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I close by recommending free improvisation in general and in every respectable form to all those for whom [music] is not merely a matter of entertainment and practical ability, but rather principally one of inspiration and meaning in their art. This

recommendation, to be sure, has never been so urgent as now, because the number of people whose interest belong to the former category and not to the latter has never been so great. Even if a person plays with inspiration, but always from a written score, he or she will be much less nourished, broadened, and educated than through the frequent offering of all of his or her powers in a free fantasy practiced in the full awareness of certain guidelines and directions, even if this improvisation is only moderately successful.

--Johan Hummel



As apt as Hummel's insights may have been in his early-19th Viennese musical world, they are all the more so in that of today. As the central means for navigating the confluence of diverse streams that is increasingly characteristic of our times, improvisation has never been more essential to the preparation of musicians as it is in the present. The emergence, moreover, of a wave within today's musical ocean called "improvised music"—whatever precursors to which in earlier times could not have matched the current phenomenon in scope and vitality—underscores the need for improvisation to not only serve as a means for enhancing interpretive musical expression, but to be approached as an area unto itself. Hence, what might be called an "aesthetic of spontaneity."

It has been entirely gratifying in this regard to see a marked increase in student groups of varying sizes at our recent festival/conferences. This is not only key to the future for ISIM but the musical culture at large and we need to ensure that it continues to develop. Several angles toward this might be pursued through ISIM channels. One involves instituting through residencies for improvising musicians in schools so that students early on are initiated on their journeys as improvisers and will thus not only be better prepared to embrace the diversity of the musical world but will also demand experiences in this area as they pursue further educational studies.

Closely related is a second approach that in my view addresses the situation closer to its roots. That involves bringing improvisation into the preparation of aspiring music teachers, an issue that has gained increased attention in recent years but with notably limited inroads. Whereas a week-long residency by an improvising ensemble can have considerable impact during that specific time-period, with perhaps some residual effect that lasts a bit longer, the music teacher, by virtue of being a permanent member of an educational community, has the capacity to instill creative musical values on an ongoing basis to large numbers of students. He or she can also significantly shape the overarching culture of a school and create future audiences for improvised music.

The two approaches, of course, are not mutually exclusive and what is truly exciting is the idea of combining them, so that top-down (residencies) and bottom-up (teacher training) strategies may enhance each other synergistically. I anticipate these issues assuming increasing prominence as we chart ISIM's future terrain. Please do not hesitate to contact me or any other Board members with ideas related to this topic (or others), and I look forward to keeping everyone in the loop as the dialogue and corresponding practical initiatives develop.

Please also join me in welcoming Douglas Ewart, no stranger to the improvised music community, to the ISIM Board of Directors. Our students and faculty are still buzzed from our collaboration with him and our Creative Arts Orchestra last December. We are particularly excited about the possibility of Douglas furthering our ties to the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), in which he has long played a leadership role.

It was great to see many of you in Ann Arbor for ISIM V, and I look forward to reuniting at **William Patterson University in February 2012** (see announcement in Conference Director's Message) for ISIM VI.

--Ed Sarath

ACCEPTING OFFERS

Stephen Nachmanovitch

Play what you hear, not what you know.
– Miles Davis

I was practicing the violin in my basement studio. I was stuck. Exploring, gingerly touching strings and bow to find some new, interesting sound, and not finding anything. Is it improv if today's improv sounds a lot like my improves of yesterday and the year before? Am I a fake? As I stood there with my instrument, quietly wallowing in these issues, suddenly BAM-BAM, BAM-BAM. Upstairs in the living room my teenage son put on a loud, irritating punk rock record. The house was shaking. I jumped, actually hopping mad. But in the time it took me to put the violin down, and before I had a chance to stomp upstairs (all the while thinking, he has as much right to musical inspiration as I do), I realized that this music was actually kind of interesting. More than interesting. I was at that moment stuck in doing the same old thing. So I decided to play along with the record. If you can't lick'em, join'em, and the result was fun and fruitful. Cornelius Cardew referred to improvising, in Confucian terms, as the Great Learning. And, as always in the artistic world of improv, learning to be a better improviser goes hand in hand with learning to be a better human being, connecting with the surprising minds of others.

