

# Observations

## Victoriaville Festival 1994

For five glorious days from May 19-23, the Festival International Musique Actuelle Victoriaville (FIMAV) once again look over the small Canadian town of Victoriaville, half way between Montreal and Quebec.

This is a festival that can jump from intimate chamber improvisations by Joëlle Léandre, Rudiger Carl, and Carlos Zingaro to the dramatically inductive raving of Diamanda Galás to the barely contained cacophony of John King, David Moss, and Olomo Yoshihide in the space of one evening. Concerts ranged from the large-scale of a multi-media performance of Richard Teitelbaum's "Golem" and Jon Rose's wryly ambitious audio-drama "Violin Music in the Age of Shopping" to stunning solos by Keith Tippett, Charles Gayle, and Canadian pianist Lee Pui Ming. With 26 concerts featuring over 100 musicians from Asia, Canada, the US, and Europe, for five days, from afternoon until early the next morning, musicians, critics, and fans ensconced themselves in a continuous flow of music, conversation, and celebration. This is a festival which has become one of the more consistently challenging and exciting showcases in North America for all forms of alternative improvised and creative music.

### THURSDAY

The festival got off to a spectacular start in the Ste-Victoire Church, with the 26-piece Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal performing a piece entitled "Musiques en Espace Sacré." This was the first major project by Espaces Sonores Illimités, a group of three Montréal-based composers whose work focuses on extending instrumental concert music by creating site-specific pieces to explore spatial and sonic aspects of the concert setting. The audience slowly filled the church to the accompaniment of a mounding low drone coming from string players spread around the nave of the church. Gradually, the wooden snaps of hand percussion entered the mix as musicians moved around the balcony above the audience like peepers on a spring evening. The music took off from there, as a stately swirl of contrasts. Solemn, sacred strings were juxtaposed against boisterous blating brass only to be transmuted over time into quavering, non-tempered string drones against Baroque brass choir. Sonorous, pastoral, hymn-like lines were countered by discordant, clustered atonality. Strings, brass, and percussion tonalities were contrasted with ancient sounds of hurdy-gurdys, krumphorns, hunting horns, wheezing harmonium, and nasal Baroque double reed instruments and the rumblings of the church organ. Throughout the performance, musicians moved around the church in careful choreography creating a sculptural, spatial sonic mass that surrounded the audience. Brass players would gather in the choir lofts for antiphonal parts played across the hall and then slowly spread out, only to converge at certain points as smaller

sub-groupings. Strings would assemble on the rostrum in front of the church then slowly break up in solemn processions to various stations around the church. The music slowly built to dense waves massing the full ensemble and then gradually, the musicians began marching out of the church as the crowd followed them out to hear the music diffuse into the night air.

The 10pm concert moved to the Colisée des Bois-Francis, a hockey arena that had been converted especially for these concerts. Upon learning that a hockey arena was being used, many were skeptical. However, floor-to-ceiling curtains covering up the bleachers and numerous sound baffles hanging from the ceiling helped to keep the sound from being too live. The main floor area was filled with table seating and the main stage was large and roomy without causing the performers to seem lost. French musician Albert Marcoeur and his quintet, featuring his two brothers on percussion and keyboards along with two guitarists, presented a program entitled "Sports et Percussions." The concept behind the performance was to use sounds of various sporting events (cheering crowds, screaming race cars, tennis volleys, rattling bicycle gears) as a basis for a series of progressive rock improvisations. This was lightly arranged, percussion-heavy music with dense sampling and twin guitar leads blending funk backbeats, folk-dance riffs, and fractured rock grooves. During the more interesting moments Marcoeur constructed tight counterpoint out of the sampled sounds. Yet too often, things fell into fascicle lurid bombast, particularly the guitar playing, which was infused with pat fusion licks.

The first night ended with a midnight concert at the Grand Calé, a converted community center that served as a comfortable mid-sized venue, with a set by a post-Coltrane jazz trio led by Montreal tenor player Yannick Rieu. Rieu played with a full, round tone spinning improvisations with a relaxed swing. He soloed with a warm lyricism that built to an unforced burred edge. Bass player Frédéric Alarie offered solid support but his tone was a bit thin. Drummer Paul Léger swung with an open groove and in an energetic duet with Rieu, he pushed the proceedings into a cascading flow with darting, jabbing phrasing.

### FRIDAY

The second day began with a 1pm solo performance for prepared piano by Montreal musician Pierre St-Jak. Center-stage was a modified upright piano, a Rube Goldberg keyboard instrument with various junk woven into the strings and certain keys set up to activate a variety of percussion instruments mounted off the piano sound-board. This was augmented by synthesizer and a sampler that was used to loop and distort the piano. St-Jak was as apt to be plucking, beating and scraping inside and under the piano as he was to be playing at the keyboard. The resulting sound was a cross between a linnery player piano, gamelan, carillon, and kolo, but the music lacked dynamic range and momentum, depending solely on the novelty of the sonic palette.

A 5pm concert returned to the Grand Calé for a recital of computer music for five musicians and pre-

recorded tape by electroacoustic composer Paul Dolden. This was multi-layered, highly structured music based on the massing and manipulation of density and velocity of sound. Highlights were two pieces featuring François Houle on clarinet and soprano sax accompanied by a taped computer part with Houle's like playing woven around the striated computer textures. Another section of note was duets with Dolden (cel, vin) joined by Ron Samworth (g) for two improvisations structured around interactions with sampling delays and signal processing of the instruments. Though the setup extended the normal sound of the instruments, it also limited the choices available and resulted in sonically active improvisations of limited scope.

The 8pm concert moved to an old movie theater providing a comfortable dramatic setting for Joëlle Léandre's Canvas trio featuring Léandre (b, vc), Rudiger Carl (accordion, cl) and Carlos Zingaro (vin). This trio's free-chamber improvisations were intimate and personal. The unique blend of the three instruments invoked gypsy music, earthy Mediterranean country songs, and French chansons, providing an original context for the players' backgrounds in open improvisation. The concert presented a series of concentrated miniatures displaying a startling level of careful listening and group empathy. The pieces ranged from an almost romantic lyricism to free abstractions of open tonalities. Skittering violin hovered over tremolo accordion and growling arco bass; crying Eastern European clarinet soared over agitated bass and violin; clipped violin bounced off quiet bass harmonics and reedy sprinkles of accordion. Their fresh inventiveness and relaxed clarity provided one of the highlights of the festival.

The 10pm show moved back to the Colisée for a presentation of Diamanda Galás' chilling "Plague Mass," a solo rumination on society's backlash to AIDS. Alone on the stage covered in primitive body paint and bathed in blood-red light Galás seemed like a druid or shaman. Her performance progressed from measured dirge to frenzied, feverish free association; in parts operatic aria, gospel shout, possessed speaking in tongues, and rattling banshee wail. Her voice was heavily amplified and often electronically processed. This, combined with her extended vocal techniques of guttural screams and flayed shrieks, was enveloping with a palpable impact that was often literally ear shattering. Her turbulent condemnation of society's marginalization and criminal attitude towards AIDS made an emotional impact, but at over one and one-half hours, the overall effect became monochromatic and was diminished.

Chaotically blending free improvisation, power rock, and sound collage, the midnight show offered a trio of John King (el g), David Moss (d, perc, vc), and Olomo Yoshihide (el g, digital sampler, and turntables.) Yoshihide's dada turntable manipulations cut from polka to Marilyn Monroe croons to angular fragments of Monk, slicing and distorting the sources and recombining them with maniacal abandon. Moss' frenetic free-scat warbles of fractured language, and drumming, combining jazz swing with rock drive and an open-improvisation sensibility, provided a shifting momentum which constantly threatened to careen out of control. King's scurrying, fuzz-toned guitar was a slashing backdrop though his playing was the most limited in scope. The relentless hyperactivity and aggressive dynamics at times constrained the improvisations but there was a propulsive energy throughout

that carried the set.

