



It's a book. It's three CDs. It's music. It's nature. I thoroughly and completely recommend that you get to know the work of Will Menter. Listening to a recording of one of his kinetic sculptures in action is, in a particular way, better than being there. You have no idea of the picture. You start making it up... that sound was there.. then the unexpected... a sequence suddenly occurs in reverse, disappears altogether, seems repeated in the bass but surely that's an accident? It's all accident - but completely by design.

The book has beautiful photography of some of Will's pieces and performances. You can see the kind of settings and objects that you are listening to on the CDs and read Will's thoughts about sound and music. He sees himself partly as landscape artist in the tradition of Richard Long or Andy Golds-

worthy but also as a composer placing and making sounds in spaces. The ideas of John Cage come to mind, that music is a series of sonic events over a specified duration. A recording of waves crashing on the shoreline is presented not as a whole CD to relax to, but as a fragment of a few minutes that underscores a fundamental question: Is music a function of listening? Perhaps that question is more open when the listener is "blind-folded", and makes a powerful argument for these recordings.

Four trumpets of different lengths made from clay are recorded at the church of Cortiambles in France, an extraordinary structure in itself. The pitches of the trumpets reverberate against each other being sounded repeatedly on the length of a breath. There is no music until you hear it, the sound in

that space is what it is and that's the point. Some of this is playful stuff. On another track I had to laugh at one point, no spoilers here, but I realised I was caught in a sort of sonic narrative which had taken a surprise turn. That's a musical response, I would say, to a performance by what was a man in a field with a stick.

There is a superb richness to the sounds Will Menter creates. These are not to be found anywhere else. Ceramic trumpets notwithstanding, Will has a fascination for the sound of stone which goes back thirty years to the slate quarries of Wales. Lithophones are a signature timbre and, yes, a metal trumpet would be completely out of context here. The programming of the three CDs is laid out as "Land, Sea, Air"; "Night, Day" and "Gravity, Breath". If there is structure, then these titles give you a clue as to the motivating

forces. And once you know that, then maybe these recordings become compositions. The sonic quality throughout is sumptuous and every sound exists for its own sake. The only question then, for the composer, must be how to organise them.

There are a range of approaches. Track 3 of "Gravity, Breath" features the sculpture 'Deep Choir' (pictured) which is motorised. (It rattled my windows by the way) There are six independent motors and the result gives rise to something that plays with your sense of predictability. It could well be classified as a form of "systems music". In fact that is obviously what it is, if you like, as are the various pendulum-based numbers, which echo the swinging microphones of Steve Reich. I love these pieces especially because of the slightly frail existence of something

resembling a melody. It is pure magic to hear and for me these pieces sit bang in the middle of the question being explored.

But there is too much to mention everything of note here. Will is a renowned soprano sax player, his background in jazz and improvisation is what has led him to this point. (enjoy the Ersatzophone impros!) This production is much more than a coffee table conversation piece. I am going to leave you with the thought that "Always Sound" sits somewhere between the music of Harry Partch and Sun Ra while accidentally sounding a bit like Messian, in a field with a stick.

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