



VAMP - LIVE SYNTHESISED VIDEO AND MUSIC PERFORMANCE

Date: February 17th 1980
 Time: 8 p.m.
 Venue: ICA

Admission: £1.75

Personnel: Peter Donebauer, Simon Desorgher,
 Barry Guy, Richard Monkhouse.

VAMP are a new performance group formed in 1979 to present Video And Music Performances for live audiences. Their appearance at the Ikon Gallery will be part of a national tour which represents an unusual if not unique event for this country. There have been some one-off music and video performances held in the U.S.A., but to the best of VAMP'S knowledge, no group in the world has attempted a touring commitment of this kind.

The core members, Simon Desorgher on sound and Peter Donebauer on video, have worked together in the U.K. for a number of years producing innovative video tapes in television studio situations. These productions have always been "performance" in the sense that they have been unedited recordings of events taking place in the studio recorded in real time. The tapes have been commissioned by a variety of organisations and have been seen at theatres, galleries and festivals in several countries. Some have also been broadcast in the U.K. on BBC 2.

The performance group is a natural progression from the studio to concert situation following on the development over the last few years of the necessary equipment to make such events possible. This progression was felt to be a very necessary one by Peter Donebauer; he felt that the broadcasts of his work, edited into the context of "Arts" programmes, and cold showings on monitors in art galleries, missed the dynamic improvisatory quality of a completely new event - the ability for music and coloured vision to be produced live and for each person's creations to influence the other in

real time by immediate feedback.

Although the event is new, the dream of its possibility in an old one. Of the background to this dream, Peter Donebauer says;

"Music has always been linked to visual events, even if those events have only been the musicians playing their instruments. But the links to the theatre and dance go back to unrecorded history and are today exemplified by the importance of opera and ballet.

"But most music itself, excluding perhaps song, is a very abstract phenomenon in that the sounds produced need not be representational or refer to our externally perceived world, but have a direct internal relevance for us. This need not imply, as some people argue, that music is at best self-sufficient, but rather that the visual parallel be as non-representational as the music such that the two together operate at the same level internally. At approximately the time of the emergence in the west of "impressionist" and "abstract" painting, composers such as Scriabin and visual artists such as Klein dreamed of an art of abstract light to accompany music. The term "colour music" became the collective label for the many people who tried to develop the means to achieve this. It would seem that this early movement died. The reasons are obscure but they include the cost and limited possibilities of the technologies available to these pioneers, also perhaps the phenomenal rise of cinematography and movies at the time. Peoples' collective psyche preferred films to the refinements of abstract sounds and images.

"We believe, however, that the fundamental artistic impetus to link music and image is still very much alive, the essential criterion only being that they operate at a harmonious level internally.

"Due to the complexities and dynamics of music, it is obviously limited to project still images with music as some people have done. Less obviously, most film and television images may be criticised on the basis that their production is never linked directly to the act of producing music in real time (other than the special but banal case of televising the performers themselves). For various reasons

the techniques above fail to harmonise music and image at a common internal level. The pioneers of colour music were much closer with their technically unwieldy attempts to project abstract coloured light as a live performance simultaneously to the music performance".

The realisation of this long held aim to unify music and image in common time is now possible with the use of colour video which Peter Donebauer sees as the visual equivalent to music. The equipment necessary to present this live to an audience did not previously exist. Consequently, in collaboration with Richard Monkhouse, he has spent the last two to three years developing the Videokalos Colour Synthesiser; this is really a versatile video image processor and mixer that performs all the necessary studio functions within one portable compact unit and allows extremely flexible control starting from either monochrome or colour sources. In general, the conceptual basis and design of the synthesiser is quite different from traditional television equipment whilst still encompassing their functions. Firstly it combines within itself many functions normally carried out by separate pieces of equipment, notably the functions of switching, mixing, special effects and their associated electronics and sync pulse generation and encoding. Secondly, the instrument is designed as an instrument equivalent to a musical instrument or electronic music synthesiser. All controls are easily within the reach of a single operator who thus has total visual control over the parameters of all the studio sources which allows greater creative freedom than has previously been possible.