

MOBIUS NEWSLETTER

354 CONGRESS STREET, BOSTON
(FORT POINT) 617 542-7416

VOL 3 #5 FEB./MARCH 1986

We've had encouraging news on the funding front! We recently received grants from the Polaroid Foundation, and the Eugene F. Fay Trust of the Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company. Their support is very much appreciated. We must also give credit to Louise Stevens, of ArtsMarket, who assisted in developing our proposals. Her ability to put it all into words is uncanny!

How do we describe the need for Mobius in Boston? We talk about how over 200 artists were involved in work here last year - that of the 65 pieces that were presented, all but two were original works - that no other place really provides the space to try out the kind of new work that 'falls between the cracks', that can't easily be categorized, such as large-group multi-disciplinary collaborations - that it is the audiences who assist the artists in the development of the work, that their responses and comments and suggestions feed its growth.

And that on all levels it involves risk-taking - for the artist trying out a new idea in public - for the audience coming to see something 'untested' - even in initiating discussion about what they've seen. We hope to have created at Mobius an atmosphere where risk-taking is allowed and encouraged. Because we believe that the future of art lies in the experimentation of today.

MOBIUS PERFORMING GROUP

Whispers by Julie Rochlin
and Victor Young:
February 20, 21 / March 1,
2, 6, 8

In the Flesh by Bob Raymond
and Marilyn Arsem:
February 22, 23, 27, 28 /
March 7, 9

WHISPERS

Victor Young and Julie Rochlin
"Until I was 3, we never had a home. We were too poor. We lived with my grandparents, then we rented part of my uncle's house. After my dad got a steady job, he became eligible for a home loan under the

GI Bill. We were able to buy a house in a development on the outskirts of Albuquerque. We were the last house before the prairie started. It was a concrete block house with a low concrete block fence and a new lawn. It had two bedrooms, a livingroom and a kitchen with a small concrete patio out back.

There were gas furnaces in the floor with grates to let the heat up. We moved into the house in the summer. When I first got up in the morning, sometimes my mother would be in the bathroom so I would go and stand over the grates to pee. The first cold day in the

fall, my mother was in the bathroom so I went to the grate to pee and the furnace was on. It hissed and steam came up and I ran down the hall screaming and yelling. For as long as we lived in that house, I had trouble peeing in the morning."

* * *

We start, as has become habit, by telling stories about all the homes we've lived in. We are amazed by the richness and diversity of the material, and decide to center our work around the theme of "home".

Whispers- cont.

Now, after roughly four weeks rehearsal, we have begun to feel limited by "Home" as a title, and concerned that the audience will be looking for the issue of "home" in every aspect of the piece. We feel a great sense of relief and freedom when we decide to change the title to "Whispers". It embodies the intimacy, the childhood memories, and the elusive quality of this piece. So far, there is much less text and more movement than in our last two pieces. We are intrigued by different ways to convey the sense and texture surrounding "home" as well as including the more personal anecdotes from our past.

This is our third collaboration, and it's exciting to see how our ideas play against each other. There's a rhythm, a kind of shorthand, to the way we create that resembles the steady beat we've decided to have running through the performance. As we become skilled collaborators, the process of creation seems much smoother and less arduous.

We are also at opposite ends of the spectrum in our personal relationship to "home". Julie is in search of a home, and Vic is just settling into one. We hope these perspectives will add a rich texture to the performance.

The evening will be made up of five separate pieces, each distinct in style and content. There will be a steady, unchanging rhythm throughout the performance, like a thread woven from beginning to end. As artists, we want to begin creating a repertoire of work, possibly using "whispers" or "home" as the theme which runs as an undercurrent in each work. This will give us the flexibility to perform different evenings of different configurations or to present one short work. A by-product of this approach will be work that can be easily toured. But for now, we are concentrating on the first five works in what may be a very long term project.



IN THE FLESH: This is a new (and improved) version of a set of performances previously known as "Pig Baby". We are currently deep in the heart of the matter, trying to flesh out the skeletal frame of ideas we've been working on.

