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## ISIM Newsletter Fall 2007 Volume 3, No. 3

### Message from the President



As some of you know, I recently stepped down as head of Michigan's Jazz and Contemporary Improvisation Studies Department. Having founded this department 20 years ago, the decision to relinquish my leadership role was, needless to say, not an easy one. But I have no doubt that the department will be in great hands under the direction of my good friend and colleague Ellen Rowe and I am eager to see it continue to grow. While I will continue to be highly engaged in music, this move will enable me to devote more time and energy to our Program in Creativity and Consciousness Studies, a cross-disciplinary initiative on our campus that delves into the interior dimensions of the creative process as it manifests in the arts, sciences, humanities, and everyday life. What I find interesting, moreover, is that the more cross-disciplinary my work becomes, the more I realize and appreciate jazz as the initial catalyst and in many ways driving force as it evolves. A principle emerges here that may shed light on the work of ISIM.

That is, when we step back from back from style categories—or for that matter, any kind of disciplinary categories—we gain a vantage point that enables us to go deeper into those categories at those moments when that particular form of knowledge is appropriate to our creative endeavors. And therefore, while ISIM members' musical horizons more often than not transcend conventional style categories, many pay deep homage to style-specific sources in the evolution of their personal voices. Here is where jazz looms large in the pantheon of genres, out of which the contemporary improvised music landscape has emerged.

I would like to illustrate this point from the perspective of music pedagogy. At the upcoming conference, I will formally introduce what we are calling the "ISIM Curriculum Project", which will be an attempt at a new model of basic musicianship training that is aligned with today's diverse musical world. Naturally, improvisation will be central to this model, not only as an expressive modality in its own right, but also as a powerful integrative tool—one that 'builds bridges' to composition, interpretive performance, theory and aural skills, diverse musical sources, and extra-musical areas of human development, such as creativity and consciousness, that are so critical at this juncture in time.

Now, while conventional approaches to musicianship training at most music schools seek learning materials from Euroclassical music, the ISIM Curriculum Project will follow a different strategy. Instead of proceeding from the outset from presumed style sources, the ICP will begin by taking inventory of what skills students need—the processes and content areas called for in today's world—and only then seeking the most fertile style sources for these skills. Let me go into how this can spawn new curricular strategies from the standpoint of rhythm, a highly neglected area of musical study.

A few years back the keyboardist-scholar-medical researcher Jeff Pressing, who unfortunately passed away soon after his paper was published, coined the phrase "Black Atlantic Rhythm" to categorize the vast amount of music in the world that is rooted in rhythmic practices that originated in Africa and its diasporic cultural extensions. When you think about it, Black Atlantic Rhythm (BAR)—which encompasses what improvising musicians call "time feels" or grooves and much more—is absolutely pervasive in the contemporary musical landscape. So when it comes to identifying skill areas for today's musicians and music teachers, it is difficult for me to imagine too many skills that would rank higher on the list than BAR abilities.

When it comes to then identifying primary stylistic sources for BAR skills, jazz—arguably the predominant source—immediately comes to the fore. But now jazz appears in a trans-stylistic context—as a result of a kind of pedagogical inquiry that did not begin with style categories but rather viewed style as a byproduct of a prior quest for skills—and thus we can begin to evaluate and appreciate this genre free from the baggage that comes with style categories. Even in the improvised music world, the term ‘jazz’ can be highly ramified; one can only imagine the baggage associated with this category in the classical world.

Let me continue this trans-stylistic chain of thought initiated by the idea of Black Atlantic Rhythm, where now a powerful pedagogical principle now comes into play. That is due to the fact that BAR manifests in the musical world primarily through improvisation (though in jazz also through composition), and thus as contemporary rhythmic training models are developed, they will also necessarily involve improvisation and thus begin to exhibit robust integrative properties; this is key in a time when curricular models (in all fields) are hard-pressed to cover a rapidly expanding knowledge base. But we are not done yet: BAR also typically manifests in tonal/modal environments, so the emergent rhythmic training will also have a strong harmonic syntax component. Again, when we look into style sources for these skills, we recognize jazz as a hotbed of BAR/Improvisation/Tonal-modal skills.

But this does not mean that musical study becomes a jazz-centric universe in this way of thinking. For example, when we come to the parameter of multi-movement, formal architecture; Euroclassical repertory is arguably unrivaled as the primary source. When it comes to altered and extended harmonies, Jazz and post-Romantic European music both excel. When it comes to chord inversion, Euroclassical and contemporary Western pop music may be primary sources, although some jazz literature is exemplary here too.

