

C O U P L I N G S

Compositions and Improvisations  
by  
Richard Teitelbaum

Hi Gaeshi Hachi Mi Fu

for solo Shakuhachi

一  
返  
録  
三  
二

Threshold Music No. 7

for environment and instruments

Tai Chi Alpha Tala

for Tai Chi performer, FM biomedical  
telemetry system and Tabla

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Trio

for Moog Synthesizer, Winds and Bass

Performers

Shūdō Yamato

Shakuhachi

Barbara Mayfield

Tai Chi

Sharda Sahai

Tabla

Richard Teitelbaum

Moog Synthesizer, electronics

Anthony Braxton

Winds

Dave Holland

Bass

December 20, 1974 8:30 P. M.

59 wooster street / new york city, 10012 / (212) 925 3615

Hi Gaeshi Hachi Mi Fu Ever since briefly studying the Shakuhachi with Kodo Araki V at Wesleyan University in 1970 and '71 I have wanted to compose something for the instrument. Unfortunately I could think of no way to approach the beauty and serenity of the music of the traditional repertoire, and other modern works I've heard tended to confirm this feeling. I therefore decided to try and compose a work in traditional Japanese style. The result is a new piece based on Hi Fu Mi Hachi Gaeshi, one of the classics of the Kinko School. Historical precedent helps, perhaps, to support such an idea, since Kinko Kurosawa himself is known to have collected, arranged, and notated many previously existing Shakuhachi pieces. In the case of this particular piece, Kinko actually combined two previously existing works, Hi Fu Mi (One, Two, Three) and Hachi Gaeshi (Return the Bowl) into one piece. With the guidance of Shakuhachi player Ralph Samuelson, I have maintained the basic musical sequences and phrase structures of Kinko's version, but have recombined them. I was delighted when Shūdō Yamato approved of the concept and was honored that he agreed to play the piece. This is its first performance.

Threshold Music No. 7 is the latest in a series of pieces I have been performing since last winter, designed to help heighten sonic awareness and develop musical attunement to the natural sound environment, particularly to the more subtle and elusive interactive phenomena and partials which result from the interplay of complex tones and broadband "noise" sounds which characterize our modern soundscape. The "sound environment" may be presented in several ways: natural, amplified live, or taped. The players use the environment as a "score" and, matching their loudness levels as precisely as possible with those of the sounds they hear, attempt to gently reinforce certain frequencies, creating in this way a kind of "acoustic amplification." By the careful matching of the timbre and dynamics of the instruments to the environment, a blending of the one into the other is created so that the listener can no longer distinguish between the two. The overall softness and the extremely narrow dynamic range of sounds hovering about the threshold of audibility (defined as that level at which the sound will not be perceived in 50% of its presentations) create a soundspace requiring the listener to "focus his hearing" analogous perhaps to the more commonly recognized focusing of the eye. Further, the "participatory hearing" stimulated by such low-definition patterning tends to stimulate the experience of aural hallucinations, the mind filling in sounds though it may not actually be receiving such information from the outside environment.

Tai Chi Alpha Tala (1974) is a recent piece linking some highly developed arts and technologies from several cultures -- ancient and modern, eastern and western. During the practice of the ancient Chinese meditational exercise Tai Chi Chuan, the performer's alpha brain waves are transmitted, by means of an FM bio-medical telemetry system, to control the rhythm of a synthesizer. Biofeedback research has indicated that high output of these

alpha rhythms is associated with internal states of tranquility and "well-being." Thus the Tai Chi practice enhances and increases the alpha output. Each alpha wave (which comes at the rate of 10 per second) is used to trigger envelope generators and to step a 30-position sequencer tuned to a particular scale or mode. In this case the mode chosen is a form of the pentatonic scale family known both for its simplicity and universality. (Traditional Chinese music is, for instance, based on such scales, as is that of many of the world's music systems.) In this way the alpha brainwaves "play" melodies and patterns whenever their amplitude exceeds a pre-set threshold level. Listening carefully, Sharda Sahai identifies recurrent patterns and, responding with miraculous speed and accuracy, accompanies them on the Tabla, highlighting and reinforcing brain rhythms, thereby adding an extra dimension to the feedback. The years of skill and training which produced Sharda Sahai's mastery of what is one of the most highly developed rhythmic musical tradition in the world enables him to recognize and respond to patterns with a speed and accuracy which no western technology could possibly achieve. (Since the alpha rhythm supplies the basic pulse at 10 per second, the drummer must respond to a basic "beat" with a tempo of mm=600!)

In addition to a continuing involvement with biofeedback music since 1966, I have been for the past several years interested in the problem of interfacing diverse musical cultures and technologies. In this piece, the link between the several cultures is the biological universal of the human alpha rhythm.

Trio is a spontaneous collective creation by the three performers.

Instrumentation, friendship and past experience working together define limits and form bases for the generation of the music. During the past decade, the process of collective improvisation, or "real-time" composition as it is sometimes called, has developed rapidly in the West. (The art of improvisation has of course remained an integral element of most non-western musics for centuries -- which it once was in European art music as well.) With roots both in the "free jazz" traditions of such men as Taylor, Coleman and Coltrane, as well as in the more classically oriented groups such as Musica Elettronica Viva, AMM, the New Music Ensemble and others, this form of music making has become increasingly practiced throughout Europe and North America, where it has even begun to enter the university curriculum. The notion that non-hierarchical, collective interaction by a group of musicians, without resort to instructions or programs imposed from without (whether by composer, conductor or anyone else) can create meaningful art is still a controversial one. Clearly such a concept does not reflect the structure of most of our present day institutions -- musical or otherwise. Whether the models offered by collective musical processes will find fertile ground for growth within those institutions, perhaps even effecting changes in their structures, remains to be seen.

