

probably unconscious since African traditional music has never been distributed in quantity in the West, and therefore to arrive at this point Taylor had to perform a kind of constructive destruction act in the process of confronting and learning the technique of Western Music. In other words, having acknowledged and understood the musical validity of Western musical technique, he has appropriated it as raw material and re-shaped it in the form of his personal and community desire and so created a new force. The extraordinary power of his achievement lies in the fact that this process is always audible in his playing.

IT WOULD NOW BE SILLY in examining the broader social implications of his music to say, as is so often said by the more condescendingly liberal of the white jazz critics, that Cecil Taylor is forging a new black image in America. He is doing nothing of the sort. He, like so many other great musicians of our race, is a product of an already strongly forged emotional image, common to universal human experience and most consistently developed to broader levels by historical black experience.

The implication that a new image needs to be forged for the black race in America, is not merely insulting, it is also a lie. In fact what is needed and what Cecil Taylor among others does supply, is a strengthening and revitalisation of ancient virtues. A renewal of ancient ritual rather than a creation of new ritual. It is the circumstance under which his particular vision of black experience is forged that creates the illusion of the renewal being new, but as the blues singer said:

*The blues ain't no stranger
Oh yeah,
They've been here before.*

And in any case the vision of the Afro-American experience that white America holds is not the vision that the community in general holds of itself. And it is the self-image which is most important in the vital life of a people. Cecil Taylor is in this way a pure artist because what he creates is drawn from a pure inner desire conditioned by a native rather than an alien standard. And just as Taylor works inside the rhythm

of his music so does his sensibility exist within the framework of the broad experience. This is the rhythm that is black.

AS A SOCIAL DIRECTIVE in the illustrative way, his music could be said to represent only motion and fundamental soul. If these virtues were fully employed in the black American community's life as they are in his music, there would be no question of the "new image." But this is not the teaching of the official American community attitude and so this could explain why there are not too many recordings of Cecil Taylor, or for that matter traditional African music, available in the West. Yet it is always dangerous to politicise an artist's product for it loses in that way much of its humanity and it is this humanity that is its strength. Cecil Taylor is a creator whose force lies in subjective moments of his creativity and these moments must be allowed to disseminate naturally and subtly into the wide area of the communal consciousness, and that takes time.

HIS BEST RECORD to my mind is the 1958 "Looking Ahead" (Contemporary M 3562), and yet I am tempted to think that the Candid Album, "The World Of Cecil Taylor" was an even more important breakthrough. The work with tenorist Archie Shepp on this album held a new grain of simple sweet beauty with harsh but sad overtones. In short a baring of the blues. But the company, Candid, went out of business soon after that record was released and so now it has become a rare collector's item. On the Fantasy Album, "Cecil Taylor Live At The Montmartre," (Fantasy, stereo, 86014), in spite of the absence of bassist Henry Grimes who had been his bass-player in the U.S.A. but who did not go to Europe with him, the extraordinary economy of his playing is the outstanding quality. Against the earlier Contemporary disc it illustrates a remarkable process of consistent and relentless thrust. But in spite of perpetual motion and momentum he does not sacrifice the fundamental soul and in so doing he makes the direction of his movement valid.

One sweep of love

FOR THE SABOTEUR

*parched flames
lap the sullen night sky
blue of gaseous conflagration
scarlet carnations
spattered on fallen walls
and the scent of roasting flesh,
where they die;*

*no last word:
only the hiss of lighted fuses
desultory detonation
wood cracking across fractured steel
smould'ring into
charred grotesqueries heav'nward turned,
where they die
hailing freedom with their parting breath.*

*their bones decay in unknown places
banished from tear-hallowed graves
by the greed in men's hearts:
no heap of earth,
no flowers;*

*there are no flowers
where our heroes lie,
but we'll gather their bones
in one sweep of love
and bury them
where flowers bloom ever in numberless
hues,*

*for this precious thing:
freedom.*

MAKHUDU RAMMOPO