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adding machine: a musical was developed and received its world premiere at the next theatre company, artistic director jason loewith, on february 5, 2007.

adding machine: a musical was produced in new york by scott morfee, tom wirthafer, and margaret cotter at the minetta lane theatre, opening night february 25, 2008.

a note about the program
Program content is compiled by the production's Assistant Director, Lydia Jimenez, and edited by Nigel Maister. For a complete list of sources and works cited, please contact the Theatre Program.

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we are particularly indebted to Marian Todd, whose generosity made Adding Machine: A Musical possible

senior farewell
The UR International Theatre Program wishes the following students who have contributed to the Theatre Program over the course of their undergraduate careers and who are now graduating: good luck, godspeed, and many broken metaphorical legs in the years ahead. Stay in touch!
Priscilla Alabi - Mel Balzano - Leah Barish - Chris Bickford - Kevin Brice
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1/6
Elmer Rice wrote *The Adding Machine* in seventeen days. He regarded it as an opportunity to exorcize his feelings toward his father, who, unable to support his family, "failed to measure up to [his] standards of fatherhood":

"It was not as though I had vented my ill-will by portraying my father in an unfavorable light. For, though he had many of Mr. Zero's prejudices and malevolences, he was proud, self-assertive and anything but a conformist. My release is part of the mystery that enshrouds the whole creation of the play."

—Rice in his autobiography, *Minority Report*

This production was made possible, in part, by the Ellen Miller ’55 Endowment for Theater Productions.
A child, Elmer Leonard Reinzenstein had a passion for building blocks. With his "flyer set" of vari-colored stone blocks, Elmer built structures and edifices that convinced his mother he would grow up to be an architect. He did not know that the hundreds of books he read at the New York Public Library, a block away from his family's apartment on West 114th Street, would frame his perspective as a playwright. At the time, reading was an "escape and compensation for the dullness of daily life." In retrospect, Rice realized that "nothing in [his] life was more helpful than the simple act of joining the library."

Financial setbacks caused by his father's epilepsy forced Rice to leave high school prematurely. He accepted an office boy position in a law firm. Afterward and after earning his high school equivalency, he decided to attend law school. Rice pursued law not out of any interest in the subject, but with the perception that it was the only plausible career he could pursue. Law lectures satiated Rice's voracious literary appetite. Able to read a play in a two-hour lecture, Rice was offered a five-year Hollywood contract by Samuel Goldwyn. He moved to Hollywood in 1919, but was troubled by the differences between film writing and playwriting. He found film to be less of an individual artistic endeavor, and more of a collective, corporate endeavor that stifled originality.

For a short time (1935-1936), Rice was director of the Federal Theatre Project (FTP), a branch of the Works Progress Administration where the aim was to provide work for unemployed professional actors and other theatre artists during the Great Depression. A firm believer in free speech and vocal advocate against censorship, when the State Department declared that foreign heads of state could not be depicted on stage, Rice resigned in protest.

After his resignation, Rice founded the Playwrights' Company in 1938, with the prominent American dramatists Maxwell Anderson, S.N. Behrman, Sidney Howard and Robert E. Sherwood. The company agreed to produce any play written by its members on the single condition that production costs did not exceed $25,000. Plays budgeted above this amount were not produced. Will Pickens (Sound Designer) was privileged to have designed the UR International Theatre Program's first musical, Hello Again, David Bragen's The Happy Dutchman, The Illusion (both at the URITP and Geva Theatre Center), George F. Walker's Suburban Motel, and The Colonel by Wrachso Boytchev, Geva Theatre Center: The Music Man, Cabaret, A Marvelous Party, Key West, and That Was Then. Broadway: Death of a Salesman (Barrymore Theatre), That Championship Season (Jacobs Theatre), The Importance of Being Earnest, President (American Airlines Roundabout Theatre). Off-Broadway: Evolution (Cherry Lane), That Hope Change Thing, Sweet and Sad (The Public Theatre), Completeness, Burruh Port Boys (Playwrights Horizons), Forcified From the Beatles, Black Snow, Non-Play (The New Ensemble), Benefactors, I Never Sang for My Father, Heroes, and Beasley's Christmas Party (Kean Company). Regional credits: Water by the Spoonful, Anthony and Cleopatra (Hartford Center Stage), A Time to Kill (Arena Stage), Richard III, Comedy of Errors, Cymbeline, and Macbeth (Chicago Shakespeare Theater). Will mixed the original Off-Broadway production of Adding Machine: A Musical. www.willpickens.com. Will is a UR International Theatre Program Associate Artist.

