

a sophisticated survey of the development of phonography (as in recording and recording technology), that outlines the concomitant 'liberation' of sound as material for art. This was, for me, another outstanding chapter in terms of its integration of philosophical and literary-artistic concerns.

There are questions to be asked of this book perhaps. But a book that raises questions and interested enquiries rather than hackles, and which celebrates diversity rather than monothematic affirmation, can often be, as here, a joy. And there is more than a sufficient wealth of fascinating and mutually enlightening observations between chapters, most of which do not overlap significantly (a credit to the editor's guiding hand at the planning stage). *Recorded Music* emerged from my clutches with margins full of pencilled asides, agreements and queries, and numerous pages folded down for future return. I emerged thinking hard, more knowledgeable on areas that I might not have encountered otherwise, and looking forward to encountering them again (for the record).

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Katja Blomberg (ed.), *Peter Ablinger, hearing LISTENING*, Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg, 2008. ISBN 978-3-86828-003-6

Ingrid Beirer (ed.), *Bernhard Gál, Installations*. Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg, 2005. ISBN 3-936636-53-2

Brigitte Digel and Bernd Künzig (eds.), *Kristof Georgen, Sound*. Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg, 2009. ISBN 978-3-86828-050-0

Ingrid Beirer (ed.), *Douglas Henderson, playback. no rewind button*. Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg, 2008. ISBN 978-3-86828-015-9

Wulf Herzogenrath (ed.), *Christina Kubisch, Electrical Drawings*. Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg, 2008. ISBN 978-3-86828-013-5

Kehrer Verlag has published a long and interesting list of books on sound art over the years, ranging from genre-defining theoretical works and extended exhibition catalogues to artist monographs. These publications discuss different aspects of sound art, from those found in silent or nearly inaudible expressions, to clearly articulated and strong attacks on our auditory brain. Germany has a particularly strong tradition of sound art, and Kehrer plays an important role in developing and presenting discourse that springs from the genre.

From Kehrer's catalogue, five recent books have reached *Organised Sound*. The books present the work of five artists: *Peter Ablinger, hearing LISTENING*, published in conjunction with a Berlin exhibition

at Haus am Waldsee; *Christina Kubisch, Electrical Drawings*, published for a retrospective exhibition shown in Bremen in 2008 and Marl in 2009; *Bernhard Gál, Installations*; *Douglas Henderson, playback. no rewind button*; and *Kristof Georgen, Sound*, published on the occasion of three recent exhibitions. The books are richly illustrated, well designed, delicate to the touch, and are published in both German and English. Three of them (Gál, Georgen and Henderson) also contain CDs with excerpts of the artists' works.

Ablinger, Henderson, Kubisch and Gál are all professional musicians and composers, while Georgen's biography shows a fine arts background. These artists have all reached beyond the constraints of the common concert situation to be able to focus the audience on qualities of sound other than timbre and rhythm, and on different modes of listening. Their projects are in many ways related to the electro-acoustic project of listening within the sound for timbral and structural experiences outside of the pitch-based paradigm, but their interest in context, reference and the act of listening itself has moved the sonic constructions away from the specifically musical arenas and into galleries and other spaces for installation. The artists share an attention to 'non-musical sound', and use this focus to interest the listener in complex auditory situations in quite different ways.

The book on Peter Douglas Henderson is edited by Ingrid Beirer, and features texts by Frank Gertich and Louise S. Milne. Henderson emphasises the sculptural aspects of his works, objects that occupy space while at the same time producing sound. Several of these works are concerned with strings and rock culture, and it is tempting to believe that Henderson draws on his background in punk bands in the 1980s and 90s described in the biography. These references are particularly clear in the works *Stop, What Could Replace Opus?* and *playback. no rewind button*. Henderson has also been an active acousmatic composer, as Louise Milne refers to in her essay when she writes that he 'restages' the human subject's experience of itself in the world. Sculptural elements are paired with this sensitivity, and the perhaps most extreme example is found in the work *pages of illustrations*, where he constructs the sound of wind flowing through a tree, from individual recordings of rubbing leaves. His approach is one of composing with the found sounds rather than leaving them relatively untouched, which is so often the case in soundscape works. However, Henderson has chosen spaces more conducive to listening than normal concert venues. His works are also structured differently from most music: they have no fixed duration, thus opening for a listening experience more controlled by the visitor than the producer of the event. The accompanying CD provides exquisitely

produced excerpts from his works, and the hyper-realism resulting from his recording and production techniques appears to be a significant part of his work. While migrating the sounds into a listening situation, and altering their significance through removing their context, the sounds keep their clear identity through the production process, resisting the alienation that often, willed or unwilling, follows from electroacoustic signal processing.

