

On Saturday, February 1 and Sunday, February 2, 1992 at 8 p.m., New Music Concerts presents *Electronic Purgatory*, a "digital music-theatre" composition created and performed by Kristi Allik and Robert Mulder.

In *Electronic Purgatory*, all traditional physical staging devices such as sets, musicians, lighting technicians and such have been replaced with an interactive computer environment. The electroacoustic instruments, music and the visual stage elements are generated "live" by means of a computer-controlled system.

Consequently all elements, both visual and aural, are generated, realized and controlled in real-time without the use of video or audio tape. *Electronic Purgatory* was first performed, in a shorter version, at the ISCM World Music Days in Oslo, Norway, on September 24, 1990, and won an Anerkennung at 1991 Prix Ars Electronica.

Essentially, *Electronic Purgatory* is an audio-visual essay which is inspired by modern quantum physics, and the fact that many of the current mathematical answers in that brand of science appear to have an almost meta-physical

quality. The artists cast the physical development of their performance along a structural form first designed by Dante for his *Divine Comedy*. The "many worlds" principle, which suggests that multiple realities can exist on different dimensions, all at the same time, was taken from Stephen

Hawking. The name for the piece is a description of the emotions which overcome the performers on the stage, where their role and level of control ranges from the sublime to that of total domination under the electronic forces.

**electronic
purgatory
a digital
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composition
for performers,
interactive
theatre and
electro-
acoustic
music
with
kristi allik
and
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february 1 & 2
1992
at 8 p.m.
betty oliphant
theatre
404 jarvis street
961-9594**

new music

C O N C E R T S

as furniture or props. A black floor, and a black velvet backdrop will make it appear even more empty and dark; in contrast with this, the performers are dressed in white.

On stage, the performers appear to move in a Tai Chi-like manner. Their white clothing often becomes a canvas for the slide projection of bold graphic designs or richly colored textures. These multi-image projections are the only source of stage lighting and are controllable from the stage.

With touching and exploratory movements the performers appear to manipulate, shape and initiate a multitude of aural and visual phenomena.

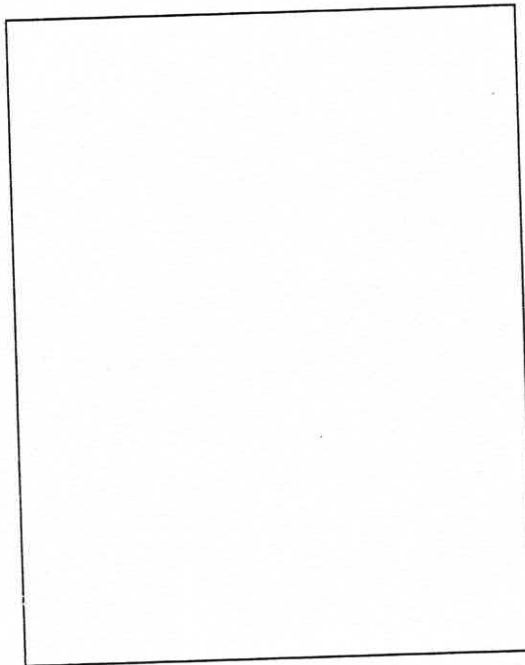
A carefully designed "cybernetic choreography" is employed during the whole work; often elements created or disturbed in one "video world" will immediately affect elements in the other "video world." Gestural movements are not exclusively utilized for the manipulation of the visual elements, they can also affect changes in the aural fabric. Slow deliberate movements can be used to shape the dynamic changes of the musical texture; quick movements of fingers or hands would initiate slight and subtle percussive sounds.

Certain sections of *Electronic Purgatory* utilize the performers merely as "movement generators," and do not show the performers themselves, only the abstracted residue of their kinetic actions. Other sections utilize the physical outline of the body of the performer as a collage tool, replacing the contents with its own living textural pattern.

Essentially the work is a live performance, and has sections which are almost entirely improvised, these sections will be uniquely different in each performance. Other sections are

The performers, interwoven in this complex interactive fabric take the audience on a journey through time and multiple dimensions of reality which range from the turbulent initiation of the universe to a serene "quantum-physical" terminus. *Electronic Purgatory* is loosely constructed in four movements, the first of which has a Genesis-like flavour and probes the development of the entropy-defying forces of life. In this section, the almost god-like gestures of the performers shape a primordial "soup-of-all-possibilities" into increasingly more intricate and perdurable aural and visual forms. In time, these congealing formations reveal the evolution of recognizable physical phenomena. The section concludes with the gradual dissolution of the delicate interdependent layers, leading to a mechanistic, B. F. Skinner-inspired reality. Here *Electronic Purgatory* struggles with the basic contradictions associated with the state of human awareness: the interactors are confined to an existence where the human spirit is separated from the body, and simultaneously tortured in a "mindscape" sired by its own intellectual limitations, while the corporeal remains are chained to a landscape wrought by the body's own hands. The work concludes with an exploration into the dynamics of interactive music-theatre, loosely inspired by the idea of parallel relationships encountered in multiple layers of reality as found the work of Dante and Stephen Hawking.

