

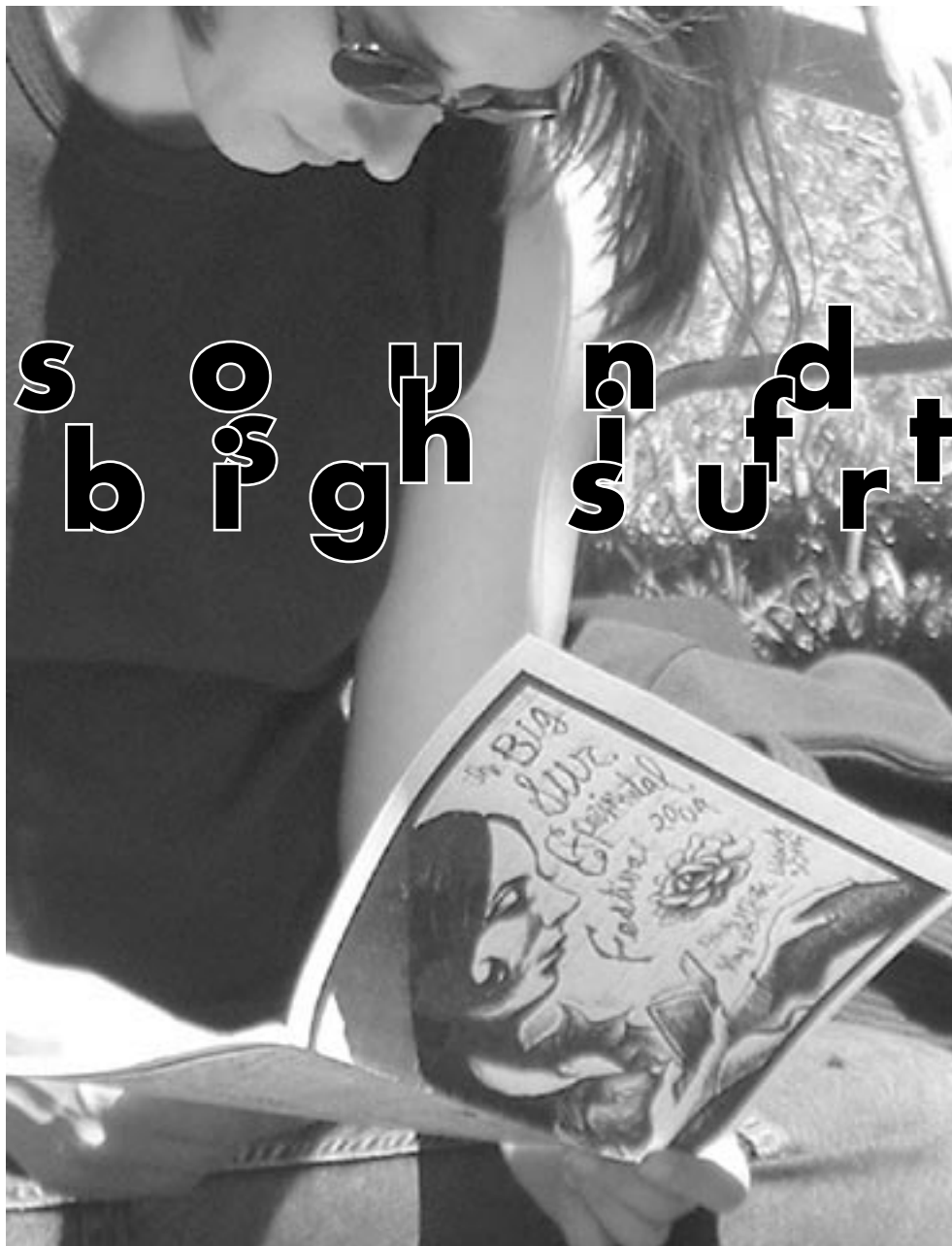
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Creative Music Calendar

July 2004

s o u n d
b i g s u r



Angela Hile. Photo by Marjorie Sturm

Marjorie Sturm

"In the intoxication of conviviality in the carnival, music emerges as a kind of structure or shaping force- music becomes the very 'order of intimacy.'" -Hakim Bey

After five years in the making, this year's Big Sur Experimental festival felt like a little miracle. A DIY shamanic sound installation, accompanied by action paintings, contact improv dancers, and a film diary festival, was a beautiful ruminative remedy to these not-so-beautiful times.

