

deep listenings ascolti profondi

numero tre

rivista trimestrale di nuove proposte musicali

outsiders peter garland

La figura di Peter Garland, compositore nato a Portland, Maine, nel 1952, è una delle più misconosciute dell'attuale panorama statunitense.

Dopo gli studi al California Art Institute con i maestri James Tenney e Harold Budd, e con compagni come Michael Byron e Chas Smith, Garland comincia a scrivere musica nel 1971; fortemente influenzato dal minimalismo, lo abbandonerà presto in favore di una scrittura più personale, anche se sempre fondata sugli insegnamenti di Tenney e di un altro suo grande mentore: Lou Harrison. Da allora, passando per fasi e cambiamenti che pure caratterizzano questi anni, Garland non ha mai smesso di scrivere, ma paradossalmente per una figura tra le più attive nel campo della musica sperimentale, di fronte ad un "corpus" compositivo consistente, nulla (se si eccettuano le "Matachin dances" uscite su Cold Blue ed un paio di brevi brani editi dalla Cold

Blue e dalla Opus One) era mai stato pubblicato finora. E' quindi sorprendente che nel volgere di un anno ben tre Cd a nome Peter Garland siano stati pubblicati da tre diverse etichette: la What Next di Santa Fe (la più legata all'artista), la giapponese Disk Union guidata da John Zorn e la nota New Albion.

Possiamo seguire per mezzo di questi tre lavori, molto distanti tra loro per impostazione artistica, le diverse fasi dell'evoluzione musicale garlandiana.

Sono infatti presenti le due anime del musicista, quella più sperimentale degli esordi (che si perpetua anche in composizioni più recenti), e quella della maturità, dove l'influenza delle musiche tradizionali dei nativi americani e del Messico divengono il materiale per ampliare e completare l'ispirazione del compositore, costantemente teso alla ricerca di una musica di confine, una "border music", come cita opportunamente il titolo di uno dei tre Cd.

lavoro che più esaurientemente racchiude l'essenza del Garland musicista, offrendo una visione panoramica della sua opera. I lavori più datati sono quelli per sole percussioni: "Three pieces for percussion" o "Apple Blossom" del 1972/73 richiamano alla mente la musica di Conlon Nanarrow e Lou Harrison, oltre a interpretare lo spirito della musica degli indiani d'America, popolo alla cui sensibilità artistica Garland si sente elettrificamente vicino. I brani "Cantares della frontera" e "Old men of the fiesta" sono invece più recenti e ci introducono in un universo lirico e più influenzato dalla musica tradizionale messicana, musica che Garland ha studiato sul campo durante la sua lunga permanenza in Messico.

I brani sono articolati in più "canzoni" o "danze" e, anche dove sono presenti ancora le percussioni, l'insieme risulta più cantabile. Christopher Shultis alle percussioni e Rosalind Simpson all'arpa spiccano, per ispirazione, fra gli interpreti.

Grandi esecutori anche per gli altri due dischi: nel mini-Cd giapponese (appena 28 minuti) voluto da Zorn, i due brani "Nana+Victoria" e "Penasco blanco" ci offrono il Garland del versante "indiano" e percussivo. Guai però a cercare un particolare ritmo; quello che si cerca in questo tipo di composizioni è più l'aspetto sonoro, acustico, delle pelli o dei sonagli che utilizza, ben secondario dall'esecuzione partecipe di William Winant. Lo stesso Winant al vibratone e Julie Steinberg al pianoforte sono poi gli interpreti di "Penasco blanco", brano a struttura circolare che evoca immagini di quiete dell'anima.

