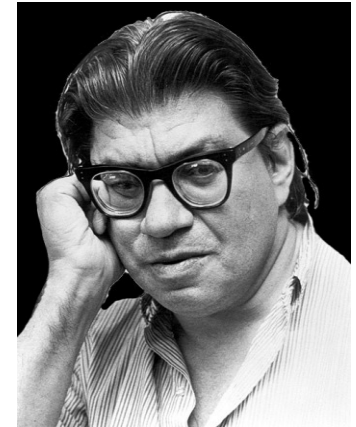


*A Journey through the world of*

# MORTON FELDMAN

*An Interview with Chris Villars*

**Zahra Partovi:** It's been quite some time that I have been a frequent visitor and an admirer of your Morton Feldman website. And now I am grateful you have agreed to this interview so that we can put pieces of the puzzle together and understand your 20-year journey into the world of Morton Feldman.



Of course I have many, many questions to ask you, but I would like to begin with this: What happened? Why and how were you so smitten with the music of Morton Feldman?

**Chris Villars:** I remember very vividly the first time I heard Varèse. It was on a vinyl LP – Robert Craft's Varèse disc in the Phillips Modern Music series. It was a shattering experience, hearing *Hyperprism* for the first time! My first encounter with *sound!* In Varèse's case, raw, loud, aggressive sound, but sound freed from the constraints of traditional musical composition.

It was the same with Feldman. His sounds just captivated me! Sounds free like Varèse, but so totally different – the *Feldman* sound! – soft, tender, and so beautiful! That never changed, I think, through all his various experiments with methods of composition. The sounds always came first, and were always *Feldman* – soft, gentle, beautiful!

People often say they don't understand Feldman. They ask how they should approach him. Eberhard Blum gave the answer – just listen! Listen, without traditional expectations or preconceptions, to his sounds. To paraphrase Feldman himself, let the sounds take you where *they* want to go, not where you anticipate or expect them to go. Once you “get” Feldman's music – which is very often the first time you hear it! – you're hooked! Then it almost seems that there is no other music! All that other stuff is something else! Feldman is *music!*

**ZP: Did you ever meet Feldman?**

**CV:** No, I never met him.

**ZP: When was the first time you heard a piece of his music?**

**CV:** The first time I heard his music was the late 1960's, possibly 1966, the time of his first visit to the UK when there were several concerts and radio broadcasts. That was where I first heard his music - on the radio. In the mid 60's I became very interested in contemporary music. At that time BBC Radio 3 was the place for that. The Controller of Radio 3 then was William Glock. He used the channel to actively encourage and promote contemporary music. Not just British contemporary music, he had a very healthy international perspective. There were major contemporary music broadcasts from around the world almost every night! So I first heard these soft, slow pieces by Feldman then, listening to the radio at home in a darkened room.

**ZP: What was the composition of Feldman's you heard for the first time in the 60s on the radio?**

**CV:** I believe it was *Two Pianos*, with Feldman himself as one of the pianists. There were other instrumental pieces as well, but *Two Pianos* is the only one I now recall.

I went to many concerts – contemporary and classical – with a school friend around that time, but I don't believe I heard any Feldman live then. I'm trying to remember when I did first hear Feldman live! Considering that I now often say that it's so much better to hear Feldman live rather than listen to recordings, I was remarkably tardy in following that advice myself! In fact, I think the first Feldman concert I went to was that given by the Barton Workshop in Amsterdam in September 2000, nearly 25 years after I first heard him on the radio! After that, I definitely went to *Crippled Symmetry* in London in October 2000, and then *For Bunita Marcus* also in London in March 2001. That performance – by Andrew Zolinsky – was a revelation! I sat quite close to the piano, just a couple of feet away, and could clearly hear all the wonderful resonances of the dying sounds! Wonderful! I was spellbound for 90 minutes!

**ZP: Your commitment to and passion for the music of Morton Feldman is astonishing and admirable. Would you mind speaking a little more about your love of his music?**

**CV:** It might be useful to compare Feldman with Cage. Of course, they were great friends, and their encounter was absolutely crucial to Feldman's development. But their musical aesthetics were poles apart.

