

Phil Treloar / Feeling & Thought

Of Other Narratives

tracings in the ground of
Collective Autonomy
people–practice–theory–history

Volume 5

Poetry–Language–Thought

I've included the text material below because it relates directly to the project at hand. The Sydney Opera House performance of *SHADES: in memoriam Roger Frampton* was a significant event, if only regarding the subject of its dedication. But further to this, it brought together into the one performance space, Steve Elphick, whom I'd known and worked with for years, and Carl Dewhurst, whom I'd never played music with prior to this event. The music that resulted from that occasion gave direct rise to the *Poetry – Language – Thought* project.

With thanks to Jim McLeod who was then still working with the ABC, the project became a realized event. Jim's support and Neale Sandbach's enthusiasm and participation in the recording made them both part of the music. Tragically, Neale is no longer with us but the countless recordings he made at the ABC are testament to his abiding commitment to creative music.

John Shand, too, has, and continues to be a stalwart in support of improvised music in Australia. His crit of the *SHADES: in memoriam Roger Frampton* not only elucidates this fact but also clearly defines his aesthetic and philosophical stance vis-à-vis creative pursuit in general and improvised creative music in particular. Endless thanks to all these people for all they have done and continue to do.

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The real reason for music— that the heart might burst yet

SHADES

Reviewed by John Shand

The Studio, November 24

Why do we listen to music? Is it to decorate our lives with the aural equivalent of ducks on walls? Much music is consumed because the lone eye of the two-dimensional, decidedly lame duck succeeds in following us around the room. So all-pervading is it – from supermarket to dentist chair to concert hall – that when the real thing comes along, one can be

shocked, bewildered or even mistake it for a fake. Or, as was the case with the world premiere of Phil Treloar's *SHADES in memoriam Roger Frampton*, one could be profoundly moved and appealingly disoriented.

Treloar's tribute to his late friend and staunch collaborator – a crucial composer and improviser – is stripped of the artifice of style, the vulgarity of cliché and the idiocy of pretence. It is not so much a work for four specific instruments and spoken word, as for five individuals capable of giving of themselves,

rather than their prowess. This sets Treloar's work apart. Where most composers want their vision realised, Treloar seeks the deepest self-expression the performers are capable of offering. *SHADES* could have been subtitled *A Concerto For Five Hearts*.

Treloar (drum-kit, marimba, percussion) was joined by David Ades (alto saxophone), Carl Dewhurst (electric guitar), Steve Elphick (bass) and John Clare (voice). Composed sections plaited together predefined fields of often playful improvisation, framed by Clare's

readings of poems by e. e. cummings and Paul Celan.

While the overall structure was cathedral-solid, some individual sections lingered longer than was ideal. But criticism was ultimately blasted aside by the many triumphs. For instance, the instruments – even, in Treloar's hands, a gong – often conjured the human voice, while the lone voice became an instrument.

Clare had, on the surface, the least improvising latitude. Yet his instinct for interaction ensured a growing sense of the aptness of the words within the overall

scheme, culminating in a riveting reading of the poem by cummings which begins, "mr smith/is reading/his letter". Here, as elsewhere, the lines of poetry truly became lines of improvisation in the musical dialogue.

The saxophone and percussion were played without amplification, lending an immediacy and intimacy. Amid assorted combinations – from solos to quintets – one could delight in the invention and aesthetic sense of Dewhurst, the empathy and brimming emotion of Elphick, and the daring, warmth and

beauty of the benignly smiling Treloar – the process obviously as joyous as the outcome.

Through it all blew the storming, aching saxophone of Ades. It often seemed the room could barely contain its power, and that it would burst walls and hearts simultaneously. It was as majestic as it was raw, as complex as it was primitive and as potent as it was vulnerable.

A quote from Celan's *Stretto* could neatly summarise the piece: "... here/it gapes wide open, here/it grew back together." Frampton would have loved it.

The Music – VOLUME 5

On November 24, 2002, I presented a program in The Studio, Sydney Opera House, performing *SHADES: in memoriam Roger Frampton*. This piece, then recently written, was the bearer of deeply personal feelings and historic/creative overtones stretching all the way back to Roger's and my early days together. It's a weighty piece. One that drew together many of the threads *Collective Autonomy* had spun since its inception; something I'm sure Roger, who had passed away January 4, 2000, would have recognized and reveled in. The performance was not particularly well attended nor, I feel, particularly well received. I'll not rehearse here why I think this to be the case. Suffice it to say that from my perspective the performance was a powerful, sincere, and heart-felt occasion. One, that to this day, I am deeply grateful for. The opportunity to connect with Roger in this way was a privilege for us all.

Roger's contribution to musical life in Australia, although bordering on the legendary, or perhaps because of it, has been accounted for with a somewhat biased pitch and *SHADES*, I'd hoped, might serve to bring about a modicum of balance. Most, it seems, ignored its content. Interestingly, the press got it! The "Work" was performed again the following year, twice in fact at the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz, and again, by and large its reception indicated that the point had been missed. And again, the press got it! The story, however, has a happy ending and it can be found in *Poetry–Language–Thought*.

