

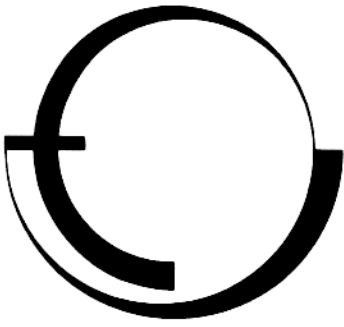
## **CURRENTS at Theatre Vanguard (1973-1978)**

Barry Schrader

May 30, 2011

In 1972, Judith Thomas Stark <<http://articles.latimes.com/2006/jan/02/local/me-stark2>> created the Judith S. Thomas Foundation with her profits from the sale of the James B. Lansing Sound Co., maker of JBL speakers. She and her husband, Milton R. Stark, bought the Stage Society Theatre at 9014 Melrose Avenue, in West Hollywood. Supported by her foundation, the venue was renovated and reopened in February 1973 as the nonprofit Theatre Vanguard.

The Theatre Vanguard was a unique institution, an experiment in the support and presentation of contemporary performance art. Here is the original statement of purpose of the Theatre Vanguard, signed by the founders:



A new theatre, unique in this city, and perhaps in this country, is being organized. Theatre Vanguard, a most unusual concept in theatre organization, is a non profit institution; its purpose to encourage the performing arts, as well as the playwright, the designer, the composer, the film maker, in Los Angeles. It is dedicated to presenting the new, the experimental, and the excellent.

The Stage Society Theatre at 9014 Melrose, has been bought and updated. This 200 seat theatre offers a fine stage, a dancer's "dream floor", a light system with professional lightboard, a complete sound system for multi-media presentations, fully equipped dressing rooms, reception room, and a multi-purpose rehearsal room that can seat 40.

This is not a commercial theatre. The commercial artist, if talented, eventually finds his stage, but the most brilliant non-commercial artist may never have the opportunity for a hearing. We shall present high quality work by established artists, experimental works that might not otherwise be seen or even created; work by young artists, and designers, to enable them to develop their talents under good performance conditions; works in progress, etc. We shall also commission new works, organize festivals, and award grants. In all, we are artist and performer oriented. We firmly believe that the potential audience in Los Angeles for the non-commercial is far greater than is commonly supposed.

Performances will include plays, dance, music, poetry, film (classic, professional, experimental, student), lectures, mixed media, childrens' theatre, and an experimental lunchtime theatre.

While new projects will occasionally originate within the theatre, our goal is to be the center where artists, composers, poets, can meet, exchange ideas, develop projects, have access to the latest in periodicals in all the fields. We hope to offer our complete facilities to the many now functioning local theatres, where their best productions can be presented under excellent theatrical conditions.

Beyond any unusual expense of the production, all box office proceeds will go to the performers and artists. If there is a deficit, this, by arrangement, will be defrayed by Theatre Vanguard. Soon we hope to offer minimum guarantees, as well as box office proceeds. We will not retain any financial interest in the future of our presentations. We are here to assist the artist.

We welcome your correspondence and interest. Theatre groups, dance groups, music groups, poets, critics, film makers, or whoever you are, if you are actively involved in the performing arts, we would like to exchange ideas with you. If you feel as strongly as we do, that such a theatre could operate successfully in Los Angeles, contact us. We are now programming for the season. Exciting things are happening. For further information please contact Theatre Vanguard.

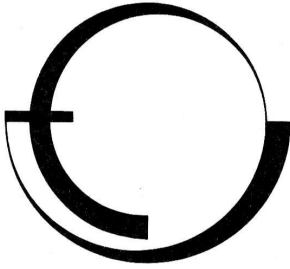
Sincerely,

Judith Stark  
Milton R. Stark  
Robert Houston

At the end of 1972, I was asked by Leonard Stein, who was on the Board of Directors of Theatre Vanguard, if I would be interested in producing a series of electronic music programs. At the age of 27, this was an incredible opportunity, and so I accepted and created the series CURRENTS. (In today's phraseology, we would more properly use the term electro-acoustic (electroacoustic) to describe the music on CURRENTS. But, at the time, this term was not in use.)

On December 17, 1972, a meeting was held of several artists and concert producers in Los Angeles:





REPORT ON MEETING OF COMPOSERS AND MUSIC TECHNICIANS  
AT THEATRE VANGUARD ON DECEMBER 17

In Attendance: Robert Ashley (Mills College), Roger Reynolds (Univ. of Calif. at San Diego), Barry Schrader, Harold Budd, Ingram Marshall, Keith White, Charlemagne Palestine (Calif. Institute of the Arts), Dorrance Stalvey (Monday Evening Concerts), and others.

Purpose of Meeting: to show off the theatre and demonstrate the sound equipment (tapes by Barry Schrader and Harold Budd).  
added

Suggestions for/Equipment: 1) Quadrophonic Tape Deck, 2) half-track Stereo, 3) Separate power for audio and video, 4) Extra outlets backstage, particularly for extra speakers. Otherwise general satisfaction with the set-up and agreement that additional equipment should be provided by the performer-composer or rented in LA.

Scheduling of Events: Dates already requested: 1) Robert Ashley, March 17 or 18 (preparations from March 13 or 14); 2) Charlemagne Palestine, March 30, 31, April 1 (preparations from March 26). Other events (in preparation) in April and May: (see list below).

Contracts: should specify conditions of use, equipment provided by Theatre Vanguard and by the performer, fees, etc.

Calendar: Monthly calendar, events to be determined, if possible, three months in advance.

