

ABATTOIR: Audrey Chen (cello/voice) and Robert van Heumen (electronics)



"They have performed together in various combinations before in Amsterdam and Chen's home city of Baltimore, but this was their first duo. Chen played cello with more finesse than I have seen her do before. When I have seen her in the past she has employed the cello and electronics mainly as drone instruments, with her often primal vocalizations leading the performance. Tonight her voice fed hungrily and playfully off her capricious cello playing. Devoted to not holding back when she performs, it was a pleasure to see her working so hard to match van Heumen's often brutal digital transformations of her sound. There were several moments of pure psychedelia as van Heumen allowed untransposed, ungranulated repetitions of Chen's voice to come through—often considered dangerous territory in some circles but used here in good taste. Van Heumen tends to play forcefully and loudly, and tonight was no exception. However, I noted positively that his choices seemed to be more calculated and considered than usual, with less attention given to his joystick controller and more focus on subtle actions and longer-term transformations. I loved it when, halfway through the second of two extended pieces, he took Chen's keening voice and filtered it in such a way that, for a moment, it seemed that George Martin, the revered Beatles producer, had entered the room."

Review by Keir Neuringer from a live concert at STEIM May 22, 2008.

Sound clips at <http://hardhatarea.com/sounds.php?category=20>

Contact: robert@hardhatarea.com

Audrey Chen

Audrey Chen is a Chinese-American musician and performance artist born outside of Chicago in 1976. Using the cello, voice and analog electronics, Chen's work focuses on the combination and layering of traditional and extended techniques. A large component of her music is improvised and her approach to this is often extremely personal and visceral. Her performance work incorporates sound, movement and visual/sculptural concepts. Chen performs solo and in collaboration with a wide number of musicians and dancers. Among musicians, she has worked with many great improvisers, including Phil Minton, Elliott Sharp, Aki Onda, Phill Niblock, Frederic Blondy, Jim Pugliese, Alessandro Bosetti, Mike Cooper, Mats Gustafsson, Mazen Kerbaj, Michael Zerang, Tatsuya Nakatani, Le Quan Ninh, Joe McPhee, Susan Alcorn, Michele Doneda, Paolo Angeli, and Gianni Gebbia. Some current projects include: duos with Phil Minton, Frederic Blondy, Robert van Heumen, Kati Hernandez, Nate Wooley, a new trio project with Nate Wooley and C. Spencer Yeh, 3AandE: with Seamus Cater, Robert van Heumen and Nate Wooley and Trockeneis: with Andy Hayleck, Dan Breen, Catherine Pancake and Paul Neidhardt. Chen has performed in Europe, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, Taiwan and the USA. She is currently based in Baltimore, MD USA where she is member of the Red room and High Zero Collective, an on-going series and international festival devoted to experimental improvised music.

<http://www.myspace.com/audreychen>

Robert van Heumen works with sound: electronic, experimental, improvised, structured, composed. Recent works include the compositions 'Vreemdeling (Stranger)', 'Fury', 'Silent' and '12 Bullets' which are performed in multichannel and semi-improvised environments as well as produced for release on CD. As a musician he uses STEIM's live sampling software LiSa and real-time audio-synthesis and algorithmic composition software SuperCollider. He is active as a member of the electronic audio-visual trio SKIF++ (with Jeff Carey & Bas van Koolwijk), noiseband Man in the Middle (with Nicolas Field & Tom Tlalim), Shackle (working with electro-flutist Anne LaBerge on restriction), electro-acoustic sextet OfficeR (with Koen Nutters cs.), founding member of the N Collective, and has shared the stage with dj sniff (Takuro Mizuta Lippit), Michel Waisvisz, Richard Barrett, Sakata Akira, Nicolas Collins, Oguz Buyukberber, Luc Houtkamp, Guy Harries, Morten J. Olsen, Daniel Schorno, Roddy Schrock, Audrey Chen, Nate Wooley a.o. His soundworld is a mixture of digital crackles, heavy distortion, melancholic melodies, environmental sounds, voices, sounds from kitchen appliances, most of the time smashed beyond repair. Van Heumen is Managing Director of the STEIM foundation in Amsterdam, curator of the Local Stop concert series and member of STEIM's Artistic Committee. In a previous life mathematician, trumpet player and software programmer. He still reads L.E.J. Brouwer.

<http://hardhatarea.com>