

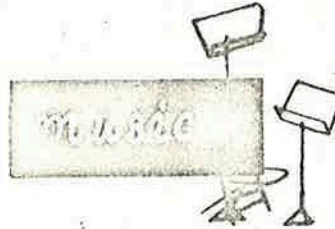
240 Mercer St. New York 10012

the village VOICE, March 9, 1972

A surprise under the piano

I have been to so many interesting concerts lately, it is hopeless to attempt to cover them all here. I could discuss a couple of them and ignore the others, but it makes more sense to try hitting high points of all these events.

Let me begin with some performances of graphic music which I heard at the Kitchen. Scores of this type leave much up to the performer, and often I feel the performers don't involve themselves with the problems enough to find really good solutions. But this was definitely not the case when Judy Sherman did Sylvano Bussotti's "lettura di braibanti." The piece began as the soprano crawled out from under the piano, where she had



been hiding during the previous numbers. The text of the song has to do with joking with a guitar, and she made many gestures with an imaginary guitar while she sang. She finished by disappearing behind a loudspeaker. This may sound corny, but it wasn't. Her movements and her singing worked together very appropriately, resulting in a truly delightful interpretation of the little song.

William Hellerman's performance of a graphic score by Jim Fulkerson on the previous night (February 21) was also very successful, but here the solution was purely musical. He must have spent a great deal of time studying the score for "Patterns II" for solo guitar, because the materials he selected to interpret the score were quite interesting and quite appropriate to each other. These included many harmonics, koto effects, and some strange sounds

created by whistling across the strings. The result was not the haphazard kind of performance graphic scores often receive, but a carefully controlled and well defined piece of music.

The performance of Fulkerson's "Structures," on the same program, was also quite successful. The piece began with a tape collage of language of all kinds—Latin, English, aesthetic, vulgar, scholarly, slowed-down, sped-up. Then a tumultuous applause began on the tape, and a dancer, Mary Fulkerson, descended the corner staircase in a crude paper costume. The applause continued while she danced a rather long solo, which vaguely reminded one of curtain-call gestures. Needless to say, when the dancer finally finished and the taped applause faded out, the real audience didn't applaud. You couldn't, even though it was a good piece. The experience of all that recorded applause was just too weird.

The second half of Rhys Chatham's concert of "Music with Voice and Gongs," at the Kitchen on February 28, had a beautiful atmosphere. Four large, amplified gongs, bathed in dim colored lights, provided a visual setting which blended well with the ceremonial sounds of the gongs. The music itself was not so much a composition as a presentation of the sounds of gongs. Chatham made a few adjustments in balance and timbre on the amplifier while the four players kept the instruments ringing, but for the most part the gongs were allowed to do their own beautiful thing, with a minimum of human tampering. There was no pitch organization or rhythmic organization or structural organization to speak of. It was just gongs. And their sound was so suggestive and familiar, one hardly noticed that the music was actually a radical new kind of minimalism which almost negated the whole idea of composition.

Tom Johnson