat* in which we heated the auditorium to really high temperatures and get the whole audience sweating like crazy. I would use only the sounds of heat; so then I had to think of what I was going to burn. Firewood takes you a certain distance, but I thought it wouldn't have nearly the resonance of something like a piano burning. I happened to know that there was at that point a particular garbage dump in Wandsworth, London, which specialized in pianos that people wanted to get rid of. It was a piano graveyard basically, all uprights that peoples' grandmothers had owned, which were long since defunct and replaced by the telly. So I knew that pianos would be available. I consciously thought that it might produce some interesting sounds. I had an old microphone that I could lose, that I could just put in the instrument and let it go. So I wrapped the microphone cable in asbestos so it would last as long as possible. I was involved in a small festival in London. We were on open ground where we could burn something safely.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** So are there documentary recordings of the piano burning? Can one listen to your piano burning?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** I wonder if it's even still playable? It probably has to be baked. I've got a small reel of really thin tape that was recorded not at the burning itself. People started talking like crazy through the burning and the mic, which lasted a long time, of course picked up the chatter like anything. The piano made wonderful sounds, but as a way of recording heat, the crowd was a complete barrier. We didn't get anything useful. But afterward we had a séance. Alex Gross, an American artist who is living in New York, and some other friends, decided we'd have a séance to see if we could raise Beethoven to see what he thought of it. So we collected in a tent afterwards for this séance. Alex got up and said, "Ludie! Ludie!" He did his damndest to evoke Beethoven. Somebody was running a tape on an old Uher, you know, a little Uher deck. A wonderful sound came on the tape at that point. I've long since believed that Beethoven was full of opinions and made them heard! *[laughs]* It wasn't feedback or anything electronic that we pin our ears on, it was just there. So that's somewhere in my archives.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** So, what were those sounds? Obviously the strings would get heated up and get tense and pop I would imagine.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** And there was an interesting resonance to a lot of the sounds. The pop, crackle, snaps, so to speak, were super resonant because of the qualities of the wood.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Were there different pitches?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Rough pitches, yes.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** I would love to hear the way it sounds, but I wouldn't want to set my own piano on fire in order to find out! *[laughs]*

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** *[laughs]* I can show you pictures of how it looked. It looked very beautiful. Smoke tendrils started coming up between the keys, and they were very delicate like the old pictures in children's' stories of the Genie coming out of Aladdin's lamp—the way the smoke sort of spirals. That began to happen between the keys. There were all sorts of wonderful images.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** It's a very Fluxus piece in a way.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yeah, it was.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Where you connected to Fluxus at all?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** No. I had a number of friends who were Fluxus people. I really like Fluxus! All together it's totally pleasing. But no, I wasn't connected to Fluxus.

## 7. Coming to America

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** I didn't come over here until '73. Pauline got me over here.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Really?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yeah! *[laughs]* One of the many things that I'm grateful to Pauline Oliveros for...

**FRANK J. OTERI:** So how did that happen?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Ruth Anderson, my partner, had put in the electronic music studio at Hunter College and was directing it. It was the first one to go into the CUNY system, I think. She was going on sabbatical and called Pauline to see if Pauline would like to take her place for a year in the city. Pauline said that she had a sabbatical too, but she suggested me. I had been dying to get over here. Most of my musical friends were American by that point. I had been meeting a lot of people in London: Charles Amirkhonian, the Sonic Arts Union folks, Alvin Curran, and all sorts of good friends were here, Cage and Tudor and so on. I was dying to get here, so I said yes. I remember it vividly. I was in the bath. *[laughs]* I got out of the bath one evening, this call came from the States: would you like to like to come to the States? I had been trying to figure out how to get here for at least 3 or 4 years. I wrapped a towel around me and said, "Yes!" *[laughs]*

**FRANK J. OTERI:** At this point, 30 years later, do you consider yourself an American composer?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** I'm often called an American composer. I don't know. I don't have a real answer to that. I still somewhere think of myself as a New Zealander. It's my birthroots and it's the soundscape and landscape that's really triggered a lot of my work. Many of the ways that I think about sound come from my experiences in New Zealand as a child. But I live here and it's the most nourishing environment I've been in yet. It's given a lot to me. America has been very generous to me. So, yes, I'm both. I think I'm both.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Certainly a lot of the environments that have triggered your work have been American environments, specifically this particular area we're in.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yeah.

