

STEREO

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TRAVELON GAMELON

Music for Bicycles Richard Lerman



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L616
T7
1982
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MUSIC LP

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Richard Lerman w/ students of the Stedelijk Secundair Kunstinstituut Gent, Belgium for the Promenade version of Travelon Gamelon, Sept. 29, 1981. Photo by Michiel Hendryckx w/ permission from De Standaard & De Gentenaar.

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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TRAVELON GAMELON

Music for Bicycles

Richard Lerman

SIDE 1

Band 1: Promenade version 6:08

Boston Mass., July 2, 1979

Band 2: Concert version 13:58

Pittsburgh, Pa., June 6, 1981

all selections © BMI

SIDE 2

Band 1: Promenade version 5:12

Amsterdam, the Netherlands,

April 27, 1982

Band 2: Concert version 14:45

Amsterdam, April 27, 1982

all selections © BMI

TRAVELON GAMELON

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Why music for bicycles? The title came first. A gamelan orchestra is a large group of percussive instruments, usually metallic, from SE Asia. In fact, the sound of such a group is not unlike the timbre of amplified bicycles. The rhyme of the title, and its implication of a 'travelling' gamelan, seemed too good of an idea to pass up. I was further intrigued with using the bicycle as a sound source, as an instrument and as an image. Memories from childhood of attaching cards to wheels to strike the spokes provided another impetus to pursue the pieces.

I had briefly amplified a bicycle in 1963 for an early tape music piece by jamming a microphone against the frame and recording the sound for future use. This would have been impossible in live performance -- too much feedback. Using phono cartridges which I took apart, the first performance of an earlier version happened on Feb. 4, 1977. Four of the six cartridges broke. Over the next 6 months I developed a way to safely house the cartridges in plastic and also increase their response.

It occurred to me that another version could be performed outdoors with riders and I conceived the Promenade version. This necessitated designing and building 25 small battery powered amplifiers, getting horn-type loudspeakers to attach to the bicycles, making pickups, and organizing the event. With each rider individually amplified, the Promenade version was first given in May, 1978 at U. Mass.-Boston.

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TRAVELON GAMELON

Music for Bicycles

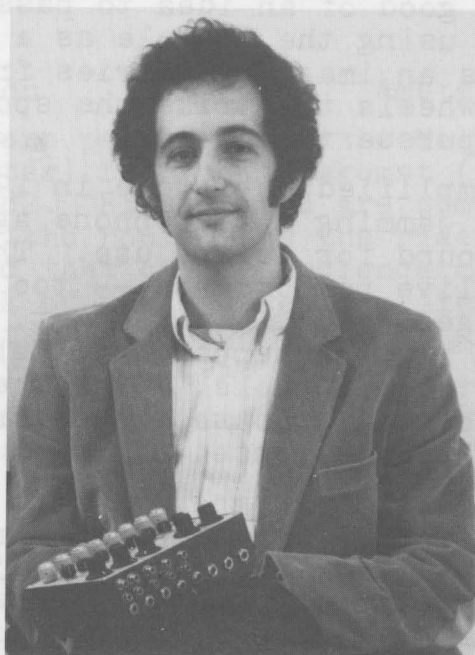
Richard Lerman

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FX 6241

TRAVELON GAMELON Music for Bicycles

Richard Lerman



Portrait of Richard Lerman. Photo by Bill Burke.

I was born in 1944 in San Francisco. After living in LA, Virginia, Washington DC and other places, we eventually settled in Milwaukee, WI, where I became interested in contemporary music at the age of 16.

I began working with electronic music in 1963 while at Brandeis U. Since 1967, I have also been involved with making 'personal cinema' since 1967, and now teach filmmaking and performance art at the Boston Museum School.

Since 1976, I have performed in many US cities including Milwaukee, St. Louis, Portland & Eugene, OR, San Francisco & Santa Clara, CA, Houston, Chicago, NY and others. Travelon Gamelon was included as part of the New Music America Festival at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 1980. It has also been offered in many European Festivals and cities including the 1979 Muzički Biennale Zagreb and in Split, Yugos., at the Spiel und Klangstrasse Festival in Essen, W. Germany, at the 1981 World Music Days in Brussels and Gent, in Amsterdam, Utrecht and in London.

