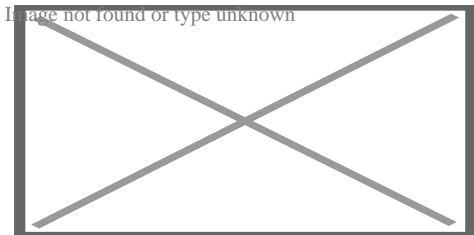




## Other Minds Festival: OM 4: Concert 1, 4 of 7



**Identifier**

OMF.1997.11.10.D

**Object Type**

Digital Audio

**Musical Selections**

Cooking Demonstration (10:11) / Donald Swearingen

**Description**

Other Minds, Inc., in association with the Djerassi Resident Artists Program, and with the In Performance Series at the Cowell Theater in Fort Mason Center, presented Other Minds Festival IV at the Cowell Theater, at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco, November 10-12, 1997.

The first concert of the 4th Other Minds featured several electronic and mixed media works by composers Laetitia Sonami, Donald Swearingen, Pamela Z, and video artists Visual Brains.

**Program:**

Laetitia Sonami: She Came Back, Again (1997)

With She Came Back, Again Sonami writes that she "rediscovers the pleasure of the fluidity of sound offered by FM synthesis. The lady's glove controls parameters of the synthesis and flirts with the destabilization of these sounds, constructing and deconstructing layers, forming recollections of abstract habitual patterns...The inspiration for the text came from the earlier version of the music which had no narrative. It gives some obscure and confusing description of a mechanical being, probably the one performing, the same way a narrator's voice in some animal or war documentary describes the scene being shown, trying to create meaning when meaning is not asked for."

The text is by Melody Sumner Carnahan, excerpted from "One More Thing, and read by Sonami. Aside from the

narrator's voice, there is no prerecorded music.

Donald Swearingen: When in Japan

It all started with Randall Packer's piano. When in Japan has been a long way since then, and, while it continues to unravel, it never seems to become actually unraveled.

Donald Swearingen: 1923

1923 reaches for impossible memories in transformed and reconstrued (not reconstructed) themes of television past. It took a ton of electricity strung high across the river to bring it all to life, and even now the images bounce about beneath the waves of my furrowed brow. And still the water flows through long greedy reeds.

Donald Swearingen: Cooking Demonstration

The lost emotions of food you ate remain in the utensils that ripped it up and prepared the meal. I have resurrected the echoes of these sentiments and present them to you under a magnifying glass. All sounds verbatim from my own kitchen.

Pamela Z: Metrodaemonium and More (1995-1997)

Metrodaemonium sprung from a live performance piece I did called "Re-Sounding, a portrait of Downtown San Francisco" which premiered outdoors at the Center For the Arts at Yerba Buena Gardens as part of a site specific sound series commissioned by Secession Gallery in 1995. I created the samples by carrying a portable DAT recorder around on public transportation and in the streets of the city. Metrodaemonium is still evolving both as a live work and an audio piece, and now includes movements such as "The MUNI Section" and "Carpark" as well as one called "NEMIZ" (which currently exists only in a recorded form). In performance, the samples are triggered with the BodySynth™ (a controller that uses electrode sensors worn against the skin to generate MIDI information).

Pamela Z: Bone Music (1993)

Bone Music was created during the time period when I was working on the score of a piece called Circle of Bone by The Qube Chix. My character in Circle of Bone was a sort of anthropologist, and the vocalizations in this piece were born from my explorations of that character. All the sounds in this piece are created live using various shades of processing on the voice, and the shifting rhythms of found percussion in three separate delay loops.

## INTERMISSION

Mona-Lisa (1996), (United States Premiere)

Laetitia Sonami, Donald Swearingen, Pamela Z & Visual Brains

Mona-Lisa was commissioned by the American Embassy in Tokyo for the 13th annual Interlink Festival, and was performed in Tokyo, Kobe, and Sapporo during October and November of 1996. Laetitia Sonami, Donald Swearingen and Pamela Z collaborated with Japanese video artists Visual Brains to produce a full-length performance work employing live music and video. With a text by writer Melody Sumner-Carnahan as its inspiration, the piece evolved over several months as each group developed ideas on both sides of the Pacific and shared them through exchanges of email, audio CDs, videos, and live video-conferencing. Finally, the piece was put into its finished form when the three musicians traveled to Japan and rehearsed for several days with Visual Brains in preparation for the first performances in Tokyo.

Mona-Lisa is set in three large sections, each introduced by a spoken narrative from Sumner-Carnahan's text. In each section, the narrative is followed by a musical section which evolves with increasing levels of complexity, finally disintegrating into its constituent elements, a sort of sonic dust.

The performers each contribute specific architectural and structural elements to the work. Laetitia Sonami's computer-generated rhythms form the rhythmic backdrop against which the disintegration is measured. Pamela Z's vocalizations represent a lyrical element whose repeated appearances serve to reconnect us to the elemental Mona. Donald Swearingen's percussive and metallic samples provide layers of punctuation and accentuation to the thematic elements. Visual Brains' video displays provide the visual architecture for the cityscape in which we imagine the events are unfolding.

