

Blending Bach

Analog sounds set to season Gene Leahy Mall

by Ken Mayer

Omaha has missed out on 20th-century music, and the Analog Arts Ensemble means to do something about it. With a thriving indie-rock scene and a thriving arts scene, it seemed strange to Joe Drew, co-director of Analog Arts, that there wasn't a contemporary music scene in Omaha.

The style of music is often criticized for being dissonant or hard to understand, but Drew intends to change the perception of last century's sound by showing people just how accessible it is.

"The type of music we do is the cross-pollination of things," Drew explained, "where you have rock meeting jazz meeting Bach, and the avant-garde just seemed to fit right into that scene and we were surprised that nobody had done it yet."

A virtual organization with 16 members from all over the world, Analog Arts is a contemporary arts collective of classically trained artists who explore new trends through a variety of disciplines. Drew and founding director Dolf Kamper met in college and decided to stay in touch as they continued to study and perform in New York and Germany. Omaha became the beneficiary of this collaboration when Dolf's wife Marcia Kamper joined the Omaha Symphony.

"The tools that you need to enjoy Stockhausen are the same tools that you need to enjoy Bach," Drew said. "It's just that he requires a different way of listening and you kind of have to put on a different set of ears. But if you can listen to one, you can listen to the other."

Not only can you attend with a different set of ears, you can show up in your jeans. "We are not elitist," he said. "Historically these artists have been put on a pedestal, and you are supposed to shuffle in, in respectful silence and scratch your chin. Analog is really about tearing down those barriers ... in a way that brings it directly to people, and doesn't put a wall between the audience and the music."

About the only composer whose pieces will be played next week at ARTSaha! that isn't 20th century is Bach. Drew feels Bach's work has been performed largely on period instruments lately, and breaking out of that instrumentation can make the man's work fresh and new again.

Bach's *Musical Offering* will be performed simultaneously by a flute trio, brass quintet, percussion ensemble and on the First United Church of Christ's organ. Each group will be free

to express its own interpretation of the piece. "The experience with the Bach is to make it interactive," Drew said. Audience members are encouraged to move between the various performances at will.

Three centuries away from Bach is Karlheinz Stockhausen, whose music also figures prominently in ARTSaha! 2005. Stockhausen is arguably one of the most innovative composers of the late-20th century. His influence is heard in avant-garde, rock and dance music. Members of the Analog Arts Ensemble studied with Stockhausen, and have been in consultation with him to prepare their performance of his piece *From the Seven Days*.

The piece consists of a textual "score" or series of instructions, such as "Play a sound with the certainty that you have an

infinite amount of time and space," or "Play a vibration in the rhythm of dreaming."

"We are going to be set up at different stations throughout the Mall," Drew said. "The way the pieces work is that there is no beginning, there is no end. For the musician, they are not playing together as an ensemble, per se. So when one musician is done with one piece he can move on to the next station along with the

audience, so both the musician and the audiences are free to move from station to station."

Electronic instruments will appear in a variety of events, and on Tuesday, Aug. 23, an all-electronic music program will be performed. Some of the pieces will be soundtracks that Analog Arts Ensemble members have composed, and will be played to accompany the short films for which they were written. Several methods of creating electronic music will be used, including live instruments processed on the spot, synthesizers, tape loops, and "found sound," including one of Drew's electronic pieces, a collage of George Bush talking. Drew noted that he and the other musicians will be available to discuss the performances.

ARTSaha! slams together Omaha and the arts in some unique ways that promise both insight and challenge with this wide-ranging and eclectic festival.

ARTSaha! 2005 will be held in various downtown locations Aug. 19-28. Attendees can pay per event or purchase a global pass for \$20. For more information, visit artsaha.org or call 346.1434.



COURTESY ANALOG ARTS ENSEMBLE

SWEET MUSIC: Nestor Hirzbaum, Joseph Drew, John Klinghammer and Rudolf Kamper perform Kamper's chamber oratorio in the closing concert of ARTSaha! 2004.