L'ultima uscita è quella su New Albion, dal titolo "Walk in beauty": qui troviamo l'aspetto più classico della musica di Garland; il brano che dà il titolo al Cd, per piano solo, è infatti quello più accessibile, con reminiscenze di

Splendida la sezione finale, con un "ostinato" fra le cose più belle ascoltate ultimamente. "Sonos de flor", eseguito dal trio Abel-Steinberg-Winant, è quello meno personale; la struttura del "renga" giapponese utilizzata come base dal compositore contribuisce ad un orientamento del brano verso un'etica "orientale" che richiama alla mente il "Varied trio" di Lou Harrison, di cui si è potuta recentemente ascoltare la versione da parte di questi stessi esecutori. Chiude infine "Jornada del muerto" (l'orchestra per pianoforte), composizione eminentemente percussiva, specie nel bellissimo "Third movement", strutturato su figure melodiche scarse ed insistenti dove l'ispirazione minimalista torna alla memoria ed eseguita con controllata veemenza da uno splendido Ali Takahashi.

La fama di Peter Garland è stata per lungo tempo preceduta da quella di editore e curatore della rivista Soundings, pubblicazione che dal 1972 al 1991 ha rappresentato l'unica voce e l'unico territorio di confronto per la tradizione sperimentale americana, da sempre negletta dall'establishment accademico post-serialista.

Il libro "In search of Silvestre Revueltas: Essays 1978-1990", ospita alcuni suoi testi già precedentemente pubblicati e qui raccolti in forma organica.

Nella prima parte dell'opera, attraverso articoli dedicati ad alcune delle figure più importanti della musica del nostro secolo, l'autore ripercorre le tracce della tradizione sperimentale americana: da Varese, Ives e Ruggles, a Cowell, Partch e Harrison, alla figura fondamentale di John Cage, fino a La Monte Young, Terry Riley e James Tenney.

La sua è un'analisi storica che, oltre a tracciare una sorta di albero genealogico della musica americana contemporanea e a dare il giusto rilievo a compositori misconosciuti eppure fondamentali nell'evoluzione della sperimentazione, non disdegna critiche spesso aspre alle istituzioni canoniche della società musicale statunitense.

Nella seconda parte del libro Garland affronta l'altro suo grande interesse: la musica delle popolazioni native americane e spagnole del sudovest e del Messico, in un excursus che va dalle musiche tradizionali "povere", dove la coscienza civile si sposa coraggiosamente con la passione intellettuale, alle musiche "alte" d'inizio secolo. In particolare modo analizza la figura di Silvestre Revueltas, compositore messicano a cavallo degli anni '30, scomparso prematuramente all'età di 40 anni.

Qui l'analisi di Garland diventa più dettagliata e particolareggiata e il viaggio nella musica di Revueltas assume le caratteristiche di uno studio storiografico e musicologico che prende le mosse da una passione autentica.

A mio parere è proprio attraverso compositori come Peter

Garland che si può perpetuare un'importantissima tradizione e creare il naturale trait d'union tra avanguardie storiche e scenario sperimentale odierno.

Peter Garland è realmente un'autore teso alla comprensione delle "altre" culture: non le interpreta, ma le fa proprie e poi semplicemente espone quelle che sono divenute le "sue" conoscenze, che così facendo possono divenire conoscenza per tutti noi.

Discografia di riferimento:
"Matachin dances" (Cold Blue)
"Border music" (What Next)
"Nana+Victoria" (Disk Union)
"Walk in beauty" (New Albion)

partecipa con un brano ai seguenti dischi:
Blackheart Percussion Group "B.P.G." (Opus One)
"Cold Blue" (Cold Blue)
"Hyper Beattles"

Bibliografia di riferimento:

"America: essays on american music and culture 1973-80" (Soundings Press)
"In search of Silvestre Revueltas: Essays 1978-1990" (Soundings Press)