Another major work that has received wide performance is Incident at 3 Mile Island: perhaps an Elegy for Karen Silkwood which has performed at many of the above places as well as at the JF Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with the Dance Exchange of Washington DC. Currently, I am working with a group called Sound/Image/Events made of myself, Tom Plsek and Larry Johnson. I am also beginning to perform with David Moss, as well as involve myself in creating different types of sonic sculpture.

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Jeffrey Stock (l) and Erick Ekwurdzel (r) perform the Concert version of Travelon Gamelon at the 3 Rivers Arts Festival in Pittsburgh, PA, June 6, 1981. Photo by John Sale with permission of the Pittsburgh Press.

Musically, each of the 3 bicycles in the Concert version is introduced with different rhythmic structures. Each bicycle is turned upside down, and performed alone, with the players at the rear and front wheels striking the spokes only. Each spoke has its own unique pitch. Some bicycles have different timbres from each other. After each has completed their parts, there is a free middle section with all bicycles together. Here, the piece is more improvisatory and other sounds are heard including: brakes being applied, cables being plucked, the frame and/or chain being struck and at the end of the section, the spokes being bowed. The third section is a retrograde canon of the first section. Throughout, there are often electronic modifications of the sounds. What is heard by the listener is a blend of the 'live' sounds of the spokes being struck by metal or wood and the amplified (often modified and delayed) sounds of the bicycles.

The score, completed in early 1978, uses two systems of notation simultaneously: one of traditional music rhythmic values and the other a graphic notation using bicycle wheels to notate the rhythms. This notation has allowed the piece to be performed by persons without or with little knowledge of reading music. The middle section is more playful and uses symbols that combine music notation and bicycle imagery.

Travelon Gamelon has been performed in many cities. Experience has shown me that the piece can serve as a good intro for persons not familiar with, or even hostile to New Music or electronic music. At several outdoor events I have followed T. Gam. with very much more abstract and less accessible music to a generally appreciative audience.

Since these pieces, I have created many other pieces for outdoors. I have also adapted pieces originally conceived for indoors to also be performed outdoors. My constructing pickups has lead to explorations of other piezo-electric devices so that the pickups now cost about 60¢ to make. I have recently built new pickups and 'microphones' from such materials as copper and brass window screens, aluminum foil, paper and mylar.

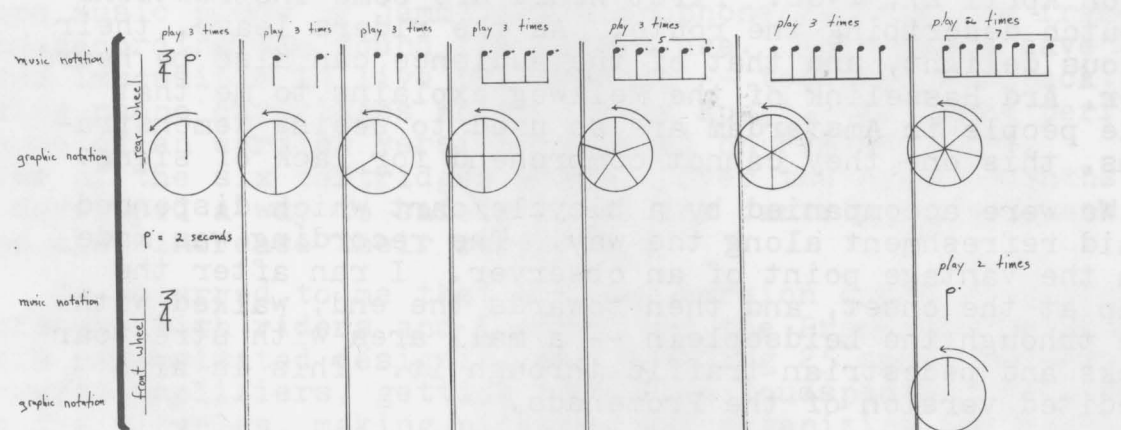
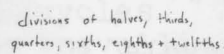
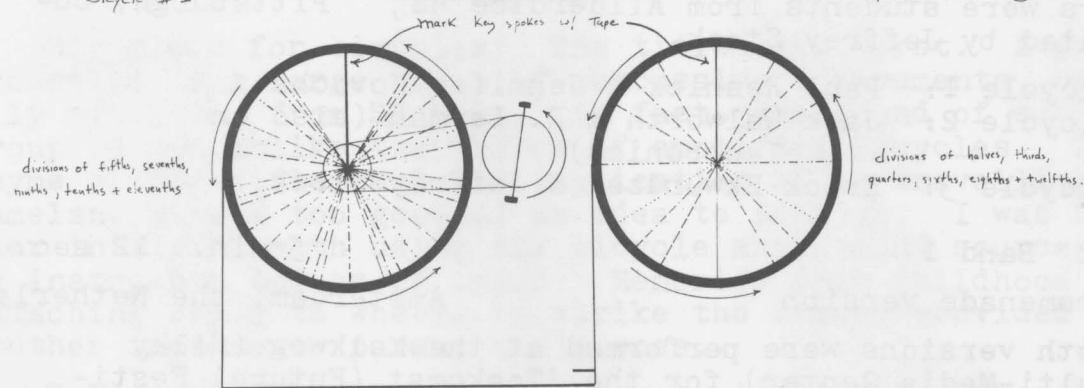


