FORUM: IMPROVISATION

The following is the first part of a gathering of statements and interviews on the topic of improvisation. We have in no way tried to be encyclopedic; we have instead been selective, providing material of historical interest as well as illuminative of the range of current practice, to enliven as well as enlighten.

Interviews were transcribed directly from tape, this transcript then being sent back to the originator for editing. What appears here, therefore, is what composers/performers wish to have appear. The interviewer's words are italicized.

Although we provide no bibliography, we urge the interested reader to investigate Derek Bailey's book, *Improvisation* (Ashbourne, England: Moorland Publications, 1980). The remaining interviews will appear in subsequent issues of this journal.

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Summer, 1963, was the beginning of the New Music Ensemble in Davis, California, experimenting with free group improvisation through that year, giving many concerts, demos and making a record. The next summer I went to Rome and, being very enthusiastic about the new way of improvising we felt we had originated, carried its concepts to Europe. I came to be associated with a number of composers in Rome, chiefly Franco Evangelisti, Aldo Clementi, Ivan Vandor and Cornelius Cardew, as well as American expatriates Frederick Rzewski, Bill Smith, John Eaton, Allan Bryant, and Alvin Curran. In the fall of that Roman sabbatical year, I began to receive tapes from the Davis NME, "Here's what we're doing now! Here's the concert we just had!" I played these tapes and the NME record for my new composer-friends in Rome. Evangelisti, especially, embraced our improvisation concept totally.

Was there already an improvisation thing going on there?

No. . . at least not in the free sense we felt we were practicing. In terms of primacy of idea then, I may have brought this influence to Europe. My expectations were innocent enough: I thought it would just be interesting to them, or boring. They would ask me what was going on in Davis, California, and I would say, "Well, we're experimenting with free group improvisation. No scheme, no format, no pre-conceived concept but the group dynamic itself." Hearing the tapes or the record, they—mostly Franco—would say, "Ahh. . . but what process are you using?" "Nothing, except how we feel about one another's playing and responding to it in the moment." They'd say "Impossible!" And I would go on to say, "No, I swear it's stand-up composing," instead of sit-down composing, my differentiation between the two ways of making music, the two kinds of composing. Improvisation is stand-up, and "real" composing is sit-down. Franco, who claimed he had given up composing, calling it a contrivance, a manipulation, embraced this concept of improvisation, because it fit perfectly with his non-composing stance. He told me, later in 1967, that composition was dead, that the whole "act" of sitting down to contrive a piece of music was decadent. For Franco, this came from a very strong ideological motivation. He was a Communist and, when thinking as a composer, felt totally at odds with himself, his culture and his socio-political beliefs. In improvisation he felt that music and ideology could be reconciled. I think that was probably the case with Cornelius Cardew as well.

Anyway, back to the story. I played my "tapes from home" for them. Franco was fascinated, saying, "This is it. I really believe!"...and he wanted immediately to form a similar improvisation group. We did form the group, an international one. For instance, Ivan Vandor, a Hungarian, was the tenor saxophone player, that is, a composer who also played tenor saxophone. We were all composers who also played. That was how you got in. In the Davis group, there were people who never declared themselves composers (Jon Gibson, for instance) but who were, actually. In the Italian group, being a composer was requisite and more important than "just being a performer," an elitist attitude that Franco conveniently overlooked.

The day came for the first session of the Italian group. I retain a vivid impression. Cornelius Cardew came to observe, heard the group and, in the later part of the session, joined in. Franco was an ecstatic priest of the session. We had lots of keyboards...pianos, organs...it was a huge ensemble. I played flugelhorn and string bass. There must have been ten people...Clementi, Vandor, Evangelisti, Smith, Eaton, John Heineman, Cardew, Curran, Mario Bertoncini, myself. In such a huge ensemble you can't reconcile the differences in approach among the performers who, as composers, are all trying to shape the piece in their own compositional image. The anomaly—funny now—was in what Franco named the group: IL GRUPPO DI IMPROVISAZIONE DA NUOVA CONSONANZA, the new consonance improvisation group. To me, it had no consonance as a group, but perhaps that was what was "new" to the Italians.

The concept for GINC was very idealistic, very romantic, and it seemed right in tune with what everyone wanted to do: very Italian, very anarchic, very diverse. I don't think we could ever have come to an agreement about anything, which was maybe its main charm. We had weekly sessions, which was about all that any of us could, I guess, abide. (Aldo and Franco argued a lot, and Aldo, frustrated, dropped out.)

Was there any leader in the group, or was it just where everybody sat down and played?

Like the Davis group, there was no recognized leadership. The group dynamic was the thing to sustain: individuals coming together to make music and react freely to one another.

Wasn't it during that period in the '60s that the whole idea of group-ness began to take over in our society? Not only corrective consciousness-expanding groups, but also the reaffirmation of a group feeling in rock music?

Yes, we were group-oriented. In fact, a psychologist named Harry Aron followed us around, writing about us and analyzing our behavior. I commented on that

phenomenon in an article in the late '60s in the *New York Times*, called "Music Is Dead, Long Live Music." I talked about groups being the wave of the future. Actually it was a wave of the past. I had finally realized what it was we had been doing: "Oh! So this is a 'group thing' we're doing!" So GINC gave a debut concert, and it was outrageous, which meant it was successful, well attended and supported by the state, the best thing you can do in Italy. . . be supported by the state. We had a whole concert to ourselves on the Nuova Consonanza Festival in the spring of 1965. Evangelisti was the festival entrepreneur, so it was no surprise that we were included. Since he had stopped composing, this improvisation thing was just right. He could sit out there and wail and not feel guilty about not composing. I've never thought of it in the political context until now, but Cardew certainly had to cope with the contradiction of elitist composing and ideological beliefs. . . and his Scratch Orchestra and AMM were, I've since learned, manifestations of that political stance. If you embrace a kind of musical anarchy, pretty soon you begin to think politically. I'm not sure that what he was doing then—what either of them were doing—directly gave rise or confirmed certain ideologies, but maybe there was some of that at work.

Frederick Rzewski, Alvin Curran, Allan Bryant and others who were members of Musica Elettronica Viva—formed a year later—were also present, not during the first sessions however. They were in Rome and they came to those concerts; I can't believe that they weren't influenced by what we did. It's marvelous to think that a California outfit had something to do with influencing Europeans and expatriate Americans as early as 1964.

After you'd been in Rome a year you came back, and the New Music Ensemble continued.

Yes, they had made a second record while I was in Europe. When I came back, it seemed to me to be a changed group, but, then, I had changed as well. . . full of new influences. . . had a lot of new scores. A little side story: when I first met Cardew in Rome—at that first improvisation session—I knew who he was but didn't know his music very well. I asked him if we might meet. We did, at the American Academy. He brought along his process pieces, mainly. One was "Memories of You". It was done at the concert, in fact, that you did in Davis the next year, right? I played him some tapes of my music, he played tapes and showed me scores, mostly one-pagers like "Octet", which were marvelous to me. He seemed to be sitting down, inventing these schemes which caused performers to do some of the same kinds of things we were improvising standing up. A good relationship started there. But a touching moment happened in that encounter. As he kept giving me those mimeographed pages, I would say, "Oh, thank you! This is fantastic!" At the end of our meeting, he said, "I wonder if you wouldn't mind paying me a dollar for each one?" He was destitute. Of course, I paid him. That stayed with me a long time, the fact that this man was so dedicated to his

music and to a kind of social consciousness that was important not only to music but to the way we live.

At any rate I brought back many of Cardew's pieces, as well as many other composers' works. We began to perform many of them that season, 1965-66. You were part of that, the series Edna and I had in our Davis home, a monthly living room concert for 75 invited friends of new music. The main focus was experimentation with process and new materials. SOURCE was born at the end of that season, also partly because of the unpublished scores I had brought from my travels the year before. It was because of the awareness that none of this important new music was being seen or heard very much that Stan Lunetta, John Mizelle and I came up with the idea of SOURCE. It wasn't a magazine at first. It was to be a catalogue of scores that were going to circulate. At first, we envisioned a cheap format for the company catalogue. "Well, we ought to have excerpts." "No, not excerpts, we have to have the whole piece!" "That means we actually publish several pieces." "That's something more than a catalogue." And it began to control us, fascinated with the idea of doing something that wasn't a journal, but some other beast . . . music as art . . . SOURCE. So, about nine months later . . .

Proper gestation time.

Right, exactly. In January, 1967, we came out with the first issue of SOURCE, Music of the Avant Garde, with its brazen sub-title that we gave it to attract attention. But I don't want to give you a history of SOURCE. What is relevant is that we were improvising. SOURCE was improvised: it came out of the music we were making.

How many times a week were you getting together?

Well, at the beginning in '63, almost every day in a little house we rented in the middle of a field near Sacramento. It was like a string quartet. You simply rehearse every day. We devoted ourselves entirely to the project; we'd spend sometimes as much as six hours per day together, exhilarated! I think that's what you really have to do to begin to feel like you're really making music. But in 1965, when I returned, we were thinking more in terms of concerts and preparing ourselves for tours and other appearances. I believe that was the time when we started to be less interesting, musically. We had begun to distill those wild ideas of '63 into the schemes and processes of '65 . . . we began to sit as we improvised, becoming more sit-down than stand-up composers.

How many of the players had jazz experience?

If you mean, "How did our jazz experience affect us?", I can't, objectively, say too well. I'll try to answer in two ways. First, we consciously ruled out any overt jazz

expression. That's not to say we succeeded with that conscious exclusion. Second, when Lukas Foss first heard tapes and records of our work, in 1968 I believe, he commented to me: "Oh, this has such a jazz flavor," which says something about his ear and taste and also something about our innocence about our cultural heritage.

It's interesting too, perhaps, that Foss had an influence on me in terms of forming an improvisation ensemble. I think he formed his improvisation ensemble in southern California in 1956, at about the same time Art Woodbury and I were experimenting with free jazz. The Foss group worked from schemes and formats, graphic roadmaps to guide the performers, and they were intent on creating stand-up, classical contemporary music. I was really inpressed by their late '50s record, by the skill and inventiveness in that neo-classic genre. I don't think anyone could have mistaken it for jazz.

So Foss was influencing me, and Gunther Schuller was influencing me with his third stream notions, and Darius Milhaud was admonishing me to "let the jazz come out", and John Cage's ideas and music were changing me. Milhaud, Schuller, Foss, and Cage, I say to myself now, had an important influence on my work at that time. Actually, the idea of improvising as a way of making music had always been with me, but I had never connected it with my work as an art music composer. They made that connection for me.

When did you get into electronifying the NME?

In 1966-67, the year after I returned from Europe. Stockhausen and Tudor had come to teach that year at Davis. Stockhausen seemed to ignore the NME, except to note that it was some kind of side activity. He also ignored a thing called the Buchla Box that we got that year, and he almost ignored Tudor's presence that winter. But David didn't ignore us. We electronified with him, not Stockhausen. Stockhausen's work in electronic music was, at that time, primarily in making tape pieces, instruments and tape, little or nothing to do with live electronics of the sort that Tudor was working with. We collaborated with Tudor in the performance of a variety of live electronic compositions: Cage, Ichiyanagi, Behrman, Kagel, von Biel, and many others. That year made the NME diffuse, probably because of our preoccupation with SOURCE and electronification. But the main thing was that Tudor taught us about the electronic continuum.

And then there was the First Festival of Live Electronic Music.

Yes, which was in fall, 1967.

First and only festival.

We figured it would be.

You were improvising when you were electronic.

Ah, I guess that might seem anomalous. Actually, we never noticed the evolution into electronification. It was all still improvised. We improvised SOURCE too. All those conversations, for instance, were improvisations. Rather than sit-down-and-write you stand-up-and-talk.

I'm still improvising (even now, as I edit [sic] this transcript). I've always improvised, and I just keep on doing it. If anyone asks me what my music is about, I say I'm still a jazz musician, and I've never stopped being one. It's just that people have stopped recognizing that what I do is jazz. It had everything to do with my being able to express myself musically early on. I latched onto it, found a niche there, first of all as a country-western, Harmon-mute trumpet player. I played in a country-western band in Vernon, Texas, when I was 14 years old. The band copied Bob Wills and needed a Harmon-mute trumpet player to set up and play the tune and maybe even improvise! I could do that, got the job and got paid more in one night than I got in the whole week on my paper route. That was good stuff! That, I felt, was easy to do, and, meanwhile, I was getting legit musical chops.

Here at North Texas the students wear T-shirts with the logo, NTSU JAZZ! A couple of years ago another T-shirt made its appearance, NTSU LEGIT! Amused, I thought to myself that neither of those would fit me—I'm hybrid: jazz-legit, legit-jazz. I and many others improvise between the two, but to declare anything formal about the phenomenon is probably to misunderstand it. I'm certainly not going to propose a new T-shirt.

This relates to your hint that one might not be improvising when one is electronifying. You see electronic music was born without a folk, an orphan (no T-shirt!). It didn't have a language, it made funny sounds, seemed incoherent. All it could do was imitate other musics, but that and the weird sounds made it silly and childish . . .

Themes for cheap science-fiction movies.

Exactly. We didn't know what to think. Was it only good for giant spiders? I was attracted to it because of the sonorities you could create, the subtle inflections (like jazz), and the orchestral textures you could create in the privacy of your own studio. "OK. So no orchestra's playing my music, I've got my own." All that helped electronic music thrive, even though it had no folk . . . a music in search of a folk, in fact. Meanwhile, there were plenty of musics with folks, thriving and becoming legit: improvisation, chance, process, theater, stochasticism, computer

composition. . . So, here are these two musics, one with new legitimacy, the other —seductive!—but without a folk, illegitimate. They begin to get together. Today, unfortunately, I think electronic music has found its folk, several folk: the academic folk, the scientific folk, the film folk, the jingle folk, the commercial folk. . .

This is how another pattern developed: the "electronics" began arriving and settling down in institutions in New York, Illinois, and California, "making music without writing music", which we formally called improvising or "having a good session." The "electronics" practice and practice and practice (without music, remember) until their personal language evolves. They then start to expose their music, be unsuccessful, mostly, and sometimes be extremely successful (e.g., Subotnick). So. . . I think that the notion of making music without putting notes on paper happened both with improvisation becoming important since the late '50s and the emergence of electronic music as an important genre at about the same time. In both, nothing important is on paper. Merging, these currents brought forth other forms: performance art, experimental music, and a new attitude that instant music is important. Instant, non-lasting music is part of our mass culture. Since younger artists don't consider what they do as composers as "lasting", the idea of making instant music with minimal materials becomes meaningful and fulfilling.

I think these are healthy developments. I can't imagine decrying them. I'm sad, of course, to see some things that I cherish fade, but that's the way it goes. The new composers seem intent, then, on the essential things: of creating a personal art and of paying attention to working with the immediate materials at hand, what they've found. . . and ritual. To me, ritual is now least important. In the '60s we were intent on inventing new rituals too, but mainly to say that the ritual we were given was wrong for our music. We threw it away. Today, new ritual making has become an old ritual. Most are throwaways. . . though some have value. I thought twenty years ago that these things might be happening now and become very important. I guessed right.

I'm still improvising today. . . with computers. Improvisation, because it's immediate instead of considered, is still decried by the academy: "It doesn't come from a rigorous examination of materials. . . no training, craft or discipline." Where it comes from is feeling the earth of music, seeing what's there. . . "Ah! Here's something good! I like that." And using it.

AMM: EDDIE PREVOST, KEITH ROWE

How did AMM start?

Eddie Prevost: The group that was to adopt the name AMM consisted of Lou Gare, Keith and myself; shortly afterwards Laurence Sheaff joined, then we adopted the acronym, and not long after that Cornelius [Cardew] joined.

How did the three of you get to be playing together in the first place?

EP: Lou was the linking element, I suppose. Lou was playing with Keith in the Mike Westbrook band, and had also been playing in the band that I was in. You always get those small groupings emerging. In fact the precursor to AMM was a strange combination of lots of odd people who fell away, in a sense, as it got more radical.

So you met up after hours or on other days . . .

Keith Rowe: Kind of, yes. It was a very strong ideological and musical question which got the grouping together. As Eddie said, Lou and I were in the Westbrook band, and I think more and more wanting to break away from the quite narrow kind of form which that band had adopted. It was a very emulative style of American jazz, probably based around late Ellington and Mingus; a bit of free improvisation, but basicaly a 4-piece rhythm section and solos in the order of, say, tenor sax, trumpet, possibly piano, double bass, drums; that kind of very static format. And we began to react against the notion of the 32 bars and the 16 bars and the 8 bars, feeling I think that life didn't actually neatly break itself up into 16 bars, that life was a much more open-ended system. And we reacted against the restrictions by playing in different keys, injecting what would then have been regarded as arbitrary kinds of notes, and experimenting, taking ideas

. . . Lou and I had both been to art school, and for example in painting you can paint something any colour, as long as you get the tone right, then overall the landscape will work. Tonally you can do a colour-shift on it, shifting yellow to green, and green to purple, and purple to blue, so you shift all the colours around but tonally it's right so the painting still works. Then we took those sorts of ideas, and said, Let's forget the pitch, but get the timing of the note right. So it didn't matter what note you played, so long as you got the timing right. Of course this was chaotic in the context of jazz music! And of course, then dropping the bar-lengths too just created havoc. Well, in the end we had to leave.

Since you'd had a grounding in the visual arts, was that a principal influence – had you heard any new music, avant-garde music at that time?

KR: Not really. I mean, I can remember, in the same way that we've all heard Debussy in film music without actually hearing Debussy, I'd certainly heard modern music. But the visual arts were important, because I think we were adopting attitudes which were much closer to painting, or painters, rather than to musicians . . .

But then of course people like Cage were also following painters . . .