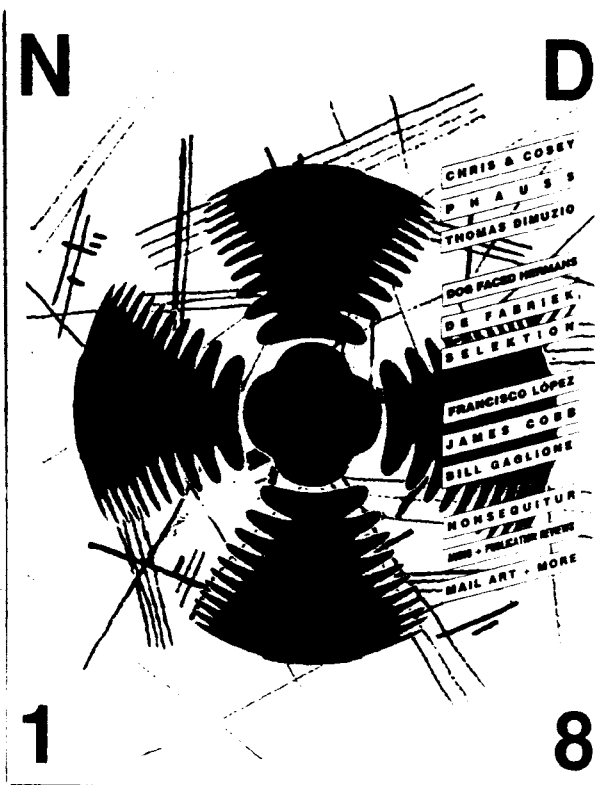
Giovanni Antognazzi



SILENZIO
DISTRIBUZIONE DI NUOVA MUSICA
e ARTE MULTIMEDIALE

MINIMAL MUSIC
COMPUTER MUSIC
DISCHI D'ARTISTA

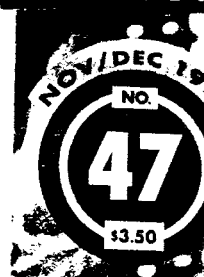
LIBRI • DISCHI • VIDEO • PARTITURE
VENUTA PER CORRISPONDENZA



Garland, Peter "Border Music" [Nonsequitur] (CD, 67 mins) This CD contains six pieces by composer Peter Garland, who studied with Harold Budd and James Tenney, and was also the editor of Sounding Press and author of books and articles on American music. Four of the works are from the early 70's and the other two are more recent. The music is minimal and acoustic using harp, piano, violin, percussion, and a variety of other instruments. The two more recent pieces ("Cantares De La Frontera" and "Old Men of the Fiesta") mostly feature the harp for a very ambient excursion whereas the earlier works featured might have a stronger and directed touch. A very enchanting poetic quality and quiet charm runs through the majority of these pieces. A very beautiful package, with liner notes and history, which helps to frame and document the work of this composer. (DP)

OPTION

MUSIC ALTERNATIVES



● **PETER GARLAND: Border Music** Chronologically, this retrospective selection of Garland's work starts with a muted, minimalist piece for four marimbas, with an acknowledged debt to Harold Budd — together with some contemporaneous percussion works (stark and ritualistic, including one for sirens and bullroarer), which echo the radical experimentation of iconoclasts like Cage, Varese and Partch in the 1930s and 1940s. This body of work was composed by Garland in the early 1970s, and suggests a search for his own voice. Then the CD takes a 13-year leap to 1986 and reveals a new preoccupation with indigenous Southwestern U.S. folk materials. "Catares De La Frontera," a set of compositions for unaccompanied harp, is a kind of distilled, minimalist folk music, quite lovely, which according to Garland is based in part upon a traditional Mongolian music expressing "love and longing for the homeland" — which in this case is rural New Mexico. Another set of dance pieces, "Old Men of the Fiesta," for combinations of violin, harp, rattles and claves, was composed in 1989-1990. This music is simple and stately, with the ritualistic quality of the earlier percussion pieces absent the aggression and desire to shock. (Nonsequitur, Box 2638, Santa Fe, NM 87504) — Bill Tilland

RECORDINGS

December 9, 1992 • SEATTLE WEEKLY

Peter Garland

Border Music
(*¿What Next?*)

Born in Maine, trained in California, and residing in Santa Fe and Mexico, composer Peter Garland has accumulated numerous musical influences. Those influences coalesce arrestingly on the most recent piece on *Border Music*, "Old Man of the Fiesta" (1989). Beginning with one of those mournful violin-based folk melodies that come echoing out of New England, out of the American past, the piece glides through a Yaqui Indian dance segment, complete with bonelike rattles, and sections of turtle-shell drumming, without ever losing its stately grandeur or its sweetness of melody and tone.