I think that, for Cage, sounds were primarily *physical sensations*. His compositional practices – such as the use of chance and very long silences – were intended to separate sounds from each other and from the organisational principles of traditional music so that each could be heard as the unique physical sensation it was. By contrast, I think that for Feldman sounds were primarily *feelings*. He was not interested in separating sounds, but rather in finding new ways of combining them that would bring out and emphasise ever more intensely their inner core of feeling.

I think Feldman's music is firmly rooted in the North European romantic tradition. Beethoven and Schubert were amongst his heroes. He was concerned with meaning and feeling, and, in many pieces, addressed central themes of the romantic tradition, such as Love, and Death. *The Viola in My Life* pieces are love poems. *For Bunita Marcus* is a love poem, and *For Philip Guston* is an elegy of mourning for the death of his mother and his estrangement from his friend. Like so many others, I have a strong emotional response to Feldman's music. Ultimately, this core of feeling and meaning is why I love Feldman's music.

**ZP: We have all read many essays and articles and books on Feldman and have our favourites. Of all the scholarly and impressionistic writings about Morton Feldman, which have touched you the most?**

**CV:** John Tilbury's short but comprehensive notes on playing Feldman have always impressed and inspired me. These mostly appeared as CD liner notes. He has gradually elaborated them over the years. The first "On Playing Feldman" was one of the first texts to be collected on the website. I think I have collected the notes from all his major Feldman recordings since then. For me, they constitute an essential summary of the experience of playing and hearing Feldman.

I also particularly like the personal memories of individuals that met him briefly under various circumstances, such as those by Richard Bjorkman, Martine Cadieu, and many others. These brief glimpses of him are always touching and revealing I think.

**ZP: What was the first impetus for you to take on the task of creating a website on Feldman and did you have any idea how vast this site would become, visited by so many people from around the world?**

**CV:** The initial driver was my need to get some practice with web technology and computer database systems. I was working in IT and I needed to keep up with emerging developments.

**ZP: Why did you make it specifically a *Feldman* website?**

**CV:** I had begun to collect the increasing number of CDs of his music that had started to appear, and I couldn't find a listing anywhere of all that was available. So it was an obvious choice for a practice database. That sounds a bit mundane I suppose! It would be nice to be able to say I was inspired by my love of his music to start a site to honour and promote it, but it didn't happen like that! I had no idea that it would become "Feldman Central" – as someone once called it! – with all the features it now has, or that it would attract so many visitors, though of course still very low numbers compared with popular sites today.

**ZP: When did you launch the Feldman website?**

**CV:** The site was launched on January 7 1997. Initially, it just consisted of a list of works, a CD discography and a few links to other Feldman sites of interest. The other sections you see today were introduced gradually over the years. Mostly these new sections were suggested by fans emailing me with suggestions like, “Why don’t you have an LP discography as well as the CD one?” etc. Right from the start the site had a community of users who contributed in so many ways to its development.

**ZP: I have been very curious to know how you gathered your many visitors when you had just started your website. What’s your secret?**

**CV:** When you start a new website, you submit the address to various search engines to ensure it gets listed. AltaVista and Yahoo were the favourites when I started. Google came along a bit later. Back then, if you searched with keywords “Morton Feldman” not very much came up. So, once the “Morton Feldman Page” was there, it pretty soon got noticed by those interested. So, I guess you could say Morton Feldman was my secret! He famously claimed to have no secret. My secret was him!

**ZP: Which pages of the Feldman site are most visited?**

**CV:** The Feldman homepage is visited about 100 times a day. After this the most popular pages are, Texts (60 times a day), Forthcoming Performances (20), Bibliography (10) and Discography (9). The most popular general text is Sebastian Claren's Feldman chronology (5), and the most popular analytical texts are those by Francesco Sani (35), Tom Hall (15), and Magnus Olsen Majmon (15). The huge popularity of Francesco Sani's articles is very striking! The most popular media downloads are the premiere performance of *Chorus and Orchestra 2* (15), the films *Softly – A GIANT STEP trailer* (9), and *Feldman Sings* (8), then Jan Williams's Feldman interview (4). There is no commercial recording of *Chorus and Orchestra 2*, which perhaps explains the popularity of that download.

