

**MEV** MUSICA  
ELETTRONICA  
VIVA—"SPACECRAFT"


ALAN BRYANT  
ALVIN CURRAN  
FREDERIC RZEWSKI  
RICHARD TEITELBAUM  
IVAN VANDOR

**AMM**

CORNELIUS CARDEW  
LOU GARE  
CHRISTOPHER HOBBS  
EDDIE PRÉVOST  
KEITH ROWE

# LIVE ELECTRONIC MUSIC IMPROVISED

WERGO 

**WERGO**   
A DIVISION OF  
SCHOTT MUSIC & MEDIA GMBH

WER 6930 2

LC 00846



A & R—Earle Brown  
Liner Notes—Frederic Rzewski/Cornelius Cardew  
Original Recording Engineer—Bob Woolford  
Mastering—Eugene Thompson  
Album Design—Ely Besalel  
Album Coordination—Audrey Portnoy  
Typography—The Composing Room

FROM ROME:  
**MEV**  
ALAN BRYANT  
ALVIN CURRAN  
FREDERIC RZEWSKI  
RICHARD TEITELBAUM  
IVAN VANDOR

FROM LONDON:  
**AMM**  
CORNELIUS CARDEW  
LOU GARE  
CHRISTOPHER HOBBS  
EDDIE PRÉVOST  
KEITH ROWE

# LIVE ELECTRONIC MUSIC IMPROVISED

WERGO 

FROM ROME:

**MEV**

ALAN BRYANT

ALVIN CURRAN

FREDERIC RZEWSKI

RICHARD TEITELBAUM

IVAN VANDOR

FROM LONDON:

**AMM**

CORNELIUS CARDEW

LOU GARE

CHRISTOPHER HOBBS

EDDIE PRÉVOST

KEITH ROWE

## Live Electronic Music Improvised

### Original liner notes from the 1970 LP recording

by Frederic Rzewski and Cornelius Cardew

#### From London: AMM

For this occasion AMM Music was recorded at a concert given for the Crypt Programme in Notting Hill Gate, London, June 12th, 1968. **The tape has been edited and interspersed with silence in accordance with a random number programme** to give a representative cross-section of a concert lasting two hours. The text which follows is extracted from a lecture by Cardew on the ethics of improvisation:

Written compositions are fired off into the future; even if never performed, the writing remains as a point of reference. Improvisation is in the present, its effect may live on in the souls of the participants, both active and passive (ie: audience), but in its concrete form it is gone forever from the moment that it occurs, nor did it have any previous existence before the moment that it occurred, so neither is there any historical reference available.

Documents such as tape recordings of improvisation are essentially empty, as they preserve chiefly the form that something took and give at best an indistinct hint as to the feeling and cannot convey any sense of time and place. Obviously a recording of a jazz improvisation has some validity since its formal reference – the melody and harmony of a basic structure – is never far below the surface. This kind of validity vanishes when the improvisation has no formal limits.

In 1965 I joined a group of four musicians in London who were giving weekly performances of what they called AMM Music, a very pure form of im-

provisation operating without any formal system or limitation. The four original members of AMM came from a "jazz background." When I joined in I had no jazz experience, yet there was no language problem. Sessions generally lasted about two hours with no formal breaks or interruptions, although there would sometimes occur extended periods of close to silence.

AMM Music is supposed to admit all sounds, but the members of AMM have marked preferences. An open-ness to the totality of sounds implies a tendency away from traditional musical structures towards informality. Governing this tendency – reining it in – are various thoroughly traditional musical structures such as saxophone, piano, violin, guitar, etc., in each of which reposes a portion of the history of music. Further echoes of the history of music enter through the medium of the transistor radio (the use of which as a musical instrument was pioneered by John Cage). However, it is not the exclusive privilege of music to have a history – sound has history too. Industry and technology have added machine sounds and electronic sounds to the primeval sounds of thunderstorm, volcanic eruption, avalanche and tidal wave.

Informal "sound" has a power over our emotional responses that formal "music" does not, in that it acts subliminally rather than on a cultural level. This is a possible definition of the area in which AMM is experimental. We are searching for sounds and for the responses that attach to them, rather than thinking them up, preparing them and producing them. The search is conducted in the medium of sound and the musician himself is at the heart of the experiment.

In the summer of 1966 we were playing every week in the tiny music room at the top of the London School of Economics, and the proliferation of sound sources in such a confined space produced a situation where it was often impossible to tell who was producing which sounds – or which portions of the single room-filling deluge of sound. In this phase the playing changed: as individuals we

were absorbed into a composite activity in which any kind of virtuosity would have been completely irrelevant. It also struck me at that time that it is impossible to record with any fidelity a kind of music that is actually derived in some sense from the room in which it is taking place – its shape, acoustical properties, even the view from the window. What a recording produces is a separate phenomenon, something really much stranger than the playing itself, since what you hear on tape or disc is indeed the same playing, but divorced from its natural context. What is the importance of this natural context? The natural context provides a score which the players are unconsciously interpreting in their playing. Not a score that is explicitly articulated in the music and hence of no further interest to the listener, as is generally the case in traditional music, but one that co-exists inseparably with the music, standing side by side with it and sustaining it.

Once in conversation I mentioned that scores like those of La Monte Young (for example: 'Draw a straight line and follow it') could in their inflexibility take you outside yourself, stretch you to an extent that could not occur spontaneously. Keith Rowe replied that "you get legs dangling down there and arms floating around, so many fingers and one head" and that that was a very strict composition. And so it is; not only can the natural environment carry you beyond your own limitations (whatever that may mean) but the realization of your own body as part of that environment is an even stronger dissociative factor. Thus the natural environment is itself giving birth to something, which you then carry as a burden; you're the music's medium. At this point your moral responsibility becomes hard to define.