The music portion of the festival was organized around a variation of John Berndt's Sound/Shift concept, which is ideal for bringing musicians from different geographies, ideologies, and experience together with no aesthetic constraints other than that the music be wholly (holy?) improvised. In this way it is possible to discover the musical outer limits as

a new common ground. At Big Sur this year there were over 90 musicians, none paid, with the equivalent of 80 different ensembles. This potentially was the largest grouping of free improvising musicians ever attempted in North America.

Lynn K. Jones, an audience member, succinctly wraps up the Sound/Shift event as the following, "I believe that this festival epitomized what Rollo May called 'creative courage.' The structure of the festival was that musicians came and went in 40 minute intervals. With five musicians playing and one replacing another every 10 minutes or so, there was a constantly evolving combination of musicians and a changing musical dynamic. Ultimately, there was two 7-hour days of uninterrupted improvised music. No musician ever attained center stage or individual acknowledgement- it was music making in a collective spirit."

Sound/Shift is like a Zen koan, a simple
continued on page 2

concept yet very powerful due to its egoless structure. The lack of headliners and clapping is a radical release from the normal participant and spectator experience because there is no ongoing barometer to measure an individual's contribution. Our basic human need of being collective (at least for a moment) is something we have little opportunity to experience in our hyper-individualistic society (except perhaps in church, sports, and war). By its very nature, Sound/Shift is transformative because it is against the grain of our psychological and social history. Music, potentially the highest art form due to its immaterial essence, is often held captive by the constraints of the ego. When released the results were often compelling. Entering the space of this type of sound sculpture is as much about life as it is about the music.

It's only natural to want to mention the performers that moved me the most, mainly my friends of course, when writing a review of any sort. But I will resist this temptation and only mention the performance of Jonathan Horne, the 21-year-old guitarist who traveled out from Charleston, South Carolina with his painter mother. My conversation with him kicked off my weekend in Big Sur, his enthusiasm absolutely contagious. He was amazed at how many master musicians were playing this weekend,

... how he recognized so many of their names, ... had many of their CDs. And the thought of playing music with them made him so sickeningly nervous that he had been practicing for months for this Sound/Shift event. He couldn't get over the



Jonathan Horne, Carolyn Torrente

uncanny good fortune that was providing him with this opportunity. He was thrilled to meet and play with these musicians that he respected. And when Jonathan Horne stepped onto the stage he radiated all of this. His body vibrated with an "Oh-my-god! Here I am! This is really happening!" as he struck perfectly mindful notes from his electric guitar, absolutely in the moment, channeling perhaps the only muse that ever exists. Undoubtedly, his enthusiasm is a possible gift to the more seasoned player, as it melts the potentially petrified spirit that our culture creates.

It was great to see one woman after another enter the stage this year. The Russian metaphysical psychologist Gurdieff believed

that the only way an organization or institution of any sort could achieve a transcendental state is when there is a balance of women and men. This year with eighteen women out of ninety-some-odd musicians performing (yet about a four hundred percent increase from the Big Sur Sound/Shift 03), a shimmering was present. Women after women, not anomalies, contributed to the morphing sonic river.

When the idea came up to curate a mini film festival component at Big Sur, I was met with the challenge of what type of film would complement the intimacy of the Sound/Shift musical conversation. The event's occurrence at the Henry Miller Library triggered my thoughts about Anais Nin, the noted diarist. Then the diary film appeared like an immediate choice because it is playing with the present moment and inviting spontaneity. It is improvisational. The home movie is raw and more democratic than most genres of filmmaking, but one would have never guessed from the dearth of submissions that we received. But overall I was genuinely pleased with the selection of films that we screened, that came to us one way or another, and created the first Anais Nin Video and Film Diary Festival.

Anais Nin loved the word *furrawn*, which means the intimacy created through conversation that creates a better understanding of ourselves, others, and the world at large. It's an easy word to love because it is hopeful about humanity. It is hopeful while we are simultaneously standing witness to brutal political lunacy and inhumanity. It is this musical consciousness and expansiveness that will hope-



Tim DuRoche

fully protect us. And perhaps these gatherings are a form of political protest like Ha Kim Bey believes, "Simply to meet together face-to-face is already an action against the forces which oppress us by isolation, by loneliness, by the trance of media."

