

Arleen Schloss:
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PETER FRANK

"A. E. BLA BLA BLA, ARLEEN SCHLOSS' MULTIPARTITE PRODUCTION IS A PROVOCATIVE PRESENTATION... THE ELEMENT OF PURE PLAY, ALWAYS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT IN HER WORK, HAS NOW BECOME PARAMOUNT... MUSICIANS (LED BY BUTCH MORRIS), DANCERS (ORGANIZED BY CHRISTA GAMPER), AND MISCELLANEOUS COOPERATORS PARTICIPATE IN THE WORK...

A PRACTITIONER HERSELF OF MANY MEDIA AND AN ENERGETIC EXPLORER OF VARIOUS NEW TECHNOLOGIES, SCHLOSS HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH LANGUAGE EVER SINCE SHE ABANDONED PAINTING IN THE EARLY 1970's. TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, HER CONCERN HAS BEEN ALPHABETS. IN MEDIA AS DISPARATE AS PHOTOCOPY, SOUND-LIVE AND RECORDED, AND LASER PROJECTION, SCHLOSS MANIPULATES THE VISUAL AND SPOKEN CHARACTERISTICS OF LETTERS. SHE DEMONSTRATES IN HER VARIOUS VISUAL AND TEMPORAL COMPOSITIONS THAT LETTERS—WHICH ARE SUPPOSED TO FUNCTION AS THE BASIC, IRREDUCIBLE COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE—ARE IN FACT NOT IRREDUCIBLE. WORKING MOSTLY, OF COURSE, IN ENGLISH—BUT EXPLORING OTHER LANGUAGES AND EVEN ALPHABETIC SYSTEMS WHEN AND WHERE APPROPRIATE—SCHLOSS OPENS UP THE SONIC POSSIBILITIES OF LETTERS THROUGH SWIFT, INTENSE, ALMOST MANIC AND ALWAYS PLAYFUL INCANTATION. NOT SURPRISINGLY, SHE LOVES TO PLAY WITH THE PROLIFERATION OF INITIALS AND ACRONYMS IN MODERN LIFE (ITS AD/ITS BC/ITS ABC/ITS AOK/ITS IBM/ITS CIA). SHE ALSO PUNS DEFTLY ON THE VERY NAMES OF LETTERS, NORMALLY MONOSYLLABIC SOUNDS WHICH SO FREQUENTLY HAVE OTHER MEANINGS AS WELL. SCHLOSS HABITUALLY SUBJECTS LETTERS TO PROCESSES OF DEFORMATION AND REFORMATION. EXEMPLIFYING THIS VISUALLY IS HER PROCESS PIECE WHEREIN SHE PHOTOCOPIES A SINGLE LETTER ON A PAGE OVER AND OVER AGAIN, EACH COPY MADE FROM THE LAST, SO, 100 GENERATIONS LATER, THE LETTER'S IMAGE HAS DISSOLVED INTO THE EVER—MORE—MAGNIFIED IMPURITIES OF THE PROCESS... HOWEVER AWARE SCHLOSS MAY HAVE BEEN OF HISTORICAL, AND EVEN CURRENT, SOUND AND VISUAL POETRY, SHE HAS GROUNDED HER OWN EXPERIMENTS NOT IN THE THEORETICAL SUBSTRUCTURES OF THE EUROPEAN EXPERIMENTAL TRADITION BUT IN ORAL PRACTICE AT ONCE UNIVERSAL TO ALL HUMANKIND, DISTINCTLY CHARACTERISTIC OF URBAN SPEECH, INFLECTED BY (POSTWAR) AMERICAN SPEECH PATTERNS AND COLLOQUIAL HABITS, AND SPECIFIC TO HER OWN EMPATHIC EAR... MUCH OF THE PROCEEDINGS WILL COME AS MUCH OF A SURPRISE TO SCHLOSS AS THEY WILL TO ANY SPECTATOR. BUT THAT UNPLANNED ASPECT IS AS MUCH A NECESSARY PART OF THE EVENT AS IS ANY PRE—REHEARSED ASPECT. SCHLOSS IS NO NAIF, BUT HER APPROACH IS AS SPONTANEOUS AS IT IS STUDIED, JUST AS HER SOURCES ARE GREATER, NOT LESSER, FREEDOM—AND ALLOWS HER AUDIENCE GREATER, NOT LESSER, PLEASURE. SCHLOSS' ART PROVOKES AT ONCE SOBER REFLECTION AND GLEEFUL PARTICIPATION—AND DEMONSTRATES THAT LANGUAGE ITSELF CAN, TOO.