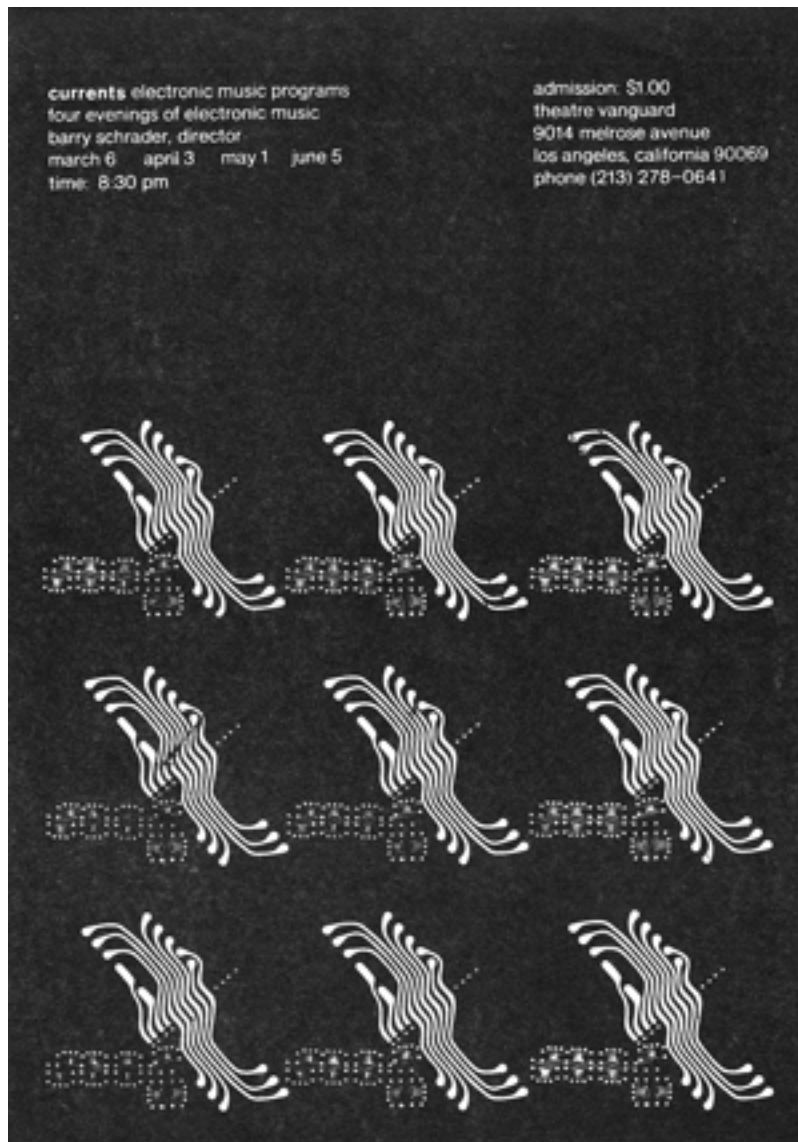
Suggested Music Events (as of December 20): 1) Monday Evening Concerts special programs (Feb. and April), 2) Robert Ashley (see above) (March), 3) Charlemagne Palestine (see above - March), 4) Morton Subotnick (April or May), 4) Salvatore Martirano (late April, early May), 5) California New Music Ensemble - piano and percussion (April or May), 6) The New Muse - chamber orchestra (May or June), 7) ZAJ - Spanish Neo-Dada group (April or May), 8) Yvonne Rainer - dancer (April, May, June). (See correspondence and addresses, next page). \* (see below)

Dates to Avoid: April 22, Easter Sunday; March 8, March 28, May 6 - Encounters.

Continuing Events: monthly Electronic Music programs (suggested by Barry Schrader) - set aside one date per month; film programs, poetry readings, etc.

Publicity: when to announce, newspapers, radio, TV, monthly mags., etc. Mailing lists: announcements.

CURRENTS was, to my knowledge, the first ongoing series of electronic music concerts in the United States. There were four concerts presented during the first season, in 1973, and they consisted of works from 44 composers from the United States, Europe, and Japan.



Here is the first page of the program for the initial concert:

THEATRE VANGUARD

presents

CURRENTS

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Electronic Music Program

March 6, 1973

PROGRAM

1. Introduction and Assemblage.....Barry Schrader  
from "Bestiary" (1972)
2. Sailing to Byzantium (1973).....Alden Ashforth

INTERMISSION

3. The Unicorn from "Bestiary".....Barry Schrader  
(1972)
4. Cantilena for voice, violin,.....Mel Powell  
and tape (1970)  
Su Harmon, Soprano  
Yoko Matsuda, Violin
5. Return and Exit from.....Barry Schrader  
"Bestiary" (1972)

---

Wind and surf, water drops, flowing water, planes,  
trucks heard over a distance. These sounds  
which you may have heard upon entering the  
theatre, or shall hear during the intermission  
of this concert, are the product of a new  
musical instrument being developed by Serge

As you can see, in addition to the music presented, there was also a real-time presentation of Serge Tcherepnin's new analog system. The reviews for the first concert were very positive. Melody Peterson wrote in the March 7, 1973 issue of the *Los Angeles Times* "...Theater Vanguard's new electronic music series Currents could be to the 70s what Monday Evening Concerts [was in the past]..."

The Vanguard's unique policy of featuring only contemporary music, film, dance, and other performance arts was singular at the time. It created a center for new work that, in addition to the newly formed California Institute of the Arts, where I was on the faculty of the School of Music, gave Los Angeles a much-needed boost in its artistic profile. This was, in fact, the beginning of a kind of renaissance in the Los Angeles arts scene, one that lasted throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

It's often the case that people don't fully realize the importance of what they're involved with at the time. Unfortunately, this was true of me in relation to the CURRENTS series. As the Theatre Vanguard seemed to be a success, and they were documenting all of the programs and many of the artists who performed in them, I never thought to save all of the programs from the concerts that I produced from 1973 through 1978. As a result, I don't have the programs for the rest of the CURRENTS presentations for 1973. In fact, I have only a handful of programs from the entire run of CURRENTS. The documentation for the Theatre Vanguard, as large as it was, seems to have disappeared, and there is only the slightest trace of the Vanguard's accomplishments on the internet.

At the end of 1973, the Board of Directors issued a progress report:

# Theatre Vanguard

## PROGRESS REPORT

Theatre Vanguard has now concluded its first season of existence. It was a brief season, of only four-and-a-half months, from our opening on February 9th to July 1st. Our goals were ambitious, the more so since we knew of no other theatre with a similar policy to lend us guidance. These goals, as stated in our program, were: "To become a center for the avant-garde and non-commercial arts in Los Angeles; to encourage the creation and development of these arts by sponsoring and presenting exciting experimental and unusual works of both new and established artists in music, dance, drama, film, poetry, multi-media, and all media; to provide the 'involved' audience we firmly believe exists in Los Angeles the opportunity to experience the new directions in art, and, thereby, to participate in its evolution." And to do all this on a truly non-profit basis, allowing the artist the maximum financial reward for his performance, in most cases the entire box-office, so that he can better continue his work.

