

# S t r a n g e N a t u r e

*A nocturnal drama in one act, transforming the Village of Yorkville Park into a dynamic night-time stage, employing movement-theatre, light sculpture, sound installation and electroacoustic music*

The Village of Yorkville Park, Toronto

Friday, August 16 & Saturday, August 17, 1996

A Fringe Festival of Independent Dance Artists Offsite Project, produced by Studio Excelo

Quartet Version with lighting design by Jeff Bartlett, at The Southern Theatre and regional locations, August 1-10

Presented by the American Composers Forum, produced by Studio Excelo as part of Sonic Circuits

## **Cast**

**Takashi Harada**

ondes Martenot

**Sarah Peebles**

electroacoustics, shô, audio installations

**Peter Chin**

costumes

**Peter Chin, JoAnna Powell, Allison Ulan, Katherine Gordon-Marsh**

dancers

**Kazue Mizushima**

music installation, dance direction

**Yoji Toyosaki**

projections/visual installation

## **Musical instruments and installation materials:**

**ondes Martenot:** an early electroacoustic instrument developed by the late French 'cellist and instrument maker, Maurice Martenot, between roughly 1916 and 1972. It contains two oscillators, three specially-constructed loudspeakers (oscillating a Chinese gong, a spring reverb unit and sympathetic strings), and a small keyboard interface which provides touch-sensitive vibrato, and which contains a string running the length of the keyboard, used to access non-standard tones and a wide range of glissandi, via a ring which attaches to the players' finger.

**sound installation:** 200 paper cups, silk string.

**electroacoustics:** computer-assisted performance including sampled sounds, Max and Sample Cell programming, diffused over 10 loudspeakers placed within the mini-marsh, trees and rear of set; water whistle, "bird-o-lator" (15 toy birds, containing chirping sample chips, placed in trees and controlled via home-made push-button box); shô - Japanese reed mouth-organ used in traditional court music (*gagaku* / entering Japan from mainland Asia c. 600-800 A.D.).

**visual installation:** 6 high-powered slide projectors, 2 dissolve units, cloth-wrapped styrofoam surfaces on construction hoarding; slide art — natural surfaces (rock, etc), computer-enhanced color, etc.

**set:** The Village of Yorkville Park (downtown Toronto; designed by Olsen Worland Architects): tree grove, marsh with boardwalk, corridor, water fall-sculpture sculpted paper light shades (boardwalk section), background hoarding (encompassing in total 1/4 of the park; roughly 1/4 block)

**The music of *Strange Nature* integrated** hand-made, vintage, high-tech and ancient instruments. The ondes Martenot produces a wide variety of sounds, ranging from white noise to bird calls, industrial sound to the 'cello-like singing quality it was originally developed to reproduce. Harada's performance as soloist in the middle of the marsh underpinned the myriad of activities (both visual and aural) surrounding him, and at once contrasted and overlapped the sounds of string telephones and sampled sound environments. Electroacoustics provided by Peebles, while invisible, were intended to draw attention to

different areas of the park and at times to infuse the atmosphere with a subliminal pedal-point (a constant) — be it the sound of gurgling water, frogs, buzzing insects or bell-like tones. The sampled sound “environments”, combining North American and Japanese insects and city-scapes (see “dillpatch” and “lake Ontario” diagrams), were diffused in an intentionally tongue-in-cheek way in these areas, playing off the park’s theme of nature recreated.

Kazue Mizushima's string telephone installation, while made of the simplest materials, was performed to elicit subtle harmonic and timbral textures, loud, dense, reverberant soundscapes, and everything in-between. Her trademarks — extensive, visually-striking constructions, detailed performance techniques, and theatric realization — played off the distinctive architecture of the Village of Yorkville Park, and the performers moving within the array of high-tension strings, were central to both dramatic interplay and sound creation.

Yoji Toyosaki’s light installation worked with layers of slowly-changing slide projections against a three-dimensional, textured construction placed against the hoarding, behind the ondes Martenot player, to create a visual environment in the shadows of the park which intersected the static aggregates of paper cups and string, the art deco shapes of the ondes Martenot speakers, and the moving figures as they passed through the projections at close and at far ranges.

### *Credits*

**Concept:** Sarah Peebles  
**Co-direction/improvisation:** Takashi Harada, Kazue Mizushima, Yoji Toyosaki, Sarah Peebles (Takashi Harada appears courtesy of JVC Japan)  
**Photo documentation:** Francesco Gallé (3x5 images) and Adrienne Leong (4x6 images)

### **Personnel:**

Ron Gaskin	Production Co-ordinator/Stage Manager
James Pett	Technical Co-ordinator/Sound & Recording Technician
Jennifer Shaw	Lighting Technician, Design
Bentley Jarvis	Audio Assistant
Robert Cruickshank	Technical Assistant/Bird-o-lator Design
Simon Jarvis, Dave Chokrun	Technical Assistant
Sachiko Murosaki	Assistant—visual installation
Ginny Wong	Assistant—visual installation
Peter Chin	Costume Co-ordinator/Design; Stage Lighting Design—boardwalk
Sophia Grigoriadis	Production Assistant, Public Relations
Ron Miyanishi	Production Assistant, Volunteer Co-ordinator
Corinne Crathorne	Production Assistant
Avril Helbig	Promotion
Anneli West	Graphic design
Heli Tuomi	Web page design
Nick dePencier	Video Documentation
Peter Lord	Cartage
Owen Young	Security

Volunteer staff: Gord Melamed, Sybil Wilkinson, Pamela Neblett, Vivian Lusney, Jenny Christodou, Marianne Madarush, Misao Kanke, Niel Benson, Rob Gilmore, Robert Kettle, Jola Sobolak, and Takayuki Miyazawa & co.

Produced by Studio Excelo (Sarah Peebles), and presented by The Fringe Festival of Independent Dance Artists and CIUT Radio.

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Strange Nature toured to Minnesota August 1 - 10, where it premiered as a quartet (without dance) at The Southern Theatre in Minneapolis, with workshop-performances at the Northfield Arts Guild and at St. Cloud State University. Presented by the American Composers Forum as part of Sonic Circuits Festival of Electronic Music (Philip Blackburn, director), and produced by Sarah Peebles, the tour was supported by the Japan-United States Friendship Commission, the Japan Foundation through the Performing Arts JAPAN Program, the Suitcase Fund: A Project of Ideas and Means in Cross-Cultural Artists' Relations — an initiative created by Dance Theatre Workshop in New York City with major funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, and by AT&T Foundation.

Video, photo and audio documentation available upon request:

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