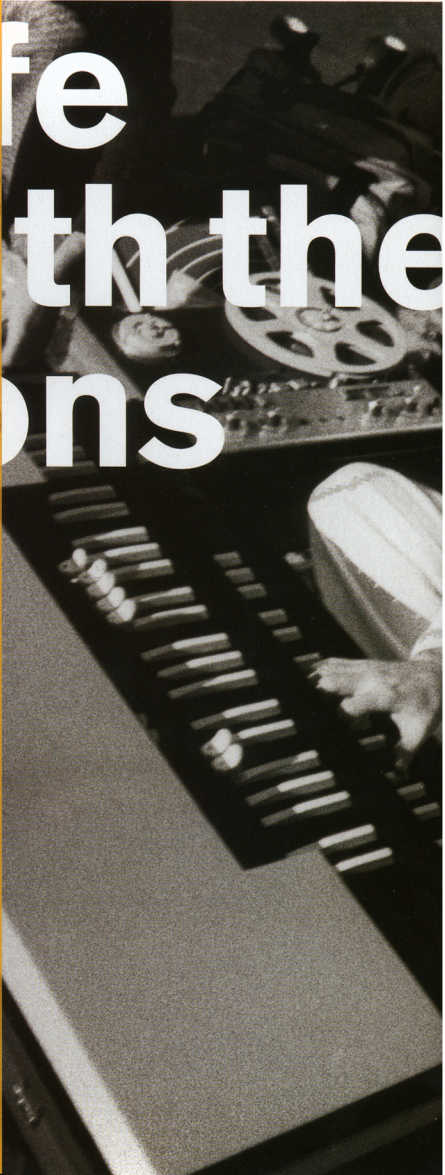


Life with the lions

A black and white photograph of a person's hands playing a piano. The piano keys are visible, and a film reel is in the background. The image is partially obscured by a large orange vertical bar on the left side.

In France during the early 1970s, a millionaire modern art dealer bankrolled a brace of initiatives designed to promote some of the most radical American musicians of the post-war era, including Albert Ayler, Sun Ra, La Monte Young and Terry Riley. In Paris, Edwin Pouncey meets Daniel Caux, the creative force behind these utopian outposts of underground art: the Shandar label and the Nuits De La Fondation Maeght concert series.

Photos: Philippe Gras/Eye Control



As we enter the living room of Daniel Caux's immaculate apartment in the middle of Paris, it's obvious that our subject has prepared for our visit. A handful of LPs have been pulled from Caux's vast record collection, which lines the room, and stacked neatly along one wall. The names on the sleeves are familiar, but these records, which constitute virtually the entire catalogue of a small label called Shandar, haven't been seen outside of hardcore collectors' circles since they were released some three decades ago. Next to the records are piled various back issues of *L'Art Vivant*, a short-lived modern art magazine which, like Shandar, was funded by the French industrialist and art collector Aimé Maeght, and for which Daniel Caux wrote a number of buccaneering articles on free jazz and minimalist music during the early 1970s.

It was through those articles that Caux managed to connect with some of the most important musicians of the post-war avant garde. Using funds supplied by Aimé Maeght, Caux issued a series of landmark recordings by Albert Ayler, Sun Ra, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Terry Riley and La Monte Young, whose names and faces now stare out at us from that line of records stacked against the far wall. Maeght's money also funded a series of concerts Caux promoted at a private art museum in the south of France that have become the stuff of legend in free jazz and minimalist circles.

As his impressive CV testifies, over the last 30 years Caux has continued to champion new music through journalism and broadcasting, as well as by promoting major European concerts by Harry Partch, Glenn Branca, Harold Budd, Jon Hassell, Moondog and many others. In the early 70s he made a field recording trip through Algeria and later produced records for Radio France's ethnic recordings label Occora. Recently he made a series of programmes about new electronic music for France Culture called *Hypnomixotechno*, in the process interviewing Derrick May, Kevin Saunderson, Carl Craig, Richie Hawtin and others. But today we are here to talk about his work during the halcyon days of free jazz and minimalism, which emerged from the moment he started out as a visual artist in the turbulent political, social and creative climate of Paris in the mid-1960s.