How well have we realized these goals? To begin with audiences: during this short period we have become widely known, but we are not content. We are certain that among those out there in our vast decentralized City who are still unaware of our existence or our policy, there are many who would be interested in our programs.

As for these programs -- their quality and adventurousness -- let us recount our accomplishments:

We are particularly proud of our record in music, which division is under the able direction of Leonard Stein, long renowned as a leading conductor, performer, and tireless champion of new music. The outstanding event was the three-day First International Festival of Contemporary Music of Los Angeles, presented in association with the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM). Works by 18 composers from 8 countries were performed, conducted by Leonard Rosenman, Leonard Stein, and William Kraft. Four U.S. premiers and two world premiers were included, supplemented by films with music by Satie, Hindemith, and Schuller. Not a seat went begging.

Other highlights were individual concerts of the multi-media works of Robert Ashley and Morton Subotnick, the appearance of the kinetic young California New Music Ensemble, an opening-night performance by the Contemporary Music Ensemble of Cal-Arts conducted by Gerhard Samuel, and the 50½-hour marathon "Spectral Continuum" of Charlemagne Palestine, assisted by the noted avant-garde dancer Simone Forti. (Intrepid music buffs arrived equipped with sleeping bags.) And finally, we are most pleased with "Currents", a series of once-a-month electronic concerts, often augmented by live musicians and film. This unique series, directed by Barry Schrader, put to

excellent use our fine sound system. All in all, some 44 composers, many of them in attendance, were represented by one or more compositions during this first season.

In the field of dance, which in Los Angeles is over-crowded with a large number of poorly-supported struggling companies, we presented a variety of programs, beginning with Gene Marinaccio's exciting and innovative American Concert Ballet, followed by Kazuko in her first full concert, assisted by Benn Howard; Teodoro Morca's Flamenco in Concert, with Maria del Rocio; the vital young company of Joey Harris - The Group; the first local appearance of the theatrical Xoregos Company; and successful performances by the Matti Lascoe Company, for the first time in the City, and by the popular Elle' Johnson Company.

Since most local theatre companies possess their own facilities, there has been a less pressing need to present plays, but several theatre groups are preparing plays to be performed next season on our main stage. Our small downstairs theatre has been busy all year with workshops, including Ed Ludlum's Playwrights' Platform, William Winter-sole's American Theatre Laboratory, Allan Mann, working on a multi-media type of theatre, Ruth Saturensky, and others. It has also been used as rehearsal space by many local companies; and next season it will become a full-fledged theatre with plays open to the public. During the past season we presented the Otrabanda Company from Antioch College performing "Stump Removal", a frenetic experimental play by the Flemish writer-director Tone Brulin; a talented local group of young musicians-actors-magicians, The Organ Grinder, in the delightful children's musical "The Star in the Buttercup Tree"; and the Little French Theatre in new and old French plays, in French.

In the challenging 20th-century art of film, we have been most active. We have benefited from the collaboration of Bill Moritz, Director of the L.A. Film-Makers Co-op, of the new L.A. Cinematheque, and of Doug Edwards, Director of the Film Society, formerly at The Egg and the Eye. To begin at the end, our regular season concluded with Film International, in association with the Film Society, a wide-ranging Festival of 18 films from 8 countries never before seen in Los Angeles, plus an evening of experimental films. Earlier we had a special showing of "Family Life", a sensitive feature film by the talented new Polish director Krzysztof Zanussi, making his first local appearance. We are especially pleased with our various series of so-called underground films, some of them organized by the Cinematheque, which also arranged an evening of the work of new young film-makers, a project to be continued in the Fall. We had full programs, usually with the film-makers present to answer questions, of the films of Corinne and Arthur Cantrill (from Australia), John Whitney Sr., Chick Strand, Robert Nelson, Gunvor Nelson, Oskar Fischinger (his first major L.A. retrospective),

Pat O'Neill, and Scott Bartlett, along with substantial showings of Jordan Belson and Stan Brakhage, a program of surrealist films, and varied samples of such underground masters as Bruce Conner, George Kuchar, Stan VanDerBeek, Carl Linder, Hans Richter, Ed Emshwiller, Standish Lawder, etc., as well as a number of film-makers being shown for the first time anywhere -- altogether the work of 70 underground film-makers, and 22 feature film directors.

All in all it is apparent that we have fulfilled our intention of emphasizing the experimental in art. It should, however, be pointed out that this doesn't mean we are prejudiced against the more perfected art that derives from earlier experiments, but it is a fact of the market place that such art can more easily find a showing, whereas experimental art, not being commercially rewarding, is seldom booked by other theatres, and we are trying to fill this large void. We are privileged to show these works because we are willing, and fortunately able, to operate at a loss. When we occasionally presented work that was not strictly experimental, it was for another of our purposes -- to offer the encouragement of a performance to new, young, and promising artists in fields that are neglected by the commercial theatres. This applies particularly to some of our dance programs. We believe that with help these companies will develop in exciting new directions.

While we are naturally interested in presenting experimental work of the highest quality, we are also ready to introduce work that "takes a chance" in its experimentation, as experimental art should, as well as work by young artists of talent who are still in the early stages of their journey. The most difficult hurdle for the young artist is his first showing, and in the performing arts it is difficult for an artist to progress without seeing his work under actual performance conditions. Such programs should, consequently, be evaluated within the context of a laboratory work-in-progress situation -- more for their promise than their actual fulfillment.

For our next season, beginning September 14th, we are planning (in addition to the types of programs we have been presenting) jam sessions by creative modern musicians, improvisational nights by dancers, lectures on controversial subjects, staged readings of poetry, and showings of forgotten or neglected masterpieces. And finally, we would like to add that anyone with an interesting program, or even an idea for a program, is invited to contact us at Theatre Vanguard. We will consider anything.

