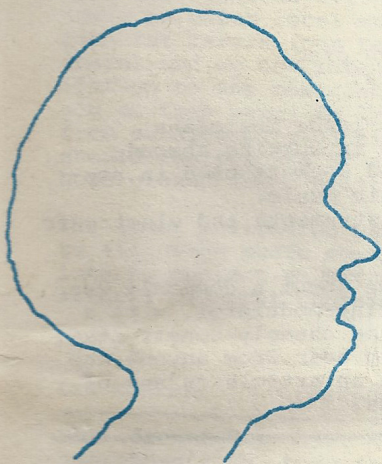


MUSICS

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max eastley

Aeolian Instruments

Aeolian Instruments have always had a special fascination for man. There is a hypothesis that states that they were discovered as an ancillary function of objects already in existence, so that the Aeolian Bow could have been discovered accidentally by a hunter hanging his bow up in a tree and hearing the wind playing across the string. Of course most stringed instruments will produce a sound when held in the wind: a story in the Apocrypha relates how King David's lyre sounded in the North Wind at night. One could also speculate that the flute was discovered by someone at some time hearing the wind blow across a living bamboo stalk in which a hole had been drilled by a bird or insect.

ACOUSTIC TECHNOLOGY —

four views

john latham

A Personal Letter

Dear David,

I went up to look at the Breather last weekend - in its store in Chester.

Although dismantled, I was assured that it is all in good order, with bellows airtight after a re-spraying. I am proposing to have it erected next year - possibly in the Tate gallery - INSIDE, - as the roof is the ceiling in the room we are talking about.

I think it may be interesting, technically, to you. The maximum air content of the bellows is around 500 cubic feet - a lot of air for a musical instrument - and its Lbs/cu. inch pressure is low. Each emission may last only a few minutes in each hour or - if we are taking the 6-hour tidal cycle of the concept, it will be heard only to breathe twice a day, once in and once out, audibly for say 4 minutes at a stretch.

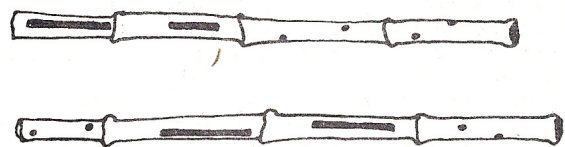
One chief difficulty is in getting the reid(sic) to the best resonance - and indeed to get the right reid. The testing time is so dependent on the mechanics. A bagpipe drone fitted originally made the best sound of any yet tried. The subsonic reid was too extravagant with the air, but in tests inside the building with the bellows only operated by having the top lifted and then sat on by 3 people, it was very effective. Like a giant ghost, it got the others there on several weak spots, their nervous system in head and stomach was said to be affected as by a 'dread' of some undefined kind.

I need of course to work on the device as assembled - and this is rather expensive and outside the range of possibilities as yet. However - if we could persuade enough Scots to have it made at sea, properly, I am sure it would be possible to have the sound heard from Bell Rock over some 50 miles of coastline that is about 12 miles away. After all, it was the sound of the pipes over the hills that first rallied Scottish identity.

.....

Best -
 John

John Latham to DT - 20 November, 1975.



Aeolian Bows occur in Java, Malaya and West Africa, while in China, Japan and parts of Indonesia they are attached to kites. Aeolian pipes occur predominantly in S.E. Asia and China where they may be fixed to buildings or attached to pigeons; however, they also appear in the New Hebrides and Guatemala. Aeolian bells are found in East Asia and East Africa. This distribution of Aeolian instruments through certain parts of the world could indicate a significant pattern and could prove to be a fruitful field for study.

In Antiquity, Aeolian bells were known to have been used to scare away evil spirits from tombs; in Asia they are attached to the corners of houses, the traditional hiding place for demons; Solomon had bells hung from the Temple roof to keep birds away: indeed, one could devote a whole volume to aeolian animal and bird scarers used in agriculture - as far as I am aware there is no single study of such devices. There is a famous story of St. Dunstan who, during the Middle Ages, was nearly burnt for witchcraft for making a harp that played by itself. In 1558 Giovanni Battista Porta writes of strings sounded by the wind. From 1646 Athanasius Kircher made a study of the Aeolian Harp and produced many designs with wind-catchers of fantastic shape. In 1785 Abbate G.C. Gattoni of Como made a gigantic Aeolian Harp that he maintained could predict the weather, hence one of its names: Armonica Meteorologica. Between 1780 and 1860, according to Sachs, the Aeolian Harp found most popularity in Europe, where it was hung in parks and the ruins of Mediaeval castles. There are a number of historical documents relating to these instruments and it is interesting to note that most of these later European references are to the Aeolian Harp only, the Aeolian Bell and Flute being virtually unknown in Europe. Those readers wishing to find more extensive information on the history of the Aeolian Harp should consult Stephen Bonner's four volumes on the subject (see bibliography).

Yet another aspect that has a relevance to Twentieth Century Music is that music created by the wind is often arhythmic and, as previously mentioned, such harmonics as the Eleventh, Twelfth and above are reached: notes that are not found in the conventional music scale. These aspects could be of interest to the improviser who wishes to improvise with a source entirely free of preconceived ideas. Perhaps these notes, phrases and rhythms will also provide material for composers of the future, the way that bird-song has provided material for those in the past.