Exploring the motivations behind the central image of the work, creating a little creature out of parts from the meat market, reveals many of our current fascinations. There is a marked interest in the boundary between life and non-life, life and death; further, we have been reading a lot about pre-Christian symbolisms, also about "fairy" tales, creation mythology, the nature of "ritual", and thinking a lot about the nature and uses of religion. In the secular age, science cannot or will not answer

certain questions. Where do we find these answers? Though it may seem that we may get just a bit too big for our britches, rest assured that we only carve up a particular piece of this universe, serving it up cold and fibrous. Finally, it's clear that our style of presentation is somewhat surrealist, presenting much of our imagery in a dreamlike fashion, on the borders of consciousness.

The choice of materials emphasizes the mundane, the (mostly) everyday objects in our lives: vegetables, flowers, meat, dough, a bathtub, houseplants, coins. The technology employed is relatively simple: audio tape, slide projections, a dash of lighting for effect. We will also include readings from a variety of texts, including Gregory Bateson's

"Steps to an Ecology of Mind", Barbara Walker's "Crone" and "The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets" and miscellaneous other texts about myth and ritual.

Lastly, this work is also about the process of collaborating. We are both relatively headstrong individuals, intent on using our own images and methods. The trick is to produce something that is truly from neither of us individually, that we can both support and that "resonates" within each of us individually. Though the path is fraught with obstacles, we are pleased to report that we are progressing nicely, thank you.

-- Bob Raymond and
Marilyn Arsem

MOBIUS PERFORMING GROUP

WHISPERS by Victor Young and Julie Rochlin
Marilyn Arsem

IN THE FLESH by Bob Raymond and

\$6.00 Friday/Saturday

\$4.00 Thursday/Sunday

8:00 p.m.

Students: \$4.00

Thursdays - Sundays, February 20 - March 9

In the Flesh: Feb. 22, 23, 27, 28; March 7, 9

Whispers: Feb. 20, 21; March 1, 2, 6, 8

IDES OF MARCH RITES OF SPRING

The Second Annual Board of Directors' Fundraising Party

Call Mobius for details

Saturday, March 15

8:30 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.

SOUND ART AT MOBIUS, PART VIII

VOX

by

Trevor Wishart

8:00 p.m.

Performed by Electric Phoenix

\$6.00 / \$4.00 students

Friday and Saturday, March 21 and 22

Free Workshop: Sunday, March 23, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

354 CONGRESS ST.
BOSTON
542-7416

It's unfortunate that the word "interesting" has been so often misused in reactions to performance that it now seems to be synonymous with "uninteresting" or "awful". Certainly, there are pieces which are, truly, interesting (curiosity-provoking, intriguing, involving), but how are we to simply describe this reaction to the artists involved without it sounding like slander? Personally, I shudder inwardly not at the word "interesting", but when someone says that they either "got", or "didn't get", the "point" of something I've been involved with. So let's talk about Points.

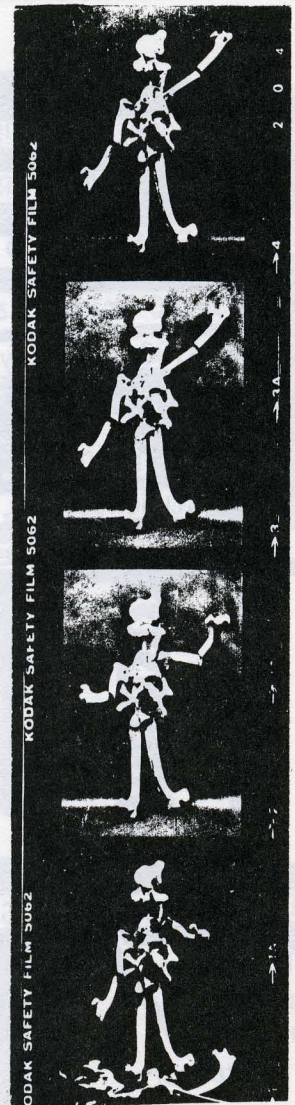
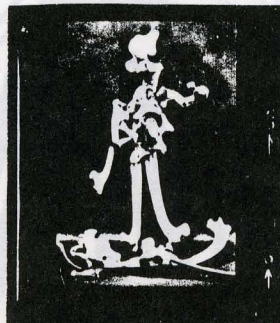
I wish I knew how it was that the language of plane geometry came to be regarded as an adequate vocabulary for the creation and description of live performance.