### SATURDAY

The third day of the festival opened with a 1pm concert by the Temmeson-based duo Shaking Ray Lewis with Dennis Palmer (kbd, vc) and Dub Slagner (d, perc). These two imbued spontaneous collective improvisation with their Southern roots. They combined a rock edge, bluesy Country and Western, and honky tonk with a penchant for free improvisation and a home made touch. Palmer played cheap synthesizers and low-tech electronics and had a vocal style that was as apt to mimic a screaming rock electric guitar as it was to dive in to hyperkinetic atonal yodels. Slagner responded stonically from behind his kit kicking out driving percussion sounding like a cross between Han Bennink and a rock drummer. Both players displayed a somewhat limited scope yet their set had an honest verve.

The afternoon concert brought the Orchestre Vélocipède de Montréal and their wacky retold bicycle instruments looking like something out of a Dr. Seuss book. Two-, three-, and four-wheeled pedal powered vehicles sporting strung instruments, horns, keyboards, drums, cymbals, loudspeakers, and resonators, slowly circled the floor of the Colisée around and through the crowd, acting as roving sound-sources. The musician-bicyclist, dressed in black, created libal stonks, ambient drones, and modulating sheets of sound. Over several days, they also performed parades in the streets for the local townspeople. Though they were intriguing to experience, they were more spectacle than musical performance.

The 5pm solo piano concert by Keith Tippett was another highlight of the festival. His set consisted of one spontaneous improvisation unfolding in an unbroken thread. His long, extended lines had a delicate exactitude yet delivered a forceful momentum. Starting with rattling bells and quiet strumming of the strings inside the piano, the improvisation built with measured clarity, as he slowly added to mounding layers and then slowly stripped them apart. Tippett prepared the piano with metal bars and wooden blocks which he adjusted throughout to control the timbre, attack, and sustain of various sections of the keyboard. From dark, thundering bass rumbles to lyrical clustered runs, Tippett's improvisation developed like focused motifs reflected in a fractured mirror.

The evening performance of "Golem" by Richard Teitelbaum at the movie theater was the most technically complex of the festival. The multi-media piece blended video, film, and slides flashed on a screen across the stage with composed and improvised music featuring the composer (kbd, synth, computer generation), Carlos Zingaro (vin), Ursula Oppens (p), David Moss (perc, vc), and Maggie Nicols (vc). Teitelbaum has attempted to construct a new type of music theater using the synthesis of visual imagery, text, interactive computer systems, musical structures, and improvisation. With a theme based on a legend of a creature, created to protect a community, who grew so strong that he ran amok and had to be destroyed, the sheer density of the piece was at times overwhelming and difficult to decipher. The final half of the piece, though, was the most successful as Teitelbaum cued various improvised duets by flashing lights hung in front of each of the musicians. The improvisations built into a free frenzy until everyone entered the mix in a chaotic entropy as images exploded on the screen. The piece climaxed and then dissolved into a final quiet resolve



# FESTIVALS BACK EAST

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL MUSIQUE ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE • MAY 19TH - 23RD / 1994

REVIEW BY SPIKE TAYLOR

FOR ALL THE UNINITIATED, say, the Festival International Musique Actuelle in Victoriaville (FIMAV) is perhaps the integral annual gathering of musical minds in North America in the performance setting. This year's event has proven yet again that this small community in the eastern townships of Quebec is a significant opening along the pipeline of creative and adventurous music.

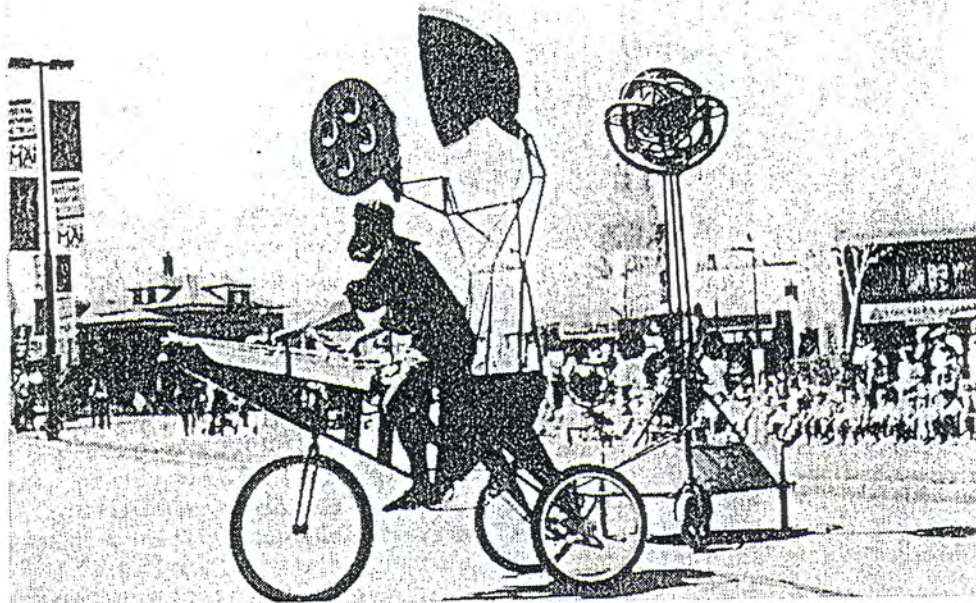
I tapped in for the five days and nights and I'll share with you here what I found (what you missed), and it's a tremendous lot. Taken simply as a celebratory showcase of bold new musical works and workings, the FIMAV has made its name through tasteful presentations and unique

pairings of musicians and musical styles. From here, though, the simple rules of staged festivity are defenestrated and the spirit of the unknown and the elements of risk take over. There is really no way of knowing what you'll hear at a FIMAV concert and so expectations give way to a new outlook for the spectator. If this still sounds an easy task you must then realize that the true task is to keep up with this musical intensity twenty-six times over a five day period - a tremendous lot.

THERE HAD BEEN A LOT OF BAD BLOOD and water under the bridge to stage this eleventh edition of the FIMAV after the tenth anniversary blowout in the autumn of 1992. Under civic pressure to popularize the event the organizers bowed to allow for some restructuring and be reborn in the spring of 1994. Artistic Director Michel Levasseur would only bow so low, though. In a resounding press release issued at the time of the tenth anniversary, Levasseur stood fast by the festival's mandate and stated, "...the only negotiable letter in the FIMAV is the 'V'". Relations between the festival and the city are much more relaxed these days - there is a new and supportive municipal administration, a three year contract for the future springtime celebrations of this most uncompromising music and the sun shone on Victoriaville for five days straight.

As the political background seems sound and stable we ought to look now at the music. Though 1994's lineup was not the galaxy of stars that 1992's was, this fact added to the element of risk so vital to this here and now. For the most part, the risks were rewarded at the music's outer reaches as explored by Espaces Sonores Illimites, Mari Kimura/Jim O'Rourke, Shaking Ray Levis, Keith Tippett, Borbetomagus and the surprise duo of Caspar and Peter Brotzmann.

The story that circulated the Montreal record shops prior to the festival was that the drummer from Caspar Brotzmann's Massaker had gone A.W.O.L. and the band's FIMAV appearance had to be scrapped. Happily and timely though, a gap was uncovered in the tenor-legend-father's schedule that enabled him to join his equally enigmatic guitarist-son for an improvised sonic trapline. From the opening nod it was quite clear that these two were bound to the search for a common musical ground in contorted ranges of high-volume and layered dissonance. Once they'd found a workable space the two pushed each other ahead into the unexplored zones where the strangest father-son weekend trip was ever taken - or witnessed.



For the jazz fan in Victoriaville there is much that can be learned toward an insight into the free and adventurous music of the future. Where the mainstream jazz festivals have a tendency to invite artists from the more commercially viable and safely de-mystified realms of blues and world beat along with the jazz, the FIMAV counters the black/white thinking of the day with a presentation of the most exciting and gorgeous spectra of greys ever heard. The representatives from the more recognizable jazz spheres were highly successful in tearing down the musical barriers that impede too many in the established jazz trade.