CALIFORNIA, APRIL 1986

DEAR THEORY,

OUTPUT IN A STATE OF CABARET & SPONTANEOUS HARMONY
STATE OF THE DREAM, A DREAM IN DIALOGUE, A SCREAM OF SELF SURPRISE DISCOVERY
IN PUBLIC

DEVELOPING MULTI LANGUAGE, THE WORD IS THE WORLD WITHOUT THE L
THE WORLD IS THE AGE & HUMAN FACTOR—SOLID AS A SHOCK SUDDEN LIFE

TRY IT, U MITE LIKE IT, ITS GREAT SUN, U CAN DO N E THING
PERHAPS U DO SOMETHING, & ITS SOMETHING ELSE N E WAY HUNTING 4'THING &
FINDING ANOTHER

TRANSPHENOM ----- OBSERVATION RESEARCH ----- A VISION

HOW 2 TALK THE SPEED OF LIFE—CAN U C THE DGE OF A SHADOW
PERFORMANCE INFLUENCE IN ACTION—KEY IS HUMAN SUBSTANCE ELECTRO CONTACT
PERFORMANCE ART TRANSMITS PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION, 2 DO ALL U CAN DO
OUTER TIME, INNER LIGHT, X TEN SION OF THE IDEA

IN PRINT—A LIFE OF ITS OWN—THIS IS NOT A SURFACE, WRITING WITHOUT LOOKING
ACTION & ADVENTURE—PRESS B TWEEN THE PAGES—THE PAGE IS THE PERFORMANCE
ITS ALIVE—IT TALKS—MINE 2 MIND—STATE OF MIND

U C THE PAGE—THE PRODUCT & THE INSTIGATOR OF THOUGHT

U C IT, ITS YOUR GLANCE, CLARITY OF H2O

PORPOISES & BEE DANCES—ELECTRO SOUL SIGNALS SPECTRALINE INFRASEC

VOCAL IMAGE, C VOICES, CUSS & FUSS, SEEN VOICE

ACTION DETAIL REPORT—SEAT SIT SITUATION

THE QUESTION UNSEATS THE ACTION

THE LIFE PERFORMANCE FROM THE LIVE SIT

THE VECTOR REFLECTOR ACTOR REACTOR

A FORMER PERFORMER REFORMER

ACTION IS QUICKER & IDEAS R THICKER

A LIFE TIME

THE MIDDLE IS THE BEGINNING OF THE END

I REMAIN

HISTORICALLY YOURS,

ARLEEN SCHLOSS

INPUT: LYNNE PAMELA KANTER

Peter Frank

ARLEEN SCHLOSS: AE BLA BLA BLA

In terms of their effect on their audiences, performance artworks can be assigned to three categories: Evocative, INvocative, and PROvocative. Evocative performances indicate, even depict events and situations exterior to the actual experience of the performance. Traditional narrative theater falls under the "evocative" rubric, as does any other presentation—no matter how radically formulated which in any way simulates circumstances other than that of the performance itself. Invocative performances follow or build on more-or-less traditional ceremonial patterns of action. As such they are in effect rituals, invoking super-mortal forces. Few art or theater performances today actually appeal to deities, or set one in a mood to contemplate universal spiritual matters, the way a Catholic High Mass or Buddhist monk's chanting does; but the ersatz ceremonies of Hermann Nitsch's Orgien-Mysterien Theater, for instance, or the suspension of temporal apperception realized in LaMonte Young's music, achieve the same elevated focus and, by inference, sense of deistic appeal. Provocative performances are spectacles, at most incidentally associative or ritualized. Spectacles provoke simple, even childlike passions—joy, excitement, wonder, fear—which

can be (but are not necessarily) harnessed to adult feelings (reverence, patriotism, nostalgia, aesthetic satisfaction). Firework displays and musical bands marching in parade engage us in such simple provocation.