KR: That's right. So there was obviously something larger than just what we were thinking about going on in the community of musicians *and* painters, at that point, which I think we understand a lot more now, while at the time we just felt a need to go into something . . .

So when was that? I first heard AMM at the Conway Hall in May '66 – by which time Cornelius had joined, of course, and even by then the performance sounded as one generally remembers AMM sounding. But there must have been some sort of transitional period . . .

KR: Yes, we know the transition period; it's still jazz-like, but quite free, in November '65, but by June '66 it had undergone a complete change, because we have recorded music from those periods . . .

EP: The acceleration is quite extraordinary.

June '66 is the Elektra record . . .

EP: That's right; well, we located the Elektra tapes, and compared them with an acetate which we had released – all of 6 copies or so – and there you can see the kind of jazz form, although as Keith says, very free, but within six months things changed quite dramatically.

At this time, was there anyone else doing work like this which you knew of?

KR: No, not at all—I'm sure Cornelius knew of people, but not from a jazz point of view. The only thing close to it would be Spontaneous Music Ensemble, but they were still attached, as far as we were concerned, to the ideas which were pre-November '65 for us!

It was a sort of un-focusing of fairly straight jazz, wasn't it?

KR: Yes, the instrumentation. . .

But the borders began to break down. But it was still within that format.

KR: And I think it is still true of those groups that they still sound like jazz.

So it didn't really change very much when Cornelius joined; what changed was more the sort of thinking about the group by the people in it rather than the actual music you made, so it was a change of consciousness, not a physical change.

KR: Right. And I think Cornelius found it enabled him to play much more in the way that he'd dreamt about. And then for us, because of his much greater experience, and being that bit older than us, he gave it a kind of breadth and authority that we would have had to work for much longer to achieve. I think we'd have always done what we did, I think AMM would have come out as AMM even if Cornelius hadn't joined, but it would have taken us longer to achieve that confidence.

I get the impression that from that time you begin to be more aware of what was going on in the sense of standing back and talking about it, rather than just doing it, as one tends to when one gets into a new experience. And I feel that over the last 10 years or so that's got more important than it was when I was in the group, when we never ever talked about what the music was doing. The music was completely sacrosanct in that sense. That obviously developed later—why did it develop? I mean that was more or less parallel with the Scratch Orchestra, and the political changes within that.

EP: Yes, they're related. I think the first part of your description definitely fitted in with the ethos of the time. And in a sense this emphasis on the intuitive is something which in 1965 was fairly new and unfamiliar. The subsequent analysis surely reflects the struggle that went on in the Scratch Orchestra, and to some extent is a summation of the experience which went on both in AMM and outside it.

It's obviously related to the way that the late 60s obviously couldn't sustain their momentum purely on being lovely and intuitive . . .

EP: That's right, yes. As you're well aware, AMM was hardly in the middle of the Flower Power thing. Nevertheless it was certainly affected by that ethos, Cage and so on. What one hopes we've arrived at now is more of a synthesis of the recognition of the power of intuition but with a rational perspective, which seems to me a pretty healthy way of doing things, to look for that kind of balance—which is implicit, of course, in Buddhist teaching. But the balance was always tipped in one direction, wasn't it?

KR: If we analyse that notion of 'analysing', if we look at the idea of analysing and then intuition, I think that in the very earliest days in the AMM we did both, and you could view that as a period when we were trying to make the thing work until it became satisfactory, and we found an optimum way of carrying on. So we would have a free play, and play with no formal limitations, which we would record, and we would meet later in the week and we'd play it through and we'd discuss it. We'd discuss the effect of the music, what we liked about it, what we didn't like about it. It was quite a discriminating analysis, but in the playing completely intuitive. This went on for a considerable period of time, until the analysing meeting was dropped—I can't remember when that was.

EP: But Cornelius never came into that, did he? He was never involved.

KR: No, that was us. I mean, he'd obviously done a lot of musical analysis in his time, and he didn't need it! So that was the way we dealt with it. Then we got, I think, to an optimum period where we could just go and play, and we didn't feel we had to analyse or even discuss—and you know from your own experience that this is completely true, that one would travel to a gig in a vehicle for maybe six hours and not discuss the music once, set up and play, then six hours back and still not discuss the music! And never talk about it again, except that someone might feel happy, and someone else might feel not so happy, and that went on literally for years. And then there was a lot of discussion as AMM dispersed in that period '72 to '73, and then again in '75 when it began to come back together again after that break, though it had still been maintained by Eddie and Lou. There was then again a new kind of discussion. And in a sense the music was taken back to its early 1964 or '65 days, where it became recognizable forms of playing, and it's taken roughly five years to actually cover that same ground again in a new way.

Why was it, when AMM came back together, that it went backwards? Was it a safety measure? Did it seem inappropriate to continue in a free style—was it so easy to do that you felt the need to force yourselves out of it and change the style

in order to become more aware of what you were doing?

EP: Well I don't know how to answer that; but historically one should point out that in fact there was a movement even before AMM dispersed to play in a slightly different way. I mean a lot of the electronics had been dropped; Lou was almost entirely playing saxophone, Cornelius hardly played any electronics, and my drumming became more obviously drumming too; so, there was that change already implicit within that time. Afterwards, as you know, Keith moved out, and then there were a couple of odd things that Cornelius did with Lou and me. After that in fact we decided not to refer to the thing as AMM, but we couldn't escape it; I mean we did a gig, we just called ourselves Lou Gare and Eddie Prevost, and when people did a review they called it AMM, so in the end we gave up and said OK, that's AMM! There was so much continuity anyway, because although it was just saxophone and drums there were definite happenings within it that you could see were influenced by what happened previously.

In a sense it's a false question that I asked, because actually it merely parallels what happened in other kinds of music-making as well. I mean, I went through exactly the same thing; I stopped using electronics, and began, about the mid 70s, which was when my music became much more recognizably tonal again, dropping all those experimental structures, simply because they seemed to be outdated, one didn't seem to need them any more. And there was a sort of return; I think a lot of people shared that, you can analyse it in a lot of ways, it's partly a swing away from the 60s, society was changing in that sort of way . . .

KR: I think there are many ways of analysing it; one of them is the dead practical one, which is, one learnt to play the guitar and the drums and whatever else in a particular kind of way, with a particular kind of technique which one had learnt, developed and mastered and it seems only practical that if you have to restart something, even if you are approximating to the same position you left off before, you might well feel the need to go back to those earlier techniques because they're the ones you learnt originally.

If you're a jazz guitarist you're not going to start playing like Segovia . . .

EP: The skills needed refining, though, I think. There's a sense in which I personally enjoyed going back to just playing the drums; my playing has improved in that respect a good deal. But it's been done with a different consciousness. As Keith said, that emulative thing was so strong, to play like one's musical heroes, and therefore one's technique was bound up in that. Subsequently you develop a technique to adopt your own musical identity which somehow transcends at last that kind of emulative approach. It's very complicated. There are all kinds of things going on during that time both inside and outside music which obviously

had a bearing on one's attitude. It's very difficult to encapture that in one profound moment and say 'That's it'.

Oh yes, it would be wrong to, and it's wrong to regard it as being separate from the other factors in one's life at that time.

KR: That coming back is rather like Picasso's life, where he continually does drawings which relate to each other all the way through, and they're recognizably Picasso's drawings, and they're rather like some kind of springboard or some standard you can relate other things to, and from which other things can develop. And I suppose it's almost like Mondrian's life of gradually, almost imperceptibly, developing to an abstraction from a very regular form at the beginning, very naturalistic and representational. And in a sense it's probably something like the AMM development too, that it comes from a representative form, and gradually develops into this so-called abstract form. And what's interesting, I think, is the length of time it's taken us to do it the second time around as opposed to the first time around.

Yes, it's always more difficult the second time. When AMM began to re-form in '74 or '75 was there any critical comment, favourable or unfavourable about the change of style, or didn't people notice?

KR: I don't think anyone paid any attention.

EP: No, they didn't. Playing opportunities were so rare. . .

You didn't do very much playing?

EP: Not a lot, no. As well as that, I think you have to realize there was a stylistic reaction which actually precluded the AMM. Now, in a very superficial way which I despise entirely, it's something more fashionable. Yet, as Keith and I would confirm, it's doing essentially the same thing. And that's one of those peculiar things. – It's difficult to explain it. –

Yes, a few little things shift somewhere and suddenly it all changes. Something which nobody had looked at is now ultra-desirable.

EP: The only comment I can really remember of the kind I think you're looking for is when we did the first big public thing with John [Tilbury] which was at the Round House in October '79, when there was a comment that 'the old revolutionaries weren't really revolting any more' – maybe they put it a different way! – but it was that kind of thing.

KR: 'Almost serene'!

EP: 'Almost serene', that's it! When of course if you listen, as we have, to the tapes of the early stuff, there's an incredible amount of serenity in some of the passages, the proportion is quite high. So that notion that it was somehow raucous and abrasive in the early days is not really based on any fact.

KR: Yes. I challenge the casual listener to be able to tell which is the early stuff and which is the later. I think *we* can tell the difference because of the sonorities and the amount of amplification or whatever...

Well they're technical things, aren't they?

EP: Yes, you reckon 'Oh, that must be Laurence playing that clarinet' or 'it's Christopher doing that', therefore you've located it historically.

One of the nice things about the Crypt record is that it's quite impossible much of the time to tell who on earth is doing what, absolutely impossible!

KR: And *what* is doing what!

And what is doing what, yes. I mean, for much of side 1 there's this drone which is going on. I can't identify any known instrument. It doesn't sound like a bowing thing, it doesn't sound like an organ...

EP: We've had a few like that, haven't we? Not just on those tapes...

I don't think I knew what it was at the time! (Laughter)

EP: There's one place, I don't know whether it's on that record, or another one, where one is convinced it's a percussive thing, and then suddenly you realize that there are other percussive things going on which means it couldn't be! We think we've located it now—it's a contact microphone on a gong—but we're not absolutely sure. You're right, it's quite perplexing really.

What I think is one of the great things about it, and relates to your essay, is the fact that it's completely against solos, in the way that a jazz solo comes up, or like in a concerto; it's not ever one person. One of the joys of it is that you can't *distinguish who is playing what, and that it is completely unimportant one way or the other. I mean, if there's a sax playing it's Lou, but it's not important that Lou happens to be playing the sax, it's not Lou's solo, Lou just happens to be playing the sax. I mean* we *know about that, but I think that to an audience it is probably quite an important factor...*

EP: Yes, I'm quite mystified by it really, I don't know why it should be. I think the problem with this kind of very direct interactive playing is that it can lend itself to a lot of psychological games that were never implicit in AMM. We did a broadcast quite recently with Evan Parker and Barry Guy, Keith and myself, and we had this agreement with the producer that when the green light came on we'd kind of wind it down. Well, he wasn't very efficient, he just flashed the green light on and then turned it off again, so if you didn't actually see it when it flashed you missed it. And *we* saw it so we stopped. But the other two didn't see it, so they continued to play on. Afterwards, when we were discussing it, Evan was convinced that we were playing some kind of AMM-like game with him, to just stop playing and put him in a spot so to speak! He took quite a lot of convincing that it wasn't like that at all, that we just don't play those kinds of tricks! And it seemed to me that this was an experience he had generally had with other people, and thought 'they must do it too'. And it's something which I've observed with many other improvisations in the late 70s—there's a lot of that going on, a lot of weird psychological games going on. Unspecified, but they're there.

Once again, it's finding a structure, isn't it? If you don't have a musical structure you have a social structure, which is what the Scratch Orchestra turmoil was all about. I mean what you described could happen if you were playing a piece by Christian Wolff, one of the earlier pieces. You make up an instruction as you go along, you decide that at a certain point you're going to stop playing and see what happens to the other guy, then you decide you're going to start playing again. All of that requires a sort of thinking before the event, 'At a certain point I will do this', something which obviously doesn't relate to anything that AMM ever did. But one can see why groups might decide to play like that, simply because of a need for some kind of structure—they feel happier if they think they're fulfilling an instruction, even if it's a completely random instruction they've just made up themselves!

KR: Going back to the beginning again, I think the thing which we're trying to look at at the moment is trying to place the AMM in relationship to all the other things; you asked if we were conscious of other things going on at the time, well we weren't, but I think more and more we're beginning to become conscious of where it fits in historically with other kinds of music. It's something along the lines that from 'round about 1920, when you start to get Schoenberg's new style emerging, you get a selection of specific material which is much more objectified, so the tone-rows or whatever are there, and they have to be used in that sequence. It's almost like a reaction, I suppose, to romantic composers, to feeling, and maybe to whim or whatever; and the way that that developed was to Boulez and Stockhausen, certainly Webern too, the objectification of the material; and that didn't allow for improvisation, because the notion of the permutation of 12 notes isn't the kind of thinking that lays itself open to improvisation unless you've

got a computer for a brain!

So it's quite funny to watch Berg easing his way out of it in something like Lulu, *trying to keep the series there, but still justifying all sorts of things which theoretically he shouldn't have used.*

KR: So if one was trying to adhere to those mainstream ideas in modern music, improvisation was a difficult proposition. And I think the second World War clearly disrupted that stream of Viennese and German music, because of problems with suppression that was suffered in the period of the Third Reich, and then subsequently the difficulties of performance, and maybe then a rejection of those ideas generally in European music, which gave rise to more of a French influence or an Italian influence; it tended to spread the schools out more, it became possible for people to feel much freer. And then with the American influence politically and economically after the war, a much fresher approach, I think, created the kind of conditions where improvisation was much more possible. So that's what we're looking at now, where AMM fits in that much larger thing, and probably too in the way that it does adopt many of the ideas of Varèse, Cowell, Cage, Ives. . .

EP: I'd like to shift the emphasis slightly, because I've got an idea you're putting forward an idea which indicates a kind of sympathetic development; with the Americans, I'm sure that's true to a certain extent, but I think even the American stuff was a response to, and some of the European experience that we're part of was a response to—if you transfer the serialists' mentality to the rest of the way of life in Europe, which you can with some reasonable justification—a response to a feeling of alienation with the forms which that represents. The high-rise blocks for instance—a very structured way of organizing people. Even the Welfare State, which was a marvelous thing when it began, began from an organizational, paternalistic point of view rather than looking at people as separate entities. People were seen en masse. And I think a lot of improvisation was a kind of response to that dehumanising aspect of life. And that's the link I would put into it, and I think it's just one of the recurring moments, if you like, that you can see if you look at the whole history of jazz; you can say it gets sharper where there are things to react against of that kind. And I sense that in the 60s there was a general reaction against those kinds of forms which were quite alienating, and one obviously picked up with the Americans and saw them as kindred spirits who were likewise responding.

[The conversation wends its way around to the similarities and correspondences between notated and improvised music.]

KR: . . . there are parts also of Berio which at times have the same kind of feeling,

as if one had actually composed a piece of AMM music; the same kinds of sonorities, the same kind of relationships . . . and then I think what's happening in improvisation generally is that there is a connection between it and composed music; take Berio again, that *Sequenza* with saxophone is, in places, very much like Evan Parker's playing. And some of the Xenakis cello writing is very much like free improvisation. And that's probably an influence going two ways, one hopes anyway, listening to each other.

EP: What's certainly perplexing is that really, apart from Musica Elettronica Viva, there have been very few manifestations of the kind of group which use, to use Evan Parker's term, a 'laminal' approach; layered textures. In the European free jazz side there's still been this emphasis on individual statements in juxtaposition to each other . . .

It's sort of solo and accompaniment – which is constantly changing, but is nevertheless still definable as solo and accompaniment.

EP: What is slightly perplexing, though, is why there have not been so many manifestations of that kind of playing. I mean, why don't we have lots of imitators?

I think one reason is that it's extraordinarily difficult to do.

KR: Yes, I think there are some very concrete reasons why not; though there's another way of viewing the 'layered' approach, which is that it's almost like polyphony in a sense. It works linearly, and you can take chunks of it, and its vertical emphasis is well-balanced and constructed . . .

Or like 13th or 14th century polyphony, when the thinking was horizontal rather than vertical . . .

KR: I think it's certainly true, anyway, of composed music, that composers who didn't work from systems tended not to have schools follow them; recently, for instance, Varèse doesn't seem to have a school of people composing in that style. Is that accurate or not?

I think he's got sort of subsumed into the kind of European music tradition by now – there are a lot of composers who can be drawn on; nobody would use it as well and rawly as he did, but I think that a lot of Varèse sounds like a lot of European music. It's not Varèse's fault.

KR: So possibly one of the answers is that if you go and look at a lot of free improvisation groups you can see the system in the music, even if it's relatively

arbitrary—whereas I think AMM is so intuitive and so non-systematic that it's very hard to copy, and Eddie made the point the other day that because AMM is such an individual contribution, based around the notions of the individual deciding for himself what he's doing, that if you go and copy that you immediately take away its most essential feature.

And you can't teach people to play AMM music. You could think about how AMM music works, but then what do you say? What do you actually tell people to do? I think a lot of it comes down to particular people being together at a particular time, more so than with a lot of free improvisation groups, and I think the same is probably true of MEV. It's a specific group of people. There's a periphery, but there's also a hard core of people who've been involved with it, and one can't imagine AMM existing after we're all dead, unless by somebody slavishly imitating, listening to lots of recordings.

EP: You can give people some sort of an insight into what it's like to improvise, but of course what you'd be encouraging them to do is to do their *own* improvisation, develop their *own* personalities. To teach anybody to actually play AMM music would be a negation of what AMM music was about.

And I don't think anybody who'd been involved in AMM would do that.

EP: There is a point though, and that's possibly the reason why there isn't any discernible school, where there is a discernible school of people connected with the FMP in Germany and the Dutch school and the English school like the Baileys and the Parkers, there is a direct descendance from those styles.