A jazz unit could hardly be more established than Trio Three - Oliver Lake, Reggie Workman and Andrew Cyrille - and it's hard to imagine a stronger and more imaginative concert statement than their's. The same is true-plus-two for the Myra Melford Quintet where energy and joy supplanted the reserve of the Lake-led group. Melford's inspired trio of drummer Reggie Nicholson and bassist Lindsey





Horner were met and challenged by the ideally matched horns of multi-reedist Marty Ehrlich and trumpeter Herb Robertson. While Horner and Nicholson ploughed through the groundwork of mainly Melford's compositions, the front-line piano and horns worked a brilliance of mood swings and odd blasts of blurts. Melford's awesome technique staggered even those standing near the back of the room. She is at once a dancer, a romantic and a savage suckerpuncher at the bench, at times beating all hell out of the piano and making it beautiful.

Charles Gayle's much anticipated solo set delivered beyond any expectation as he claimed the stage with a knowing confidence and wailed it through his tenor saxophone, kicked it into his drum kit or testified to it at the piano with a voice that proclaimed it. Saxophonists Spearman and Larry Ochs lead a furious locking-and-unlocking of grooves fleshed out in the Glenn Spearman Double Trio and stood them among the FIMAV's highlight events. The merging of these two outright trio units from the San Francisco area is a dynamic step towards a full and forthright group improvisation. They filled the room with a swirling mass of freely Ornettized compositions balanced on the edge of reason and abandon. It was an inviting place for the listener to hang.

Elsewhere on the rack of the eleventh FIMAV's strong suits was the continued commitment to showcasing Canadian

## CODA MAGAZINE

composer/improvisers. These ranged from the self-assured and endlessly inventive solo pianists Lee Pui Ming and Pierre St. Jak to the very talented multi-reed player Francois Houle. Michel F. Cote's 'Bruire' group gave a truly off-the-wall performance combining the leader's own percussive off-roading with Claude Fradette's minimalist guitar work, Serge Boisvert's trumpet and voice, Martin Tetreault's in-the-know tracking on turntables and the inimitable Jean Derome's own table full of strangely blown surprises. The performance swung on an odd but undeniably cool new meter that evoked the sense of it being the soundtrack to a movie the entire audience would line up to see and bring friends to. Yannick Rieu's tenor-led trio chopped into a solid set of straight-ahead jazz but, as the midnight show on the first of five nights of music, much of the small audience of all-day travellers were contorted in their chairs in restless sleeps. Great band in a tough slot.

THERE WERE TWO UNIQUE and entirely remarkable spectacles by Quebec ensembles at the FIMAV in terms of use of physical space, motion and, of course, music. Espace Sonores Illimites opened this year's festival with *Musique En Espace Sacre* inside the beautiful Eglise Ste-Victoire. Some one-hundred-plus music stands and twenty-six musicians in motion were the means toward a sonic exploration of the traditional concert space with unorthodox contemporary music. The result was a strange character study of the church as the established and foreknown centre of the community. It was a challenging and somehow entirely appropriate entry into the often intense musical experience of the FIMAV. No less challenging but more interactive were the two performances by the descriptively elusive

Orchestre Velocipede de Montreal. The six 'velocipedes' took to the streets of Victoriaville in a spirited afternoon event which featured the fun and functional aspects of the sound-generating inventions incorporated into the structures of the cycles. The city block was crowded with children and adult onlookers who may have been wondering 'what's been going on in there' for the past ten autumns. For their second performance, a multi-disciplinary piece entitled *Karel*, Orchestre Velocipede found their element on the floor of the modified Collsee des Bois Francs. The dark, open spaces there supplied a dreamlike atmosphere when combined with the audio and visual experience of these very physical and oddly musical self-propelled velocipedes. The paths of the cycles were generally in and out among the fascinated and welcoming clusters of the 'concert' audience, pausing every so often to dismount and play their 'instruments' in a more confrontational manner than they could when in the drivers' seats.

There were some performances which transcended the concert setting even further with multimedia, theatrics and on beyond. Diamanda Galas mounted her solo *Plague Mass* before the largest audience of the festival's run. It was an ear-splitting, eye-opening and mind-shattering testimony against the many different reactionary and counter-reactionary efforts and actions taking focus away from persons infected with AIDS and the disease itself. The three workdays needed to ready multimedia composer Richard Teitelbaum's performance *Golem* at the Cinema Laurier paid off as a major technical coup for the FIMAV and as an unforgettable sound and visual scape brought to life by the larger than life presence of vocalist/percussionist David Moss. *Violin Music in the Age of Shopping* was presented by the Australian composer/violinist Jon Rose and his ensemble, cast with a sense of humour that rubbed both ways. Depending on how closely one may have warmed up to the decadent spirit of his spectacle, the feeling of the music being usurped by the tone of Rose's commentary prevailed. The uneasiness is with me to this day as I have the feeling that the audience was right where he wanted us and he worked us masterfully. I still can picture him behind his desk, impeccable, with his smirk and violin.

French composer Albert Marcouer's *Sports et Percussion* and Toronto's Graeme Kirkland and The Wolves represented physical exercises in manic power-pop and engaged their audiences by different tactics - Marcouer through the thrill of the sport and in the playing and Kirkland through sex, violence and a convoluted delivery of the goods. Kirkland's *Compositional Collage* material is more direct and effective on disc than on the FIMAV stage and it's been around awhile, too. Time for something new from this group - the potential for some groundbreaking moves was clearly evident but not ultimately realized.

The festival went silent after a blistering set by The Nudes - an international supergroup of diverse innovators led by Amy Dennio on voice, guitar, accordion and alto saxophone, drummer Chris Cutler, bassist Bob Drake and guitarist Wadi Gysi. By the same assumptive logic that made the festival's opening concert fit so well in its surroundings, so too did the looping rockout affair of The Nudes' closing concert seem somehow righteous.

The 1994 edition of the Festival International Musique Actuelle was one of the strongest ever and remarkable for having overcome the obstacles which threatened its integrity and its future in Victoriaville. Again, this festival is integral to the new music for its encouragement, its focus and its tasteful and often risky ventures to stage the untried and even unimaginable. The inherent problems with the jump from the fall to the spring were not really evident but upon closer examination one would notice some very small audiences at some of the most entertaining concerts.

With the springtime now established as the 'when', the 1994 FIMAV should have convinced any sceptics that, indeed, this is 'where' it's at for this music.



# LA RÉSONANCE DES LIEUX

Johanne Rivest

**ESPACES SONORES ILLIMITÉS**  
(Alain Lalonde, André Hamel, Alain Dauphinais, compositeurs)

**MUSIQUES EN ESPACE SACRÉ**  
Ensemble contemporain de Montréal (ECM)  
Direction: Véronique Lacroix et Paolo Bellomia (2<sup>e</sup> chef)  
Solistes: Eric Mercier - zurna, cor de berger, bombarde, chalémie, chabrette limousine;  
Daniel Thonon - accordéon diatonique, shakuhachi, vielle à roue

Festival international de musique actuelle de Victoriaville, 19 mai 1994, Église Sainte-Victoire

Je tiens à remercier les trois compositeurs d'Espaces sonores illimités pour m'avoir renseignée sur les aspects de leur travail et sur la réalisation de Musiques en espace sacré lors d'une rencontre tenue à Montréal le 15 novembre 1994.

...il serait judicieux et possible de prévoir une disposition pour toute combinaison de plus de deux musiciens, de façon à ce que la distance que les sons devront parcourir du corps émetteur jusqu'à l'oreille de l'auditeur soit un facteur favorable à l'interprétation. Il est difficile de reproduire les sonorités et l'impression que l'éloignement donne au son uniquement en réduisant ou augmentant le nombre d'instruments, ou en variant leurs intensités. Une fanfare jouant pianissimo de l'autre côté de la rue ne produit pas le même résultat sonore que la même fanfare jouant le même morceau forte un pâté de maisons plus loin. Des expériences, même à petite échelle, comme séparer un chœur de l'orchestre, ou placer un chœur hors-scène ou dans une partie éloignée de la salle, semblent indiquer qu'il existe dans ce domaine des possibilités dont la présentation de la musique tirerait tout avantage, non seulement du point de vue de la clarté des matériaux harmonique, rythmique, thématique, etc., mais aussi pour un meilleur rendu du contenu profond...

(Charles E. Ives, « La musique et son futur », 1933, in *Contrechamps*, n°7, (décembre 1986), p.176.