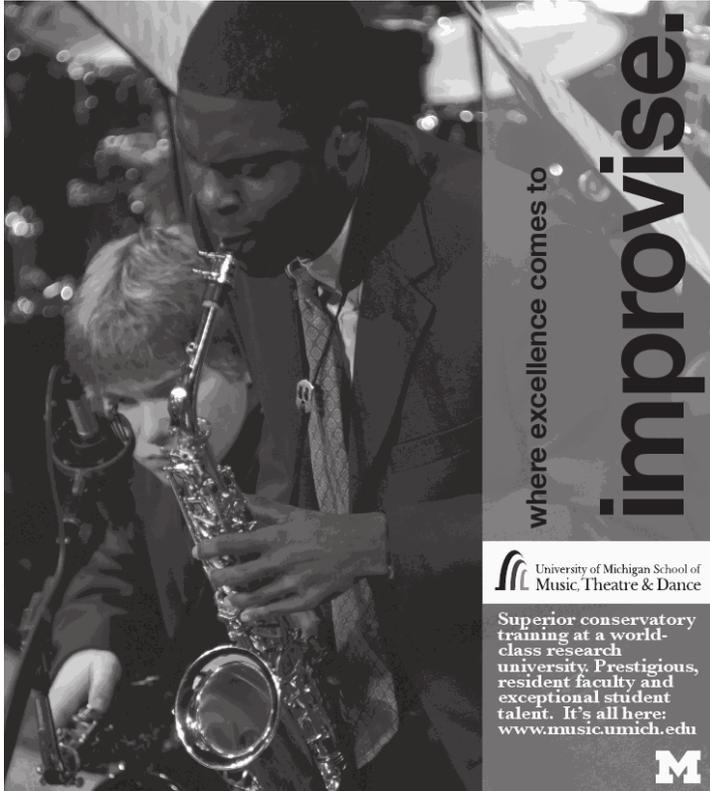
One of the great things about punk and post-punk is that there is so much repetition. I remember an older composer I knew dismissively saying (of Phil Glass) that it's easy to write a lot of repeat signs. But if you want to learn by listening, repetition is great. Over-the-top patterns are great.

Then I decided that the record wasn't nearly loud enough if I was going to learn something from it. In improvisational theater it is common to talk about improv as a series of offers. This comes from the work of Keith Johnstone, who invited his students to play a game called one-on-one-no-blocking. In the interactive art of improvisational theater, any sentence, word, grunt, gesture, movement, by one actor, is seen as an offer to his or her partner. Actors quickly learn to accept all offers. Blocking an offer stops the action, whether by negating the first actor's gesture, countering with a "better" or cleverer alternative, ignoring the offer, dithering, or flat refusal. What makes a piece of improvised art (whether in theater, dance or music) flow, and what stops up the flow? Johnstone catalogued some of the many ways in which one player can block another. You offer me coffee, and I say "I prefer tea," and the air fizzles out of the scene. I may block your offer out of wimpiness, fear of embarrassment, negativity, inattention, desire to lower the stakes, desire to appear cleverer or more skillful than you, or being stuck on my agenda. The net effect is that the forward movement of the improv has been tripped up.

Coffee/tea. In "real life" I can go out to dinner with you and refuse your offer of coffee because I like tea better; that does not impede the flow of our conversation. But in the compressed playspace of the stage or studio things are different. I may have a severe food allergy and refuse a dish that you offer me. But on stage, it is more interesting if I gobble up your dish of peanut curry, go into anaphylactic shock, and between loud, gasping, breaths, beg for the medical expertise of Sarah Palin. My funeral can be a fantastic, extended musical offering for you and my other partners, and, of course, my ghost.