The style-juggling proves more precarious elsewhere. Some of Garland's early percussion pieces sound more like exercises than compositions. But thanks to the two recent works framing the collection, *Border Music* sustains a mood of meditative mystery: the desert, under a bright moon, its inhabitants flickering over the sand like shadow puppets.

Glen Hirshberg

The Sound Contemporary

～新しく生まれ出る音～

第23回

「ピーター・ガーランド——音楽詩人——」

境田雅之

6

1952年にアメリカで生まれたピーター・ガーランドは今最も注目されている若手作曲家の1人だ。カリフォルニア大学で作曲を学んでいたころはミニマリストの影響を受けていたといことが、作曲の傾向はライヒやグラスと違っている。タイプは違っても、その音が内包する世界を探索する人という感じがする。彼は放浪癖があるらしく、メキシコの村に移り住んでラテン・アメリカ・インディアンに関する研究を始めたのを皮切りに、世界各地を転々しながら作曲活動をしている。また作曲活動以外にも1972年から音楽誌「Soundings」の編集を行ない、その中で展開されたアメリカ実験音楽の価値観に関する論評は貴重な資料として高く評価されている。

そんな彼が先日日本アーティスト交換プログラムで来日した。3か月半に及ぶ滞在では自身のコンサートはもちろん、日本の文化・芸術の演出について調査してきたという。日本での予定をほとんど終え、離日直前の彼にインタビューする機会を得たので、作曲法などについて尋ねてみることにした。ビールを飲みつつ丁寧に質問に答えてくれた彼の人格は温厚そのもの。現代音楽界にあって破綻的でも理解しづらい彼の音楽性は、多分そんな人格の現われなのだろう。

§

まず尋ねてみたのは、彼の初期の作品である「BORDERMUSIC」について。このCDには彼の作曲の特徴を語る上で重要な作品と思われる「THE THREE STRANGE ANGELS」「THREE SONGS OF MAD COYOTE」などのパーカッション曲が含まれている。とても力強くシアトリカルなイメージを持つこれらの曲だが、解説とともに詩を添えている点に興味を引かれた。彼に尋ねてみたところ、詩の存在は大きく、

8

作曲する上でイメージの源泉はこれらの詩をちとにしており、そのイメージに従い作曲をしているとのことであった。突然の啓示、自然に対する畏怖。そんな詩のイメージが、そのままパーカッション曲になっている。感情の表現を重視する彼であるが、それはあるイメージを形にすることにほかならず、これは初期作品からの一貫した傾向といえるだろう。この時点での彼のミニマリズムは、シンプルな素材をエモーションに、かつ力強く発展させることを意味しているようだ。

同じくパーカッション曲といえば、時代を経た1990～91年の作品「ナナ・ヴィクトリオ」のパーカッション・ソロも非常に面白いので紹介しよう。特に1曲目の発想がユニークだ。高低2つの太鼓によって奏でられるのだが、最初は低音の太鼓が速いリズムを刻み、高音の太鼓は非常にゆっくり、トリズムを刻んでいる。高音の太鼓は次第に速くなりだんだんと低音の太鼓のスピードに追いついてくる。すると今度は低音の太鼓がだんだんゆっくりとなり最後は高低のスピードが入れ代わって終わる。ミニマリスト的発想はむしろこの曲の方が強いかもしれない。随分変容していくポリリズムの模様と思わず引き込まれてしまう曲だ。さらに中間部での高低2つの太鼓がほとんど同じスピードでありながら少しずつずれていくさまは、ライヒの「ドラミング」における位相変換を彷彿とさせるものがある。

