

# contact

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# experimental music catalogue

Robert Ashley: Fancy Free or It's There; Complete with Heat

David Jackman: Untitled Prose Collection

The work of Robert Ashley has followed a logical path over the years and has always retained a theatrical closed field situation allied to applied sound treatments: often the rationale behind a piece is more fascinating than the music in performance which can on occasion be extremely unpleasant. The composer presumably wants it that way - as his performances and those of his colleagues prove. His artistic relatedness to his most closely related partner, Gordon Mumma, is remote except in general terms, while his affinity in aesthetic position to Alvin Lucier is close; at least one of the pieces under review, Fancy Free or It's There, accepts this debt - though the procedures are essentially the Ashley of proportional procedures. A male speaker's voice is recorded by four cassette machine operators. Within the text are limits: limits of preparing for the initial attack - the accentuation of phonemes - the attack itself and the release leading to silence before the next act. Within each proportional ratio of time - within these limits - errors will occur (stuttering, delivery). These faulty elements - the "Fancy Free" factor - are recorded and replayed immediately by the tape operators, who themselves create a duality of anticipation of the text, and the act itself: their own reaction to the errors when they occur are the performance. It is an interesting piece in the study of, and reaction to, awareness, and works in performance - at least in the hands of the Sonic Arts Union, Ashley's own group. The diagram for performance replay equipment differs from the copy of the score published in the American magazine Soundings, and Dynaco 4 Amps and Pre-Amps together with Sony 110 Cassette machines are not necessary for performance - the circuits being identical in each drawing, except for the omission of special inputs.

Complete with Heat is an earlier work originally written for Bertram and Nancy Turetzky, though open to performance by any number of wind and string players, with or without a tape available from the composer. Pitches are specified, the duration and tone production are open within specified limits. It is a piece which requires considerable rehearsal and technical ability,



yet opens new areas of positive sound experiences. Like the Detail for two pianists, to which it is closely related, it is a creative performance work: one of the important contemporary American works of the 1960s and a major addition to the Experimental Music Catalogue.

David Jackman obviously feels a strong association with birds, for they feature one way or another so frequently in his Untitled Prose Collection. Unfortunately they do not produce any kind of originality in this context. All this sort of activity has been seen previously and towards a definite objective; the negative environmental activities are numerous, as also are the static activities such as sitting within a mandala without thought or action - even, as in another piece, spraying grass with a non-toxic colorant. On occasion he has a good sense of humour - as also should the reader. Pieces like these are useful for classroom work - preferably in a primary school where their ideas can be enjoyed to the full. The pieces are numerous, short and varied in content, though they improve towards the end and become musical on a primitive level. As they cover a three-year period and the mind processes can be followed through, one wonders why EMC thought this collection worthy of publication.

DAVID JONES

(These works, and those reviewed in the two previous issues of CONTACT, can be obtained from: Experimental Music Catalogue, 208 Ladbroke Grove, London W10. Discussion of EMC material continues in the next issue. A new edition of the catalogue is now in preparation.)