## 8. The Hudson River and the Danube

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Let's talk a bit about Mapping the Hudson River and what that was all about. I know that you were doing this project more than 20 years ago.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yes, I started recording the river in '81 and by '82 had put the sound map together. It was commissioned by the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers. It wasn't the first river thing I had done. I started recording rivers back in the '60s, again when I was in England, because I was interested in trying to discover why they are so magnetic to us, why people love to go to river banks, what their ears are reaching for as well as their eyes, and what our bodies respond to in rivers. At the same time I was aware that for city people—many of the world's major

cities are on rivers, right—for city people, rivers are usually entirely visual. They're not sonic entities. They're not sound worlds. I wanted to bring a river into the body in a different way than through the eyes. So I had been experimenting with installation pieces and so on based on river recordings that traveling friends and I had made from all over the world. The Hudson River came about in a curious way. I went to the Hudson River Museum at a time when I was looking around for arts administration work and applied for a job. I happened to be talking to somebody who could see very well that I was no arts administrator! *[laughs]* She said, "You're an artist, why don't you make us a proposal?" I was looking out on the river from the museum and the idea flashed in front of my eyes *[laughs]*, flashed through my ears! We took it from there. They got funding and I started hiking up and down the river.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** And you've done every mile of the Hudson River?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** No, I couldn't say that. I did it by driving into areas where I could get very close to the river and then going up and down the banks just checking for likely recording spots. I couldn't get close to the entire stretch of the river. I started up at Lake Tear of the Clouds, as you know, and worked my way down to Staten Island.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Lovely Music put out one CD, but this work is obviously a lot larger than a single CD.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** It's a two-hour audio installation. As the CD does itself, it has a map and a clock is always mounted above the map. From the clock and the information on the map you can figure out which part of the river you are listening to at that time. People have favorite spots, and locals always have favorite spots they want to checkout. Also there is a separate audio station in which you can slip on a pair of headphones and listen to people who work on the river talking about their bodies' experiences of the river. I wanted to give the body back into the river in many other ways than only through the sounds of the river. There are fishermen, river pilots, an Adirondack Ranger, Bob Boyle who lives here in Cold Spring, and several other people, an old farmer way up near Troy. They have all been in the river at all sorts of different times under all sorts of different circumstances and they tell their stories about their encounters with the river.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** You're doing another river piece again now.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yeah, I waited a long time. I thought, "I did that. I worked on rivers for years. I'm going to set them aside and do other things." But about 20 years later I had a yearning to do another river piece.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** The Danube.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yeah.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Are you finding the sound world of the Danube to be similar to the Hudson or different?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** It's different in many ways. The Hudson descends faster than the Danube. The Danube is enormous. It's 2,880 odd kilometers long. It starts in the Black Forest in Germany, it goes through Austria, and it goes through Hungary and takes a bend south. It's basically a west to east flow, which is unusual for rivers. It takes a long bend south in Hungary, goes through the northeast corner of Croatia, it goes through Serbia—I was just in Hungary, Croatia, and Serbia recording this fall—it forms the boarder between Croatia and Serbia, then between Romania and Bulgaria, then it jogs north and ends up in the Black Sea in a huge delta. It's an enormous river. It goes through a lot of high plains country, the great plains of Hungary for example. It also goes through mountain regions. It seems to me that the Hudson spends