KR: I think there are tangible things you can spread around; a type of fingering . . .

Yes, a lot of it's to do with actual instrumental technique...

KR: Whereas with the AMM it's quite the reverse of that. It's much more difficult. I mean when you get those very long suspended near-silences which are very, very delicately balanced, it's very hard to re-create that. I mean, it's hard enough for us to be able to get to those optimum situations . . .

EP: 'OK, Bud, like that bit, keep it in for the next set!'

KR: 'Can you do that again?'! (Laughter)

KR: And I think when you're playing with prepared instruments too, instruments which you've actually built up, then they become quite unreliable.

EP: Like that piece that you made on the duo record. That particular weighting of the ruler where you've got it oscillating [a metal ruler inserted between the guitar strings and then set rocking to and fro], I've heard you do that again, but it's extraordinarily difficult to get the same feel.

KR: Of course, one wouldn't attempt to get it. . .

EP: No, but I've listened out, and thought Ah, that is that happening, but it's never matched that first occasion.

KR: Which of course is one of the essential features of non-repeatability...

EP: Well I play the drums the same way every time!

KR: . . . the non-repeatability of life.

EP: Ah, *that's* the same, yes!

KR: I mean, ultimately all music is non-repeatable. So I think AMM is really much more. . . the *essence* of AMM is much more a recognition of the differences in performance. Was it Horowitz who said that getting the right notes ought to be secondary to getting the feeling? I think we obviously extend out from that.

EP: Well it's the essence of the musical experience, isn't it, of dealing with a problem in that way, in a fairly adventurous way, hopefully. . . The thing about AMM is that it *is* musical. It's not anti-music in any sense.

KR: I think it started off by being a reaction to the situation we found ourselves in, but I think now it's become much more a confirmation of the other musics that are around us and have been going on before. I think now we feel quite a lot of unity with someone like Horowitz playing the Liszt B minor sonata or something like that; we recognize that in there are the same kind of aspirations; with Beethoven or with iso-rhythmic motets; AMM is a part of musical history too.

DEREK BAILEY

How long has COMPANY been going?

About five years... 1976 it started, but its genesis goes back longer than that, because 1976 was when I gave it that name. It had been struggling along in one form or another for a few years, because that way of working has always attracted me; getting people together who wouldn't probably choose to work together, but what they have in common is this inclination at least to make music by improvising. So for instance in 1970 I had a concert at the Purcell Room with people like Evan Parker and Jamie Muir and John Tilbury and Ron Geesin, and I think of that as a sort of precursor to Company, except the idea developed a bit. So now... well, it's difficult to say what Company is because it supplies all sorts of things. I like to play each night, for instance, which is pretty rare, and it's a way of getting people together so I can go down and play the guitar every night. Also I think it *is* a good way of improvising if you've got a bunch of people who

wouldn't normally play together, and the results are more interesting over a longer period of course, a kind of shifting, and alliances, and breaking up...

And how much is it the same people and how much different people?

Well, a thing like last week, which was a five-day thing...every year I try to do this Company week which is five days, and I invite maybe 10 musicians to take part in it, and they're usually a different 10 from the previous year although there's always some carry-over; for instance the trombone player George Lewis; he's been involved in Company for the last couple of years and has been quite a central figure, I think, for that time. Now the first two years, from '76 to '78, somebody who was in it all the time was a cellist called Tristan Honsinger, another American. He's kind of drifted out of it now, I don't know why, maybe it suits him less, actually; it seems that some people it suits and some it doesn't. Tristan and George it did suit very much, and they were in almost all the Company things during their periods, and of central importance. But otherwise most people that I invite will do maybe one or two Company events and then move off to more productive things from their point of view. I mean, for none of these people that I ask is it a central activity...a lot of composers, or those concerned with performing new music, not centrally free improvisation. If I ask somebody like Phil Wachsmann for instance, who was in last week, he actually I think would probably choose to work with a more homogeneous group of people —in fact they probably all would. But even those who are interested primarily, in fact entirely, in working with improvisation, they'd want to be working with people who had things like material or language in common with them. So I suppose the only person for whom it's their first choice of working situation is me, and I get the others to indulge my inclinations.

How do you set things up musically? You've got your 10 people together; is anything then said?

I explain how we work, which is all that's said, and takes about two minutes—no, that's not quite right. Usually the first performance, which in this case was a broadcast, serves the purpose of providing a way of introducing people. But, say, if there was nothing like that, the first concert out of a series of concerts is programmed and I'll probably put together a number of groups out of the 10 people. Maybe I'll put them in pairs or trios which actually does make sense because very often I invite them in pairs; they do have natural allies so there's at least one person there with whom they're familiar or even comfortable. So I might put a program together on the first night where they go through this stuff that they'd normally do; at that time everybody gets to hear everybody, so at least

they've heard each other. From that point on the groups are put together by the people taking part, so it's a kind of consenting improvisation. Maybe they'll think of a trio, so they might want to play with him and her and so they go and ask him and her, Shall we play this trio? And they say yes or no, and that's all right; there have been cases of that, where somebody says, Well, I'm not quite sure at this stage; and then if it's OK they give the group to me and I make a program out of the suggestions, and the only point of the programming is to, say, prevent somebody playing three times and somebody else not playing at all. So I have no influence on what happens at all, really, other than inviting them. They decide what happens. And it can go in all sorts of directions depending on the people—it might be large groups, it might stay with small groups, because they always start with small groups. That's it, that *is* the introduction, and all the rest of it is through the music—they sort it out themselves.

How much work do you do abroad with Company? Do you do the same sort of work when you go abroad?

You see, there are a number of things wrong with Company as far as somebody presenting it is concerned. First, there's this time thing—I like it to have at least three nights, I don't think it works with less. Well, there aren't many people who will give me three nights all together, you see. Here, I can organize it myself. Once a year I can go and try and raise the money and organize it—most years I've managed it. But I have to do that all myself. In other places there are at least two drawbacks. It's rather a lot to be doing, four or five nights. I mean there isn't anybody I can approach sensibly about that; I *do* approach lots of people, but not many are interested, it's too much; or they start talking about doing one night or two nights which isn't enough. . . the other thing is that given that you *do* four or five nights, it's not a promoter's dream as regards programming—I mean everybody appears every night, you don't save anything up or gradually build it up. . . they're all there, and they're all in unfamiliar roles. So the kind of marketing procedure which works in every kind of music—to do with well-known names whatever they became well-known for—doesn't work in Company. So that's a drawback. But given that, I've done all right. Company's had things in Berlin, every year we do a small one in Paris, we're doing it this week in fact, four days . . . we've played in Tokyo, that was a kind of all-Japanese one—we've also had an all-Canadian one in Toronto—but they're rather specialized things; the French and German things were as it normally works. There's maybe one this autumn in New York which I'm hoping will work as the one here works. It's interesting to see if it can function over there, the whole business of putting on something like this over there is interesting in the way it's done as opposed to the way it's done here, and so that's rather attractive. . . . But generally speaking the things that are offered to me to do with Company turn out to be kind of unsuitable, it's not

something you can take to Festivals. This year we were up for three days in Italy but then it collapsed because the promoter thought that he'd like to suggest who would be on it and it doesn't work like that either, you see. It's not a very manageable thing as regards the music market-place, any music market-place, so generally speaking I have to try to put it together myself or get some people to put it together for me.

How has it changed over the years in terms of the actual playing?

I'm not sure. Somebody asked me about that recently and I thought about it and I'm really not sure. It seems to me . . . I can only speak kind of superficially about it because there have been lots and lots of changes, but generally speaking it started as being a fairly jazz-based thing, most of the people in it were jazz players or free improvisers who came very clearly from jazz. Then it went through really quite a heavily theatrical phase, and I don't know what it is now, because I never do know what it is at the time. It seems to be that the mixture's getting more extreme . . . I suppose it reflects what *I'm* interested in, which probably reflects what everybody's interested in. I think to some extent Company reflects what's going on in these areas . . . I think that the theatrical thing's died down a bit, and now there's a sort of mixing of styles . . . I don't know, that already sounds too portentous, actually. Maybe it's just this year; we've very successfully mixed all sorts of people who would really never have gotten together otherwise, and it did work very well . . . so I don't know whether that means anything outside of itself . . . I don't know what we're doing now; there have been those two main phases but there have been lots of little changes. One of the changes is that people kind of come from wider circles, but they actually come from where I've been working in the last two years. I think it can all be most easily explained for me in personal terms; I'm trying to translate that into some general terms and I'm not sure it works. But to some extent it just happens—Company is drawn from the people I've bumped into over the previous couple of years and I've asked them to take part and they've been interested to do it. So it's a bit empirical.

Are you aware of the style changing over the last few years?

As I say, these changes seem to me to go on all the time, but I wouldn't say that I'm either very aware of changes or even greatly interested in them—as long as they happen it seems to be OK to me. It's in the nature of this kind of music-making, I would have thought that you could accommodate that . . . I'm interested now in relating to people who aren't primarily free improvisers. I don't play with them in *their* context, but I've started, these last couple of years, inviting people who aren't mainly connected with improvisation. It doesn't seem to me important that they're not; I just find that if they seem attractive as musicians, then I ask

them along and see if *they're* interested; given this reasonable amount of goodwill and interest then I find it'll virtually always work on some level and some very good levels, actually. I like the stylistic differences. It seems to me to give, to invite, more improvisation, actually. The development of a sophisticated improvising language, the development possibly of a kind of attempt at perfection, no longer interests me at all.

Do you think that's a difference between your approach and AMM's approach, for example?

Maybe...I'm not exactly sure what their approach is, actually, I haven't heard them for a long time. I would have thought they were pretty eclectic; I mean, Keith's played in Company—he was thrown into a pretty varied, pretty diverse version of it, but I'm not sure...I would have thought that at their stage they can't still be poking around in one area of language, refining a language.... But I haven't heard them for years. There *are* musicians who are still interested in that, refining a kind of improvising language, it's interested me in the past—I just don't find it very rewarding nowadays. I'd still rather do it than move into some other kind of music-making, I still think it's got something.... The epitome of that kind of pursuit seems to me to be solo improvising, which is totally bankrupt. It's horrible. I mean, there are some very fine solo improvisers, very good players who have produced good music; but there's so much of improvisation that's missing, that's not possible in solo performance.

It can so easily fall over into being just self-indulgent...

So maybe I'm inclined to think of this refinement of free improvisation into a special area of study as leaning a bit towards that, of carrying with it some of that stigma that you can easily attach to solo playing...the word does have a general meaning—I like it when there's some kind of rough edge. I don't mean stylistically, but someone bumping onto it who maybe doesn't like working in that way; having to make do seems to me an important part of improvisation. I can't describe it really. Getting from A to B with no B. And I think once it gets very highly specialized there are all sorts of dangers. You can quickly find yourself in the position where what you're actually pursuing would be best achieved by doing something else.

What is the state of free improvisation now? Are there many people involved with it in England?

I don't know whether I'm the best person to ask about this because I don't actually spend a lot of time here now, and when I am here I don't really look at

the scene. A couple of years ago you couldn't walk down Oxford Street without bumping into a least 30 or 40 free improvisers—it was rife, not to say plagued.... It seems to have quietened down a bit. But that's just a general impression.

How about Europe?

I think it's quietened down a lot there. The two places where it seems to be very active at the moment are Japan and New York. Certainly the difference between New York say at the beginning of this year and even last year... there does seem to be a little bit of a boil going on there as regards this area. These things do seem to fade away quite quickly, but a lot of people are involved in it over there at the moment.

Are the players there from jazz backgrounds? From experimental music...?

I don't think so. It's so difficult now to get young players who are jazz-based. And they are mostly quite young players, so they're not going to come out of jazz anyway; I think they've got jazz ambitions, but it's not quite worked out yet. Mainly it's rock based, I think, but a sort of arty rock, a kind of highly intellectualized relationship with rock—it's not your average rock musician who does a bit of free improvisation. Their interest outside of free improvisation is in popular music areas, I think, but some of them are also composers, in fact I'd say most of them do have a very strong interest in composing. But there are a lot of them. In Japan there are even more. It's a bit like it was in England say three years ago. But it's difficult to say much about them. I played on a concert with about 35 of them, young players, and there was a solo concert while I was there, a concert of solos where 55 people played a 10-minute solo each! Which gives you at least a kind of indication of the quantity, if nothing else.

What about the quality?

Ah, I don't know—because most of them I didn't hear. But the quality's never been easy to put your finger on anyway, it's never been represented by a lot of people...

I think it must be indicative of some sort of change—the generation that came out of jazz giving way to a generation which is coming out of rock...

I'm not sure they're coming *out* of rock, that's where they're heading. Popular, classical or theatrical... jazz is very rare now, and the jazz players are not interested in free improvisation.

The only thing I would add about Company, that I've kind of gotten into saying lately as a way of getting round trying to even decide what it is, is that I like that way of working in free improvisation; forming groups that *can't* last long. I like a kind of built-in obsolescence, both overall—so the 10 people who played together last week I suppose will never work together again as those 10 people, however they might meet as twos or threes—but also within that week, generally speaking, groups aren't repeated. There is no reason why they shouldn't be—there *was* a group that was repeated because it was particularly successful so they did it again—but generally speaking they sort of hunt around and find out the different possibilities, good possibilities, and five days is a good length, because you can only keep this up for a certain amount of time before you kind of move to the extremities and start winkling out the most unlikely combinations. . . . But that way of working—I think of it as semi ad hoc playing, it's not totally ad hoc because these people after five days are certainly not strangers, and they do have a chance to develop some relationship—it just stops short of it turning into a kind of band, and I think that at *that* point, for my tastes, a deterioration sets in. This is where maybe I wouldn't agree with a lot of people involved in this thing. That development thing, I don't see it as being, from the improvisation point of view, some kind of advance, or improvement. So I think of this way of working, putting these little groups together for a short period of time, as being a very basic way of working in this kind of music-making; a basic way of working in orchestral music is in an orchestra, and in most other kinds of music there is this band concept, whether it's a brass band, or a jazz band, or a rock band you get this group of people together and they aim for a tightness and an identity and all of that. . . I don't think that works in free improvisation, and it's to avoid that. . . Company's largely to avoid that—to avoid having to deal with that, so you never attempt it. This other way, permutations or whatever, is I think as basic to free improvisation as that band concept is to non-improvised playing.

HAROLD BUDD

About improvisation—it's a uniquely American way of making music, just as normal in our society as motets must have been in another.

It seems to limit itself, however, to certain types of music; all the people that write all the notes on a page are not particularly enthusiastic to have you make up your own.

The only difficulty with some improvisation, I think, is people who aren't terribly skilled at it. They're not really basing their language on anything that means very much to other people, including their compadres in the ensemble. So, improvisation shouldn't be mistaken for counterpoint and antagonism in music: when it's done well in an ensemble, it's an excellent manifestation of non-competitive music.

Does it work when it isn't jazz-derived?

In my opinion it doesn't, sticking to a narrow idea of what improvisation is. I don't think it works very successfully outside of a jazz- or rock-derived language. It's the business of a common language. Jazz, after all, has a noble tradition; we all know what it sounds like. It is always in a state of flux; I understand that part, and it doesn't have to be jazz that is based on chord changes or another run-through of *I Remember April*. Jazz is really much more interesting than that. I can't imagine anyone who fancies himself to be interested in and has some experience in improvisation who doesn't know exactly what the language springs from.

Thirty, forty years ago we listened to records, later tapes—incidentally, the invention of the record did some very curious things to jazz because there was no longer, "Wow, you should have heard so and so's performance at the Elks

Hall last night, it was great!" it all became legend. Now you have that great solo at a festival, now it's fixed, the ephemeral nature is gone.

Another odd thing about recordings: the tradition in jazz is that a person becomes celebrated based on a track record over the long haul. They are consistently good more often than they are not good, shall we say, and people who have gone to clubs and concerts understand that, and there is really very, very little creative happening in a recording. Jazz recording is a very uncreative affair because the recording is documenting a performance—it may be a mediocre one, or it may be an excellent one, it doesn't make any difference—in any case, it's being done inside an artificial place, a studio, and that's the traditional way, that's the way recordings were developed, to document a version of something as opposed to using the recording studio as a compositional tool, which does not happen in improvised music for the most part unless we are talking about a broader definition of what improvisation is. But focusing on human beings making acoustic sounds and that a recording is documenting it, it's a pretty cut-and-dried affair. You play good or you don't, and you make three or four versions and you say, "Well, I'll take number three, it's by far and away the best; I could have done it so much better yesterday," or "God, you should have been there last year," but too late, man, it doesn't make any difference. You take what you get and that's all there is to it. But, for the most part, jazz musicians are celebrated for their track record. And a consequence of a track record is that you get recorded, and thereby reach a much larger audience. I recall in the '50s—in Los Angeles where I grew up—that Thelonius Monk was considered by many of my friends to be that "wrong note" pianist who inexplicably played on a few Parker 78's, and so forth. And of course one infamous example is the really vicious criticism leveled at Ornette Coleman when he emerged. Recordings do force you to take notice.

What about the fellow who took the recording apparatus to all of the Charlie Parker concerts and recorded every breath he blew, mostly half-completed sets, out-takes, and private, unauthorized, pirated recordings?

It's still only a fraction of the man's career as a creative artist. Nobody could have been around that often. Now Charlie Parker is a perfect example. He died young, but he, just like everybody else around him, played all the time, and one of the reasons he became celebrated was because he was interesting more often than dull. There are times, I am sure, when he was just awful, and, naturally, odd things like being out of tune have no relevance whatever to this sort of thing.

Forty years ago there were things that people didn't do in improvisation, which is back toward what you said about knowing the language. Now, however, there isn't anything you can't do.