## REVIEW

## New sounds suit old site in Victoriaville

*Unexpected is normal  
at new-music festival*

ANDREW JONES  
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

VICTORIAVILLE - The 11th annual Festival International Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville got under way last night with a bit of heaven on earth.

The opening concert of the festival, which runs through Monday, brought some bold new music to a very old place.

Subtitled Music in a Sacred Place, Espaces Sonores Illimités was a musical, philosophical and acoustic exploration of Victoriaville's Ste. Victoire church.

As performed by the intrepid Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal, it was the perfect opening to Victo, and the perfect introduction to musique actuelle: new sounds in ancient structures, a bracing musical tonic of water poured from an ancient well.

Built in 1896, the church is one of Victoriaville's most recognizable buildings, its silvery-white spire towering over the city's downtown.

Festival organizers have delighted over the years in programming the unorthodox here, and many of Victo's best shows have come from those who have ascended its hip pulpit - the late Sun Ra, The Rova Saxophone Quartet, German trombonist Konrad Bauer.

### Church Inspired works

Yet no show has plumbed the acoustic spaces of the church as Espace Sonores Illimités did.

The modern chamber works by new-music composers André Hamel, Alain Dauphinais and Alain Lalonde focused on the Ste. Victoire church as a gathering place, an architectural landmark, and an acoustic marvel.

They also proved that a church can be a place to listen to more than just Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier.

From the beginning, spectators were treated to a total immersion in sound.

They filed in to a nervous, highly strung violin drone pockmarked with percussion, reminiscent of Penderecki.

The musicians playing were deployed throughout the church - in the bell tower, the choir space, the rostrum, the balconies and the pews. As one spectator put it, "I guess there is no one place to sit."

### Soloists sprint around

The works segued into each other unannounced, their layered textures a juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane, overlapping the atonal density of Ives with the exultant air of Purcell.

In their pews the audience was rubbernecking like mad, watching as soloists sprinted up and down the aisles and ensembles shifted their positions throughout the church.

The Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal delivered a rich, precise performance of music clearly written to evoke the history etched into the stained glass and Second Empire architecture of the Ste. Victoire church.

Needless to say, this newfangled music of the spheres didn't faze the crowd one bit.

Afterward, a little dislocated but ears and eyes opened, the congregation began to make the trek uptown to see a French rock opera with a libretto culled from soccer and boxing play-by-plays.

In Victoriaville, one expects the unexpected.

■ *Espaces Sonores Illimités, performed by Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal, at Ste. Victoire church in Victoriaville last night, as part of the 11th annual Festival International Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville.*



Bringt dem Publikum neue,  
bisher ungehörte Töne nahe

## Festival International Musique Actuelle Victoriaville

Victoriaville, rund 170 km östlich von Montreal gelegen, bietet schon seit mehr als einem Jahrzehnt ein höchstes Anspruchs gerecht werdendes Festival für aktuelle Ausdrucksformen improvisierter Musik, wie es in Nordamerika einmalig sein dürfte. Die mutige Programmgestaltung beinhaltete in diesem Jahr unter anderem mehrere Welt- bzw. Nordamerika-premieren. Konditionelles Stehvermögen wurde den Festivalbesuchern während der fünf Tage bei 26 Konzerten an drei verschiedenen Veranstaltungsorten inklusive Ortswechsel zwischen den Konzerten abverlangt, eine konzentrierte Auswahl erschien somit unumgänglich.

Wesentlich geprägt wurde das Programm von Projekten, bei denen visuelle Gestaltungsmittel eingesetzt wurden. Eröffnet wurde das Festival mit der Aufführung eines großorchestralen, in E-musikalischer Nähe angesiedelten Werkes durch das Ensemble Espaces Sonores Illimités in einer Kirche. Unter Nutzung der räumlichen Gegebenheiten verstanden es die rund 30 Musiker, in neue klangliche Dimensionen vorzustoßen, wobei der ständigen Bewegung der Künstler im Raum eine besondere Rolle zukam. Zu einem der Festivalhöhepunkte geriet die Performance von Diamanda Galas, geprägt durch die überragenden stimmlichen und theatralischen Fähigkeiten der Vokalistin sowie durch die beeindruckende Bühnengestaltung und Lichttechnik. Diamanda Galas verstand es, ihre Erfahrungen in unterschiedlichsten künstlerischen Bereichen in die Aufführung ihres Werkes „Plague Mass“, das sich kritisch mit der Aids-Problematik auseinandersetzt, einzubringen. Auch Richard Teitelbaum setzte sich in seinem Werk „Golem“ mit zeitbezogener Thematik, der Beziehung von Mensch und Technik in der Gegenwart, auseinander. Ein traditionelles Thema als Ausgangspunkt wählend, lotete er unter Einbeziehung von Videoprojektionen die Möglichkeiten der Wechselwirkung von technischen Mitteln und musikalischem Ausdruck aus. „Violin music in the age of shopping“ nennt Jon Rose sein satirisch-theatralisches Projekt, in dem er sich mit musikalischen Mitteln kritisch mit dem Verlust kultureller und menschlicher Werte in einem von materiellen Dingen geprägten Zeitalter auseinandersetzt.

Bezüge zur Tradition freier Aus-

drucksformen des Jazz bildeten einen weiteren Programmschwerpunkt. Das Glenn Spearman Double Trio erzeugte eine hochbrisante Mischung aus freien Solo- und Kollektivimprovisationen, die sich nahtlos in einen ausgewogenen Gruppenkontext einfügten. Ähnliche Zielsetzungen, wenngleich eher auf kompositorischer Basis, verfolgte Myra Melford mit ihrem Quintett. Ihre von Blues und Gospel getränkten Kompositionen ließen ihren Mitspielern durchaus Freiräume zu individueller improvisatorischer Entfaltung. Vergleichs-

weise traditionell wirkte der Auftritt des Yannick Rieu Trio. Der kanadische Saxophonist hat die Jazzgeschichte verinnerlicht und versteht es, diesen Erfahrungsschatz in eine persönlich ausgeprägte Klangsprache umzusetzen, die ihn auch in freie Bereiche musikalischen Ausdrucks gelangen läßt. Der Tradition der Great Black Music fühlte sich insbesondere das Trio Three mit Oliver Lake, Reggie Workman und Andrew Cyrille verpflichtet. Schwarze Musik vom Feinsten, zu deren Weiterentwicklung diese drei Ausnahmemusiker wesentlich beigetragen haben, wurde mit dem Blick nach vorn auf den Punkt gebracht. Der Soloauftritt von Charles Gayle, der neben Tenorsaxophon und Baßklarinetten auch Piano und Percussion spielte, wirkte wie ein Aufschrei. Gayle hat den Free Jazz zu einem Extrempunkt geführt, an dem Grenzen überschritten, Mauern eingerissen werden – die Umsetzung seiner jahrelangen Erfahrungen als Straßenmusiker in New York. Auch der englische Pianist Keith Tippett wußte als Solist zu überzeugen. Zur Umsetzung seiner sowohl vom Jazz als auch von euro-