The Directors

9014 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90069

The Theatre Vanguard was built with a state-of-the-art sound system, configured for quadraphonic playback. I'm fortunate to have received a copy of the documentation of this sound system from Leonard Stein shortly before his death:



THEATRE VANGUARD

SOUND SYSTEM  
SPECIFICATIONS

## SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

### CONSOLE:

The console is generally a stereo system or mono if desired and is capable of 4 channel or quad reproduction through the quad tape inputs in the rear of console. 6 microphone inputs may be utilized at one time with complete mixing capability with 3 mic's in channel "A" and 3 mic's in channel "B". Mono mixing may be obtained by placing the (Norm - A+B) switch in the A+B position. Two line inputs are also available in the line input of each mixer. The top mixer is channel "A" and the bottom mixer, channel "B". During normal operation, 2 stereo tape players can be mixed in via the tape play 1 and the tape play 2 level controls on the mix panel. Phono or line inputs can be selected with the (Phono Line Switch) which appears on the mixer line input level controls.

Panning is available and can be used during stereo or mono operation. There is a left right pan and a front rear pan, this operation will move the sound front to rear, left to right or diagonally, if desired. The pan pots cannot be utilized during quad play operation.

Inputs to stereo tape recorders for recording are available. Tape 1 in the rack is connected normally. Tape 2 inputs and outputs are accessible on the rear of the console.

The top panel of the console has 4 switches and level controls which select the inputs to each of the 4 power amplifiers and the level control for the input level of each. The selector switch will select channel "A", channel "B", pan, or quad play to the input of each power amplifier.

### RACK:

Located in the rack is a TEAC Model 1200 tape recorder which is system tape 1. On top of the rack is the AR turntable. 4 level controls are located on the lower panel for booth monitor speaker level which has no effect on the house level. An output patch bay is included which will allow patching of any amplifier output to any speaker line in the system. 2 Crown D-150 power amplifiers are located in the rack. The system power switch is located below the power amplifiers.

### INTERCOM SYSTEM:

4 plugin's for headsets with boom microphones located at (1) stage apron, (2) in light booth, and (1) in stage managers booth. In addition, a microphone located behind the proscenium can be switched on by a switch in the stage manager's booth to pick-up what is happening on the stage in addition to normal communication on this system.

There is also a telephone system between the office and the stage manager's booth. A switch is located on the stage manager's phone to select a buzzer or light for indication of call.

#### GENERAL:

This system utilizes high quality amplifiers and speakers and will reproduce a sound level of better than 90 db full range in the theatre.

#### INPUTS:

- 6- Microphone
- 2- Line or stereo phono (switchable)
- 1- Quad tape play input
- 2- Stereo tape play

#### OUTPUTS:

- Stereo - A and B
- Mono - A + B
- Quad - (Utilizing quad play inputs in back of console)
- Tape 1 for recording
- Tape 2 for recording

#### AMPLIFIERS:

- 2 - Crown D-150 (4 channels @ 75 watts)

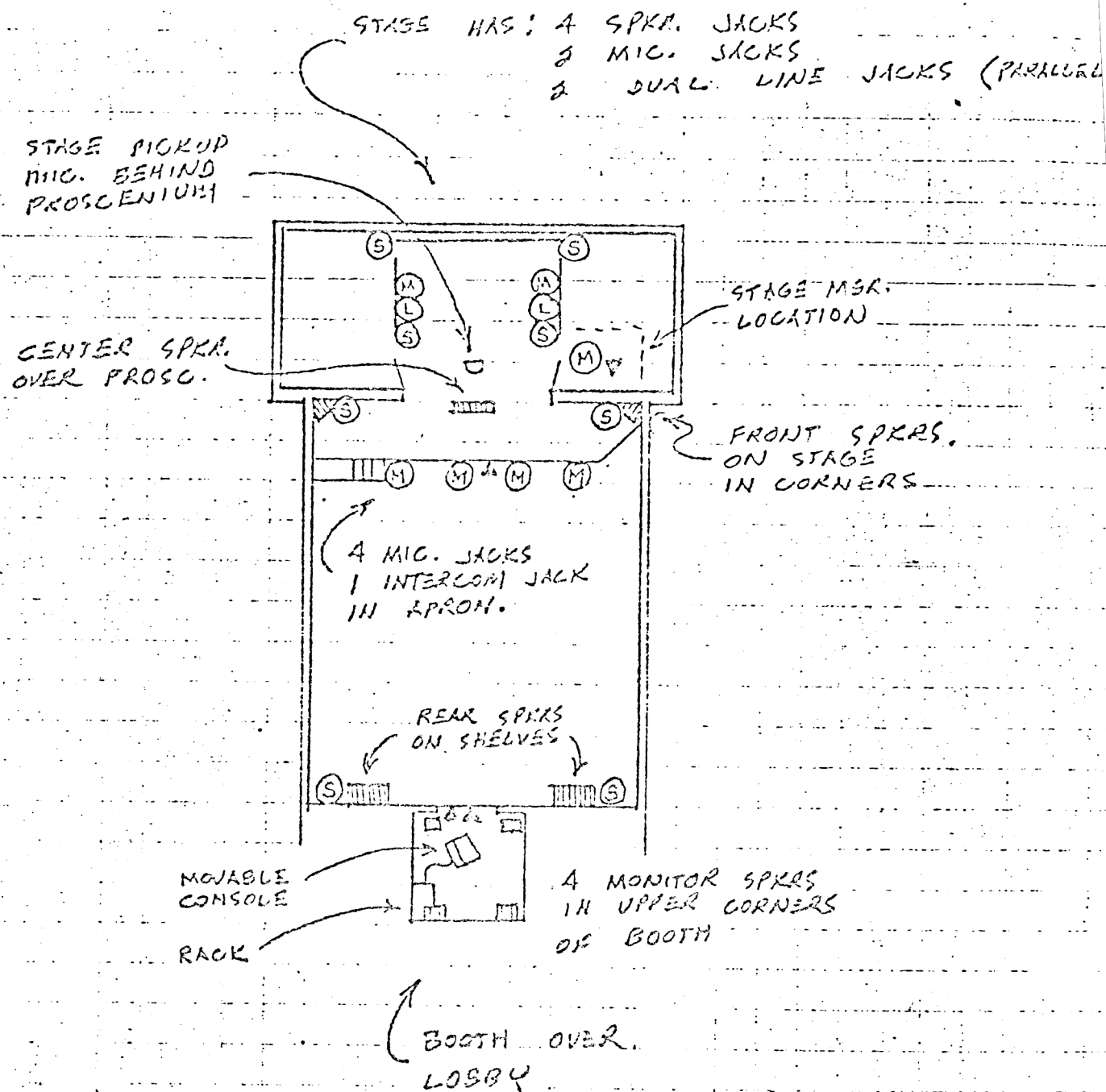
#### SPEAKERS:

- Stage left
- Stage right
- Proscenium (stage left and stage right combined)
- House rear left
- House rear right
- 4 Booth monitors

#### MISCELLANEOUS:

Additional speaker outlets are available on stage, as well as line inputs. Location of speakers, microphone inputs, line inputs and communications are on the drawing of the next page.

