

ELECTRONIC MUSIC by PRISCILLA and BARTON McLEAN

Both works realized at the Indiana University South Bend Electronic Music Studio

BARTON and PRISCILLA McLEAN are not only husband and wife and professional composers; they are also a versatile travelling duo called The McLean Mix. As such, they specialize in live as well as taped electronic and instrumental music, touring the mid-West in 1974 and subsequently the East and West Coasts.

PRISCILLA McLEAN

Dance of Dawn (1974)

thunderous sun roaring away the abyss
riotous life-noises scream the air
senseful
rougeyellow leers white light eyeprying
footfall din is lost in
the jeers of the catmoon

- P. M.

LIFENOISES

An alteration and subtle change of motivic ideas propels the work, beginning with string-like minor seconds, gradually coalescing into a repeated rhythm which then separates itself by silences and slowly widening intervals (the interval of a second is a major cohesive factor throughout the work).

THUNDEROUS

Rhythmic propulsion, distilled from the early percussive sounds, gains strength by the second half of the work. Highly filtered "Jew's harp" sonorities (beginning 13' into the piece) and marimba-like qualities combine and invade the returned string-like fabric until shattering cross-rhythms and brittle timbres explode into a panning effect of violent drum-like (timpani) rolls.

SUN ROLLING

An evocative melody of undulating character keeps recurring in different guises usually at or immediately after structural climaxes. This melody, altered, becomes a polyphonic "choir" of sounds approximately one third of the way into the piece, eventually fusing with clanging repeated tones and rhythms in a section of dense polyphony.

LEERS WHITE LIGHT

Emerging from the beginning texture is a static chord-cluster, structured from previous sonorities, which recedes and reappears at key temporal locations. At times this becomes a ring-modulated chord gradually fluctuating and subtly changing, occurring as the antithesis to previous "chaotic" and complex sections. These areas of stasis are the peace, the philosophical reflection, the calm that accepts and sorts the "senseful" experience into a coherent intention; the transparent white light.

LIFENOISES

A side-note: A few minutes into the composition is an unintentional Morse Code communicate, first noticed by another listener, a CO (standard signal from a caller who is trying to communicate with anyone who can hear and understand his sounds). The parallel to the composer's basic intention is intriguing.

PRISCILLA McLEAN (b. Fitchburg, Mass., 1942) received her musical training at Massachusetts State College at Lowell and Indiana University (M. M. in Composition, 1969). Her principal teachers were Richard Kent, Thomas Beversdorf and Bernhard Heiden, and in electronic studio technique, Michael Babcock. Among her most recent instrumental compositions is a commissioned Bi-Centennial work Messages, premiered in 1975 by the Indiana University (South Bend) Contemporary Chorus and Chamber Ensemble. Since 1974 she has been co-directing a national radio series of works by members of the American Society of University Composers. Recent live electronic activities include performances with John Eaton, David Cope, Burt Beerman, and Barton McLean. Since 1973 she has been on the composition faculty of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind.

BARTON McLEAN
Spirals (1973)

*Phrase-wisps melting into pedals
and drones ...
jazzy licks spiralling upward and beyond*

Composers, particularly in the electronic medium, must not only create their realization, but must also fashion, for each new work, an all-inclusive and self-contained universe of sound which draws all components into its orbit, compelling them to obey its unique laws.

*melodies which appear as smoke wisps
turning, in, on, and around
harmonies responding, unpolluted by
equal temperament*

Labelling a work “electronic” should not automatically relegate it to the stereotype of the machine esthetic. To the contrary, it must be possible and desirable to counterbalance this tendency with a concept which accentuates all of the human qualities associated with music and life.

*myriad shapes floating toward a liquid horizon
in a sea with islands of sudden focus ...
unbalancing..
conservatory-bred senses of time!*

What is the shaping of a new sound-universe if it is not principally the restructuring of time relationships, and the reorientation of the sonic material around this new time orbit?

*quiet, reflective soundpools
white hot thermomusical explosions
igniting the ear*

Can they all be contained in one universe?

— B.M.

Barton McLean adds: "My wife and I have found the experience of actively composing in the same household interesting and exciting. To the extent that any two composers can get along together, we do, despite the obvious differences in our compositional styles. One can imagine the problems — two composers and one electronic studio, or one piano, or one needing quiet while the other needs to make noise, not to mention the problem of all composers and their egos. We have managed to solve the first set of problems by teaching on alternate days and by capitalizing on our work habits, I being a day and she a night person. The second, potentially more serious problem just does not exist for some reason. We do not compete with one another, but instead encourage each other's success."

BARTON McLEAN (b. 1938) graduated from SUNY at Potsdam, received his M. A. from Eastman, and his Mus. D. in composition from Indiana University. His principal teachers were Henry Cowell, Thomas Beversdorf, and Bernhard Heiden, and, in electronic studio technique, Michael Babcock and Bruce Hemingway. He is now director of composition, electronic music, and theory at the South Bend campus. He is also active in broadcasting and is on the Executive Committee of The American Society of University Composers. Recent activities include the premiere of *Dimensions II* for piano and tape over the BBC, and a coast to coast broadcast of *Metamorphosis* for Orchestra. This recording was made possible by a partial grant from Indiana University.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)