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## Andy Thurlow's Anarchestra: Traditional Musical Paradigms Brought into Question: An Annotated Bibliography

Alex Moulton  
*University of Denver*

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## **Andy Thurlow's Anarchestra: Traditional Musical Paradigms Brought into Question: An Annotated Bibliography**

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ABSTRACT

Joining the words Anarchy and Orchestra, Thurlow's inventive ensemble, Anarchestra breaks down barriers to musical experience. Thurlow seeks to make a musical experience that everyone can participate in. Thurlow creates anarchy by calling out several musical paradigms – that music is something other than sound over time, that it needs to follow rules of tonality, and that musicians must be absolute experts in their craft. Thurlow invents his own instruments, and his instruments are designed to be easy to play and free players from any preconceived notions when it comes to making music. These instruments have no history or methodology of learning. Thurlow is inspired by Harry Partch and his work represents the largest work of outsider musicianship since Partch.

Anarchestra. "Anarchestra – Our Mission." Home page. Accessed November 2, 2022.

<https://www.anarchestra.org/our-mission>.

Anarchestra is both the instruments created by Andy Thurlow and the thousands of people that have played on them. Anarchestra has three ideals, Participation, Experimentation, and Access. Instrument video demonstrations by Andy Thurlow himself, a documentary, and interviews are all included on the website to support Anarchestra's claims. The website for Anarchestra is the first place someone should go to learn about the musical art.

Anarchestra. "Batur." Bandcamp, October 1, 2014.

<https://anarchestra.bandcamp.com/album/batur>.

An album released by Anarchestra on October 1, 2014. This album has 15 unique tracks all sharing the same name, "Batur ##." Songs are heavily influence by rhythm and groove. Instrumentation is entirely unique to the album and the group as the physical instruments were designed and built specifically for the style of music. Anarchestra is self-published through an online media sharing website, Bandcamp. Thurlow releases the tracks for free following the publishing conditions of Bandcamp. Thurlow tries to distribute the music freely to follow his anti-commercialization of art principals. Batur is a prime example of music and creativity that puts into question the traditional paradigms of western music because it sounds much different than traditional western music.

Anarchestra Instruments. "anarchestra: Stigo and Klydd." Youtube. November 8, 2016.

<https://youtu.be/0DbcWfb-Hng>.

Andy Thurlow presents and demonstrates a new instrument he invented called Stigo and Klydd. Stigo is the "string box" and foundation of the instrument. Klydd is the percussive thumb levers perched on top and center of the box. Named after Walt Clyde Frazier and Igor Stravinsky, Thurlow created an instrument reminiscent of the primitive sounds in Rite of Spring. This instrument rejects the western culture of locking one's self in a practice room to perfect the performance on an instrument.

Bohlman, Philip V. "Diaspora." *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deane Root. Accessed 2 Nov.

2022. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

There are four key configurations of history that diaspora produces. Myth or sacred journey, overpopulation/political repression, conquest/colonialism, and transnationalism all are part of history of diaspora in some configuration. Bohlman uses musical examples and studies from cultures that were separated from the “home” region for whatever reason to demonstrate the history of music in diaspora. Music is a key indicator in identifying cultures that were separated. Bohlman is an Ethnomusicologist and teacher at University of Chicago. Thurlow believes that music should be accessible to all people, including those outside any musical culture, and has created something that doesn’t exist in any culture. It holds similarities to music in all cultures but is entirely unique.

Chusid, Irwin. *Songs in the Key of Z: the Curious Universe of Outsider Music*. Chicago: A Cappella, 2000.

“Outsider Music” is a term coined by Irwin Chusid, inspired by the artwork of those that make beautiful sculptures and paintings outside of the tradition of western art. It is hard to define “outsider music,” because many of the people that make music outside of the music industry are both worth listening too and work to have success and be noteworthy. Chusid includes music written by artists mentioned in the book that are all worth listening to. Chusid would agree with Thurlow that music is gatekept by western traditions. Thurlow has released over 34 albums with Anarchestra containing music that is “outside” the norms of the music industry or the classical tradition.

Cutietta, Robert. “Why Is There Such a Mismatch between Academia and the Music Industry?” *College Music Symposium* 52 (2012). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26564880>.