As musicians, we experience these same interactions in very complex, nonverbal ways, and often at speeds that are very fast compared with the speed of verbal interaction; so it's great to have the parallel world of improvisational theater which can at least partially be described in words. We can extrapolate to our own musical experiences of tone, movement, breath, rhythm, vibration, and partnership with others.

Dan Richter, a superb actor and author in Berlin, emailed me a couple of years ago that he had just taught a workshop in which he had his students working with physical objects as offers. Improv actors, like musicians, thrive on the intimacies of human interaction, mutual support and conflict that are carried by



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language, sound and action. But what if we see the thing in front of us – a book, a table, a rug, a window, a plant – not as a prop we can use or ignore, but as an active participant in the moment, its qualities presenting an offer of interaction. A powerful idea, especially if you are stuck. Look around you in the room – if your room happens to be a stage with an audience present, so much the better. Any object will do.

If you're a musician, your instrument can be an offer. A violist searching with muscle consciousness for the balance points of a beautiful bow, a bassoonist salivating over an exquisitely cut reed, tabla player feeling for the sweet spots of the bāyāñ's skin. Each of us finds instruments fascinating, loving the details of craftsmanship and obsessing over the flaws that we compensate for. Instruments, as visual art objects, as tactile and proprioceptive body extensions, as functional sound generators, become a bridge between parallel universes.

And as improvisers we are comfortable with seeing any object as a musical instrument.

What if we as musicians can see our instruments, or parts of instruments, as offers – independent entities asking us to do something? What about extended techniques? My non-musician son just figured out that you can get an interesting sound from a guitar string by gently running an electric toothbrush over it. I've been playing an 18th century viola d'amore with the cardboard tubes left over from rolls of paper towels or toilet paper. Amazing sounds, my favorite timbral discovery of the past couple of years. One day I was cleaning up the kitchen, about to throw this cardboard tube away, but then I saw it as an invitation to play.

Musicians or dancers who have worked and played with pieces of visual art know how strongly an inanimate object can behave as an interactive partner, bristling, flowering or flowing with offers and suggestions. The more we give ourselves over to these offers, the more we are able to give up control, and discover all kinds of riches.

Improvising musicians are used to using sound as offer. The buzzing of a light fixture, which might ruin a humdrum performance of a great classic, may, in improv, invite us to interact with a new kind of drone and a new set of overtones. And here is the instrument: in the middle of a piece we may see this object we've been playing with for years, right next to our face, but here's a new detail or asymmetry or flaw we've never noticed before, a new kinesthetic relationship, and here we go ... Partners may play off of the details on each other's instruments, or to the new and ever-changing intersect of instrument and body, body and floor. Beyond our instruments, there is also the stage, the room, both the beautiful and the annoying things that strike our senses. We don't need to content ourselves with playing on the stage, we can play with the stage.

Dan's concept of objects as offers really struck home for me. As an improviser and teacher I love people, and practice a social and extraverted art form of give and take with my partners, but I get to do this mostly when traveling. In my studio, with a plethora of musical toys, I sometimes feel dried up and dumb. But to look around me and see my instrument as an offer, each of its parts as an offer, instrument as an Other, somewhat alien being, with its own desires, is wonderful.

Seeing the objects on my desk as offers. Or even the desk itself. It's never-ending. I'm fortunate to be able to interact with these objects, which are nothing special but precious in the surprises they bring. I used to know the late Herbert Zipper, composer and conductor, who survived multiple concentration camps, and was able to see the sunlight glinting on the barbed wire as an offer, a piece of wind-blown trash as an offer, and with the help of those perceptions lived on to bring music to many thousands in the years after. (William Blake said, "inspiration needs no one to prove it, it is as evident as the Sun and Moon").

This is about the daily experience of interacting with objects. Does that experience push us beyond our expectations? As musicians, we sometimes learn that our instruments, even if they are beautiful, refined products of an ancient technology, can become as humdrum and boring as kitchen utensils. That is the negative side of practice. And like kitchen utensils, instruments can be reanimated by an instantaneous act of imagination, seeing.