"You choose the sound you hear. But listening for effects is only first steps in AMM listening. After a while you stop skimming, start tracking, and go where it takes you."

"Trusting that it's all worth while."

"Funnily enough I don't worry about that aspect."

"That means you *do* trust it."

"Yes, I suppose I do."

(Excerpt from a dialogue on AMM by David Sladen)

Cornelius Cardew

### **From Rome: MEV – *Spacecraft***

MEV – "Musica Electronica Viva" – is by now a familiar name to persons attentive to the most recent developments in music. Formed in Rome in 1966 by the American composers Allan Bryant, Alvin Curran, Jon Phetteplace, and Frederic Rzewski, the group soon acquired international recognition for its work combining techniques of composition and group improvisation in live-electronic music. After a year of concert activity in Rome, MEV made a series of tours throughout Europe in 1967–68, giving over 100 concerts in 30 cities. In addition to performances of works by individual composer (besides members of MEV: Austin, Behrman, Cage, Cardew, Chiari, Gelmetti, Kosugi, Lucier), the group's collective work *Spacecraft* was presented in about 80 public concerts. In the summer and fall of 1968 MEV appeared in the festivals of Avignon and Palermo, toured Italy, and performed every night for six weeks at the MEV studio at 27, Via Pietro Peretti, Rome. These studio performances will continue in 1969 on a twice-weekly basis (every Friday and Saturday from 9 to 11 p.m., open to the public and free of charge during the periods when the group is in Rome. This spring the group will re-visit Paris and London. Another extensive tour of Europe is planned for the fall of 1969, and a tour of the United States beginning in Febr. 1970.

The music of MEV is open in every sense. Form and content are variable according to circumstance. Tapes and complex electronics – R.A. Moog Synthesizer, brainwave amplifiers, photocell-mixer for movement of sound in space –

are combined with traditional instruments, everyday objects and the environment itself, amplified by means of contact-mikes, or not. Sounds may originate both inside and outside the performing-listening space and may move freely within and around it. Jazz, rock, primitive and Oriental musics, Western classical tradition, verbal and organic sound both individual and collective may all be present.

Composition and improvisation contain each other. Composed pieces are introduced, in whole or in part, and without programming, into the free duration of a concert, which may begin before the arrival of an audience and end after its departure. Improvisations are constructed on and around a composed scaffolding that is treated like an instrument with moveable parts. The temporal, harmonic and timbral structure of the whole is the unforeseeable combined result of free choices made by all of the individuals concerned. The composition of the group is variable. The nucleus consists generally of between five and ten persons. (Among those who play or have played with MEV are: Allan and Barbara Bryant, Frederic and Nicole Rzewski, Jon Phatteplace, Alvin Curran, Edith Schloss, Richard Teitelbaum, Ivan Vandor, Carol Plantamura, Steven ben Israel, Steve Lacy, France Cataldi, Ivan and Patricia Coaquette.) MEV is a performing group, a waystation, and a school where older and younger learn from each other and play together on the same stage. Friends and guests regularly sit in. It is normal and natural for members of the audience to participate.

MEV performances have taken place in the most varied circumstances: in festivals, concert halls, theaters, museums, churches, schools, universities, art galleries, bookstores, clubs, cafes, cinemas, occupied factories, prisons, radio and television, films and in the street. MEV is a group of composer-performers making live electronic music: composed, improvised, individual, collective. The music is a search for a new harmony: a process where speaker and listener agree to communicate. Electronics are a means: making space itself a living circuit.

Frederic Rzewski

## Live Electronic Music Improvised

- |   |  |       |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | <p><b>AMM</b><br/>         Cornelius Cardew<br/>         Lou Gare<br/>         Christopher Hobbs<br/>         Eddie Prévost<br/>         Keith Rowe</p>  | 19:47 |
| 2 | <p><b>MEV – Musica Elettronica Viva</b><br/> <b>Spacecraft</b><br/>         Alan Bryant<br/>         Alvin Curran<br/>         Frederic Rzewski<br/>         Richard Teitelbaum<br/>         Ivan Vandor</p> | 23:14 |
|   |  | 43:05 |

**From the original 1970 LP:**

Artist & Repertoire: Earle Brown

Original Recording Engineer: Bob Woolford / LP-Mastering: Eugene Thompson

**Addendum 2009:**

To bring out the outstanding original quality of the Contemporary Sound Series records, the music was transferred to digital using only high-end turntables and analog-to-digital converters (equipment by Thorens, SME, Shelter, Conrad-Johnson, RME).

The Earle Brown Music Foundation would like to thank Udo Wüstendörfer, recording producer and engineer at Hessischer Rundfunk Frankfurt. Renowned for his extraordinary expertise in 20th-century music as well as for the beautiful sound of his recordings, Wüstendörfer was the producer of choice for remastering the series. With constant comparison to the originals, Udo Wüstendörfer created the transfers and further enhanced them for CD while remaining true to the nature of Earle Brown's sound.

Cover Art: hj.kropp [[www.artional.de](http://www.artional.de)]

Booklet Layout and Editing: Ulrike Bretz-Faust

All texts © The Earle Brown Music Foundation, Rye, N.Y.

© The Earle Brown Music Foundation, Rye, N.Y. / 2009 WERGO, a division of SCHOTT MUSIC & MEDIA GmbH, Mainz, Germany

© 2009 WERGO, a division of SCHOTT MUSIC & MEDIA GmbH, Mainz, Germany

Manufactured in Austria · Printed in Austria

WERGO · Postfach 36 40 · 55026 Mainz · Germany

E-Mail: [service@wergo.de](mailto:service@wergo.de) · Internet: [www.wergo.de](http://www.wergo.de)