

**THE
SOUND AS
MUSIC:**

New Music Collective

@

College of Charleston

Recital Hall

Simons Center for the Arts

09.15.05

8 PM

Program

I am Sitting in a Room (1970)

For voice and electromagnetic tape

Alvin Lucier (b. 1931)

Clapping Music (1972)

for two performers

Steve Reich (b. 1936)

Rhythm Song (1984)

for solo marimba

Paul Smadbeck (b.1955)

Adapted for marimba & electronics by

Ron Wiltrout & Philip White (2005)

Für Alina (1976)

for solo piano

Arvo Pärt (b.1935)

Adapted by the New Music Collective (2005)

Twilight Music (1984)

for horn, violin, & piano

John Harbison (b. 1938)

Performers

Laura Ball – Piano

Robbi Kenney – Violin

Nathan Koci – Horn

Philip White – Electric Guitar, Electronics

Ron Wiltrout – Percussion

About the Program...

*“**New Music: New Listening.** Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for, if something were being said, the sounds would be given the shapes of words. Just an attention to the **activity of sound.**”*

- John Cage

It is with this in mind that we offer this concert, “The Sound as Music.” We are the New Music Collective, and we are here to educate the public about new music. This installment of our concert series involves the musical nature of **sound**. Music is always sound (or is it?), so is sound always music? We will let you decide as we offer up these 5 works of decidedly different sonic textures. Voices, clapping, computers, meditations, and traditional horn trios don’t necessarily have a lot in common. But we say they don’t have to. We say that clapping is as much “music” as is a traditional chamber ensemble, as is a marimba & laptop duet. We invite you to come along with us, break down some musical boundaries of your own, and explore the many different ways we can define *what music is*.

I am Sitting in a Room

About the Composer-Alvin Lucier was born in 1931 in Nashua, New Hampshire. Lucier has pioneered in many areas of music composition and performance, including the notation of performers' physical gestures, the use of brain waves in live performance, the generation of visual imagery by sound in vibrating media, and the evocation of room acoustics for musical purposes. His recent works include a series of sound installations and works for solo instruments, chamber ensembles, and orchestra in which, by means of close tunings with pure tones, sound waves are caused to spin through space.

About the Piece

(This is the actual "score" for the piece)

Necessary equipment: 1 microphone, 2 tape recorders, amplifier, 1 loudspeaker. Choose a room the musical qualities of which you would like to invoke. Attach the microphone to the input of tape recorder n°1. To the output of tape recorder n°2 attach the amplifier and loudspeaker. Use the following text or any text of any length:

"I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my

speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural resonant frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but more as a way to smooth out any regularities my speech might have."

Record your voice on tape through the microphone attached to tape recorder #1. Rewind the tape to its beginning, transfer it to tape recorder #2, play it back into the room through the loudspeaker and record a second generation of the original recorded statement through the microphone attached to tape recorder #1. Rewind the second generation to its beginning and splice it onto the end of the original recorded statement on tape recorder #2. Play the second generation only back into the room through the loudspeaker and record a third generation of the original recorded statement through the microphone attached to tape recorder #1. Continue this process through many generations.

- Make versions in which one recorded statement is recycled through many rooms.
- Make versions using one or more speakers of different languages in different rooms.
- Make versions in which for each generation, the microphone is moved to different parts of the room or rooms.
- Make versions that can be performed in real time.**

RESULT: The space acts as a filter; it filters out all of the frequencies except the resonant ones. It has to do with the architecture, the physical dimensions and acoustic characteristics of the space. Every musical sound has a particular wavelength; the higher the pitch, the shorter the wavelength. Actually there's no such thing as "high" notes or "low" notes, we simply borrowed those terms from the visual world to describe something we didn't understand. A musical sound as it is produced on an instrument, in a column of air or vibrating string, causes oscillations at a certain rate of speed. For example, the A that an orchestra tunes to vibrates at 440 times per second and can therefore be considered faster than the middle C on the piano that vibrates at about 262 times per second. But as those sounds move out into space they can be observed as various-sized wavelengths, so you can see how directly the dimensions of a room relate to musical sounds. If the dimensions of a room are in a simple relationship to a sound that is played in it, that sound will be reinforced; that is, it will be amplified by the reflections from the walls. If, however, the sound doesn't "fit" the room, so to speak, it will be reflected out of phase with itself and tend to filter itself out. So by playing sounds into a room over and over again, you reinforce some of them more and more each time and eliminate others. It's a form of amplification by repetition. Thinking of sounds as measurable wavelengths, instead of as high or low musical notes, has changed my whole idea of music from a metaphor to a fact and, in a real way, has connected me to architecture. (Every room has its own melody, hiding there until it is made audible).

Clapping Music

About the composer- From his early pieces, *It's Gonna Rain* (1965) and *Come Out* (1966), to his and Beryl Korot's digital video opera, *Three Tales* (2002), Steve Reich's path has embraced Western Classical music as well as non-Western and American vernacular music, particularly jazz. "There's just a handful of living composers who can

legitimately claim to have altered the direction of musical history and Steve Reich is one of them," states The Guardian (London).