Elliot Reeland (Choreographer) is a Brooklyn-based director/choreographer/artist and holds a BFA in Dance from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Recent Work: Into the Woods (Asst. Choreographer, Centerstage/Westport); Union Square (Ens. Dancer, 80 St Marks); West Side Story (A-Rab; Dir: David Grabarkewitz, El Paso Opera); Let It Rain (Director, NYU); The Daughter of the Regiment (Soldier, dir. Sean Curran, Opera Theatre of St Louis); Jennifer the Unspecial (Director & Choreographer, NYU), CIRCUTCs (Dancer, Patricia Noworol Dance, German Tour). Elliott has also taught and choreographed for New York University, First Stage Children's Theatre, The Arrowhead Broadway Company, Ballet School of Stamford, Boston Ballet, NYU's GMTWP and Milwaukee Skylight Opera Theatre. His own dance work has been shown at Joe's Pub, The 92nd St Y, Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, and around Wisconsin.
artist bios

JOHN BAXINDINE (Music Director) is an internationally successful arranger and pianist specializing in musical theater. Credits include: International: Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (New Arrangements/Oberndorfer, US, UK Tours), I Love a Piano (Music Director, Japan Tour), Der gare Starn (Arrangements/Oberndorfer, Australia Tour). Broadway: Chance and Change (Oberndorfer, Supervision), Other NYC: Yank! (York Theatre). The Mystery of Edwin Drood (20th Anniversary Concert), The Fiddler (FringeNYC 2006). Assistant to orchestrator Jonathan Tunick: Cy Coleman’s The Great Oysterman (Prince Music Theater), Meet John Doe (Ford’s Theater), Paradise Found. Other regional: Paradise (Philadelphia premiere; Barrymore Award nomination), Kathie Lee Gifford’s Saving Annie (White Plains PAC), Pal Joey, Casino Paradise, Jamaica (Prince Music Theater). Arranger for Donna McKechnie, Christiane Noll, Hampton String Quartet, etc. Recordings: Rupert Holm’s Swing, John graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University, where he received the Thomas Temple Ford Prize for his groundbreaking thesis on Leonard Bernstein’s The添加机器.

MARRSHA GINSBERG (Set and Costume Designer) Previous work with Nigel Maister at UR: sets and costumes: The Puzzle Locker (David Hancock); Suburban Motel (George Walker); sets: Gorky’s The Lower Depths. Recent theater work: Map of Virtue (13P); Er Nicht als Er zu mit Robert Walser), Meetfactory, Prague; Our Class (dir. Blanka Zizka; Wilma Theater); Tchaikovsky (David Levine; Lumino Festival, Mass MoCA, Watermill Center); Blue Flower (ART; Elliot Norton Design Award); Telephone (Foundry Theater, NYC, Obie-award); Lavishious Something (Women’s Project/Cherry Lane); Bleakhouse (Bauhaus Festival, Theaterhaus Jena); Kafeneion (Athens/Epidauros Festival); Knock-Out (Tsha Theater, Hamburg; Theaterhaus Jena); Opera: with Ken Rus Schoen: It Happens Like This (Guggenheim Museum, Tanglewood Music Center), Prosperina (Spoletto Festival USA), with Christopher Allen: Phantom (Stadshaus Hannover), Die Entfuhrung aus dem Serail (Theater Basel); Immeno (Glimmerglass Opera); Carmen (Nationaltheater Mannheim); Sorca Pradone, Rita & Pauvre Motel (San Francisco Opera); In Mother’s Shade (Orchestra); with Roy Rallo: Arrangements on Naouss (Opera National de Bordeaux); Methusalem Projekt, Don Pasquale (Nationaltheater Weimur); La Finta Giardinera (San Francisco Opera); Elektra, Bluebeard’s Castle (Long Beach Opera). Exhibits: Solo: "Pavlov’s Lab and other rooms" at Gallery Magnus Müller, Berlin; "Design Life Now" National Design Triennial, Cooper Hewitt Museum, ICA Boston, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. Grants: NEA/TCG Early Career Design Fellowships; MacDowell Colony Fellowships. Education: MFA, NYU Tisch School of the Arts; Visual Arts at Whitney Independent Study Program; BFA, Cooper Union. Marsha is a UR International Theatre Program Associate Artist.