Much of the "outer-worldly" quality in the work is achieved with the unique staging design. The "magic," for example, is achieved by superimposing the two interactors electronically on life-sized video screens (video worlds), placed on either side of the stage. During the whole piece, the performers are confined to a relatively small stage area. This area is completely devoid of any set-like contraptions such



tightly composed, and serve as counterpoints to the improvised variations.

To achieve a true interactive and integrated performance, the artists designed a multi-computer network. Each computer in the network is assigned a specific task; for example, each video world is controlled by an independent computer. A MIDI interface connects each video world to the network, and via this network receives and sends information to the other computers.

The original concept for *Electronic Purgatory* called for ten independent video worlds, eight-channel sound generation capabilities, and complex multi-image projections, all controlled by Amiga computers.

Kristi A. Allik was born in Toronto. She has received degrees from the University of Southern California, Princeton University and the University of Toronto. Her teachers include John Weinzweig, James Hopkins, Frederick Leseman, Lothar Klein, Oskar Morawetz and Milton Babbitt. She has received numerous commissions and awards, including Canada Council grants, Ontario Arts Council grants, a SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, a Chalmers Foundation Award, the Federation of University Women Award and the Irving G. Mills Award. She has written an opera, been involved with theatrical productions, and has

written a number of integrated media works. She has had performances of her works in Europe, U.S.A. and Canada. Allik became interested in electroacoustic music several years ago, and since that time, much of her work has dealt with the electroacoustic sound and its various timbral possibilities. Currently, she is on faculty at Queen's University School of Music, where she teaches composition, computer music and music theory.

Robert C. F. Mulder was born in Den Haag, Holland, in 1943. Essentially, he considered himself an electronic artist at the tender age of 14, and since that time, has followed a path of self-guided education and discovery. Currently, his interests are in the field of time-dependent visual phenomena, and applications which utilize visual art as a process, rather than as object. In general, he is fascinated with all matter of interactivity found between image, movement, colour and music. Mulder is equipped with a strong artistic as well as technical background, and this unusual facility has brought his current work to the forefront of the international new-media arts world. He has won numerous grants and awards, in national and international competitions. Mulder engages in concerts and lectures world-wide, and his performances and installations have been experienced by audiences throughout Canada, the U.S.A. and Europe.

Electronic Purgatory was created with the generous assistance of the Canada Council, Media Section and Explorations, Commodore Canada in Toronto, Very Vivid in Toronto, Intelligent Music in Albany, N.Y., 3M Canada in London, and the Ontario Arts Council.

Reminiscences of Milhaud

To commemorate the centenary of the birth of Darius Milhaud, New Music Concerts is pleased to present a concert featuring his ballet suite *L'homme et son désir*, the *Aspen Serenade* and the *Octuor à cordes*, which consists of his 14th and 15th string quartets played simultaneously. To celebrate the great tradition of musical lineages, the concert also features a Canadian link with works by Bruce Mather and James Harley—Mather was a student of Milhaud and Harley, a student of Mather.

Reminiscences of Milhaud

"In 1956-57, I had the good fortune to study with the Russian pianist Alexander Uninsky who taught for several years in Toronto. He kindly obtained a scholarship for me to study with him at the Aspen Music School in Colorado in the summer of 1957. Uninsky introduced me to Milhaud who accepted me in his composition class in Aspen.

"At that time, I was writing a type of post-romantic music full of clichés. As I played my pieces, he would wince whenever he heard a cliché. Needless to say, this made quite an impression on me at the tender age of eighteen. He made me understand immediately the difference between composing and arranging. His great strength as a teacher was the ability to discern in any style the inventive ideas as opposed to the conventional formulae. His classes constituted a course in aesthetics.

"He was a man of great physical courage in that he continued to compose, teach and conduct in spite of almost constant pain from rheumatism. His generosity, sense of humour and positive attitude towards life inspired all who met him. I continued to visit with him until his death in 1974."—Bruce Mather

Milhaud was one of the few 20th century composers to create an absolutely personal language, his own universe. No

**happy
birthday,
darius!
works by
darius
milhaud,
bruce mather,
james harley
sunday
march 8,
1992
at 8 p.m.
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one before him created structures of such contrapuntal density, like a luxuriant jungle. His polytonality was in fact a means to achieve clarity with so many simultaneous melodic ideas. Each idea was identified by a different key. He was also the great pioneer in writing for large percussion ensembles, even before Varèse.—b.m.

Octuor à cordes, opus 291

Modéré—Animé—Vif

In 1948, Milhaud was given a small green notebook with a splendid binding of the Romantic era. Each page had eight musical staves. He conceived the idea of writing in this notebook two different string quartets, his 14th and 15th quartets, which in superposition would constitute a string octet. Here is an excellent example of the complex textures characteristic of Milhaud's finest works. The first performance was

given in 1949 at Mills College in Oakland, California by the Budapest and Paganini quartets.—b.m.

Aspen sérénade, opus 361

Animé—Souple et printanier—Paisible—Énergique—Nerveux et coloré

(Astir—Springlike—Peaceful—Energetic—Nimble and colorful)

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