That's absolutely correct, but that has always been true, I think. I tell you that listening to a recorded anything by Cecil Taylor, solo piano, you sense that of course this is spontaneous improvised music, but to some people the language itself sounds very much more from the western European tradition than out of the black American tradition. It isn't true, of course, but here's another of those sorts of confusions that I really applaud.

As a player, you have participated with jazz musicians, and nowadays are participating with people not known primarily as jazz musicians, so that improvisation has got to be thought of as going in another direction. Like the common speech . . .

I think the common speech is just altered. It's still there; my tastes have simply changed. You know, personalities alter; that's all there is to it. I don't have any real fondness at all any more for traditional jazz. There's certainly nothing wrong with it, but it's not for me.

So how would you characterize the new common speech? How about the Art Ensemble of Chicago?

I think the common speech there *is* black American music, without question. And if you land somewhere in Chicago from Mars and hear them, these sounds, "What do you mean, this is black American music?" But if black American music is not wholly unknown to you, you recognize that it is frankly the basis for this language. As to trying to characterize the new common speech, I think it would be a mistake to try. The pool of sources is so immense and diverse and catholic that you'd just end up chasing bits and pieces here and there. I think all you can say is that each person *prefers* to emphasize discrete services—sort of mix them up—and none of the others. Also, you can't overlook the impact of so-called world music, but the interesting thing here is that not too long ago that meant art music traditions—conservatorships—and now it includes vernacular music as well.

What about European versions of improvisation? starting out, I would assume, with trying to play black American music.

Yes, absolutely. I don't think the Europeans are any different than the Americans in this respect. Everyone has access to excellent recordings. There

are not mystery things any more. Whereas there used to be a small coterie of cultists who used to buy 78's on Prestige by Thelonius Monk—Christ! you can call up CBS and have them send over a hundred! so it's just wide open. For example, Jan Garbarek, the Norwegian tenor sax player, possibly derived his style from Pharaoh Sanders the same way that an American kid in Tucson does, by listening to the goddamn records and imitating the sound, and this is something to really celebrate. So the language has spread and, therefore, has altered, but the way one comes to it, the way one learns it, the way a European learns it is exactly the way an American learns it in these days: recordings. I admit that I was astonished by Cage's statement in Chicago [New Music America, '82] that "perhaps if there were less recordings there'd be more music." (What's even more astonishing was the applause. I hope it was for the *bon mot;* I'm not sure.) I wonder if people truly appreciate how democratic recordings are? There's a certain point, you know, when the record's out there, that it isn't yours any more, that its use really isn't you any more, it's theirs.

What about un-jazz improvisation—is there a new common speech? You look through catalogues of—I can't call them rock records, because that isn't what people are doing any more—if you look through a catalogue, there are people in France, in Japan, in Germany, in Australia, in Sweden doing something which isn't rock, and it isn't jazz, and it certainly isn't "classical" music: what is it?

This is a wonderful confusion. You could say it's partly all of those things. I guess it's one of those things that's easier to define by focusing on what it ain't! All right: non-jazz improvisation: so let's abandon, for the moment, so-called dinosaur rock and roll, heavy metal and all that stuff, which is certainly improvisation, and probably some pretty good players. Witness Grateful Dead's huge devoted following! not the kind of rock and roll I particularly like: various branches of new wave bands, techo-rock bands: Robert Fripp's guitar solos on David Bowie records. . .Glenn Branca's performance in Chicago dramatically focused the by-now obvious schism in experimental music. The ascendancy of avant-garde rock-derived music over traditional jazz-derived modes is not a commercial one. It has to do with the vitality of the language, and I'm afraid that the "classical" wing of experimental music is not up to the challenge right now. About serious music and so-called improvisation ensembles, I have to confess my ignorance there and also why I'm ignorant about it is that I'm just not interested in it.

How about pop jazz? Grover Washington, Jr.?

Is he a jazz musician? Yeah, he is, that's right, but then why, for example is an English non-jazz guitar player like Fripp obviously not jazz at all? Grover Washington Jr.: it's mostly charts that he plays with Lonny Liston Smith-type chord changes, and is that jazz? The answer is "yes," of course, but here we have something that is clearly jazz with very little improvisation, and something that is clearly not jazz which is improvisation, so . . . ?

The problem might be dependence on labels. Even if you read the catalogues of international releases, they *are hard put: what is (here's an actual example) "Amphetamine-powered over-the-top hard rock/punk/metal"? Anyway, this is the music all the kids growing up playing today are listening to now. Who knows what they are going to be doing?*

A lot of people who've become very adept at improvisation, or who have been in bands at one time: they, too, grow out of a certain set kind of mold and do something that is a logical extension of what they had been doing, but it's become refined or even more extreme, or they've completely made a left turn and done something else. Sometimes I think that one shouldn't overlook, in the broadest sense, the political aspect. Improvisation, to a certain extent, is a political statement antagonistic to more formal concerns in music, and I think it is unrealistic to overlook that. It has as its basis, perhaps, a kind of anti-establishment bias.

The establishment is order, a repressive order?

It doesn't have to be expressed or even felt, you know, in terms quite that strong; it's just an alternate way of making interesting music.

You have people growing up to attend straightforward institutions and saying, "Well, I want to learn about music," and they discover when they start to study theory that this is not what they want at all. There is an order, an oppressive nature, with all the things you can't do, you mustn't do, you don't get to do.

You know that's really the fault of the educational system because, in my opinion, the study of traditional music theory is really a history course and not a theory course. It is simply learning the language learned by European masters in the past. There's certainly nothing wrong with that, and it shouldn't be repressive or oppressive, but of course a lot of people with not much imagination have confused theory as something outside of its historical context. But I've never met an interesting artist who hasn't *learned* what they're doing. Now it doesn't make a bucket load of shit-difference whether or not it was

learned in college or was self-taught: they learned *something*. Now maybe they learned electronics as engineers in professional recording studios, real state-of-the-art studios. Learning I-IV-V progressions is another way to learn how to be an artist. You learn something: you don't just wake up being able, Mohammed-like, illiterate one day and literate the next. You don't do it. There is an area of self-discipline in there. There's a backlog of experience, of finding out that thus and such works, that you're interested in this, but not in this, and you learn as much as you can about it, you expand the language as far as you can and then at some point, perhaps, you do something else, but the main thing is that you have a reservoir of discipline and experience.

But there are people who have been at it for years and years and who are still incompetent.

That's quite true, but there are incompetent lawyers also.

True enough. How much, in the music you are now working with, is essentially improvisation?

I have a dual role in that respect. Since I haven't actually written, or shall we say composed, music in the traditional sense for quite a number of years—let me talk about my role as a pianist. This is, I suppose, of some controversy, especially among pianists, who are just horrified at this incredible way that I play, not a formally trained pianist—I've never taken a lesson in my life—so initially I played the piano in order to demonstrate how certain keyboard washes or grounds were supposed to come across in musics that were otherwise notated. Slowly but surely I've built up a sort of technique where, instead of demonstrating the way I wanted it done, I thought I'd better take the entire responsibility and just go ahead and do it. I always considered, however, that my role as a solo player, pianist, is really an adjunct, or a version, of my music, which is rather the opposite of the way it is with most everyone else. They consider, if they are piano soloists, for example, the music that's played is the music. It stands on its own. I don't feel that way myself. I feel that it's a reduction of something that's really much more interesting to me. But that's simply because I changed my own mind about the sort of music that attracts me. I mostly, at the moment anyway, prefer working inside a professional recording studio and making music using the studio as a resource, and when keyboards, or whatever sounds, are required, well, I'm the guy that does it. I can't play electric bass, shall we say, so somebody else does it for me. By no stretch of the imagination am I an engineer, but there's always an engineer there who does know what to do.

Now, this is a broader aspect of improvisation. What if something happens in

the studio—you only have the vaguest idea of what you're going to do—things start coming together, accidents happen, just as they happen in live performance: what do you do then? Well, you take advantage of it, or if it's a real clunker, of course, you go back and erase it, just as in live performance if it's a real clunker you have to forget about it and go on: everyone will forgive you. That's a form of improvisation, I think an interesting one.

The tape you were playing last night, with you and Gene [Bowen], was this just noodling around?

That was a result of noodling around, but by the time we said, "Let's make a little cassette copy of this," then it's not noodling any more. The composing part has been taken care of, put it that way.

Doesn't formal composition begin as noodling also? it may not be physical, a kind of mental noodling?

You are doing nothing at all physically, but something is happening, hopefully, in your inside head. Wasn't it Philip Glass?—I think so—he gave an interview in some magazine I read and said that his pieces begin as improvisations and then they're fixed later: what a perfectly natural thing for an American to do! Also Jon Gibson's solo performances seem so clearly to me, at least, to have begun as an improvisation—I don't know if this is really true, but I hope it is—and, you know, one of Debussy's ongoing criticisms was that he was notating an improvisation. The least improvised music possible would be, I think, film scoring, because everything is a given, except what the sounds are actually going to be. So a lot of work has been done for you: I mean, you don't have to worry about formal structure. I think the real creative part is done with a good film music editor. Some of these people actually are the artists, and they're supplied sounds by people who do that.

Somebody told me a while ago that a great many people who listen to this unclassifiable music we were talking about are essentially a non-music audience; they may be painters, dancers, amateurs, whatever, but they are not the same kind of audience that are going to hear the Budapest String Quartet. Of the people who buy records of your music, how many are, like, conservatory fiddle majors?

Well, I'm sure some, but by and large, no; I think it's a broader audience, and I think that's an excellent idea. Besides, I'm very certain that the number of people that I'd call virtuoso listeners is expanding pretty fast. But this all goes back to the availability of recordings again. You don't have to be a devotee to

get almost any kind of music that pleases you; it's available everywhere.

Nowadays you hear the record first and then you go to the concert; in the old days you went to the concert and then decided to buy the record.

As a matter of fact—I don't know whether this is the case in Europe, but it certainly is here in America—famous bands go on the road in order to sell records, and they lose a fortune on the road; they don't make money, but that's not the point, they make it at a later date through record purchases.

What's astonishing in the last ten years is the number of independent persons or small groups that put out their own records. The recording industry used to be dominated by what, eight or ten companies? but now you look through any listings of what's available and there are hundreds of small labels with one or two records each.

What a good idea! and part of the reason is that since record sales are so huge in this country it's not difficult for the small labels to get distributed; they are relatively easy to find. Any big city, any modestly sized city, has two or three record stores which feature music by Henry Cowell, Anthony Braxton, and whomever. The really big labels took an incredible bath half a decade ago—it's not because they didn't sell millions of records, which they did, and they continue to do, but it's the old saw that growth didn't keep pace with their expectations, and so they overcommitted themselves and took an enormous bath. That has set up an awfully good climate for small labels, for what I would call boutique labels. It's the difference between selling Gallo wine by the state-load or shopping for small boutique labels that make superb superior products, but they sell one-hundreth of what Gallo does.

Thirty years ago I knew of people whose work I wanted to hear that I'd heard about, *but there weren't any records. Later we could mail tapes back and forth to each other (which is another interesting feature), but now if you want to hear somebody you can find the record. And I think this tends to defeat the idea of precise categories for styles that we were talking about, where labels become meaningless. In the '50s everybody listened to the new work by Stockhausen and Berio and those gentlemen from Europe, and there was a sort of imitative replicated compositional rationale here because of that. Now it's centrifugal; people are saying, "Well, we want to make our own sound, which is a different sound from all that stuff we are hearing."*

I wonder how many people have analyzed the fact that their language is a result of their limitations? For example, why didn't Thelonius Monk sound

like Art Tatum? The reason is that he couldn't play the piano as well as Art Tatum could, if anybody could. So what did he do instead? He developed a style that sounded like Thelonius Monk. And I think a lot of improvisation has got to deal with that issue. I am sure, for example—there are plenty of saxophone players, probably all right here in Hollywood as a matter of fact, who could play rings around John Coltrane in a sight-reading contest, but not in terms of inventiveness, in meaningfulness, in the esthetics of it.

But I'm bothered by the fact that so much of what's being done today, the jumped-up mediocrity . . .

Well, that's one of the consequences of the freedom to do what you damn well please. You have to accept that, but I don't think there's anything wrong with that. What really pisses me off are people complaining about how much money, shall we say, Black Sabbath makes in one year. Well, let them make the money. Why not? they must enjoy it. I think envies and jealousies are really self-defeating in art. Not every photographer is going to be Helmut Newton, and he's certainly, by all stretches of the imagination (and what an imagination!) an extremely good photographer, in a purely technical sense alone. So, should Lucas Samaras' Polaroids look like Helmut Newton's fashions? No. Once again, it's the aspects of singular personalities.

Hasn't improvisation, as we've been talking about it in terms of the label-less music, that music out of the jazz stream, accepted a kind of post-sixties affirm-one's-personality-ism? the kind of self-aggrandizement that's left over from the '70s, which reflects itself even now in these holistic newspapers that list all manner of self-exploratory groups and approaches, and the improvisation is simply a cop-out for this kind of "Wow, I'm expressing my personality"?

You are probably absolutely correct, but I think that one consequence of improvised music is that it *is* self-expression, except it's also immediate gratification or humiliation, occasionally. The reason that some of the stuff is so distasteful to many is that a lot of people, given a forum for self-expression, really don't have very much to say. There's something about the desperateness of it that's maybe just our natural reticence about being so candid all the time; it's just distasteful. But, as far as self-expression goes, I must say I completely applaud that, and I tend to like people who express themselves who are interesting people; what they express is interesting, and I think that I wouldn't have it any other way. Some music, you know, is so polarized at one extreme that questions like "what does it mean?" have to be answered with "if it isn't perfectly obvious, then we have nothing to say to one another," which is ok with me, but I think that a bit of distance and ambiguity—reserve, actually—is very important.

But what about the unintelligible ambiguity of early rock lyrics? Donovan, early Dylan, that kind of thing, where a lot of images are thrown together in a kind of quasi-poetry and supposedly, therefore, by their mere citation, become imbued with some kind of supernal force which presumably makes them intelligible on a level beyond normal discourse.

Let's do it a different way. Once again we've ultimately got to talk about personalities. That's all there is to it. Talking self-expression we're not talking about a concept, really, we're talking about a person who was doing the self-expressing. But, to be frank, the entire issue isn't with us any more. I wonder if another element—that of extremism—isn't a good one to focus on. Now, for example, I can think of two extremists, Ennio Morricone and Albert Ayler. Absolutely unambiguous, unequivocal self-expression, maybe because it's *so* polarized, *so* focused on one thing, that you accept it or reject it as a totally personal thing, but not because you can't say, "Well, I don't understand it." It's too obvious. Ayler was the complete improviser, I would say, and Morricone, of course, not; everything is circumscribed, but the extremism, yes, that's the interesting point.

Well, you can also look at the extremism in terms of convention. Post-punk lyrics, for example, which are totally designed to be extreme, all in a convention, like Gothic novels, or horror movies.

You're right. What I just said about Ayler and Morricone, for example, you can say the same for Barbara Cartland, or whatever her name is who does the romance novels. But conventions can be a very rich lode. I'm thinking, for example, of lyrics that are so processed that they're unintelligible, or a kick-drum whose pulse has nothing to do with the piece. So the convention is intact, but the function has disappeared. I think we're back to the idea, if they have something interesting to talk about we're interested in listening.

LEE KAPLAN and VINNY GOLEA

How long have you been playing together?

LK: Since 1976. It hardly seems like it! We went through a long period of not playing together, and I guess when you hear it, it doesn't necessarily seem like the product of seven years. Vinny and I first played together in a trio called Moonpath. That was me trying to play with Vinny and percussionist Alex Cline, who at the time were far superior musicians. It became evident after doing two concerts that maybe we should cool the performing. Vinny and Alex continued playing together, and I went back to the woodshed for a while.

VG: We just had three different ways of doing something and tried to put them together to make them one way.

What electronic instrumentation do you use?

LK: Well, I have a Serge Tcherepnin modular synthesizer, with a Serge touch-sensitive keyboard. I also have a five-octave organ type keyboard, and that's really my standard equipment except for using tape machines.

You seem to be one of the only synthesizer players who spends more time in performance off the keyboard than on. There's a great deal of work constantly patching.

LK: That's a function of my being a terrible keyboard player. . . I try to keep away from the constant desire that most synthesizer players have for approaching the instrument as a keyboard instrument. . . I'm more interested in the concept of producing sound, and I feel the less I know about playing the keyboard, though it's a limitation, the better I like the outcome.

In performance, even though there may be no audible rhythm, you keep time with your body to something you must be hearing inside, and there is a very definite rhythm even when you're just changing patches.

LK: It's like a tide in the music. I know I've been told that many times. When we finish playing sometimes I'll have the clearest idea of what the music sounded like, and other times I'll have absolutely no idea whatsoever; and people will say, "You really moved a lot this evening." And I'll think, "Did I move? I certainly wasn't aware of it!"

What about the use of the pre-recorded tapes?

LK: So far, the tapes have been sounds that I've recorded in nature. Unfortunately, a few times in the past I've appropriated subject matter that has been on records. I don't really feel comfortable about doing that any more, but in some instances, I haven't been able to go out and tape those sounds that I want myself. Say, Japanese temple bells resounding with insects creating a chorus behind them: I haven't been able to go to Japan and record these things, and you come across a record. . . . . Also there have been my tapes of the overtone series of Schweppes tonic mixer bottles, some choruses of flutes built by Douglas Ewart of the AACM. . . . Basically, it's to create other layers to enter into our music. They don't really serve as means of composition, except in one or two isolated cases, but I basically have an array of tapes so that I can select a certain type of sound if I'm hearing it.

Do you know what's going to happen?