The point is that, while at the end of the day, it is difficult to imagine a vital course of musical study in which jazz is not prominent, diversity will be inherent in a trans-stylistic approach to curriculum design. And jazz’s prominence is due solely to the fact that it possesses an extraordinary richness of important skills. At the same time, this skill base, by its very integrative and creative nature, yields a context that invites important contributions from other style sources. This enables students to gain a foundation that allows them to move in whatever direction they choose, whether it be classical performance, ethnomusicology, improvisation, or any of the infinite array of pathways at our disposal in this day and age.

There will be ample opportunities for many people to be involved in the ISIM Curriculum Project—for one thing we will be looking for sites to host pilot programs, as well as individuals who might teach these programs—and I hope you share my excitement for the kind of contribution and leadership this project may make possible. I firmly believe the time is ripe and the receptivity in the field has never been more keen.

I greatly look forward to seeing many of you at this event, hearing your music, listening to your ideas, and learning and dreaming together. If last year was any indication, we can think of the next ISIM gathering as our “second family reunion.” I can’t wait.

Ed Sarath



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**Executive Director Report**  
**Sarah Weaver, Executive Director**



I am very excited about our upcoming conference *Building Bridges: Improvisation as a Unifying Agent in Education, Arts, and Society* December 14-16, 2007 at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois USA.

Enclosed you will find the Conference Registration Form. I hope you will attend and be part of this extraordinary event. I would like to thank ISIM Vice President Maud Hickey and her assistant Evan Tobias for hosting the conference this year at Northwestern University.

I am confident that the ISIM Conference 2007 will be an outgrowth and expansion of our truly special experience last year of the inaugural ISIM Conference 2006. The 2007 theme is reflected in our featured artists and presenters Jane Ira Bloom and Mark Dresser, Michael Zerang and Mazen Kerbaj, Oliver Lake and the University of Michigan Creative Arts Orchestra, Bennett Reimer, and the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians.

Building bridges in our field and in our society through improvisation is an essential process to achieve the fundamental purpose of our organization, both within our organization and world-wide. I am inspired by the enormous response we received to our Call for Proposals this year. I am also inspired by participation from Advisory Council members Pauline Oliveros, Stephen Nachmanovitch, Thomas Buckner, and Rui Carvalho, in addition to our featured artists and presenters. This is a very rich and deep context for the realization of our theme. I hope you will join us as we celebrate our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference!

I would also like to remind everyone that membership renewals for 2008 are due by December 16, 2007. Enclosed you will find the Membership Renewal Form. Please mail this form to ISIM or renew online to continue your membership in 2008.

I look forward to the ISIM 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference 2007!

Sarah Weaver

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*Department of Jazz and Contemporary Improvisation Studies*

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## A Word from the Advisory Council

An Interview with Jane Ira Bloom and Mark Dresser  
Sarah Weaver, Interviewer



Jane Ira Bloom. Photo by Kristine Larsen

SW: I would like to start by hearing some background about how you both met and how your duo was formed.

MD: I ended up in New Haven by accident. My car was vandalized in 1975. I was taking a three-week vacation from San Diego. Once I was on the east coast, particularly in New York, I realized there was no reason to go back. I ended up in New Haven because the person I was living with knew someone in New Haven. It seemed like a nice place to live and I just happened to move onto a street down the block from Gerry Hemingway, around the corner from Anthony Davis, up the street from Robert Dick, Pheeroan Aklaaf, and Jane. Jane was a student at Yale. I met her and played with her a few times. Kent McLagen, Mark Helias, and Leo Smith were there, it was just a really vibrant scene that I happened to fall into without planning at all.

JB: Yes, I don't know that much has been written about it, but New Haven in the 70's was a pretty interesting time. You heard Mark listing off the amount of musicians that were geographically in the same place, it was phenomenal. At the time I didn't even think anything of it. There was a very productive and creative music community.

MD: That's true. Equally significant is that over 30 years later I'm still playing with you, I'm still playing with Gerry Hemingway, Anthony Davis, and Mark Helias. Though we didn't meet in New Haven I brought Ray Anderson up there to play where he met Hemingway and Helias to form that group Bass Drum Bone. Robert Dick I'm still in contact with. I think what's really interesting is these musical relationships have continued. I think that's one of the richest aspects of aging in music, with these long relationships depth happens. And trust.