As I kneel down on the kitchen floor to scrub off a hunk of gunk, I might view the wet paper towel and the slats of hardwood (A) as a bit of trivial drudgery that takes me away from my "real work," or (B) as an offer to be present (shiny light on the woodgrain, surprise snow on the land outside seen from floor level). This morning it was B, but usually it's A. If it were B all the time, I suppose that would be a form of visionary enlightenment – seeing the infinite in all things. I'm a long way from being there, but there is hope. Accepting the offers of objects, the musical body-mind animates the physical world. In interaction with. In conversation with. In emotional reaction to. Stimulated by. Stimulating toward. Sentences ending in prepositions are not grammatical, but they are more like music.

For me, one of the best parts of the 2010 ISIM in Ann Arbor was a late night conversation with Zim Ngqawana, talking about the confluence of music and medicine. In Zim's language, Xhosa, there is no separate word for music, the closest is the word for medicine. He sees the instrument, too, as a medical device, as we shimmer and shake the body into alignment.

So, as my house shook from the vinyl my son was playing – it was not punk after all, but Violent Femmes – I shook and shimmied upstairs to join the fun, and learn something about music.

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Improvising the Good Well by Mike Heffley

The recent news has rekindled my half-century love affair with “improvised music” (scare quotes explained in closing). Arabs rising up in North Africa and the Middle East, Iranians raising up a bit in response to remind the world they haven’t given up, American unionized workers and fugitive Democratic legislators in their Midwestern states: young leading and older following, amassing spontaneously, leaderless, ignited by some random spark or other against threats perceived and/or real to their lives and/or livelihoods; all self-organizing around and within a space of social chaos as their best ground against pernicious oppressive order. As a young music student coming of age in the late 1950s and ‘60s, especially in San Francisco, my musical tastes and aesthetics developed hand-in-glove with my social and political self: folk and rock music galvanized and guided, expressed and explored the spirit and mind of mass protest movements against state violence and militarism and injustices racial, economic, and class. The way they did so musically was clearly more improvisational than compositional: they hung demonstrations of civil disobedience on a few rhythmic chants and simple songs everyone could entrain themselves around in loose and fluid performances that forged a group identity and voice on the fly, in the flux of largely unscriptable moments. They did not unfold like the performance of a play, or a group sing of Handel’s Messiah.

Furthermore, what they played out against was typically the social equivalent of a composed score—codified law, which the demonstrators wanted to impugn as authorized more by immoral than moral force, to contest and change, often by breaking it. Those they challenged did not typically rally themselves with and around music in that way to counter them, directly; indirectly, their tastes and aesthetics would more likely run to the more conventional and commercial music posing no such challenge. That said, rarely did such protesters rally themselves around the music of, say, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, or Sun Ra. These were more the acquired tastes of the most adventurous and intrepid jazz geeks; anecdotally, though, I suspect fellow ISIM members would corroborate my own experience that those tastes virtually always did go with the positions and tactics of social change and idealism rather than with those of the status quo.

After reading the following (“Four Times Journalists Held Captive in Libya Faced Days of Brutality;” Anthony Shadid, Lynsey Addario, Stephen Farrell and Tyler Hicks; *The New York Times*, 3/23/11)—

Libya was never much of a state. In theory, that was Colonel Qaddafi’s idea. The Great Socialist People’s Libyan Arab State of the Masses was supposed to be perpetual revolution...At its best it was dictatorship, at its worst chaos, and what we saw from one end of the country to the other was the detritus of an experiment whose own people lamented had lasted far too long...

