

(narrative)

'So Yves asked me to write a few lines about QUOI DE NEUF. It's a kind of a strange position to be in - -ah- writing an article on something that -ah- one has organized and put together -- in coming back to it and -ah- re-evaluating the experience - putting it all together - acting as -ah- enumerator, documentor, art critic -ah- generally summing up the experience. So I guess the first question one asks is - what was QUOI DE NEUF all about? What - what were the issues? and -ah- the answer to that is really -ah- that it was about -ah- the idea was to present a series of evenings -ah- featuring -ah- the activity of the experimental scene here in Montreal -- kind of bringing artists in touch with one another's work -- and -ah- also kind of putting on a -ah- something that would make itself felt in the public consciousness generally - creating a higher public profile for the -ah- collective arts scene. So these were the basic goals - -ah- the festival was sponsored by the Canada Council - the -ah- performance art division of the Council -- and -ah- the place where all this took place was Conventum Centre d'essai Conventum - -ah- it's a little - -ah- it's an experimental centre in Montreal -- it's a centre for the -ah- the -ah- non-mainstream arts."

'Concerning the structure of the festival, there were three evenings -ah- Wednesday, March 28; Wednesday, April 4; and a final Wednesday - April 11 - and -ah- basically the sequence of events began with an evening that -ah- concentrated just on a single medium, that of -ah- sound improvisation, and this led to a second evening which presented several media in a row - -ah- poetry, music, and dance, and the whole thing wound up with -ah- a final evening of mixed media - bringing everything together, summing up the experience - -ah- it was a fairly complex -ah- thing - - there were a lot of people who participated in ...'

(enumeration)

FESTIVAL QUOI DE NEUF/LIST OF PARTICIPANTS: Charles de Mestral, Chris Howard, Andrew Culver, Pierre Dostie, Keith Daniel, Robert Lepage, Michel Lepage, Robert Leriche, Claude Simard, André Farkas, Tom Konyves, Yves Bouliane, Yuri Meyrowitz, Marie Chouinard, Robert Racine, Daniel Léveillé, Ginette Laurin, Louise Lecavalier, Daniel Soulières, Manon Levac, Dena Davida, Carol Harwood, Evelyn Ginzburg, Gurney Bolster, Sylvie St. Laurent, Lizette Poisson, Mike Haslam, George Haslam, Ted Dawson, Jean Letarte, Raymond Gervais.

(narrative cont.)

'it -- and in order to promote something of this size it was necessary to -ah- first of all run a publicity campaign through the mails - -ah- there was a poster designed by Mike Haslam -- and beyond the poster I did a series of radio and tv appearances -ah- in order to create some kind of -ah- public awareness of what was going to happen.'

(report)

The opening evening - Wednesday, March 28 - focused on the single format of Sound Improvisation. There were three groups: SONDE, the Lepage brothers, and l'EMIM - each with its own completely different approach to music and the improvisation situation. The first group, SONDE, with its five members: Charles de Mestral, Chris Howard, Pierre Dostie, Andy Culver, and Keith Daniel, featured a somewhat European approach, using improvisation to explore the sound possibilities of specially constructed amplified instruments. In a one hour performance, they played four titled improvisations: PLAQUES, featuring their ensemble of six amplified metal plates; SHEETS & GONGS II, that combined steel gongs with suspended metal sheets of various sizes; PROMENADE DANS LE BOIS II, that entered into the sound world of a wooden dome structure erected on stage; and finally SAHABI IV - one of several improvisation formats the group has created to feature their koto-like amplified string instruments.

After a short intermission that allowed time for rearrangements on stage, the next group, the brothers Robert and Michel Lepage, began the second part of the evening. In contrast to SONDE's special instrumentarium and serious, introspective approach, the Lepages performed on conventional instruments - clarinet and piano - were humorous, and often played directly with audience reaction and expectation. The

improvisation was a series of many short fragments; brittle, sarcastic, often verging on pure theatre, that revealed a subtle but wide range of musical psychology.

Closing the evening, the group l'EMIM (l'Ensemble de Musique Improvisée de Montréal) performed with two members present - Robert Leriche, saxophone, and Claude Simard, amplified double bass. Although the instruments were again conventional, this group has a background in the Québec free jazz scene, and it was clearly reflected in the style of performance - an intense tight series of struggling gestures ...

(enumeration)

FESTIVAL QUOI DE NEUF/Evening 2/April 4, 1979/Centre d'essai CONVENTUM/1237 rue Sanguinet/8:30 pm/Admission \$2.50

PROGRAM: (Poetry) André Farkas, CHANCE SUITE (THE HEART OF THE MATTER); Tom Konyves, SYMPATHIES OF WAR; (Music) Yves Bouliane, (S')ENTENDRE DEBUSSY; (Dance) Marie Chouinard, CRISTALLIZATION and DIMANCHE MATIN MAI 1955; Daniel Léveillé, OCRE and VOYEURISME: the group CATPOTO, Contact Improvisation.

(narrative)

'It's funny, but the -ah- the second evening of QUOI DE NEUF turned out to be a -ah- -- -ah- more complex than -ah- than I thought it would be -- both on the level of the participants - the artists themselves, and on the -ah- on the level of audience reaction. The main cause of this -ah- the main -ah- the problematic situation I think was really -ah- brought about by the nature of the program itself -- that of juxtaposing various media against one another, which obviously -- drew different people for different reasons to the performance -- -ah- as well as bringing together a -- diverse -ah- group of -ah- artists/performers who -ah- were very into what they were doing as individuals but - perhaps not particularly open to -ah- what else was going on in the same evening -- As a result -ah- for instance -ah- after the -ah- opening of the show -ah- there were some remarks made that the poetry was not anglophone - and -ah- during the first short break we took after -ah- a performance of -ah- Tom Konyves' SYMPATHIES OF WAR (videopoem) and -ah- Yves Bouliane's -ah- (S')ENTENDRE DEBUSSY - the conceptual musical piece on the program -ah- - some Francophone poets came up to me - rushed up to me at the back of the hall - furious - demanding their money back -- it was a very unexpected experience -- I mean the contents of the program were advertised - -ah- Beyond that particular reaction, some dancers -ah- expressed impatience with the technology -ah- the necessity to set the stage up in particular ways that - that -ah- that took rehearsal time. In addition, -ah- we did have some technical problems at the beginning of the evening that -ah- that caused -ah- the first piece of the program -ah- André Farkas' CHANCE SUITE (HEART OF THE MATTER) to be postponed until after the -ah- first short break. Ah- after this piece was performed -ah- as the dance part of the program was beginning -ah- one man in the audience was heard to say -ah- impatiently -- 'Ah, finalement!' which -ah- again clearly expressed this segmentation -ah- this division of interest that was characteristic of the whole evening.'

(report)

The third and final show of the QUOI DE NEUF festival was held on Wednesday, April 11. Just as the opening evening had focused on a single aspect of the performing arts - sound improvisation - and the second had presented several media back to back, so this final evening consolidated and summarized the experience of the series with a program of sound and mixed media pieces. There were three artists: myself, coming from a background in sound; Raymond Gervais, a conceptual artist who works with numerological systems; and Mike Haslam, a visual artist who is now involved in creating live performance works.

The first pieces of the evening were two of my works - EXPLORING THE OBJECT for horn, 4 microphones, and mixer, and THE CLOUDS OF MAGELLAN (with Suzy Lake) for computerized slide show and audiotape. EXPLORING THE OBJECT, realized in collaboration with horn player Jean Letarte, is a sound piece that works with interlocking levels of limited improvisation. In the QUOI DE NEUF performance ...