About the piece - *"Starting in 1971 my ensemble began touring Europe. We would carry 2000 pounds of loudspeakers, amplifiers, drums, marimbas, glockenspiels, electric organs, microphones, etc. In 1972 I composed Clapping Music to create a piece of music that would need no instruments beyond the human body. At first I thought it would be a phase piece, but this proved inappropriate since it introduced a difficulty (phasing) that seemed inconsistent with such a simple way of producing sound. The solution was to have one part remain fixed, repeating the pattern throughout, while the second moves abruptly, after a number of repeats, from unison to one beat ahead, and so on, until it is back in unison with the first. It can thus be difficult to hear that the second performer is in fact always playing the same pattern as the first, though starting in a different place."* - Steve Reich

Rhythm Song

About the composer-Paul Smadbeck's career as a composer and musician has been unusual. After studying music and composition, he became quickly recognized as an accomplished marimba soloist and composer for marimba. In the early 1980s Smadbeck composed five pieces for marimba, including Rhythm Song, which are well regarded in the percussion world. In the late 1980s he gave up playing and composing to pursue a career in commercial real estate in upstate New York but has recently returned to composing.

About the piece-Written in 1984, Rhythm Song is a work based on the principles of minimalism. This piece features single melodies that are split between each of the performer's four mallets. After an initial fanfare that runs the length of the marimba, the predominant melodies begin in a singular, almost lonely form. These melodies are soon intricately woven within the mallets and across the keyboard. They merge and evolve throughout the piece, creating intricate rhythms and harmonic textures that evoke the rich heritage of African marimba, gyl and balafon music. Rhythm Song lends itself well to collaboration, often performed with "one or more marimbas," as the composer suggests. It is with this in mind that Philip White and Ron Wiltrout have decided to adapt the piece to include electronic processing and sampling throughout the piece. Philip White is taking the live sound of the marimba and processing it with a variety of delays, grain effects, and frequency shifters. You can certainly expect to hear more than one marimba in this adaptation.

Für Alina

About the composer-Arvo Pärt was born in Paide, Estonia, on Sept. 11, 1935. In 1944 Estonia experienced occupation by the Soviet Union, which would last for over 50 years and have a profound effect on Pärt's life and music. Living in the old Soviet Union, Pärt had little access to what was happening in contemporary Western music but, despite such isolation, he kept at the forefront of the new methods of composition being ushered in during the early 1960s.

Official judgment of Pärt's music veered between extremes with certain works being praised and others, such as the Credo of 1968, being banned. After its composition, Pärt chose to enter the first of several periods of contemplative silence, also using the time to study French and Franco-Flemish choral music from the 14th-

16th centuries. At the beginning of the 1970s, he wrote a few transitional compositions but then turned again to self-imposed silence.

Pärt re-emerged in 1976 after a radical transformation that made his previous music almost unrecognizable as being from the same composer. The technique he invented, or discovered, and to which he has remained loyal, he calls tintinnabuli (from the Latin, "little bells").

About the piece- The basic guiding principle behind tintinnabulation is composing two simultaneous voices as one line with one voice moving stepwise from and to a central pitch-first up, then down-and to the other sounding the notes of the triad. It made its first public appearance in this short piano piece, Für Alina.

"I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements -with one voice, two voices. I build with primitive materials -with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells and that is why I call it tintinnabulation." -Arvo Pärt

Twilight Music

About the composer-John Harbison was born into a musical family in Orange, N.J., on Dec. 20, 1938. Improvising on the piano by age five, he started a jazz band at age 12, then completed his undergraduate work at Harvard University and earned an MFA from Princeton University. Following completion of a junior fellowship at Harvard, Harbison joined the faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Since one of his interests is helping younger composers, he serves as on the boards of the Copland Fund (as president) and the Koussevitzky Foundation.

About the piece - *"The horn and violin have little in common. Any merging must be tromp-l'oreille and they share material mainly to show how differently they project it. In this piece the two meet casually at the beginning and part rather formally at the end. In-between they follow the piano into a Presto, which dissolves into the twilight halftones that named the piece. The third section, an Antiphon, is the crux-the origin of the piece's intervallic character. It is this kind of music I am often drawn to, where the surface seems the simplest and most familiar, where the piece seems to make no effort, but some purposeful, independent musical argument is at work. The final section's image of separation grows directly out of the nature of the instruments."*

-John Harbison

The New Music Collective would like to thank...

The College of Charleston, Kathryn Norton, Dr. Trevor Weston, Kelly Linton, The Gibbes Museum of Art, Tom White, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Quentin Baxter, Meg Workman, Helen Rice, Joan Perry, Rani Boyle, and everyone here supporting New Music in Charleston.

Upcoming Events

October 21, 2005 - A Separate Reality

Humanities Center, 554 Rutledge Ave.

7-10 PM, \$5

Join us as we venture into the realm of the visual, experiential, and performing arts in this mutli-disciplinary art show, benefiting the Humanities Center and ShelterNet. The show will feature works and installations by local artists, as well as a performance of a new work for Chorus, Electronics, and complete darkness by Philip White. Event is from 7-10pm with a performance at 9pm.

www.NewMusicCollective.org
Info@NewMusicCollective.org