The book on Bernhard Gál is also edited by Ingrid Beirer, and features two texts by authors Barbara Barthelmes and Stefan Fricke, who respectively take up aspects of Gál's musical production from architectural and spatial perspectives. In his interview with Fricke, Bernhard Gál explains that he prefers to have his works discussed as music, and a CD with excerpts from the works is included. Gál interests himself in particular sonic environments, records them and then composes with the material he has gathered. However, it is neither the material nor its origin that attracts the listener's focus, it is Gál's compositions – his abstracted formal developments. His intention is often transformation of certain environments rather than representation of them, and consequently his works often border on programme music, where there is a topic, a perspective, and a particular interpretation or perception to which the composer wants to bring attention. Gál works in an abstract manner, and with the combination of objects and light, in gallery and outdoor exhibition settings, this programme intention is often difficult to follow, leaving the sense of abstraction to become dominant. In this sense, his works are not tied to the notions of site-specificity and creation of place that one often finds in sound art. Gál sonifies musical ideas, and chooses visual accompaniment that encourages focus on the music rather than the acoustic 'biotope'. Perhaps paradoxically, this also runs through his works for architectural spaces, an ongoing collaboration with the architect Yumi Kori, where existing or pre-existing architecture is lit with both sound and music, again with the intention of interpretation.

The book *hearing, LISTENING* is edited by Katja Blomberg and gives the reader an interesting presentation of Peter Ablinger's oeuvre. In addition to the customary documentation of works, it contains an interview by Trond Olav Reinholdtsen, and essays by Chico Mello and Christian Scheib. Ablinger states in his interview with Reinholdtsen that he is not interested in the sound itself. He tends to lean more towards issues of perception, investigating how sound brings the listener into being through the meaning-making processes that listening entails. Thus art becomes a window into both experience and realisation for Ablinger. An example of this approach is his work *Weisslich 36*, described by Christian Scheib, where microphones are mounted to headphones, and

the microphones' output is piped directly into the ear. Ablinger makes us aware of the act of listening, and that listening itself is a filter that allows appreciation. As such, sounds are more meaningful as frameworks and conditions for perception than having particular significance because of their spectral surfaces and sounding qualities. Author Chico Mello explains in his text that by getting close to the sounds, Ablinger seeks to annul their representational function and focus the installation experience on underlying issues of identity, representation and perception.

Listening Pieces similarly suggests Ablinger's interest in context, in an installation of 25 white folding chairs placed in a 5*5 grid in settings such as parking lots and beaches. He pointedly focuses our attention on the listening situation more than on a particular soundscape experience, and the 'institutional' aspect suggested by this type of structured listening is not insignificant. So instead of providing the visitor with fixed objects, Ablinger provides a relational experience of sound. A sociocultural perspective is important to Ablinger, which entails an interest in the use of technology as a mediational means. For example, the timbral surface of his work *Quadraturen* mimics the human voice through an abstraction achieved through signal analysis and a mechanically played piano. Thus, the piano stands for something else, and leads to another issue that attracts Ablinger's attention: the issue of representation, and consequently mimesis, where success in turn depends on perception and the signifying process of meaning making. In his *Weisslich* series, this is his strongest focus.

Electrical Drawings is the name of an exhibition of Christina Kubisch's works, as well as the title for the accompanying large-format book edited by Wulf Herzogenrath. The publication describes the development of Kubisch's works for more than thirty years, from 1974 until 2008, and focuses on different areas of interest through four essays by Ingmar Lähnemann, Karin Seinoth, Uwe Rüdth and Christoph Metzger, and an interview by Helga de La Motte-Haber. The book, and particularly the interview with the artist, delivers a thorough view into Kubisch's artistic development during her many years as one of Germany's most interesting sound artists. The topics for the essays are Kubisch's performance work with experimental music and video art, her work with spatial modelling through light and sound, and her mapping of urban environments and constructed surroundings through induction caused by the electromagnetic fields – 'electrical walks'. Given the number of texts and the time span that is covered, this book provides an impressively thorough discussion on the thoughts and works of this very influential European sound artist. However, a documentary DVD would have provided additional depth to the discussion.