## THEATRE VANGUARD



## LEGEND

- (A) CANNON MIC. OUTLET
- (L) TWO PHONE JACKS - DUAL LINE OUTLET
- (S) DUAL 5-WAY BINDING POSIS - SPKR OUTLET
- Y 4-TERM. CANNON INTERCOM OUTLET

## EQUIPMENT LIST

### 1 - RACK

- 2 - Crown D-150 amplifiers ( 4 channels @ 75 watts)
- 1 - Patch Bay (Pwr. amp outputs and speaker lines)
- 1 - TEAC A-1200 1/4 track stereo recorder
- 1 - AR Turntable
- 1 - Shure phono pre-amplifier
- 4 - Volume controls for booth monitors.

### 1 - CONSOLE

- 2 - Shure M-67 mixers and custom mixing facilities.
- 4 - Output selector switches
- 4 - Output level controls (straight line type)
  - Tape 2 stereo in and out.
  - Quad tape play in.
  - Tape play 1 level control.
  - Tape play 2 level control.
  - Norm and A + B switch.
  - Phono and line switch.

### 4 - SPEAKER SYSTEMS with

- 1 - JBL - 2220 A (15" low freq. spkr)
- 1 - JBL - 2305 (H.F. horn & lens)
- 1 - JBL - 2410 (H.F. Driver)
- 1 - JBL - 3120 (Crossover network)

### 1 - PROSCENIUM SPEAKER with

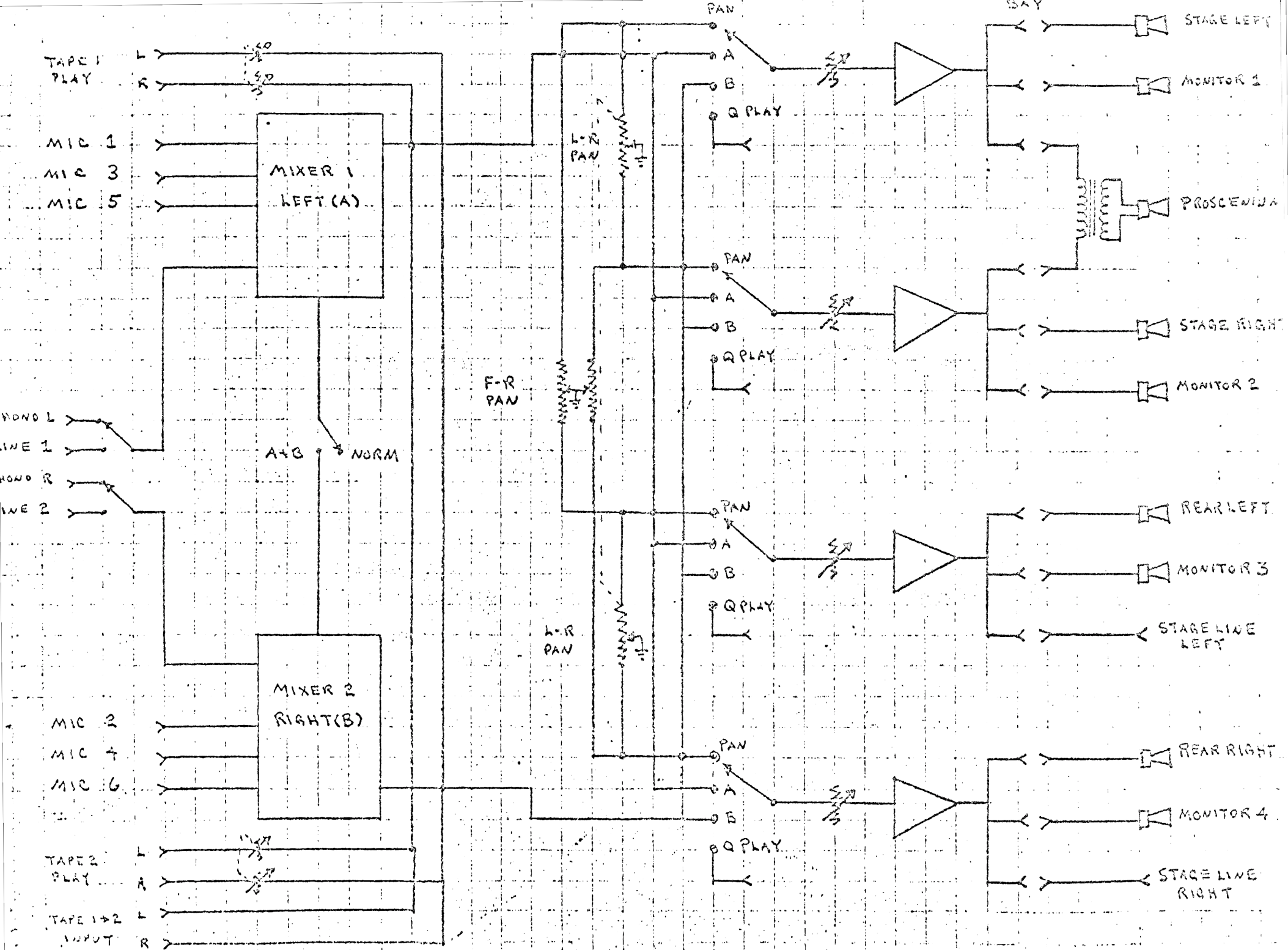
- 1 - JBL - 2120 (12" l.f. speaker)
- 1 - JBL - 2305 (H.F. Horn & lens)
- 1 - JBL - 2410 (H.F. Driver)
- 1 - JBL - 3120 ( Crossover network)

