

sean o huigin / A FEW SOUND THOUGHTS

In 1969 artist Aiko Suzuki put together a multi-media performance entitled Cricket, the first to be held in Toronto. In the process she approached electronic music composer Ann Southam and myself and asked us to contribute to the program. From that point on Ann and I have worked closely combining her music and my poetry, producing records, tapes and live performances.

My main interest in the early days was not so much pure sound but the layering of sound, especially voices. I had been working with performances using up to eight readers experimenting in moving sound around, over, across performance spaces.

Collaborating with Ann was fascinating for me as she was able to create much more dramatic and complex effects electronically than was possible with just live voices. It was and still is of more interest to me to provide Ann or others with whom I might work with my texts and see what they do with them, than it is to actually sit together and work on a final product.

About the same time that Cricket was produced, I began to do considerable work in schools through the just-created Inner City Angels in Toronto and the equally new Ontario Arts Council Artists in Schools program.

From the early days in the schools I used bp Nichol's MOTHER LOVE record which the children responded to enthusiastically. For those with reading/writing problems the use of Sound Poetry enabled them to participate in an oral/linguistic creativity which provided great scope for expression with no fear of mistakes or failure. Combined with Visual, Found and Conceptual Poetry explorations a program was developed which I have been using ever since to provide young people and even older audiences with a new concept of Poetry and a non-threatening introduction to the experimental areas of the Art.

During the years Ann and I have continued to collaborate, producing programs for school broadcasts as well as theatre events. In the mid-seventies I spent three years in England working with Bob Cobbing and his Experimental Poetry Workshops. There as well we began touring schools introducing Sound Poetry with equally enthusiastic reception and participation from the students.

Now there are a number of Sound Poets working in schools and the value of this

Art as a learning vehicle has been well proved. With language today on the brink of major evolution due to the potential of international computer communication it is my feeling that the work the Sound Poets have been doing over the years may finally be perceived as being relevant and important to the change about to take place.

