

SALZBURG

Bruce Odland and Sam Auinger's "StadTraum"

For three days last summer the first "Tone and Art" festival brought a series of contemporary music events to Mozart's birthplace, filling the squares and streets of the city with the sounds of jazz bands, folk and rock music, electronic and classical performances. Though music-based, this festival was designed to be a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, using the monuments and urban spaces of Salzburg as a backdrop for works that were, in most cases, either highly visual or theatrical. Notable presentations included compositions performed on Otto Beck's Klangmobiles—colored bicycles that emitted lights and musical sounds when pedaled—and Werner Raditschnig's opera "Der Schädel" (The Skull), which featured musicians performing on moving cranes.

But the centerpiece of the festival was the three-act sound drama "StadTraum" (City Dream), by composer Bruce Odland (New York) and composer/acoustic designer Sam Auinger (Linz). A brilliant spectacle that included classical and contemporary music, actors, dancers and fireworks, the piece was a metaphoric exploration of Salzburg's history through the medium of its sounds. Centered at the Residenzplatz, "StadTraum" utilized high-tech loudspeakers distributed throughout Salzburg and in the mountains, as well as speakers held aloft by helium balloons, to create a vast acoustical chamber that unified the entire historic section of the city.

"StadTraum" was described by the artists as a "resonating dream of history," a drama interpreting historical sounds that continue to resonate into the present. The piece was divided into a prologue and three acts. These chronicled the city's evolution from a natural state into the progressive complexities of human society. The narrative was conveyed by various means: recorded sounds, light projections onto monuments dating back to 400 A.D., renditions of medieval and classical music accompanied by church bells and shadow plays of dancers in illuminated windows. To signal the approach of modern times, there was urban noise and dissonant music.

The whole progression was punctuated by fireworks dis-

plays, designed by the Scheutz company, that provided visual allusions to different eras and events: streamer-type fireworks to suggest the Baroque, artillery-like explosions to recall the city's conquest by Napoleon. By far the most provocative of these was the finale, when fireworks exploded over the entire city, accompanied by a Hitleresque voice and shafts of light reminiscent of the Nazi propaganda spectacles. The combination forced all of us uncomfortably to conflate the horrors of the Second World War with the pyrotechnic displays we saw all too frequently on CNN during the Gulf War. At the end, the return of the sounds of nature came as both a relief and a warning.

"StadTraum" was one of the more profound and successful performance works I've seen in recent years. It went a long way toward demonstrating that sound is not simply a random accompaniment to other events but has a history of its own. Like the old architectural structures that continue to shape contemporary life in Europe, old sounds resonate from the past to become part of present-day social and cultural life. "StadTraum," seen by 25,000 people, made it clear that the complexities of our sound environment must be understood if harmony is to be restored to urban life in the future.

—Shelley Rice