Another awesome component of Sound/Shift 04 was the location of Big Sur,



Jess Rowlands and Luis Monne

California and the blessing of idyllic weather. The mountainous edge, the tall trees, the fresh air are natural intoxicants for nature-starved urbanites. But it appears for the moment that some cycle is complete in Big Sur (for reasons too long, boring and tedious to go into), and the question remains, "Could a festival of this sort travel?" Where? Somewhere in nature perhaps? Vermont? The Southwest? Marin Headlands? Can it go on, will it go on without anyone being paid? Is there a patron saint? Or perfect as is?



above: Ignaz Schick (Berlin); below: Mitchell Brown, seen through Marianne MacDonald's harp strings



photos this page by ED/Marjorie Sturm, except lower right & center by djl

Luggage Store Gallery
New Music Series

Thursday, Jul 1 2004 8:00 PM

Ezekiel Talbot (various)
Polly Moller (flute/voice) with Will Grant
(electronics) and Jim Carr (bass Guitar)
Peter Nyboer (electronics)

Thursday, Jul 8 2004 8:00 PM

8pm Jess Rowland - multi media sound
9pm Arrington De Dioniso (voice and bass
clarinet)
Scott Rosenberg (contrabass clarinet, soprano
saxophone) Paul Dutton (voice) from Toronto
Jacopo Andreini (various instruments and found
objects) from Pistoia, Italy

Thursday, Jul 15 2004 8:00 PM

NOISE OHH GOREY-US NOISE!
Oscillating Innards
Pedestrian Deposit
Xome
Stimbox
Democri\$y (southern CA)

Thursday, Jul 22 2004 12:00 AM

TBA

Thursday, Jul 29 2004 8:00 PM

Edgetone New Music Summit

1007 Market St. @ 6th Street SF
415-255-5971
www.outsound.org
www.bayimproviser.com

A Look Through the Keyhole at John Shiurba's 5x5

Phillip Greenlief

John Shiurba's recent (Un)limited sEdition release, *5x5: 1.1=M*, presents music with stark contrasts – music that is composed and music that is improvised.

The co-existence of these two styles in the same sound environment is not a new practice. Theme and variation have played out over the long course of Western music since the Renaissance. More recently, jazz musicians used melodies or tunes that serve as a springboard for improvisation along with chord progressions the improviser must follow to assure that spontaneity exists within predetermined form. This musical practice is not only found in jazz, but also in the blues, rock, and other folk forms.

In post-bop improvising (free jazz), Ornette Coleman gave permission to improvise with only the melody dancing in your head as a guide. More recently, composers have combined these elements and stirred in a variety of compositional forms where an array of notation practices and improvisational games can exist side by side or within the framework of a large-scale work (i.e., works by Braxton and others from the AACM community and beyond).

Shiurba's practice on *5x5*, however, is to present composed material but not to allow it to inform the improvised sections of the work. Shiurba noted in conversation that this idea was contrary to jazz. I should mention that it is contrary to most forms of Western music where theme and variation is present. Is this idea a new one? How, if at all, does the composed music influence the improvised music? If it's not there to influence the improvisation, what is its purpose?

I like to have questions that accompany a listening experience, so I started with, why present material and not develop it? It's an interesting exercise, but the music on *5x5* rings as anything but music for the sake of exercise. The quintet features guitarist/composer/conductor Shiurba, clarinetist Matt Ingalls, Dan Plonsey on reeds and violin, bassist Matthew Sperry (to whom the music on this disc is dedicated), and Gino Robair on percussion; a small legion of improvisers well equipped to explore the sound potential of their instruments without predetermined material or strategies.

An image came to me while I was listening to *5x5* that helped to conceptualize the work. I visualized construction sites in those old silent movies (ala Buster Keaton), with pedestrians lined along fences looking through empty knotholes to witness the construction

of a skyscraper. In the *5x5* music, it's as if the ensemble is walking through a deconstruction zone of improvised music (where the players tangle with melody, rhythm, harmony, phrasing, or to develop language elements of their instrument), stopping occasionally to peer through the keyhole at construction sites (where bursts of composed activity occur). The composer may have used written material to hold it up against improvisation in order to achieve stark sound shifts.