THOMAS DUNN (Lighting Designer) designs lighting for architecture, dance, theater, and visual art venues in the US and abroad. Previous Todd Theatre productions include: Suburban Motel, The Illusion, The Haairy Dutchman, 365 Days/365 Plays, Light the Lower Depths, and Killer Joe. Other University affiliations include: Auburn University, Bard College, Florida State University and Fordham University. Thomas is the recipient of a 2009 Kevin Kline Award for Outstanding Lighting Design on The Little Dog Laughed (The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis), as well as a 2007 Bessie Award for Lighting and Visual Design on Ноттинг Импортанты (DD Dorville’s human future dance corps). He was educated at Bennington College and Yale School of Drama. Thomas is a UR International Theatre Program Associate Artist.

cast

mr. zero ...... andrew polec iv
mrs. zero ...... katie lewis
daisy dorothea devore ...... zoe netter
shrdlu ...... chris urquiaga
the boss/the fixer/charles ...... jacob goritski
mrs. one/mae/prisoner’s wife ...... leah mould
mrs. two/betty/matron ...... christine m. rose
mr. one/prisoner ...... brian gialdole
mr. two/prison guard ...... andrew spitzberg
ensemble ...... christina graham & travis kohler

band

piano/conductor ...... john baxindine
keyboards ...... jesse lozano
percussion ...... daniel lyons

musical numbers

prelude
something to be proud of
harmony, not discord
office reverie
moving up in numbers
in numbers (reprise)
the party
zero’s confession
hamster and eggs
didn’t we?
was a fool
gospel according to shrdlu
dead march

intermission

a pleasant place
shrdlu’s blues
daisy’s confession
i’d rather watch you (reprise)
freedom!
freedom! (reprise)
the music of the machine

background: the original production of elmer rice’s the adding machine
The Occupy Movement began on September 17, 2011 in Zuccotti Park, a privately owned park in New York City’s financial district. Activists protesting social inequality and corporate influence on government occupied the park in a tent encampment until November 15, when it was dismantled by law enforcement. Following Zuccotti Park’s example, numerous Occupy demonstrations were formed in cities across the United States and around the globe. The temporary encampments of the Occupy movement, evoking as they do the tent cities of the displaced, lacked—certainly in their beginnings—a formalized social structure. The freedom and improvisation of these ad hoc communities soon necessitated the establishment of rules and hierarchies to ensure peaceful, sound and sanitary cohabitation.

Joshua Schmidt (Composer/Co-librettist) is a Milwaukee-based composer/sound designer. Schmidt believes The Adding Machine “to be a romantic comedy; a very, very dark romantic comedy that explores one simple question: What is a life worth living.” His other works include: A Minister’s Wife, which received six Joseph Jefferson Award nominations and two awards: Best New Work (Musical), and Best Supporting Actress (Liz Baltes); Whida Peru, a one-act monologue in music that served as the second act of INNER VOICES: 2010; and The Gift of the Magi, which premiered in 2010 at The American Players Theatre. Schmidt’s work has been featured in venues across the US. He created the sound design for the UR International Theatre Program production of Kaufman and Hart’s You Can’t Take It With You (2008; dir. Susanna Gellert).
In a letter written on March 25, 1938, Todd Union President, George Corwin, assured the son of George W. Todd that even after his father’s death, “as long as our student union shall function on this campus, [his] name shall be perpetuated in the hearts and minds of this institution.” Decades after his death, and decades after the building’s transformation from student union to Theatre Program home (the conversion of the union dining hall to black box theatre was funded by Todd’s daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Conolly Todd; his granddaughter, Marian Todd, underwrote the piano used in this production), our production of *Adding Machine* leads us to consider more than the name of our benefactor.

With his brother Libanus, George W. Todd conceived and commercialized the Todd Protectograph, a machine designed to protect against the fraudulent alteration of checks. The early machines embossed an ink imprint into the body of the check paper that stated a limiting amount. A check written for $8.26 embossed by the Protectograph would read, “Not over $9.” Improved design soon permitted the embossing of exact amounts. The use of bank checks was not a common practice at the time, but a wave of forgeries and check “raisings” swept the country in the early 1900s. Skilled forgers, called “draft raisers,” would increase the amount of genuine bank drafts a hundred, even a thousand times their original amounts. Thus, the Todd Protectograph Company enjoyed rapid growth in its first decade, and score. He removes any pauses that occur between these repetitive phrases, causing Mrs. Zero’s natural speech rhythms to become “heightened, relentless and nagging.” The dissonant intervallic clusters of the music through which these repetitions are expressed further contribute to the mood of exasperation and discord. The entire libretto is created of phrases and dialogue from Rice’s text that are musically enhanced by the composer.