次に「WALK IN BEAUTY」に関して質問してみた。童歌のような印象的な高音のメロディで始まるこのCDは、ピアノの持つパーカッシブな響きと、美しい繊細な響きの調和をたたえた曲だ。インタビュー中でも彼が語ってくれたことだが、「情緒的でありながらセンチメンタルにならず、エモーションとパワフルのバランスを取る」

φ

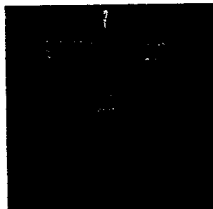
ということのまさに1つの極みのようにも思える。「僕の作曲はとてもゆっくりなんだ」と語るガーランド。ここでは、作曲のシステムなどというものは一切無いという。あるとしたら素材としてのピアノの音に耳を傾けること、それは力強い打撃音であったり繊細なピアノ音であったりするのだが、その音の中に自らの感情を読み取ろうとする作曲家の意思があるだけだ。ゆえに作曲はゆっくりと進行する。そして、音が中身の固有の世界は、彼の感情を通じて開示されるのだ。その音楽は静寂と力強さが隣り合わせにあり、情緒的な中に緊張感があふれる世界がある。さらに付け加えるとすれば、演奏者であるピアニスト高橋アキの素晴らしい演奏と、凛とした雰囲気をもたえたこのピアノ曲は彼女なしでは成立しなかったであろう。

「僕は音楽家ではなく、詩人なのではないかと思う。ガーランドはインタビューの中で自分自身をこう評していた。実際の曲は詩的である。作曲に先立ち詩のイメージをふくらませてから取り掛かるということもあるが、ひとつと最小のボキャブラリーでイメージを語ろうとする彼の作風は、まさに詩的という印象を受ける。

今回の来日で佐渡に滞在した彼は、宿にいた夢にあったグランド・ピアノを気に入り、ストリング・カルテットを作曲した。その第1楽章の約8分を作曲するために、1日4～5時間ピアノの前に座ったが8日間もかかってしまったという。心に由来する微かなイメージを詩に託し、その繊細な感情を、研ぎ澄まされた詩的な音へ、ていねいに置き換えていったのであろう。

今も世界のどこかで、彼はゆっくりと自分の音楽を造り上げている。イメージとピアノに向かい、音のボエムを書き綴る音楽詩人。そのエモーションな音をぜひまた聴かせてほしい。

(通訳: 中原真理子)

「BORDERMUSIC」
(WN0008)「ナナ・ヴィクトリオ」
(AVAN 012)「WALK IN BEAUTY」
(NA052CD)

PROFILE

さかいだ まさあき 1957年東京生。現在、専門学校ミューズ音楽院教授部長の職にあり、育て上げたプロフェッショナルは多数に昇る。また、リットーミュージックm&a-netにてオンライン・ミュージック・スクール「電脳音楽人講座」を主宰し、同講座「ミュージック・セミナー」での執筆も好評である。ポピュラー音楽教育の研究開発のほか、実効的ミュージシャン、パフォーマーを独自の視点で選り抜く。音楽表現に加え、身体論、舞踏、ダンス・セラピーなどに注目している。

Tango/4

1993

PETER GARLAND Border Music, *Nonsequitur Records*. Retrospektyviai apžvelgiantis P.G. kūrybą leidinys. 1972-1990 m. darbai turi vieną bendrą bruožą - mistišką, tačiau šviesią nuotaiką. Ši muzika gracinga, tauri, apgaubta sakrališko apeigiškumo, nelyginant iniciavimo į totemą šokis... Kūrybinė sfera: nuo akademiškos (fortepijonas, arfa, smuikas) iki primityviosios (idiofonai, šnaresiai, riaumojimai ir pan.).

THE

Santa Fe's Monthly m a g a z i n e of the Arts • September 1992

LIKE THE SURREALIST POETRY OF BRETON, ARTAUD, AND PREVERT, Peter Garland's music has long had an automatic quality to it. It seems to capture that which lies just beneath the silence of one's immediate thought. But unlike the surrealists, Garland follows what appears to be an irresistible inner direction, giving his compositions both a consistent philosophical base and a recognizable aesthetic.

