George Lewis
Composer, performer, and experimental musician George Lewis is the John H. and Catherine H. Puck Foundation Professor of American Music at Columbia University in New York. His latest CD, "The diameter of a circle," has been released on the ECM New Series label.

1. STEVEN SCHICK (Park Avenue Armory, New York, February 18) Kurt Schwitters's Merzbuwelen (1927–32) is a sound poetry classic. Steven Schick's highly amplified interpretation during the Tune-In Music Festival, with video montages of giant images of Schwitters performed by Shahrokh Yadeegar and Rosa Karr, evoked a US mass media demonology, speaking in tongues.

2. MUSIC FOR MEETING (Roslyn, NY, March 20) One of the final events at the old Roslyn location featured performances by Christian Wolff, Takahisa Kosugi, David Behrmann, John King, Akim Carron, Ikue Mori, Marina Rosenfeld, Gordon Mumma, John La Barbara, and many others, all to celebrate the release of "Music for Meeting (New World)," a two-CD box set of pieces created by these incredible composers for the Cunningham company.

3. JOHN ZORN (David H. Koch Theater, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, March 25) John Zorn's monodrama La Machine de Frite (2000) took its title, as John noted, from "a drawing by Arman Artaud created during his last days in the asylum at Rouen...no text, no plot, and no stage directions." The present version, performed in New York, was accompanied by the electro声flammatory therapies Artaud undertook in the asylum.

4. MISHA MENGELBERG (Le Poisson Rouge, New York, March 25) Misha Mengelberg's Instant Composers Pool exemplifies the legacy of Mengelberg's associations with Fluxus and the famed "Notenlektor" gang (with Louis Andriessen and others) of the 1970s. Today's JCP functions as much as a family as a band, and you can hear the musicians sonically close ranks around their beloved leader.

5. OLGA NEUVIRTH AND THE TALEA ENSEMBLE (Boschman National Hall, New York, May 24) Olga Neuvirth's audacious yet subtle use of time always puts me on the edge of my seat, and I loved the Austrian Cultural Forum-sponsored performance of her music by the Talea Ensemble, one of today's hot contemporary music bands. In the midconcert discussion, she confessed her original intent to become a jazz trumpeter after listening to—who else?—Miles Davis.

6. MATANA ROBERTS AND MUHAL RICHARD ABRAMS (Community Church of New York, September 23) Well attended but rarely reviewed in major New York media is the ongoing concert series of the New York chapter of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. A highlight of this year's lineup was an evening of open improvisation by a quartet led by pianist-composer and AACM cofounder Muhal Richard Abrams, preceded by an extraordinarily introspective piece by saxophonist-composer Matana Roberts, featuring sudden, unexpected juxtapositions and interjections alongside subtle sonic marking. It came as no surprise to me that it was totally surprised by what happened onstage.

7. KAJA SAARIAARO, JEAN-BAPTISTE GARRIGUE, CARRILLA HORTIGA, AND MARGARET LEEHAN (Roslyn, NY, September 15) Considering Roslyn's humble origins in truckdriver Jim Shively's Tesla cell, the new four-hundred-seat venue on Roslyn's Atlantic Avenue is a perfect place for Brooklyn's Atlantic Avenue to celebrate. One of the first concerts featured innovative Finnish composer Kaja Saaritson's early work "Gaias," performed by virtuoso violinist Camilla Maria Hentinga with subtly textured music bands. The midconcert discussion, she confessed her original intention to become a jazz trumpeter after listening to—who else?—Miles Davis.

8. ANTHONY BRAXTON (Roslyn, NY, October 5–6) A highlight of Roslyn's weekend of Braxton performances was the world premiere of two acts from his opera "Trigun." This was Afrofuturism après la lettre; Braxton's portrayals of intergalactic imperialism have more in common with Doris Lessing than with Sun Ra, and the third-five-piece orchestra underlined the work of twelve amazing angels who portrayed characters with endlessly morphing identities.

9. TYSHAWN SORRY, OBLIQUE 1 (P Recording Studio, Detroit) This brand new recording by this young and widely admired percussionist, pianist, and trombonist gives it to you straight. Any peaks Sorry may have reached so far are merely prologue.

10. BURKHARD STANG, HOMMAGE À TUIR (Taanem Gallery) Stang is part of what he jokingly calls "the Third Viennese School," along with sound artist Christof Krumpner and video artist Billy Rose. His Hommage à Tui is part of a five-hundred-page compendium of his works, three CDs, and a DVD of video collaborations such as Rose and Martin Amsler. If you're going to pay homage to yourself, this is how you want to do it.
SVETLANA ALPERS is professor emerita in the History of Art Department at the University of California, Berkeley, and a visiting scholar at New York University’s Department of Fine Arts. Among the books she has written are The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century (University of Chicago Press, 1983) and The Variations of Art: Velázquez and Others (Yale University Press, 2003); she is currently at work on a book titled Roof Life. In 2007, she collaborated with James Hyde and Barney Kuklo on a series of photographic prints, Painting Them for Now: Fragments of Topolo at the Co’ Dojlid. Here, Alpers shares the book she took to be the best of 2011.

Architectural historian and critic ANTHONY VIDLER is dean and professor of the Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of the Cooper Union in New York. He is the author of numerous books, including The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhappy and Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism (both MIT Press; 1992 and 2008), respectively, and the curator of several exhibitions, including this past year, “Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling, Architect and Teacher” for the Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal and the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven. For this “Best of 2011” issue, Vidler discusses the book he felt was the year’s most significant.

Composer, performer, and experimental musician GEORGE LEWIS is the Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music at Columbia University in New York. Since the late 1970s, the work of this 2002 MacArthur Fellow has been central to the development of interactive computer music and improvisational sound. The author of A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music (University of Chicago Press, 2008), he is currently editing the first two volumes of The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies for Oxford University Press. In these pages, Lewis picks ten highlights of the year in music.

MAU IBA ELDAHAB is the director of Objectif Exhibitions in Antwerp, Belgium, where she has, over the years, curated solo shows by Hassan Khan, Michael Pontony, Norma Jean and Tim Etchells, and Patricia Esquivias and is now preparing an exhibition (which opens next month) with the Dutch artist and filmmaker Barbara Visser. This year she has been involved with several books for Steidlver Press, including From Berkeley to Berkeley and Circular Facts, as well as a collection of short stories by Khair as a monograph on the work of Chris Evans (both forthcoming). In this issue, ElDahab gives her top ten art picks of 2011.

Chief curator and deputy director of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid and, from 1991 to 2009, curator of Dia Art Foundation in New York, LYNN COOKE has organized numerous exhibitions worldwide, including the 1993 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh and the 1996 Sydney Biennial. Last year, she curated the major traveling retrospective of the work of Wim Wenders and co-organized “Alighiero Boetti: Game Plan,” which is currently on view at the Reina Sofia. For her year-end issue, Cooke offers her selection of the standout projects of the year. PHOTO: NICK GREENWOOD