-----Richard Teitelbaum

Richard Teitelbaum was born in New York City and attended Haverford College and Yale University. From 1964-66 he studied composition with G. Petrassi and Luigi Nono, while on a Fulbright to Italy. There he met Frederic Rzewski and along with several other American composers founded the first live electronic improvisation ensemble Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV). At this time he also became interested in the idea of biofeedback music and created several pieces in this genre that were performed extensively throughout Europe. He has also played the Moog synthesizer live in concert since 1967. After returning to North America in 1970, Teitelbaum formulated the concept of World Band in which master musicians from diverse cultures improvise together. This group, founded at Wesleyan University, gave several performances in and around New York. He has authored several theoretical essays and has taught at the California Institute of the Arts and the Art Institute of Chicago, founding the Electronic Music Studio there. He is currently Visiting Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the Electronic Media Studios at York University in Toronto and a founder of the New Music Co-op there. He has recorded with MEV on Mainstream, Byg and Polydor records, and recently with Anthony Braxton on Arista and Sackville, and Dave Holland, Karl Berger and others on Creative Communications, all soon to be released.

Shūdō Yamato is a leading member of Kotobuki Kai, a shakuhachi study group led by Judō Notomi of Tokyo. He is active in performing and teaching the Kinko style shakuhachi in Tokyo, Fukuoka and Kitakyushui. Mr. Yamato was initiated into Ikuta style sokyoku at the age of six, and later at the age of 12 turned to the Kinko style shakuhachi. At first he studied the flute with his father Shuwo Yamato who was a professional shakuhachi player. At the age of 15 he became under Gado Iskamato's tutelage and learned the 36 honkyoku of Kinko. At the age of 19 Mr. Yamato served his apprenticeship with Judō Notomi, a national treasure in the Kinko style shakuhachi. In 1956 Mr. Yamato earned his diploma of the Kinko style shakuhachi and received his professional name from Judō Notomi. Since then Mr. Yamato has performed actively, mainly with the late Haruhiko Notomi, on stage, television and radio. He is currently Artist-In-Residence at Wesleyan University.

Barbara Mayfield has studied the Chinese martial art Tai Chi Chuan for the past four years under Marshall Ho'o, Robert Cheng and Howell Yip. She has been actively involved in biofeedback music since 1967, performing in many concerts throughout Europe and North America with Richard Teitelbaum and Musica Elettronica Viva. She is a former co-ordinator of the World Music program at Wesleyan University and is currently doing biofeedback research on Tai Chi at the York Experimental Aesthetics Laboratory in Toronto.

Sharda Sahai was born in Varanasi (Benares) on September 27, 1935. This tabla artist has maintained and augmented the great musical tradition of his illustrious family. The foremost exponent of the Benarasi baj style of tabla, Mr. Sahai is a seasoned veteran of over 1000 public performances in every major city of India, north and south, All India Radio (for which he is an A-grade artist), and most recently concerts in Paris, London and Holland. In 1970 he did a major tour throughout the United States with the young sarod player Amjad Ali. Recently Mr. Sahai has performed at the Philharmonic and Carnegie recital halls in New York. Sharda Sahai is the direct descendant of the founder of the Benares style of

tabla playing, Ram Sahai, who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century. The direct line of transmission passed down to Bhairav Sahai then to Bhagvati Sahai, the father and teacher of Sharda Sahai. Other branches of this "Gharana" include the late tabla master Kanthe Maharaj, who became the teacher of Mr. Sahai for three years after the demise of Bhagvati Sahai. In 1965 Mr. Sahai started the Ram Sahai Vidyalaya, a non-profit making school of music in Benares. He has many disciples in India and America, and is currently Artist-In-Residence at Wesleyan University.

Anthony Braxton, born June 4, 1945 in Chicago, began his musical studies at the age of eleven. While studying saxophone with Mr. Jack Gell, he was also a student at Roosevelt University and a music student at the Chicago College of Music. Moving to Paris in 1969, he had the opportunity to play and record with people such as Ornette Coleman, Archie Shepp, Gunter Hampel, William Breucker and Philly Joe Jones as well as to record several LPs under his own name. In 1970-1971 he toured with "Music Elettronica Viva" after which he joined "Circle" with fellow musicians Dave Holland, Barry Altschul and Chick Corea. He returned to Paris in 1972 where he continued to perform and compose for various ensembles. Recently returning to the US, Mr. Braxton has recorded the first of a series of recordings soon to be released by "Arista Records".

Dave Holland was born in Wolverhampton, England. He participated in the new music in England with John Surman and John Stevens. He travelled to America performing with Miles Davis and later with Stan Getz. He was part of the collective group "Circle" in 1970 which included Chick Corea among others. He has performed throughout America, Europe and Japan, working with Karl Berger, Sam Rivers and Jack Dejonnette among others. His records include "Conference of the Birds" and "Music From Two Basses" and is currently preparing a solo record.