—I wondered: what is the real, detailed nature of the processes and products of improvised music in all such social contexts and dynamics? to what extent does it tend to align with one social/political stream more than another, and why, and how absolutely? might it be appropriated and employed, counterinsurgently, by established rather than uprising powers and parties? if so, how?) These reflections on the recent news have found their way into my recent work. The first of two pieces in press is my review of George Lewis’s 2008 book about the AACM, *A Power Stronger Than Itself* (University of Chicago Press) for the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. The second is my chapter for a reader called *Jazz and Europe*, in press with Northeastern University Press/University Press of New England, due out this year or early 2012. Since neither is in print yet, I’ll allude to and paraphrase rather than cite from them.

I summarized my take on Lewis’s book by concluding that it itself was a “power stronger than itself,” to a power of four: first was the power it documented in the AACM of transcending its humble, obscure, and socially neglected roots to achieve such great things over its lifespan; second was the power it granted and wielded through those of us in journalism and academia who recognize those things for what they are, and document them so ourselves; third (with the fourth, most relevant here) is the power of the AACM story as a model for all Americans, not just African Americans, at this point in our cultural history when so many more are tasting the same kind of bitter fruits—economic inequality due to systemic promotion of rich over poor in so many ways—that were more concentrated in racial ghettos in the recent past; and fourth, its power as such a model for the nation as a whole in the global round, for its way of making so much from so little, as America finds itself slipping from its position of privilege and power by failing to make even enough out of so much.

Lewis’s account of the AACM’s original mission and vision depicts it as more composition- than improvisation-centered; the “creative music” rubric has always spoken to a kind of holistic integration of both aspects. A similar leveling and integration of the old modernist high-low hierarchy, between art music and folk and pop music also comes through loud and clear and erudite in his telling. The first such integration gives composition full pride of place and its due as the part of the musical art form it’s shown itself to be throughout history; the second ensures that that place will not be a throne from which it will lord over improvisation as over some slave-queen it got as a spoil of war by killing her original chosen husband, or over music’s other aspects as its slave-subjects. Once composition and improvisation, simple and complex, are integrated into a body whose health includes its brain acting as attentive servant to its feet as much as the reverse, the music we call “improvised” is removed from all suspicion that it is merely reactive to, derived from, a developmental step below that which we call “composed.”

Analogically, it resonates with the notion of social revolutionaries who have a workable plan, or at least an informed faith that one will emerge, for what better to do with the social body once they’ve improvised an overthrow of its abusive government; it puts to rest the bromide that today’s freedom fighter is inevitably tomorrow’s tyrant or failed revolutionary.

Lewis established this bit of wisdom for the AACM by showing Muhal Richard Abrams’ embrace of Russian immigrant composer-theorist Joseph Schillinger’s writings in that group’s formative years. Rather than prescribing the parameters of composition, as did

bebop's chromatic extensions of Common Practice, or as did serialism, Schillinger's system of composing was descriptive, spelling out universal principles and patterns rather than a system of rules to follow. It presumed not only an inherent order in the idiosyncratic body making its arts, but also a sure sense of said order's details and patterns as reflecting a universal order, not as deviating from it destructively.

A descriptive system simply charts what one knows to be there; a prescriptive system is imposed as an abstract on a body as if the latter were a chaotic and formless mass in need of such imposition. It generally starts its life as descriptive, and would best be let continue as such, but is often, disastrously, employed as prescriptive by those who would wield power and control unduly.

My second text draws on the homological conflation of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements circa 1955-69 with what bibliographer John Gray called *Fire Music* (Greenwood Press, 1991), to explore how it might apply to current scholarship of improvised music. A summary of its salient points:

the best of it was apolitical in posture and content, unlike the social-realist didactics of Communist China and the USSR; its "fiery" affect was typically the far more effective political statement, one entirely constituted by sound and rhythm, not words; this political affect was not parochial; the same sounds and rhythms translated and transplanted well to cultural contexts outside the black-and-white American one, including Asian American, the '68ers in Western Europe, and the dissidents in the former Eastern bloc; they have continued to do so in cultures such as Mongolia, Turkey, Korea, China, Japan, to name the few on my own recent scholarly radar (it's worth recalling that even Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, as short as their times were and as early now, both moved beyond the burning racial issues of their moments and into the international arenas of power plays and economic issues); improvised music, including that generally called "jazz" from its beginnings to now—as discussed and defined by voices such as Albert Ayler's, Sunny Murray's, and Anthony Braxton's (to name the few I cite)—might be better understood as America's folk music than its "classical" or "pop" music, to whatever extent that we scholars have to resort to such rubrics.

