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**The Minimal  
Slow-Motion  
Approach:  
Alvin Lucier  
and Others**

*March 30, 1972*

A pre-recorded voice is heard: 'At the time of the 1972/philip-glasss-new-parts statement, this cassette will be closer to microphone one than Alvin's cassette, and further from microphone two than Mary's cassette.' Then a different voice: 'At the time of the 1972/philip-glasss-new-parts statement, this cassette will be further from microphone one than Stuart's cassette, and further from microphone one than Mary's cassette.' There are four voices in all, and they continue to describe their positions in this manner, the recording quality

varying accordingly with each statement. It is very difficult to visualize the movements of the voices, and I didn't bother to try for the first five or 10 minutes. But there was nothing else to do, and gradually I became involved and began trying to visualize the movement being described. It was a totally unemotional experience, and yet a fascinating one.

This is a description of Stuart Marshall's 'A Sagging and Reading Room,' presented on the March 19 program, which opened the Spencer Concerts series. And judging from this concert, it will be an extremely adventurous and thought provoking series. Some of the seven programs will be presented at Village Presbyterian Church, and others will be at Spencer Memorial Church, near Boro Hall in Brooklyn.

The second piece on the program was Mary Lucier's 'Journal of Private Lives.' It begins with a sort of prelude, consisting of black and white slides, depicting different forms of currency, along with newspaper clippings which are reversed and almost impossible to read. The body of the work consists of three simultaneous events. On a screen at the left, one sees a hand slowly writing a message: 'In the dream I am writing you a letter. I don't know what I am saying in the letter, but you must mail me a letter arranging to meet me on such and such a day... etc.' On a

screen at the right is a series of color slides showing slightly different views through a window. All are rather hazy, and a good deal of concentration is required in order to pick out the differences between them. The third event takes place on a central screen. For a while there are slides of solid colors, only slightly different in shade. Then there are two simultaneous projections on the screen, and a couple begins slow-motion ballroom dancing, casting mysterious double shadows on the screen. The whole piece is in dead silence.

The program ended with Alvin Lucier's 'The Queen of the South.' Here, four singers sit around a square metal plate, about three feet across, with sand sprinkled on it. As they sing into their microphones, the metal plate vibrates, causing the sand to shift into many different patterns. It had a very religious feeling that night, with everyone staring at the sand as it moved into one intricate design after another. Most of the singing was not very pleasant to

listen to, but it doesn't matter, because the movements of the sand had some of the same magic for us that the Navajo sand paintings must have for the Navajos.

The most striking thing about the concert as a whole was its coolness. Very little actually happens in any of the pieces, and they all work on a static dynamic plane. And yet I was never bored. The minimal, slow-motion approach gives one time to become involved in images in a very personal way. And if you can flow with it, and stop wanting something dramatic to happen, it can be extremely rich. The slam-bang-fast-pace-keep-the-show-moving approach we have all grown up with is not the only way to put on a concert, by any means.

*Note:*

*This may be the first time that the new music was described critically as 'minimal.' In any case, the article clearly defines what the word means for me.*