

RESEARCH AND PAULINE OLIVEROS

"Research: 1. careful search; a close searching.... experimentation having for its aim the revision of accepted conclusions."
(Websters New Collegiate Dictionary)

Part of what we are doing as musicians is known: We know music as a craft and as a cultural activity.

Part of what we are doing as musicians is unknown. We don't know exactly what will happen when we take a new step in our musical language, when we meet our audience or our performers with new situations, when we as makers ask new questions through our makings, when we revise a cultural situation for these reasons.

....experimentation having for its aim the revision of accepted conclusions.

In this sense the compositional work of Pauline Oliveros is research. Not entered into as a scientist with an exact question objectively to be answered but as an artist, ~~does~~ from the subjectivity of the individual who is a hypersensitive barometer of our culture. For example, in her work:

Sonic Meditations at a performance at Rutgers University several years ago. There were three levels of performer involvement:

- 1) The core group which toured with the piece.
- 2) A group recruited on campus which rehearsed several times.
- 3) The audience which received written instructions on how to participate in the piece. The music-energy

radiated out from the center. It could be amplified or passively absorbed. Sitting closer or further from the center is a choice about how to receive and respond to this energy. Instructions dealing with breathing bring the crucial interlock of voluntary/involuntary musculature into a public shared performance space. What possible results does this have for individual consciousness, and for a group sensibility? Certainly, a new textural mix has been formed that may have no exact precedent in Western culture. And we are talking about a pattern of energy relations or vectors that are as potent on a human scale as those in a planetary system are on its scale.

....entered into from the subjectivity of the artist, yet offered to us as a unique, tangible situation that we may absorb and analyze or integrate into our lives - whichever we choose.

....the revision of accepted conclusions.

Or, take the piece, $S\psi^*\psi_d\tilde{c}=1$, performed on February 23rd, 1969 in La Jolla. The macro- within micro- is expressed by having star constellations of a particular month layed out on a gym floor using blinking amber traffic markers as stars. Within each constellation various human activities including music are carried out by various personages: Amplified heartbeat, slide-shows by twins, back-strap weaver, tape recording and distribution of the ambient sounds by space travelers (Cosmonauts).... People being largely themselves, but partly 'larger than life', doing individual and co-operative activities within a struc-

tured system - symbolic yet particularly sensed and felt for a performance space: a model for societal behavior where all persons' skills and activities must harmonize in order to flourish. Sounds, sights, and motions of great beauty, subtlety and variegation are available to the observer to be perceived as minute or grand polyphonic patterns. A grand and difficult undertaking for performers and audience both. It's a transformation of 'ordinary reality' that keeps an unexpectedly large amount of that 'ordinary' in tact. Link, which I know from score only is a larger scale approach to these phenomena.

....Research - fr. recherche - fr. circare
(latin = to go around)

Finally, consider the ♀ Ensemble (Womens' Ensemble) formed and led by Ms. Oliveros to explore women's energy in music. Sessions were devoted to Sonic Meditations with no verbal communication, but individual journals kept instead. The effect on the women's lives was enormous and transcended the length of time the group existed: after it ceased to meet, the women's lives were still influenced by the slot of time in the week that had been allotted to the meetings -- giving a focus from which the rest of the week's activities took off as if charged by a battery. The interweaving of one's life processes and one's musical processes, the individual and private with the group and shared, focussed attention and broadening awareness, all this sets up experience and growth possibilities that are unavailable to us, for the most part of our lives and in most contexts. People at a univer-

sity are thus in a privileged position if they have such wide-ranging compositional and research work made available to them by a trained person on a teaching faculty. For personal transformation or for study purposes only these pieces and the activities and thought which they engender are as invaluable as they are rare. The ordinary human world goes on in a quite different way, living on with much wasted energy, unawareness and in constant peril of disaster for these very reasons.

.....Rechercher (French)= to look again.

- - Daniel Goode,

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