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Anthology of Text Scores by Pauline Oliveros, ed. by Samuel Golter and Lawton Hall (review)

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Who will end the silence about women composers in standard music textbooks? Who will take steps to close the gender gap that still exists in our musical community? We will.

Anthology of Text Scores. By Pauline Oliveros. Edited by Samuel Golter and Lawton Hall. Kingston NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2013. 218 pp.

DOUGLAS COHEN

On the morning of September 11, 2002, I found myself participating in a performance of Pauline Oliveros's *The Wheel of Life* (1979). The emotional wounds were still strong for most New Yorkers on this first anniversary of the fall of the World Trade Center. As the bells rang at the time each plane crashed into the towers, my friends and I lay on our backs in a circle, heads facing inward, and listened. The listening led to synchronized breathing, the breathing to sounding, but we always came back to listening. Through this composition we were able to observe and share this moment of sorrow and remembrance while expressing our feelings communally.

The Wheel of Life is one of over one hundred compositions from the 1970s to the 2000s collected in Pauline Oliveros's *Anthology of Text Scores*, published by Deep Listening Publications. The common thread throughout is that it all begins with listening. This applies not only to a work like *The Wheel of Life*, which belongs to Oliveros's discipline known as Sonic Meditation, but also to those pieces composed expressly for concert performance or with specific musicians in mind, like *Thirteen Changes* (1986) for the experimental violinist/composer Malcolm Goldstein and *Sound Fishes for an Orchestra of Any Instruments* (1992).¹

The ever-present reminder to listen in Oliveros's work is not surprising to anyone familiar with her development of the practice known as Deep Listening. Similarly important but perhaps not as readily apparent is how the circle has been a central organizing image throughout her career. I had been aware of the presence of circles in Oliveros's work since studying the score to *The Wheel of Time for String Quartet and Digital Synthesizer* (1984), based on the Tibetan Buddhist *Kalachakra*, or reading *The Grand Buddha Marching Band* (1981), with its spiral mandala for a score.² The significance of the circle, however, has never been as apparent as here, and part of the credit needs to go to Lawton Hall for the expert design and layout of this book, with the beautifully rendered mandala score to the composition *Wind Horse* (1990) on the cover.

Mandala-like circles are a recurring image throughout this anthology, from the mellifluous *Lullaby for Daisy Pauline* (1980), with its singing of

1 Pauline Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations* (Baltimore MD: Smith Publications, 1972).

2 Pauline Oliveros, *The Wheel of Time*, *MusikTexte Zeitschrift für Neue Musik* 7 (December 1984): 17–23; Oliveros, *Deep Listening Pieces* (Kingston NY: Deep Listening Publications, 1990), 19–20.

mmm sounds at points interspersed with vowel sounds, to the elegiac *God Dog* (1989), a loving graveside ritual for circling voice, bell, and electronic drones.

The score to *Out of the Dark* (1998) interlocks four circles within a surrounding fifth. This extends to the performance with pairs of matched stings and optional other instruments at opposite sides of a circle surrounding the audience. In *Magnetic Trails* (2008) the circle represents the globe, with magnetic poles repelling and attracting polar opposite instruments, violin and piano, as they navigate a compass score with curving trails and a single bisecting line running north and south.

The circle is not the only image in the works of Oliveros presented in this volume, but it is a prevalent and welcome one. The enveloping strength and shared bond found in the circle can offer the security to give a person the courage to listen.