VG: Not always, no, unless we have a predetermined structure. He'll say, "How do you want to start?" and I'll say, "How about flute quarter-tones," and he'll say, "Well, I can put the Schweppes tape underneath that, do you want to start like that?" and I'll say, "Oh, that's a good idea."

LK: The idea is that I will become more active and record more sounds. There are probably now ten or twelve tapes that I choose among. With a duo, I sometimes feel there really has to be a full sound, and the idea that I may be dealing with on the synthesizer may not really be enough to fill up the room; so it

provides another texture in the music. Sometimes it provides an easy method of making a transition to another area, too. But there are people who are really masters in dealing with tapes. There's Alvin Curran, Maryanne Amacher, people like that. So much of what they do is involved with the tapes—I feel like a novice, but I know that it works in the music and I'm very happy with the growth so far. George Lewis, also, is another one.

VG: We played with George and he had this piece that was just me and a tape. I'd never played it before, and the first gig we did he said, "Oh, we're going to play this now, you've got it." And I said, "I've got what?" And this thing started and I started playing with it, and then he said, "Ah, that's great, that's great." And that was the end of that one whole piece. But after a while when you're playing with it, you don't even realize that it's a tape. You know, you expect to hear it at different times.
A lot of it is very automatic in terms of our structure—for an hour's performance it might be, "Let's start quiet, and get more metallic in the middle, and then we'll take it out from there." Lee might say, "Well, how about the temple gong at the end?" and I'll say, "Well, that's fine." Or he'll say, "Can you blow on two clarinets?" and I'll say, "Yeah, if the reeds are wet I can do it; if they're not wringing wet I can't do it."

During the bass clarinet circular breathing I noticed that whatever fluffs may arise when you're catching your breath are allowed to happen as a natural part of the music instead of denying the instrument any sound it might make.

VG: I had to come a long way to accept that. It's very hard. But then, as I practiced that more, the more you hear how that false sound becomes the real sound, and then the other sound becomes subordinate to the false sound; so you kind of wait for the false sound and then you try and grab it, and then you have to remember how you grabbed it, and by that time you are into another false sound.

LK: Vinny and I get into constant debate when he plays the flute. When he plays long tones, it sounds like the ocean rushing in when he inhales. That's something I've yet to get used to, but I think Vinny has a real human, organic approach to his woodwind instruments, and considering how many instruments he plays, I really think he has a definite and mature sound on each one.

VG: I think it's important because your mood will be static the entire time unless you go to the voice of the instrument. I mean, without being psycho-spiritual, or whatever, you do have to turn yourself to the instrument and not force your own thing on it, because then you really fight it. . . .

Is there a scene in Los Angeles for your music?

VG: My answer to that is two- and three-fold. There's a certain small audience for what I do. A good example of that was in March when I had the good fortune to do a large ensemble work for fourteen pieces, which I had tried to do for a couple of years, and all of a sudden it was happening. But we couldn't get a review! I mean I got one review on the entire thing. There were many major creative improvisers, however you want to label them, all in one band, and here they were playing this music, which I thought was pretty good, and so—one review. It was ridiculous. It's as if they're pushing it out of the way all the time. And you get tired. I've been here for ten years, and I feel like I've gone through the Amazon. I've turned around and the trail is growing around me, so I've got to cut my way out again!

LK: There *is* a larger audience. We had about 350 for the large ensemble. Earlier this year, the Independent Composers Association sponsored a concert including Ingram Marshall and Foster Reed, Carl Stone, and the two of us; we got 300 people to come to that concert, in a church. So, there is an audience. The last time that Vinny and I played, with Henry Kaiser, there were 100 people in Steinway Hall, and that was all that could fit.

Do you usually do an hour set, or is that special?

LK: It seems that every time it differs, but usually it ranges between 35 minutes and maybe an hour and a quarter. If you were to set Vinny up in a hall with no constraints you could start a concert at 7 o'clock and you'd walk in at 9:30 and it would still be the first set. It's nice because every time we play, the parameters for what we do are different, and we really don't set up our music very much in advance. Which is not to say that the music is without structure. It takes me about an hour to get set up properly, and it takes Vinny a while to set up all his instruments, get the reeds ready, and tune himself to the hall. Then we see how things feel; for five minutes before we go on we'll discuss the music, then shut up and be quiet for a minute. It's nice. I feel in that sense it's really flexible. The worst thing in the world is when you try and structure all of your music in advance, and you walk into the hall and you realize it's not going to work. You then have to fit the concept to what's going on. . . .

One of the really important factors in improvisation, when you're playing for people, is the fact that there *is* an audience, and they can change the music entirely. For people who deal with notated music—you can feel it sometimes in a performance; someone's performing a piece and you have an audience that's huge, the hall's filled and there is electricity. There's no way that it can help but affect the performance. In most instances it's for the better, but still you're playing the notes that are on the page and when it's over, it's over. When you're dealing with improvisation the audience really becomes a huge part of the music, and I think the people who really don't ever go out and improvise will never

know how that is. That's what makes the music interesting. In that way it's a living music; it's different each time.

VG: They send thoughts to you; they complete your phrase, sometimes, and you can hear; there are things they send to you. And things happen when you play a room; the hall where we played was echoey, so it was really suited for playing with more space. But a poor guy who's stuck with a piece of notated music can't even change the tempo of it. Suppose he had to play a really facile clarinet piece; all his notes are going to run into each other and no one can really hear. It's a plus and a minus, but if you're really approaching the hall, you can see if it sounds this way, you can do things with it.

At the gallery performance, there seemed to me to be a rhythm under all the other rhythms, like a pulse every three or so minutes, a tidal kind of slow change happening and not reflected on any of the three or four other levels sound was happening on.

LK: When we did that concert it had a very oceanic feel to it; I really felt, in a sense, the undercurrent of waves. I felt almost kind of sad in that room. Not because there was a small audience, but just the way the music came back; it was almost like it was enveloping me. Our music tends to move into areas more frequently, and with a lot of diversity, than in that performance. To me it goes back to the concept of improvisation and the hall and the audience having a real degree of input to the music. I love dealing in the low registers and hearing those smokey, low frequencies, and in a room like that it gets lost. The high frequencies really come out, especially when you hit the different resonance points around the room.

It seems to me that not many people today—I don't know much about what's going on in Europe—are working over a fast pulse. There may be fast things happening, but the basic pulse is getting slower.

LK: I don't know whether I can agree with that. In the middle-to-late 60s there were two emergent schools of improvisation, entirely different in nature, one taking place in the United States, one in Europe. You can talk about the post-Ornette Coleman period and the liberation from playing over chord changes; also people like Eric Dolphy, John Coltrane, and Albert Ayler who were taking the sound beyond playing the notes over the changes. After that happened, there was a divergent stream, especially between the AACM and what was going on in New York. It was a necessary thing to work through. It was music of the time. I think there was a lot going on because people just had to explore the boundaries, it had never been done before. Take a look at the AACM, the

advent of little instruments, the multi-instrumentalist, the solo instrumentalist in particular. People know Sonny Rollins played saxophone solos, but people didn't get up and present a whole series of solo pieces for woodwind instruments, or brass instruments, as Leon Smith did.

In Europe there was an entirely different school of improvisation. In England there was Tony Oxley, Derek Bailey and Evan Parker; and in Holland there was Willem Breuker, Han Bennink, Maarten van Regteren Altena. In Germany there's Peter Brotzmann: all these people were doing something that basically had a very, very fast pulse, lots of small sounds, not necessarily connected by the same timbral production. You take somebody like Derek Bailey, he may have five sounds connected; none of them will be produced in the same fashion. I think that in Europe in the late 60s and early 70s there was a school of improvising which was about a lot of events happening in a very close period of time. I don't think it can be said that there is a slower pulse emerging in improvised music; it's about everyone doing their own thing, in a sense.

VG: It's an interesting question about time. We play things sometimes that are very quick, and at the same time, if we play a ballad, many times I hear the pace a lot faster in my mind and I hear something over there and I fit the notes to that; yet everyone else is moving in slow time; and sometimes when we're playing fast, I do the opposite. It seems as if time has to be internal, as some kind of clock, and it can go in either direction. Evan Parker may do a series of events in very quick succession, but it's hard to hear. You may have to listen to him as doing it over a long period of time: it's strange, but everything is reversed. He overlays and overlays . . .

LK: . . . and he'll be playing a soprano saxophone solo and you may hear the movement as being every time he takes a breath, which might be every three minutes . . .

VG: . . . and you'll hear up and down, up and down, slowly, whereas other people will be listening to every single note and go "My God, what is this sound?" So listening takes the time that way, whereas the player might be thinking very quickly. That's a hard question.

LK: We're entering, or have entered into, a period where you can really view the body of the music, say, that Vinny and I are a part of, broadly labeled as improvisation, now in some sort of historical context. But I hope at least that the music has reached a period where it's not so much about people exploring, say, the concept of time, but where everybody is creating music with what they, as individuals, have learned, and what has been created up to that point by a body of improvisers. You know, it's like Charlie Parker saying—this is a paraphrase—"you learn everything you can about an instrument, then you throw it all away and you just play. . . ."

ELLIOTT SCHWARTZ

My thoughts on improvisation are related to personal experiences: occasions on which I've performed publicly with only a cue-sheet, a dramatic ground plan or a premise to guide me, and other instances where I've played without any sense of what the music would sound like beforehand. I can recall having improvised solo piano music before my friends in this manner when I was a high school student, and later (in college) performing four-hand piano improvisations—fairly lengthy ones, as I remember them—with one of my roommates. Those piano duets had general "shapes" that were agreed upon beforehand, usually ABA arcs of contrasting mood or a series of variations upon some innocuous tune fragment. My partner and I never worried about synchronizing our activities. Whenever one of us initiated a major change in tempo, texture or whatever, the other would either follow along or actively resist the change (which would, of course, then create change of another sort). Occasionally we would decide in advance to stay within certain keys, or to self-consciously avoid any reference to tonality; usually, though, we went our own ways and created a very attractive *ad hoc* brand of polytonality.

Many years later, when Marion Brown and I were both teaching at Bowdoin, we formed an improvisation duo which we named "Soundways," toured for a while,

and cut a record. I have no background in jazz, and so for me playing with Marion Brown was a revelation. It was sobering at the outset, for example, to realize that he knew much more about my world (Cage, Webern, etc.) than I knew about his, and that he was much more spontaneous in his approach than I had ever imagined I could be. We "rehearsed" many times, but only to learn each other's favorite tricks and responses, never to create an actual repertoire of pieces. When waiting backstage before performances, I would frequently try to suggest some general "schemes" or musical shapes; Marion never wanted to hear any of them. "Let's just go out and play," he would say.

These experiences have taught me that (1) "improvisation" (however one defines it) is most exciting when it creates adventure, a quality of unpredictability, a certain *danger*. For me that quality can only exist if the performance in question occupies "real time" (where's the adventure if you can stop at any moment?), if it takes place before an audience (even an audience of one or two), and if there is more than a single solo performer, since the addition of wills and whims other than one's own compounds the unpredictability factor beautifully.

(2) Furthermore, I've developed an attachment—almost an esthetic preference—for accidents, unplanned occurrences, the opportunity to unravel a knot in real-time-performance situations. I'm pretty traditional in my views on musical "form"; that is, I am more interested in controlling a specific succession of events than in creating a space in which events interact freely, and I prefer certain successions (very old fashioned ones, like the Rondo or Sonata) to others. But I've discovered that, for me, such attachments to traditional ordering are not incompatible with an equally strong fondness for the unplanned. The fun of improvisation (or of composition) lies in the contradictory tugs between those two—the excitement of seeing where a randomly arrived at idea (or an unwanted accident) will lead, how my instincts and preferences cope with the input the real world (or "fate") gives me, and the satisfaction of knowing that *any* material—well, almost any—can be shaped to a degree that will accommodate my preferences.

I occasionally compose my written-out music in this way, using the page as an analog of "real time," or a frozen performance (i.e., refusing to look backwards or make major revisions of what has already "occurred"). In this situation I "improvise" with my material, shaping and exploring whatever the notation suggests, with a feel for the total succession (including my estimates of future events!) to guide me. As a particular frozen improvisation (or written composition) develops, I sense "middles," "climaxes" and "endings" by trusting my instincts for proportion and shape. In all of this, I see little difference between the symbolic improvisation at my writing desk and the live, public, real-time variety I engage in seated at the piano.

LARRY SOLOMON

IMPROVISATION (1)

Until the twentieth century, improvisation was essential for making music, both in composition and performance. Commonly, composers and performers of the past were skilled improvisors. The mere mention of Paganini, J.S. Bach, Liszt, and Busoni recalls their impressive feats. Others, such as Mozart, Schubert, Chopin, and Beethoven, are known to have used improvisation as a compositional tool. First-hand descriptions of musical activity as late as the nineteenth century give the impression that improvised music was abundantly performed, and not just as solos; consider these duos: Mozart and Clementi, Beethoven and Wolffl, Mendelssohn and Moscheles, Brahms and Remenyi. The accounts are often nothing less than spectacular. For example:

> [Johann Hummel] converted his playing into a free improvisation-fantasy, but one that constantly preserved the waltz rhythm, so that the dancers were not disturbed. He then took from me and the others who played their own compositions during the evening a few easily combined themes and figures, which he wove into his waltzes and varied them at every recurrence with a constantly increasing richness and piquancy of expression. Indeed, he even made them serve at length as fugue themes, and he let loose all his science in counterpoint without disturbing the waltzers in their pleasure. Then he returned to the galant style and in conclusion passed into bravura such as even from him seldom has been heard. In this finale the themes taken up were all constantly heard, so that the whole rounded off and ended in real artistic style.[1]

Improvisation was not only admired but required of skilled musicians in the past. The figured bass notation in the Baroque and unwritten cadenzas of Classical and Romantic concerti are evidence that composers presumed performers could improvise. The skill was considered not only important, but "indispensable." In 1760, C.P.E. Bach wrote:

> Variation when passages are repeated is indispensable today. It is expected of every performer. The public demands that practically every idea be constantly altered, sometimes without investigating whether the structure of the piece or the skill of the performer permits such alteration. . . . One no longer has the patience to play the written notes [even] for the first time.[2]

This philosophy of performance may come as a shock to contemporary performers who tout the antithesis as axiomatic, but this was common "classical" performance practice in the eighteenth century, as is evident from the flexibility of the scores written during this time.

Since it rarely occurs as an academic study and its ephemeral nature does not submit easily to analysis, improvisation has gained a reputation of mystery and superstition. It is sometimes considered unrefined, primitive, undisciplined, or interior to composition. Since improvisation is looked upon with awe by some and with suspicion by others, authors avoid the topic as though there were little to be said about it. Published books are nearly all restricted to special techniques in stylized treatments, such as jazz or figured bass realizations.

Try looking up "improvisation" in your favorite music history text or other references. You may be surprised to find how little there is on the subject. Why has a musical area of such richness and major importance been ignored?

Musicologists may believe that the reason for the lack of literature is the ephemeral nature of improvisation, but this is only partially true. Improvisation is actually a more documented and approachable subject than many studies of early music, and the first-hand descriptions, which are numerous, are often colorful and exciting. In other cases, interesting gaps in our knowledge may be discovered. For instance, in what music history text do you find that Leonardo da Vinci was renowned as a musician in his time? He was strictly an improvisor and wrote no music.[3] He may have been a profound influence in the history of music in ways that we know nothing about.

In addition to the many first-hand accounts, a number of recordings are available documenting improvisatory performances near the end of their heyday at the close of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. There are primarily piano roll recordings, with phonograph recordings beginning in 1900. Many interesting things are discovered on these recordings, revealing a performance practice that contradicts much of what is regarded today as "authentic." Who are the performers? None less than the students of Liszt and such composers as Mahler, Debussy, Scriabin, and Brahms. This was a time when improvisational performance was declining, giving way to early twentieth century literal performance, and yet many striking examples of the art are still represented.[4] By comparison, modern performance of the classical repertoire is rigid, unimagin-

ative, and dry; "different" performances of the same work vary only in "interpretive" detail.

Also available for research are the scores of music composed or influenced by improvisation. More music than we imagine has been written-out improvisation, or at least started that way. Many revered composers were keyboard players and composed at the keyboard: Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Franck, Stravinsky, *et al.* Chopin was one who made no clear distinction between improvisation and composition:

> The other day I heard Chopin improvise at George Sand's house. It is marvelous to hear Chopin compose in this way: his inspiration is so immediate and complete that he plays without hesitation as if it could not be otherwise. But when it comes to writing it down, and capturing the original thought in all its details, he spends days of nervous strain and almost terrible despair.[5]

Among other works available for research are the fantasies of Mozart and C.P.E. Bach, the technical treatises, and, of course, the wealth of recently composed music employing improvisation.

A study of the history of music reveals an art in continuous change, always vital and never the same with the passage of time. However, music education is almost exclusively based on models of pre-existing music. For all its advantages, such education often leads the mind into fixed patterns of thought, a narrow viewpoint, and finally into dogmas. In music, one is taught to hear in selected schemas to the exclusion of others of equal possibility and trained in equal temperament, regular meters, symmetric rhythms, and the like. Summarily, students are ear-trained (or ear-chained) to formulae, taught to regard certain sounds and combinations as superior to others, and are often obliged to adopt the values and prejudices of teachers, all in the name of education and musical tradition—music that was never created as formula or dogma, but was rather in constant flux and renewal.

Indoctrinating a child to draw a face according to a prescribed formula rather than encouraging an original vision of that face seems an obvious fallacy. Yet, music educators fail to see the parallel in training students to hear and play according to prescribed formulae, often with the implication that there is only one valid way to perform, compose, or think about music.