Robert Cutietta gives a speech to the College Music Society, revealing his secret double life as both classical guitarist and composer a rock bassist. In both scenarios his colleagues would have discouraged pursuing either career path – each leading to a dead end. He even admits he might give the same advice to his own colleagues. The clean separation between music industry and music academia reveals both cultures have barriers separating those within from those without. This barrier exists within two giant pillars of music. An even bigger barrier separates listener from performer. Thurlow would agree with Cutietta on the clear barriers between musicians and music forms. Thurlow seeks to break down the barriers between musicians and non-musicians.

Gaare, Mark. “Alternatives to Traditional Notation.” *Music Educators Journal* 83, no. 5 (1997): 17–23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399003>.

Mark Gaare briefly summarizes the history of musical notation and acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of modern musical notation. He also points out some modern musical notations alternative to the standard five-line staff and quaver-driven notation. Guitar, accordion, and keyboard tablature, digital styles like midi, and digital piano roll are all modern takes on an attempt to make dictating an aural art style easier to read and understand. Gaare does not claim any notation system to be superior to the traditional notation, nor does he rank systems in order of best to worst. He identifies the limitations of each. Instruments in Anarchestra don’t always fit within the limitations of traditional notation. Gaare’s article is good evidence that “outsiders” with no music experience will see more musical success in an aural tradition with no sort of musical notation.

Lindley, Mark. "Equal Temperament." *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deane Root. Accessed 2 Nov. 2022. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

Equal Temperament is regarded as the normal tuning of the western 12-note chromatic scale. Keyboard instruments and pianos are defaulted to this method of tuning. Piano tuners traditionally used a 2:1 pitch class tuning system, where each semitone is exactly 100 cents from the next and octaves are 1200. Most piano tuners now depart from that method to achieve a smoother sound since most octaves are more than 1200 cents. Anarchestra's instruments are unique to the ensemble and built by Andy Thurlow. Thurlow will, depending on the musicianship level and type of participant, often adjust the tuning of his instruments. For the non-musician the instruments are typically tuned to a pentatonic scale. With more advanced musicians, he will tune the instruments to a microtonal temperament. All with the goal to make the experience accessible and experimental to the participants.

Parker, Sylvia. "Claude Debussy's Gamelan." *College Music Symposium* 52 (2012). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26564874>.

The Paris Exposition Universelle in 1889 celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French revolution. The world fair brought with it many cultures and music, including the Indonesian Gamelan which excited Debussy. Timbre, tuning, polyphonic layering, and rhythmic structure are the foundational features of the gamelan. Sylvia Parker, ethnomusicologist at the University of Vermont, analyzes Debussy's *Pagodes* under the lens of these four musical features. Similar to this analysis of Debussy's music, Andy Thurlow's music from the Anarchestra can be analyzed by timbre, tuning, polyphonic layering, and rhythmic structure. His instruments have unique and primitive timbres, tuned equally and microtonally in temperament, layered in polyphonic texture, and have rhythmic intensity.

Partch, Harry, and Horace Schwartz. *The Harry Partch Collection. Volume 1*. New World Records 806212. CD. 1997.

Andy Thurlow cites Harry Partch as the last instrument maker since Anarchestra to reinvent western musical instruments. This album contains the Eleven Intrusions, Castor and Pollux: A Dance for Twin Rhythms of Gemini, Ring Around the Moon, Even Wild Horses, and Ulysses at the Edge. Thurlow is even further inspired by Partch's music when he names his albums and tracks after the order of Eleven Intrusions. Tracks on Anarchestra's *Batur* are entirely named after the album.

Steveket. "Anarchestra: "um . . . yeah, so I did this"." Youtube, September 3, 2014. [https://youtu.be/\\_yJSSnu3Le0](https://youtu.be/_yJSSnu3Le0).

This video is the documentary of Anarchestra. This contains the mission of Anarchestra, interviews with Thurlow, instrument introductions and demonstrations, and video example of a group participating in Anarchestra. This showcases Thurlow's mission with Anarchestra, the ideals, and shares how his music puts into question traditional musical paradigms.

Sun, Cecilia. "Experimental Music" *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deane Root. Accessed 2 Nov. 2022. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

Like "outsider music," Experimental music is a term used to describe the movement in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century characterized by opposition to traditional and academic practices of

performance, composition, and aesthetic. The experimental music movement was piloted by American composers Charles Ives and Henry Cowell. Experimental composers were quickly adopted into the world of academia and lost their “outsider” status. Anarchestra is self-identified as an experimental music group. Thurlow’s instruments are a testament to the term “experimental,” as most of his instruments are the result of answering the question, “what makes sound?”