SW: What was it initially that brought your duo together, and how has that changed over the years?

MD: It's a joy to play with Jane for so many reasons-her sound, her soaring phrasing, the depth of her tunes. What I feel has really changed over the course of our time working together is just the trust level. After a certain point of working together I really felt her trust and confidence that whatever I would attempt to do, she trusted that I would find the right solution. That's a huge step to give that power to someone.

JB: What it does is the music can open up in enormous ways. When that isn't there, you don't realize how closed down it can be. The potential for where improvisation can go when that exists, I think that's the extraordinary thing. Mark's talking about trust, there's also relaxation. This can also translate into enormous freedom of creativity. What more can a person ask for? What more can a musician ask for?

SW: I definitely sense this dynamic in your duo. Last year at the conference I remember walking into the room when you were performing and it was electric. I was shaking my head because it was just so unbelievably freeing, waves and waves of sound, spinning, incredibly uninhibited. So I can hear what you are describing in your duo.

MD: Yes, that whole thing of empowering people that you play with to make decisions, the first time I really encountered that was with Anthony Braxton. Working with him for nine years, he always made you feel like you were the best thing that ever happened to his music. When someone instills that kind of confidence in you, I've noticed you play above yourself. You play at your potential level.

JB: You know another person who has that quality, Mark? George Lewis. I remember early on he used to put together these ensembles. I remember he had that enormous confidence that you could create something extraordinary. It was almost as if someone was giving you license to open up.

MD: I think it's really particular to composition and improvisation together. We've all played certain music that is very demanding on multiple levels. Braxton is a good example of this; the musicianship tasks are on the edge of impossibility yet he expects you to give your creative all, and take chances. Jane's music is uniquely demanding as well. Her notation



is remarkable- there's a very intuitive flow about how she represents her music on paper. Still there's an openness to her charts, that promote openness in the playing.

JB: The past couple of years I was definitely writing for Mark. It's interesting you're talking about technical demand. There's almost nothing I can think of to write that Mark Dresser can't play on his bass. Virtuosity is never there for its own sake, it's always there to serve some musical purpose or compositional thrust. It's the thing that propels you into improvisation. From my point of view, composition serves my improvisational muse. As opposed to the other way around. There are many composers who improvise ideas that turn into composition. From my point of view, composition interests me as it can be invigorated and brought to life by improvisers. That's what really excites me.

SW: I want to talk about the 2006 ISIM Conference *Time, Sound, and Transcendence: Forging a New Vision for Improvised Music Pedagogy and Practice*. Both of you were there last year, and are going to be at the conference again this year. What do you recall about the 2006 conference, your experience, the scene, and maybe some of the strengths and challenges?

JB: I certainly loved having the opportunity to hear things that I would never have a chance to hear otherwise. I remember I was particularly moved by what Steve Coleman's group was doing with the University of Michigan Creative Arts Orchestra. There were parts of that piece that I was really transfixed by. People are approaching improvisation from many different angles and you have no idea what's coming. That's energizing for me.

MD: I liked a lot of it. I think I was a little more critical. I enjoyed hearing the things that Jane mentioned, and I really enjoyed Pauline's presentation when she did the work with the Mazen Kerbaj recording. It triggered a lot of interesting things about people being engaged in music. I enjoyed some of the presentations but I felt there was very little substantive discussion about the topics, "sound," and "time." Yet there was a lot of talk about transcendence. I hope these issues will be grappled with in the next meeting. Now is a particularly exciting and interesting time to be a musician. The whole idea of telematic performance, which is something, Sarah, you and I and Pauline have been talking a lot about recently. I look forward to creative, articulate, and honest discussion about music making and interdisciplinary interaction.

SW: Could you talk about how this year's conference theme *Building Bridges: Improvisation as a Unifying Agent in Education, Arts, and Society* is operating in your experience? I know you are both performers, and college professors, and your music is affecting our society. How does all of that come together for you, in terms of improvisation?

JB: When I think about what improvisation means on a societal level, what it could mean, I remember an experience I had years ago in the early 70's. I was on a state department tour of Poland. This was before the wall came down. I'll never forget going all around the country, people hearing our music. We were playing our jazz compositions and also experimenting with completely improvised sets. We loved it, but when those people heard it, it was more than that. Our improvising was translating to them as political freedom of expression. The repression that existed in Poland at that time was overwhelming and it seemed as if music and improvisation were ideas that people latched onto to help express a kind of yearning. I think sometimes we take the freedom of spontaneous musical thought that we have for granted - what an extraordinary thing it is that is going on in the human mind.

