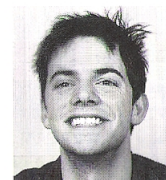
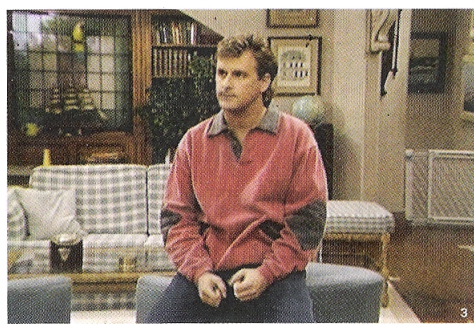


Nico Muhly



New York-based composer Nico Muhly has worked with composers ranging from Philip Glass to Björk, and has written pieces for the American Ballet Theatre and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His compositions have debuted at venues such as New York's Carnegie Hall, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Kitchen. *Mother tongue*, his second album, will be released in July.



From top: Page from Mark Ovenden's book *Transit Maps of the World* (Penguin, 2007). Moscow transit map. Paul Slocum, *You're Not My Father*, 2007, still from a color video, 3 minutes 54 seconds. Louise Bourgeois in her studio with her 1996 sculpture *Spider IV*, Brooklyn, 1996. Photo: Peter Bellamy.

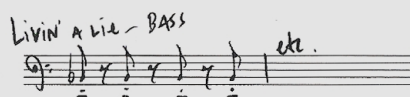
1 LOUISE BOURGEOIS (TATE MODERN, LONDON) First of all, she is ninety-five years old, which is incredible. Second, this survey was the most expensive art show I have ever been to; it was ten pounds and worth every penny. I have always found Bourgeois's giant spider sculptures (one of which, exhibited at the Tate, appears to be laying eggs over a giant cage containing a chair from her New York home and scraps of tapestry from her childhood) to be arresting, moving, and terrifying.

2 MARK OVENDEN, *TRANSIT MAPS OF THE WORLD* (PENGUIN, 2007) When I was a kid, I was completely fascinated by subway lines, particularly by the maps and diagrams detailing how they connected. Ovenden claims this book brings together "every urban train map on earth," and I have no reason not to believe him. It has, for example, many, many maps of the Moscow system, including one from 1977 that looks like an octopus made out of chopsticks. There are also some wonderful biological-looking maps of the Tokyo system.

3 PAUL SLOCUM, *YOU'RE NOT MY FATHER* ([HTTP://TRANSITION.TURBULENCE.ORG/WORKS/NOTMYFATHER/](http://transition.turbulence.org/works/notmyfather/)), 2007 This great video comprises clips of people reenacting the same brief scene from the television show *Full House*, played in succession over the original audio. In addition, a second sound track, composed of short samples of the original incidental music, plays on loop and crescendos over two iterations of the video set. What you get is an intricate layered piece reminiscent of early Steve Reich, but made with synthesized 1980s sitcom music. The oboe holding a high A throughout and the repetitive guitar are two of the most satisfying sounds I have heard in a long time.

4 STEVE REICH, *DANIEL VARIATIONS*, 2006 Commissioned by Carnegie Hall, this twenty-minute vocal piece—ostensibly in memoriam Daniel Pearl, the journalist kidnapped and murdered by Al Qaeda operatives in Pakistan—uses only four statements as its lyrics. Particularly effective is the second movement, which centers around a sentence, "My name is Daniel Pearl," spoken by Pearl to his captors as they videotaped him. By having the performers repeat this line slowly, Reich makes the naming do all the work that a story could. In his obsessive manipulation of simple phrases, he elegantly questions our desire to make sweeping narratives about terror and war.

5 THE-DREAM (FEATURING RIHANNA), "LIVIN' A LIE" I am obsessed with this song, which has a few things in it that are emergency-good. The length of the bass notes, for one, is very special; each is slightly longer than half a beat (see transcription below)—a subtle detail that makes the song feel urgent, even though it's not particularly fast.