Daniel Caux's first ambition was to be a painter. In the early 1960s he studied fine art at the Ecole des Arts Appliqués in Paris, and with fellow avant garde artists Jean-Jacques Lebel and Ben Vautier he was a member of the French branch of George Maciunas's Fluxus movement. During this period Caux's interests outside of painting included watching underground movies and listening to a wide range of esoteric music that included Indian and Arabic music, early US minimalists such as Terry Riley and La Monte Young, and the new jazz of Eric Dolphy, John Coltrane and Albert Ayler. For Caux, hearing Albert Ayler's early ESP-Disk recordings was an experience that would change his life. "I had such a shock when I first heard Albert Ayler on ESP-Disk that I stopped painting, because I thought that my art should be as great and amazing as his music," he enthuses. "Hearing him play on record turned my whole world around."

Fired by the clarion call for social and artistic freedom that he heard blasting from Ayler's tenor saxophone, and anticipating his future life as a promoter, producer and organiser, a highly evolved enthusiast who made things happen, the young artist attempted to stage a festival that would celebrate this burgeoning American music. Drawing on his Fluxus connections, Caux planned the festival as a multimedia event with input from Jean-Jacques Lebel who, as well as being involved with Fluxus, had links with New York's experimental Living Theatre group.

"He did a lot of happenings," remembers Caux, "including one where he appeared completely naked

apart from a face mask of General de Gaulle. Lebel started to organise these happenings in Paris as early as 1964, where he once invited Eric Dolphy to come over and play at his apartment.

"In 1966 we planned to bring Albert Ayler and La Monte Young over to perform in Paris," he continues. "Unfortunately this never took place because of financial problems. You could apply for money from the Ministry of Culture, but at that time they saw free jazz and new music as being subversive and refused to give any money to the project."

It would be another four years before Caux was able to officially invite Albert Ayler to perform in France. But the saxophonist did appear at George Wein's Paris Jazz Festival later that year, with a group containing his brother Donald on trumpet, violinist Michael Sampson, bass player William Fowell and drummer Beaver Harris. During the festival the Ayler group played two concerts that were met with decidedly mixed receptions. Caux, however, was spellbound. "On 13 November 1966 he played with his brother Donald for half an hour on a revue called 'The Story Of Jazz'," he recalls. "Ayler was playing at the end of that and the people there did not understand what he was doing. During this first concert he was booed by the audience, it was like a battle. The second concert was at midnight with only myself and a few people present."

The thrill of that late night Paris concert (which was eventually released by the hat Hut label as part of the *L'étranger/Paris 1966 album*) only intensified Caux's passion and enthusiasm for the music of Ayler and the entire free jazz movement, which was becoming more readily available as American musicians began to head for Europe in search of work and the kind of attentive audiences that had been denied them back in the States. Caux was not alone in thinking that there was a need for free jazz to establish itself in Paris, and soon he was being commissioned to write articles about the music for magazines such as *Combat* and the more radical *Jazz Hot*. When Caux and Lebel's proposed music happening failed to materialise, they screened a selection of work by underground film makers, including Andy Warhol, Jonas Mekas and George and Michael Kuchar. The response to this alternative happening was positive and helped establish Caux's name as an organisational talent in the city's avant garde art scene; by 1968 he was promoting one day free jazz concerts with such exiled musicians as Frank Wright, Noah Howard and The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, who had flocked to Paris in the wake of Ayler's legendary performances. It was around this time that a friend recommended him to the exclusive French art magazine *L'Art Vivant*, which was financed by the multi-millionaire businessman and art collector Aimé Maeght. This link between the wealthy connoisseur of the arts and the enthusiastic Caux would give both parties the freedom to realise their dreams.

Aimé Maeght's lifetime interest in the arts was fostered by his friendship with the French modernist painter Pierre Bonnard. Maeght was also friends with Matisse, and in 1945 he opened a gallery in the Rue de Téhéran in Paris which quickly became one of the most important venues to view and buy works of modern and contemporary art, staging exhibitions by Bonnard, Matisse, Miró, Chagall, Calder, Giacometti and others. Over the next two decades Maeght amassed one of the largest private collections of modern art in the world, and in 1964, with help from his wife Marguerite, he financed the impressive Maeght Foundation, an art museum in Saint Paul de Vence near Cannes in the south of France.