You'll probably recall from math class that a "point" is a zero-dimensional phenomenon. Why are we so anxious to find and contain meaning in a location which can't possibly contain any resonance, any interconnection, any potential for growth or discovery? Closely related to the desire to sum up an artwork in a zero-dimensional space is the desire to uncover the "line" which is made up of these points, and which leads to the most important point. A line, of course, possesses only one dimension, and it might explain a lot about (say) American psychologically realistic theater if the elevation of certain concepts -- such as the "through-line of action" and the linear/hierarchical structure of character objectives -- to the level of commanding metaphors is looked at as a drive towards stripping an inevitably multi-dimensional event of its complexity. How many scenes of conflict in contemporary drama,

as predictable and unresonant as anything created by humankind, have seemed suicidally unidimensional, heading toward the final zero, nothing for the audience to take home and dream about?

Work that is too difficult to be contained by a linear metaphor advances to two dimensions, and is frequently discussed in terms of its "field of meanings", "web of imagery", "network of associations" and the like. This is certainly an improvement, but in order to come to grips conceptually with what all live performance forms most fundamentally are, we must leave plane geometry behind and create four-dimensional metaphors, refusing to back off from the complete dimensionality of present human beings and performance environments, and their changes over time.

In other words, refuse to accept an analysis which takes writing (the point of the pencil, the line of type, the plane of the page) as its model. Here lies one of the central and recurring difficulties of written performance criticism. I don't advocate abandoning the pencil and pad as aids to memory, but it's not sufficiently realized that the reliance by critics on writing during a performance acts as a radical filter on perception.



The most engaged part of the critic's organism becomes the motor and neural pathways connecting the hand and cerebrum, and, frequently, only those impressions which can be instantly articulated in writing are given serious attention. Like attracts like in this case, and since the most active element of the writing hand is the point of its pencil, it searches for the "point" of the performance (and lingers over that line of points called a plot description). Which may help to explain why, given that in the richest of works in all performing media the "points" are relatively insignificant, written criticisms seem so often to have so little to do with the works they purport to evaluate.

--- David Miller

SOUND ART AT MOBIUS, PART VIII

VOX by Trevor Wishart, from Great Britain
Performed by Electric Phoenix

Performances March 21 and 22

Free Public Lecture: March 20, 8:00 p.m. Bartos Theater,
Arts and Media Technology Building, M.I.T.

Free Workshop: March 23 at Mobius, at 3:00 p.m.

Sound Art at Mobius presents Vox, composed by Trevor Wishart and performed by the vocal ensemble Electric Phoenix. Wishart is one of Britain's leading young composers of new music; his works have been performed widely in several countries, including the Environmental Music Festival of London, the Gent International Multimedia Festival, the Zagreb Biennale and the London ICES Festival. His publications include contributions to the field of music education as well as The Book of Lost Voices, a catalogue and description of extended vocal techniques. He has produced substantial tape-pieces which have been broadcast in 17 countries, and has worked with British performance artists to develop a style of music-theater using props and visual effects.

Electric Phoenix consists of four vocalists -- Judith Rees, Linda Hirst, Daryl Runswick and Terry Edwards -- and sound technician John Whiting. The group is one of the most radical vocal ensembles in Europe to come from a "contemporary classical" background, combining new developments in singing technique with vocal electronics and aspects of theater performance. According to Bernard Holland of the New York Times, "Electric Phoenix takes one more step in breaking down stylistic barriers between the sung, the spoken and the artificially created." Their repertoire includes works by Berio, Cage, Kagel and Stockhausen, as well as over twenty commissioned pieces.

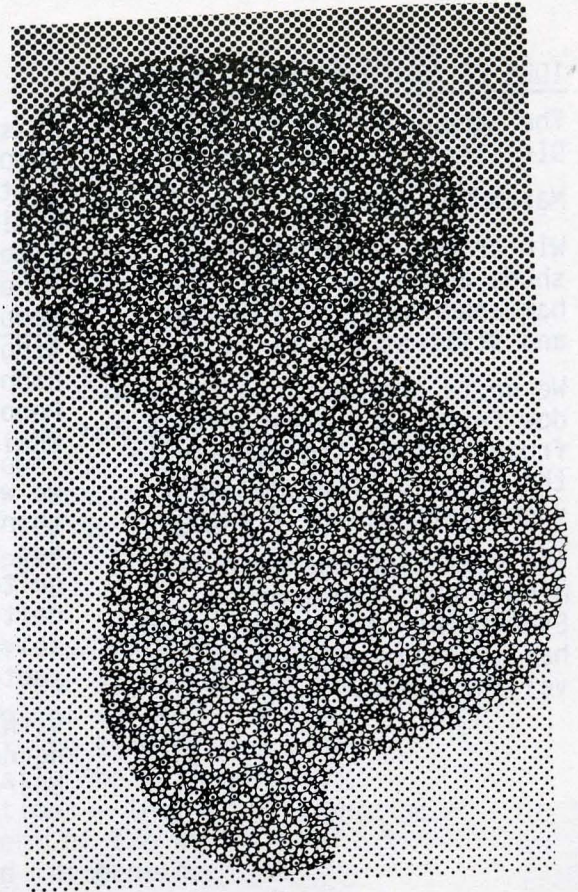
Wishart gave us the following description of Vox by telephone:

