

Drumming for Land

Bounce enough drumbeats around the vault of Washington Square Church and you can't lose. Jerome Kitzke's *The Paha Sapa Give-Back*, performed there October 13, was a joyous melee. Vocalists Kitty Brazelton, Theo Bleckmann, and others shouted in unison and thumped their chests. Kathleen Supové scraped the piano strings in eerie solos. Kitzke's group Mad Coyote improvised hot, atonal jazz, which percussion ensemble Essential Music answered with ferocious drumming, yelling "Paha Sapa Give-Back!" In the penultimate section, Irma E. Inahubareiti LaGuerre told the story of Wooke, the White Buffalo Woman who gave the Lakota people their rituals. In all, it was one of the most elaborate, varied, and compelling spectacles Downtown has heard in recent years. And before the music started, Charlotte Black Elk eloquently denounced the government's attempt to buy off the Sioux rather than give back the sacred Black Hills. "How do you sell who you are," she asked, "and still remain who you are?"

—K.G.

The Choreography of Noise

Henry Gwiazda, Poet
of Natural Sound

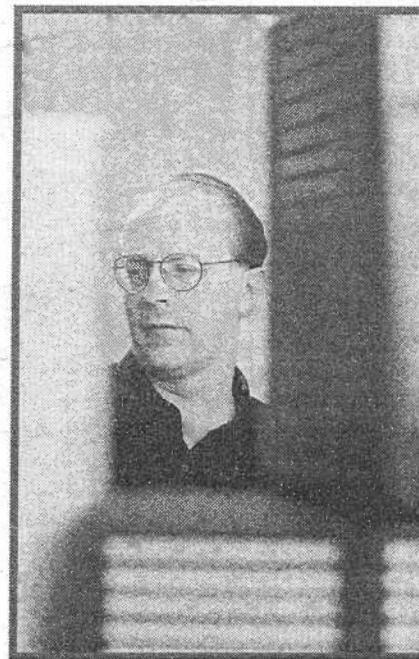
BY KYLE GANN

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT—A seagull swoops lazily from right to left, then quickly downward, clearly having sighted food. Someone (a woman, judging from her footsteps) works at a counter in front of me and then shuffles around to my right. A basketball hits a hoop several feet above me, falls, and bounces toward me. A brook murmurs at my feet, and boots march by through the rain. A disembodied guitar accompanies much of this activity, its chords floating in long ovals like bubbles blown by a child. I don't see any of this, because I'm sitting in the dark. Nor is it actually happening—I only hear it in vivid 3-D, for this is virtual audio.

Guitarist/virtual-audio composer Henry Gwiazda has been touring his new work, *buzzingreynold'sdreamland*, around the country, and its appearance at the Hartt School of Music October 9 to 11 was its closest approach to New York scheduled so far. (Gwiazda's a Hartt alumnus, brought in for a celebration of the school's 75th anniversary.) Either as performance or sound installation, the piece carries a severe limitation: it can only be heard

by one person at a time. The speaker alignment is calculated down to the millimeter, and the audience member sits in a chair whose mandated position is marked on the floor with tape. The spatial illusions are exactly dependent on your ears being the right distance from the speakers. Swing your head around, as I did to experiment during my second and third hearings, and the whole sonic plane shifts and distorts. From just three feet off center, it's like looking at a painting from a 10-degree angle to the surface.

Come on, I urge Gwiazda, put the speakers far enough apart, and you could play this at a concert. But he convinces me that, if the speakers are separated by more than 14 feet, a gap in the soundspace destroys his sonic choreography. "People look at paintings alone," he argues, "they read poetry alone, but everybody thinks music has to be a collective experience. People are going to listen to this piece alone." Software that could adjust the music to follow the listener around would require a helmet (which Gwiazda has tried to get someone to invent) to com-



Gwiazda: His new work can be heard by only one person at a time.

municate the listener's head position to the computer. As it is, he plans to put the piece on CD, with instructions on where to space your speakers and

body: "People will have to tear their living rooms apart to hear this piece," he jokes sardonically.

What makes the physical inaccessibility of Gwiazda's recent music especially regrettable is that he's an incredible poet of natural sound. In the solo sampler-and-guitar pieces he performed here in the late '80s, he had an evocative way of combining sounds—the crunching of potato chips, a baby crying, bird songs—to create delicate psychological narratives not at all reminiscent of noisy musique concrète. In *buzzingreynold'sdreamland*, titled after an old Coney Island freak show, he's raised the free association of everyday timbres to a charming level of picturesqueness that transcends the work's technical interest. Someone needs to bring it to New York. Compromise is unlikely, though, for Gwiazda has become as meticulous about spatial location as La Monte Young is about tuning and Conlon Nancarrow about tempo. Like so

much new music, his piece raises your sensitivity, making you realize how many in-your-face phenomena you habitually filter out. ❖

JAIME PENDEL

Cypress Hill

Cypress

III (temples of boom)