



IN CONCERT: SIX MONTHS IN NEW YORK

The second event of the pair was a concert of minimalist works given by rock-classical crossover band The Fireworks Ensemble at the Tenri Cultural Institute on March 18th. After an opening piece by the ensemble's bassist, Brian Coughlin, inspired by a Far Side cartoon featuring two elephants playing the piano, by the end of which the pachyderms were stomping about in forearm clusters all over the keyboard, the audience was braced for an evening of good clean fun. Lois V. Vierk's *Io* used detuned guitar glissandi and Chinese pentatonic effects on the marimba to recreate conditions on one of the more volcanic moons of the planet Jupiter, but the highlight of the evening was undoubtedly *Grab It!*, a music-theater piece by Jacob Ter Veldhuis, in which saxophonist Michael Ibrahim played vigorous figurations in order to block out a series of noises coming from a boombox (mainly prisoners shouting and swearing on a documentary about Death Row). Although musically blunt, the piece provided a witty political comment on the clash of high-class entertainment and desperate impoverishment, and sounded suitably self-mocking in performance. Ibrahim's attire was particularly ironic: dressed in a blue, red and white New York sports shirt and dark green Army camouflage cap, he strutted around the stage as if it were Times Square in a pair of shades, with his boombox slung over his shoulder. A problem with the batteries meant that he had to start the piece again, but the effect was barely spoiled for the audience, who seemed enthusiastic for more. And the ensemble delivered; with such energy in fact that what had been touted as the evening's masterpiece, Louis Andriessen's *Hout*, felt too relaxed a work to take the heat.— *Nicholas Rice*