"AE Bla Bla Bla", Arleen Schloss' multipartite production, is a PROvocative presentation. It invokes no higher powers; it evokes no other story. Various viewers and participants may respond associatively to the activities scheduled for all hours of the day. The element of pure play, always an important component in her work, has now become paramount. Some of the segments of "AE Bla Bla Bla" provoke viewers themselves to interact playfully, while others are entertained through the cleverness of Schloss' own play.

Although she has organized multi-performer presentations and performed in others' works, Schloss is now to engage the talents of many other artists in her own performances. In "AE Bla Bla Bla", Schloss finally exploits the contributions of her friends in the realization of her own GESAMTKUNSTWERK. Musicians (led by Butch Morris), dancers (organized by Christa Gamper), and miscellaneous cooperators (who may or may not appear, as chance will have it) participate in the work, giving the spectacle the air of a pageant or circus. Despite the festive air they lend "AE Bla Bla Bla", however, these other artists are subordinating their own inventions to Schloss' program.

A practitioner herself of many media and an energetic explorer of various new technologies, Schloss has been preoccupied with language ever since she abandoned painting in the early 1970s. To be more specific, her concern has been alphabets. In media as disparate as photocopy, sound (live and recorded), and laser projection, Schloss manipulates the visual and spoken characteristics of letters. She demonstrates in her various visual and temporal compositions that letters—which are supposed to function as the basic, irreducible components of language—are in fact not irreducible. Working mostly, of course, in English—but exploring other languages and even alphabetic systems when and where appropriate—Schloss opens up the sonic possibilities of letters through swift, intense, almost manic and always playful incantation. Not surprisingly, she loves to play with the proliferation of initials and acronyms in modern life ("Its AD/ its BC/its ABC/its AOK/its IBM/its CIA"). She also puns deftly on the very names of letters, normally monosyllabic sounds which so frequently have other meanings as well. Schloss habitually subjects letters to processes of deformation and reformation. Exemplifying this visually this is her process piece wherein she photocopied a single letter on a page over and over again, each copy made from the last, so, 100 generations later, the letter's image has dissolved into the ever-more-magnified impurities of the process.

It is tempting to place Schloss in the tradition of concrete and sound poetry. In purely categorical terms her work is indeed concrete and/or sonic. But as the TRADITIONS of concrete poetry and sound are specifically European, Schloss' work is something of a special case. The manipulation of ciphers and lingual sounds does connect Schloss to PAROLE IN LIBERTÀ, to ZA-UM speech, and to MERZGEDICHTE; but the CHARACTER, and the underlying motivation, of Schloss' art is as different from these as—well, as New York English is different from Hannover German, Milanese Italian, and St. Petersburg Russian. With the work of Gertrude Stein, Abraham Lincoln Gillespie, Bern Porter, Jackson MacLow, Emmett Williams, Dick Higgins, Pauline Oliveros, Alain Arias-Misson, and many other poet-musician-artists, America, despite its historic lack of interest in the formal expansion of language in literary contexts—has contributed to the experimental sound-sight-speech tradition. But the tradition is European. It has not transplanted itself in the United States the way it has in Brazil or even Canada. However aware Schloss may have been of historical, and even current, sound and visual poetry, she has grounded her own experiments not in the theoretical substructures of the European experimental tradition but in oral practice at once universal to all humankind, distinctly characteristic of urban speech, inflected by (postwar) American speech patterns and colloquial habits, and specific to her own emphatic ear.

Thus, while Schloss' art lends itself well enough to analysis according to structuralist, semiotic, hermeneutic, and deconstructionist theories, it has not issued FROM these theories. While reasonably aware of these linguistic philosophies, Schloss works instead from impulse, from intuitive response to easily available, even unavoidable stimuli—popular music, advertising, commercial signage, modes of typography, radio, television, and the like. It would be as accurate to see Schloss as a second (or third) generation pop artist as it would be to see her as a sixth-generation visual/sound poet.

