

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC,
DANCE AND
PERFORMANCE

PETR KOTIK

MARCH 23, 1982 8pm
EXPLORATIONS IN THE GEOMETRY OF THINKING
for voices
text by R. Buckminster Fuller

CHAMBER MUSIC
for instruments

performed simultaneously

March 25, 1982 7pm
MANY MANY WOMEN
for voices and instruments
text by Gertrude Stein

S.E.M. ENSEMBLE:

DORA OHRENSTEIN
LOIS WINTER
CYNTHIA RICHARDS-HEWES *
sopranos

WILLIAM ZUKOF
countertenor

WILLIAM LYON LEE
GENE PAUL RICKARD *
tenors

ELLIOT LEVINE
GLENN BILLINGSLEY *
baritones

ALBERT DE RUITER
bass

PETR KOTIK
SUSAN STENGER
flutes

JAMES KASPROWICZ
LON GORMLEY **
trombones

MARY ROWELL
violin/viola

CAROL BUCK
violoncello

* March 23 only
**March 25 only

It all began in 1971, when Julius Eastman started to work with the S.E.M. Ensemble, primarily as a singer. Composing a new piece for the group, I had to include a part for voice. It was the first time that I was composing music with voice and the decision had to be made whether or not to work with a text instead of vocalized sounds.

I have always felt uneasy about music which uses voices without a text. Not to use a text seemed rather pretentious. Perhaps my feeling is a result of my dislike for color manipulations in music. I thought, "If I should use a voice, there should be a text. Without a text, I might as well use instruments."

Ever since my earliest attempts in composition, I have been most impressed by works which were composed in a clear way, going directly for the substantial, without unnecessary manipulation of the sound material. (This explains my interest in composers such as Cage or Mozart). The concept of simplicity within complexity has always been a very exciting thing for me, and it relates to all aspects of music, not just its structure, but also to performance-related decisions: notation, instrumentation, etc. (For example, the scores are notated as simple and self-explanatory as possible). I am always trying to avoid the use of amplification, and generally, I am disinterested in any sound-manipulating devices.

In 1971, my ability to find an appropriate text to work with was handicapped by

poor knowledge of the English language (I started to learn English in November 1969), and also by my ignorance about English literature. Nevertheless, I was examining everything I got my hands on - among the books was a collection of short writings and lectures by Gertrude Stein. I chose sections from a lecture, Composition as Explanation, for my piece with Julius. Since then, I have included voice in all my compositions, except DRUMS for percussions and a recent piece, CHAMBER MUSIC.

All my compositions have been directed toward performances with the group of musicians I have been working with. I never write music for an abstract reason (hoping that someone will perform it later). This is why I presently use voices so frequently. Since 1971, every time I finished a piece, I started to search for a new text for the next composition. The use of Gertrude Stein's texts until 1978 was not an a priori decision; it resulted from my inability to find any other text to work with.

In 1978, during my work on MANY MANY WOMEN, for the first time I became interested more in the content than in the form of the text. This resulted in the choice of using texts by R. Buckminster Fuller for my next piece.

MANY MANY WOMEN includes up to six singers and six instruments (minimum two singers and two instruments). If performed in its complete version, the piece takes five to six hours. The musicians are grouped in pairs who always sing or play simultaneously in perfect intervals (fourth, fifth, and octave). The music is divided into sections, and each pair may begin a section at a time. Once started, the section is performed exactly as written, to the end. Then the pair may wait as long as they wish before going on to the next section. Thus, a constantly-changing texture is created as pairs enter and drop out, the piece going from dense to sparse in its structure. Although each pair decides subjectively on their entrances and the length of silences, nobody can predict the result of the whole. One can control only one's own part - the behavior of other parts are unknown and unpredictable. The piece proceeds without any central control.

EXPLORATIONS IN THE GEOMETRY OF THINKING for voices (minimum of six) is the most recently finished piece. It consists of a main part "Numerology", performed by an ensemble, and four parts of solos, "Synergy", "Synergetics", "System", and "Conceptuality". All parts are divided into sections with silences between them. "Numerology" is being performed by various sizes of the ensemble (minimum of two singers up to the whole group) as singers enter and exit. When singers make such an exit, they can perform a solo, simultaneously with the main part, or with another solo, or remain silent. If there is a general silence, they can also start a section, it has to be performed in whole, exactly as written. No more than three different parts should be performed simultaneously.

CHAMBER MUSIC for wind and string instruments is a work in progress. The piece is divided into sections and is performed in a similar manner as my previous pieces. Some sections are written in parallel fifths, some have just a single line. The piece combines simultaneously solos, duos and ensemble playing.

All my compositions written after 1971 can be performed in part or completely. The pieces are written as separate parts, without a master score. The music is based on a steady pulse, without down or upbeats and without bar divisions. The simultaneous appearances of various parts and sections are determined by performers during the performance. Those decisions are sometimes guided by performance rules. The structure of the music is based on an open form concept. This concept operates with an equal distribution of elements at first, and later, it lets various parts and elements regroup themselves in an anticlimatic manner. The music has a synergetic quality: synergy means behavior of whole systems unpredicted by the behavior of their parts taken separately.

(Petr Kotik, March 1982)

PETR KOTIK, composer and flutist, was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1942. He studied music in Prague and Vienna and between 1961-69, performed extensively throughout Europe. In 1969, Kotik settled permanently in the United States, and in 1970 he founded the S.E.M. Ensemble, which consists of musicians from New York City. The group performs a series of concerts each season in Buffalo and New York City and frequently tours the United States. Since 1972, it has toured Europe thirteen times and in the summer of 1980, it toured Central and South America.

In 1964 Mr. Kotik performed with John Cage and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in Europe. In 1966-67, the electronic studio of West German radio commissioned a work of electronic music by Kotik. Contrabandt, a live electronic piece, was com-

pleted at the WDR studio and has been widely performed in Europe and the United States. In 1969 Kotik was invited by Lukas Foss and Lejaren Hiller to join the Center of the Creative and Performing Arts at the State University of New York at Buffalo as a composer and performer. Kotik remained with the Center until 1974.

In 1973, Kotik organized a summer program in experimental music in New Hampshire, Chocorua '73, with a faculty of six composers: David Behrman, Julius Eastman, Petr Kotik, Gordon Mumma, Frederic Rzewski, and David Tudor. In 1974 Petr Kotik researched and realized the musical work of Marcel Duchamp which led to performances and lectures on Duchamp's music throughout the U.S. and Europe. In 1976 Duchamp's music was recorded by the S.E.M. Ensemble for Multhipla Records in Milan.

In September 1978 Kotik toured South America participating in a Symposium of Composers at the University of Sao Paulo and giving lectures and solo concerts throughout South America. In the summer of 1980, Kotik toured South America again, lecturing and performing with the S.E.M. Ensemble.

Presently, Petr Kotik is living as an independent composer, performer, and director of the S.E.M. Ensemble. The Ensemble has performed whole evenings of Kotik's music at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Paula Cooper Gallery, the Clocktower and The Kitchen in New York; the Art Reserch Center in Kansas City; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; the Museum of Modern Art ARC 2 in Paris; Dokumenta VI in Kassel; the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London; the Jazz Club in Prague; Museum Bochum, West Germany; DAAD in West Berlin; and Fundacao das Artes in Sao Paulo. In 1981, MANY MANY WOMEN was released on Labor Records, New York, in a five-record set edition. This work was also released on Cramps in Milan as a single LP. In 1976, Cramps also released an LP of Kotik's flute solo works.

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