### 4 - BOOTH MONITOR SPEAKERS with

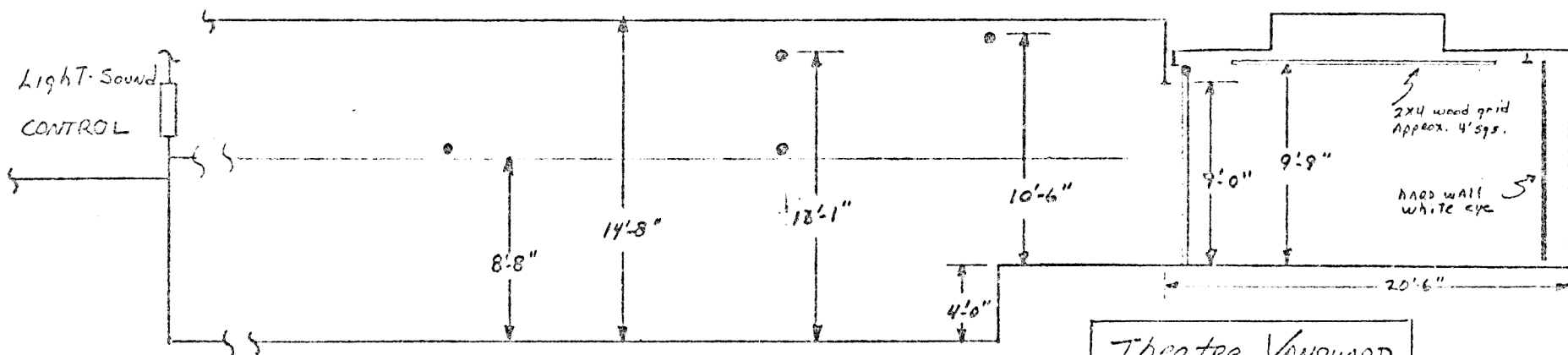
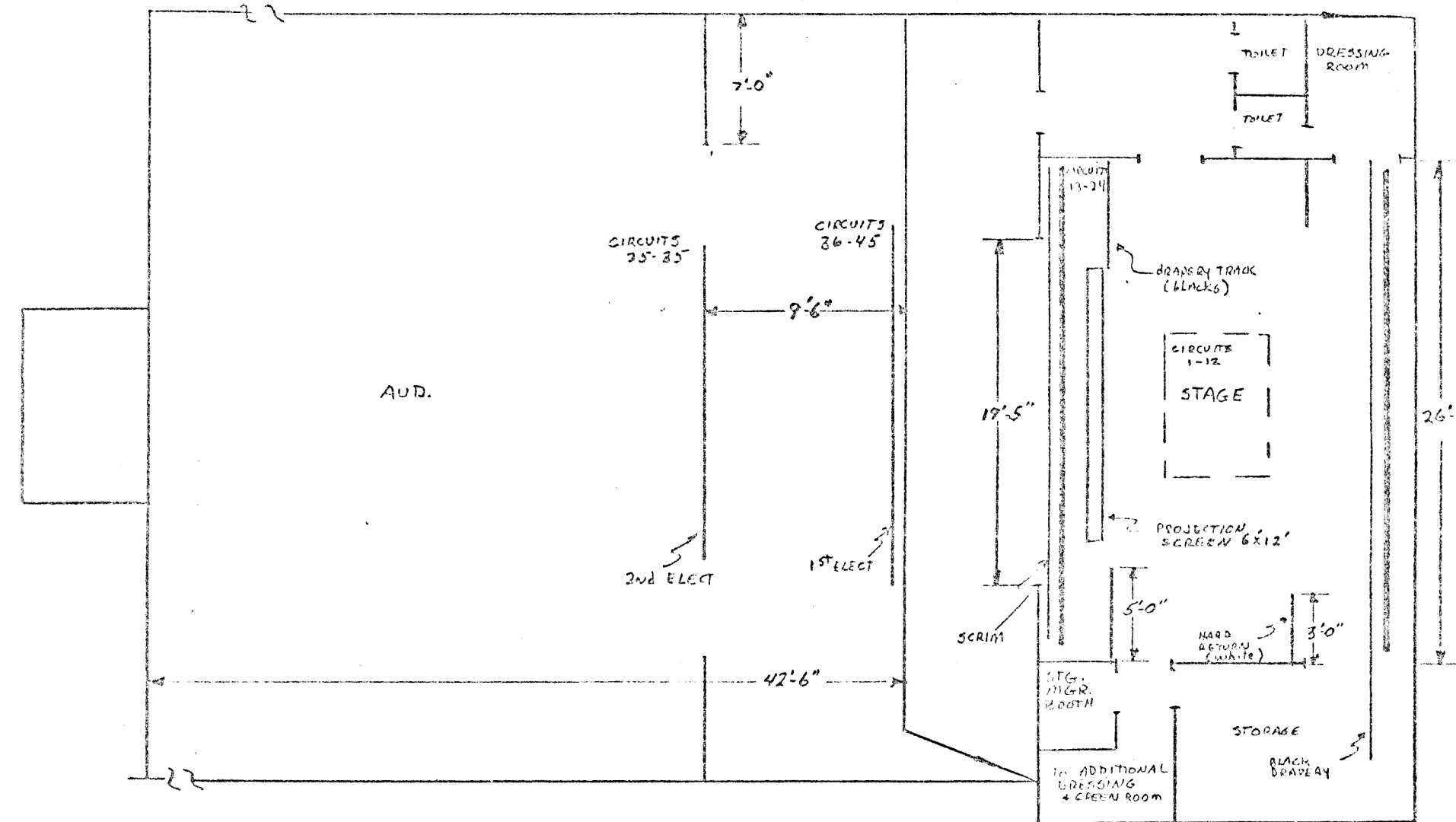
- 4 - JBL - 2110 (Full range 8" spkrs)
- 4 - AKG - D-190 E Microphones
- 4 - Atlas microphone stands (MS-11C)

### 3 - TELEX OS-75 Headsets with boom microphones (noise cancelling)

- 1 - Sony condenser mic for proscenium pick-up.
- 2 - Bogen CH B - 10 A telephones.







