

music we'd like to hear

three concerts on three wednesdays curated by three composers

III
john lely

john white

c-major machine

antoine beuger

jankelevitch sextets

cornelius cardew

schooltime compositions

performed by:

laurence crane, angharad davies, rhodri davies, catherine kontz, john lely, sam mirelman,
ross parfitt, tim parkinson, michael parsons, john stephen, markus trunk and john white

7.30pm the church of st anne and st agnes, gresham street, ec2

13 july 2005

with grateful financial assistance from the Holst Foundation and the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust

“There are plenty of good pieces waiting to be written in C major.”

Arnold Schoenberg (pre 1951)

C-Major Machine was written in 1971 for the Promenade Theatre Orchestra, consisting of John White, Hugh Shrapnel, Alec Hill and Christopher Hobbs, who met weekly at White's house in Wimbledon to play reed organs, toy pianos and other budget devices. Hobbs: “All the music for the PTO tended to be written rather quickly (particularly by White and Hobbs) in order that there be something new to play each Sunday. The pieces which seemed worthy of performance were then rehearsed thoroughly. Concerts were given at various art galleries and informal venues between 1970 and 1973, when the group dispersed, though White and Hobbs continued as a duo for the next three years.”

C-Major Machine is just one of the many ‘machine’ pieces which White has composed since the 70s. Others include *Drinking and Hooting Machine*, *Jew's-Harp Machine*, *Newspaper Reading Machine* and *Autumn-Countdown Machine*. The *Oulipo Compendium* (Atlas Press 1998) describes a machine piece as “the result of a process applied to a given sound-world, in the same way that a Welsh rarebit may be said to be the result of a mechanical process applied to the world of bread and cheese.”

hi john,

thanks for your email.

i am very happy you are going to play the jankelevitch sextets.

here are a few lines from the cover text of the english translation of jankelevitch's book "music and the ineffable", which might be nice to print into the program.

Music, Jankélévitch argues, is not a hieroglyph, not a language or sign system; nor does it express emotions, depict landscapes or cultures, or narrate. On the other hand, music cannot be imprisoned within the icy, morbid notion of pure structure or autonomous discourse. Yet if musical works are not a cipher awaiting the decoder, music is nonetheless entwined with human experience, and with the physical, material reality of music in performance. Music is "ineffable," as Jankélévitch puts it, because it cannot be pinned down, and has a capacity to engender limitless resonance in several domains. Jankélévitch's singular work on music was central to such figures as Roland Barthes and Catherine Clément, and the complex textures and rhythms of his lyrical prose sound a unique note, until recently seldom heard outside the francophone world.

have a nice concert!

yours,

antoine

‘Musical education is what *Schooltime Compositions* (1967) is about. The work is a notebook of observations, ideas, notations, hints, diagrams, concepts, scientific experiments, geometric analogies - some direct, some oblique, but mostly presented as ‘facts’ with no covering instructions. For Cardew each composition was a matrix to draw out the interpreters’ feelings about certain topics or materials. Here the different matrices grew around such things as words, melody, vocal sounds, triangles, pleasure, noise, working to rule, will/desire, keyboard. Some of the matrices serve as a measure of virtuosity, others of courage, tenacity, alertness, and so on. They point to the heart of some real matter, mental or material. The score tells the interpreter the general area of his potential action - he may wish or have the talent to play, or sing, or construct, or illumine, or take exercise of one sort or another, and can draw out his interpretation in that direction.’

From *Cornelius Cardew* by John Tilbury (Contact No.26 Spring 1983)