There are some obvious questions raised by his recent release, *Border Music*, on ¿What Next? Recordings. Namely, "What borders, whose borders, why borders?" Garland explores these questions with the grace and depth of a poet. Two of the titles on the recording reflect Garland's long-standing love affair with Mexico. In both "Cantares de la Frontera" and "Old Men of the Fiesta," Garland captures tiny, elemental fragments of what just might be a Mexican folk tune, as one might pluck a butterfly out of the air, and places them in a transparent musical setting. The result is much like a Giacometti painting or sculpture: a body of music has been stripped down to its simplest, most naked form. Once in this form, every minutiae can be examined and experienced as it wends its way, organically evolving, from beginning to end. Yet, the respectfully acknowledged influence of Mexican and Tex-Mex musical idioms is the least interesting of the borders with which the composer is toying.

Garland's music is distinctively avant-garde. He was writing in a minimalist style long before it became popular, and, unlike some, has developed and nurtured it into something more intriguing and less obviously repetitious. But Garland has never been one to deal completely with abstractions.

His music is always firmly rooted in something organic—such as the sacred culture of a simple people. This makes it essentially folk music. This arbitrary musical border between folk and classical is blurred even further by the use of such quotidian folk instruments as a harp, a violin, and a rattle.

In contrast to the lilting lyricism of these two pieces (which were recorded at the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe) are the "Three Pieces For Percussion," completed in 1973 and performed by the highly acclaimed and talented UNM percussion ensemble.

In this trilogy, Garland retains his Giacometti-like nakedness, but breaks through into harsher, more ominous territory. Employing such forces as a bass drum, a bull-roarer, eight tom-toms in unison, a pair of sirens, and a piano struck by a wooden board, Garland creates a disturbing atmosphere of raw power.

The second piece of the trilogy, "Three Songs of Mad Coyote," is a perfect and compelling musical expression of three song-poems of the Nez Percé Indians:

Ravening Coyote comes
red hands, red mouth
necklace of eyeballs!

Mad Coyote
madly sings
then the west wind roars!

Daybreak finds me,
eastern daybreak finds me
the meaning of that song:
with blood-stained mouth
comes Mad Coyote!

All of these "Three Pieces for Percussion" raise the question about another border: where does music stop and noise start? In fact, this is an age-old question, posed by such early 20th century giants as Edgar Varese. Yet many of us who have been spoon-fed by a predictable pop culture all our lives still ask it. As he musically combines a fear of the unknown with an awe of the divine, Garland seems to shout an answer through the mystical din: "If it moves you, it's music."

The final composition on the recording is a sensual marimba quartet called "Apple Blossom." Written in Vancouver in 1972, the piece derives its inspiration from an André Breton poem known as "On Me Dit Que Lá-Bas." The piece, like the poem, is self-admittedly erotic. But unlike the "Three Pieces for Percussion," the eroticism of "Apple Blossom" does not stem from an unstoppable unleashing of inhibitions. Instead, it evokes the afterglow. The wonderings as to the whys and wherefores of a carnal and basic, yet ever-renewable mystery. And therein lies the final border Garland attempts to eradicate in every work on the recording. The one between the earthly and the spiritual.

John Kennedy and Charles Wood once said of Garland's music that, "It is clearly expressive of his intent to root the sacred in nature." In *Border Music*, Garland has followed this intent to an extreme. Every composition, in its own way and using the simplest of materials (both musically and instrumentally), quietly asks why there must even be a distinction. One does not always need a Gothic cathedral to be inspired. Sometimes a stone will do just fine.

Border Music is locally available at Alla Bookstore, Blue Moon Books, and Ohori's Tea and Coffees.

END

Jamie Allen is a composer and music critic who teaches at the College of Santa Fe. His recent commission, *In Memory of a Once-New World*, will be premiered at the New Mexico Music Teachers Association convention this fall.