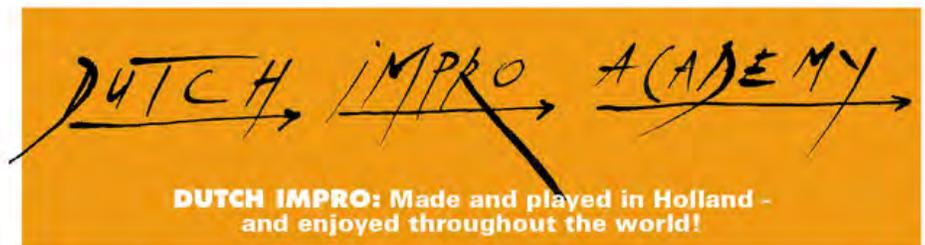
I found myself gravitating to the folkloristics side of things as I started seeing from my research how steeped in folklore (oral and written) and spiritual mythoi (Daoism, Buddhism, Shintoism, shamanism) was the Asian-traditional music from which such current masters of the non-idiom as Sainkho Namchylak, Jin Hi Kim, Mei Han, Min Xiao-Fen, Miya Masaoka, Wu Man and others have drawn their sources of inspiration and material. I pondered their natural collaborations with both white and black American and other world-ethnic roots musicians and with the more avant-garde "art music" side of things, both improvised and composed. The bullet points above reflect my own most immediate intellectual concerns as I ponder how I want to write about improvised music in the global round, specifically in my third book, on Asian and Asian-American improvised music, after two books on essentially the same music discourse in the variously different contexts of African-American and European (mostly German) scenes. Building on the point in my first allusion—that improvised and composed work best together as integral and nonhierarchical parts of creative music—I turn my concern to what such music tends to align with in the larger cultural world. I care about what in it qua music does so, and I want to discern between that and how it may be appropriated for agendas (again, per social realism), and I want to notice when it is simply impossible to appropriate it so, and I want to understand why it might be impossible.

Such questions move beyond whether it is improvised or composed, or authentic or contrived in this or that way, and into whether it is moral or not, or even good or evil. Anthony Braxton famously voiced something about this when he spoke of "free improvisation" as potentially defined as the "freedom to kill you"; Stockhausen stepped in it when he compared 9/11 to a great work of art. I pondered such questions at length in my book *Northern Sun, Southern Moon* when I attached qualifiers such as War, Eros, the Holy, and Religion to the music under discussion.

I put "improvised music" in scare quotes because I don't see the fact of its being improvised as the only or defining aspect of it. As a writer, I've always been both frustrated and satisfied with the use of "creative" to describe the music of our concern here; it's too vague to denote anything distinctive, but is also thereby in little danger of violating or omitting some vital aspect of that which it connotes. When I wrote my book about Anthony Braxton's music, I had much to say about the history of Africa and Europe, and African- and European-American histories together in America. When I wrote my book about his creative-music counterparts in Eurasia, I had much to say about the deep and recent social and political histories there. However, little if any of the actual music I wrote about self-identified as anthemic of this or that movement or point of view. Currently, I'm steeped in the same kind of project, focused on the same kind of musical mindset and processes coming out of Asia and Asian America. I know the musicians I'm writing about as part of a familial community of

working professionals who collaborate with each other and with those I wrote about in my first two books. I'm connecting their common ground and music with what I've seen in the past five decades of my life, and what I'm seeing in the news about the Middle East and the American Midwest. I'm connecting it too with women's issues, specifically. Stay tuned...