**ZP:** Who are the people who most visit your Morton Feldman site?

**CV:** Visitor numbers drop significantly during academic holidays. So I guess students are frequent visitors. Some popular texts are put on the site by academics specifically so that students can have easy access to them! Other than that I cannot tell who the visitors are.

**ZP:** How do you learn about the upcoming Feldman concerts?

**CV:** The most important source nowadays is personal communication. The site is now pretty well known, and many performers tell me directly about their upcoming concerts. Then I have a small but enthusiastic band of "scouts" in different countries, who let me know about any concerts they hear about in their territory! Oh, this is quite informal! I haven't gotten around to issuing badges yet! I think it's rather wonderful that, quite spontaneously, these people have set about helping me out! Without their contributions, the listing would be considerably shorter! I guess it is one of the themes

of our interview that the site is a collaborative venture. I just put it all together. Nearly all the material and information is provided by others.

**ZP: What is the reason for the popularity of Feldman's music in Europe?**

**CV:** One possible answer – that has been extensively researched by Amy Beal – is that, in the post Second World War period, America invested heavily in a programme promoting American experimental music in Europe, and, in particular, in West Germany. America funded concert tours, lecture tours, and academic residencies by composers like Cage and Feldman. Feldman spent an academic year in Berlin on an academic exchange grant. Through these encounters, he made many friends amongst important German academics and performers. These people continued to promote his music through their research and publications, their teaching, and performances. The result was that in Germany and other Northern European countries, Feldman's status as one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century was widely acknowledged at an early date. Only more recently has he come to be widely regarded in this way in America.

**ZP: I understand that there are over 200 visitors who have signed up to be notified about new MF recordings. Who are these Feldman fans who are so eager to know every new recording?**

**CV:** Yes, and do you know, the majority have been on the list for years! I mean, 10 years or more! Very few people ever leave the list. Some drop off because their email accounts stop working. And there are relatively few new joiners. The majority joined early on and have stayed with it!



Who are these people? There are a few I know who do set out to collect *every* Feldman recording! At least, every Feldman-only CD. *I* am one of them!! Having started, and collected all to date, it is a big, big thing for a collector to decide to stop!! But it does feel increasingly pointless. They will all end up in the recycling bin before too long I guess, as the CD finally dies its death!

However, the mailing list doesn't *only* notify about new recordings. I include brief announcements of "what's new?" on the website generally. I'm sure that is more valuable to many folk. It saves them having to keep looking, for example, at the list of texts, to see what has been added. The email tells them what's been added since the last update.

**ZP: You have an encyclopaedic knowledge of every aspect of Morton Feldman's life and music. How do you retain all these details in your head??**

**CV:** Well, that's easy! I don't retain them! In fact, I quite often don't even correctly recall what I've posted on the website! There is so much material gathered over the years that I just don't remember. So the trick is to "know someone who does know"! And that "someone" is most often a search engine or an index. The Feldman website itself has its own search facility. That means you can search the whole site, including all the texts, for any words or phrases. Then of course there's Google for searching more widely. As for indexes, Alan Nicholson's invaluable index to *Give My Regards to Eighth Street* is available on the website. This is indispensable for finding a particular quote, or whatever, in Feldman's writings. *Morton Feldman Says* and *Morton Feldman in Middelburg* both have indexes, though both are really only useful for looking up name

references. So, a combination of these resources enables you to find particular details quite quickly. I only really maintain in my head a very broad outline of things and the knowledge of where to look things up!!

**ZP: Coding and constantly updating such a vast website is no small task. Would you like to tell us about some of the joys and frustrations associated with that?**

**CV**: The joys are the satisfaction of discovering valuable new materials and bringing them into the public domain, and the gratitude that many folk express for the site and its various features. I guess the only frustration I feel is that I often think I shouldn't be doing it! I think a Feldman Foundation or Trust – like those that John Cage and Earle Brown have – properly funded and staffed would probably serve Feldman better. It would be able to better promote and encourage Feldman events and publications, in the way the Earle Brown Foundation funds concerts, for example. And it wouldn't have the problem of one day ceasing to be updated! I think that would better serve Feldman in the long run. But, of course, then I wouldn't have the fun I have running it myself! So maybe that's just a note for the future, and for me there are *no* frustrations!