Children's visions are rich. Their world is full of magic and wonder. Adults' admonitions, such as "stop day-dreaming" or "that's childish," are destructive to such imagination. Most parents are anxious that their children be initiated into the world of mental and academic discipline, where intelligence and learning is usually measured by the speed and degree of their indoctrination

and behavioral modification rather than by their degree of inventiveness, imaginative powers, and free, original thought.

An interesting refutation of this was written by Albert Einstein concerning his childhood development. In answering the question about why he in particular discovered relativity theory, Einstein once wrote:

> The normal adult never troubles his head about space-time problems. Everything there is to be thought about, in his opinion, has already been done in early childhood. I, on the contrary, developed so slowly that I only began to wonder about space and time when I was already grown up. In consequence, I probed deeper into the problem than an ordinary child would have done.[6]

Einstein's parents had thought he might have been retarded because of his slow development as a child.

The influence of academic indoctrination lies heavily on contemporary composition. Maximum control and certainty, antithesis of improvisation, were common maxims of composers in the 1950s, especially with those of the post-Webern camp. The assumption seemed to be: the greater the control, the greater the use of structure, the greater the music. An incorrigible dogma arose that is intolerant of any alternative view—pronouncing all else "primitive" and "artless." The doctrines of serialism find shelter in academia, where verbose, analytic rationalizations, charts, and other platonic artifices serve to sanction an academic art. Music becomes a geometrical ornament or an excuse for elaborate theories. The structure becomes more important than, or identical to, the music itself. Emotional content, so foreign to academic thought, can be ignored. Yet the fact that this verbosity over technical matters has no precedent in the writings of past composers is overlooked. Scholastic scores of the 1950s are replete with every kind of marking, distrusting any interpretive intelligence.

Is more control "better" than less? Improvisation has been called incomplete composition, but it is just as valid to call composition overdone improvisation. Perhaps too much effort has been devoted to their separation, to elevate composition to the status of a superior activity. Perhaps there is less difference than is commonly supposed.

Does composing simply involve the conscious and willful manipulation of sound, i.e., its organization? Or does it demand an unusual sensitivity toward gestural speech, of sighs, murmurs, shouts, etc? Is improvisation purely sensual or does it also embody concepts? If so, how are the concepts realized? Many composers consider structure, the grammar of music, as background, relegated to the unconscious. Often, they speak of beauty and meaning heard in the random world of sound. These, too, enter into improvisation as well as composition.

Revision, improvement, and polish may also be aspects of improvisation. Continuous decisions change the nature of an improvisatory piece, which may result in a fixed form with flexible detail. Some may even be charted or scored with varying degrees of predetermination. Many contemporary "compositions" are scored no more than this.

The line drawn between improvisation and composition is as artificial as that drawn between ethnic art and "official" art. Composition implies something more fixed, less changeable, than improvisation, but the distinction is a matter of degree and has never been defined.

Contemporary performance practice in academia is anti-improvisational. Performers adhere doggedly to the printed notes and try their best to "be authentic," however impossible and even undesirable that may be. When contemporary scores suggest or require the performer to improvise, the "trained" musician discovers a gap in his skills and either cannot do it or does it poorly. Modern music education is largely responsible for this. The quest for "authenticity" has overshadowed, and even suppressed, the performer's willingness to take risks. The score was never meant to imprison the performer's imagination. To the composer it is apparent that his ink-charted paper can only be a rough approximation of the music, no matter how precisely it is scored. In every performance there will be much over which the composer has no control. The same score often results in different sounding music. The score, then, is only a blueprint, not the architecture itself. If the realization of this blueprint is to be successful, the performer must use imagination; in other words, the performer must have a vision that transcends the score, a concept that reaches beyond the symbolic representation in sound or interpretive detail. Otherwise, a machine could play as well. This vision is unrehearsed and extemporaneous, and is always present when the music is brought to life.

Not long ago, I attended a student recital where the performers were very nervous. Many feared the idea of performing on a recital and were relieved when it was over. Most of the performances were forced, mechanical, and tense. One of the performers, a guitar soloist, spent about three minutes tuning his instrument before playing. As he did so the pegs of his instrument squealed with expression, and he delicately plucked at soft harmonics on the strings. I listened in awe at the beauty of the sounds in time and space. After these three minutes of uninhibited, naturally flowing sounds, the "music" was supposed to begin. My impression was just the opposite: the music had ended. He tightened, played out of tune in a forced and mechanical manner, stopped twice due to memory failure, and blushed with embarrassment. The piece lasted two and a half minutes, but seemed more like six tortuous ones.

This pathetic state of affairs shows how stereotyped the idea of music can become. There is an expected ritual for a performer and audience that resists

change. Content is often dictated by a mechanical beat and meter (a formula that poetry has long been free of), an abundance of repetition, phrases of equal four-bar lengths, and rhyming tonics, subdominants, and dominants.

Although scholars have used varied terminology to identify the process, most of the world's music is composed through improvisation. An existing idea is changed by an ensemble, finally rehearsing a fixed version for a polished performance. Such is the way of contemporary jazz improvisation. Apparently, folk music is the result of communal changes over many generations.

All performers must improvise to some small degree, for every performance is different, and these differences are normally not haphazard; something that is not in the score, however slight, is added. Therefore, the practice is not as foreign to the classically trained musician as is commonly thought. Essential to all music making, at least as important as technique, improvisation is a part of a musician's skill. Unfortunately, it is usually entirely omitted from a musician's training, leaving the impression that it is either unimportant or too difficult.

Imagination is vital to improvisation, and this mental activity is largely ignored in contemporary academic performance practice. Perhaps this is partly due to a prevalent notion that imagination is the antithesis of discipline. But discipline plays a great part in improvisation, for there is a difference between improvisation and chance. The latter does not involve decisions, whereas in improvisation decisions are constantly being made at the moment, in the present. The improvisor may start with any sounds, but as he proceeds a shape suggests itself, and he works toward this emerging shape. He may not realize that the music is complete or what it has become until the last sound is played; thus, he must constantly use his imagination.

What does imagination mean? The *New Oxford Dictionary* contains two relevant definitions: "1) the action of forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses" and "4) the power of the mind to form concepts beyond those derived from external objects. . . b. the creative faculty of the mind in its highest aspect: the power of framing new and striking intellectual conceptions." It is this last definition that is most important to improvisation—the formation of an image external to the sounds (sense data), not in imitation of a pre-existing music, but of new and original substance.

Imagination in improvisation leads to the discovery of alternatives. These alternatives were either previously unrecognized, ignored, or considered musically impossible. These discoveries are probably what, more than anything, make improvisation such an especially exciting and vital activity. The restricted content of conventional music is revealed and new musical terrain is opened. One can never be the same again. Traditional forms, tonics, triads, scales, meters, etc. are seen as only a small part of the universe of musical possibilities.

We might discover, for example, that a viable alternative to compulsive control is bending, rather than manipulating, an idea that has much in common

with traditional Eastern religious thought: allowing our environment to influence and teach rather than vice versa.

To the formalists, John Cage appears to be a sensationalist playboy, an anti-artist. In his writings is found the influence of Eastern thought:

> I wished when I first used chance operations, to make a music in which I would not express my feelings or my ideas, but in which the sounds themselves would change me. They would change my likes and dislikes. I would discover through the use of chance operations that things I had thought I didn't like, I actually liked. So that rather than becoming a more and more refined musician, I would become more and more open to the various possibilities of sounds. This has actually happened, so that my preference as an individual, in terms of musical esthetic experience is not any of my music and not any of the music of any other composer, but rather the sounds and noises of everyday life.[7]

Our view of music needs constant re-examination to help to understand the limits imposed upon it. Where does the music lie? Is it simply "organized sound" as Varèse said? Could music be something other than sounds? Is it sufficient to play the notes in time with a modicum of "interpretation"? George Ives, Charles's father, was once asked, "How can you stand to hear old John Bell bellow off key the way he does at camp meetings?" His reply: "Old John is a supreme musician. Look into his face and hear the music of the ages. Don't pay too much attention to the sounds. If you do you may miss the music."[8] This idea is primary to the people of all times and geographic areas: not the sounds, not the structure, but the "spirit" is the essence of music.

Where does this "spirit" come from and how does it become a part of music making? A constant bombardment with sounds disembodied from the spirit has contributed to a massive insensitivity to both sound and music. Sounds have lost much of their meaning. Can man, in his comfortable and secure technological womb, know what the sounds of the environment meant to his primitive ancestors—the sound of thunder, a gentle rain, the north wind, an animal lurking in the bush, or the death cries of a fellow human. Insulated from these things, he has substituted artificial sound worlds, such as television, where he is indoctrinated in specific meanings for music and sound by means of formula-like associations.

Freedom from these imprisoning formulae can result from opening the ears to new possibilities and by avoiding old ruts. The key is re-sensitization through active listening, which means hearing into, inside, and around the overtone structure, attack, and decay; treasuring nuances of color and dynamic

shape; and holding one's breath with events in time. It means relaxing and being at peace with musical time, forgetting clock-time. Active listening, the key to improvisation and composition, requires the mind's focus on sounds and their motion, allowing them to effect and influence one's responses. It means filling them with meaning, being unafraid, and using one's imagination.

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THE POLITICS OF IMPROVISATION

Malcolm Goldstein

. . . . . these words
written, black upon white
heavily indelible within the mind's eye
should be heard,
sounded out as wind articulating
utterances, leaves fluttering in Autumn
to sign the presence of something passing, unseen but felt
within the spiral of the ear.

"The Politics of Improvisation" was first presented as a talk at the "Alte Schmiede" in Vienna, in May, 1982. Alte Schmiede: the "Old Blacksmith Shop". A place to forge, out of red hot metal, new ideas with which to tread upon paths as yet untraveled. A place of renewal: fire, of endless becoming and transcendence, and metal, of being and prescribed form, coming together in the passage of redefining. Now a place of meetings and exchanges/changing.

The original presentation consisted of walking to various individuals and places in the room, posing a question and pauses for discussion. (The questions were written on separate cards and could be read in any sequence.) At the end, the audience was asked to submit their own questions which were read aloud and stimulated more discussion. I welcome such a continuing dialogue from the readers of this article.

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THE POLITICS OF IMPROVISATION

Once upon a time, I imagined a piece of music in which I invited several musicians to my house to play some music. When they sit down to begin, and finding no music, they ask, "Where is the music?"..... to which I respond, "*You* are the music!"

At the time I smiled at the idea, but later, as it lingered in my mind, I came to recognize the radical implications even within its simplicity.

(and so the story begins.....

What would happen if, in an orchestra,
a violinist (one of thirty or more) would get so
carried away with a musical passage, so as to begin
to express their own individual sense of that passage?

What would happen to the violinist?
What would happen to the orchestra?
What would happen to the conductor?
What would happen to the audience?
What would happen to the music?

Can you possess a sound?
Can you possess an improvisation?
Does the improvisation become more valuable if it is recorded
and copyrighted and sold?
Would you listen to a live performance differently if you knew
it was being recorded and was to be released as a phonograph
record?

How do you judge a concert of improvised music?
How do you judge a concert of classical, European music?
Is there a difference?

How does a music conservatory student judge a concert of
classical, European music?
How do you judge a concert of new (never heard before by you)
contemporary music?
How do you judge a concert of music from cultures outside of
the European tradition?

Why do we judge concerts/pieces of music?

Tell me please, do you judge each tree so critically?

Does the training of a musician, of a professional musician, reflect the value attributed to the music?

Does the value differ from the "unschooled" training of a folk musician?
. . . of a jazz musician?

Is it more valuable, less valuable or just different?

Can you copyright an improvisation?
Can you copyright a music composition?
Can you copyright an edition of a music composition?
Can you copyright a book discussing or analyzing the music composition?

Which is more valuable? . . . . . why?

(Wind upon my face
coming and going.)

Is a composition by Bach or Beethoven (or name your favorite composer) "perfect"?

Can an improvisation be "perfect"?

How is it that many composers performed in the European classical repertory were known in their time also for their talents as improvisors and today it is rarely part of a composer's activities?
Consider the training of a composer and performer:
What was the difference between composer and performer in the past?
What is the difference between composer and performer now?

Have we become so specialized as to narrow each spirit into the appropriate slot for the final accounting?

How is it that as the price of printed music
goes up so also it seems that the value of living
people becomes more and more worth-less?

(music as rooted in the living experience)

Could the decline of improvisation have anything to do
with the development of the orchestra as a major institution
in classical European music?

Could the decline of improvisation have anything to do
with the establishment of large businesses printing music
available at reasonable prices?

What happens to the individual (performers and composers)
in the context of these larger institutions?

Have you ever, in the act of doing something,
realized it would be more meaningful
to be doing something else?

What would happen to a classical musician
at that moment performing a sonata?
What would happen to an improvising musician
at that moment playing music?

What would happen to your life?

When listening to some favorite piece of music,
performed by a different person or ensemble, do you recall
previous realizations?
Do you compare them? . . . at the moment of listening?
. . . afterwards? ever?

How is this different (if it is different)
from listening to an improvised music?

Why, in classes of musical
analysis, is the object
of study dissected in terms
of harmonic structure but
the *sound* of the living
music omitted?

In an improvisation, can you anticipate
anything that will happen?
. . . . . How does that make you feel?

In an often-heard piece of music, do you
anticipate anything that will happen?
. . . . . How does that make you feel?

What does this have to do with the musical experience?
. . . . . with the social/historical experience?
. . . . . with the personal experience?

Why are limited editions more valuable than unlimited editions?
What does "valuable" mean in this context?
Would the print be less an aesthetic experience if there were more of them?

Does that make each human being, uniquely one, the most valuable edition of all?

Singing a tone on each out breath,
over and over, the same tone for a very long time. . . . . .
what do you hear?
What is constant? What changes?

Do you attempt to make the tones (dynamics, articulation, duration, quality, intensity, etc.) all uniform?
Do you allow for differences to occur? Do you enjoy them?

If this were part of your profession, would your attitudes, of above, change?

How do you feel about a person who is illiterate?
Could you respect such a person?
Could you imagine working under such a person if he or she were your director?
Do you think them capable of conceptualizing as subtly as you?

What do you think about a musician who cannot read music?

How is it that every school in the United States has a music appreciation course with major attention given to the European tradition of classical music?

How is it that very, very few schools in the United States have a similar class in the history and appreciation of jazz?

(Or is the issue here not only of class/culture attitudes, but also of racism?)

Why is the musical "expression" separated from the piece of music? Why do students practice the notes and rhythm first and then add "expression"? — add it like spice on top of a cooked meal, rather than worked into the process of cooking.

How would you respond if a soloist, performing an 18th or 19th century concerto, would really improvise the cadenza in the midst of the concert?

How would you respond if a musician embellished and improvised around the melodic harmonic structure of an 18th century music repeated section (as was done then) rather than simply to play it through again, but softly (as is done now)?

Could that moment ever be captured?

Would you want to capture it?

Have you ever observed the facial expressions
of a musician performing in an orchestra?
of a musician performing in a string quartet?
of a musician performing in a jazz ensemble?
of a musician performing in a rock concert?
of a musician performing in the street?
of a musician performing on a hillside?

What are some of the differences?

Do these have to do with the music being performed?
. . . with what you experience?

Who is the architect
that laid the foundation
for concert halls: seats all lined up,
nailed to the floor, rigidly
facing one way?

Do you ever feel the strait-jacket
or the urge to stand up stiffly
at attention while the orchestra
performs as if
on military parade?

If an individual were to realize the raga Bhairava every morning, would it be the same "piece"?

If two individuals were to perform Bach's E Major Partita in different eras, would it be the same "piece"?

If an individual were to improvise upon the chord changes of "Body and Soul" in different countries, would it be the same "piece"?

How would you hear them? . . . listen to them? Would you be the same person afterwards?

When an improvisation is said to be free
what does that mean?

Free from what?
Free to do what?

Can you listen this way also?
Free from the images and expectations?
Free to receive and participate?

When confronted with music that incorporates improvisation,
why do most professional musicians feel threatened and often
say, "anyone can do that."?
Because anyone can do it, does that make it less valuable?
And if anyone can do it, would each person do it the same way?
And, if the professional has lived with and played their instrument
for many years, would their realization be different and, if so,
in what way(s)?

And besides, do *you* really believe anyone could do it?

Why do students of music study editions in which the figured bass (the standard 18th century improvisation shorthand) is totally worked out, note for note, and often poorly realized by the editor? . . . (What's his name?)

Who gains by this?
Who loses by this?

Is a musical improvisation a piece of music
or the whole of music?

(Why are selections of music called "pieces"?)

What does improvisation ask of the performer that is so different from printed, through-composed pieces of music?

. . . perhaps: "Who are *you*?"; "How do *you* think or feel about this moment/sounding?"

If an improvisation be looked upon as
a process of *discovery* by someone shared
within the moment with other people,
can an improvisation be unsuccessful?

Is it possible to teach music composition?
Is it any less possible to teach improvisation?

If composition is included in the curriculum of most colleges
and every music school, how is it that practically no school
includes improvisation in its course of study?

If improvisation were taught in every music school,
would that make it more valuable? or less valuable?
to whom?

Consider what I am doing here/now; what you are doing—
the way we are relating: You, listening to what I have to
say and I, talking and wondering who you are and what you
think about all of this.

Consider:
the difference between a lecture and a conversation;
the difference between an orchestra with a conductor and
a chamber ensemble without one.

Can you name the 2nd flute player in the _____ orchestra;
or the 4th horn player, or even the lead viola player?

How is it that devoted listeners to jazz can name all of the instrumentalists
in an ensemble?

Why is the capacity to name the people so different in these two situations?

When you go to a concert, do you hear the piece of music as an object (Symphony #5) or as the sounding of people, for people of the moment?

How much do we think of a label,
which identifies an object,
which conjures up a sound image
of a recorded rendition
. . . while we sit and listen to a live performance?

