

SLP



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I. SLP denotes a group of musicians (and their recent project) who are, since the beginning of the 80's, active in new rock music and the fringe area of both electronic and tape music. They also work in different combinations as single artists or under the project names SBOTHI, LLL and P16.D4. Their common label name is SELEKTION.

The structure of a rock group inherently bears a tendency towards a collaborative principle: no unique authorship, no separation between composer and player: instead there is a constant interchange of ideas and musical material. For SELEKTION this cooperative way of working is a prerequisite of continuous production.

Another important aspect of SELEKTION's work is the international mail music network which serves as a scaffold for independent distribution of sound carriers and as an important condition to the exchange of information and musical material.

II. A correlate of the working exchange of the musical material on reel tape or compact cassette and its interchanging or sequential reworking is the so called "recycling". This term denotes a procedure concentrating on materials already existing on their own or as separate sources as a practical base for further reworkings. It is important that those basic materials should have reached a complex state for which not all musical or acoustical materials can be used.

The musical activity is not so much object centered, rather, it is engaged with the general conditions of exchange and organisation. Cooperation, material-exchange, and recycling are fundamental to NICHTS NIEMAND NIRGENDS NIE! the DLP by P16.D4 and SBOTHI (1985/86). Both groups/projects had been cooperating on different smaller matters before. NNNN! marked the point when a general discussion of procedures and a parallel processual work on the musical material necessarily merged into the conceptual frame of a sound carrier, which was on the one hand a documentation of a processual cooperation and on the other, a complex connection of sound materials; i.e. those sound formations referring to various independent compositional ideas on the level of pieces or fragments and to the sound carrier as an obligatory condition on the macrostructural level.

SLP presents an attempt to transfer the experiences of cooperative work and SELEKTION's development of tape-music to the field of a multi-levelled live presentation. It includes a live recycling of the NNNN! record mentioned, a spatial installation defining SLP's pragmatic space and a computer composition selecting the sound material, which determines the special acoustical space.

III. On four pedestals in the center of a (square) room four operators face the public. Led by a composition scheme, diverse passages of NNNN!'s fourth side get scanned simultaneously or in different combinations. The scope of action reaches from simple playing or repeating of passages to alternating "scratching" and percussive sounds.

The information thus produced is fed to a relay station. Under the computers direction, the four stereo channels can pass through or be erased in different combinations. Mode and speed of the computers erasing activity coordinates the four voices' dispositions which can be heard in various combinations and overlays. In each of the four corners of the room loudspeakers are situated. Each turntable has its special direction, "sounds" at end, back, left or right wall.

The spatial organisation of SLP dissociates the localisation of musical activity and presence of sound. The listener, who can move unhindered during the concert, finds himself between the erratic stage fragment and the specific sound wall of his own choosing. His movement and presence is a direct influence on the sound development.

The theme of SLP is not a readable musical message in terms of program music or a technical demonstration of recycling or computer music. Its motivation is the working process of production and selection of musical material.

IV. Emphasizing structural change in this context has a specific reason: the computer, as a universal machine, may, as a prolonged arm of man, play or perform everything which man can't, due to physical inability (the virtuosity problem), or it may work as author when appropriately programmed, i.e. compose or print after determined or aleatoric programs. SLP's conceptual intention is to use the computer as a controlled regulator multifunctionally in a process-orientated recycling procedure. The computer is not a quasi-human "responsible composer": its function of creating and controlling structures is under permanent control of humans who do the programming. It perforates (erases) and organizes the formation of sound. The compositional reflection thus results from an inversion of common procedures. Not a selective or massive setting-up of sound (that is to say, an accumulating composition), but a structural thinning out of a mass of sound, a sound sculpting, is intended. Accumulative and selective processes interacting can produce unknown musical structures.

A specific appeal of using a computer derives from the necessity to be explicit. This necessity to reveal one's own actions denies the composer the exaggerated mystification of (non-reflected) working procedures. Even though, there is no need to give explicit reasons or explanations to the machine, this need appears necessarily, as soon as a group of collaborators, having various approaches towards artistic work, participate. The attempt to integrate explicitness within the framework of the project is a paradigm for the work on/of SLP.

V. Viewed from the perspective of the computer program, SLP consists of four channels or voices each of which can be switched on or off at any given moment of the composition. The program does not react to the actual sounds passing from the records through the relay station, nor is there any feedback from the resulting sound in the room from the actions of the record operators.

The composition for the program is a study in rhythmical structures. The way these structures are generated is fairly complex. Fourteen short rhythmical motifs are used—confronted, compressed and distorted—thus resulting in four-voice rhythmical patterns which sometimes are reproduced using the model of human memory—both long-term and short-term memory. Within this framework a great variety of acoustical events is attainable; parameters presented by the programmer are of fundamental influence.

The piece is divided into three movements, corresponding to the pieces on the record face. The character of these movements is different, not only because the sounds on the record are different, but also because the parameters are set in different ways. In fact, these parameter settings depend on the acoustical material. A crucial criterion is the internal complexity of this material; the first movement allows elaborate switching because the corresponding piece is mainly a sequence of moldable noises. The second movement is based on a piece with a fragmented temporal structure with long pauses, thus inhibiting any complex treatment by the computer (which would not be audible at any rate). The third piece has a repeated basic rhythm which tends to dominate every switching rhythm.

In the first movement, the classical ideas of musical development, and models of human memory are dominant.

The second movement has a very different character, resembling a demonstration of the different effects that a meter may have if played at different speeds: if it is played slowly, it is perceived rhythmically; if the speed increases, we hear it as an audible sound. The third movement is more reduced in its switching structure, amounting to a constant beat which is sometimes interrupted by the program, the records or the operators.

VI. Although special parts of SLP's setting are complex—the computer program, the information on the records—it has a structure which can be perceived easily as related to the common use of consumer electronics (for example, the reproduction of sound carriers on stereo equipment), except that four of these carrier systems are interacting. This can be understood as a rejection of the one-dimensional use of a medium, be this the fixed relationship between instruments and periphery in the studio, or the prototypical listener's training.

Furthermore, SLP presents a conceptual use of media familiar to the broad public (normal turntables, home-computers, simple amplification systems). The field of interest is not limited to the specific use of a single musical/ technical instrument but is defined by the interaction of systems of technical instruments on one hand and social systems on the other.

SLP is basic material for further recycling.

SLP has been performed at:

08th Aug. 88: Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Darmstadt;

22nd Sep. 88: International Computer Music Conference, Köln;

17th Dec. 88: Festival für experimentelle Musik, München;

06th May 89: De Revolutie van de Dynamiek Festival, V2,NL;

30th Sep. 89: Leipziger Jazz-Tage, Leipzig;

18th Mar. 90: ART FRANKFURT, Frankfurt