**ZP: I understand that the content of your Morton Feldman website is archived for safekeeping at two major libraries. Which ones are they?**

**CV**: The first, in 2013, was the Bavarian State Library, in Munich, and the second, just starting this year, is the Ivy Plus Libraries consortium in the US.

A few years ago, with the content of the website growing, due to people's generosity in submitting material, more and more precious and unique, I began to worry about what would happen to it all when I stop updating it, as must inevitably happen one day! I talked about this for the first time in an interview with the pianist Ivan Ilić in 2013. Almost immediately I was contacted by the Bavarian State Library to negotiate the inclusion of the site in their permanent digital archive. That's the deal! They will preserve these materials permanently, carrying them forward through whatever technology developments occur. They took their first archive copy in July 2013, and have taken copies every 6 months since.

Just recently, I was approached by the Ivy Plus Libraries consortium about including the site in their extensive Contemporary Composers Web Archive. So, thanks to these institutions, preservation of the existing content is well catered for.

**ZP: Many people, like me, from around the world who share your love for the music of Morton Feldman are very grateful for your amazing contribution to the understanding of Feldman's music. This must be a very satisfying reward for your hard work.**

**CV**: Oh yes! Without that I would not have carried on! After all, at the end of the day, what does anyone do anything for? Isn't it, ultimately, to be praised for doing it? We need that satisfaction.

Philip Guston once asked, would Van Gogh have painted if he had been all alone? He answered, no, he had to have at least one person – in his case his brother, Theo – to give him moral support. Of course, he goes on to say that, for him, there

were times when that person was Feldman. I remember when I was making paintings, just 3 people around the world repeatedly expressed their appreciation. That was enough! I carried on! It's remarkable how little you need, but how essential that little is! So yes, that gratitude is a very satisfying reward for me, and also the reason the site is still there today!

**ZP:** In a sense, your Morton Feldman website serves as an online “Morton Feldman Society”. But since the possibility of having a Feldman foundation is slim due to the fact that there is no Morton Feldman trust as such, do you think someone, or a group of people can create a physical Feldman society somewhere where people can meet in person and share information and ideas?

**CV:** You are right, the website only exists in hyperspace! There is no contact between the people that use it. It's just a resource. So, yes, a group of enthusiastic fans – presumably based in or around a major centre – could form such a society. They could meet informally to share ideas, and also organise more formal events, such as chamber concerts, talks, joint outings to Feldman events, etc. It would only need a nucleus of a few dedicated enthusiasts!

**ZP:** In interviews, often the interviewer misses some very important questions! Would you kindly speak a little about the aspects of your involvement with Feldman's music and your huge operation and maintenance of the website dedicated to him?

**CV:** I am proud of three or four small things that I have had a hand in concerning Feldman's music. I say, “three or four,” because the fourth is still a work-in-progress!

I drew Feldman's publisher's attention to a small error in the published score of his early song, *Only*. Eventually they corrected it. Along with Steve Dickison, I was instrumental in bringing to light a recorded performance of Feldman's "lost" piece for electric guitar. The score of this was subsequently reconstructed by Seth Josel, and the piece is now widely performed. More recently, I drew the attention of several singers to, *An Exquisite Line*, the tiny piece for solo voice that Feldman wrote for Bob and Abby Friedman. The first performances of this have recently taken place. And more recently still, I have suggested and encouraged attempts to create scores for the two short piano pieces that Feldman wrote for the film, *Sculpture by Lipton*. Work on these is currently in hand. I hope it will eventually lead to their publication.

These are all very, very small things in comparison with Feldman's great masterpieces! But they are "little gems" which add to the richness of his catalogue I think.

