

Robert Ashley/ Walter Marchetti

October 25, 2001 Merkin Concert Hall, NYC
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Two of music's senior provocateurs performed at New York's Merkin Hall in 2001, at an event organized by singer and facilitator Thomas Buckner. 40 years earlier composer Robert Ashley had co-founded the aesthetically radical ONCE Group, and Milan based artist Marchetti helped form the anarchic Cagean alliance ZAJ. Compromise is still not on either man's agenda.

This limited edition double album presents a realization of *Marchetti's Nei Mari Del Sud. Musica In Secca*, a slow and hollow husk of a piano piece that enacts the emptying out of Western art music's selfconscious content. What the listener misses from the actual event was Marchetti seated near an untouched piano dropping notated papers to the floor while the music issued from a tape. There's also a tumultuous, splintering piano variation from *De Musicorum Infelicitate*, prerecorded and channelled through speakers while the composer sat motionless under cellophane.

A more pressing reason to seek out this recording is splendid *Yes, But Is It Edible?*.

Buckner theatrically recites Ashley's stimulating thought on music and speech and his ONCE Group reminiscences, while Ashley himself repeatedly punctuates the discourse with a dissonant piano chord. Then there's *Practical Anarchism*, Ashley's affectionate and funny tribute to Marchetti, words spoken in his idiosyncratic and inimitable intonation. Finally, enigmatically, Ashley performs Marchetti's 1966 ZAJ piece *Musica Per Un Bicchiere Non Molto Grande*. This is a fascinating document for listeners with an appropriate perspective on music and provocation.

Julian Cowley