

Co-sponsored by Real Art Ways,
Wesleyan University and the
Wadsworth Atheneum:
October 3-20, 1979

Ashley in performance:
Sunday, October 14 in the
Atheneum Theatre at 8:00 p.m.

Robert Ashley at the World Trade Center, 1975
Photograph: Mimi Johnson



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support.

Robert Ashley's elegantly expansive works reflect his very special talent for conceiving and realizing large-scale theatrical presentations. MATRIX and Real Art Ways have joined together to sponsor two major works by Ashley.

Music With Roots In The Aether (1975-76), also co-sponsored by Wesleyan University, is a unique set of fourteen one-hour color videotapes in which Ashley focuses on the creative genius of seven important contemporary composers: David Behrman, Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Gordon Mumma, Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley and Ashley himself. Private Parts (1977), to be presented in the Atheneum Theatre on Sunday, October 14, 1979 at 8:00 p.m., is a multi-media performance piece featuring Robert Ashley and "Blue" Gene Tyranny. Together these two celebrated works confirm Ashley's reputation as a well-spring of poetic vision.

Music With Roots In The Aether is an ambitious and epic achievement in which Ashley expands the medium of video far beyond its conventional applications. Most notably, Ashley moves video into what he calls an "untelevision" aesthetic. The seven interviews and the seven performances take place against the landscape of real time. In most of the tapes only one camera is used for a single, unedited hour-long take. The result is a level of intensity and concentration that exquisitely mirrors the stylistic denominator common to the works of these seven composers. Deftly form and content are brought into accord.

Ashley's long-standing friendship with each of the other six subjects creates an unusual framework of trust. Furthermore, the slow-moving uncut camerawork allows ample time to observe and to savor the ebb and flow of thought. It is in this exceptional context that Ashley chooses to explore the ideas and the music of his subjects. These are

thoughtful portraits in which much is learned and much is revealed. Cumulatively the fourteen tapes make a significant contribution to our understanding of some of the most innovative musical developments of the last two decades.

Private Parts is seen by Ashley as yet another manifestation of his continuing interest in portraiture. He has described the work as "portraits of imaginary people and places." It has also been described as "a melodrama about a bank robbery told in seven long songs."

While Music With Roots In The Aether offers us rare insight into the musical philosophies of seven distinguished artists, Private Parts engages the viewer/listener in a more personal, more introspective experience. Here the collaboration takes place primarily between Ashley and the individuals in the audience.

The music of Ashley's spoken vocal line casts a spell. His dreamlike incantations are subliminally evocative. Soon each member of the audience is in private retreat. Flooded with associations, we travel great distances in a short time. Ashley is an urbane and articulate tour guide. Multiple levels of meaning heighten the magnitude of almost every phrase we hear. We sit, quietly astonished. Everything is germane. Ashley has guided us into meditations on the structure of our own thought processes. Little wonder, at the conclusion of the performance, our minds are out of breath.

Robert Ashley was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1930, received a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Michigan in 1952 and a master's degree in piano and composition from the Manhattan School of Music. He was a founder of ONCE (a pioneer multi-media performance group in Ann Arbor), a co-organizer of the ONCE Festivals and a member of the Sonic Arts Union. In 1969 he became the director of

the Mills College Center for Contemporary Music in Oakland, California where he continues to teach part time. Ashley divides his time between the West Coast and New York City. He is represented by Performing Artservices, Inc. of New York City.

Andrea Miller-Keller
Curator of MATRIX

Works by Robert Ashley:
Private Parts (With Settings for Piano and Orchestra by "Blue" Gene Tyranny), 1977, a live performance piece featuring Robert Ashley and "Blue" Gene Tyranny, with grand piano, electric keyboards, orchestral tapes, closed circuit color video system, etc.

Sunday, October 14, 1979 at 8:00 p.m. in the Atheneum Theatre, tickets \$3.50. This event is co-sponsored by Real Art Ways and the Wadsworth Atheneum.

The entire work is made up of seven parts; three parts will be performed this evening. Duration: approximately one and a half hours, no intermission.

Music With Roots In The Aether, 1975-76, fourteen one-hour color videotapes.

Video "landscapes" of seven American composers (David Behrman, Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Gordon Mumma, Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley and Robert Ashley) presented in two-hour programs of musical performance and talk. Produced and directed by Robert Ashley. Director of Photography, Philip Makanna. Sound Recordist, Maggi Payne. Video Recordist, Jerry Pearsall. Concept Consultant, William Farley. Camera Assistant, Pat Kelley. Additional sound recording by Peg Ahrens, David Behrman, Peter Gordon and Marc Grafe.

These tapes will be exhibited October 3-20, 1979 on a rotating schedule at Real Art Ways (197 Asylum St., Hartford), at the Center for the Arts Gallery, Wesleyan University (Middletown) and in the MATRIX Gallery at the Wadsworth Atheneum.

Special thanks to Mimi Johnson of Performing Artservices, Inc. for her help in planning this exhibition and publication.

MUSIC WITH ROOTS IN THE AETHER is a music-theater piece in color video. It is the final version of an idea that I had thought about and worked on for a few years: to make a very large collaborative piece with other composers whose music I like. Originally I hoped it could be realized as a live performance piece, in a much different form, but that was too impractical to think about for very long. Among the real choices, video is by far the best medium for many reasons.

The collaborative aspect of MUSIC WITH ROOTS IN THE AETHER is in the theater of the interviews, at least primarily, and I am indebted to all of the composers involved for their generosity in allowing me to portray them in this manner.

The piece turns out to be, in addition, a large-scale documentation of an important stylistic idea that came into American concert music in about 1960. These composers of the "post-serial/"post-Cage" movement have all made international reputations for the originality of their work and for their contributions to this area of musical composition.