Garland's body
of music, much
like a Giacometti
painting or
sculpture, has
been stripped
down to its
simplest and most
naked form

by Jamie Allen

the village

VOICE

CONSUMER GUIDE Kyle Gann

Peter Garland: *Border Music* (What Next?) We're overdue for this seminal West Coast postminimalist on easily available disc. Sadly, his late work isn't much represented; four of the six pieces date from 1972-73, the years of Garland's "noise minimalism." *The Three Strange Angels* and *Obstacles of Sleep* were incredible for their time: mammoth piano clusters, warbling sirens, whirring thundersticks, assembled with a sculptural austerity Varèse would have admired. Since then, Garland's moved in gorgeous new directions, represented by a string quartet and piano works not included here. *Cantares de la Frontera* for harp and *Old Men of the Fiesta* for violin, harp, and rattles are reflective, modal, Lou Harrison-like, and lovably unpretentious. It's a must-have disc for partly historic reasons, but Garland's *next* compilation will be the stunner. **A MINUS**

Honesty Before Weirddness

By Kyle Gann

Peter Garland

Two composers in my generation are the lighthouses I use to navigate through the volatile waters of fashion. The Atlantic one is Rhys Chatham. The Pacific is lit by Peter Garland of Santa Fe, publisher of *Soundings* and self-appointed guardian of the American Experimental Tradition. Garland's been

A Name for so long that his combination of youth and longevity works against him. I bought my first Garland record—*Apple Blossom*, on Opus One—when I was 18 and he was 21. Garland became famous not for his music, but for securing the reputations of anti-establishment pioneers: Nancarrow, Rudhyar, Harrison, Partch, Tenney. Being an intrinsically rabble-rouser in an isolated place, he hasn't had the support systems that the self-disenfranchised can turn to in New York. The upshot is, it's taken a long time for anyone to ask what the composer Peter Garland is all about.

And what is he about? The question finally got asked by Essential Music, Charles Wood and John Kennedy's intrepid ensemble that, like Garland in *Soundings*, has set out to single-handedly right the wrongs of American music. Essential Music gave Gar-

land his first New York one-man show February 7 at Greenwich House, in front of an audience swelling with the composers *Soundings* has championed over the years. The music ranged from hair-raising to tuncful, and, since Garland is so identified with the experimental tradition, it suggested some surprising things about what that tradition means.

The two 1973 works were pure noise-sculpture. *Three Songs of Mad Coyote* began with drummers in fierce unison, like an American Indian beat but with energizing rhythmic shifts. *Coyote's* second "song" involved the whirs and growls of bull-rollers (flat pieces of wood whirled on strings) and lion's roars (twine scraped through a hole in a drumhead), and the third song used piano clusters that boomed like distant thunder. *Obstacles of Sleep*, aptly titled, revved up a pair of sirens to the highest pitch, then damped them with a yelp. As the piece continued, slowly turned ratchets made a commotion like the explosion of baseball-sized popcorn kernels, and sweeping glissandos threatened to take the black keys off the pianos. (Essential Music's percussionists produce the loudest unamplified concerts in New York.) These pieces might be the last stern classics of pure modernism, all remnants of classical resolution removed, and

not yet infected by any trace of postmodern irony.

The later works, 1988-90, were less abstract, melodic and even gentle. Garland's recent style is a nonrepetitive minimalism, each contrapuntal line shaved down to only three or four notes, yet still full of unexpected twists. *Drinking Wine*, whose translated-from-Chinese text Dora Ohrenstein sang in dark, ghostly tones, featured the Roy Harris-like octaves and wide consonances of Garland's piano style (Philip Bush on piano). *A Green Pine*, another Ohrenstein vehicle, had accordionist Guy Klucvsek rocking endlessly between triads on C, B-flat, and G. A fabulous pianist, Judith Gordon (a Yo Yo Ma accompanist), brought delicacy and color to *Walk in Beauty*, a multi-movement piece based on the Navajo peyote ceremony. It began with, and finally returned to, a hesitant repeated-note melody over a pair of chords a whole-step apart.