SW: That's really fascinating. And also thinking back to earlier in the interview, what both of you value as far as your duo, that inhibition, supporting each other, freedom of expression, this seems to be a theme. It's fascinating on a personal and societal level.

JB: Well, we toss that word around, "freedom", but the fact is what we mean by freedom in our dialogue is so different from what you ordinarily might associate with the word. When Mark talks about that kind of trust and sharing, shared history, to me much of it is about unconscious processes. We can't even begin to label what the heck they are - what allows us to make the split second decisions that we do and why it feels so right. I credit the unconscious as well as the conscious mind.



Mark Dresser. Photo By Jerry Speier

MD: That's something you and I have spent a lot of time developing extra-musically as well. Through studies of martial arts, those types of skills completely translate to music. It's improvisational in nature. So it's that extra-musical dimension, being able to sense and develop energy, to feel quality of energy.

JB: If it weren't for you Mark I wouldn't have been studying T'ai Chi for the past 10 or 11 years. In fact you are directly responsible for connecting me with T'ai Chi.

MD: The energetic aspect of performance and its qualities is as an extra-musical dimension that informs my music. I generally don't like to talk about it, but I do believe that there are multiple disciplines outside of music that are completely relevant and aid in the sensitivities needed for making music.

SW: Another topic that is going to be talked about at the upcoming conference is the ISIM Curriculum Project. Developing improvisation pedagogies for schools. Maybe you can talk about some of the teaching methods you have used, some of the challenges you may have come up against, in terms of the style, or expectation, and the dynamics of teaching improvisation within your schools.

MD: That's a huge question. I mean, generally I want students to develop their own instrumental and metaphoric vocabulary. I want them to learn how to analytically listen to the environment-to be able to translate it into some sort of communicative code, a notation of sorts. To take that code, turn it around, and put it on their instruments. Look at all kinds of strategies. My goal is encourage people to compose/improvise their own music.

JB: You learn to get just as creative with how you teach young students as you do in improvising the music. I find that I adjust my thinking based on who I'm talking to. It varies from semester to semester. I put a lot of creativity into thinking about how to create the best scenario for spontaneity to happen. In a very general sense, a lot of what I do is showing young people how to go from places they know to places they don't know. Using vocabulary, developing notation and exploring ways to communicate with other musicians in improvisational settings. When students are just beginning to learn about improvisation, a lot of times it's about telling them when not to play. Listening, which is something you certainly know a lot about Sarah, is a skill that has to be developed. When musicians experience improvising together they often feel the push and pull of both initiating ideas and stepping back and being reactive. All of that involves a very special quality of listening.



Jane Ira Bloom and Mark Dresser with Atlantic Pacific Waves (with Min Xiao-Fen and Jin Hi Kim). Photo by Jerry Speier

I'm all for the idea of having improvisation in an educational setting, but I've always found that I've resisted pedagogy. I guess it's because I'm a player - because I've learned it by doing. It makes me nervous to get too analytical about the process.

MD: I completely relate to what you are saying. Pedagogy is best at justifying itself. At the same time, there are certain aspects of music that you can break down and view as parameters. It's useful to abstract rhythm, pitch, acoustical properties of tone. I'm studying pedagogy all of the time trying to figure out how to best communicate how to play an instrument. What I'd most like to do is set up an environment in the classroom where people feel comfortable enough that they can take a chance, even fail, but collaborate and invent together. At the same time I like to promote musicianship, not just western musicianship but to wholly develop ones sensitivity to tone and time and the ability to translate these perceptions to others, whether its musicians or artists in other disciplines.

SW: You both use electronics in your playing. Could you talk about this?

JB: Electronics are as much a part of my natural sound palette as my instrument. The important thing is that they become intuitive - that you use them and practice them just like your instrument. Then they become part of you instead of something that you use. You are feeling and thinking in those sounds, not just making them. I use an old effects processing set up that combines electronic sound with my acoustic sound. It's archaic but suits my needs as an

improviser and as a saxophone player who is still interested in generating sound compelled by breath, phrasing, and timbre.