As well as being a showcase for the visual arts, Maeght wanted the Foundation to act as a stage for contemporary music and dance. In 1966 he began to put on concerts at the Foundation under the banner

Nuits De La Fondation Maeght. Although by this point he was in his early sixties, Maeght's ear for new music was as sharp as his eye for modern art. In July 1969 he invited The Cecil Taylor Quartet (with alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons, percussionist Andrew Cyrille and saxophonist Sam Rivers) to perform a series of concerts at the Foundation which provided an unprecedented platform for Taylor's music, and reinforced Maeght's reputation as a visionary patron of the living arts.

Impressed by the articles on free jazz and minimalist music that Caux was now writing for *L'Art Vivant*, Maeght contacted him early in 1970 and asked him to coordinate a series of Nuits De La Fondation Maeght concerts based on this new American music. "There was this guy called Francis Migroliog, a modern composer who was responsible for all of the programming," explains Caux. "Maeght said to him, 'Yeah, but what about all the people we are talking about in the magazine, like Albert Ayler, Sun Ra and the minimalists, why are they not performing at the Nuits?' Migroliog was unsure about their music because it was too new, so that's when Maeght contacted me to direct the 'underground' part of the Nuits as a special event. I organised this event for Maeght myself because the other people from the Foundation were against the idea."

Caux programmed the series with the help of a friend of Aimé Maeght's called Chantal Darcy.

"Chantal was young, full of energy and enthusiasm but not a specialist in music, so she asked me to help her," Caux explains. "I became the head of programming and Chantal organised the business side: the trips, the fees and everything."

"I invited Ayler and Sun Ra to the Nuits, and also Milford Graves," he continues, "but at that time he was teaching music at a school in Harlem and it was not possible for him to attend. I invited La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela and Terry Riley. La Monte Young told me that he would be glad to attend, but he wanted to play for a whole week. So we set something up for him on the roof of the Foundation."

For Young and Zazeela, their eight-day *Dream House* rooftop installation was the first time their music had been performed in France. Caux dutifully documented the proceedings, and *L'Art Vivant* later published a special edition devoted to Young. Pieces played during the eight days included a section of *The Tortoise*, *His Dreams* And *Journeys* and *Map Of 49's Dream* The *Two Systems Of Eleven Sets Of Galactic Intervals* *Ornamental Light Years Tracery* with Young, Zazeela and saxophonist Jon Gibson being joined, from time to time, by violinist David Rosenbloom and Terry Riley on additional vocals. In the evenings Zazeela provided a lightshow to illuminate the proceedings.

The *Dream House* presentation proved to be one of the highlights of the Nuits concerts that year, and for Caux it represented a massive breakthrough in his efforts to get the music of these minimalists taken seriously. "It was mainly through being involved with Fluxus and George Maciunas that I was introduced to the minimalist music school," he explains. "I knew La Monte Young, though, before joining the French Fluxus group. I had met John Cage and asked him if he thought La Monte Young was an important musician in America and Cage told me he was."

In a fascinating interview with Cage that was published in *L'Art Vivant's* issue on Young, the composer tells Caux and his wife Jacqueline that he was particularly impressed by two of Young's early works from 1960: his Fluxus related *Poem For Tables, Chairs And Benches*, etc. which Cage performed in New York, and *2 Sounds* for magnetic tape, in which one sound was produced by the friction of metal on glass and the other by metal on wood, both at high volume. "La Monte lived in San Francisco at the time," Cage explained to the couple, "and despite the

distance of two or three thousand miles you could feel the power of the music. Listening to these pieces was for me an experience that changed my way of listening," he confessed, "of listening to everything."

Not everybody shared Caux's enthusiasm for the new music he was busily promoting and presenting. His proposed series of concerts was met with a small pocket of resistance from those connected to Maeght, the most notable being the jazz record producer and arranger Norman Granz, who wrote to Maeght saying that he had been 'ill advised' to allow Albert Ayler and Sun Ra to play at the Foundation, as, in his opinion, neither were 'serious' musicians or artists.