In a sense, the text itself can be thought of as another performer. The text selections introduce and set the mood for each of the three sections, and provide a narrative basis for the work which serves to link and unify all of the other elements. In the first text, we are introduced to a rather bleak image of the modern city, with a dazed and delirious "visionary" muttering incomprehensibly about "her": "she is a drug addict, she is diseased, she stinks...". We want him to "wake up", but we are unable to pierce the miasma of his delusions. In the second text, we enter a disturbing dream of the "mother" as a fallen angel, passively allowing herself to be used, and then disintegrating amidst the nonchalance of the postmodern generation. In the final text, we see her in her most elemental form, before she has been tarnished by the filth of the modern city: "she was vivid and overflowing", "she was adolescence", "she was sacred music".

Whereas the narrative creates a story line that works backward from Mona's modern degradation to her primeval ascendance, we cannot sense such a clear line in the other musical elements. What we can perceive is that we are being carried along by a rhythm that we can be assured will always return. It is like the wind that in time turns the sharp edge of the stone to sand. When it is quiet, there is nothing left of the forms which once inhabited the space so fully.

Born in Corpus Christi, Texas, Sumner Carnahan is the author of story collections from Burning Books, *The Time Is Now* (1982) and *Thirteen* (1995), as well as a biography of a Tibetan man, *In the Presence of My Enemies* (1995) from Clear Light Publishers. Recordings of Carnahan's texts are available on compact disc on Barbara Golden's *Greatest Hits* (Burning Books), the *Tellus Jewel Box* (w/Sonami), *Elektra Nonesuch Imaginary Landscapes* (w/Sonami), *Frog Peak*, and *Lovely Music* (w/Sonami).

### About the Composers

Laetitia Sonami is a French-born, Bay Area-based composer/performer who synthesizes advanced technology, original music, and narrative into an intimate, spontaneous art form all her own. She is best known for her unique instrument, the elbow-length "lady's glove" that she plays live onstage, which is fitted with pressure and motion sensors to control electronic sounds. In the last several years, her performances have earned her substantial international renown; in 1997 alone she has performed at the Berlin- Musikerinnen Festival, the Lincoln Center Outdoor Performance Series, New York's Kitchen and Bang-On-A-Can Festival, Le Garage in Paris, as well as in Amsterdam, Zurich, and Quebec. In 1996, she was featured in the American Embassy's Interlink Festival in Tokyo, Kyoto, Kobe, and Sapporo; as well as in performances in Berlin, Barcelona, Vancouver, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. Sonami was also a featured performer at the Opening Night concert at San Francisco's Center for the Arts at Yerba Buena Gardens in 1993. In January of 1997, the *New York Times* described Sonami as "a human antenna searching the air for sounds, like a dancer focused on her hands, or like a deity summoning earth-shaking rumbles with a brusque gesture."

Donald Swearingen lives in San Francisco, composing and performing original electroacoustic music. A classically-trained composer and pianist, his strong commitment to musical experimentation has sent him along numerous paths, from the garage band to the concert stage to computer networks. His current work concerns the use of movement and gesture as the source of media control in an expanded, computer-assisted performance environment. His work has been presented in the San Francisco Bay Area at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Life on the Water, the Lab, New Performance Gallery, Studio 4, Artists Television Access, Koncepts Gallery,

and Laney College; and he has traveled, performed, and lectured widely in the United States and abroad. His full-length solo work *Noise into Water* premiered in 1993 to enthusiastic audiences at New Music Theatre's Zero-In-Time festival at Life on the Water in San Francisco. During the Spring of 1994, he was Composer-in-Residence at the Djerassi Foundation and was featured in the Exploratorium's Interactive Sound Studio during the Summer of 1994. In the Fall of 1996, Swearingen toured Japan, performing and lecturing in various cities as a featured composer/performer in the Interlink '96 Festival.

Pamela Z is a San Francisco-based composer/performer and audio artist who works primarily with voice, live electronic processing, and sampling technology. She is well known both regionally and nationally for her unique performances in which she layers her operatic voice with digital sound processors and a MIDI controller called the BodySynth that allows her to access electronic samples through gestural movement. Pamela Z has performed in the Bay Area since 1984 and has toured extensively throughout the United States. In 1996, she performed at Lincoln Center in New York as part of the "Bang on a Can" festival and in a four-city tour of Japan as part of the Interlink Festival. She has created a number of commissioned audio pieces for New American Radio, the most recent of which was supported by the San Francisco Art Commission. Pamela Z produces "Z Programs", an ongoing series of interdisciplinary events in which her own work has been featured along with that of other artists doing experimental work in various genres. In addition, she is a member of the performance ensemble The Qube Chix, performs regularly with New Music Theater (including their John Cage festivals), and has performed with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Pamela Z is scheduled to create and perform a new work in collaboration with the California Ear Unit in L.A. for January of 1998.

#### About the Video Artists

Visual Brains (Sei Kazama & Hatsune Ohtsu) uses video and computer-generated art to express today's Japanese formalism as a medium code through the use of extremely direct quotes. Formed in 1981, the team has worked on a wide range of audio/visual projects including special events, independent productions, television, educational videos, and promotional videos. Their work has been shown in film/video festivals and art galleries throughout the world, including venues in New York, Berlin, Amsterdam, London, Paris, and Tokyo. Visual Brains has won numerous awards for their work, most recently as part of the First Annual International Video Festival in Hong Kong (1996). Kazama and Ohtsu are members of the Japan Society of Image Art and teachers at Nippon Electronics College.

[Notes from the original printed program,]

#### People

Other Minds Festival (features)  
Swearingen, Donald (features)

#### Related Collection

OMA.COL002.OMP.01

[Other Minds Festivals](#)