AN UNTITLED PIECE FOR

ORIGINAL QUARTET

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The six foot by eight foot "Junk Box" began with a trip to the junk yard and with a persuasive argument to convince the proprietor that his dormant pile of metal really had sound vibrations hidden within its body. Although his face showed a slight look of unbelief, he stopped the huge crane-like monster from his random gulping, and I was allowed to scamper around, selecting the pieces that I wanted. The choice selections for stardom were carefully laid in their waiting limousine because of their shape, an unusual twist or bend, or size, knowing that the big bass pieces would be contrasted with the tiny soprano ones. Their real potential for tone could not be tested until they were freely suspended, although there were some sneak previews. Even after several minutes of wary watchfulness the employees of this thriving metropolis began to discover small gems that they had never noticed before. Excited voices could be heard exclaiming, "Look! Look! Wouldn't you like to have this?" I drove away with a pocketbook a little bit lighter and with my limousine a great deal heavier.

The privileged characters took up residence in the most secretive depths of the music building with the gauges and steam pipes for company and patiently waited for their own special home to be constructed. After the blueprint was drawn, an unwieldy saw and a hammer that was determined to drive crooked nails laboriously transformed a small pile of lumber into fourteen multi-sized rooms, consisting of four-sided
boxes. Another eliminations trial was held to discover who fitted best in each room and who had the best voice. Only a few tears were heard from the unfortunate ones, but one large wail was heard when the whole structure came toppling over. One small detail had been forgotten; the structure did have to stand on its own two feet. Well, the solution to this earth-shattering problem was not two feet but four, consisting of three foot two by fours, and the pile of boxes in their final form became a lanky caterpillar. Large nails, wooden beads glued onto dowel rods, metal pipes and a wooden pole are employed to strike the various metal surfaces, when the Junk Box is asked to sing. The gorgeous rusty coats that the residents of the Junk Box had acquired over their many years of struggle determined the color scheme, red, orange, yellow and brown, of their new home and also for their newly created friends.

The second member of this quartet, the "Superlative 2 Toadstool," began with the donation of a wooden spool on which rope comes wound on. With the aid of a hand drill, eye screws encircled the top disc and eye bolts, the bottom. Ordinary wire was stretched between the two and tightened by turning the eye bolts. With only a few dozen broken wires and small dowel rods, determining the length of wire that will vibrate by being inserted at different levels between the wires and the central pole of the spool, which acts as a resonating box, a nasal twang is emitted when the wires are plucked. With a little more effort than the wave of a magic wand an ordinary wooden spool became a misshaped harp. The toadstool became complete when this pileus was attached to its stem, consisting of a fence post
nailed to a piece of plywood and surrounded by the negative plywood shapes left from the cutting of the "Organic Paper Drum." The positive forms for this drum, emerging from the sheet of plywood as a three-sided organic form, connected by hinges, confronted the world with faces of geometric-designed wrapping paper, shiny tin foil and waxed paper. They are coaxed into speaking when a pair of drum brushes are lightly dusted across their surfaces.

The smallest form, displaying some organic surfaces of wood and metal, became a "Giant Baby Rattle," when it was revolved around a central pole. But even a baby might be startled when a carefully constructed, enclosed colonade structure became a heap of rubber pipes and escaping marbles, wooden beads, fish bobbers, b-b's, golf balls and ping pong balls after the first revolution. But with the aid of a little magic, consisting of epoxy glue and masking tape, the balls are now tightly sealed within the rubber tubes and can gently roll between the metal and wooden surfaces or land with a heavy thud.

The Junk Box, the Superlative Toadstool, the Organic Paper Drum and the Giant Baby Rattle stood anxiously awaiting the down beat by the conductor's baton, but they soon discovered to their amazement that nothing had been written for an illustrious group like this. So that their hopes might not be shattered, I immediately came to their rescue with a slightly unconventional piece to exploit their unique and varied sonorities. The residences of the Junk Box were each given a letter of the alphabet for identification; the wires of the Superlative Toadstool, numbers one to thirty-one; the faces of the Organic
Paper Drum, numbers one to three; and the Giant Baby Rattle, simply the identification of balls. Music notes were deprived of half of their duties by expressing only rhythmic values without pitch identification. This is determined by each individual item, whose selection is described by the use of a letter or number under the standard musical notation. Even the notes were completely abandoned and substituted for arrows when the nail is to be dragged around, down or across the piece. The unpredictable nature of my musical characters influenced the writing of an unpredictable composition, which might be described as a combination of aleatoric and determined elements.