päischer Musiktradition geprägten Klangvorstellungen nutzte er sämtliche sich bietenden Möglichkeiten einschließlich des Spiels im Innenraum des Instrumentes konsequent aus, um eigenwillige, mitunter mystisch-düstere Klanglandschaften zu entwickeln. Improvisation in höchster Vollendung gelang dem Canvas-Trio um die französische Bassistin (und Vokalistin) Joelle Leandre. Gemeinsam mit Carlos Zingaro und Rüdiger Carl gelang ein Konzert, das von der nahezu unglaublichen Fähigkeit der Beteiligten lebte, intuitiv aufeinander zu reagieren und zu kommunizieren. Die Form des freien musikalischen Dialogs pflegten Vater Peter und Sohn Caspar Brötzmann. Free Jazz-Erfahrung europäischen Einschlags auf der einen, Umgang mit rockbeeinflusster Improvisation auf der anderen Seite schufen ein Spannungsfeld, in dem beide sowohl zu sensiblen Zwiegesprächen als auch zu hochenergetischen Klangabenteuern fanden. Mitunter in rockigen Gefilden wandelte ein Trio mit dem Gitarristen John King, dem Perkussionisten/Vokalisten David Moss und Otomo Yoshihide, der neben der Gitarre auch diverse Plattenspieler bediente. Augenzwinkernd wurde vorhandenes musikalisches Material verarbeitet und verformt. Kaum eine Schublade auslassend, zeigten die drei Musiker Wege für zukünftige Formen improvisierter Musik auf. Völlig auf den Einsatz elektronischer Klanggeber vertraute das Trio Voice Crack aus der Schweiz. Unversehens fühlte man sich in eine lärmgefüllte Fabrikhalle oder in die Straßenschluchten einer Großstadt versetzt, deren Töne in einen logischen Zusammenhang gesetzt wurden. Gleiches gelang der New Yorker Gruppe Borbetomagus, wenngleich sich dieses Trio herkömmlicher Instrumente bediente, deren Klangmöglichkeiten jedoch in höchst unkonventioneller Weise ausschöpfend. Im Anschluß an die Auftritte beider Gruppen dann das gemeinsame Spiel, bei dem sich die klanglichen Möglichkeiten nicht nur addierten, sondern potenzierten. Rein akustisch agierten dagegen die japanische Violinistin Mari Kimura und der amerikanische Gitarrist Jim O'Rourke bei ihrem ersten gemeinsamen Duo-Auftritt. Leise Töne, Stille als Gestaltungsmittel, das Duo betrieb Klangerforschung im besten Sinne. Das europäisch-amerikanische Duo The Nudes sprengte dann zum Festivalabschluß endgültig jegliche musikalische Kategorisierungen. Ungeniert bedienten sich Amy Denio, Wädi Gysi, Bob Drake und Chris Cutler an allen Ecken und Enden der Musik, Pop, Jazz, Folklore – nichts scheint ihnen heilig, um daraus etwas völlig Neues entstehen zu lassen.

Victoriaville nimmt fraglos einen wichtigen Platz in der Festivallandschaft ein, wenn es darum geht, neue, bisher ungehörte Töne dem Publikum nahezubringen und richtungweisend zu wirken.



Fühlt sich der Tradition der Great Black Music verpflichtet: Oliver Lake  
Foto: Karl Heinz Bechholz

Bernd Jahnke



## Jazz In Time N°55, septembre 1994

Victoriaville, Canada, du 19 au 23 mai 94

Déménagé de l'automne au printemps, pour la première fois cette année le FIMAV (*Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville*) s'est déroulé sous le soleil, du 19 au 23 mai. Le beau temps a même permis quelques manifestations musicales organisées - l'Orchestre vélocipède de Montréal- et improvisées, des musiciens ayant profité de quelques coins de rues pour se réchauffer dans tous les sens du mot. Plus eclectique que jamais, le FIMAV nous a présenté des musiques d'avant-garde de différentes allégeances, et ma foi, les genres y étaient fort bien représentés: jazz, électroacoustique, rock, musique écrite ou improvisée, work-in-progress, musique sacrée... Et puisque que la «comptenderesse» ici présente a des goûts personnels qu'elle est bien prête à rendre publics concernant les choses de l'ouïe, c'est donc de coups de coeur en coups bas que je vous déclinerai ce festival marathon où on nous convie à vingt-six concerts en cinq jours, sans chevauchement d'horaire.

L'ouverture du festival a été confiée cette année au groupe **Espaces sonores illimités**: trois compositeurs québécois ont créé les pièces de *Musiques en espace sacré*, écrites spécialement en fonction du lieu où elles devaient être présentées, soit l'Église Ste-Victoire. Les vingt-six musiciens en mouvement dirigés par la jeune et dynamique chef d'orchestre **Véronique Lacroix** ont pris possession de l'église en envahissant toutes ses allées, le chœur, le porche, les clochers etc... jouant autour et parmi le public, nous incluant dans l'oeuvre et faisant qu'un spectateur assis à l'avant n'a pas tout à fait entendu le même concert qu'un spectateur assis à l'arrière. Début de festival magistral et impressionnant où la curiosité de chaque spectateur bondissait de note en note pour fouiller l'ensemble de l'église. Gros coup de coeur pour les prestations magnifiques des pianistes **Myra Melford** et **Lee Pui Ming**, deux improvisatrices qui savent allier fougue et subtilité. La première se produisait en quintet, avec Lindsey Horner (cb) et Reggie Nicholson (dm) - qui sont aussi ses partenaires en trio et avec qui elle a enregistré un CD plus que recommandable, *Alive In The House Of Saints*, sur étiquette Hat Art - ainsi que Herb Robertson (tp) et Marty Ehrlich (as, cl).

Très physique, le jeu de **Myra Melford**: elle donne l'impression de se livrer à une danse contemporaine avec son clavier, à un rapport de forces, des tensions très fortes qui sont équilibrés par des moments mélodiques des plus harmonieux. La grande classe, quoi. En ce qui concerne Lee Pui Ming, pianiste originaire de Hong Kong mais habitant aujourd'hui Toronto, son impressionnant solo a permis au public d'ici de la découvrir: elle aussi, c'est une improvisatrice déchainée et frenétique, mais qui mêle à ses envolées des notes venues d'Orient, un jeu qui passe d'une musique cristalline à un cri rauque; vaguement lettriste et sachant jouer la comédie, elle se plaît elle aussi dans un jeu très physique. On en redemandait. Dans un registre plus grave, on ne peut passer sous silence la *Plague Mass* de **Diamanda Galas**: la cantatrice qui a interprété du Xenakis et du Scelsi, qui a joué avec Butch Morris et John Zorn, a chanté à capella, s'accompagnant au piano seulement à la toute fin, cette messe dédiée aux personnes atteintes du sida. On peut très bien ne pas aimer cette diva qui exploite avec force cris et vocalises les registres graves et aigus (qu'elle a fort développés faut-il le souligner?), n'empêche que cette femme impressionnante vaut la peine d'être vue, et entendue a moins une fois dans sa vie. Un concert difficile, heureusement placé entre deux concerts plus légers. De tout façon, il me semble que tout est plus léger avant et après cette *Plague Mass*. A défaut de la voir sur scène mêler ses textes à ceux des psaumes et des poètes tel que Baudelaire et de Nerval, tentez l'expérience sur disque: La Galas nous recommande de monter le son au maximum sur presque toutes ses pochettes et vous serez: cloué à votre fauteuil, c'est garanti. Côté projet d'envergure, le compositeur **Richard Teitelbaum** a présenté *Golem*: une performance magistrale où se mêlent la voix magnifique de Maggie Nichols et celle, des plus versatiles, de David Moss, où se mêlent le violon de Carlos Zingaro, ainsi que les techniques vidéo et MIDI interactifs qui permet à tous ces éléments de s'écouter et de se répondre en même temps sur fond de mythe cabalistique. Enchanteur et hypnotisant: On en sort bouleversé et ému au point que le concert suivant, le **Glenn Spearman Double Trio** n'a pu s'accaparer toute l'attention méritée. Quant à **Graeme Kirkland**, un batteur canadien qui se produisait en fin de soirée ce jour-là... eh bien