MD: I'm not so interested in electronically processing the bass. There was a period in the early 80's when I was performing with various multi-effects units using various kinds of harmonizers, reverbs and delays. I soon came to the conclusion that electronic processing (in my hands), was less flexible, less immediate, and less intuitive than what I could coax from amplifying the bass in unorthodox ways and use volume control. For over twenty years I have experimented with various pick-ups and microphones allowing two and even three notes on one string. In '82 I met a guitarist named Tom North. He had pickups suspended over the gear box of the guitar, very much like Fred Frith's. I learned that Eugene Chadbourne had also explored amplifying the neck from two different places. When I saw Tom do it he encouraged me to try to build something similar for the bass. I wasn't much of a builder myself but I started asking people to help me realize this idea. And then start building pre-amplification.

The last 20 years my whole amplified profile has been more electro-acoustic rather than processed. I don't use any delay or reverb. The real parameter that I really enjoy most is just volume. Using a volume pedal to change the envelope of the sound I find very pleasurable. It's kind of ironic to spend a lifetime trying to learn how to control an instrument really well and find that what gives me the most joy are those sounds that have an unstable element.

One of the things that I really enjoy is collaborating with non-musicians including luthiers. I've been fortunate to know Kent McLegan, a wonderful bassist, bass builder and engineer living in Denver. Upon my request, Kent designed two sets of magnetic pickups embedded into the fingerboard. His skill and generosity have allowed me to realize musical ideas that previously didn't project.

Most recently Kent built for me a piezo-electret fibre pickups built into the bow. So actually it changes the normal sound perspective. It is great fun blowing-up these small sounds under the sonic microscope.

SW: How do modes of listening play into your experience as a duo? Listening processes that you've observed, your listening relationship.

JB: One thought that comes to mind is sharing a certain kind of specificity about how you hear. I mean, you can listen on all kinds of levels. Mark in particular has a radar ear and also an ability to articulate what he hears - a feeling response and a hearing response. When you can share that with somebody, that's pretty extraordinary – something we probably take for granted. I know you use the words "Deep Listening". Anytime I've ever asked Mark what he thinks about something, I know exactly what kind of answer I'm going to get because I know it's coming from someone who really listens with a high degree of precision. For young musicians 'how to listen' is a concept that they're just learning.

MD: What changed my awareness of listening was becoming aware of the overtone series. I remember one day in the 1977 I started to play around with the overtone series on an open string. When I started going high enough in the series I began to appreciate how many different frequencies were accessible from any one fundamental. Once I became aware of this, it was as if, I could match almost anything I heard from any location on the bass. Once you start listening in a spectral way, you can start hearing and identifying pitch and rhythm in everyday life.

One of the assignments I give students is go out with a tape recorder and record a choice thirty seconds from the environment. The next step is to make a score, identifying pitch bands, time line, attack and dynamic envelopes. The next step is to translate this score into an arrangement for acoustic instruments. This confronts the improviser with microtonality, non equally sub-dividable time, and extended techniques.

JB: Another interesting technique I've tried is when you get musicians to be silent, or put yourself in an environment that has silence. I think what starts to happen is that it elevates your concentration on what you can hear, the fineness that you can hear with. It's silence that helps focus that kind of concentration. Another way is to just sit in a room and listen to everything that's around you. To be still and silent for a while and then see what happens.

SW: Thank you both very much for this interview. We are all looking forward to your performance at the ISIM Conference 2007!

JB and MD: Thank you!





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#### ISIM Member Profile::

### **Dom Minasi**

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Dom Minasi has been playing guitar for over 50 years. He became a professional musician and started playing jazz when he was 15 years old. In 1961 he started teaching and working as a full-time musician.

In 1974, he was signed to Blue Note Records. After two albums he left the recording business with a sour taste in his mouth and did not record again as a leader till 1999 for CIMP records. Between those years he made his living composing, teaching and arranging. Because of drummer Joe Coleman, he did have an opportunity to work and perform with many jazz giants including Arnie Lawrence, George Coleman, Frank Foster, and Harry Sheppard, to mention a few.

He also worked for Young Audiences New York, where he was the first teaching artist to use song writing as a learning tool in Literacy Programs throughout the NYC area. Since then he has composed over three hundred children songs.

After recording as a leader, *Finishing Touches* (CIMP 196), and *Dialing Privileges* (CIMP 197) as co-leader with Blaise Siwula), he formed CDM Records. In 2001, with his new trio, Ken Filiano -bass and Jackson Krall- drums, he recorded *Takin' The Duke Out* 'live', a collection of Duke Ellington tunes, at the Knitting Factory in NYC. Dom expected this record to be the last recording he would ever make as a leader.