Essential Music's most ambitious coup was the world premiere of Garland's *Rogue Dalton Songs*, with Nils Vigeland conducting an 11-piece ensemble. The drum blasts, slapstick, maracas, and sharp harp pizzicatos that differentiated the songs timbrally were as powerful as the violent political poems they accompanied, written by short-lived Salvadoran guerrilla/poet Dalton (1935-75). As strings and percussion hammered out blunt isorhythms, David Fry's distinctly annunciated tenor pierced through the ensemble, but his chantlike line, often limited to four notes, wasn't written to underscore the poetry's drama. Not a touch of tone-painting did Gar-



KRISTINE LARSEN

It's taken a long time to ask what this guy's all about.

land indulge in, yet the tense emotionality of the whole gave Dalton's indictment a stern authority. The songs were as hard-edged, uniform, impassive, and vivid as a panel of Mayan hieroglyphics. Rough and bristling, the Dalton Songs showed the influence of the Latin American composers Garland has often championed, as well as his political concern for Central America. But some of the music, at least in surface respects, was nearly the most conventional I've reviewed in this column. In Garland's music—as in that of Nancarrow, Cowell, Harrison, and LIVES—bizarre noises coexist happily with major triads. The American experimentalists never fell for the anti-consonance exclusionism that cut serialism (and more recently, free improv) into a one-dimensional aesthetic. Music, in

the Am Ex Trad, doesn't have to be weird, simply honest. Honest music will sometimes sound weird—everyone has a few thoughts and feelings outside the experience of others—but the honesty comes first, not the weirdness. In the second movement of *Walk in Beauty*, Gordon played soft clusters from which she sustained triads; the shimmering effect added, not shock value, but a purity the cleanest consonance couldn't have equaled.

Or, as Garland put it to me after the concert, "I was afraid my music would be eaten alive in New York. It has a sentimental side to it. New York music is about proving you're the most baaaad-assed composer in town." Garland's not a very baaaad-assed composer, but he's one of the best. ■

contemporary

VITAL

under ground

MAGAZINE FOR
ELECTRONIC AND
ELECTROACOUSTIC
MUSIC

1 SEPT. '92 NO COPYRIGHT ISSUE 25

PETER GARLAND - BORDER MUSIC
(CD by *Nonsequitur*). This man studied with Harold Budd and James Tenney. Does that say anything? Budd is, in my eyes, a romantic minimalist. Tenney is a composer whose compositions are straight, no detours, no deviations.

The music on this CD follows both courses. There are works for harp that I can easily play for my grand-mother. There are also compositions for percussion that would instantly give her a stroke. Still: the first category is quite nice to listen to (but then again, I have never heard a harp play a dirty note). Also: the percussion-pieces are sharp, hard, and direct. Beautiful. Cool, precise.

In between these extremes we find others, like 'Apple Blossom' for 4 marimba's that are played extremely softly, like 'Obstacles of Sleep' for 2 sirens, amplified ratchet, piccolo's, lion's roar, and 2 piano's.

Garland's music certainly has personality. It's the constant and consequent compositional language that appeals to me.
(IS)

WIRE

Peter Garland Border Music

(**WHAT'S NEXT? WN0008CD**) Garland

studied composition with Harold Budd and James Tenney; takes Lou Harrison as his mentor. He roots the 1986 written-for-harp piece *Cantares De La Frontier* in Mongolian music, but its All-American wide-open harmony and yearning stillness go all the way back to Edward MacDowell (via Cage and Copland). Stillness and sonority — and bullroarers — dominate his 70s percussion-works. His recent *Old Men Of The Fiesta*, a series of utterly plainspoken, stately little folk dances, reinstates the distance between this longstanding American tradition of vernacular innocence, and every Euro-composer except Satie (if you pretend Erik's badass bad-faith wasn't part of the point). As uncalculated as a music-box: short-circuit your own cynicism and you'll get there too.