disons que c'est le seul concert auquel je n'ai pas assisté, et paraît-il que plusieurs auraient dû suivre mon exemple: On m'a dit qu'il s'agissait probablement du pire concert jamais produit à ce festival en onze ans. Ça en prend bien un!!! A travers ces performances à couper le souffle et puisqu'il faut bien respirer un peu, quelques iconoclastes ont pu nous faire partager leurs libations musicales sous le signe de l'humour et de l'ingéniosité: le pianiste montréalais **Pierre St-Jak** et son piano préparé qui sonne comme un gamelan nous a offert sa poésie avec un instrument qui avait tout pour nous émerveiller et nous faire ouvrir tout grand les yeux et les oreilles; l'**Orchestre vélocipède de Montréal** -des vélos transformés en sculptures musicales mobiles par le **Paskal Dufaux** et le compositeur **Michel Smith**- s'est produit tout d'abord dans la rue au grand plaisir des enfants curieux de voir fonctionner ces engins futuristes desquels émergeait une musique électroacoustique chaleureuse et accessible (eh oui, c'est possible), pour ensuite intégrer le public à ses chorégraphies sonores dans un espace clos où l'on ne pouvait s'asseoir et où tout le monde s'est amusé à valser avec ces vélos incroyables. Difficile de causer iconoclastes sans vous dire un mot des chaotiques, cacophoniques et puissantes compositions du compositeur canadien **Paul Dolden** et de l'humour de **Jon Rose**. La musique de Dolden, pour bandes et interprètes, en l'occurrence lui-même et Ron Samworth aux guitares, ainsi que Francois Houle à la clarinette et au sax soprano, un jazzman des plus polyvalent, est déstabilisante et intense. C'est une expérience sonore que vous pouvez retrouver sur le compact *L'ivresse de la vitesse*, sur l'étiquette empreintes DIGITALEs, qui était lancé à cette occasion. Quant au violoniste Jon Rose, il a présenté sa pièce *Violin music at the age of shopping*, une satire théâtre-musicale où se mêlent kitsch et post-modernité avec une Joëlle Léandre drôle et intrigante et Otomo Yohishide aux tables tournantes. Ce dernier ne s'en est d'ailleurs pas remis: il a quitté Victo avec un bras plâtré, ayant chuté, à la fin du concert, en bas de la scène, après avoir donné deux prestations mémorables puisqu'il s'était précédemment produit aux côtés de John King et David Moss (eh oui, encore lui, au grand plaisir des festivaliers qui ne sont pas prêts de l'oublier). Joëlle Léandre aussi d'ailleurs avait déjà joué avec son trio **Canvas**, formé de Carlos Zingaro et Rüdiger Carl. Une belle équipe, complice et audacieuse, qui improvise brillam-

ment autour des discours de musiciens intelligents et drôles: beaucoup d'adjectifs? Soit, mais assistez à une de leurs rencontres et vous m'en donnerez des nouvelles! Quelques fleurs aussi au pianiste **Keith Tippett** qui jouait en solo: un jeu hypnotisant et frénétique qui préfère les aigus cristallins aux accords puissants. Je réserve les feuillages pour **Charles Gayle**, trop cabotin, qui aurait intérêt à se contenter de jouer du saxophone puisqu'il le fait fort bien (la batterie était vraiment de trop). Et les pots? Je les lance tout d'abord à **Voice Crack** et **Borbetomagus**, seules notes discordantes - sans jeu de mot- de ce festival, qui ne les entendent fort probablement pas se casser à leurs pieds. Respectivement «collectionneurs de déchets technologiques» et «esthètes du bruitisme», ils ont fait du bruit pendant la période qui leur était allouée. Ne manquait que quelques outils électriques (scie, perceuse etc...) pour parfaire cette atmosphère tout à fait post-industrielle. Mais que voulez-vous, le grand air des chantiers de construction ne m'a jamais intéressée.

Tout juste sorti du printemps, le FIMAV inaugurerait joyeusement la longue liste des festivals de l'été dans la bonne humeur générale. Les éclectiques festivaliers en ont eu pour leur argent et les G.O. du festival semblaient satisfaits de cette première édition printanière. Rendez-vous l'an prochain, pour la treizième édition.

Annie Landreville

# Explorations sonores illimitées

Offert comme premier spectacle du Festival international de musique actuelle de Victoriaville, le groupe de 28 musiciens appelé «Espaces sonores illimités» a vraiment exploré l'espace de l'église Ste-Victoire jeudi soir dernier.

## Manon Toupin

C'est assis dans les deux allées centrales que les amateurs de musique actuelle obtenaient la meilleure sonorité et la plus

complète visibilité des déplacements des musiciens. Parce que des déplacements il y en a eu.

Au début du spectacle, les violonistes étaient debout sur les bancs de chaque côté

de l'église, sur les bas-côtés. D'autres musiciens attendaient à l'entrée de l'église, en haut du jubé et dans le transept. Il semblait même que quelqu'un jouait d'un instrument dans le confessionnal.

La musique des violons a pris son envol, tout doucement avec quelques sons de percussions. Par la suite, des notes de cuivres se

sont élevés, venant de nulle part. A ce moment, les spectateurs se sont mis à regarder partout afin de trouver la provenance de ce son.

Ce spectacle était tout un défi pour l'attention des spectateurs, des gens de tous âges, qui essayaient tant bien que mal de trouver d'où venait la musique.

Les musiciens, en

plus d'avoir à jouer devaient continuellement se déplacer, de l'avant à l'arrière de l'église, puis en haut dans le jubé. La musique du groupe Espaces sonores illimités est très organisée, tantôt mélodieuse, tantôt cacophonique. Certains amateurs se laissaient simplement emporter par la rythmique irrégulière tandis que d'autres essayaient de trouver un sens à ce qu'ils enten-

daient.

La sensation de recevoir de la musique d'en haut, de devant, de derrière et des côtés était assez particulière. L'impression d'être enveloppée par la musique faisait passer les spectateurs par toute une gamme d'émotions.

L'exploration de l'espace de l'église s'est faite entièrement et par

moment, les musiciens couraient littéralement dans les allées de l'église. La musique était parfois intense, parfois douce mais toujours très mystique.

Pour terminer la soirée, les musiciens se sont rejoints à l'avant et ont débuté une procession qu'ils a menés jusqu'à l'extérieur de l'église où ils ont accompagné les spectateurs.

LA PRESSE, MARDI 17 MAI 1994



CLAUDE  
GINGRAS

## LE FESTIVAL DE VICTORIAVILLE

■ Le Festival international de Musique actuelle de Victoriaville s'ouvre jeudi soir, 20 h, à l'église Sainte-Victoire, par un programme de «musique spatialisée».

Trois oeuvres y seront créées, signées Alain Lalonde, André Hamel et Alain Dauphinais. Lalonde est bien connu. Ses deux jeunes collègues ont étudié principalement avec Michel Longtin. Les trois oeuvres font appel à des instruments familiers (cordes, vents et percussions) et à d'autres beaucoup plus rarement utilisés. Les exécutants, 24 au total, seront répartis un peu partout dans l'église, y compris dans le jubé et les galeries latérales, et les trois oeuvres seront enchaînées, formant ainsi un concert d'environ 85 minutes, sans entracte. Aucune amplification ne sera utilisée, précise Lalonde. Il ajoute que chaque oeuvre a été conçue en fonction des deux autres et que le passage d'une à l'autre sera bien senti par l'auditeur.

Lalonde, Hamel et Dauphinais viennent de se grouper sous le nom «Espaces sonores illimités», pour la présentation d'«événements», et ce concert marque les débuts de leur association.



Festival international  
de Musique actuelle  
de Victoriaville

## Le lieu est sacré, l'espace est libre

GUYLAINE MAROIST

La politicaillerie contaminant l'air de Victo, le Festival de musique actuelle a failli prendre la route menant à Sherbrooke et il a même songé à s'expatrier à Montréal. Mais le vent des Bois-Francis ayant assaini le paysage, la grande célébration de la musique d'avant-garde n'a pas quitté sa demeure. Et c'est sans doute une pure coïncidence si les notions d'espace et de lieu marquent la soirée d'ouverture du FIMAV...

Tout d'abord, l'Orchestre vélocipède de Montréal envahira les rues de Victoriaville en fin d'après-midi. Un cortège de six instrumentistes-cyclistes fera voyager la musique électroacoustique dans l'espace. La procession donnera un avant-goût du spectacle présenté samedi, au Colisée des Bois-Francis.

«La première préoccupation de l'orchestre vélocipède, c'est le déplacement du son, explique Michel Smith, compositeur de l'oeuvre qui sera interprétée au Festival et qui se nomme *Karel*, tout comme son fiston né en février dernier. On retrouve beaucoup cette préoccupation dans la musique acousmatique. Par ailleurs, dans un concert de cette musique, on s'assoit dans une salle et on écoute des hauts-parleurs. Ce n'est pas tellement intéressant. L'oeil et l'oreille sont liés. La façon dont un musicien bouge ses mains lorsqu'il joue influence notre écoute.»