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Repenete by Rui Carvalho

Repenete derives from *de repente* which means “at once.” It also is known as *desafio* (challenge). This is a genre that makes use of improvised poetry upon a given theme, using pre-determined forms settled by the folkloric oral/sung tradition. The improviser develops a certain theme obeying a determined poetic structure. This improviser is called *repentista*. If there are a couple of improvisers “dueling” their improvisational skills we then have a *desafio* (challenge). The improvised lyrics have, more often than not, captious, hilarious meanings, as both opponents mock each other with their improvised lyrics.

Quite often the first verse sung by one of the *repentistas* is the last verse sung by his opponent, thus building a continuous stream in the sung story, almost like a jazz musician picking up a melody from the improviser playing before him to start his solo. Anyway, traditionally, in the end they make up and bury the hatchet.

It also may happen that a couple of *repentistas* develop their lyrics upon a certain theme in order to tell their own version of an event which can be of any kind. It can be about a political event as well as about mythology, on a folkloric sense, or even about the everyday life of the community they live in. Today it is quite usual to meet *repentistas* singing for tourists along the beaches of north eastern Brazil. They may perform solo or as couples and are expected to be rewarded with some money by the person “exalted” by their singing. Usually the last verse refers to the amount of money they are expecting to receive from the tourist.

Repenete is directly related to *cordel* literature. *Cordel*, which literally means string, got this name from a Portuguese practice in the XV century. The leaflets called *entremezes*, related the day-to-day life in Portugal and are given credit by some critics as the very origin of Portuguese drama, which is supposed to have started in the early 1500s with Gil Vicente. These leaflets were hung out on a string - thus the name *cordel* - offered to whoever might be interested on buying it. Brought to Brazil in the beginning of colonization, still during the XVI century, the *entremezes* blossomed in the north eastern part of the colony, originating the local *cordel*. These written texts share with *repente* the same metrical structure. It still goes on up until the present day, and all open air free markets in north eastern Brazil show the local *cordel* production as well as the local *repentistas*, singing in their own way their improvised lyrics about stories of the day, or any fact that may draw attention from the public.

But it was not only in north eastern Brazil that *repente* blossomed. Also in Rio Grande do Sul, in southern Brazil, it became part of the local folkloric expression where it is called *trova*.

Two harmonic instruments are used to follow the singing: steel-stringed acoustic guitar and acordeon, both very popular instruments in Brazil. In northeastern Brazil the acordeon is also known as concertina, while in the south it may be called gaita or fole. Both expressions derive from gaita de fole, which in Portugal denominates bag pipe, an instrument present in Portuguese folklore certainly inherited from the celtic culture’s presence in the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula. The acoustic guitar is used more often than not in north eastern Brazil by *repentistas* while in Rio Grande do Sul, the acordeon is mostly used. It also is quite usual, in north eastern Brazil that *repentistas* make no use of harmony instruments and just keep a groove on the pandeiro (tambourin). The groove and the technique in this case are entirely different from the ones used on samba, for instance. There’s some degree of variations used on this groove but basically it must stick close to the basic rhythmical pattern. In this case, the melodic line almost disappears and the chant becomes simply rhythm and poetry, just like the genre known today as rap, abbreviation of rhythm and poetry. In Brazil the rhythmic chant is called in various regions *embolada*. If this chant is accompanied by percussion instruments only, it is then called *coco de embolada*. If an acoustic guitar is used to accompany the singing, than it is called *cantoria*. Generally the harmony behind the chant is a V7 chord, and the singing moves around a mixolydian scale, sometimes with with raised 4th.

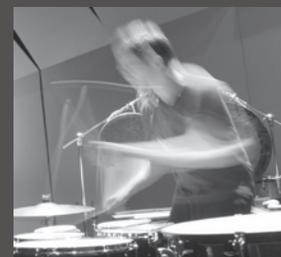
There are various metric and poetic structures used in *repente*. Each one applies to a certain occasion or context. In order not to make this text too long I will just list the names of various metrics used on the poetical construction of *repente*: quadra, sextilha, septilha, oitava, quadrão, décima, galope à beira-mar, martelo, redondilha, carretilha, just to name the most traditional ones.