JOHN LANDY HOOBY / LIGHTING DESIGNER

Theatre Vanguard  
9014 Melrose Ave.  
Los Angeles, Ca.

# PROJECTION EQUIPMENT ---

ONE (1) 16MM KODAK PAGEANT ARC PROJECTOR, MODIFIED TO 5000ft REEL  
CAPACITY WITH A MARC/300 TUNGSTEN-HALOGEN LAMP AND A 2"  
FOCAL-LENGTH LENS.

ONE (1) 9' X 12' DALITE SCREEN - MOTOR OPERATED

ONE (1) SET OF MOVIOLA REWINDS

ONE (1) KODAK PRESSTAPE UNIVERSAL SPLICER

THREE (3) 5000ft REELS

ONE (1) 1600ft REEL

DISTANCE FROM PROJECTOR TO SCREEN IS 50ft.



In 1974, CURRENTS ran a competition for films with electronic music soundtracks. This was an attempt to combine two of the Vanguard's main interests: new music and experimental film. The concert presenting the top six works was presented on May 17 and 18, 1974. Here is the entire printed program from that presentation. It lists not only the works presented, but also the complete list of the contributing directors to CURRENTS, along with the names of the Theatre Vanguard's Board and Staff:

Theatre Vanguard

presents

\*

the winning entries in the

CURRENTS FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONTEST

for

ELECTRONIC MUSIC AND FILM

\*

Friday and Saturday

May 17, 18, 1974

8:30 P.M.

PROGRAM

KALEIDOFORM (1974) 4th finalist  
film: Howard Danelowitz  
music: Douglas Lynner

LINE OF APOGEE (1967) 5th finalist  
film: Lloyd Williams  
music: Vladimir Ussachevsky

\*Intermission\*

TRIP (1972) 1st finalist  
film: Istvan Ventilla  
music: Pril Smiley

AURA-CORONA (1974) 3rd finalist  
film: Dennis Pies  
music: Carter Thomas

SONDO (1974) 2nd finalist  
film: Franklin Miller  
music: Peter Lewis

\*Presentation of Theatre Vanguard's  
\$500 award to be made by Barry  
Schrader, Director of Currents.

EVOLUTION OF THE RED STAR (1973) Winner  
film: Adam Beckett  
music: Carl Stone

## ABOUT THE CONTEST

The First International Contest for Electronic Music and Film is sponsored by Theatre Vanguard in conjunction with its series of electronic music programs, Currents. The combination of film and electronic music is becoming increasingly popular since it provides composers and filmmakers with many new areas of experimentation and exploration. It is the hope of Theatre Vanguard that this contest will provide encouragement to artists to create works using these combined mediums.

The judging for the Contest was held at Theatre Vanguard on April 13 and 20. The judges were Jules Engel, William Moritz, Paul Silliman, Dorrance Stalvey, Morton Subotnick and John Whitney. Judging was based on the effectiveness of how both music and film worked together to create a unified experience.

## CURRENTS 1973-1974

### DIRECTOR

Barry Schrader

### CONTRIBUTING DIRECTORS

Alden Ashforth

Francoise Barriere

Francois Bayle

Robert Bernat

Jim Burton

Joel Chadabe

Christian Clozier

Lorenzo Ferrero

Lejaren Hiller

Erkki Kurenniemi

Peter Lewis

Per Olaf Lundohl

Luis de Pablo

Mel Powell

Elaine Radigue

Jukka Ruohomäki

Jean-Claude Risset

Josef Tal

Fernand Vandenbogaerde

Bulent Arel

Vladimir Ussachevsky

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

#### COORDINATOR

Barbara Kraft

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **Officers**

President . . . . . Judith Stark  
Vice President . . . . . Robert Houston  
Secretary/Treasurer . . . . . Milton R. Stark

### **Members**

Saul Braverman                      Leonard Stein

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS**

Judith Stark  
Robert Houston  
Milton R. Stark

## **THEATRE VANGUARD STAFF**

Theatre Manager . . . . . Paul Silliman  
Public Relations Director . . . . . Ellen Van Den Houten  
Assistant House Manager . . . . . Irene Maryan  
Secretary . . . . . Lindy Smith

## **ARTISTIC ADVISORS**

Music . . . . . Leonard Stein  
Film . . . . . Robert Houston, William Moritz

**Art Display Courtesy of the Maryan Gallery**

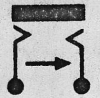
CURRENTS would present other programs featuring experimental film with electro-acoustic music soundtracks. Here's one such program from October 24, 1975:





# Theatre Vanguard

## CURRENTS



### CURRENTS ELECTRONIC MUSIC SERIES

PRESENTS AN EVENING OF FILMS WITH ELECTRONIC MUSIC SCORES

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 8:30PM

CIRCLES, film by Doris Chase, music by Morton Subotnick

SYNCHROMY, film and music by Norman McLaren

CYBERNETIC 5.3, film by John Stehousa

REVISITED, film by Joyce Borenstein, music by Carl Stone

EXPLORATORIUM, film by Jon Boorstin, music by Barry Schrader

TOTEM, film by Ed Emshwiller, music and choreography by Alwin Nikolais

TWO IMAGES FOR A COMPUTER PIECE, film by Lloyd Williams, music by Vladimir Ussachevsky

PRISMATIC VARIATIONS, film by Jim Davis

Admission: \$2.00 general; \$1.50 students (with current school i.d.) & senior citizens

In 1974, CURRENTS presented a program of historic electronic music. This was the first time any of these works had been presented publicly in Los Angeles:

PROGRAM

FOUR ÉTUDES (1948)

Pierre Schaeffer

- #1. Déconcertante (Étude aux tourniquets)
- #2. Imposée (Étude aux chemins de fer)
- #4. Composée (Étude pour piano)
- #5. Pathétique (Étude aux casseroles)

CAPRICCIO FOR VIOLIN AND TWO SOUND TRACKS (1952)