Développé par Claude Shryer, Michel Smith et le sculpteur Paskal Dufaux, l'Orchestre vélocipède a vu le jour lors du septième Printemps électroacoustique de l'ACREQ en 1992. Tributaire des bruitistes italiens, de Harry Partch, du mouvement de l'écologie sonore et des traditions du gamelan balinaï, l'orchestre met en scène des vélos transformés en instruments sophistiqués, munis de hauts-parleurs. «Le musicien fait corps avec l'instrument-vélo. Le public a un rôle de participation. Les spectateurs sont debout et les musiciens jouent et se déplacent parmi eux. C'est important qu'on voie de près les vélos. Ils évoquent les machines de Léonard de Vinci et de Jules Verne. Ils ont aussi leur côté Mad Max.»

Et à quoi peut ressembler le chant des bicyclettes? «Il est composé de sons incongrus. C'est parfois dadaïste comme production sonore. Rock aussi, à cause des sons fuzzés et de la puissance. Je compare souvent l'orchestre à un kaléidoscope iconoclaste. Voir l'orchestre, c'est comme lire un article sur une tribu inconnue dans le *National Geographic*. Notre orchestre n'a pas les mêmes us et coutumes que les autres.»

### L'espace sacré

Premier concert du Festival? *Musiques en espace sacré*, du collectif Espace Sonore Illimités, présenté à l'Eglise Sainte-Victoire. Initié à l'Université de Montréal lors de l'événement *Portes Ouvertes* il y a trois ans, le collectif, formé par Alain Lalonde, André Hamel et Alain Dauphinais, se donne pour mission de créer des oeuvres en fonction du lieu et de l'événement auxquels elles sont destinées.

«Nous nous interrogeons sur la mise en espace de la musique instrumentale, spécifie André Hamel. Nous avons composé les pièces de *Musiques en espace sacré* en tenant compte de l'architecture de l'Eglise Sainte-Victoire et de son caractère sacré. Par exemple, nous faisons bien sûr référence à la musique religieuse. Mais nous tenons aussi compte des lieux dans notre propos extra-musical. Les 26 musiciens prennent tout l'espace: le balcon, le jubé ainsi que la sacristie sont occupés. Les musiciens sont en mouvement et courent même dans une de ces trois pièces. Juste pour te donner une idée: il y aura 110 lutrins dans l'Eglise.»

A 22h00, au Colisée des Bois-Francis, Albert Marcoeur, batteur français très attendu par les amateurs de musiques actuelles, nous fera une digression sur les sports avec son orchestre de cinq musiciens. A la suite de ce match-performance, Yannick Rieu, grand improvisateur natif du Saguenay, chauffera le Grand Café accompagné par l'excellent contrebassiste Frédéric Alarie et par le batteur Paul Léger. Juste avant de repartir à Paris où il loge désormais, l'excellent ténor nous propose *Freedom Suite*, de Sonny Rollins ainsi qu'une oeuvre de son cru, *Sweet Geom*, inspirée par des formes géométriques. Euclide meets Charlie Parker. (Du 19 au 23 mai. Infos: (819) 752-7912)







# Wheels of Electroacoustic music? Victoriaville '94

VOX - CALGARY - JULY 94

by Paula Fayerman

Festival International Musique Actuelle held in Victoriaville, Quebec approximates Lollapalooza for avant garde music fans. Twenty-six concerts took place this year on five days over the May long weekend. Jazz, improvised, electro-acoustic, new classical and loud rock music poured out of speakers and shook up the otherwise complacent little city. Here are a few of the highlights from the festival:

## JAZZ

Some people attended jazz concerts only, and they enjoyed outstanding performances. The best jazz show of the festival was Oliver Lake on saxophone, Reggie Workman on bass and Andrew Cyrille on drums. Each individual in this trio has a long list of credits; Oliver Lake co-founded the World Saxophone Quartet, Reggie Workman played with Coltrane's original quartet, and Andrew Cyrille has improvised with Cecil Taylor. Their experience and long history of productive collaborations was evident in the fluid, seamless, and beautiful music. These masters expand the tradition of African-American jazz.

In contrast, the "Canvas Trio" with Joëlle Léandre on bass and voice, Carlos Zingaro on violin and Rüdiger Carl on accordion and clarinet, explored European free improvised jazz. Less groovy than Lake, the Canvas Trio perform sensitive quiet pieces that sound like new classical music, as well as humorous free improvisation typical of the European avant garde.

Myra Melford brought a quintet to the festival, instead of her usual trio. With energetic all-over-the-keyboard forays, Melford combines a Cecil Taylor influence with structured and melodic jazz format. She draws on Latin, blues, and gospel influences



for her elbow pounding percussive solos. Marty Ehrlich on sax also played impressive solos, the rest of the band included Herb Robertson on trumpet, and the regular members of her trio Lindsey Horner on bass and Reggie Nicholson on drums.

Other notable pianists this year were Lee Pui Ming and Keith Tippett who both played solo concerts. Lee Pui Ming from Hong Kong now lives in Canada. With voice and piano she melds traditional Chinese pentatonic sounds with jazz. She wore herself out bouncing up and down on her piano bench

with frenetic solos. Keith Tippett from Britain is not as well known as Keith Jarrett, but he should be. His one hour freely improvised concert was mesmerizing, unfolding overtones and harmonics, building layers of sound.

Charles Gayle also played a solo concert of free improv saxophone, then switched to gospel-style piano, and finally moved to the drum kit. His scary, maniacal voice declared the Lord and exhorted the audience to be saved. His increased notoriety in the last several years stems from his unsurpassed freak-out sax as well as from an unconventional past. He survived on New York City streets for fifteen years, playing sax and earning enough to just get by.

## MULTIMEDIA

For the adventurous, jazz is only one aspect of the festival. This year several multimedia performance events combined music and theatre. Jon Rose's "Chaotic Violin" exhibited his talent as a violin, synthesizer and computer virtuoso. This piece used overdubbing, multi-layering, sound sampling and violin-propelled electronics to expand the violin's sounds. The second piece "Violin Music in the Age of Shopping" was in the spirit of Fluxus. Performers from all over the world joined Rose: Lauren Newton on voice, Chris Cutler on percussion, Otomo Yoshihide on turntables, Joëlle Léandre on bass and voice and Lee Pui Ming on piano. The stage was covered with garbage, old boxes, couches, and instruments. On and off cue performers tore up boxes and threw them around, played ping pong or wildly improvised without inhibition. This anarchistic opera had some structure, returning again to Jon Rose's list of consumer goods (golf clubs to marshmallows) and his advice of shopper's specials on the third floor. The combination of everyday life and art, the freedom from intellectual, physical and musical repression, was reminiscent of Fluxus' happenings and effectively spoke about the hollowness of finding meaning through consumerism.

Richard Teitelbaum's "Golem" performance was not as easily understood but was thought-provoking and moving. A large gauze screen obscured most of the performers including Teitelbaum on piano and computers, Carlos Zingaro on violin and Ursula Oppens on piano. Only the vocalists, David Moss and Maggie Nicols were in front of the gauze. Large video graphics appeared on the screen; these projected images were computer controlled, interactive to respond to the musician's performances. Two interactive player pianos also listened and responded to the live music. Teitelbaum wrote he wanted to use the story of the Golem as a symbol for the promises and dangers of technological society, but with all the technology surrounding the stage the message unfortunately turned into irony. Instead some powerful images and moving music confronted feelings of loneliness, pain, and oppression. A large gargoyles image on video repetitively belched and swallowed smoke above the shadow of Carlos Zingaro as he played improvisation based of Eastern

European and Gypsy melodies. David Moss sang in sensitive cantorial style while Hebrew letters, texts and gravestones flashed on the screen. The group's frenzied music matched a mile per minute succession of live-foot-tall faces from all cultures blending one into the other on the screen. These are some examples which conveyed ideas of racism and intolerance.