Just as Schmidt’s musical additions heighten the emotional content of Rice’s text, so he and his co-librettist’s subtractions also function to amplify the expressionistic element of the work. In the original play, “the girl in the window” is named Judy O’Grady, and she appears in a graveyard with a “young man,” with whom, the text suggests, she will have sex. Judy has recently been released from prison and discovers the gravestone of Mr. Zéro, who was responsible for her being “sent to the hoose-gow” for six months. The audience sees “the girl in the window” interact with others in a real environment, whereas in the musical, she only gets a passing (but critical) mention from Zero and by Mrs. Zero. The musical’s “girl in the window” is a figment that exists exclusively in Zero’s mind; our perception of her is formed by Zero’s representation of her. Her lack of physical definition and representation in the musical give a director the opportunity and freedom to expressionistically represent this figment and thus build on the psychological portrait of repression that is unique to Mr. Zero.

Jason Loewith (Co-librettist) is Executive Director of the National New Play Network, an alliance of not-for-profit professional theatres that fosters the development and production of new plays. He is a Jeff and After Dark award-winning producer, director and writer. He served as Artistic Director of Chicago’s Next Theatre Company from 2002-2009, during which time he directed area premieres of Paula Vogel’s *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, Lynn Nottage’s *Fugitive*, Theresa Rebeck & Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros’ *Omnium Gatherum*, and revivals of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* and *Measure for Measure*.  

Continued on page 17
a note about shrdlu

shrdlu’s name is the second half of the typographic sequence “ETAOIN SHRDLU,” a phrase born out of the keyboard arrangement on Linotype machines. Linotype machines were hot metal typesetting machines with which newspapers and magazines were printed from the 1880s until the 1970s (when computer typesetting and offset lithography made them obsolete). In hot metal typesetting, molten type metal is used to make a mold with a line of raised letters, called a slug, which presses ink to paper. The letters on the Linotype machine were arranged to reflect their frequency of use in the English language. ETOAIN SHRDLU are the twelve most frequently used letters in English, and so composed the first two vertical columns on the right side of the machine’s keyboard. When a typographical error was made, the Linotype operator was unable to backspace to delete it. But to re-type the line, he had first to finish the line of type to eject the incorrect metal type slug. To finish the line, the quickest method was to “run down” the first two columns on the keyboard with a finger: producing the phrase ETAOIN SHRDLU. Sometimes, the line would inadvertently not be discarded, and so the phrase would appear erroneously in publications.

the elysian fields

he classical Greek conception of paradise and the afterlife, where, as Shrdlu says, “only the most favored remain,” is the Elysian Fields, a place where gods, heroes and the righteous eternally reside. Homer writes in the Odyssey: “men lead an easier life than anywhere else in the world, for in Elysium there falls not rain, nor hail, nor snow, but Oceanus breathes ever with a West wind that sings softly from the sea, and gives fresh life to all men.” In the Odyssey, Elysium is not a realm of the righteous dead, but a paradise where heroes live eternally under the rule of Rhadamanthos, son of Zeus. In Pindar’s Odes, those who lived righteous lives on Earth reside in Elysium after death, where they “receive a life free from toil… in the presence of the honored gods,” and “enjoy a life without tears,” where “flowers of gold are blazing.” Like Homer and Pindar, Rice envisions the Elysian Fields as a “pleasant place,” however, admittance is not exclusive to the righteous, but also, in defiance of Shrdlu’s religious dogma, “the basest of sinners.”

Prior to the employment of the adding machine, businesses sought “lightning calculators,” individuals who could mentally add long, wide columns of numbers at prodigious speeds and with complete accuracy. In the 1880s, the Académie des Sciences in France hired a committee to study lightning calculators in order to conceive methods to develop lightning arithmetic skills in accountants. Dorr E. Felt, co-founder of the Felt & Tarrant Manufacturing Company, another prominent producer of adding machines, blamed pen and paper calculating practices of “turning men into veritable machines,” and welcomed mechanical calculation as a humanizing force.

