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| Scratch Orchestra |
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| The Scratch Orchestra grew out of an Experimental Music class run by Cornelius Cardew at Morley College (1968-73). Though a number of people contributed towards the discussions that led to the formation of the ensemble in 1969, it is Cardew, Michael Parsons and Howard Skempton who are most frequently cited as the founders. (This is in part due to the three composers contributing £5 each to open the orchestra’s bank account.) Cardew wrote and published the ‘Draft Constitution’ of the orchestra in 1969, and the first meeting took place in November that year.  The Scratch Orchestra consisted of musicians and non-musicians, and was devoted to the exploration of experimental music. The constitution, written in a deliberately formal style, favoured a democratic, open form of governance, though in practice Cardew’s leadership was pivotal to the ensemble. More specifically, a range of activities were described: mental discipline (members were encouraged to write down ideas frequently for ‘scratch music’’– accompaniments that could be performed alongside, and as a background to, other scratch musics); collaboration (in the form of improvisation rites such as in the Nature Study Notes); irreverence (‘popular classics’ ranging from Beethoven to Schoenberg were to be performed in an ad hoc style); and imagination (‘research projects’). Compositions such as Cardew’s The Great Learning were performed too. |
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| Further reading:  (Eley)  (Tilbury) |