

(Program continued from p. 11)

Notes on the Program

Late in 1980, I found myself in a recording studio on Thirty-Fourth Street. I was doing synthesizer work for Hugh Levick, an old friend. On one piece Hugh asked me to play the ney (an obliquely blown Arabic, Turkish, and Persian reed flute). When Frank Eaton, the engineer/owner, heard the ney, he said there was someone he wanted me to meet. Frank was one of Dary John Mazel's students at Oberlin Conservatory and very fervent about getting experimental music recorded. Sussan was slumped back in the chair of the control room when I walked in. Usually I can place people right away but I couldn't place her. Frank hadn't told me anything about the person I was supposed to meet. There was something about the way he said "person" that made me not ask for any more details. They were listening to some backup vocals she had done on a disco/funk tune. It was one of those awkward situations. Everybody was reserved; Sussan was definitely not talkative. Frank uttered some furtive but polite words of introduction. I didn't like the music at all, and I could hear them hearing me not like it. I was just about to make an excuse and depart gracefully but there was something in the phrasing and the inflection of the vocals that made me ask Sussan where her accent was from. She looked so impenetrable, fragile, and slightly bothered. Then it occurred to me that perhaps she didn't like the tracks either. She said she was Persian. I asked her if she knew cha-cha style singing; she nodded. So I showed her my box of neys. I played something in the "saba" mode. She turned to Frank and told him I was playing the music of the desert. Then she started to sing. Frank ushered us into the studio. I added a 14/8 drum part and she dodged her way through the maze of polyrhythms, adding killer cha-cha syncopations. Those were the original tracks for a piece called *Queen of Saba* on the album *Eros in Arabia*. Sussan then played me some of her own compositions which I liked a lot.

Frank invited us to come up and do more work. Eventually quite a few pieces got recorded, mostly between two and ten in the morning. On most of the pieces I would put the basic melodies and rhythms down on eight-track, and then they would

get bounced up to sixteen, and then we would work on vocals and processing. A variety of processing and collage techniques were used. (The interest in returning to electronics did not have to do with transferring my keyboard style to synthesizer. It grew out of a feeling for the timbre of the ney.) I wanted to fuse the ney and the voice with the aid of electronics. For the first time, it was possible with a western keyboard instrument to play microtonal inflections and intonations previously reserved for string and wind instruments. Most of these pieces use some form of digital sampling, either Synclavier, Fairlight, or Electroharmonix Instant Replay. There is a certain sense that resources are being extended in an organic way that comes from playing keyboard and then ney, and then being able to play the timbre and inflection of the ney on the keyboard polyphonically, or by adding inflections and timbres together and playing them all on one key. We also used a "resonant loop," which reorganized the overtone structure of the voice and flute, as well as the percussion.

It wasn't until last summer, when we were invited to perform at the Asillah Festival in Morocco, that we had an opportunity to develop something that went beyond purely musical collaboration. We were guests of the festival for three weeks, and were given the enclosed courtyard of the old Rizuli Palace, located just next to the ramparts of the town, to rehearse in. The courtyard had twenty-five foot arches and a tiled floor. In the center, there were two interlocking squares that formed an octagon. Sussan gravitated to the center of the form and created a dance that moved from the center out in a zigzagging spiral. I based the pulse of my circular breathing on the ins and outs of the spiral, and chose notes in the modes based on her proximity to different points of the octagon. Other values such as dynamics, split tones, etc., were relative to her distance from the floor and her hand "mudras." There was a certain ritual or ceremonial atmosphere. Artists from all over the world had been invited to the festival, and many were housed in the upper bedrooms of the palace. During the

night of our performance, many people said that they saw spirits. We found out a little about the palace history. After Rizuli finished building it at the end of the last century, all the artists and artisans who had worked on it were killed there so that no one else could build one as nice. Back in New York, the squares were changed to interlocking square spirals: one based on the length of the side of the square and one based on its diagonal (*Axaxaxis milô*).

Last fall, Sussan proposed that we work with Assurbanipal Dabilla. She said, "I

can't say certain things without the language of his theater." I thought their work together at LaMama for *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was intriguing, and I also liked Steve Gorn's use of Eastern instruments to create dramatic tension. Our first week of rehearsals with Assurbanipal is ending as these notes are being written. So far he is pointing out certain enigmas and then allowing us the freedom to resolve them. Yesterday he said, "Once your presence is established, then you will become invisible."

—Richard Horowitz

Some of the pieces were originally performed under the title *Attraction Quotients* and here are some of the quotients:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{seduce} = \frac{\text{elude}}{\text{deduce}} \\ \text{deluge} = \frac{\text{delux}}{\text{delude}} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{seduce} \times \text{deluge} = \text{debutante debauché} \\ \text{seduce} = \frac{\text{debutante debauché}}{\text{deluge}} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{seduce} = \text{elude} \times \text{deluge} = \text{deduce} \times \text{deb debauché} \\ \text{deluge} = \text{seduce} \times \text{delux} = \text{delude} \times \text{"} \end{array}$$

$$\text{delude} \times \text{debutante debauché} = \text{Demure, And } \frac{\text{denture desquamate}}{\text{denude}} = \text{Demure}$$

$$\text{delude} \times \text{debutante db} \times \frac{\text{denture desquamate}}{\text{denude}} = \text{Demure}^2$$

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{seduce}^2 = \frac{\text{elude} \times \text{demure}^2}{\text{deduce}} \\ \sqrt{\text{elude}} = \frac{\text{seduce}^2}{\text{le denouement}} \end{array}$$

$$\text{seduce}^2 = \text{le denouement} \times \sqrt{\text{elude}}$$

$$\text{le denouement} \times \sqrt{\text{elude}} = \frac{\text{elude} \times \text{demure}^2}{\text{deduce}}$$

$$\text{le denouement} = \frac{\frac{\text{elude} \times \text{demure}^2}{\text{deduce}}}{\sqrt{\text{elude}}}$$

or

$$\text{le denouement} = \frac{\frac{\text{elude} \times \text{demure}^2}{\text{deduce}}}{\frac{\text{seduce}^2}{\text{le denouement}}}$$