

I have escaped even myself

am I? Who am I? What am I? How did I come to be this, the person I suppose I am? What does it mean for me to be me? Is this character a manifestation of my being, a mirror to my consciousness, or even a splinter of my unconscious, a link to deep and hidden secrets about myself that I never even knew? So who is the real me? Do I know? How would I know? What does it mean to know something? Why should it even matter? I create. I experience. I apprehend. I think. I taste. I breathe. I exist. But am I?

In by himself or herself, no man being is an island. Fragmented, multiple and malleable, the voices within the socialised self allows the individual to imagine the world in the terms of "self" and "other", according to the structure of a universal social. I am merely myself. So who asked the question? Is the singularity, continuity, consistency and identity of the self a mere illusion? "I" has no meaning without "you", without the "other" of the social. I cannot see, much less recognise myself without someone else. History. Memory. Language. Image. In the mirror, I see that which the others see of "me". Hello. And you are? The body. The brain. The mind. That's me? Which me? If "I" am but an illusory side-effect of bio-chemistry, is the image that meets my gaze in the looking glass, the me that the world sees, not also a representation, a symbol of this thing called "me"? A representation that guarantees my false(?) sense of uninterruptedness and self-consistency. The "I" is merely an abstraction, a short-handed way of addressing the complexity of the self. So what?

And beyond the instant caught in the here and now, where is the "I" of the moment? The subjectivity of experience and existence is mine and my alone to have. The only

true thing that I can completely trust. Or should I? Is the world an illusion beyond "me"? But am I not also a similar caricature? So I am not what I was five minutes ago, much less five years ago. Yet I am still me. Only me? Thoughts. Flashbacks. The will to be. A will that is stamped on my actions. The will to create. This is me. Because I will it to be. My things. My belongings. My work. My creation. My art. That will is me, yet beyond me. An extension of myself, a part of my many selves, yet also immeasurably greater than the sum of my collective selves. Or perhaps it was just a figment of my imaginary being that has managed to escape the confines of my self. It is, is it not? Would you happen to have the answer? If only you were me. Or if I were you. Though I also believe I truly were you. And still am. Am I not? I have not escaped. I have escaped.

"I have escaped even myself" is the second in a continuation of a series of experimental music / sound art events presented by Singapore Sonic Arts Collective (sporesac). Building upon the success and goodwill of "I have lost friends", an interpretive and cross-cultural interrogation of the meaning of loss via 4 sets of performances, in February 2005, this continues to showcase a range of local and global artists in their attempt to ground abstract experimentation in the reality of everyday experiences and "real-world" issues. Turning a reflective eye inwards upon the seat of the human psyche, "I have escaped even myself" will attempt to address the elusive nature of the self and the divide between the inner (though probably not any more "true") self and the represented externalised selves that are taken to denote that self, whether in terms of body-image, material possessions or even creative output. In the realm of performance and art, what defines

the artist as a self? Is this his or her own undertaking alone? Or is the artist and his or her art defined by that which is created and the meanings that are derived thereof? Or continuing along the same vein, is the artist not in a sense a fictive construct, one fashioned by an audience, even a non-existent one? Featuring 6 solo sets of about 16 minutes each, presented by a collection of local and international sound experimenters, the intention is to have a continuous collage of sound with five bridging segments, each one a brief improvised collaboration between the artists concerned that flows seamlessly from and to the preceding and following sets, allowing a non-stop flow of processes that dissolves the very idea of a "solo". An examination of the deterritorialised extensions of the self in the realm of performance, this performance will also question the ubiquity of the concept of the "solo". What does it mean to be solo? What does a solo performance actually mean and where does it begin and end? A solo refers to a sense of singularity. But is that singularity referring to the performer, his or her performance or the larger context of the event. So who and what is this solo? A soul trying to raise its voice? Or an implicit recognition of our (misplaced) belief in the singular unity (and primacy) of the category called the individual? If the self is but a fragmented bundle of conflicting subjectivities, is not the idea of a "solo" a paradoxical suggestion? Perhaps, the existential loneliness of the human condition is not an issue of the randomness of life or the impossibility of companionship, but rather the inability of the self/selves to escape its prison. And with laptops and other musical instruments through which performers work, create and speak, there could and should also be a reconsideration of the kind of

identities, personalities and selves made possible by the intensifying nature of the nexus between man and machine/instrument, by the rise of cybernetic beings. Other than the manipulation of space, sound artists and musicians have always relied on machinic appendages, even if these are but extensions of the body, such as a voice or limbs. In this sense, the man-machine linkage is not clearly just a novel one. Is the voice that is "liberated" through the act of performing the hidden self of the artist or merely the proverbial ghost in the machine? A resounding solo performance indeed. Does one perform or is one performed through? Giving voice to circuits that hum with a life of their own. There is indeed something aesthetically powerful in that thought.

The evening will conclude with a panel discussion with the involved artists, and their thoughts about the idea of "solo" and "composition" will be discussed.

This ongoing series is conceived by Yuen Chee Wai, researched by Alex Goh and produced by Harold Seah. Presented by sporesac/Flux Us at 72-13, with the strong support of 72-13.

25 March 2006, 8pm.

Tickets at \$15/- available at the door.

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