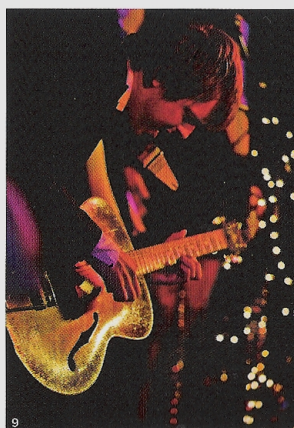
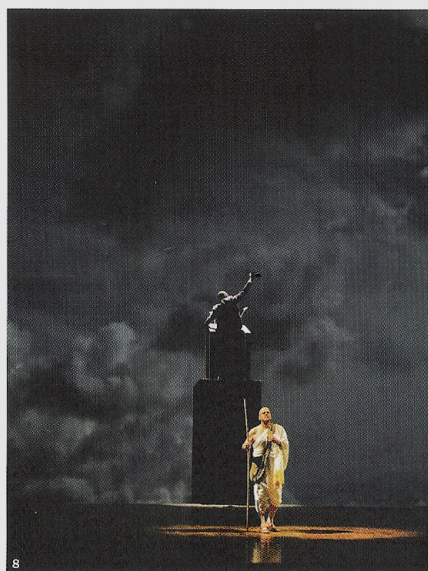
6 DAVID LANG, *THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL PASSION*, 2007 This piece won the Pulitzer Prize in music this year, but I would vote for it for prime minister if I could. A Carnegie commission, the work tells the story of Hans Christian Andersen's *Little Match Girl*, in which a young girl is beaten by her father and freezes to death on the street, as a *Passion*—which is to say, a narrative with built-in commentary. The vocal parts alternate between lyrical phrases and twitching, irregular, syllabic Morse code.

7 SON LUX, *AT WAR WITH WALLS & MAZES* (ANTICON, 2008) Under the name Son Lux, composer Ryan Lott makes incredible songs in which his own repetitive, plainchantlike singing is laid over grids of electronic sounds. The results are sort of formless electro-lieder, but the formlessness is their winning feature. The songs dissolve and emerge like a whale breaching in slow motion.

8 SATYAGRAHA (METROPOLITAN OPERA, NEW YORK) Directed by Phelim McDermott and designed by Julian Crouch, the Met's production this past spring of Philip Glass's 1980 opera seems at times like a lesson in the material possibilities of newsprint—the performers scrunch it up into balls, with which they pelt Gandhi, and use it to make puppets. The former action was, for me, a visceral reminder of laying fires in Vermont, where I was born; the latter transported me to the folk pageantry of the Bread and Puppet Theater in Glover. I always know an opera production is working for me when the correspondences are not musical or visual but emotional and, ideally, related to a specific childhood image. The final scene, in which an ensemble member enacts Martin Luther King Jr.'s orating while facing away from the audience on a podium above Gandhi (who sings a Phrygian scale thirty times or so), is one of the most hypnotic things I have ever seen presented onstage.

9 TEITUR, *THE SINGER* (CHEAP LULLABY, 2008) On his new album Faeroese singer-songwriter Teitur does what you wish all singer-songwriters would do: Write great songs, then strip away everything until only the barest necessities are left. The most effective song on the album is "Don't Let Me Fall in Love with You!," which is performed with only a few instruments, including a bass, a snare drum, and—hidden in the choruses—a glockenspiel and a viola. There is something so satisfying in seeing somebody who has the gift of songwriting resist the usual entrapments of the genre.

10 HILARY HAHN, *SCHOENBERG & SIBELIUS VIOLIN CONCERTOS* (DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON, 2008) I actually don't care for the Sibelius concerto, but I have a near-autistic obsession with a single note in the second movement. I have collected many recordings just to compare the way this note is carried out, and Hahn does it best: just the right amount of bite, just the right amount of vibrato, just the right amount of "riding" the orchestra. This note needs to be the queen sitting on the throne, and, as you can imagine, there is a long tradition of overdoing it. The way she plays it, Hahn shows herself to be the clever princess who secretly runs the show. □



From top: Philip Glass's *Satyagraha*, 1980, in a production directed by Phelim McDermott, 2008. Performance view, Metropolitan Opera, New York. Foreground: Gandhi (Richard Croft). Background: Martin Luther King Jr. (unidentified performer). Photo: Ken Howard. Teitur performing at Park Cafe, Oslo, March 8, 2008. Photo: Martin Damkinstensen. Hilary Hahn, Theatre Corona, Montreal, 2007. Photo: Mathias Bothor/Deutsche Grammophon.