These three performances of *SHADES*, in addition to John Clare (Opera House), Michele Morgan and Scott Tinkler (Wangaratta), and in all three, David Ades, who had been largely responsible for the Opera House concert taking place, also included Steve Elphick and Carl Dewhurst. Steve I'd known and engaged with countless times since circa 1981 and quite often these occasions had included Roger. Carl, however, was new to me. And what a blast this proved to be! Intuitive, committed, and communicative. It seemed to me immediately obvious that a trio of considerable creative potential lay in the collective, Dewhurst–Elphick–Treloar. I approached Jim McLeod, then producer for Jazz at the ABC, and his response was utterly supportive. On July 16 ~ 17, 2003, we went into the ABC Studios, Harris Street, Sydney, and Neale Sandbach recorded the music presented here in *Of Other Narratives* Volume 5.

The music was entirely improvised. There was neither planning nor discussion. The one exception is *Twenty-Six Short Pieces*, Volume 5, CD-2. And in this case it was simply suggested that at some point we play a series of sort pieces. In fact, my initial proposal emphasized this general strategy, stressing the position of the recording engineer as another band member. In the event, Neale was precisely this. The studio setup was reasonably complicated due in part

to us being in immediate aural and visual proximity. Percussion instruments – some of which I'd carried with me from Japan, others on loan through the generosity of Hamish Stuart – were spread in a fairly large circle (about half the studio floor space!), and Neale had positioned several microphones so that the entire setup could be recorded without requiring further adjustments once we began to play. As I recall, Steve and Carl were setup with microphones and as well, direct inputs. With all this in place Neale was then able to play the desk concurrent with the musical ebb and flow. And within less than an hour, July 16, the first of our two days in the studio, we were flowing as a quartet with the one goal in sight and this, clearly focussed.

The result is here on the two CDs that constitute *Poetry–Language–Thought*. The track order in which they appear is the order in which the music was played. There has been neither editing nor production manipulation. As you hear it here is how it happened, with the only difference being the duration between takes. Neale was a wonderful band member as was Jim McLeod's incisive perception that this was a project that must happen. Abundant gratitude goes out to both.

For *Collective Autonomy* this recording marks approximately the end of a very long trajectory and the beginning of a new one. In a sense, the process of making this music had taken me and my inquiring turn of mind back to the very beginning; the wonderful days when Roger, Jack Thorncraft, and myself, would play music for hours on end, exploring possibilities and inventing new ones as we went. And during the same period, the early 1970s, Roger, Peter Evans, and myself (Dave Ellis, too, on occasion), would, likewise, play for hours on end, doing so on instruments we'd made or found; doing so with the agreement that any sound was potential music; a lesson, an unfettered environment, a tabula rasa; an inspiration we'd no doubt been awakened to through our enthusiasm for Coltrane (Alice & John), Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, and Anthony Braxton, John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen, (to name just a few); but most of all through our innate predilections and un-gated drive to discover essences that might constitute music rather than to have music dictated to us. Our inspirations were, more-or-less, confirmation that the inner voice spoke the truth and, if for no other reason than this, was a valid course to follow. The only course to follow. And follow it we did.

Poetry–Language–Thought is entirely free of premeditation. It embraces utterly the kind of musico-creative ethos Roger, Jack, Peter, and I had striven so hard to liberate. To my mind, those efforts are fully embraced by Trio 2003. It does so as its own entity. This was not self-conscious. It is no more emulative than were the creative excursions taken in the early-'70s by the four people mentioned above, and it is every bit as expressive and personally committed.

Crucially, and above all else, *Poetry–Language–Thought* is spontaneous music made by people able to get past expectations and imported, self-directed images, to simply allow themselves to be themselves, playing music as they are themselves, doing so with mind and heart wide open and a clear view as to who they are, doing what it is they do, without pretension.

The irony of conservatism is that it calls on the radical as an index. And failing this calling amounts to an imported default position; a status quo accepted without feeling, thought or question, as a hand-me-down. And as such, is the spirit of a culture embraced, at all?

VOLUME 5 TRACK DETAILS

CD-1			6	Impression 10.5	00:43
Track	Title	Duration	7	Impression 10.6	00:50
1	Impression 1	04:18	8	Impression 10.7	01:10
2	Impression 2	03:38	9	Impression 10.8	00:59
3	Impression 3	03:47	10	Impression 10.9	00:50
4	Impression 4.1 (1 st movement)	05:58	11	Impression 10.10	01:04
5	Impression 4.2 (2 nd movement)	04:13	12	Impression 10.11	01:21
6	Impression 5	01:31	13	Impression 10.12	00:39
7	Impression 6.1	05:45	14	Impression 10.13	00:38
8	Impression 6.2	02:50	15	Impression 10.14	00:39
9	Impression 6.3	10:14	16	Impression 10.15	00:57
10	Impression 6.4	03:44	17	Impression 10.16	01:12
11	Impression 6.5	07:29	18	Impression 10.17	01:16
12	Impression 7	05:47	19	Impression 10.18	01:22
13	Impression 8.1 (1 st movement)	04:47	20	Impression 10.19	00:50
14	Impression 8.2 (2 nd movement)	05:26	21	Impression 10.20	01:07
TOTAL TIME		69:29	22	Impression 10.21	02:00
			23	Impression 10.22	01:31
CD-2			24	Impression 10.23	00:58
1	Impression 9	07:59	25	Impression 10.24	02:00
2	Impression 10.1	00:39	26	Impression 10.25	01:11
3	Impression 10.2	00:37	27	Impression 10.26	01:28
4	Impression 10.3	00:43	28	Impression 11	11:18
5	Impression 10.4	01:07	29	Impression 12	11:10
			TOTAL TIME		58:20