The everyday operation and updating of the website does take up a lot of time, but it is a labour of love which I do willingly. I wouldn't grumble about any aspect of it! I love doing it!

**ZP: Would you please tell us about your own website. Were the two parts of the site – the Feldman and the Chris Villars – created together or at different times?**

**CV:** I added my first paintings page, and linked it to the Feldman page, about a year after the Feldman page was launched. Then, over the years, I gradually added various other things I had gotten involved with.

**ZP:** Would you please speak a little about your paintings. When were they painted and what were the inspirations?

**CV:** In 1973 I had a vision, an experience of brilliant light and intense emotion which lasted only a few seconds but which made a profound and lasting impression on me. At first the experience was quite amorphous, but soon I came to remember it in the form of a specific image in which I saw multiple meanings. I did several paintings at the time trying to pin down this image.

Twenty years later, in 1993, I got involved in painting some blown eggs with my family ready for Easter. While helping the kids with theirs, I decide to do one myself, and, without really thinking about it, found myself painting the egg with a division of blue sky above, green earth below, and, overlaid on it, that elusive image from my vision twenty years earlier! Straight away, I started making paintings on hardboard panels. I took up the image from the vision again, and used it in many different ways for years and years!

Over the years I produced over 400 paintings. Most of them were unsuccessful even in my eyes! That I went on painting as long as I did was due in large part, as I mentioned earlier, to the encouragement I received from a few fans I had acquired around the world!

As time went on there was a gradual shift away from the image of the vision. Eventually there emerged paintings, or groups of paintings, consisting of just monochrome panels. The end was in sight! I finally managed to stop making them in 2015.

When I look back at the paintings now, I feel that many of them should be thought of as sketches for much larger canvasses. Many, especially the later sets, would be more effective I think being much larger, say 6 foot by 4 foot. Imagine the Blum Memorial piece (3 red panels and a black one) like that. It might work! The reasons they were all the small size they are was, firstly, that being much larger would require me to be a committed artist, with a studio and all the rest. In fact they were just a part-time hobby. I called myself a “Sunday painter,” not an artist. Also, I intended them for – if anything – friends with normal sized homes, where giant panels would be impossible. They were the scale of most people’s domestic interior.

**ZP: Aside from your paintings, on the Chris Villars site you also have writings. Would you please speak about your poetry and how long have you been writing?**

**CV**: In my teens I was heavily into science fiction, and wrote some short stories. In the 70s and 80s I developed a particular view of the philosophy of physics and published a number of articles which are now online. Then, in the late 80s I got interested in how Rothko’s paintings achieve the intense emotional impact they do. I drafted an – unpublished – interpretation using concepts from Jungian psychology. A spin-off from this is the article about Rothko’s abortive UNESCO commission – which contains a little original research – and is also available online.

Alongside these things, I have sporadically written poems. The poems currently on the website were written in 2016. Most recently, I have collaborated with you on a number of projects that all have a strong poetic, or lyrical, character, specifically, a series of illustrated children’s stories, and *ECHOES*, a book of photographs and texts to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Feldman’s death.

**ZP**: Would you please speak a little about the project *ECHOES* we did together?. After the writings in *ECHOES*, do you have any new writing projects?

**CV**: When you got back from filming for your forthcoming Feldman film in Buffalo, you had many sequences, and individual photos, of places that Feldman lived at or would have known well. You also had similar material from your earlier filming in New York. Then you conceived the idea of this book, *ECHOES: Time Present & Time Past*, as a sequence of these photos accompanied by lyrical texts evoking aspects of Feldman's life and music. You encouraged me to write these texts, and we worked enthusiastically together on this project to get it ready for publication on the 30th anniversary of Feldman's death.

It was very important to both of us that the final pages should not appear to be poems illustrated by photographs. The words and the images were to be equal partners. Most frequently, the image came first and inspired the words. We experimented with the arrangement of the words on the page, integrating them with the image. Of course, we wanted the words to be always legible, but not to stand out so strongly that they became perceived as autonomous texts. If the words sometimes obscured parts of the image, why shouldn't the image sometimes encroach on the words?

