

SLOUGHT FOUNDATION AND SOUNDFIELD, NFP
PRESENT

“AMERICAN INDEPENDENTS”

ALVIN CURRAN WITH ENSEMBLE NOAMNESIA
PROGRAM FOR FEBRUARY 4TH, 2007

1. Discussion with ALVIN CURRAN (Composer), GENE COLEMAN (Composer and Artistic Director of Soundfield) and THADDEUS SQUIRE (Executive Director, Peregrine Arts, Philadelphia)

2. Alvin Curran: “TransDadaExpress (Extraordinary Renderings)”
Performed by the composer on keyboard and computer

3. Improvisations with Alvin Curran (keyboard and computer) and members of Ensemble Noamnesia (Gene Coleman (bass clarinet), Dave Smolen (electronics), Dustin Hurt (trumpet and accordion) and Evan Lipson (dbl. bass))

TransDadaExpress/Extraordinary Renderings

Once a week a train leaves from the Zurich Hauptbahnhof for the city of Dada in eastern Siberia. The trip takes 5 days and this train is known as the TransDadaExpress. Of course I am lying. The trip actually takes 4 days to arrive. On January 17, 2006 I performed in sequence with many other artists around the world to celebrate Art's Birthday on the radio. From the SWR studio in Baden Baden, I played a spontaneously made composition for 30 minutes using about 500 sampled sounds and a Midi keyboard – the sounds included direct, indirect and imaginary references to the history of Dadaism: a slowed down basket ball = Hugo Ball, poetry of Hans Arp, Schwitters, Cage and streams of sonic absurdities. Thanks to the imagination of Erik Karlson, I have decided to call this radiophonic composition TransDadaExpress 2 – Extraordinary Renderings. In the Dada tradition, I arrived one day late at the SWR2 studios to begin work on the reworking of the original performance. It is in the middle of World Cup fever; and so I arrived and immediately sat down at the piano and began to play (the introduction to a music originally written for the Trisha Brown Dance Co.) and brush my teeth at the same time (well not quite but almost). For I would not only re-work my original recording, but in a quite “radiophonic” way use the entire spacious Radio Drama studio – with all of its classic but absurd sound-effects machines and special acoustic spaces like bathrooms, garden walks, doors, chains, windows, bells and buzzers of every type – and of course a grand piano, as my text, score, instrument and home. I walked around like an idiot pushing a chair and whistling parts of the “Internazionale;” mumbling, I hid myself in a closet and began banging the doors and windows to be let out – yes liberated, while practically the whole world was watching Norodom and Neuville (2 non Germans) score a marvelous goal for the German team. So these radio sounds simply leaped like cinema realite directly into my recording and into the DadaPlatz of Hans Arp. To be completely honest, I must say that every sound you hear in this piece is stolen and the poor Dadaists could never imagine how digital technology, philosophy and amorality has not only liberated sound from ownership but from itself as well. So the voices of Maria Callas, Pavarotti, Alois Bucher, and Shelley Hirsch appear side by side with the calls of Loons, wolves, jackals, bees, Bison, Gorillas, and Schwitter's son, Scelsi, my wife Susan, Glenn Miller orchestra, Inuit throat singing, Aboriginal chanting, piano tuning, car crashes, children screaming, Oakland rappers and the SWR kamerchor - just to name a few of the sources. About the subtitle: Morally reprehensible is the current USA practice of Extraordinary Rendition, a pathetic euphemism to describe the secret arresting, transport, and interrogation of people to unknown destinations without any legal recourse. In provocative contrast, this same phrase could (with some irony) also describe the remaking or reworking of an artistic creation. Hence my not too ambivalent use of it here, to remind us of Dada's own aim at unmasking the hypocrisy, misdirection, of bourgeois conventions. So my confessions continue – not only did I steal all of these sounds but I have illegally tried to transport them across borders - on a sentimental journey to DadaCity, as well.

-- Alvin Curran