"Granz knew Maeght because Duke Ellington had previously come to play for the Foundation, so they were in touch," recalls Caux. "Maeght understood what he was telling him, that Granz thought Ayler and Sun Ra were troublemakers, but Maeght was very supportive towards me. In his twenties he had been a drummer in a jazz group, that was in the 1930s, so Maeght already had this musical sensitivity. Then through the articles that I was writing about free jazz he became very interested in the music. Maeght was also very polite to all the musicians. Because he was used to dealing with painters like Miró and Matisse he treated Ayler and Sun Ra in the same fashion, like artists."

When Albert Ayler took the stage for the first of his two Nuits De La Fondation Maeght concerts on 25 July 1970, the reception he received from the large audience was ecstatic. With a new group consisting of his wife Mary Maria Parks on saxophone and vocals, pianist Cal Cobbs, bass player Steve Tintweiss and drummer Allan Blairman, Ayler let fly with a set of gospelised free jazz that took in tragic ballad readings, New Orleans funeral marches and traces of the blues. It was the relationship between Ayler and the veteran piano player Cal Cobbs, however, that gave the two concerts their edge. As Cobbs told writer Val Wilmer in 1971: "The rest of the people [in the group] were in another bag and I didn't understand. They would talk flip-talk and I said, 'What is this?' But Albert was very sincere and it was like a Bible to him."

For both concerts Ayler appeared in a series of flamboyant outfits, the most spectacular being a long white robe which he complemented with a broad brimmed black hat. Photographer Philippe Gras, who managed to capture this extraordinary vision on film, is still reeling from the aftershock that Ayler's appearance had on him: "To have the man in front of you and to be able to observe the stature of the man as he performs is something else. He was like a living monument to free jazz."

Caux also fondly remembers his meeting with Ayler and the friendship they formed during the days he was living in France. "After the concerts at the Fondation he stayed with me for six days, just hanging out. Maeght had given him the use of a car so that he could drive around if he wanted. He was very gentle, very intelligent, and the concerts he played were very special. I liked him very much and we connected. When he was found dead four months after the Maeght concerts I spent a month trying to find out how it happened."

Two weeks after the Ayler group's triumphant appearances the Foundation staged a series of concerts with Sun Ra and his Arkestra. These took place on 3 and 5 August 1970 during the Arkestra's

Previous page: La Monte Young soundchecks Terry Riley's equipment, 1972. This page: Sun Ra & The Arkestra, 1970 (above); Terry Riley, 1972 (below). Following page, clockwise from top: Albert Ayler, Steve Tintweiss and Mary Maria Parks, 1970; Prati Nath in Paris, 1972; Jacqueline Caux, Terry Riley and Daniel Caux in Paris, circa 1970-71. Unless otherwise stated, all photos taken at the Maeght Foundation, Saint Paul de Vence during the Nuits De La Fondation Maeght concert series



European tour. The response they received at Saint Paul de Vence was ecstatic, and Caux's description of Ra and his Arkestra in action captured the atmosphere of the concerts perfectly. "[The audience is] stunned before a spectacle that surpassed in every way anything they could have imagined," he later wrote. "Films are projected behind the musicians; these include vistas of New York and Chicago, street scenes, Arkestra rehearsals, rockets to the moon, Egyptian gods or plumed African warriors. Lights are filtered on to the stage or illuminate it strongly while Sun Ra's organ throws lightning bolts. Dancers brandish emblems or symbolic objects. From this surge of collected improvisation, emerges the alien sonority of a bass clarinet, or six flutes playing in unison to a theme intoned by a choir, or a few rippling piano notes to the howling of a Moog synthesizer, thus the music takes on varied and unpredictable aspects. Then suddenly one of the musicians jumps over a luminous glass sphere which only moments before was supposed to represent the all powerful sun..."

