



Ellen Fullman (left) and Arnold Dreyblatt

Ellen Fullman
The Long String Instrument

Superior Viaduct LP

When I saw Ellen Fullman perform in the attic of Bristol's Arnolfini Theatre in 2014, she did something she would never normally allow: she electrically amplified her instrument. The acoustics of the space were so poor she was left with little choice. The natural amplification offered by the instrument's resonators was insufficient without a sympathetic architecture. Presumably the Tennessee born composer and instrument builder had no such difficulties when she recorded her 1985 album *The Long String Instrument*, now being reissued on vinyl by the San Francisco based Superior Viaduct label. The LP's five cuts were recorded during a residency at Eindhoven's Het Appolohuis, a 19th century cigar factory turned into a vibrant space for performance art and new media by composers Remko Scha and Paul Panhuysen in 1980.

Today, Fullman is widely celebrated for her work with the long string instrument, but back in 1985 it was still a relatively new part

of her practice. Trained as a visual artist, she began experimenting in sound around 1978, beginning with the *Metal Skirt Sound Sculpture*, a pleated sheet metal skirt with guitar strings drawn from it to the toes and heels of her platform shoes. She had a piece called "Streetwalker" where she played this item of musical clothing while pacing through the city's red light district.

In 1980 she was invited to perform the same piece at the New Music America festival in Minneapolis where she heard about a performance of Alvin Lucier's *Music On A Long Thin Wire*. Fullman never made it to that Lucier performance, but its title alone was enough to inspire her. Soon after, she began experimenting with long thin wires of her own, rubbed longitudinally with rosined fingers, and she gave her first long string performance at the Walker Art Center in November 1981.

In the three and a half decades since, her method has undergone a process of continual refinement, which Fullman has referred to as her personal music school. But even in the comparatively early dawn when this recording was made in the

mid-1980s, the long string instrument – a room-spanning installation of 32 bronze and stainless steel strings, stretching some 50 feet across – sounded rich and full and utterly bewitching.

To listen to this record through headphones now is to enter a world of sound that gleams like some multifaceted gemstone. The album opens with "Woven Process", a duet in which Fullman and her composer friend Arnold Dreyblatt walk slowly up and down the alleys of the instrument, gently teasing out the different harmonics, drifting through staggered chord clusters. With its fluvial quality, always moving but never going anywhere, the piece at once recalls the tamboura drone of Indian classical music and some of the late orchestral works of John Cage.

Despite the insufficiencies of the room, I was bewitched by Fullman's performance at the Arnolfini, and this 1985 record transports me immediately back to the peculiarly timeless mindset I found myself in that evening. What I had not previously heard, however, was another instrument of Fullman's invention, the water drip drum.

This simple device uses finely calibrated valves to release drops of water onto a contact miked aluminium pan, the splats of which are then transformed by foot pedals to produce a sound not unlike a Ghanaian talking drum. On the third track "Swigen" (Dutch for "Swing"), this instrument really comes into its own. Heavily ring-modulated, the water drip drum provides a wonkily unpredictable foil to the drone of the long string instrument to produce a sound reminiscent of the electronic soundtracks to certain paranoid science fiction film of the 70s.

In the three decades since this was first released, audiences have learnt to expect from Fullman the aqueous expansiveness of the LSI drone – and that's here too, sounding particularly lovely on "Memory Of A Big Room". But there's another, more dynamic side to the composer, effectively showcased here on "Swigen" and "Dripping Music", that would appeal not just to fans of Eliane Radigue or Pauline Oliveros, but also Moondog, John Carpenter and even The BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

Robert Barry

The Sea". If *White Light From The Mouth Of Infinity* was the record *The Burning World* should have been, *Love Of Life* points firmly to what was to come.

Abi Bliss

Mikael Tariverdiev

Film Music

Earth Recordings 3×CD/3×LP+PBK

In 2011, Stephen Coates of The Real Tuesday Weld was sheltering from the cold in a Moscow cafe when he became fascinated by the muzak playing in the background. It turned out to be Mikael Tariverdiev's soundtrack to *Goodbye Boys*,

and so began a journey that led to this first major Western release of his film music.

Tariverdiev was a kind of Soviet Michel Legrand. A near-contemporary of the French composer, he was born in 1931 to Armenian parents in Tbilisi, Georgia. He studied with Aram Khachaturian, and became known through his music for the coming of age film *Goodbye Boys*, directed by lifelong friend Mikhail Khalik in 1964. They worked on several films, but in the early 1970s Khalik ran foul of censorship and defected to the West. Tariverdiev is still a household name in Russia for his music to cult TV films *Seventeen Moments Of Spring* (1973)

and the romcom *The Irony Of Fate* (1976), regularly shown on winter holiday TV.

Like Legrand, Tariverdiev had a penchant for melancholic themes that exploit cyclical harmonic patterns, and he also had a love of jazz. The dominant style here is romantic, with an element of pastiche – shades of Astor Piazzolla on "Prelude For Cello And Piano" from *The Fate Of The Resident* (1970), and lush Ellingtonian voicings on "It Happens" from *The Man Overboard* (1956). Several tracks, including "Summer Blues" (1964) with its cautious free jazz coda, and "All This Jazz" (1968), feature Eduard Tyazyov's jazz ensemble – I presume he's the crisply

styled pianist, and there's a passionate but unidentified alto saxophonist.

Tariverdiev scored over 130 films, and he also composed ballets, operas and song cycles. In the 1960s he developed a third stream aesthetic, The Third Trend. But it's hard to see him as a cultural nonconformist. He was awarded the Lenin Komsomol prize, and in 1986 he was named People's Artist of Russia; he was also head of the Composers' Guild of the Soviet Cinematographer's Union from its inception. Yet despite its recourse to sentimentality, this is appealing, historic and culturally important music.

Andy Hamilton

Pieter Borsma