The first down beat of the conductor's baton begins a section, identified by the rehearsal numbers one to six, in which the sequence of sonorities is determined within a free metrical unit. This develops into a canon between the four players, structured into a mixed meter section of $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{5}{4}$. The aleatoric and ostinato patterns, which consist of a given, repeated form with the choice of determining the tone elements to be used, begin a few measures after rehearsal letter seven. At section eight players one and four continue these patterns while players two and three begin an alternating imitation which develops into single melodic lines and finally into the similar patterns being played by one and four. This section continues to rehearsal number fourteen with a constant increase in tempo and volume. The final section is structured like the beginning as a determined sequence of sonorities within a free metrical unit. The complete composition suggest a kind of A B A form through structure, texture, which is characterized
by a sparenness in the beginning and closing sections, contrasted
with the density of the middle section, and tonal element through
the developmental use of the same tonal item at the end which
began the work.

After four skeptical people were recruited, the moment
for which the quartet had been waiting for finally arrived;
they began to sing. But to their amazement, they were soon to
learn that they were not only fun to listen to but were also
fun to look at, and that their performers were not limited to
the carefully selected four but were extended to the whole
gamut of ages and occupations, who were simply drawn by a
curious and creative urge to make sounds, to make music. Thus
it seems that the same feelings that I had experienced as
constructor and composer were very actively transferred to those
who saw and found the joy in exploring. For me this is the most
successful element of my bizarre quartet.
FOOTNOTES

1. Junk Box can be seen in the photograph on the following page.

2. Superlative Toadstool

3. Organic Paper Drum

4. Giant Baby Rattle
5. The diagram of the Junk Box, showing the method of labeling the various pieces for writing and performance purposes, is found on the following page.

6. The score for "An Untitled Piece" immediately follows the diagram of the Junk Box.
I. Use side of nail

II. Outside rim

III. Inside rim quick upsweep of hand as tip leaves ring

IV. Little faster

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R.H.

G quickly

L.H.

Edge (f)

Hold nail head

---

L outside rim

Hold nail head

---

S (f)

R

S

Q
Improvise in your section (3)

Improvise in your section (4)

poco rit.
Harmonic overplay as fast as possible

I

X W F E G D A  A D G E F W X  X W F E G D A

(PP)

II

Nail slowly

III

Nail slowly

Play as fast as possible

IV

30 29 28 27 26 25 24 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

9 Improvise on \text{ABC} (4)

I

H D G E F W X

II

Z Y T T Y Z Y

III

T Z a Z a Z a

IV

30 29 28 27 26 25 24

9a Improvise on strings 17-26 (4)

I

II

m W X W W X W

III

N M N K M K J K

IV


(G to Balls and improvise with the)

Improvise on strings 1-10
Pluck 2 strings at a time

continue with Balls

Improvise in section I hitting 2 at a time

cres.
I.  Improvise M=metal W=wood

II.  Improvise M=metal W=wood

III.  Stick mallet

IV.  Use one brush and ring of the other alternately on wood

* Stick end of mallets  * Hold mallet part, play with sticks, inside and box W
Rubber on paper stick together
Brush on wood

Improvise on 6-13
Rubber on paper stick together
Brush on wood

Gradually louder
Improvise alternating between wood and metal

Gradually increase

Run nail lightly across wire
Go back to position
Nail slowly so each ring sounds

I

II

III

IV

10 → 8 | 10 → 8 | 3 → 11 | 3 → 11

I

II

III

IV

Grooved part E E

R

Grooved part K

G

G

E

E

G

G

G

G

12

29

27

24

25

Slowly so each edge sounds
Side of nail across ridges

Balls
Have sideways gently, slowly roll

Wire
I  

II  

III  

IV  

---

rub nail along edge

Balls slowly

---

rub nail with nail

---

Paper outline, general shape, quick sweep

---

Hands on top of wire drum

10 Hand 9 Hand 13 Hand 14 12
Support structure Heavy pipe

Walk around in front and hit in dent

Balls (f) quickly

Return to the back

crooked pipe Nail head

Nail head

slowly, deliberately

Wooden pole Nail

(ff) D (mf) D (pp) D