proportionally more of its life up in the Adirondacks with a fair gradient and moving faster than the Danube does.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** The Danube goes through so many important European capitals.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yeah, and all of them pave its banks with stone and rock. All of them run roads right along the bank. *[laughs]* I haven't recorded the Danube in any of them. I haven't recorded the Danube specifically in Vienna. I went up in the Vienna woods and recorded a tributary. I haven't recorded it in Budapest. I went south of Budapest to an island and found a great recording about a half an hour south of Budapest. Where else have I not recorded the Danube? *[laughs]* I didn't record it in Belgrade. I wanted to very much. So I went to where the Sava River flows into the Danube thinking, perfect spot, major tributary, major confluence, and there wasn't a peep. Not even a little wave action. I'm recording in tiny little spots, really out of the way places, and finding really wonderful sounds.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Now when this project is completed, how long of an installation will this one be?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** At least three hours, I think. So people come and go.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Are there plans to release this one on a CD?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** I think eventually. I've been talking with Lovely eventually about putting it on a DVD, which would be great. Then we could put the map straight on the DVD and the associated information and so on. But I'm not going to get it completed until 2005. I have to have it all put together by the summer of 2005, then start showing it in Europe, in the cities and towns along the river, which is where I very much want it to go first, and then here. It's a complex one, much more complex than the Hudson. The map is going to be big. It may go along two walls of the space. It's going to be huge. I've already recorded 66 sites, and I've got another 850 kilometers to go. I'm doing interviews with people along the river in their own languages and dialects because it flows through 10 countries. It flows through all those languages, and the languages are beautiful to listen to: people who work on the river, again, people who live by it, their experiences with the river, and especially, I'm asking everybody, what does the Danube mean to you? It means a great deal to all of them, and they all have an answer to that question. Then I'm going to play their voice back underwater, through an underwater loudspeaker in the Danube itself, and have the Danube process their voices—re-record their voices through a hydrophone and feed that into the mix. So everybody's voice is going to go through the river. I just did a test with Liz Phillips, a really fine sound artist who is also a water nut like me, yesterday at Alpine, just downriver on the New Jersey shore. We stuck one of her underwater loudspeakers off the dock into the river, and I put down Maggi Payne's hydrophone, which Maggi has generously lent me many times already for this project. I fed some Serbian women talking about the Danube through, and it works! This was an experimental idea, I wasn't sure if it would work. But conceptually I loved it, so it was a big relief to find that it actually worked.

## 9. Writing for Other Musicians

**FRANK J. OTERI:** A little over a decade ago, aside from all of these installation and environmental projects, you started writing for conventional western instruments again. I guess what I want to ask you is—how has it been informed by all of this environmental installation work that you do, and what made you return to instruments given that you've been established as doing this other work for such a long time?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Let's see, I started doing it in '87. Yes, of course it has been affected by my work with other sorts of sounds. My instrumental work is very timbral. But then I've been in