The success of the concerts by Ayler and Ra boosted Caux's confidence about the future of the music he had now become a part of. "The atmosphere at the Nuits was created by the people who loved these artists and came to see them perform," he reminds me. "At least 80 per cent of the audience were fans of Sun Ra and wouldn't have missed the concerts for anything in the world. When Albert Ayler first came to Paris in 1966 people booed him and there was a big scandal. After May 1968, however, in the wake of the student protests, the underground movement went almost mainstream. It was a bit like techno now, where it suddenly became mainstream and opened up to a larger audience. Many of the people who attended the Nuits didn't have access to this kind of music before 1968."

Once the Nuits De La Fondation Maeght series had ended, Maeght approached Caux with the suggestion that, as the events had been filmed and recorded, a record label should be set up to document the series. Maeght invited Chantal Darcy to join Caux in running the new label; her first contribution was to donate her name (Chantal DARCy) to the project, which became known as Shandar.

Although Caux says Maeght funded the setting up of the label, according to Charlemagne Palestine, who would later release one album on Shandar, there was another benefactor involved. "Philippe Lette was the husband of Chantal Darcy whom she had recently married," he explains, "a young lawyer from Montreal who was working between France, Geneva and Canada. Together they began to approach people and asked them to propose pieces for possible release on their new label. Although Shandar was Chantal's baby, Philippe had, in my opinion, a very important role. Chantal was the art snob, while he was a down to earth, very humorous and sincere guy. I think Philippe put up most of the money for Shandar to help his new wife realise her dream of running a record company."

Shandar's office was located at 40 Rue Mazarine, a small gallery space in Paris where Caux and Darcy worked together on a catalogue of immediate and future releases. The first to emerge were the recordings of the Ayler and Sun Ra Nuits concerts, which Shandar issued as separate two record sets. These were lavishly packaged in full colour gatefold sleeves, with the designs incorporating striking photography taken during the concerts by Philippe Gras and Claude Gaspari. At Aimé Maeght's suggestion, *Illumite*, a Stockholm recording taken from his mammoth *Uus Den Sieben Tagen*, and a three record set of Cecil Taylor's 1969 concert for the Fondation, were also scheduled for release. "The

admiration and passion that Maeght had for Cecil Taylor was almost sexual," laughs Caux.

Shandar provided an outlet for Caux's continuing passion for free jazz, permitting him to release new albums by the former Albert Ayler drummer Sunny Murray and the French piano player Francois Tusques. More importantly, the label gave him the opportunity to commission and release new works by many major names in the American minimalist movement, whose music up to that point had been virtually impossible to find on record. Early minimalist works issued by Shandar included Steve Reich's *Four Organs/Phase Patterns*, Philip Glass's *Solo Music* and Terry Riley's *Persian Surgery Dervishes*.

"The first piece of minimalist music I heard was Terry Riley's *Dorian Reeds*," explains Caux, pulling out a copy of the LP in question, which was issued in America in 1966 by the tiny Mass Art Inc label. "There was this famous shop called Lido Music on the Champs Élysées which was the main specialist record store in Paris during the 60s and it was there where I could listen to musicians like Terry Riley."

"I was a painter, and to me, other artists like Mondrian and Rothko were working in a similar way to the minimalist musicians. I thought of it as painting in sound. The repetition of the music was also appealing to me. It's more related to the fine arts than twelve tone music, it has more of a link."

By now Caux was working as a broadcaster for France Culture (the French equivalent of BBC Radio 3), and he persuaded the station to buy tapes for broadcast from La Monte Young, Tony Conrad and Angus MacLise. "The people at the radio station were somewhat conservative at first," Caux says, recalling the station's response to the extended durations of Young's drone works, "and although they liked it, they thought they would just play five minutes. In the end they played 30 minutes continuously."

Eventually Caux convinced Young to agree to record a Theater Of Eternal Music album for Shandar. After much discussion and fine tuning, the tapes were finally delivered in 1973. "La Monte is a nice guy," laughs Caux, "but he's also a special case and working with him on a project can become complicated. When we were working on the Theater Of Eternal Music record he became very difficult and did not want to hand the tapes over; he would always find some reason. It's one of the longest of the Shandar albums..."