The Burroughs Adding Machine Company continued to thrive throughout the early 1900s. The company expanded its factory forces to manufacture numerous types of office machinery, including typewriters and check protection machines. As vacuum tube computers developed in the 1950s, the Burroughs Company designed and manufactured ElectroData, a decimal architecture computer for business computing. In 1962, Burroughs invented the revolutionary B5000, the first machine to contain virtual memory. Burroughs, as other computer companies were, was in intense competition with IBM and thus merged with Sperry in 1986 to form the computing company, Unisys. Unisys continues to manufacture computers today for banks, weather data services, and government purposes.
Numerous inventors developed mechanical calculating machines throughout the seventeenth century. Drawings by German astronomy professor, Wilhelm Schickard, in a 1623 letter to Johannes Kepler depict a “calculating clock” that could add and subtract six digit numbers. French mathematician Blaise Pascal invented the first commercialized calculator in 1641, and French watchmaker Rene Grillet and German mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz found inspiration from Pascal’s work.

William Seward Burroughs, a bank clerk born in Rochester, New York, built, manufactured and commercialized the adding machine for the American office in the late 1800s. Seward founded the American Arithmometer Company in 1886, later named the Burroughs Adding Machine Company.

In the American office, adding machines remedied the “long hours and slow, torturous business progress” of pen and paper bookkeeping. John S. Coleman, president of the Burroughs Corporation in the late 1940s remarked about the American office prior to mechanical data handling: “Bookkeeping, before the advent of the adding machine, was not an occupation for the flagging spirit or the wandering mind. It required in extraordinary degree, capacity for sustained concentration, attention to detail, and a passion for accuracy.” Data could now be figured faster, in larger quantities and with greater accuracy. As industry and businesses rapidly expanded, the amount of data needed to be figured increased. Businesses realized the efficiency value of mechanical data handling, and the adding machine soon became a staple in the American office. Furthermore, the adding machine enabled business functions that had before never been practiced, and the existence of data that before had never existed. Businesses now could easily keep daily ledger balances, daily cash balances, figure discounts, compute commissions, figure estimates and post perpetual inventory records. These basic calculations were often not figured because businesses did not realize the efficiency value of mechanical data handling, and the adding machine soon became a staple in the American office. Furthermore, the adding machine enabled business functions that had before never been practiced, and the existence of data that before had never existed. Businesses now could easily keep daily ledger balances, daily cash balances, figure discounts, compute commissions, figure estimates and post perpetual inventory records. These basic calculations were often not figured because businesses did not understand the value of mechanical data handling.

The Adding Machine

Rice’s The Adding Machine is regarded as an example of “expressionist” theatre. The word “expressionism” was first used in the 1850s to describe paintings of a “particular intensity” that strove “beyond the passive reservations of impressionism” towards a more violent, hetic, energetic creativity. Expressionist paintings dissolved conventional form, featured abstract use of color and evoked powerful human emotion. In 1905, a group of expressionist painters, including Erich Heckel and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner formed Die Brücke (The Bridge), a painting collective in Dresden. Franz Marc, August Macke and Wassily Kandinsky formed Der blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider, named after Kandinsky's 1903 painting) in 1912, a similar collective in Munich. This style of art evolved into German theatre, lead by Oskar Kokoshka with his 1909 play, Mörder Hoffnung der Frauen (Murder, the Hope of Women), Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller were other prominent German expressionist playwrights. Expressionism touched the American theatre in the 1920s, with Eugene O’Neill’s The Emperor Jones (1920) and The Hairy Ape (1922), and Rice’s The Adding Machine.

Elmer Rice scholar Anthony Palmieri defines expressionist theatre as a “form of artistic expression that aims to externalize inner experience. In [expressionist] theatre, the significant element for the dramatist is psychological. The playwright will try to dramatize the inward and otherwise hidden or disguised experiences of his dramatic persona. He will make use of the enacting of fantasies or memories, and will employ strange effects and weirdly distorted settings to drive home his nonrealistic aims.”

Following both Palmieri’s and Rice’s definitions of expressionism, the fragmented, subconscious dialogue between Mr. Zero and Daisy Devore in “Harmony, Not Discord” is an example of an expressionist device; though they communicate about the task in front of them, bookkeeping, the audience hears both characters express their fantasies and memories. Julia A. Walker says in Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre: “Before we see Zero and Daisy’s inability to make contact, we hear them fail to make contact with each other.” Their inability to hear what the audience hears communicates the characters’ emotional repression and inability to relate to each other on a social level.

Elmer Rice on expressionism

Though Rice’s The Adding Machine is widely regarded as an “expressionist work,” Rice himself was not well acquainted with this literary style: “An allegation that has persisted is that I was influenced by the German expressionists and even borrowed liberally from them. The fact is, though I had heard of expressionism, I had not read any of the German plays. I tried several times to define expressionism. In my memorandum to Digges [the first Mr. Zero]: ‘What we must convey… is a subjective picture of a man who is at once an individual and a type. In the realistic play, we look at the character from the outside. We see him in terms of action and actuality. But in the expressionist play we subordinate and even discard objective reality and seek to express the character in terms of his own inner life.’

