

# Yes, but could they hum a few bars?

By MAX WYMAN

Vancouver musician-composer Don Druick is still, by his own admission, trying to find himself, trying to work out what he wants to do or say in his music.

In recent seasons he has worked with two local music groups — the Vital Baton Music Co. and Musique Par Coeur — in explorations of new musical possibilities.

Musique Par Coeur, he thinks, is coming to the end of its usefulness for him, and at noon Wednesday in the Vancouver Art Gallery, Druick and a trio of friends presented the first concert in the Musique Par Coeur farewell series.

Already, the title of the group has been reduced to Musiqu Pa Coe (the omitted letters in sequence spell erur, but he says that is not deliberate, ah, mistake) and the title will diminish further as the series progresses.

The program included three works: Nameplay, by Albert Mayr; Druick's own Cherchons; and The Singularly Strange History of Gasping George, by Steve Wilkes. The printed program carried a little slogan from Jean-Luc Godard: "Toujours le sang, la peur, la politique, l'argent" (Always blood, fear, politics, money).

The inclusion of the slogan may have been gratuitous; on the other hand, it may have had real significance — to do, perhaps, with the conflicts of creating something that must exist in the real world, to do with the difficulties of being an artist, the difficulties of communicating.

In an interview with Dorothy Metcalfe in a recent issue of the Vancouver Art Gallery publication Vanguard, Druick talked at length about his desire to get close to audiences — which springs from a desire to give to others.

"I think we have to help each other get to the point where we can be totally liberated from the things which are blocking us from feeling the moment at hand . . .

"I love great performances and I don't really care what the performer is doing; it doesn't seem to matter what the work is because a great performance always goes beyond the content, because somehow the content isn't what's happening. It's the relationship between the audience and the performer, together as one group . . .

"People do all sorts of things in order to feel closer to each other, in order to break down barriers.

For that's where the magic is. And it comes and it goes. You have to be constantly working on it. It's not something which you can just lock into and it stays there . . .



COMPOSER DRUICK  
... trying to find himself

"That seems to be the important work to do right now. It's the only politically viable course open, to liberate the possibility of tenderness."

In the past, Druick has been involved in electronic music; currently he is exploring loops — tape loops, music that repeats itself in loop-fashion — and his work Wednesday was a continuation of that concern.

Against a short, taped, spoken phrase repeated without pause, Steve Wilkes played a sequence of musical phrases on

the viola. The effect of this also came close to multi-repetition, except that the human-error factor meant that, unlike the taped phrase, the live-performed pieces were each time slightly different.

The work — no plot, stressed Druick — had a pleasant lulling effect; at one point, Greg Simpson drowned everything out with a gradual, ferocious roll of drums; the viola and tape then re-asserted themselves, and the piece came to an end with a rising scream from Druick.

Nameplay comes in three parts; its structure is dictated by the performers' names, which are fed into a computer and translated into various note-values and sequences. The names involved Wednesday were Don Druick (mouth instruments), Ross Barrett (organ and saxophone) and Greg Simpson (drums).

I may have been trying too hard to hear significance; all I picked up from the piece was a series of raging crescendos and sighing pauses, albeit in some interesting sonic colors and combinations.

The Wilkes piece was the most formal and accessible of the three, and perhaps the one most obviously admitting "the possibility of tenderness." Influenced, said Wilkes, by Prokofiev's Lieutenant Kije (a suite of musical adventures centred on a mythical character invented to perpetuate a Russian Czar's mistake) the Gasping George composition is an imaginary history of a real person: a street musician Wilkes used to hear outside The Bay.

He takes a theme he heard the street-musician play and works on it in a variety of ways, principally affectionate, managing at the same time (it seemed to me) to include a wide number of sounds heard at the corner of Georgia and Granville.

The enduring impression of the piece was one of warmth perceived and communicated — and that was, indeed, the enduring impression of the concert as a whole. If that is what Druick means by going beyond content, by the possibility of tenderness, then maybe he is, indeed, finding himself.

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Organist Patrick Wedd will perform works by Hindemith, Franck, Kagel and Reubke at Christ Church Cathedral, Georgia and Burrard, at 8:30 p.m., Jan. 29.