The concept of surround sound was explored by the Orchestre Vélocipède de Montréal. Six sonic sculpture bicycles, five to seven feet tall, were peddled to produce eerie circus sounds. The bicycles drove through the audience who were encouraged to walk around the music machines. Another performance that emphasized the importance of music within space was Espaces Sonores Illimités. Compositions by Andre Hamel, Alain Dauphinais, and Alain Lalande were played by twenty-six musicians who were spread throughout the grand church. The audience was surrounded by sound coming from all directions, all corners; timpani rolls flew overhead like the boom of a jet flying in the church, a hurdy-gurdy whined from the back, a lone lost horn cried from a balcony, a trumpet in the confession booth greeted the audience with its bellows. Conductors waved their arms, attempting to bring order to their chaotic performers running through the pews. Not typical sacred church music, the pieces were irreverent and humorous without being sacrilegious.

In a different religious context, Diamanda Galás performed the *Plague Mass*, her testimonial to the sufferings and politics of AIDS. Hauntingly spiritual, and at the same time blasphemous, Galás confessed at top volume, her voice strong and ululating. The *Plague Mass* CD released in 1991 captures the power and range of Galás's voice but misses the image of her supernatural singing. She stood topless covered with blood, surrounded by a black stage, a red spotlight accentuating her bloody breasts. Then the light changed to brown and yellow and changed her body, making her look sinister, like decaying flesh. "Angels, devils," she screams, "Were you a witness?" With her evangelical chanting and the shifting lights Galás takes on the roles of both angel and devil.

## NOISE MUSIC

In addition to the jazz and performance pieces, there was music that may be best described as loud noise. The most deafening concert by far was father and son improvising duo, Casper and Peter Brötzmann. Casper Brötzmann usually heads a band called *Massacre*, but in this performance he played guitar, upside-down, through four Marshall speakers and two amps. His dad, the legendary wild saxophonist, played harder and faster, and surpassed his son, despite Casper's scolding attitude and multitude of speakers. The other decibel shattering noise was when Borbetomagus teamed with Voice Crack. Voice Crack from Switzerland

includes three players dedicated to industrial trash. Skilled in finding and rewiring junk electronics, thrown away radios and transmitters, they used amplified large metal cubes thrown on the floor to get thunderous roars, and one guy wore a bell of amplified metal scraps for shrieking, shrill effects. Borbetomagus from the USA includes two saxophonists and one electric guitarist, and all blasted freely played distortion. This listener wanted to preserve some otic function, and hastily went outside for ice cream.

## ROCK

There were some very entertaining rocking shows too. John King on guitar, David Moss, on voice and percussion, Otomo Yoshihide on sampling and turntables at times played licks which made them almost danceable. Moss, a fun, big bearded and belled man, belted out sounds from another world: opera on acid. Two good ole boys from Chattanooga, Tennessee, are Shaking Ray Levis. Bob Stagner on percussion and Dennis Palmer on synth and voice were probably in rock or C&W bands together, but now push freely improvised C&W bluegrass. Very strange to hear holl call over-dubbed, sampled and transformed to funk. The festival



closed with The Nudes: Amy Denio on accordion, sax, and voice; Chris Cutler on percussion; Wadi Gysi on electric guitar; and Bob Drake on bass. Firmly in the tradition of Cutler's improvisatory rock bands, they are made even better with Denio's great lyrics and growling vocal improvisation. After that high point at least two members of the audience were a little sad the festival was over.

Fortunately some music performed at Victoriaville is recorded and released, so eclectic music fans at least listen to these performers on CD. Le Disques Victo, the recording label of the festival has already released twenty-seven CDs including live recordings and some studio sessions. But discs, no matter how good, don't have the impact of the live performance, and so fans must impatiently wait for Festival International Musique Actuelle Victoriaville in 1995.

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letters from  
**canada**



**In the isolated spaces of Victoriaville and Vancouver,  
 the drive to renew the questing spirit of the avant garde  
 underground still burns strong.**

As devotees and practitioners make the pilgrimage to the small Quebecois town of Victoriaville, this time in the sunlight of May rather than the usual October drizzle, lines of spontaneity and inspiration intersect on the big map of improvised music. If 11 years of *Musique Actuelle* (I've attended slightly more than half) have proven anything, it's that a committed, knowledgeable audience exists for music on the cutting edge of attitude and understanding. What we — audience and artist alike — sometimes forget is that music should come first, spectacle second. And so while this year's festival, in many ways the most ambitious and expensive in its history, did offer some absolutely stunning projects, it also gave notice that technology and theatre are often contrary to intimacy and personal expression.

This was the year of the Big Event in Victoriaville. Of the 26 performances over five days and nights (all right, so I missed three concerts), ten of them involved visual imagery, stage theatrics, or otherwise made use of their environment in dramatic fashion. These ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. Albert Marcocoeur's frivolous *Sports Et Percussions* (echoes of King Crimsonish fusion mimicking the rhythms of boxing and tennis matches, fly fishing and cycling!); Jon Rose's satiric *Violin Music In The Age Of Shopping* (stage scenery as junk shop, with songs lampooning commercialism and consumerism); and Diamanda Galas's deadly serious *Plague Mass* (a howl of AIDS outrage and literal bloodbath in an idealised re-enactment of ancient Greek ritual), had nothing in common save an overemphasis on plot and *mise en scène* at the expense of musical imagination.

On the other hand, three large scale performances did manage to integrate an evocative musical score into their theatrics. Three collaborating composers — André Hamel, Alain Dauphinais and Alain Lalonde — and The Ensemble Contemporain De Montreal choreographed lovely antiphonal effects and spatial resonances in the nooks and crannies of the local church. Some of the sounds were reminiscent of Xenakis or Mauricio Kagel, others used Renaissance motet scoring and antique instruments like hurdy-gurdy and crumhorn to add a disorientation of time to that of their reconsideration of space, sanctity and sonority. Another Montreal ensemble, Orchestre Vélocipède, invaded an open arena with a *ballet mécanique* on wheels: invented instruments (percussive zithers and metallic drums, wheezy pentatonic bellows-organs, and speakers projecting a pre-recorded

tape) attached to bicycles riding around and within the audience. Both of these groups brought their particular, site-specific music to confront the audience on its own ground. The flashing lights, multiple slide projections and synthesised symphonic score in Richard Teitelbaum's *Golem* transported us to another dimension, where symbols of mysticism and magic, rich in allusion, suggested a painful awareness of intolerance, chaos, love and artificial intelligence without soul. Successfully incorporating improvised contributions from Carlos Zingaro and Ursula Oppens into his theatrical environment, Teitelbaum created a spectacular and moving experience.

Others used the drama of the moment in more subtle ways. The single microphone for Peter Brötzmann's saxophones and wall of Marshall amps for his son Caspar's Stratocaster anticipated an imbalance of style and volume, but their attitudes proved complimentary, and Caspar's restrained feedback accompaniment enabled him to sound mournful and bitter as well as aggressive. Keith Tippett, looking like a character out of Dickens, took a distinctive approach to the stark solitude of the acoustic piano, forging a huge coherent edifice over the course of a 40 minute crescendo; he ended by poignantly calling the name of the late bassist, Harry Miller, into the guts of the instrument.

Risky programming such as this inevitably results in the occasional misstep, but *Musique Actuelle's* success rate is admirably high. Thus there were strong sets of improvised songs from Myra Melford and the Joëlle Léandre/Carlos Zingaro/Rudiger Carl trio; and the authority and presence of Oliver Lake, Reggie Workman, and Andrew Cyrille. The Swiss trio Voice Crack triggered electronics with light beams, antennae and body movement (their hands-off approach put a new spin on ideas of 'remote control') and within the volume and nature of the metallic, abrasive and cavernous reverberation of their sound, an internal relationship of parts could be recognised. In the second half of this show, the two horns and guitar of Borbetomagus used non-tempered pitches and distortions to sustain levels of bleak density and dour complexity.

Sometimes the most affecting performances were the least ambitious, such as Yannick Rieu's understated tenor sax; or the focused dynamics and microscopic details of violinist Mari Kimura and acoustic guitarist Jim O'Rourke — cases where direct expression overshadowed novelty, and music once again became the message. Even at a festival as sophisticated and adventurous as *Musique Actuelle*, it is sometimes valuable to remember that it's a gift to be simple. **ART LANGE**