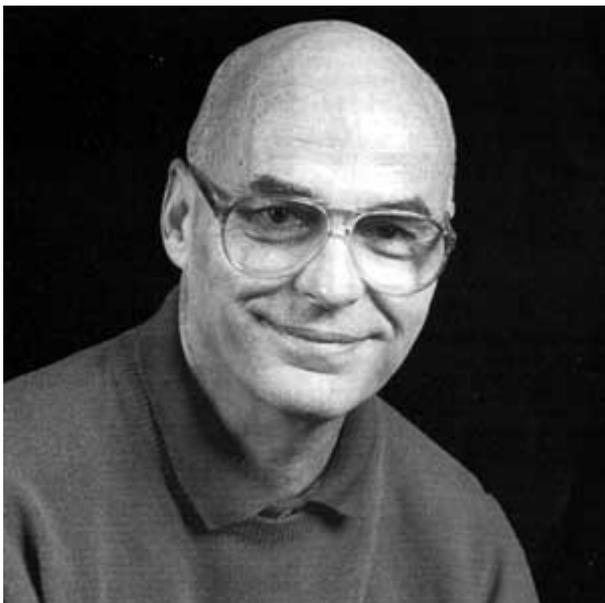


Interviews



Tod Dockstader and James Reichert in the studio mixing Omniphony



Tod Dockstader



Tod Dockstader's studio, circa. 1966

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[«index»](#) page: [1](#) [2](#)

Interview with Chris Cutler [2002]

This originally appeared as additional notes for the ReR CD release of Omniphony

Chris Cutler Omniphony was a radical and so far as I know unprecedented project, since it integrated concrete sounds, specifically composed material for acoustic instruments and subsequent manipulations of the acoustic material in a collaborative dialogue between two composers. How did you come to that?

Tod Dockstader I met Jim Reichert around 1962 at the Gotham Recording studios in NYC, where I'd been working as an engineer since about 1959. He was working for CBS television as a music supervisor picking out recorded cue music for their live drama shows. He was interested in what I'd been doing with tape - I'd done the Eight Pieces, Luna Park and Drone by then, and was working on Water Music. I had a lot of other sounds in the bank, which he listened to and suggested we collaborate on something. He took the tapes home and started writing, orchestrating and expanding on the ideas.

CC This was not for any particular purpose?

TD At this stage, no, but of course if it actually came to doing something there would be musicians and studio time to pay, which would cost money that neither of us had. But Jim knew his way around and drafted a proposal. He approached some foundations and even tried a subscription plan, neither of which elicited any interest. Eventually, it turned out he already knew someone who knew someone who had a record company. That was Owl Records - and they were looking for something new. I'd completed Water Music and Quatermass by then, and I'd been trying in vain to find a home for them. Owl bought the Concerto Grosso idea (Jim's original project title), but they knew it would take some time. Meanwhile they were still looking for material for immediate release. I sent them my three LPs worth, which they put out, piecemeal, while they waited for the 'Concerto' to be completed.

CC And how was that done?

TD It took time until we were finally ready to record the instruments. Then the studio session turned out... rough ...a hard day's nightmare. We got through it eventually. The players worked hard and didn't complain, even though some of their parts were almost unplayable. For the transformation of the instrumental tapes we went to Bob Moog's studio in Trumansburg. We ran the instrumental tapes through his filters and ring modulators and the rest, trying to make them blend with the sound of my original "cell" tapes. It took two days. So now we had my original tapes, the studio instrumental tapes and the "Mooged" tapes. Jim pretty much took over at this stage. He'd become a good editor, but as an engineer, he had a way to go: he kept mixing down into overloads, and you can hear some of that still on the CD (as bass IM distortion). But that's my problem. Owl liked it and named it; and that's when it became Omniphony.

[«index»](#) page: [1](#) [2](#)

Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to NOMEX for directing me towards Dockstader's music and to Howard Slater for his support, encouragement and contribution. This site has been constructed to disseminate information about Tod Dockstader - if you have any contributions, please email them to the webmaster.