I hope this article draws some interest upon a not so well known facet of Brazilian culture where the improvisation of lyrics and poetry plays an essential role. After all, any improviser, be it on words or music, is a story teller.

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Note from the Conference Director and ISIM 2012 Conference/Festival Announcement

Kate Olson



This will be the first calendar year out of the last 6 that isn't marked by an ISIM Conference. We've finally managed to streamline our feedback receptors, and we're doing a few things differently that will hopefully make your next Conference/Festival experience more streamlined as well.

First, we've been able to change the time of year that the conference occurs. By moving the conference to a less stressful time in the academic year, we hope to both increase attendance and encourage student participation. By way of announcement, the next and sixth annual ISIM conference will take place at **William Paterson University in New Jersey, USA, February 16-19, 2012**. More information will be available soon, including the conference theme, call for proposals, and travel and lodging arrangements. All of the associated deadlines will be pushed back to accommodate the February dates.

In addition to the new time of year, we hope to finally provide collaborative time and space for impromptu jam sessions. Rather than setting aside one specific time and location, I hope to have multiple rooms dedicated to the possibility of open jams, and perhaps instituting a sign-up process so that folks can plan out a jam together when they are all available.

Finally, I'd like to welcome Douglas Ewart to the ISIM board. Last year, at the end of the conference, we had a talk-back session that Douglas attended. I have never seen a speaker light a fire under more ISIM members than I did that night. Douglas' thoughts on involving young improvisers in ISIM and creating an outreach program to help facilitate community and youth involvement were both timely and invigorating. I look forward to working with Douglas and watching his enthusiasm spread to all ISIM members in the coming months. Here are some excerpts from his bio:

Douglas Ewart

Perhaps best known as a composer, improviser, sculptor and maker of masks and instruments, Douglas R. Ewart is also an educator, lecturer, arts organization consultant and all around visionary. In projects done in diverse media throughout an award-winning and widely-acclaimed 40-year career, Mr. Ewart has woven his remarkably broad gifts into a single sensibility that encourages and celebrates--as an antidote to the divisions and compartmentalization afflicting modern life--the wholeness of individuals in culturally active communities.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1946, Douglas R. Ewart immigrated to Chicago, Illinois in the United States in 1963. His travels throughout the world and interactions with diverse people since then has, again and again confirmed his view that the world is an interdependent entity. An example of his efforts both to study and to contribute to this interdependence is his use of his prestigious 1987 U.S.-Japan Creative Arts Fellowship to

study both modern Japanese culture and the traditional Buddhist shakuhachi flute, and also to give public performances while in Japan.

In America, his determination to spread his perspective is part of the inspiration behind his often multi-disciplinary works and their encouragement of artist-audience interactions. It is also the basis of the teaching philosophy with which he guides his classes at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he has taught since 1990, and the basis of the perspective he has brought to his service on advisory boards for institutions such as The National Endowment for the Arts, Meet the Composer (New York City) and Arts Midwest. Mr. Ewart uses his past experience as chairman of the internationally renowned Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) to celebrate and build upon the history and achievements of the organization, and is from this perspective a natural extension of the activities he has been engaged in for the past four decades.



Zim Ngqawana passes away at age 52

The ISIM family is saddened to learn of the recent passing of the legendary South African saxophonist Zim Ngqawana. Many of us had the honor of playing with, listening to, and spending time with Zim at last December's festival/conference. He will be sorely missed. The following quotations appeared in an obituary by Lisa Van Wyk in the Mail&Guardian Online:

In a reflective interview at the time of his 50th birthday, Ngqawana told the M&G that he had started thinking about death as he got older. He said "death can be studied through the silent moment after every exhalation when you breathe." He described it musically, as the "silence between the notes that provides for a meditation", and that "all great music is supposed to lead you to silence – towards yourself."