I'm interested in new vocal techniques and have catalogued many of them. I have worked with Electric Phoenix for a while because of their commitment to New Music, new ideas and the extensive range of their techniques. Each piece in the VOX series explores different vocal techniques and a different "spiritual" idea.

VOX 1: explores the genesis of form through the sounds/images of various creation myths. Here the tape sounds move from non-musical ideas, as sounds of water and thunderclaps, to clearly enunciated magical speech sounds. These sounds

are accompanied by very detailed and notated sonorities for the voices. The spatial movement is important as well and sonically, the piece divides, like an embryo.

VOX 2: Using sounds of crickets, whales, wolves, frogs and the Great Northern Diver Vox 2 explores natural sounds. The performers explore techniques of ornamentation extracted from Japanese Bunraku puppets, and West African and North Indian music. The music moves very slowly in the harmonic sense, but explores intense ornamentation inside the vocal parts.



VOX 3: is about intellectual excitement and is suggested by Kepler's writing and discoveries of the planets. Many of the rhythmic variations are so complex that the performers need to use computer-generated sync tracks or click tracks (such rhythms as 9 against 10 against 11 against 12) to stay together. The piece is in a very fast tempo.

Vox 4 and Vox 5 will be completed this year, which will end the series of VOX pieces. Vox 5 will be done at IRCAM in Paris, with computer-generated voice.

Working with Electric Phoenix, some things do get worked out in rehearsal, such as how much reverb or mixing of a certain part is needed. But the music I write as a composer is very demanding, and I ask them to extend themselves to their limits, rather than follow leads from what they are capable of doing in performance.

-- Trevor Wishart

IDES OF MARCH/RITES OF SPRING

The Second Annual Board of Directors' Fundraising Party
March 15, 1986

Winter has drawn its long shade again. Nature is as batted down, buttoned up, and still as any of us.

We write our names in the window frost, and blear out at a frozen world. The mercury in the glass outside has only vague memories of flowing.

The planet shrugs another minute onto the evening. Everything that headed south has stopped; nothing is travelling north.

At such a pass people get jumpy, panicky, make rash suggestions. And with this comet business . . . Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, Jackson's "The Lottery", Golub's The Bog People, works about propitiating gods, indicate what can happen this time of year. People rightly worry about their future.

We worry about ours, so we're thinking about rites of spring. Not that the Cash Flow God has quite the blood lust of some deities (or so we assure ourselves in the non-profit sector), but some token helps.

With all this in mind, we announce the Second Annual Board of Directors' Fundraiser.

This will happen (gods willing) March 15, 1986, from 8:30 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. As those of you who attended last year's wild and wildly popular First Annual know, there are some groundrules. There'll be plenty of food, drink, and dancing, of course, but the guests will also be performers. Roles will be assigned before the party. The party will be rehearsed, videotaped, and finally played back during the post-party cast party. There will also be regular showings of last year's PART!y performance.

Further information is on its way. But rather than wait for it, call Mobius today. Spring's arrival may depend on it.

-- John Shea

-6-

MOBIUS is funded in part by: The Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, a state agency, by a grant from the Boston Arts Lottery Council, the Polaroid Foundation, the Eugene F. Fay Trust of the Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company, and generous private support. Sound Art at Mobius is made possible by a New Works grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. The Northeast/Northwest Exchange series is funded through an Art Exchange grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities.

MOBIUS

354 CONGRESS STREET
BOSTON, MA 02210

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 8147

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED