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SOUNDS HEARD: WAYNE HORVITZ—55: MUSIC AND DANCE IN CONCRETE

By Frank J. Oteri on September 16, 2014

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Wayne Horvitz
55: Music and Dance in Concrete
(Other Room Music 001)

Music performed by Steven O'Brien, trumpet; Naomi Siegel, trombone; Kate Olson, soprano sax; Beth Fleenor, clarinet/bass carinet; Briggan Krauss, alto sax; Maria Mannisto, voice; Victoria Parker, violin; Eyvind Kang and Heather Bentley, violas; Roweena Hammil, cello. Recorded by Tucker Martine. Composed and mixed by Wayne Horvitz.

iTunes amazon.com

Listen to "55 (3)" from *55: Music and Dance in Concrete*

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Though Wayne Horvitz's music has always been somewhat difficult to classify, it has usually adhered to a "jazz" sensibility. Even *Wish the Children Would Come on Home*, his previous album released back in May of this year which consists predominantly of pre-composed music performed by a brass quartet, exudes a jazz feel despite the overall lack of improvisation (except for a few tracks where Horvitz joins them for some impromptu mayhem). However, no matter how definitions can be finessed to tie all sorts of loose ends together, one would be hard pressed to associate his latest record, *55: Music and Dance in Concrete*, with swing, bop, fusion or any of the myriad subgenres that have expanded this way of making music over the past century. Yet it is still clearly Wayne Horvitz and is utterly fascinating.

Each of the album's tracks is cryptically titled "55" followed by an additional number, but those second numbers (which range from 1 to 29) are not presented sequentially. Horvitz, with whom I corresponded via email, was born in 1955 and was 55 when he began composing this music. So despite the seeming abstraction, this is very personal music. But it gets even more complicated. Though the opening track on the album is "55 (1)," it is followed by "55 (15)" then "55 (29)" and "55 (10)" etc., almost inviting listeners to determine their own path through the material. According to Horvitz, the tracks were simply titled in the order he created them but then he later sequenced them in an order that seemed more organic. The numbers go as high as 29, but he never completed three of the tracks. The 26 tracks, scored for various combinations of wind and string instruments, were actually culled from a total of 110 musical fragments. These fragments consist of performances of 55 pre-composed Horvitz chamber music pieces plus 55 improvisations all of which took place over the course of four days in the concrete bunkers and cistern at Fort Worden in Pt. Townsend, Washington where they were recorded by Tucker Martine (who has also worked with R.E.M., The Decembrists, Beth Orton, and others). Then Horvitz electronically manipulated and remixed these recordings so that the final audio result sounds nothing like what the musicians originally played. Then, these resultant pre-recorded tracks served as the sonic component for a modular site-specific multi-media work presented in a variety of locations within Fort Worden involving choreography by Yukio Suzuki and video by Yohei Saito.

Taken out of its original context the music still manages to comes across as part psychedelic soundtrack (think *Barbarella*), part mysterious fun house (think *Sleep No More*). I personally wish that I would have been able to experience the visuals as well as the music, though I'm not sure a DVD would have captured the complete experiential immersion that the collaborators were aiming for. At least the LP (yes, it's available on LP!!!) comes with some large, tantalizing photos of the original production. Though there are only 13 tracks on the vinyl release (it has not been issued on CD!), all 26 completed tracks are available digitally on a download card included with the record. Additionally there's a wealth of information (including some tantalizing video excerpts) on a dedicated website about the project.

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