Can improvisation ever be heard this way?

Why is "improvisation" a special word?. . .
when, in fact, we improvise all day long and
in everything we do.

Do other cultures in the world include
such a word in their language?

How many words do you read each day?

How many sounds do you hear each day?

How many new thoughts do you think each day?

What do you do with all this information received each day?

JOHN SILBER

KIVA: [Hi-ah Park (dance), Jean-Charles François (percussion), and John Silber (trombone)] is a research/performance group dedicated to notationless music, mixed media, extended instrumental techniques, and live electronic music.

BACKGROUND

Although we do not consider ourselves to be exclusively an electronic group (I would say we are 50-50), the thing that influenced us the most musically was electronic amplification, the simple microphone. When you put a microphone in front of your sound you begin to hear inside the sound, you begin to hear events that heretofore were not apparent. This changes not only your perception of sound but how you produce and interpret it. What you realize is that when you change your perspective, the content, the quality of a sound, its meaning changes also. Consequently, your thoughts about sound change, and that change is very emphatic. You change something modestly in content and perspective, and sound becomes quite something else. The same note, the same duration, everything the same except this quality, this change in delivery, this change in inner complexity which changes meaning. Traditionally you are not prepared for this, this change in meaning, for sound is covered in the context of other voices, other thought, other similarities to other conventions and covering textures. However, when you perform music where sounds are sparse, timbrally varied, and where texture doesn't overwhelm and embalm, then those changes become more apparent. Well, that particular presence is there in the microphone, in the amplification, for it captures the nuance, the slight variant, the inner dimension, the inner essence as well as the upper partials. All those acoustical events that normally die two feet in front of the sound are now sustained.

Now the curious part of all of this is that even after the amplification phenomena are no longer present and you are purely acoustic, you still bear the stamp of its

aesthetic, its substance, its demands. That commitment to a new range, a new expression remains. This leads not only to a change in sound ideals and meaning but to a change in structural logic, tuning, sound production, and instruments. The inner sound content comes out on the world in a different form than the old syntax, contextual crutches are gone, and you have to deal with sound itself and ultimately new thought and disciplines.

Recognizing this discipline needs as well as the givens of the world of sound, we set out structuring a number of exercises and conditions which seemed appropriate. We would not do music which repeated itself, was patterned, or of necessity was notated. The latter was done not because we were against notation but simply because the sounds were not notatable, the complexity and chance nature of much of it did not allow adequate visual forms of representation.

THE VOICE

In examining the nature of sound the voice became primary; it was the root and fountain from which other things would flow. In doing this, it was not what the voice could do but what it was, what its *de naturis sonoris* produced. This led to a whole series of exercises which went beyond "extended techniques". Although we found extended techniques rewarding, they were too limiting for our purposes; we were more interested in the biologic nature of sound in all its form chance dimensions as embedded in the whole vocal structure rather than just impregnated content. The character of that vocal *de naturis* was that it always had a certain built-in instability, a certain element of chance was always operating and shifting under your feet. A good part of our improvisation became that pushing to the limits which made the voice reveal things about its nature that you could not have suspected it possessed. They were interesting as hell, always changing, always new, always the same but always different.* Additionally, we were interested in the envelope, the resonant sphere, which maintained the inner sounds in their proper disposition and ultimately allowed them to float about and be expressively shaped. . . It was not a matter of high and low but of shifting colors, of colors within colors, sounds within sounds, substance within substance, meanings within meanings. That grain in the voice, that happenstance air, that complexity within complexity within chance which is different than its machine-held nature. In effect we were wedded to another type of sight singing, another type of voice, another implication, another discipline outlook.

So we explored all things the voice does (rather than can be made to do). We practiced laughing; we laughed for weeks, it was great, all of those harmonics and energy fabrics, those crazy things the voice does after exhausted of air. And so things happened that you could not have found otherwise, the laugh which was not a laugh but containing another form. The other aspect in the primacy of the voice was the primacy of the breath itself. Rather than just doing Mongolian

chant: as you know there is between the lungs and the larynx a trachea. The trachea is a corrugated tube, and if you just relax as you use the voice, rather than the voice box itself you get all sorts of corrugated creations, all sorts of support partials from the air passing over the ribbings. So we worked with other parts of the anatomy, other parts of the support mechanism as sounding forms from tracheal passage to couplings into the abdomen so you could get all of those subharmonics. Basically then there was the philosophic practice difference of getting away not only from projective vocal practices but away from its gesture. Each note had the task of oblivion, of existing for itself and not before and after, it had no place to go in order to be presence.

We still practice in that way. We practice each day, putting our instruments aside; we just use the voice, it became an analog as well as source of thought. I know with my trombone, even with the lips I find myself making an artificial larynx, using all of those ingressive sounds, ululations, breath attacks, embouchure distortions, pulsations with the vocal chords, use of the trachea, all the multiphonics with the roughage attached, varied attacks forward, mid-tongue essays, air bleeding through the nostrils, the ends of sound without the middle, circular breathing, depressed larynx, high whistles, nasal substance, the most interesting aspects of acoustics scoured from another cloth, another logic.

TUNING

When you put all of that together with instruments, mutings, bowings, contact mikes, and inner flutings, it not only becomes interesting but problematic. You can not tune in the same old way nor will it support old forms and instruments. Just from the technical aspect, you can not tune in the same way for the more you hear inside sound the more you hear its natural tuning array which is not equal tempered. The natural overtone set with all those ameliorations simply will not conform to that structure and other possibilities have to be invoked. On my trombone, I remove the F-attachment tuning slide and play out the natural tube the majority of time; the bell structure is too tempered to support the envelope. The whole idea of timbral tuning can not happen the way the horn is presently built, nor will it conform to the addition of the inner vocal array multiphonic or miming the bowed cymbal. The instruments you use have to be modified both as to their use and structure. You have to learn to be attendant and facile in miming sound in more than one dimension. The tuning we use is the natural tuning form, the unreplicated octave, that which we hear and rarely pay attention to. In order to accomplish this in our early years, we set up a number of sympathetic vibration monitors to train our abilities and awareness. We had to get away from the nomenclature ear. We built sympathetic resonators from piano soundboards and strung boxes properly tuned in series on C and F# with coneless transducers to drive them in consort. We also constructed corrugated tube resonators tuned the same way as acoustic space control to get away from the flat space speaker

assembly. And lastly, we practiced with our voice and instruments, all as ways of disciplining the tuning and the instruments.

As a postscript to the tuning, after gutting the piano and thinning out its strings and tuning the two of them to C and F♯, this tuning was not only because of the tritone separation and thus differentiation of the overtone sets but for reasons that just seemed appropriate, that just seemed evidenced in the materials with which we worked. . . We would sing and for some reason F♯ would appear as the natural fundamental. I don't know why this occurred but it did, even with our dancer who was to sing, too. We also worked with environmental sounds to get away from committed instruments. We even acquired earthquake tremors on tape from Cal Tech which for some reason replicated those pitches, transients from C to F♯. It was a metaphysical sort of thing, a side issue presence, an undergirding issue. So we screwed the coneless transducers into the soundboards to drive the strings in sympathy, thereby not only monitoring our pitches but giving a light patina of sound something like a two-string tamboura but more complex, like bees. We later gave up the resonators when they were no longer necessary or desirable (pianos sound like pianos no matter how light the touch or complex the emission) from the standpoint of timbral variability.

STRUCTURE

The other philosophic point with which we contended was structure, which here became a passage rather than "being there", what T.W. Adorno called the paratactic in contradistinction to syntax, the non-predicate logic in form. Having given up conventional periodicity and pattern making in favor of sound meaning itself, we practiced in favor of that presence rather than projective image (a way of pushing the sound forward as well as structure). Now this is difficult to do, for your training says otherwise; your tendency is to drop into imitation, into patterns, into talk; it is a mindless thing that you do and you wonder "How in hell did I drop into the hole?" So we purposely disciplined ourselves to give up the things we had, we continued to explore inner sound events and an ensemble which co-existed rather than imitated. Even though we were seemingly doing different things, different aspects, this idea of negation was constantly turning up different internal viewpoints and relationships which you did not know could occur.

THE ENSEMBLE AS CO-EXISTENCE

This idea of co-existence, where you do all those things which do not repeat themselves; well, you soon run out of gas. When we first started we could play seven or eight minutes and we thought we were doing well. We now play an hour and a half, and this meant a hell of a lot of work; you had to continually invent, to continually be available to the chance thought, the chance sound, the unexpected turn you captured out of the air and your materials which you could not foresee but prepared for in your playing discipline. You learn from all of this as does

your thought about art. It is like lightning, something new is occurring all the time, something is going on of interest. So this idea of continual change, continual interest, rather than similarities and cultural assimilation became important to us. Sounds became a constant palette of colors; as a friend noted, like a bouquet of randomly collected flowers, each a different color, a different form, a different stem, a different envelope, a different state of development, without script box. In addition to the sound color change, there was this concern for the attack, for the onset; it plays a vastly under-attended expressive role for just as the spoken word is different than the written, the onset with the breath differs from that made with the tongue (not to mention a different origin shaped onset). So all of those elements closed in on us, that tuning, that invisible timbral format, that instrumentation, that form, that thought, and out of that grew our music.

In developing our music, one of the rules of the game was that not only would we practice often but we would record and listen immediately afterward. At first this listening became corruptive, because you would start analyzing and categorizing and freezing parts; a secondary corruption occurred when we began the rehearsal. We would say, "What shall we do today?" In saying what shall we do today, it immediately set margins. Not only did this idea of margins intrude at any given moment, but it fostered its own recurrence. We would say "a new piece tomorrow" but in many ways it was the same. This attitude of analysis, categories and margins setting out signposts and ruling out sounds, other forms, other discoveries we stopped after a time of suffering.

We then gave up the pretalk delivery and tape playback analysis in favor of play, don't talk, and listen. . . the unexpected, the new insight, the new path rather than judgment now became clear rather than looking for the thing you knew to be there in the first place.

LISTENING

In doing the above you built certain skills and techniques outside your normal capacities. Some were strange, exotic, bizarre; others were fundamental; and it was hard at first to know which was which. In this the listening back without comment was helpful. If you are a performer, as you do something which may be good or bad, you haven't the slightest idea where it is headed and what is its residue at the time you do it. So you listen back without comment, it is privately held letting you assess the situation in a few days, months, or years, for revelation is not always fast. It became clear to us that the creative mentality and the problem solving mentality are different phenomena even though they cross paths. If you cast your thoughts into a well, into "What am I doing? where is it going? what is happening?" then you are building a fence. So we listened, absorbing the bad with the good while the psyche was being formed and to know later how it got that way. The quiet mind's inconscient drill, for no matter what you do you always look back but it is the perspective that gives you the view, the

afferent window, the intuitionist's bag, indeterminacy leading to fact, that divorcement between extension and weirding out by chance confronting you on its own terrain.

POETRY

As a parallel momentary encumbrance, one of the things that happens that stands in your path: you know how it is in a university, you not only have to do something but you have to explain it, which at first blush can be a drag. But this became good in a curious way for in struggling to explain, to write about the unwritable, you had to find an appropriate form, an appropriate linguistic, an appropriate logic pool. As it turned out, this was not just a matter of changing vocabulary (extending technique) or fleeing formal English and epistems but creating another form of expression in tune with the musical phenomenon itself, with form shape pulse, inner poetics (silent verse), rather than rhyme and reason. The poetic once again entered through the back door, it was that semblance that made sense, that other way, but that is another story.

DANCE AS SOUND MOVEMENT

Our group includes a dancer, Hi-ah Park. We began with five dancers and five musicians seven years ago. After the initial year we were two, not because of any aesthetic divorcement or temperament clash but because people had other boats to row and the dancers' funding ran out. With great good fortune Hi-ah joined us about four years ago. She was most important to us, for the dance aspect was always a critical shadow in all that we did and she turned out to be most appropriate, most inventive and skilled. I believe the importance of dance is because you have this awareness that dancers such as Hi-ah are dealing with form itself, its archetypal inheritance in a very direct realization. That inner shape where you say something in inner space, sound carapaced eddies in dimensions of moves versus gestures, that movement within, the old Platonic paradox. For us dance was not to be set aside as another performance adjunct, another presentment, but incorporated as a part of our own formation and that of sound. We would lie on the floor and make sounds so that they would contact the floor and all of that sort of thing, we were naive before Hi-ah's presence. We knew something was present but we did not know how to grasp it. If you are a percussionist or if you are a trombone player, your tendency is to rationalize your familiar gestures into something they are not. Hi-ah helped us out of that syndrome. One of the constraints which came out of that experience with movement was that if you have some playing skill, some habit, some gesture-aligned sound, you may have to throw it away or radically modify it. This does not mean you are destroying it but that you are subduing it for want of something else which may be more ranging. The basic movement skill that was subdued was gesture, that thrust forward in time and attack. I played for two years without

moving my slide to get from one note to another. I learned to get inside sound, inside a few fundamentals and if I wanted a new sound, a transient, I had to do it with my lips, my breath, my resonance, my voice, my lungs, my trachea, my mutes, my immobilized horn. I had to mutate, to shape sound inside and out. Jean-Charles in a similar way had to give up his percussion mallets, his striking gestures for bows, scratchings, rubbings, contact and induction mikes, voicings and breath.

So with *sans* gesture, breath, and metamorphosed inner discourse, we got into dance because the problem of movement lay there along with the naiveté that we recognized in ourselves when we did it. We really did not find such a dancer at first because most dancers, as you know, are not much different from musicians; they thrust and parry and choreograph much like us and for reasons long lost. It was then that we saw this Korean dancer; she was fantastic in our eyes. I remember in a workshop she was giving a student asking her "What will I do, should I go over there?" and Hi-ah replied, "Go over there and find out." Hi-ah is a dancer in the shaman tradition; as a matter of fact, she has performed at the Smithsonian as part of a Korean Shaman ritual performance. One summer she did an all-day initiation ceremony in Korea, a part of which she dances on knives. This develops very graceful and fine movements, I am told. The depths of her movements are absolutely remarkable.

Well, what comes of this, you walk into a room with all those shortcomings of body in yourself, in your movements, and in a sense what is inside which reflects back on sound because when you play, it is like making a movement with the content of sound. *You* take the gesture and *you* put the sound in the gesture with little thought of consequence. Hi-ah is unique in that her movements are clean, pure, and primal and athletic in space. She tumbles, bends, sits, straddles; her feet always firmly attached to the ground in a very light stance. A whole range of sensitivity about space and delicacy appears. This is not to say that this is all she does, for there are times when she interrupts this with crazy irreverent moves and gestures you recognize as interruptions, points of change in what she is about in another series of movements to come.

DANCE TRAINING

In Hi-ah's training movements originate out of sound, out of the breath, out of inner discourse chant rather than rocks and bottles. Her movements are vocal rather than percussive. No matter what she does the energy is always contained, always formed and never released except in those crazy periods when tension needs to be changed. In this we worked with Hi-ah through vocal exercises as well as movement; indeed the vocal exercises came first, then posture, then movement after everything else was lost. With this our sounds took on a dance presence, a lighter touch, a spatial oscillation, a form within itself. In doing this you had to dance yourself, your own body, your own expression, your own sound.

What was good about the dance experience from this perspective was that certain viewpoints about movement were clarified, as were attitudes about all those movements a performer makes which often lack elegance which in turn reflects back upon expressive sound capacities. It was not a matter only of losing certain clichéd movement, certain philosophic beliefs, but simple physical training, a type of training that music could relate to in the development of another acoustic, another discipline, another sound confluence. If I were to put some capsule around it, it is the whole idea of meaning itself in another dimension. Out of *your* art *your* form grows rather than out of your culture. The one thing you had to keep in mind in all this was that a number of things you did had little to do with developing technique yet had much to do with developing thought and substance.

ELECTRONICS

Electronics were used primarily to amplify subliminal presences, to add another dimension to the voice, to the instrument rather than replace them. I use a contact mike on my throat because I was interested in picking up those subliminal sounds inside the voice and placing them back in the horn. The horn became a giant mixer. This was done by using a voice box and placing its tube into the tuning tube of the F attachment, thereby re-circulating the sound and adding it to the sounding fundamental and its now present partials. This is different, as you can observe, than miking the sounds directly into speakers. The latter does not allow you tone control or shape the sounds on the second generation. The reason is threefold: one is to capture the sound, another to shape it, and the third to avoid that flat-out speaker quality, that great equalizer in the sky that presses sound into one dimension. Another aspect served by this process was to allow you to phase inside the horn itself in a controlled manner rather than the happenstance of speakers beating against one another. I also used a small lavaliere mike which I placed in the other outlet of the F attachment (the F attachment tuning slide is removed) to pick up all of the sounds happening inside the trombone at the level of resonance, at the level of all those acoustical additions. I could also mix, filter, reinforce, and single out apertures (tubes bell) through simply working the F attachment lever.

I also used a voice box tube inserted into a mouthpiece with a ¼" side-drilled hole. This allowed me to shape incoming sounds with the mouth cavity as well as tolerate my own played/sung sounds. These sounds then backwashed into the lavaliere to be picked up and amped. The incoming sounds from the voice box were most often computer-generated sounds properly tuned. I was now playing the many dimensions and viewpoints of any number of sounds in the resonant horn chamber, from lips, to throat, to song, to horn, to computer or to cut them out at will with a pedal. It goes without saying that with developed playing/vocal

skills you could control the harmonic presences and transient shapes; all you had to do was will it.

