

Page

Other Minds Festival: OM 7: Concert 3, March 10, 2001 (video), 1 of 3 (OMF.2001.03.10.c2.A)01/23/2024 at 11:41:05



Other Minds Festival: OM 7: Concert 3, March 10, 2001 (video), 1 of 3



Identifier

OMF.2001.03.10.c2.A

Object Type

Digital Moving Image

Musical Selections

Invention No. 7 "Branches", for Disklavier, computer, turntable, and percussion (2001) (24:57) / Chris Brown [world premiere] -- Bellezza Appasita ("Faded Beauty"), for piano [from the piano suite "Pinocchio"] (2001) (19:59) / Andrew Hill [world premiere] -- [unidentified encore, for piano] (1:40) / Andrew Hill

Description

The final concert of the 7th Other Minds Festival (OM 7) was held on March 10, 2001 at the Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center, in San Francisco. After a brief introduction by Other Minds Executive and Artistic Director Charles Amirkhanian, the concert began with:

Invention No. 7 "Branches"

My "Inventions" series began in 1997, and are studies in polyrhythm for computers interacting with musicians playing acoustic instruments. Polyrhythm is a texture in which more than one independent is active in the music at the same time. It is especially characteristic within traditional African musics, and in their diasporic hybrids throughout the world. I use the computer to maintain evolving polyrhythmic relationships that provide independent rhythmic anchors for musicians, both holding them together and keeping them apart. The computer

also interacts with what the musicians play, so the music is different every time, not frozen.

In “Branches,” I considered the metaphor of the tree to structure the way that rhythmic subdivisions extend outward from a central pulse. Each musician climbs out on a different branch, going out on their limb, creating cycles, phases, and overlaps with the other players, sometimes coming into focus, other times obscured, sometimes alone, sometimes grouped in twos or threes - each branch different, but derived from the same trunk, starting simple, becoming complex - swinging from branch to branch.

There are also stylistic branchings - log drum and marimba music recorded in Central Africa by ethnomusicologist Simha Arom provided samples for the computer in the first half of the piece that are both matched and contrasted with William Winant’s acoustic percussion. In the second half of the piece DJ Eddie Def’s and the Space Traveler’s “Hamster Breaks” LPs, which were made for sample/scratching by turntablists, are the source material. And there are technological branchings - the computer runs genetic algorithms that “grow” new rhythmic leaves from the rhythms and notes of the piano. As I hear the percussionist and turntablist respond to the pulses, I feed this information back into my playing, creating a feedback loop (food).

The bridge I’m trying to construct here is between the intricately textured pulse music of Africa and the contemporary dance and minimalist pulsed musics of our culture. I don’t see this as being particularly farfetched - the global village has brought us back to a cultural situation that craves the experience of the polyrhythmic pulse: a complexity made of simple parts in densely interwoven relationships, with a place for everyone to listen, but without the possibility for any one person to hear, play, or contain the whole. Both improvisation and composition are essentially here. Polyrhythm implies syncretic culture - one with many centers that accepts, absorbs, borrows, samples, transforms, and evolves in many directions at once. - Chris Brown

Bellezza Appasita (“Faded Beauty”)

“Pinocchio,” my new piano suite, was inspired by the famous Italian fable, a visit to a town that sells puppets, and meeting a fellow resident at the Civtella Ranieri in Umbertide, Umbria, the summer of 2000. This is a recently-founded artists’ retreat in the Umbrian countryside near the town of Umbertide. There I met a fellow resident who would walk through the villa’s grounds hugging and talking to trees. He grew up and lived in communist Russia and never bonded with people during or after communism. - Andrew Hill

The concert continues in part 2 with:

Inner Cities 8

As a natural born liar, I have always sought the truth... So amidst the racket of pile drivers and Wailing Walls and String Quartets, Fog Horns, Midi Shofars and waltzes, I have been filling notebooks up for years with three note chords, two note arpeggios, drunken scales, umpah rhythms in seven-elevenths.

In the early nineties I started to sort these objects out, add new ones, ignore others... I’d take a few days off, sometimes a week, sometimes a month, sometimes never and go to the INNER CITIES... there I kept a secret scratch pad and a tabula-rasa in my Bluthner Piano. My father always used to say that if you keep studying the piano, you’ll always have something to fall back on. I’ve been falling ever since.

What began in 1993 as a mere 28 minute piano piece on an A major triad in first inversion, has now grown to a major (for me) series of solo piano works, of which this last - number 8 is one of the most rarified and rigorous, most lush and longest (50 minutes plus)...

Cut to the plot—these pieces are serial containers of music for solo piano, which I make unsolicited and with nothing to prove. They are pure oases of personal pleasure—intimate and democratic spaces where all is possible as long as almost nothing (well not too much) happens; there is room for everything except the superfluous. Everything is surrounded by air, by intense focus. Literal triadic memories, they begin and end stark naked like a scrawl in Cy Twombly painting. They’re exercises in liberation and attachment at the same time—dream plans for anywhere you might want to be. - Alvin Curran

The concert concludes in part 3 with:

One Last Bar Then Joe Can Sing

Commissioned by the Arts Council of Great Britain for the virtuoso percussion quintet Nexus, this piece is a reflection on aspects of percussion history, both personal and musical. The members of Nexus are my friends (I played in the Steve Reich Ensemble along with Russ Hartenberger, for example, in 1972—the year after Nexus was formed) and I have known their playing as an ensemble for almost 20 years. The piece exploits not only the tremendous virtuosity of Nexus, but rather more their wonderful musicality and subtlety. The piece starts from the last bar at the end of the first part of my first opera Medea, a very short coda for a quintet of untuned percussion instruments. In my new piece, however, this one apparently innocuous bar is progressively fragmented until it is taken over, little by little, by the addition of tuned percussion instruments. Eventually, two metal tuned instruments (crotales and songbells) play aria-like material with bows, occasionally joined by the xylophone, and accompanied by marimba and xylophone ostinatti. The piece ends with a coda in which phrases are passed from bowed vibraphone to bowed crotales to bowed songbells, supported by tremolos on two marimbas.

The rare three-octave songbells which Nexus owns is one of the great American instrument maker J.C. Deagan's particularly fine instruments and the piece is effectively a kind of homage to Deagan, the Stradivarius of the tuned percussion family. Deagan was a close collaborator with Percy Grainger in the development of tuned percussion music between the wars and I have always admired Grainger's imaginative and audacious use of percussion. The family of keyboard percussion is, for me, as important a group as, say, the string family and equally capable of expressive playing. Indeed in Medea, not only does the orchestra have no violins (the strings are from violas downwards), but the percussion section replaces, in effect, the more conventionally important first violins. My knowledge of the music of Nexus was a major factor in this decision. - Gavin Bryars

People

Other Minds Festival (features)
Amirkhanian, Charles (features)
Brown, Chris, 1953- (features)
Hill, Andrew, 1931-2007 (features)
Eddie Def (features)
Winant, William (features)

Related Collection

OMA.COL002.OMP.01
[Other Minds Festivals](#)

Related Objects

IM.OM.FP.0007.005
[DJ Eddie Def, Chris Brown, & William Winant, during a rehearsal for OM 7, \(2001\)](#)