

Paul STEENHUISEN - PROGRAM NOTES

PIECE: Jeu de Téléphone

“I do not understand why, when I ask for a grilled lobster in a restaurant, I am never served a cooked telephone; I do not understand why champagne is always chilled and why on the other hand telephones, which are habitually so frightfully warm and disagreeably sticky to the touch, are not also put in silver buckets with crushed ice around them. Telephone frappé, mint-coloured telephone, aphrodisiac telephone, lobster-telephone, telephone sheathed in sable for the boudoirs of sirens with fingernails protected with ermine, Edgar Allen Poe telephones with a dead rat concealed within, Boecklin telephones installed inside a cypress tree (and with an allegory of death in inlayed silver on their backs), telephones on the leash which would walk about, screwed to the back of a living turtle ... telephones ... telephones ... telephones ...

from The Secret Life of Salvador Dali

PROGRAM NOTE:

Jeu de Téléphone is a non-linear version of the children’s game of “Telephone”, whereby a phrase or idea is passed from one participant to the other, successively more varied and distorted until it is (potentially) barely recognizable from its original form. One of the sources being transformed is material derived from an analysis of the ringing of an old French telephone. The telephone sound is the structural basis of the piece, while at the same time, paraphrased and mutated references to standard saxophone repertoire slip like ghosts into the piece – mostly in subtle forms, but at times overt. These allusions are identified in the score with similarly playful but incorrect names of pieces like Fanta scene, Dubois: Len’s toe, not Alun’s toe, Création du mom, More rice, Creatine demon, Desenclone, and Salamander glasses off. Eventually, once the listening is tuned to these devices, other layers emerge, where the telephone ringing sound and saxophone repertoire resonate with one another, and one begins to sound like the other, despite there being no material connection at all.

First performed by William H. Street, Charles B. Stolte, and Roger Admiral.
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