

Odd acoustic spaces provide fertile ground for band's explorations

As a child growing up in Houston, Texas, Pauline Oliveros became interested in sound environments. She noticed how conversation would change from inside her house to the outdoors, how sounds could be dense, sparse, raucous, or meditative, according to the location in which they were heard. The changes in coloration and tones as a train passed, the clear feedback throughout the cavernous arches of a church, the reverberation prevalent in an underground storage space.

With the idea of illuminating the sonic qualities of different spaces and exploring the resonance and coloration of just tuned instruments, Oliveros formed Deep Listening Band in 1988 with trombonist Stuart Dempster and vocalist/computer wizard Panaiotis, recording their award-winning "Deep Listening" CD for New Albion in a two million gallon cistern on the old Fort Worden military base 70 miles from Seattle.

"One of the characteristics of the band is that we like to explore unusual acoustic space.

Two of our CDs were recorded in an underground cistern, which has a very long reverberation time. We're interested in the long reverberation time in the cistern which really becomes a partner in our music. The other environment that we recorded in was a limestone cave, which had different characteristics in different parts of the cave, but the most influential element was the water dripping in the cave. We used that as a way to interact with the space. Each situation is unique. We try to simulate some of these things when we play by using an Expanded Instrument System, says Oliveros.

Always focused on the acoustic properties of their instruments -- accordion, trombone, didjeridu, piano and found instruments -- Deep Listening Band nonetheless had an electronic vision in the hands of Panaiotis, who would reprocess these acoustic sounds and manipulate them from a centralized computer and electronic processor. With Panaiotis's departure over a year ago, keyboardist David

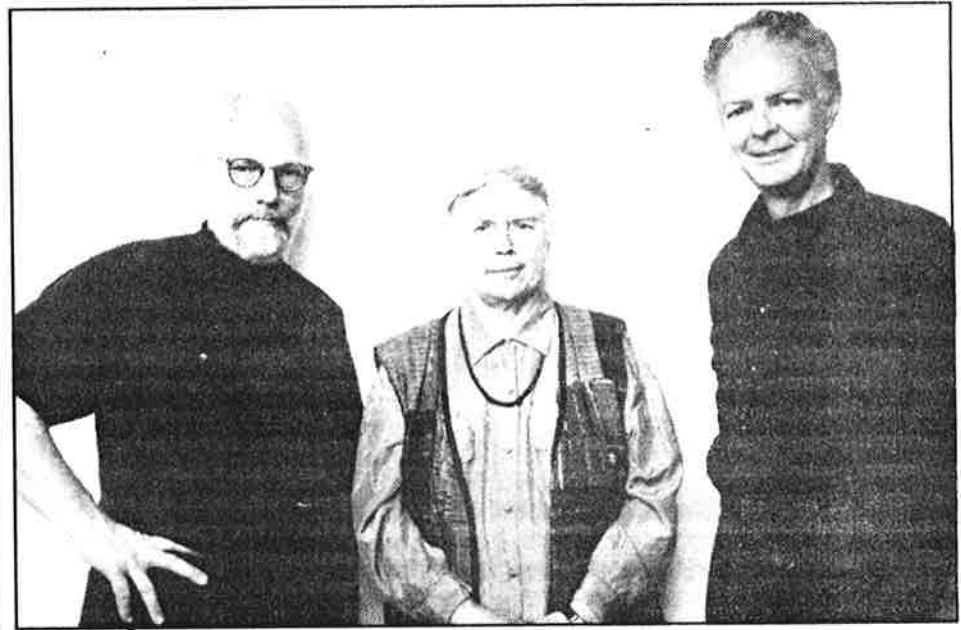


photo by Gisela Gamper

Deep Listening Band: David Gamper, left, Pauline Oliveros and Stuart Dempster.

Gamper, who had joined D.L.B. in 1989 as a performance assistant, technical coordinator and documentary recording engineer, integrated their first use of an Expanded Instrument System to distribute control of the electronic processing among all the members of group. That revolutionized D.L.B.'s ability to communicate with one another in performance and to become more attuned to alterations in the acoustics of a space which occur with the presence of an audience.

From Jan. 11-14, The Kitchen will present D.L.B. in a concert of new pieces using the E.I.S. in different ways. With the premiere of Oliveros's "Earrings," Dempster's "Milanda Embracing" and Gamper's "Deep Hockets," the group will investigate the acoustic properties of the space at The Kitchen. Related special events such as the Deep Listening Sound Massage on Jan. 10 will reveal some of Oliveros's listening techniques developed to draw attention to how we listen to different sounds. Other events on Jan. 11 will demonstrate the electronic processing of acoustic instruments over the E.I.S., which in effect creates "virtual" instruments, each with its own character in a given performance space.

Finally, on Jan. 15, D.L.B. will hook up with other musicians at "strong sites" in The Kitchen's Electronic Cafe system, which allows musicians and computers to communicate with one another from New York, to Paris, to California, for a Global Sonic Meditation. Each guest artist will solo with D.L.B. processed through the E.I.S. and returned to their home site in computer real time.

The E.I.S. is an electronic processing device which allows acoustic sounds to be expanded, transformed and moved around through electronic processing boxes. Performers then can improvise their acoustic sounds electronically through this other instrument without depending on synthesized sounds.

Deep Listening Band, at The Kitchen, 512 W. 19 St. (between 10 and 11 Aves.) Jan. 11-14, concerts 11-14 at 8 P.M.; \$15. Related events: Deep Listening Massage, Jan. 10, 7 and 9 P.M.; Expanded Instrument System demonstration, Jan. 11, 4 P.M.; Global Sonic Meditation via the Electronic Cafe, Jan. 15, 4 P.M. 255-5793.

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