

contact

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"Give up everything, we were on the track.

Begin with yourself:

You are a musician.

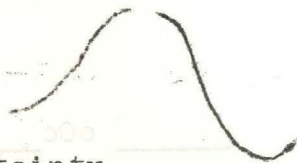
You can transform all the vibrations of the world
into sounds.

If you firmly believe this and from now on never
doubt it,

begin with the simplest exercises".

Such a revolutionary aesthetic is by no means easy to adopt wholeheartedly, and the individual members of 'Embarkation' display different degrees of commitment in their performances. Some of the 'fringe' members of the group are unable as yet to rid themselves of the nineteenth century backlash, others unable to produce the spiritual concentration that such music requires;

UNLIMITED



play a sound
with the certainty
that you have an infinite amount of time and
space.

These limitations, a function of the group's varying composition, is evident in other pieces that have been 'embarked' on. Two recent performances have been especially distinguished; 'Triple Concerts' by Keith Potter in the Arts Lab. Concert (May 29), and a setting of Apollinaire's 'The Windows' by the group's flautist, Chris Villars, (St. Francis Hall, Birmingham University, June 22). The score for this latter piece consisted of the poem which was used as a basis for free interpretation by the players, one of whom declaimed the poem in an impressively sensitive mixture of Sprechstimme, Song and normal speaking. The identity of the group changed utterly (as it had earlier in John Casken's 'Visu') as a result of working with a visual as well as an aural medium: the slow, painstaking advances towards sustained climax were replaced by a series of all-eventful episodes, strung on the evocative thread of the poetry. Each episode assumed its own character, the instruments seeming to colour each other's sound; the crux came in the penultimate section, 'where the train white with snow and nocturnal lights escapes from winter'; here the speaker led the players into a nostalgic moment of extraordinary beauty.

The hard core of 'Embarkation's more dedicated players are immensely competent; their work is not for those with an impatient ear, they are able to suspend time, to magnify, hold and examine the sounds which use it up relentlessly, with patience and sympathy. The audience must be prepared for near disaster or some kind of unmeasurable success. They constantly reappraise the activity to which they devote themselves and we are privileged to hear its developments. As the Barber Institute prepares to preserve its gentility with another round of indifferent chamber music concerts, others around the campus may wish to take advantage of 'Embarkation's exciting potential.

IAIN FENLON.