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THE SOHO WEEKLY NEWS

Living Music

Avant

JOAN LA BARBARA

DREAM HOUSE
performed by
The Theatre of Eternal Music
La Monte Young, Voice and
Sine Waves
Marian Zazella, Voice
Alex Dea, Voice
Jon Hassell, Horn
David Rosenboom, Viola
De Fracia Evans, Projections
Friday, May 3, The Kitchen

While waiting on the stairs leading up to The Kitchen (the word that filtered down the steps was that someone had changed the dial settings on the electronic equipment and that things had to be retuned and readjusted before anyone could enter the Dream House) I thought about La Monte Young's status or notoriety in the avant-garde world and how his is one of the names students hear about in Contemporary Music courses in school. The only work of his I had previously experienced was Jim Burton's rendition of "Feed the Piano" at Hunter College last year. I was curious about the chanting aspect, having heard Rhys Chatham, Charlemagne Palestine and Charlie Morrow each working on very different focal points and techniques and styles of performance. And as a singer concentrating on vocal exploration I am always curious to hear what others have discovered about this only slightly explored instrument.

The Dream House environment, which began Sunday, April 28 and continued for a week, consisted of two sine waves tuned to the 50 and 60 cycle hums of electrical current derived from the 220 European and 115 U.S. volt power line frequencies, respectively (referred to in a poetic phrase in the heavily worded program notes as "the underlying drone of the city") set up by La Monte, and some mobiles created by Marian Zazeela that looked like single curls of flat white metal with spot lights set on wooden columns bouncing colors off the gently moving shapes. During the daytime exhibit the waves and lights and mobiles were active in the space, changed by the movements of visitors to the Dream House. At designated performance hours, the Theatre of Eternal Music would gather in a little group by the western wall of the Kitchen's big space and, surrounded by a battery of electronic equipment, hum and

pretty doily patterns on the wall behind them, silhouetting the performers against the slowly changing colors as the four sets of lacy figures blurred and focussed singly and in combinations.

La Monte and Marian have incredible focus to the sound produced by their unique voices. They hummed for the first forty-five minutes, tirelessly focusing the tones and then slowly opened to a nasal French 'an', and oval sound with an open vowel below and a nasal focus above. All of the performers played long straight tones for the length of a breath or some such comfortable time except for La Monte who sang long tones but also decorated them. He concentrated on three basic tones occasionally soloing by adding turns, throat curls, shakes and other little melismas. I've been working on increased focus on individual resonance areas and was fascinated by La Monte's hand movements, reminding himself of his chosen placement and direction of the tones.

I was disappointed by the stationary state of the audience. The sine wave and mobile environments were set up to be influenced by the movements of visitors, however during the performance the slide projections necessitated darkening the room and moving around was difficult at best, with the constant possibility of treading on some unseen stomach or nose. (Perhaps small night lights at foot level would be a useful addition.)

The Dream House was a pleasant experience; the colors and shapes were soothing as they seemed to grow as they changed focus; the sounds were pure and sublimely controlled. And I enjoyed following the fantasy suggestion from the program notes of the constant sound taking on a life of its own as a "real living organism." (...wonder what Vonnegut