Henk Badings

Yoko Matsuda, violin

BELLS OF ATLANTIS  
(1952)

music by Louis & Bebe Barron  
film by Ian Hugo

\*Intermission\*

FIVE FILM STUDIES (1943-44)

John & James Whitney

TAPE MUSIC (1952)

Vladimir Ussachevsky  
and Otto Luening

- 1. Sonic Contours
- 2. Low Speed
- 3. Fantasy in Space
- 4. Incantation

JAZZ OF LIGHTS

music by Louis & Bebe Barron  
film by Ian Hugo



In 1973, the French composer Eliane Radigue  
<<http://www.lovely.com/bios/radigue.html>> decided to found a new center for electronic music in Ripert, France. This was to be known as The Ripert Centre. Here is a statement of the organization's goals:

### RIPERT CENTRE

The principle objectives of RIPERT CENTRE:

- To assist in developing public knowledge and appreciation for electronic music through international concerts.
- To establish better communications between the many studios and composers around the world through the organization of workshops, seminars and conferences.
- To publish a bulletin open to all people concerned with the dissemination of information regarding electronic music.

In addition:

- The compilation of archives of tapes and written articles to be made available to those concerned with the medium.
- The study of the international legal problems of composer's copyright protection.
- The promotion of an annual festival to be presented in the village of Ripert.

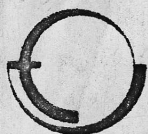
Ripert is a small abandoned village in the south of France which can be revived by the activities of the CENTRE.

RIPERT CENTRE is an international association organized in France as an "Association à but non-lucratif selon la loi de 1901," and in New York State as a "not-for-profit organization."

Unfortunately, the Ripert Centre never materialized. But CURRENTS did present a series of concerts in March of 1975 that were curated by Eliane and others involved with trying to set up the organization:

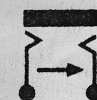






# Theatre Vanguard

## CURRENTS



### RIPERT CENTRE CONCERT SERIES

Friday, March 7, 8:00PM - FRANCE

Nicola Piquet  
Michel Chion  
Luc Ferrari  
Beatrice Ferreyra  
Louis Roquin

Saturday, March 8, 2:30PM - USA/WEST I

Alexina Louie  
Kenneth Gaburo  
Jean-Charles Francois  
Pauline Oliveros  
Reinhard Berg  
Warren Burt  
Stanford Evans  
Ronald Al-Robboy

Saturday, March 8, 8:00PM - LATIN AMERICA

Alfredo del Monaco  
Lourival Sylvestre  
Juan Blanco  
Jorge Arriagada  
Leo Brower  
Mario Lavista  
Louis Maria Serra

Friday, March 14, 8:00PM - USA/EAST

Maryanne Amercher  
Ramond Wilding-White  
Ann McMillan  
Ilhan Mimaroglu  
David Behrman  
Halim El Dabh

Saturday, March 15, 2:30PM - USA/WEST II

Morton Subotnick  
Carl Stone  
Barry Schrader

Saturday, March 15, 8:00PM - ITALY

Enore Zaffiri  
Gruppo NPS  
Lorenzo Ferrero  
Pietro Grossi  
Giovanni Sciarrino

I don't know how many concerts CURRENTS presented over its lifespan, but I'll make an educated guess at between 40 and 45. Many of the works presented were world premieres, and almost all of them were U.S. and/or Los Angeles premieres. Los Angeles was a very different place in the 1970s from what it is now in almost every way, but certainly in terms of the impact of contemporary art and music. The *Los Angeles Times* reviewed almost all of the Currents presentations, and many of the concerts were sold out. The Theatre Vanguard had only 199 seats, but getting an audience of this size for any type of "experimental" music in LA during the early 70s was remarkable.

Like all good things, the Theatre Vanguard came to an end after the 1978 season. It had been supported almost entirely by the Judith S. Thomas Foundation during its existence, and because West Hollywood was then an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County, and not a part of the city of Los Angeles, it was not possible to get any funding from local government sources. There was some slight federal funding from the NEA, but not enough to be meaningful. There was also little support from other local benefactors. In reality, the arts world is not as beneficent as some might think, and lines of support are carefully drawn along personal and institutional political boundaries. Ego often trumps any other consideration in the areas of arts support just as it does in other areas of human endeavor. As the costs of producing programs and maintaining the Theatre Vanguard rose, the Starks decided that continuing to support the project was not realistic. While they continued to be important supporters of the arts in the Los Angeles area (Judith Thomas Stark became a member of the CalArts Board of Directors), the Theatre Vanguard was closed and the property sold. The last time I went by that location on Melrose, it was an interior design business, but that was over a decade ago, and I have no idea what the building's fate is at this moment.

I had little contact with the Starks after the Vanguard closed, but I would often see them at CalArts or concerts in the 1980s and early 1990s. Mrs. Stark died in 2006 at the age of 96. However, I did let them know, more than once, how grateful I was for having the opportunity to create and direct the CURRENTS series.

The modern world changes quickly, and even though the internet now seemingly archives an enormous amount of material, things that existed before the web was created can easily evaporate into the ether. Such is the fate of the Theatre Vanguard and the hundreds of programs that were presented there. Concerts and similar presentations are ephemeral. Few will be remembered through the passage of time. While the Theatre Vanguard was of great importance to the Los Angeles performing arts scene in the 1970s, there are few today who remember it or know about it. CURRENTS was but one of the series that the Vanguard supported, and it, too, is now essentially unrecognized. Even for me, without any printed documentation, most of the programs are past recollection. I saved many of the works presented on CURRENTS and recorded on tape in the

acclimatized vault of the CalArts Library. But, several years ago, I was informed that they could no longer afford the room to store these tapes, and, as I had no place to put them, the tapes were destroyed. So there is now, even less documentation than there might have been a few years ago.

I hadn't thought much about CURRENTS for decades, but, a few months ago, someone emailed me asking for some information about the series, and that got me to thinking about it and seeing what I could dig up about it from old boxes of material stored in my office and home. There was less than I thought there would be, but, still, there was enough to document the nature of the series and also of the Theatre Vanguard. Neither the theater or the series are things that could happen again; they were products of their time and place. But they were, I think, special and important in what they attempted to do, and, perhaps, they won't be entirely forgotten in the future.