In the mid-1970s Kubisch composed a number of pieces called *Emergency Solos*, instrumentally based in experimental flute techniques, such as playing the flute wearing mittens or with thimbles on her fingers, and so on. Her focus on performative aspects resulted in her performing person becoming an important part of the works' identity, signifying a break from the contemporary music of the time and common expectations of what a musician should and should not be doing. In many ways, this type of experimentation was typical for the 1970s, but in Kubisch's oeuvre two threads emerged – a transgression of genres, and an interest in engaging the audience as creative participants in the works. For Kubisch, the last thread aimed to downplay her personal intentions, and to position her more as a facilitator, providing frameworks for the active participation and meaning-making of visitors.

This interest is developed in her future installations with sound and light, and the catalogue documents a large number of works in which fluorescent pigment is used for creating a place, or more precisely augmenting characteristics of her installation sites. Often, her works are site-specific, as in the *Clock Tower Project* at Mass MOCA previously discussed in issues 10/2 and 14/1 of *Organised Sound*. The use of fluorescent pigments facilitates an important aspect of her recent installations of sound and light, which can also be found in her numerous, well-documented electrical constructions and electrical sound walks. By augmenting and visualising characteristics of space generally concealed from attention, Kubisch provides an opportunity to reconsider our environment, and to reflect anew on our relationship to it. Her sociocultural perspective reveals our individual experiences as situated in larger contexts – experiences might be individual but there are patterns of preconditions. Her electrical walks, for example, require activity from visitors, and thus site-specificity is supplemented by action-specificity – we are still the composers but only with the materials she makes available to us through her method. Without movement and action there is no work – the action defines the site.

The monograph *Sound* – produced on the occasion of three exhibitions, and edited by Brigitte Digel and Bernd Künzig – presents works by Kristof Georgen since 2002. His works often have a documentary aspect, aiming to retain sonic environments and reconstruct particular spaces, past and present. Through his compositions, he processes memories of places and the activities that took place there in much the same manner as Kubisch's project from Mass MOCA mentioned above. Georgen employs surround techniques for both recording and presentation, and makes it clear to the visitor that his works entail listening *in* a space rather than *to* a work. An energetic example is his work *Leerstand*. His environments evidence a

quite careful touch, recomposed with flat dramaturgy rather than grand gestures and leaving a sense of some sort of unfinishedness.

Georgen's toned-down dramatic profile points to slower consideration than in real time, perhaps most clearly evident in the work *Nr. 26*, an excerpt from which may be heard on the CD that accompanies the book. The underproduction of the sonic material also points us in this direction; the sounds are to be considered as they are in themselves, or as near to that as the artist has wanted them to be. The work *The Sound of Reality* aims to be heard as containing representations of reality, and this is a hazardous project, since in principle recording and production, presentation mode and venue, all change their objects. Nonetheless, Georgen's approach is in touch with artists and composers such as John Cage and Bill Fontana, where the content lies in the listening to the sounding material and not in trying to second guess the artists' intentions. From this point of view, his works are not site-specific; they are reality-specific, relying on recognition and a shared cultural context not to become fiction.

Henderson, Gál, Ablinger, Kubisch and Georgen are artists who use sound in order to assist us in reflecting on the situations and sites in which we find ourselves, and the corresponding perception processes we enter into in everyday as well as gallery and concert situations. These are not new issues, but the way in which the respective artists stage these issues brings relational perspectives to the foreground: from Kubisch's sonification of invisible electromagnetic fields and fluorescent amplification of past events to Ablinger's problematisation of sound as a representation of something other than itself. Henderson and Georgen stage sounding details that would otherwise go unnoticed, Henderson through amplifying them, and Georgen in encouraging visitors to amplify their sensitivity. In this sense, they recompose sonic instances or contexts, and share the approach of Gál, who leans further in the direction of traditional composition.

The installation works presented in these five books transform visitors into composers, through the individual processes that we all go through while making sense of our experiences. And, naturally, these impulses resonate in us only when they strike something, when there is something there to absorb the impression. This is a common denominator for the artists presented in these five books, and perhaps most striking is nonetheless the diversity in approaches used. These works point to representations of artistic ideas where no image or movement can go – where sound art comes into its own as a genre. In sum, these books from Kehrer Verlag are valuable for any perspective that reaches beyond music as a compilation of spectral variation over time, because from a musician's point of view they encourage

us to reconsider what our organisation of sound impressions can bring of awareness and reflection.