Promenade version of Travelon Gamelon at the 1979 Muzički Biennale Zagreb.
Photo by R. Lern. an.

Bicycle #1

Travelon Gamelon

Richard Lerman © 1977



First page of the score to the Concert Version of Travelon Gamelon.

Side 1 Band 1

6 min. 8 sec.

Promenade version, Boston, MA

The recording was made on July 2, 1979 at the opening of the Boston Museum of Transportation. Just prior to the event, a violent storm happened. At the beginning of the Promenade, the sound of the wet pavement is heard, as is my warning to the 20 participants to, "Watch out for the metal," on which I nearly spilled as I rode.

This is an edited version. The Promenade lasted for 45 minutes through downtown Boston. Rather than try to match splice, I decided to present it here with quick fades and short pauses between these sections. The recording, made by myself is from the vantage point of a rider. I rode with amplified bicycle, cassette and microphones.

Side 1 Band 2

13min. 48 sec.

Concert version Pittsburgh, PA

This performance was at the 3 Rivers Arts Festival on June 6, 1981. My appearance there was partially funded by Meet the Composer. The recording was made with a cassette recorder and in addition to the sounds of the piece, crowd sounds are heard on the large plaza where the event happened.

Ten-speed bicycles were used and four of the six performers were students from Allderdice HS, Pittsburgh, coordinated by Jeffrey Stock.

Bicycle 1: Paul Resnick & Jennifer Kovachs
Bicycle 2: Jack Walworth & R. Lerman (also on electronics)
Bicycle 3: Erick Ekwurdzel & Jeffrey Stock

Side 2 Band 1

5 min. 12 sec.

Promenade version

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Both versions were performed at the Melkweg (Milky Way Multi-Media Center) for the 'Toekomst (Future) Festival' on April 27, 1982. First heard are some instructions in Dutch describing the route. As the riders leave, their obvious delight, and that of the audience can also be heard. Later, Ard Hasselink of the Melkweg explains to me that while people in Amsterdam are so used to seeing demonstrations, this one they cannot comprehend for lack of signs.

We were accompanied by a bicycle/cart which dispensed liquid refreshment along the way. The recording was made from the vantage point of an observer. I ran after the group at the onset, and then towards the end, walked with them through the Leidseplein -- a mall area with streetcar tracks and pedestrian traffic through it. This is also an edited version of the Promenade.

Side 2 Band 2

14 min. 45 sec.

Concert version

Amsterdam

Immediately following the Promenade, the Concert version was offered indoors, due to rain and drizzle. The Dutch bicycles have a different sound: they were all single speed and all had relatively thick spokes. In Amsterdam, the streets are rougher and the bikes all are 'looser' with loose screws and an occasional broken spoke. I used fewer electronics to modify sounds.

Bicycle 1: Martijn van Wensveen & Andrej
Bicycle 2: Michael Hanish & Henkjan Honig
Bicycle 3: Tim Plowman & Tom Watson

Recording by Peter Rubin

I would like to thank my wife Saf and my 2 sons Joshua and Jesse for putting up with my experiments in music and sound at often, odd hours. Happily, I can state that Travelon Gamelon received a Fellowship from the Mass. Artist's Foundation in 1978. Thanks also to Lessing Kahn, Jack Walworth, Dan Moore, David Stock and others.