*ECHOES* was a commemorative volume, a celebration of Feldman's life and music. We asked John Bewley and Jan Williams to write essays to preface it, and were delighted that they both agreed. We dedicated the book to Feldman's close friend and associate, the late Eberhard Blum.



Aside from this interview, I have no other writing projects underway at present.

**ZP:** You edited a very important book of MF interviews entitled "Morton Feldman Says". Could you please tell us a little about how the idea of that book came about?

**CV:** It wasn't my idea originally. Joseph Kohlmaier of the London-based design company, Polimekanos, wanted to publish a book on Feldman. He approached me and I suggested publishing in book form all the interviews and lectures I had collected on the website. This would complement the books of Feldman's writings that were already in print. It was part of Joseph's original idea that the book should be a beautiful object, with lots of photos and an emphasis on design. We were greatly helped by John Bewley, Archivist in charge of the Morton Feldman Papers at the University at Buffalo, Music Library. He provided high quality scans of most of the photos used. The high production values meant that the book was going to be expensive to print – Joseph even wanted to use different types of paper for different sections of the book!

Well, neither Joseph nor I had any money, so after about a year's work we had to shelve the project. Then a year or so later, Joseph persuaded Robin Kinross of Hyphen Press, London – whose main speciality was books on typography! – to take our book on! It was due to the commitment and professionalism of Joseph, his assistant Stefan Kraus, John Bewley and Robin Kinross that it turned out such a great book! Feldman's Estate – then temporarily being overseen by Bill Collieran – also helped greatly, and of course all the contributors, who freely gave their permissions.

We should have printed more copies, but Robin was – understandably! – cautious. The 2000 copies printed in 2006 were sold out in 2010. I don't think it will ever be reprinted in its original form, but I imagine another publisher will produce an

expanded edition sometime, including the many interviews and lectures that have been discovered and transcribed since the original publication.

**ZP**: Throughout the years of working on the Morton Feldman website, you have naturally come in contact with several people in the Feldman circle of artists. I have heard of your friendship with Eberhard Blum. Could you tell us how this friendship developed and after his passing, who else are you in contact with?

**CV**: I first contacted Eberhard Blum in 1999 to ask if I could post some of his published writings about Feldman on the Feldman website. He enthusiastically agreed. Over the next 15 years we corresponded regularly. He introduced me to his visual work – which I loved! – and I created a page devoted to it in the Art Gallery section of the Feldman site.

In his letters he generously provided information about his association with Feldman and his understanding of his music. And with the letters there was frequently an enclosure – one or more of his visual artworks! He knew my paintings, and gently teased me about our differences. He was a passionate advocate of “the abstract experience,” whereas my stuff, whilst heavily stylised, always retained a representational element. In 2008, I painted *Berlin Triptych* for him, in which I for once eschewed representation and utilised one of his abstract forms. He responded in 2009 by making for me a beautiful series of cut-outs, which he entitled *After Nature* in which he, in turn, for once explicitly alluded to representational forms!

After Eberhard I had no close connection with any other artist until you contacted me in 2016. We discovered a certain affinity in our love of Feldman, and – as you know of course! – this has led to several close collaborations.

**ZP:** The short 4-minute film *Feldman Sings* is a relatively new addition to the Morton Feldman website. But I understand that in its short presence there it has been viewed by hundreds of visitors. Everyone I know who has seen it says they find this little vignette extremely touching and that they find themselves humming Feldman's infectious melody over and over! Would you please share with us how you came upon this audio of Morton Feldman singing from his opera *Neither*?

**CV:** On Christmas Eve 2016, Lars Werdenberg sent me a present: some audio files of what he described as “one of Feldman’s last interviews.” When I listened to the files, I discovered two interviews! The first was Feldman’s interview with Everett Frost in New York in March 1987. But after this was a wonderful surprise! It was a previously unknown interview by Howard Skempton from January 1977. At that time, Feldman was just completing his opera, *Neither*. He had brought along to the interview the manuscript score, and for a large part of the interview talked Howard through it, page by page. From time to time, to illustrate a point, Feldman would sing an excerpt from the score, mostly from the soprano part, but also from the orchestral interludes too. Wow! What a Christmas present!