SPEAKERS

Rather than use the simple speaker assembly with the cone beating directly into the air of the room, I placed the speakers into large corrugated tubes. One reason was for tuning (the tubes were tuned to C and F# like the pianos) and the other was the emulation of the trachea. Like the tracheal corrugations this was to underwrite and make responsive the various harmonics within the fundamental rather than just their pitch sound resonance as in the cylindrical tube. Another reason was to acquire different resonant periods instead of the flat-out speaker/room response. Five tubes were like five different rooms within one. At times, rather than keeping the corrugated tubes within the performance arena, we moved them to different placements within the performance hall, placing them at different heights, directions, and at varied distances to reflective surfaces. This gave phantom presences: you get all of those different resonances happening in different acoustical situations as well as distributing the sound/instrument separations and mixdowns into different places.

DEVELOPMENT

In this whole travail in putting a music together in this way, you enter another dimension of your art. You can no longer handle sound in the same old way, it is just too dull and a lot of the fun is lost. It takes a long time to develop for it does not just come out of the air but it is indeed not only worth it but if you are going to be in electronics most necessary. If you work in electronics with amplifiers, speakers, and digital networks, you simply cannot tune in the same way nor can, I am convinced, such viewpoints support old forms and aesthetics. In order to discover this for yourself you simply have to sit down and work, to take the artist's intuition, go ahead and work in an open-ended manner: and out of your work come your revelations, your understandings, your substance. And so we did, without preordination, without a great deal of theorizing (although that certainly follows, and that too in another way). There is little sense in ruling out too much, although a little is necessary to keep from falling into an unsuspected bag of tricks. If there is anything there to build, then build some more and tear it down later. That idea of something analytic and something creative as being two different syndromes you have to keep in the forefront of your mind, try not to bias out, try not to project too much pre-sound intelligence and "this is what we are doing for such and such a reason."

Then you are driven forward, and it is an absolute delight, it's revealing, and it is music of another type, another language. It is a different way of realizing your art and the more you see the more there is in it to see. It is endless change, endless discovery, endless sound, endless. . . endless summer.

CONCERNING THE MUSIC THAT WILL BE

DAVEY WILLIAMS

Already you know that the sound of a train is a symphony; and that if the train should derail, the true spirit of 'prehensile romanticism' is reborn. The rhythm of skirmishing gunfire is the same as that of the stars.

You know that to pour a glass of water in the middle of the night during a storm is to perform intuitive music. You already understand music to be poetry, to be sound images. You have known for centuries that that music is made to be *seen*, not heard.

Musicians, long regarded as 'entertainers' on pedestals of varying heights, are now understood to be simply persons who express unconscious images aurally. Music composition, once thought to be a qualitatively assessable attempt to represent 'perfection,' is now at last returned to its only useful role: the invention and directions for invoking archetypes.

In the recent past, music composition always in some way preceded the actual, audible music. However, now that the subconscious wants to make music, we have a new arrangement indeed. Now, the music wants to tell the composer what to do. Now the performer must become the composer, and the composer must become the attentive audience, and the audience must be all of these.

And to the question "why?" we reply that our culture's only chance for liberation lies in the striving to re-embrace the aboriginal heart that has been lost, broken, and scabbed-over for so long. We must realize that the 'music industry' has appropriated music from people, has stolen folk music from the folks. The damage this has done is incalculable, for it is but a small part of the exile of imagination and individuality from our (post-WWII) culture. We who live in these times in the industrialized civilization bear witness to the execution of a plot of worldwide proportions to enslave that which is free in nature and thought (man). We reside on the eve of the murder-by-suicide of that old clunker, Western civilization.

Our role in the Yin aspect of this all is twofold: on the one hand the dirty work of removing that which does not begin or continue to exist in the service of total love; and on the other the marvel of that which does. Therefore it is only fitting that we enact Lautremont's maxim* on every plane of action; that poetry, the truest voice of liberty, must be present in all of reality.

This does not mean that milkmen will carry pen and paper on their routes so much as it means that the bottles will sing like mockingbirds as they clink against dawn's doorstep. Audiences will gather by rivers in pouring rain to attend concerts of cloud-burst and electricity, with instruments of their own as programs. Virtuosity will henceforth be judged in terms of fidelity to the state of oracle, of purity of images instead of the mere ability to imitate previous ideas.

The authoritarian-by-implication position of composer will be superseded by that of interpreter, or something akin to telegrapher. More important are the implications of various resonances in the central nervous system now. The imagination will dance to the rhythms of the moments that slip like air bubbles from the unconquerable, submarine core of the subconscious.

Make no mistake, we are not the fascists; we will not fly the black flag over all the music that has come previously. We must examine all mediums of expression, in this case all audible sound and music in the light of its contribution to the total of reality, to absolute love. That which we feel love from we will embrace; that which we do not feel love from, we will go away from. For now, we denounce the contemporary music racket as a big, self-serving chihuahua that has for too long begged its three squares daily from governments who give nothing except in

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*that poetry must be made by all

exchange for liberty. You may rest assured that when the arts agencies have all been discarded by the same big daddys who will eventually find them as useless as poets; when the fluff and dilettante modern art scene is trampled in a stampede of cowboys who prefer to maul breasts in locker-rooms instead of galleries, when the safe and famous poets have been taken out and shot along with the obscure visionaries and lunatics; you may rest assured that real poetry, real music and vision, real love will still flourish.

Coffins will be but dressing-rooms. The stage will be removed to out-of-the-way clearings in the rubble of cities' ruins and in deep jungles that have regained their mastery over us. To mention the mundane; the despicable notion of 'stars' and 'superstars' will be inferior to the status given to whoever carries home the least consolation prize for jellies at the county fair, for we shall have defeated music as a commodity at every turn, replacing the music industry's callous foistings with the pulse of the living.

We know we owe our debts and respects, too many to name. The lost skill of baroque improvisation, black and European free music traditions, the undeniability of ritual and ceremonial music: these are but a few of the heroic attempts to embrace the aboriginal function of music that is the original function of music; to invoke the latent.

And now, with music automatism the culture can take the steps beyond the lighthouses of our long dark ages. Now all ships at sea, and the flying fish and the squid, and the long-sunken wrecks and the silent ocean's jagged floor itself will all become the fog-splitting music of the lighthouse's lamp.

To speak the high language of the weather, have access to an instrument, voice, body, or any other sound-maker which you are intuitively 'at home' with. Forget all notion of your 'favorite' music; even of what you think music is at all. Assume the notion that you have never heard anything except real sounds. If you are alone, listen only to silence inside. As with automatic writing or drawing, wait for the image to come to you. If you are playing with others listen more closely to them than to yourself.

Always begin with silence. Let things happen. If you notice yourself playing from memory or pattern-response, stop immediately and do not begin again until you do so spontaneously. Forget analysis, conscious structure, etc. Do not get outside of the sound in any way.

Do this often for years and years. Do this as you would maintain a love relationship. Do not make value judgements of the sound as it occurs. Once it begins, be committed to it. Expect the impossible to happen. Suspend other modes of thought, attitudes, prejudices and preferences.

When you are not engaged in this practice, listen to real life as though it were a concert. Seek the aural marvelous. Let there exist no non-musical moments in your perception of sound (and silence is the sound of gold; the only non-musical moments exist when sound is at the service of any form of slavery).

Notice unprecedented sounds and objects; become obsessively fascinated with those that seem 'strangely familiar' to you. Investigate their sound-making potential, either in relation to traditional and home-made instruments or by themselves. Remember that every object may be an instrument, and every instrument has a voice to be transcended, and of course that any sound can be music. Attempt constantly yet passively to discover the undiscovered from instruments and objects.

If you have been inclined towards religion, speak only in tongues. Speak in tongues with a piano, with a fencepost, a windowpane. The transcendence of a soundmaker's usual voice into its latent voice, the transmutation of the unseen into the seen; these should be the kinds of goals musicians should have, if indeed they must have any at all.

To reveal the marvelous in its most undeniable mediums and intensities; music may have no higher aspiration than to make visible that kite lamp delicately tethered, aloft in the constant invisible storm that we perceive all our lives as signal-precipitating weather.

A CALL TO INSTRUMENTS

"So may night continue
to descend upon the orchestra."

—André Breton

So may it indeed, doc. That night is not made of quiet condemnation. That night's blackness is not the blindness of ears; it is that fertile sheet of silence beneath which slept the sad Mozart during his sonic deathbed realization. For in that night that Breton has cast as a net over the orchestra there exists sleep; and in that sleep there blossoms the convulsive imagination. The orchestra too will dream in its night, and the music of dreaming is the sound of the revolt that exists in the state of oneiric silence.

We will cultivate methods whereby the subconscious might plumb its depths for audible images. We will utilize instruments and objects to manifest these images with the clarity of the savage canvas. We will settle for nothing less than oracular music, liberated from idioms, schools, and categories.

Away with the Music Industry! We call for musics with the marvelous freedom of all audible sound as a language. We call for music at liberty to take up the rhythms of the subconscious; we call for performance to originate in the dreaming mechanism.

We seek for music to function as *windows*. We demand a complete redefinition of "virtuosity" which from now on shall have as its criteria fidelity to the interior model. "Music criticism" will be outmoded, just as art and literary criticism have been.

In short, we mean that the very concept of what music is and is for must be thoroughly re-examined, not only in musical and aesthetic respects, but in the cultural and psychological senses above all. We intend to imbue music with the freedom of pure automatism; we intend to make musics that are *visionary*, not by way of descriptive lyrics, nor by explanatory texts, but by virtue of that alchemy of thought and body whereby timbres and pitches on traditional instruments are absolutely transcended, whereby the instrument becomes a communicating vessel between the imagination and the moment, whereby the player becomes an instrument of that 'inner music.'

And there will exist an astonishing orchestra, whose entire repertoire will consist of the game of exquisite corpse, whose conductor will function as medicine man perhaps, if he is found necessary at all. We will improvise these marvelous musics; we do not need anyone to tell us what to dream, or to imagine; why should we need anyone to tell us what to play? There shall exist an osmotic, world-wide folk music; among free people there will again exist an audible and visible clairvoyance.

Music is a healing force, it is true. But henceforth music will no longer heal simply by soothing the savage beast; far from it in fact, for music shall now be used to release that same savage. Music will serve not only as the cure but the prevention; not just what the doctor ordered, but the razor-sharp item he held in his gloved hand as well.

Through musics we will unleash the liberty, love, and poetry; with music we will have a communicating vessel of revelation, by which faith (a supreme function of the imagination) will never again be blind, deaf and dumb.

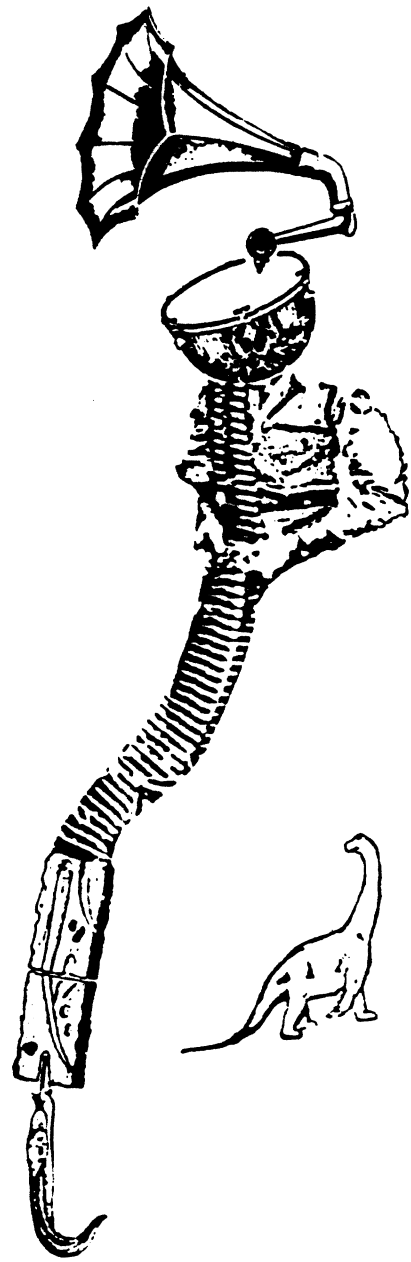
GLOSSARY

Towards a Redefinition of Music

Audience—the ears of the music-maker
Automatism—a master key to true images
Bad Music—sound which is untrue to the moment
Baroque Music—the most eloquent embodiment of the sounds stone and metal
Blues—the rainbows of the black nights
Chamber Music—rooms full of screens and planes, floors abloom with clover
Classical Music—the body odor and sense of humor of our eloquent drinking partner, Lazarus
Common Sounds—embroidery stitches in the mirror's fabric
Composer—a nomadic unknown
Composition—a piece of the unknown brought to light
Country Music—the chucks on the coals after all
Dirge—an iron chalice passed among the guests at the most frightening of parties
Electronic Music—the manufacture of synthetic outdoors
Ethnic Musics—geopsychic influences of the earth upon its soundmakers
Folk Music—the widespread and second nature activation of individual and collective automatism
Good Music—sound which maintains fidelity to the moment
Love Song—the sound of a locomotive far out at sea, wasps at night
Military Music—the sound of farting and blood over the hill
Music—the silent observer
Music Appreciation—singing in one's sleep; the convulsive dance
Music Education—a door opening onto the regions inhabited by the nomadic unknowns that give us music
Music Industry—ruins of what was cursed by pianos falling in sheets from the skies
Popular Music—the steam from evaporating blood-baths
Purpose of Music—nakedness before the flame
Recorded Music—the dream recounted
Recorded Sound Effects—yesterday's newspaper
Religious Music—immense calliopes crushing to dust all buildings with spires and antennae
Revolutionary Music—the sound of pastures welcoming the arrival of William Blake's "wheels within wheels"
Sacred Music—the sound of many golden crowns being cast down
Song—a bird or other flying thing turned to wood or marble while aloft
Symphony—a concerted effort on the part of many elements to accomplish alchemy
Virtuosity—the inherent and/or acquired ability to invoke undeniable images
Xylophone—

Yortex—

Zither—



The Klickitat Ride
108 Possibilities 54 Opposites

Pauline Oliveros

To be read to an audience or an ensemble of musicians:
The reader should emphasize the ambiguity of the word "sound" which is sometimes both a noun and a verb in the command/statements. The reader must always be heard yet he or she must be sensitive to the responses and find openings among the sounds for each new statement. The reader should sometimes allow silence to develop between command/statements and some times continue even though there is still response to the previous command/statement. The number of each command/statement should be included in the reading. The audience members or ensemble may improvise responses at any time after a command/statement is given. The improvised responses may continue to refer to a previous command/statement or to each command/statement in turn.

1 Make a familiar sound strange.
2 Make a strange sound familiar.
3 Make a slow sound fast.
4 Make a fast sound slow.
5 Make a loud sound soft.
6 Make a soft sound loud.
7 Make a new sound old.

8 Make an old sound new.
9 Make a light sound heavy.
10 Make a heavy sound light.
11 Make a weak sound strong.
12 Make a strong sound weak.
13 Make a whole sound part.
14 Make a part sound whole.
15 Make a found sound lost.
16 Make a lost sound found.
17 Make a large sound small.
18 Make a small sound large.
19 Make more sound less.
20 Make less sound more.
21 Make a sound more or less.
22 Make a sound less or more.
23 Make a simple sound complex.
24 Make a complex sound simple.
25 Make a far sound near.
26 Make a near sound far.
27 Make a real sound imaginary.
28 Make an imaginary sound real.
29 Make a full sound empty.
30 Make an empty sound full.
31 Make a beautiful sound ugly.
32 Make an ugly sound beautiful.
33 Make a poor sound rich.

34 Make a rich sound poor.
35 Make a natural sound synthetic.
36 Make a synthetic sound natural.
37 Make an out sound in.
38 Make an in sound out.
39 Make a sad sound happy.
40 Make a happy sound sad.
41 Make a long sound short.
42 Make a short sound long.
43 Make an increasing sound decreasing.
44 Make a decreasing sound increasing.
45 Make a communal sound solo.
46 Make a solo sound communal.
47 Make a right sound wrong.
48 Make a wrong sound right.
49 Make an on sound off.
50 Make an off sound on.
51 Make a crooked sound straight.
52 Make a straight sound crooked.
53 Make a crying sound laugh.
54 Make a laughing sound cry.
55 Make a smooth sound rough.
56 Make a rough sound smooth.
57 Make any sound at all.
58 Make all sound any.
59 Make an open sound closed.

60 Make a closed sound open.
61 Make a foggy sound clear.
62 Make a clear sound foggy.
63 Make a floating sound land.
64 Make a land sound float.
65 Make a running sound walk.
66 Make a walking sound run.
67 Make a cool sound warm.
68 Make a warm sound cool.
69 Make a moderate sound immoderate.
70 Make an immoderate sound moderate.
71 Make a free sound captive.
72 Make a captive sound free.
73 Make an early sound late.
74 Make a late sound early.
75 Make a following sound lead.
76 Make a leading sound follow.
77 Make a crude sound sophisticated.
78 Make a sophisticated sound crude.
79 Make a public sound private.
80 Make a private sound public.
81 Make a timid sound bold.
82 Make a bold sound timid.
83 Make an urban sound rural.
84 Make a rural sound urban.
85 Make a wild sound tame.

86 Make a tame sound wild.
87 Make an owned sound shared.
88 Make a shared sound owned.
89 Make an animal sound human.
90 Make a human sound animal.
91 Make an oral sound written.
92 Make a written sound oral.
93 Make a peaceful sound disturbed.
94 Make a disturbed sound peaceful.
95 Make an active sound passive.
96 Make a passive sound active.
97 Make an attack sound released.
98 Make a released sound attacked.
99 Make a wet sound dry.
100 Make a dry sound wet.
101 Make a tight sound loose.
102 Make a loose sound tight.
103 Make a jumbled sound coherent.
104 Make a coherent sound jumbled.
105 Make a chord sound tone.
106 Make a tone sound chord.
107 Make any sound now.
108 Make now any sound.