The insouciant celebration Schloss has planned for Linz is thus as much a simple entertainment—and as much a loving parody of simple entertainment—as it is an exegesis on the power of letters, on their persuasiveness in our lives, on their integrity as vocal and visual phenomena, on their mutability, and on their known and unknown, expected and unexpected uses. Such an investigation of letters opens up onto a playful exploration of words, and phrases, and languages.

"AE Bla Bla Bla" begins with a morning filled with the languages of the world, greeting the city ("Good Morning Linz") in as wide a variety of ways as possible. Greetings and reveilles from English to Urdu, taken from sources as disparate as FINNEGAN's WAKE and Ray Charles, are broadcast on the radio and spoken in public. The afternoon's event parades large reflective letters through the town, flashing the sun's rays all about, across the Danube, onto the water sculptures of Schloss' friend Ray Kelly. (Schloss calls the reflective action "air painting with the sun".) Spectators watch and even join in, as they please. The procession arrives at the Bruckner-Haus, candlelight at twilight and later in the night filled with a melange of choral and instrumental music, dance, laser projection, and light sculpture.

To provide more details than this would be to tempt fate into hindering Schloss' plans. As well, it would spoil the many surprises Schloss expects and hopes for. Much of the proceedings will come as much of a surprise to Schloss as they will to any spectator. But that unplanned aspect is as much a necessary part of the event as is any pre-rehearsed aspect. Schloss is no naif, but her approach is as spontaneous as it is studied, just as her sources are as much in popular art forms and means of communication as they are in forms of high art. Schloss' control over a wide variety of forms and media allows her greater, not lesser, freedom—and allows her audience greater, not lesser, pleasure. Schloss' art provokes at once sober reflection and gleeful participation—and demonstrates that language itself can, too.

California, April 1986

Lawrence D. "Butch" Morris

"The inception of creativity comes from the "IDEA", and from the idea come questions. How you arrive AT the answers to these questions (and the questions) will determine the foundation of the philosophy behind the theory on how you approach your art.

Some years ago I posed this question to myself: how do you create spontaneous composition with an ensemble and yet position all desired events? I have learned, IT is not the art... however it IS a nuance in signature, and the signature is THE ART.

An improviser is a pedestrian in an "Environmental Orchestration". My task as a composer/conductor/improviser has been to place the musician/pedestrian in various psychological sound states to induce the image of initial thought and through (the) art (it)self, the constant (re)organization of sound canvas, these images and thoughts are (re)created."

Lawrence D. Morris

Composer, Conductor, Musician

For the past twelve or so years I have been involved in researching CONDUCTING as an extended form of composition. And today there is much interest in furthering it's potential.

A "Conduction" is a conducted improvisation. In essence it is an improvised duet for ensemble and conductor. Prose Communion—a melding of minds.

In this concept, you will hear a system that is a unit. An individual conscious of it's own unity. The theory behind it's organization is the imagination. A theory that belongs to tradition.

Christa Gamper

"My interest is to explore the phenomena of expansion and progression in space, to make optimum use of our instrument of movement. I try to capture the physiological and psychological laws of human movement by means of scientific observation and analysis.

Dance and choreography—the art of movement—is not only a contribution, an expression of our age, it is also a critical examination of man and his self-made technological environment. The flow of movement is vital, it is a means of communication in search of wholistic man. Just as the alphabet allows the merging of letters to form words, books, etc., a choreography is created from elements of movement and dance phrases (technique)"

Winnie Berrios

"My interest in photography began five years ago when I felt the art of this period was not being recorded and documented. I felt this period should be recorded like Dada, because it holds the mental state of what the artist feels and sees in today's world.

Working in this project has helped me understand the inner thoughts of the artist and of myself. This, in turn, has helped me in my documentation of the Lower East Side of New York, where I live.

I feel we are entering another period of art."

Nancy Girl Vega

"I regret that I must stay home with my new-born baby instead of coming to Letterland in Linz. I look forward to participating when Letterland is performed in New York."