The style of the video presentation comes from the need I felt to find a new way to show music being performed. I have always objected to the meaning that camera editing in television - which derives from the most mundane and dumbest practical considerations in film-making - gives to music. (Film is montaged, first of all, because it has to be. Cameras can't run very many minutes at a time. Everybody who has ever tried to film music being made has had to deal with this problem. Then it got over into television from our habits.) The idea of the visual style of MUSIC WITH ROOTS IN THE AETHER is plain: to watch as closely as possible the action of the performers and

to not "cut" the seen material in any way - that is, to not editorialize on the time domain of the music through arbitrary space-time substitutions.

The visual style for showing the music being made became the "theater" (the stage) for the interviews, and the portraits of the composers were designed to happen in that style.

I am also indebted to the artists who helped work out the realization of this music/video style in the recording process. In particular, I think that the camera ideas of Philip Makanna and the sound recording of Maggi Payne use a kind of concentration of attention that is very new to "visual" media and that is more like music than like film or like television.

Robert Ashley, 1977

From program notes for Music With Roots In The Aether.

Music With Roots In The Aether:

TAPE ONE:

Landscape with David Behrman, 58 minutes.

TAPE TWO:

Music with Melody-Driven Electronics (1976), 56 minutes.

David Behrman, electronics; Don Cardoza, electric keyboard; E. Jedidiah Denman, abbysiren; Katherine Morton, electric keyboard.

TAPE THREE:

Landscape with Philip Glass, 58 minutes.

TAPE FOUR:

Music in 12 Parts - Part 2 (1974), 17 minutes.

Act 1, Scene 1, Einstein on the Beach, "Another Look at Harmony - Part 2" (1976), 30 minutes. Philip Glass, electric organ; Jon Gibson, soprano sax and flute; Dickie Landry, soprano sax and flute; Richard Peck, alto sax; Kurt Munkacsi, electronics; Joan LaBarbara, voice; Michael Riesman, electric organ.

TAPE FIVE:

Landscape with Alvin Lucier (A performance of Lucier's "Outlines of Persons and Things" [1975] takes place during the interview), 58 minutes. Anne Koren, dancer; Susan Matheke, dancer; Nicolas Collins, electronics.

TAPE SIX:

Bird and Person Dying (1975), 28 minutes. Alvin Lucier, microphones; Nicolas Collins, electronics; Ron Kuivila, electronics.

Music for Solo Performer (1965), 28 minutes. Alvin Lucier, amplified brainwaves; Nicolas Collins, electronics.

TAPE SEVEN:

Landscape with Gordon Mumma, 58 minutes.

TAPE EIGHT:

Some Voltage Drop (1974), a collection of related works, including:

Simulcast, 25 minutes. Gordon

Mumma, cybersonic French horn; William Brooks, amplified voice.

Schoolwork, 18 minutes. Gordon Mumma, crosscut saw.

Telepos/Foxbat, 15 minutes. Gordon Mumma and Tandy Beal with accelerometers and backpack-electronic telemetry.

TAPE NINE:

Landscape with Pauline Oliveros (A performance of Oliveros' Unnatural Acts Between Consenting Adults [1975], a collaboration with Carol Vencius, takes place during the interview), 75 minutes. Pauline Oliveros; Linda Montano as Huckleberry Linda; Carol Vencius as The Masked Woman.

TAPE TEN:

Rose Mountain Slow Runner (1975), 35 minutes. Pauline Oliveros, voice and accordian.

TAPE ELEVEN:

Landscape with Terry Riley, 58 minutes.

TAPE TWELVE:

Shri Camel: Morning Corona (1976), 45 minutes. Terry Riley, Yamaha electric organ.

TAPE THIRTEEN:

What She Thinks (1976), 58 minutes. Robert Ashley as George Washington; Paul DeMarinis as Guglielmo Marconi; Mimi Johnson as Whistler's Mother; Robert Sheff as Ludwig van Beethoven.

TAPE FOURTEEN:

Landscape with Robert Ashley, 58 minutes. Robert Sheff, questions; Philip Makanna, slide show.

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Rockwell, John. "Video Portraits of Avant-Garde Composers," The New York Times (May 29, '77), Sec. 2, p. 13+.

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Wiegand, Ingrid. "Video on Music," Soho Weekly News, vol. 4, no. 37 (June 16, '77), p. 21+.

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Frank, Ellen Perly. "New Sounds from the Aether," New West, April 23, '79, p. NC 26.

Bargreen, Melinda. "Robert Ashley extraordinary at And/Or," The Seattle Times, May 2, '79.

Delio, Thomas. "Avant-Garde Issues in Seventies Music," Artforum, vol. 18, no. 1 (September '79), p. 61+.

Selected recordings by Ashley:
in memoriam CRAZY HORSE (symphony) (Advance FGR-5) '64;
Untitled Mixes (ESP 1009) '65;
The Wolf Man, Source #4 '66;
She Was a Visitor (CBS Odyssey 3216 0158) '67; Purposeful Lady Slow Afternoon (Mainstream MS 5010) '71; In Sara, Mencken, Christ and Beethoven There Were Men and Women (Cramps CRSLP 6103) '74; Private Parts (Lovely Music LML 1001) '78; Automatic Writing (Lovely Music VR 1002) '79; Christopher Columbus (sonata) (Lovely Music VR 1062) '79; Interiors Without Flash (Giorno Poetry Systems) '79.

Selected presentations of
Music With Roots In The Aether:
Festival d'Automne, Paris '76 (premiere); Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC '77; The Kitchen Center for Video and Music, NYC '77; Museum of Modern Art, NYC '77; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago '77; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis '78; Kolisher Kunstverein, Cologne '78; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark '79; San Francisco Art Institute '79; And/Or Gallery, Seattle '79; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam '79.