During the performance of *5x5*, Shiurba cued the written material at his discretion. It sounds as if the performance was created as a whole, and track numbers were later assigned to notate composed entries.

I asked if there were other instructions for the musicians besides, "improvise until I cue the next composed element." Shiurba revealed that there were no other specific directions on how the improvisations would unfold. In contrast, Robair mentioned that some improvised sections were assigned to specific players, and that player would lead the improvisation – other musicians in the group would support that person's improvised journey. Sometimes, he went on, the section had no instructions at all (no specified leader), and that to his mind, it seems hard today to tell which sections had instructions and which sections did not.

If you're counting, the CD has six tracks, (not five). The first track, Intro, serves as an improvised introduction to the first composed entry. Most of the composed parts reveal simple melodies – (in contrast to other composed works by Shiurba). The composed bits have an almost goofy quality – a bit of humor is present in them – on one occasion serenity finds its way to the writing. Some improvisations are driven by sound exploration, some have melodic clarity and thematic development consistent only with localized passages. The improvised music is often more dense than the clear motives that occur in composed sections.

Overall, the composition and the intuitive composing by the musicians in the spontaneous sections cover a vast range of expression, and yet there is a thematic unity that holds throughout. Both composer and musician have shaped this overall unity – the members of the group have a significant shared history that adds a depth to the music that could have otherwise gone unstated.





Treatise by Lines

Above: The Lines Ensemble performs
Cornelius Cardew's *TREATISE*, CMC, June 19:
A.L. Dentel, Sarah Cahill, Aurora, Cheryl Leonard,
Danielle De Gruttola, Alicia Byers

Right: Cheryl Leonard, Lisa Sangita Moskow,
Alicia Byers, Liz Albee, Sarah Schoenbeck



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Damon Smith.....double bass

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July Concert Listings

PLEASE GO TO WWW.TRANSBAYCALENDAR.ORG FOR DETAILS ABOUT THESE EVENTS, PLUS UPDATES AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Thu 7/1 8:00 PM \$6-10 Luggage Store Gallery New Music Series [1007 Market St. @ 6th Street SF]

Ezekiel Talbot
Polly Moller + Will Grant + Jim Carr
Peter Nyboer

Tue 7/6 8:00 PM The Oakland Box Theater [1928 Telegraph Avenue Oakland]

The Forward Energy Trio; Jacob Lindsay/Scott R. Looney/Gino Robair Trio

Wed 7/7 8:00 PM \$5.00 The Jazz House [3192 Adeline @ MLK Berkeley]

All musicians are encouraged to bring their instrument and play improvised, experimental music exploring whatever thematic or compositional ideas are suggested by those in attendance.

Thu 7/8 8:00 PM \$6-10 Luggage Store Gallery New Music Series [1007 Market St. @ 6th Street San Francisco]

8pm Jess Rowland - multi media sound 9pm Arrington De Dionyso, Scott Rosenberg, Jacopo Andreini, Paul Dutton

Fri 7/9 8:00 PM \$18 - \$20 Campbell Recital Hall, Stanford University [Braun Music Center 541 Lasuen Mall Stanford, CA 94305]

Saxophonist Ron Stallings offers a mixed media piece that combines the talents of Bay Area jazz and spoken word artists to create a vision and context for peace. Part of the Stanford Jazz Festival.

Sat 7/10 8:00 PM \$8 New Langton Arts [1246 Folsom Street San Francisco]

Roger Kleier with Annie Gosfield and Joan Jeanrenaud

Sat 7/10 9:00 PM \$6-10 21 Grand [449B 23rd St. Near 19th Street BART Oakland]

Solos, duos & quartet with: Joshua Churchill, Chris Cory, Joel Pickard & Matt Davignon

Mon 7/12 8:00 PM sliding scale 21 Grand [449B 23rd St. Near 19th Street BART Oakland]

2nd Annual Matthew Sperry Memorial Concert

Tue 7/13 8:00 PM \$10 gen \$5 students CNMAT [1750 Arch Street Berkeley]

tanja feichtmair (austria)/david wessel/Damon Smith

Wed 7/14 7:00 PM Exploratorium [3601 Lyon St. San Francisco]

How, exactly, is the sound of a trumpet different from the sound of a flute? Explore this, and other, questions about the nature of sound and hearing at this special event.