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David Toop

Not-Music/Solubility in Bounding

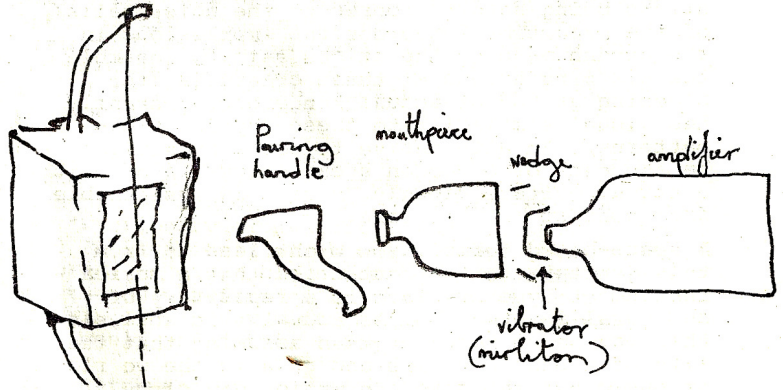
That cosmological formulations exist as signification within cultural forms is beyond dispute. Cultural "objects" begin to gain coherence only when dissected into parallel event-systems and observed as layers of on-going meaning whose priority structure can re-align continually according to context. To state this another way: an "object"/that is - apparently immutable human artefact/ can only be seen within a dualistic framework of tangible and intangible - the binary division of signifier/signified can usefully be appropriated here - unless the total phenomenon is regarded as an event passing through time. The event can then be seen to be composed of many interlocking strands; to some extent, sub-events, which focus and unfocus according to the larger event in which they are observed. It is obvious that an event can accrue sub-events throughout its span much as an organism accrues parasites - naturally some sub-events will be shed from time to time. That this process does not alter the "objectness" of an artefact /visual:tactile modes/ one whit - except, it might be maintained, in a "psychological" sense - should clarify the whole position. If the dualistic vision is pursued then it can be belligerently upheld in such a case that nothing can be said to have gone on - change in this ambience becomes a wrestling match. The life of an artefact is as long as its initial function, whatever that is perceived to be - and we may be sure that this will rarely be the whole story. Lines of inquiry endemic to this short-term view are familiar enough - "What does it do?"... "What is it for?"... "Does it do its job?"... there are transformations of these basic questions but they are not infinite - they are a function of a finite universe of paltry scope.

One of the simplest examples of artefact re-structuring within the sphere of music - consistently displaying a dazzling capacity for invention - is the manipulation of materials for the purposes of musical instrument making. Shape changers abound.

Examples of milieu within which this occurs might be, ie

Poverty. The adaptation of "waste" or the component articles of survival: the semi-cliche of the Blues/the "guitar" of wire nailed to a wall. Thus, a building becomes a resonator and instantaneously acquires multiple function.

Cultures limited through circumstances to a restricted technology. This subsumes the above, but since poverty is an undeniably dramatic field of action it is given precedence as a situation which /tragically/ elicits wealth of human ingenuity. A restricted technology also occurs as part of an ecological chain. The harsh environment of eg. the indigenous Australian enforced a sparse and pliable material culture. Tools could become instruments could become tools An interesting parallel is found in the use of urban junk by white Australians.



Ia/ Tindoline

Ib/ Flagonophone

Drawings after A. L. Lloyd. From private communication - A. L. Lloyd to Hugh Davies.

A sharp division does exist here, though, within the relatively integrated cosmology of the black indigenous Australian, the story is not completed by the truism that a tool for one job can become a tool for another job. Any school-boy knows that a chisel can undo screws and enemies alike, as well as being a writing tool of some permanence. The manner in which the tool fitted within a larger cosmological complex for the black Australians - an interlocking network of myth, social structuring and environmental features will be touched upon below. The musical instrument making of the white Australians although a facet of what might be called an ecology of contingent ingenuity - common to industrial society and surely an axis of post-industrial society, is nevertheless a spin-off of incoherence equally typical of such societies. Cosmology is personalised and non-consensual; capable, indeed tending towards, a fragmentation of perception; a mutual exclusion of categories which allows for the irrational, though not random, manipulation of any material falling into hands. For the black indigenous Australians the perspective shifts in two ways. First, we may be quite clear that their cosmology appears meaningless in terms of our amorphous world-view. Second, it is economic to itself. The first point can only be of relevance if we take our world-view as being the manifestation of eternal objective truth; since in so many experiential areas our reflective abilities are primitive in the extreme this is premature nonsense. As for the second point - the manner in which the cosmological system appears economic to itself, ie. is a system, may be of great interest to us.

The economy is located in the manner in which events are ascribed meaning and meaningfulness within the terms of a single cosmology. Although that cosmology seems to have been displaced by the inroads of white technological culture we have documentation of the Aboriginal system. The system postulated a mythical time /Dreamtime - occupied by Dreamtime people - Wati Tjukurpa/. These Wati Tjukurpa would wander the