Expressionism
How did you first encounter Elmer Rice’s *The Adding Machine*? What propelled you to musicalize Rice’s text?

One could say rather that the “Machine” chose me first. Adapting Elmer Rice’s 1923 expressionist juggernaut was the long-time dream of librettist, Jason Loewith. Apparently he had approached other composers with the project to no avail. When he finally inquired into my interest in the project in January of 2004, I was working as a sound designer on a show that he was producing at the Next Theatre Company in Evanston, IL, where he served as Artistic Director. Up to that point, I had never written a musical, nor did I envision myself writing one. I knew of Elmer Rice—his play *Street Scene* had been wonderfully adapted into a music theatre piece by Kurt Weill and Langston Hughes—but up to that point I had never read or seen or even heard of *The Adding Machine*. I didn’t hesitate. I said yes. I committed to the project. Then I read it....

Where did you begin?

The first music written for *Adding Machine* was “Daisy’s Confession.” This was before I met my wife—in my “single” years, tortured romantic that I was. I rewrote and re-orchestrated that song for a long time. Kept it secret, even. There are some difficult and explosive emotional moments in Rice’s play, but I have always felt that the act of openly articulating your love for another person when you have never done so before, is maybe the most profoundly frightening things many normal people ever experience.

Who is Mr. Zero?

Mr. Zero is the fundamental expression of human inability—psychological inability, lack of empathy, sexual inability, inability to interact with others, function in a career other than menial work, lack of vision, lack of work ethic—an encapsulation and reflection of all the worst of human behavior beyond sociopaths, psychopaths. He is who I am at my worst.

Can you consider a passage in the show, like, “Something To Be Proud Of,” and discuss how the music works technically to communicate content?

The lyrics for this song are cherry-picked phrases from Rice’s original scene one monologue, transformed. Each phrase has a natural rhythm—the natural rhythm of speech. Repetition of these phrases allows this rhythm to become iconic, groovy as it were. We splice in and out of these rhythms, which make it seem very complicated but actually it’s the heightened expression of natural speech rhythm (2’s and 3’s at different speeds). Taking out all the pauses in-between makes this rhythm relentless, even nagging. Harmonically, the music is actually very simple and basic, but I have only three instruments, so I embarked on a method of adding color and edge to the proceedings by playing with register (high notes/low notes), intervallic clusters (two notes or more, close together on the piano) which occur in parts of a measure, reflect the accentuation on natural rhythms of speech. Over time, I change one note of the overall “chord” of a particular sequence, and that changes the harmony of a section very gradually. These things in combination make the music seem extreme, which is exactly how Mr. Zero feels about his wife’s bitching about the movies. Movies—to friends—to “I hate you.” This music she sings is the equivalent of the feeling inside Mr. Zero’s head. It is his nightmare. The song is his hell. And she is articulating it.

Can you talk a bit about Shrdlu and his music? His music sounds very distinct from the rest of the score... Why is this? What are some technical characteristics of gospel music? Why does gospel/blues “work” with his character?

Shrdlu is Rice’s everyman: the prototypical American, lilly-white, church-going stereotype gone wrong—wrong as in matricide. You say it sounds distinct. I’d say each character has a distinct musical vocabulary, and that the consistency is that we grind all these musical styles through a filter—the very limited complement of piano/synth/drums as a means of unifying it all. Shrdlu sings gospel when secure in his faith; blues (at least 12 bar blues structure with very dense harmonies) when his faith is shaken. The two are related genres borne of the American experience. It made sense to me at the time, I guess. Daisy sings tin pan alley songs and pop ballads. Why? Why not. Rice wrote a play in seven wildly different scenes. Ten page monologues, naturalistic scenes, abstract scenes—the whole gamut laid out in dizzying complexity. It’s the hallmark of the play, and one could say the hallmark of the American experience: the melting pot where it all collides.

I’ve heard the music described as “Expressionist.” Can you define this style in terms of music? Why does this style of music work well with Rice’s text?

I don’t know what you heard. Someone tell me what “expressionist” music means, and I guess what I could do would be to point out several pieces in current and past history that would refute or support what you say. I wrote what I wrote without even thinking about it. Each song started as an emotional response to a scene, character, or mood, pulled from my own experience—my musical tastes and experiences—which are varied, and all relative to text.