To his astonishment, *Takin' The Duke Out* met with glowing reviews. Since then CDM has released *Goin' Out Again-2023*, *Time Will Tell*, 2003. In 2004 *Quick Response* and Carol Mennie's *I'm Not A Sometime Thing*. In March 2006, Dom's biggest project, *The Vampire's Revenge*, a double disc set of almost two hours of through-composed music with lots of room for improv was released/. *The Vampire's Revenge* was selected as one of the best recordings of 2006 by many renowned Jazz Journalist throughout the USA, Canada and Europe.

Again in September 2007 CDM released *The Jon Hemmersam/Dom Minasi Quartet*, which has been named as a first draft ballot for the 2007 Grammy nominations. Most recently, Dom has been composing 21<sup>st</sup> Century classical music and has devoted much of his time towards that effort.



## ISIM News:: Fall 2007

ISIM will be featured as a sponsoring organization for a forthcoming issue of *Ultimate Reality and Meaning Journal*, a periodical that deals with philosophical inquiry into the biggest questions of human existence. The journal is devoting a special issue entirely to music, and will feature articles by Board Members Karlton Hester and Ed Sarath, and Advisory Council member Stephen Nachmanovitch.

**The Program in Creativity and Consciousness Studies at the University of Michigan**, directed by ISIM President **Ed Sarath**, has launched an Improvisation Across Fields seminar series that brings colleagues from fields as diverse as athletics, medicine, business, psychology, engineering, and music to explore the improvisatory core of creativity in a wide range of disciplines.

ISIM Bay Area member **Charity Chan's** new record *Fenaison* was released on Ambiances Magnétiques earlier this year. Charity also took part in a recording of the music of José Maceda, organized by Chris Brown, to be released on Tzadic Records. Also, an interview with Fred Frith on pedagogy and improvisation will be published in the online journal *Critical Studies on Improvisation*.

**Andrea Wolper** will tour in Germany in early November; with Andy Fite (gtr) and Ken Filiano (bs). For concert and workshop itinerary: [AndreaWolper.com/calendar.htm](http://AndreaWolper.com/calendar.htm) or [myspace.com/AndreaWolper](http://myspace.com/AndreaWolper).

**Deep Listening Institute, Ltd.** presents Pauline "Troublemaker Tuner" Oliveros and the River Bottom Brainwave Band with Alex "Brainwave Bandit" Chechlie and Zevin "Rambling Barbwire" Polzin - harmonica, banjo, ukelin with electronics and brainwave controlled video and spatialization perform December 19 at 7 & 9pm at Emily Harvey Foundation.

**Michael Jefry Stevens** has numerous performances taking place this fall, including a European tour with the In Transit Quartet, and a performance and workshop at the Rhodes College Jazz Week. 2008 events include tours of the USA and Europe, and appearance at the IAJE conference in Toronto.

The autumn has been busy for baritone **Thomas Buckner**. In September he performed at the "New Music Days Festival" in the Czech Republic, and at the GEDOK Festival in Hamburg, including world premiers by Japanese composer Sommei Satto and German composer Matthias Kaul. Mr. Buckner also presented its US premier with the L'Art pour L'Art Ensemble on the Interpretations Series in New York. Later in the season Buckner gave a master class and recital at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. Concerts with David Wessel in Saint Louis and with Roscoe Mitchell, Douglas Ewart, Matthias Kaul, et. al. at the Chicago Cultural Center took place shortly afterward. In December Mr. Buckner will tour Europe, including a performance at the Lueneberg Festival and a collaboration with the German singer Gabrielle Hasler at the University of Bremen.

**Robert Dick** (flutes) and Ursel Schlicht (piano) have upcoming performances this fall at the Chelsea Art Museum in NYC on October 25, the Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center in Buffalo, NY on October 27 and the City University of New York Graduate Center on December 13. They opened this year's performance series at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County in September. The duo's CD "Photosphere" (NEMU 002) has been getting strong reviews, and they plan to record the next CD in early 2008.

**Salil Sachdev** will be performing on various hand drums in a collaborative concert with faculty members of the University of Colorado at Denver. Judith Coe (voice), Keith Waters (piano) and Drew Morrell (double bass) will be the other featured artists.