I got the permission of Lars and Howard to make a transcription. Whilst doing this, I decided to extract all the examples of Feldman singing into a single audio file. Listening to that was a very touching experience. I sent the file to you. You were very moved and loved it too! So when I asked if you thought it could be the sound track of a short film, you enthusiastically jumped at the idea, and in a very short time, with your cinematographer and editor there in New York, produced the wonderful short film, *Feldman Sings*.

It has proved very popular online. To date there have been over 2000 viewings! Feldman’s sweet singing voice is irresistible!

**ZP: Do you sense a resurgence of Feldman's music these days?**

**CV:** Yes. Both in academic circles and in general popularity. Two major academic monographs on Feldman's music have been published in the last 4 years. In addition, of the 62 student dissertations on Feldman listed online, 5 were written in his life time, 7 in the first decade after his death, 16 in the second decade, and 34 in the last decade. So, I think we can say interest in Feldman in academic circles is increasing dramatically!

For many years, the number of visitors to the Feldman homepage was pretty constant, around 40 per day. In the past 3 or 4 years this has gone up to a currently level of around 100 per day! So, again, there is evidence of a significant increase in his general popularity.

**ZP: What do you forecast for the understanding and appreciation of Feldman's music in the future? Do you see an everlasting presence of Feldman's unique approach to sound, which he called his hero?**

**CV:** Oh yes, Feldman is here to stay! In terms of appreciation, in contemporary music circles he is universally accepted as a major figure. That will continue, and continue to grow. In addition, we will see Feldman increasingly accepted in the mainstream classical tradition. In the past few years, we have seen classical pianists with no special commitment to contemporary music performing and recording his music. Marc-André Hamelin, Ivan Ilić, Alexander Melnikov and Steven Osborne, all of whom perform a wide range of the classical repertoire, have all had concert tours of Feldman's music, and

three of them have issued CD recordings. This trend will continue to grow across the whole range of instrumental combinations, and Feldman will be regularly programmed as part of classical concerts. The fact is that, unlike, say, Cage or Wolff, his music belongs to that tradition. He takes it further in a certain direction – towards the heart of sound! – but essentially remains within the orbit of its key values – craftsmanship, meaning and expression. I think this will be increasingly appreciated.

In terms of understanding, I have already indicated that academic interest is increasing. There will be more books, more – and different! – analytical approaches, and a new interpretations. We have already seen the demise of two early prejudices about Feldman’s music: The first, that he was a follower of Cage, and that his music belongs in the Cagean tradition, and the second, that his approach to composition was purely intuitive, that he just wrote down what came into his head that he felt was right. We know now that his concept of music was very different from Cage’s, and that he used a wide range of compositional strategies in making his pieces. I am sure that fascinating new analyses and interpretations will emerge.

**ZP: In an ideal world, do you imagine any augmentation you would like to see in your already very comprehensive website on Feldman?**

**CV**: Well, Zahra, it would be wonderful to be able to make your forthcoming abstract/experimental film about Feldman, *Softly* – A GIANT STEP, freely available via the site! I have followed the development of this film closely, and know it will be a very moving, beautiful, and important work! Perhaps, after its first round of public screenings, you might consider making a web optimised version available?

**ZP**: Thank you Chris for your trust and support in many of my Feldman-related projects! *Softly* - A GIANT STEP is an exciting and extremely challenging project. But it will be my great honour to have the entire film available on your Morton Feldman website. *Softly* was made with a great passion and love for our mutual hero and I would like it to be shared with all the kindred spirits who love Feldman as much as we do!

In 1997 **Chris Villars** founded the definitive website dedicated to the world of American modernist composer Morton Feldman. Since then he has championed Feldman's music through comprehensive information about every aspect of the composer's life and works including his music, writings, interviews, biographical information and also the forthcoming performances of his work all around the world.

This interview with Chris Villars was conducted in 2017 by Zahra Partovi in commemoration of 30th anniversary of Morton Feldman's death on September 3, 1987.