Wed 7/14 8:00 PM \$5-10 No one turned away for lack of funds. College of Marin [Lefort Recital Hall, Fine Arts Building, rm. 72, 835 College Avenue, Kentfield, CA]

Tara Flandreau, violin & viola, Damon Smith, bass, Scott R. Looney, piano with special guest Tanja Feichtmair, saxophone

Thu 7/15 8:00 PM \$6-10 Luggage Store Gallery New Music Series [1007 Market St. @ 6th Street San Francisco]

NOISE OHH GOREY-US NOISE!
Oscillating Innards, Pedestrian Deposit, Xome, Stimbox, Democri\$y (southern CA)

Sun 7/18 8:15 PM free (donations accepted) ACME Observatory at The Jazz House [3192 Adeline Berkeley]

Saxophone Solos in memory of Steve Lacy: Feichtmair, Slusser, Ackley, Plonsey, Voigt, Adams, Chase & Goldberg

Tue 7/20 8:25 PM \$7 The Oakland Box Theater [1928 Telegraph Avenue Oakland]

sfSound Group; The Vlatkovitch 9-Tet; Tanja Feichtmair Trio (Austria) w/ Damon Smith and Gino Robair

Thu 7/22 12:00 AM \$6-10 Luggage Store Gallery New Music Series [1007 Market St. @ 6th Street San Francisco] TBA

Fri 7/23 9:00 PM \$10 12 Galaxies [2565 Mission Bwtn 21st & 22nd San Francisco]

Moe! Staiano's Moe!kestra!; Sleepytime Gorilla Museum

Sun 7/25 21 Grand [449B 23rd St. Near 19th Street BART Oakland]

Record Swap. 11AM - 4PM Swap; 4PM - ??? show. Bay Area labels and sellers during the day, show in the evening.

Sun 7/25 8:25 PM \$7 The Oakland Box Theater [1928 Telegraph Avenue Oakland]

Joseph's Bones; Inner (f)Ear Ballet

Thu 7/29 8:00 PM \$6-10 Luggage Store Gallery New Music Series [1007 Market St. @ 6th Street San Francisco]

Edgetone New Music Summit
TBA - More info to come

Fri 7/30 8:00 PM \$6.00 Rx Gallery [132 Eddy (near Mason) San Francisco]

JiffyScuttler 7 - Hrvatski, Kendra Juul, Philip Sherburne, Wobbly vs. Hrvatski

Fri 7/30 9:00 PM \$8-10 21 Grand [449B 23rd St. Near 19th Street BART Oakland]

The Edgetone New Music Summit
TBA

Sat 7/31 9:00 PM \$8-10 21 Grand [449B 23rd St. Near 19th Street BART Oakland]

The Edgetone New Music Summit: TBA



July 2004

1510 8th Street, Oakland, CA 94607

**<http://transbaycalendar.org>
michaelmooreisgod@transbaycalendar.org**

The **Transbay Creative Music Calendar** is a volunteer-produced free monthly journal for non-commercial creative new music in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to our comprehensive listing of upcoming events, we publish articles and reviews about local music and the people who create it. We talk about a wide range of modern music, including: experimental, improvised, noise, electronic, free-jazz, outrock, 21st century compositions, and sonic art. Each month, 1000 copies of the Transbay are mailed to individuals and hand-delivered to over 45 performance venues and public locations throughout the Bay Area. Contact us for a FREE subscription!

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Calendar Listings must be submitted using the online form at
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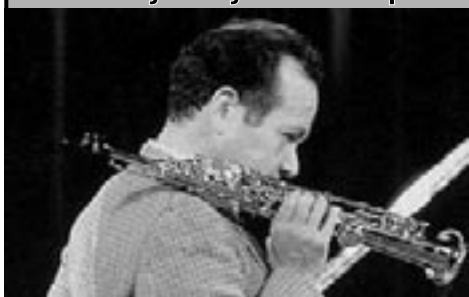
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