On the heels of a brief California tour in October, TIN/BAG, the bi-coastal duo of California trumpeter **Kris Tiner** and New York guitarist Mike Baggetta, will tour the East Coast from November 1-4 to celebrate the release of their second CD *And Begin Again* on the Evander Music label. Venues include Real Art Ways in Hartford, Brookline Tai Chi in Brookline Mass, Strange Maine in Portland, and the Konceptions series at CIM (Center for Improvisational Music) in Brooklyn.

**James Ilgenfritz** recently completed his MA in Contemporary Music Performance at UCSD, where he studied with Mark Dresser and David Borgo. Following completion of his degree, James embarked on a cross-country tour from San Diego to New York City, performing newly commissioned solo contrabass music written by composers in New York, Michigan, and California, including ISIM members Stephen Rush and Jeffrey Treviño. Along the way James performed original compositions, free improvisations, or conducted group improvisations using Soundpainting with local musicians in each city, working with ISIM Members Conrad Kehn, Brandon Vaccaro, Stephen Rush, Kyle Farrell and The Giants of Gender, the Cincinnati Real-Time Composers, Dave Ballou, Ty Cumbie, and Sarah Weaver among others.

**Sarah Weaver's** ensemble Weave performed *Resonessence* at Roulette (NYC) October 7 in conjunction with the James Ilgenfritz solo tour and the Daniel Pearl Music Days Festival. On October 19 Weave performed *Dreamwaker* at Ione's 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Dream Festival in Kingston NY, sponsored by Deep Listening Institute, Ltd. *Dreamwaker* featured guest performers Pauline Oliveros, Ione, and Mark Dresser, and a live avatar in Edo Paulus' Second Life virtual installation *Resonating-With-secondlife Wind*.

## Kyle Bruckmann's Wrack – Intents and Purposes



*Despite the many joys of my current life in San Francisco, I realize upon reflection how much this album -- and the entire entity of Wrack, really -- is a love letter to Chicago [...] It speaks volumes for that scene, and for these incredible musicians in particular, that I can drop back into town for a couple of weeks and pick up right where I'd left off. [...] As an oboist, I have little choice but to approach jazz tangentially, cautiously sliding up alongside it. I've blathered elsewhere about the classical modernist elements evident in Wrack that more authentically reflect my musical background. Any attempt to fuse these two streams is a treacherous affair, with a long and sordid history of racism (whether subconscious or overt) and questionable aesthetic results. I feel obliged to clarify that I'm not remotely interested in 'elevating' jazz, gussying it up for the recital hall and deigning to grant it 'legitimacy.' Nor am I out to prop up a moribund classical tradition by grafting on elements pilfered from more 'popular' forms.*

*Part of what I am trying to do is avoid the curse of superficial 'jazziness,' seeking instead the deep structures built into all music rooted in African American innovations. Whether or not Wrack 'sounds like' jazz is immaterial; I'm only concerned that it behaves like jazz. If the rhythms neglect to 'swing' and the melodies evoke Stravinsky or Bartók more readily than the blues, I'd like to think they do so within the framework of a music of the moment, of use and of occasion, wherein the fundamentally social processes of playing and hearing easily trump that of the writing [...] The notation often deliberately eludes perfectibility, in an attempt to embrace the 'mistake' and circumvent the paralysis always threatening classical performance practice. The processes employed attempt to drag all the players into the action as engaged creative partners, with equitable distribution of cuing responsibilities and improvising space. –Kyle Bruckmann (excerpted from liner notes)*

The second recording by Kyle Bruckmann's ensemble Wrack shows that despite having left Chicago a few years earlier, Kyle is still compelled to wear his tremendous affinity for the city and its community of creative improvisers on his sleeve. Violinist Jen Clare and percussionist Tim Daisy remain from the former quintet, with bassist Anton Hatwich and bass clarinetist Jason Stein as new additions. Bruckmann's compositions take center stage, with a keen sense of structural development playing a dominant role in the almost seamless integration of notated music with improvisation. The writing favors angular melodies and development through repetition with gradual changes, creating a platform for various combinations of duos and trios within the ensemble to interact with either soloistic or supportive improvisation. A variety of moods comes into play, from serene ambiance to a type of cartoonishly demented march feel.



