

MUSIC REVIEW

Sounds to Blend Into the Woodwork

By ALEX ROSS

Ambient music, the main event over the weekend at the Kitchen's new Electronic Cafe, has a longer history than one might think. Brian Eno first codified a philosophy of sound as atmosphere in the 1970's; long before him, though, Erik Satie introduced the notion of *musique d'ameublement*, a furniture music that the audience was supposed to hear with comfortable inattention. And in a sense, much music written before Haydn and Mozart was ambient: the Baroque genre of *Tafelmusik*, or table music, was intended as background for aristocratic dinner conversation.

Modern ambient music, however, makes more complex demands. It does not serve as the background for

An old concept is applied to a new musical order.

unrelated events; rather, like certain modes of Minimalism, it aims to wrap the audience in its sensuous embrace, excluding more conscious forms of activity. Rather than sitting composedly in chairs, listeners lie on the floor, or maybe dance. Ambient music overlaps heavily with the dense, overwhelming dance sound of techno and rave.

Ambient music also blends into the new order of audio, video, com-

puter and virtual-reality technology. Sounds play in tandem with flickering images; D.J.'s build textures on multiple turntables. The Electronic Cafe, part of an international network of performance spaces linked by advanced telecommunications systems, is a major new technological venture for the Kitchen, which has converted its second-floor theater. The audience moves around from the main floor to a bar with drinks and snacks, to display tables with various performers' wares, to an ominous-looking "sensory resonance mind machine."

The musical programming for the weekend's "Before and After Ambient" event was chosen by Ben Neill; in a program note, he echoed the ambient nomenclature, writing of a "total environmental effect" in which "the presentation and the work being presented are unified in one esthetic idea." But the sounds on Friday night, when I visited from 9 P.M. until after midnight, were far from unified. There was the heavy techno assault of Zoar, an ensemble blending cello and guitar with an array of synthesizers and intricate lighting patterns; there was the delicately dissonant piano improvisation of Jaron Lanier, devoid of visual analogues; there was Christian Marclay's violent turntable montage of assorted musical tidbits.

And Phil Niblock's contribution, video scenes of farm workers in China accompanied by unison droning tones from the Soldier String Quartet, seemed almost diametrically opposed to the ambient philosophy. This was a very traditional avant-garde assault, as difficult for the musicians as for the audience. (It was the first time I saw anyone yawn while playing the violin.) It offered nothing in the way of pleasurable hypnosis; it had no ambience.

The presentation really seemed to come together only after midnight, when the Kitchen hooked up with another Electronic Cafe in Santa Monica, Calif., via videophone. D.J. Spooky, at the Kitchen, mixed his turntables with those of two unidentified D.J.'s on the other coast; an amiable, free-flowing chaos of sound resulted. What mattered here was not the fancy transcontinental feat, but the uncertain, free-form nature of the interaction. For a little while, at least, sound was not the captive of technology and hype.



Rebecca Cooney for The New York Times

Zoar, an ensemble that blends instruments with synthesizers and intricate lighting patterns, performing on Friday night at the Kitchen.

DANCE REVIEW

Solos to 'Blue Moon' by Elvis And Sounds of a Farmyard

By JENNIFER DUNNING

Wendy Perron is a performer with a haunting, fugitive eloquence. She seems both present and absent onstage. That quality permeated "Solos With Memories," one of three new dances Ms. Perron presented on Thursday night at the Danspace at St. Mark's Church in the East Village.

The triptych of solos was performed to Elvis Presley's singing of "Blue Moon" over a muted background of farmyard clip-clop, rooster-crowing sounds. Each dance alluded to character and situation, but only obliquely. Each character seemed to be living in the private world of the imagination.

Lisa Bush might have been a farm wife, feeding and shoeing chickens in the moonlight, cradling a baby, losing herself in reverie and sleepwalking through it all. Gaunt and a little ghostly, Ms. Perron seemed to be flailing, willing herself into the real world. This woman could have walked out of a Walker Evans portrait of a Depression farm woman, but one who once went to the big city and came back forever changed and

disoriented by the splendor.

In a tour de force of all-out dancing, David Thomson seemed charged by some inner, irresistible impulse that would not let him rest. And languorous, dreaming encounters for the three enabled them to complete their solos, each walking off in dimming light.

"One Thing Another Thing," set to a lulling, pushing score by David Hamburger, started off strongly with a clear juxtaposition of choreographed and improvised dancing. Colleen Blair and Vicky Shick were like long, glistening silk threads unspooling across the stage in their choreographed duets. Matthew Brown and Katherine Ferrier kept almost touching in their progressions between stage front and back.

But when the four came together and the lines were blurred, the dance gradually became intellectualized and unengaging, a problem, too, with the atmospheric "Thicket."

DANCE REVIEW

2 Art Forms Lovingly Intertwine

By JACK ANDERSON

Music and dance don't really need each other. Music is a self-sufficient art. And choreographers have created fine works to speech, noises or silence. Usually, however, music has been their favorite accompaniment. So, too, composers have frequently been inspired by dance rhythms.

The interplay between music and dance was emphasized in "Recital With Dance," the program of compositions by Stravinsky and Ravel presented on Saturday night at the 92d Street Y by the violinist Young Uck Kim and Steffan Scheja, a pianist, who were joined in their final selection by two stars of the New York City Ballet, Darci Kistler and Nikolaj Hübbe.

Stravinsky wrote "Duo Concertant" as a concert piece in 1932. In 1972, George Balanchine choreographed it for the City Ballet's first Stravinsky Festival.

It begins with its two dancers simply standing beside the musicians and listening to them. As they paid rapt attention, Ms. Kistler and Mr. Hübbe seemed idealized concertgoers. Then the music set them moving, making them energetic in the allegros and limpid in the lyrical passages. The duet concludes memorably when the dancers appear to be separated by fate yet united in spirit by their longing for each other. The yearnings of Ms. Kistler and Mr. Hübbe implied that whereas the experiences of life are fleeting, art can embody them eternally.

Throughout the concert, Mr. Kim played with a warm tone. He could have given a more taut account of Stravinsky's "Suite Italienne," which is based upon jaunty themes from that composer's ballet "Pulcinella." But he effectively emphasized the jazzy spirit of Ravel's *Sonate* for violin and piano and the plaintiveness of Ravel's "Pièce en Forme d'Habanera."

This blending of art forms was marred only by the program's inexcusable failure to credit Balanchine with the choreography for "Duo Concertant."

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