As part of the deal Caux also agreed to release an album of ragas by the Indian classical singer Pandit Pran Nath, who at the time was guru to La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela and Terry Riley. "He [Young] was very much under the influence of Pandit Pran Nath," remembers Caux. "When Pandit had had enough he just got up and stood by the door, which meant that he wanted to leave. So La Monte just had to say goodbye to everyone and they would leave together. On one occasion Pandit stood up to leave and La Monte draped his coat over his shoulders. Pandit simply shrugged it off and let it fall to the floor, and La Monte had to pick it up and put it back. It was kind of weird."

Young's devotion to his guru, however, was completely genuine, as he explained to Jacqueline and Daniel Caux in 1970: "Sometime after our first meeting he asked me to become his disciple. I accepted on the condition that I could continue my own work, which he didn't think would be a problem. There was a ceremony and I became his disciple in the knowledge of the Indian tradition. Now he can admit me to certain secret traditions which cannot be revealed to ordinary students. These are the sort of things that are transmitted from guru to disciple in the oral tradition for centuries. My studies with Pandit Pran Nath have been very precious for me, they still are. They've been one of the greatest musical experiences of my life."

In any event, and as Caux points out, Young's relationship with Pran Nath mirrored the great singer's own experiences as a young disciple. "Pandit Pran Nath told me how he used to practise singing continuously," Caux continues. "He would often practise during the night for some nine hours while his guru Abdul Waheed Kahan slept. During the years when he served his guru he hardly slept, as disciples are not permitted to sleep while their guru is awake, only dozed. Having to work and serve his guru during the day, the only time he had to practise was when the man slept."

Another minimalist musician first championed by Caux was Charlemagne Palestine, who he invited to perform at Michel Guy's Festival D'Automne in 1974, a riotous celebration of the arts that became the natural successor to the Nuits De La Fondation Maeght concerts. "I told France Culture to record Charlemagne Palestine's Festival D'Automne performance because it was important," explains Caux, a sentiment supported by Philippe Gras. "People who were working in the same direction like Philip Glass and Steve Reich would have been nothing without Festival D'Automne," he asserts. "Steve Reich comes to France every year. He can make the piece he wants, and it started here through Shandar and Festival D'Automne."

One of the projects that brought Palestine, Caux and Darcy closer together was the tape of piano music Palestine had brought to Paris, which he called *Strumming Music*. "We loved it," smiles Caux, "so we put it out on Shandar."

"*Strumming Music* came from a master [tape] that I recorded in my red and gold loft in Soho with a few regular concerts for my friends and neighbours during the mid-70s," recalls Palestine. "That became the first time the outside world would hear the strumming phenomenon played as a concert piece."

Released in 1975, *Strumming Music* was the last great Shandar record. Caux was still involved, but other projects were now taking priority, and the running of the label was left to Chantal Darcy and Philip Lette. Under their leadership, Shandar released an idiosyncratic sequence of records, taking in electronic composition, Middle Eastern music and post-Gong psychedelia, by Dashiell Hedayat, Vincent Le Masne and Bertrand Porzot and Ragnar Grippe. There was also Abed Azze's *Epic Of Gilgamesh*, a boxed two record set that, although attributed to Shandar, bore a label that read Le Roseau. None of the records sold, and Shandar slid into decline. One day in 1979 the cellar underneath the gallery in Rue Mazarine flooded, a catastrophe that destroyed most of the label's vinyl stock and several master tapes. The gallery folded soon after and Shandar was no more.

More than two decades on, Charlemagne Palestine believes that market forces were ultimately responsible for the demise of the label. "Chantal and Philippe were lovely people," he states, "but they had no head for business and the new business art scene was quickly changing the face of modern art. Utopic projects like Shandar disappeared in little perfumed clouds of smoke, and tough, ambitious business artists, dealers and collectors started to make their killing in the art and stock markets."

"Chantal was the main person who was holding the label together, but when she lost interest and Maeght died [in 1981], it fell apart," sighs Caux. "The new regime that took over the Maeght Foundation were more interested in dealing with fine arts. They didn't really care about Shandar." □ Thanks to Matt Robin and Ann Oliver for translations. Albert Ayler's Nuits De La Fondation Maeght 1970 has just been reissued on Water. For more information on Philippe Gras's photography, go to www.eye-control.net