The compositional forms go far beyond the road-tested bookends structure, with an emphasis placed on through-composed forms that support improvisation. Usually at least one member of the ensemble is playing a written part, meaning that Bruckmann's composition and the improvisation of the ensemble are integrated. The care that was taken by Bruckmann the composer enables Bruckmann the bandleader to embrace a sort of relentless abandon that gives the music such vibrant character in performance. – James Ilgenfritz III

## Nora McCarthy – A Small Dream In Red



*A Small Dream In Red is an abstract voice and saxophone duo named after expressionist master painter Wassily Kandinsky's masterpiece "Small Dream In Red". In the early '90's I discovered I had an affinity to the concepts developed by Kandinsky, who believed that the relationship between colors and sounds, between music and painting, is not only theory but actually exists. I began to work with the guitar first then the bass in a duo format to convey these concepts by deconstructing the traditional jazz standard. At that time I also began to include a few of my original compositions, which I also then deconstructed.*

*Approaching the music from a visual perspective developed further into sound and design concepts. In 2000, I began working with alto saxophonist Jorge Sylvester and the transformation of the duo into its present form took place. We have written several compositions that include poetry interpreting Kandinsky's work from his "Composition" series namely: Yellow, Red, Blue, Lyrical, Composition VIII, Small Dream In Red, and White Stroke. We often present the duo in a multi-media format that incorporates the use of pedals and lighting installations created by visual artist Fernando Natalici. This, our first CD, is a live recording of a 2003 performance at*

**Continued...**

## ISIM Member Publication / Recording Showcase continued...

*Cleveland State University's Drinko Hall as part of the Sundown Jazz Series. In April, 2007, A Small Dream In Red performed in concert and conducted a series of workshops and master classes in Podgorica, Montenegro for Jazz Appreciation Month entitled "From Dixieland to the Avant Garde and Free Music Art Forms – "The Voices and Horns". Plans for a second CD of the aforementioned compositions are set for early 2008. – Nora McCarthy*

The duo of Nora McCarthy and Jorge Sylvester presents contrasting contours stepping into and out of dissonance, with hints of tunes weaving in and out, far more scat than lyric in the vocals, and saxophone fluid, giving energy, direction, & depth. The five tracks offer a flowing, meandering walk, with occasional glimpses of recognizable melody, and otherwise a wonderful blend of shapes, colors and textures. Nora McCarthy has a deep voice, with the timbre & range of Sarah Vaughan, but without the quick vibrato. She uses ever-so-subtle pitch-bending, and straight tones, and just a lovely touch of vibrato on occasion. Splashes of color are drawn into play with the saxophone. Jorge Sylvester plays with virtuosity and artist's subtlety. Seemingly in the background, the listener is then surprised to notice the fascinating punctuation, melodic fragments, and extrapolated melody or harmonic contrast. McCarthy's comradeship with Kandinsky (whose painting *Kleiner Traum in Rot* gives this CD its name) is certainly presented well in this recording. – Julianne Carney



## **INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR IMPROVISED MUSIC SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC Evanston, Illinois USA December 14-16, 2007**

### ***Building Bridges: Improvisation as a Unifying Agent in Education, Arts, and Society***

***Featured Artists and Presenters – Jane Ira Bloom(NY) and Mark Dresser (CA), Mazen Kerbaj (Beirut) and Michael Zerang (IL), Oliver Lake (NY) with the University of Michigan Creative Arts Orchestra (MI), Bennett Reimer (IL), Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (IL)***

*Building Bridges: Improvisation as a Unifying Agent in Education, Arts, and Society*, is a three-day interdisciplinary conference that will bring together performers, educators, researchers, students and community members from across the world, furthering their understanding of improvisation in its many facets. This second annual conference of the International Society of Improvised Music is the perfect opportunity to learn about and experience current thinking in musical improvisation.

Creating connections is one of the most prominent themes in today's world. Whether forging treaties between hostile nations, creating ties between diverse cultures in today's global society, melding ideas and artistic influences, or negotiating the intricacies of human relationship; the capacity to integrate disparate perspectives and constituencies into a coherent whole—to build bridges—is central to meaning and progress in most every area of life.

Recognizing improvisation as a powerful tool for achieving this integration, the International Society for Improvised Music will feature performances, workshops, and papers based on this theme for its second international conference.

The Conference Registration Form is included with this newsletter.

To register online visit [www.isimprov.org](http://www.isimprov.org)

To register by postal mail, submit the form to our address:

International Society for Improvised Music  
P.O. Box 1603  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 USA

For more information please contact:

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