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Paul Miller, aka DJ Spooky, that Subliminal Kid, *Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Media and Culture*, MIT Press. ISBN – 2007032443

Sooner or later a friend will tell you Laurie Anderson ‘loves this book!’ David Byrne agrees, ‘It’s a lovely eclectic collection that is a nice antidote to the usual way music and the history of music is often categorized into high/low, pop/classical, or black/white.’ The pieces are generally brief, but the sheer breadth of topics is boggling (Dave Valencia, *Library Journal*, 15 April 2008). Amazon book reviewer Jeffrey Newelt thinks this book shows off DJ Spooky’s two biggest strengths, the mashup and the teamup, while fellow Amazon reviewer Julian D. Santa-Rita thinks this compilation is essentially a book of post-graduate papers on music and its evolving relationship with the world. Branford Marsalis goes even further, writing, ‘Paul Miller has grabbed disparate philosophies and references from the past five hundred years and tied them into a neat and interesting narrative on music, sound, and current thought in our time.’

Yet some are of the opinion that DJ Spooky is a farce. His writing lacks content, and is more concerned with flashy language and textual sleight of hand (Zach G. Maldof, Amazon book reviewer). The sheer breadth of topics is boggling, perhaps to a fault. The foreword, introduction and Miller’s opening piece do little to shed light on the unifying idea behind the collection (Dave Valencia, *Library Journal*, 15 April 2008). Spooky emphasizes how the present bleeds into the future, yet the book is deeply rooted in the past (Marc Weidenbaum).

A graduate student told me that while on tour, ‘DJ Spooky talked about his trip to Antarctica where he SAMPLED sounds there. The undergrads were very skeptical – like,

how was this music?
 And ...?
 But some thought ‘this is a-maz-ing!’
 Meh.

Oh, and afterward he gave me a copy of this book to hold and somehow I thought that Marcel Duchamp wrote something that was in it or something like that.’

‘Inviting a group of authors, performers and intellectuals to participate in an anthology on music and popular culture in the era of electronic sampling is the

literary equivalent of playing Russian roulette: spin the chamber and pull the trigger, and a thoughtful collection of essays may burst forth – or you may get a barrage of academic one-upmanship and John Cage references that makes you want to put a loaded weapon to your temple’ (Dave Itzkoff, *New York Times*, 22 June 2008). Jessica Livi was convinced by DJ Spooky that ‘both in the past and today, now more than ever, art [and reviews are] naturally derivative; stemming from one source after another.’

If you want situational awareness about the world of sound, music, performance, computers, and ideas, read this book. (Lev Manovich)

‘Spooky is clearly applying his DJ skills to editing ... layer[ing] seemingly incongruous material ... letting the sympathetic overtones register with the reader. As a bricoleur, he is a little light on the mortar that binds the book: aside from a brief introductory essay, few connections are drawn between the chapters’ (Mark Weidenbaum). ‘Some of the very best stuff [in the book is] in the back [and] has hardly anything to do with sampling at all, including Naeem Mohaiemen’s searing treatise on the interrelationship between hip-hop and Islam’ (Dave Itzkoff, *New York Times*, 22 June 2008).

Marc Weidenbaum is an editor and writer living in San Francisco, California who writes about ambient and electronic music and sound art at www.disquiet.com. He was a little disappointed by absence of biographies for the contributors. It would have helped his understanding of the book to learn that Daphne Keller – contributor of what he felt was ‘perhaps the most clearly articulated essay in the book, describing the US legal system’s adjustment (or lack of it) to the digitization of culture – is a product lawyer at Google.’ ‘Still, this is a provocative and intriguing text, of interest to anyone working in or studying contemporary experimental music’ (Dave Valencia, *Library Journal*, 15 April 2008).

Polyglotisms and high culture slang
You’ll like it on sight, buy it on sound! ‘The 45-track CD that accompanies *Sound Unbound* illustrates and parallels the book’s central argument, locating a historical foundation for today’s innovations’ (Marc Weidenbaum). ‘Contrary to the back cover’s summation of the accompanying cd [sic] the musical work is far from groundbreaking’ (Zach G. Maldof).

‘If there’s one thing *Sound Unbound* is about, it’s the remix – it’s a sampling machine where any sound can be you, and all text is only a tenuous claim to the idea of individual creativity. It’s a plagiarist’s club for the famished souls of a geography of now-here’ (Paul Miller, *Sound Unbound*, p. 5). Robert Wilson believes ‘a good staging of an opera uses what you see on stage to make you hear better. Similarly, these reflections make it easier to tune in to the sometimes