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and Juliet-type song captured the breathless rapture of first love. His innovations include integrating classical techniques into jazz, like tone rows, atonality, polytonality, the chromatic (12 note scale with smallest pitch differences in western music) and tone clusters.

The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra ended its set with a jazz classic, *Groove Merchant* (by Jerome Richardson-multi-instrumentalist/composer from Oakland, b. 1920 d. 2000) released in 1968, from an album of pop songs in a jazz groove. Jones' arrangements are famous for capturing the stylistic essence of each instrumental section. *Groove Merchant* is a spirited medium swing, a joyous number featuring first the sax section that wailed in triplet arabesques, segueing into arpeggiated riffs that ended with a trill. Bass trombonist Douglas Purviance played a short, dramatic solo, then the entire trombone section took turns soloing, then standing as one, they rose before the finale. At the bar, it was hard to restrain some audience members from dancing.

Over 57 years, there were several incarnations of the band. Thad Jones moved to Denmark in 1979 and it became the Mel Lewis Orchestra, then Lewis died in 1990. Mr. Purviance explained, "After Mel's death...we became The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. We wanted to be on the Vanguard of the music. And we didn't want to be a ghost band (we commissioned new charts.) John Mosca became the leader. John was so dedicated to the band and music and (to) keeping the history going. There was so much on his shoulders, and my career was going very, very well and I got into a management position to help John. We carried the load until he left."

Mr. Purviance produces and is also a suave MC, tossing off jokes that left the audience chuckling. He said, "You are the hippest people in the world...supporting live music from (one of the best) orchestras in the world, at the Village Vanguard."

The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra won Grammys for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Albums in 1979 (for *Live in Munich*) and 2009 (*Monday Night Live at the Village Vanguard*, co-produced by Douglas Purviance). They also won 11 Best Big Band Readers and Critics Polls in *Downbeat*. The VJO, a hit for over half the lifetime of jazz, played around the world, and sowed seeds for the future of jazz. The lines down the block speak for themselves.

The longstanding members like Dick Oatts, Ralph Lalama, Billy Drewes, Rich Perry, Gary Smulyan, Scott Wendholt, John Riley and Douglas Purviance are influential teachers and have been on over 100 recordings each through networks built up over decades.

Regular Band Personnel: *rhythm section:* Adam Birnbaum, piano; David Wong, bass; John Riley, drums. *Trumpets:* Nick Archione, Terrell Stafford, Scott Wendt, John Chudoba. *Saxophones:* Dick Oatts, Billy Drewes, Rich Perry, Ralph Lalama, Gary Smulyan. *Trombones:* Dion Douglas Purviance, Jason Jack-Edwards.

Discomposed

Erik Satie, David Del Tredici and a day of music

BY D. SILVERMAN



Photo: Jordan Mejias.

Eight hundred forty repetitions comprise *Vexations*, Erik Satie's enigmatic unpublished durational piano score. Composed around 130 years ago, and evidently never performed, the piece remained a theoretical curiosity until 1963 when John Cage organized a marathon rendition in the East Village. (Long past the point where the author, or his contemporaries, could offer guidance as to what was intended.)

On September 8th, the Village Trip will mark the 60th anniversary of that first performance with a free concert at NYU's shiny new Paulson Center to kick off the two week arts festival. Clocking in at a brisk 15-hours (other productions have run twice that), involving multiple pianists and scheduled to conclude at 9 p.m., with the 840th and final, repetition to be played by David Del Tredici, a veteran of Cage's seminal presentation.

Del Tredici, 86, is a long-time West Village resident and Pulitzer Prize winning composer currently living with Parkinson's disease—and, undaunted, is reportedly contemplating an operative treatment of that theme. No doubt the experiences of a neurodegenerative disorder, plus the intervening six decades, will also inform his interpretation of the vexing piano motif this time around.

Satie did not publish *Vexations* during his lifetime—there's no evidence of his ever

mentioning it and little is known about motives or if he even expected it to exist as more than a conceptual exercise. But two tantalizing handwritten notes he added to the score elicit all sorts of conjecture.

First, vaguely, that the tempo be very slow ("Très lent").

Second, obscurely, an observation (or instruction) to the effect of "*To play this motif 840 times in succession, it will be good to prepare beforehand, and in the greatest silence, with serious stillness.*"

(While this 'note' has been interpreted in many ways, it's the basis for the current format of 840 repetitions of the score. And the wording, "*par des immobilités sérieuses,*" could suggest an involuntary stillness—movement constrained.)

Apparently, Satie took pen to paper shortly after the artist Suzanne Valadon abruptly ended their tempestuous love affair, which lasted only about 20 weeks, and while they did not live together, she moved into a bed-sit next to his during that brief span. From all indications, it may have been Satie's only intimate relationship—*ever*—(not so Valadon, she had other lovers before, during, and after their involvement. She also had a nine-year-old son, Maurice Utrillo).

The nebulous experimental score required only one sheet of paper and may well

have been a composer's anguished response to his intense emotions from the break-up. It might even have been envisioned as a musical 'diary' of the relationship in hindsight. If we suppose the couple spent about 6 hours together daily, for twenty weeks, that's 6 x 7 x 20 = 840 hours.

And if we hear the "very slow" tempo to mean "verrrrrrry slow"—as in an hour per repetition—then, conceivably, the full cycle would reflect their entire romantic episode in excruciatingly real-time.

Perhaps for someone who'd never before been in love, his rejoinder about preparing first with 'great silence and stillness' was more a recrimination.

While the NYU performance may run a bit overtime, it will not entail 840 hours. Nonetheless, if you go for any or all, you'll have plenty of meditative time to contemplate these notions and others. And, when you see David Del Tredici seated at the piano, you'll know, the cycle continues...

SATIE'S VEXATIONS, 60 YEARS AFTER JOHN CAGE

Friday, September 8th

6:00 am - 9:00 pm

NYU Paulson Center

181 Mercer Street

thevillagetrrip.com/saties-vexations

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thevillagetrrip.com