love with timbre from when I was studying in Germany with Koenig. On the one hand, I was studying electronic music with him, on the other hand I was writing a piece for 10 instruments and baritone, some settings of Kafka parables which are very timbral. Timbre is one of my great delights. It's always been a major stimulus. The other aspect of this sort of work that has affected my instrumental work is a really strong principle of letting sounds complete themselves, letting sound masses, which are resonating in some way or another from instruments and voices and so on, complete themselves. I also have a deep interest in having the personalities of the performers that I work with be able to shape what they're doing. So I work a lot with Tom Buckner. A lot of what I do with Tom is focused on a really strong interest in his reaction to things, his being coming through the sound very clearly.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** So you set poetry?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yes, or for me one of the most satisfying pieces I did with Tom doesn't use any text at all. It asks him to go through three stages of allowing his voice to take him over and carry him into a very different state of being, different from what he normally experiences, through the medium of his voice—as if he were a shaman. From shamanic rituals that I listened to recordings of in the BBC years ago in England, it's very interesting how the shaman's voice continuously transforms powerfully throughout the experience. You can hear the change of state coming on. I wanted to see if that would be possible for a performer to do. Tom does it to the hilt. He really, really does it. That has no text whatsoever.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** In terms of the compositional process—this is really my last area for you, to try to connect to all of these things. You said very early on that if you're creating something that is music, you obviously have a structure, one thing comes after another until you realize that you're doing it. What are the guiding principles when you're creating a piece, whatever it is? Do you go in saying, "Oh, this is going to be half an hour. This is going to be 3 hours; this is going to have a slow section here, have a faster moving part there, etc." What are the kinds of decisions you make before you start composing?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Oh, that's a hard one to answer. I start by feeling my way into what the first sound is. That can come fast or it can take a long time for me to find that first sound. Then I look at its characteristics and see what it suggests to me. Then before too long I have a cluster of materials to work with. What I often do fairly early in a piece—it happens when I get stuck! I sort of carry myself on these perceptions or ideas that emerge from the first sound for awhile. Then I always run it into the ground and somehow come to a T-junction. At that point I start to analyze pitch patterns—turn them around, twist them around, create as many variables from them that I can, work with them vertically, horizontally, all the old techniques, you know. I start to analyze rhythmic patterns and push them around. That's partly, of course, to generate and derive material so there is coherence, but also to get my mind grooving again creatively. I keep going from there. The point at which I'm doing that analysis is usually where a lot of the material for the rest of the piece tends to emerge and suggest overall structural shape, but I never go into a piece with preconceptions of what sort of structure I want to create, for example. I specifically never do that.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** If an ensemble were to commission you to write, say, a string quartet or brass quintet...

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Well, Bang on a Can recently approached me to write a piece for the All-Stars, so there's a specific instance... It's called *Vortex*. They did it in the marathon last June. It was great fun working with them, really wonderful fun.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** They seem a very different sound world from what I'd normally associate your sound world with. It's very loud, very feisty, confrontational...

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** I started by visiting them all. I think I started with Robert Black and Mark Stewart and asked them to just play me the sort of sounds they really like to make. It was like getting a view into their sound world. In each case people started riffing on sounds and finding new sounds from their instruments. Mark found an amazing array of sounds from both the uboingee, which is that multiple spring guitar that he's got, and from the electric guitar. He's a wonderful, creative mind, as you know of course. Robert Black was doing amazing things at the top end of his instrument. I had an idea of some of what Lisa Moore does from having heard her play often. Wendy Sutter's lyrical side came out very powerfully when we got together—beautiful, lyrical playing. David Cossin was pulling out thing out of his cupboards showing me all sorts of instrument that he's been collecting from all over the world, and showing me things that he loves to do. He showed me a beautiful thing on the tam tam, where you start the tam tam resonating and then he'd put a mic very close to it and sort of scanned the frequencies that would come out from different parts of the tam tam through a little portable speaker setup. It was a beautiful sound. So I started collecting little clusters of sounds for each player and took it from there.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** It's so interesting. This goes back to the picking up the rocks once again...

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Yes. You know, there's a clear line.

**FRANK J. OTERI:** In all of this, it's beautiful! But I walk away and I think your music is so much about everybody else. Where do you see yourself inside your music?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Huh, that's an impossible question! *[laughs]*

**FRANK J. OTERI:** We always end with the hard ones.

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** Well, where I see myself is in the continuum of ideas, as if I were a one-idea person with a continuum exactly from that rock and its layers and complexity of structure, all the way through to the Danube and what its nature is. And incidentally that is the most beautiful river to work on. It's given me such gorgeous sounds. There is a really clear continuum, I think, along there and that's where I see myself. In other words, through my work I can see that I'm trying to sense what the world is, as if I were more than a human body. I'm trying to sense what all the other phenomena of the world are by their nature. It's that old will o' the wisp, or the old grail of can you feel yourself at one with something that you would otherwise, in a different state of mind, label as outside yourself. Can you be one with it?

**FRANK J. OTERI:** Finally then, what do you want the listener to get from it?

**ANNEA LOCKWOOD:** A sense of being at one with the river or the tam tam; a sense of no separation between herself or himself and the sound; just the experience of how nourishing sound is, what it does for one's body, how good that feels.