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## International Society for Improvised Music

P.O. Box 1603, Ann Arbor, MI 48106  
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## ISIM Newsletter Fall 2012 Volume 8, No. 1



### Message from the President

A hearty fall welcome to the ISIM membership!

Exciting possibilities loom on the horizon as we consider the date and location of our next festival/conference and we hope to be able to make an announcement along those lines in the near future. I also anticipate that we will soon be alerting you to new developments in our efforts to create a robust online community that will significantly enhance our capacities to serve the ISIM membership. Meanwhile, I thought I would take this opportunity to share some thoughts about what I see as a very important facet of the broader ISIM mission.

Most of us are involved in education in one capacity or another – whether that be as teachers, visiting artists, parents, students, or citizens who are concerned about what happens in our schools as important to our future. In my view, the training of teachers is key to any kind of educational reform, and no field is arguably in greater need for reform than music teacher training. The fragmented, creativity-deficient, and mono-cultural horizons that continue to prevail – and of course this applies as much to musical study at large as it does to music teacher training – have not significantly budged even with decades of appeals for change. I was reminded in this newsletter's interview with Douglas Ewart about the AACM school as an inspiring alternative, where wide-ranging engagement with areas that are seen not as separate splinters but as part of an integrated tapestry provided a new approach. This is the kind of preparation needed for 21st musicians and music teachers. And of course improvisation is central to this preparation.

This fall I am teaching a graduate seminar that sustains this kind of conversation. Based on a chapter from a forthcoming book, the class is called the "School of Music of the Future." As you can see from the description that follows, the class presents a radically new vision that is aligned with not only today's musical landscape, but the broader kind of creative and spiritual development that is needed to address the challenges of our world. The fact that the class filled up within just a few days after I sent out the announcement, which happened just a week before classes began, gives an indication of the kind of interest in this topic.

I look forward to continuing this dialogue in ISIM circles and updating you on the various developments in the works.

Ed Sarath

## A Word from the ISIM Board of Directors

An Interview with **Douglas R. 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, Ewart immigrated to Chicago in 1963. His travels throughout the world and interactions with diverse people since then have 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.

His administrative, teaching and other duties have not prevented Ewart from maintaining several musical ensembles, the Nyahbingi Drum Choir, the Clarinet Choir, Douglas R. Ewart & Inventions, Douglas R. Ewart & Quasar and Douglas R. Ewart & Stringnets. Nor has it prevented him from releasing some of the resulting music on his own record label, Aarawak Records (founded in 1983), which has released his *Red Hills and Bamboo Forest*, *Bamboo Meditations at Banff*, *Angles of Entrance*, *New Beings*, and *Velvet Fire*.

James Ilgenfritz: *Hello Douglas! How are things?*

Things are good, school started for me. Things are zooming along quickly, the kids are great.

Jl: *Maybe we can start by going over some details of your early life in Jamaica and your move to Chicago in your late teens?*

I got to Chicago from Jamaica in June 1963. I was very interested in the arts – particularly music, though I had started painting soon after coming to the US as well. I started playing by emulating Count Ossie & the Mystic Revelation of Rastafari, the premiere drum ensemble, with dance and other instruments, after seeing them live around the age of 11, both at Count Ossie's house and elsewhere. Aside from drumming I was interested in the trumpet, but I didn't have that opportunity in Jamaica. I knew John Moore very well and in fact lived with him a bit in my early teens. This is the trumpeter with the Skatalites. So I heard a lot of music before coming to Chicago.

After I came to the states, I heard about the AACM Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and began attending concerts, and eventually bought an alto. I taught myself for a bit before taking formal lessons with Joseph Jarman, and later with Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, and Byron Bowie. That was the beginning of my formal studies, and then I went to various colleges, to Governor's State University, where I studied electronic music with Dr. Richard McCrary as well as with Dr. James Mack at Loop Junior College (now Harold Washington College).

*Jl: How did your AACM studies compare with the more academic environment?*

Well, institutional learning is different because first of all, there was a different thrust to AACM. It was a free community school. People did it solely for the love of it... not that my other teachers at the other institutions didn't love it, and even gave me free extra lessons (particularly James Mack), but AACM was a TOTAL kind of school, in terms of learning, composition, theory, performance, observing, the business of promoting and self-determination- in terms of you being responsible for getting your own work out there, to find a space to develop your work. The writing you worked on in school, you were manifesting it in performances, both recitals at the school, and at concerts that my contemporaries and I would do outside of the school. It was great, being able to go to rehearsals for the Art Ensemble and others, and to work with Wadada Leo Smith and Leroy Jenkins. Also, performing with many of those artists really hastened one's comprehension of being an artist, being a composer, being a musician, being an entrepreneur. It's manifold activity, manifold cultivation of acumen in these various aspects of music/sound-making. In institutions it's much more compartmentalized. With the AACM there was much more of a flow. Roscoe's CD says it right in the title, *The Flow of Things*. It was a real integration of the arts. And because of that attitude, the incorporation of various artists/art forms in my work, with dance, visual arts, poetry, has always been an integral aspect of my own work, in terms of being a performer, composer, instrument maker, and costume maker.

When I came to the US I was also interested in fashion and design. I also studied tailoring and worked for a while as a tailor. My interest in music superseded my work as a tailor, but my skills of being a tailor were never extinguished, because I use it in the crafting elements of making costumes and other things. When you study with those old craftsmen they were very stringent about how you designed and built things. Sometimes they were a bit conservative I thought, because in those days in the 60s I wanted to make slacks with different colors and all that kind of thing. They weren't into that kind of idea of things-they only made symmetric garments, as opposed to my more... asymmetric idea about things that I had. But those things coalesced, merging the various skills and activities into a whole. Again, the flow of things.

*Jl: It sounds like you sort of always had that sort of idea in mind from the beginning.*

I didn't see any real partition between them, and I think some of the things that influence you are quite subliminal. For example I grew up next to a schoolteacher, Enid Chevanns, and she rehearsed plays in her yard. So we would watch for endless hours, not knowing that some of Jamaica's premiere actors would be coming out of those workshops and presentations. Wycliffe Bennett was one such actor. I was learning a lot about performance and rehearsing from watching those plays with out being aware. I grew up in an area where dance was important, not just formal dancing but dance as a cultural norm was really significant.

*Jl: So you were based in Chicago for quite some time, but then ended up in Japan for a while, yes?*

In 1987 I got a US/Japan fellowship, and I lived in Japan with my wife Janis for that year, and I was studying both making shakuhachi and playing shakuhachi. I'd made bamboo instruments prior to going to Japan for many years, but going to Japan was a real booster for me. It was an expansion of my understanding of bamboo, of the

wood itself; to learn certain techniques, and to look at a culture in which bamboo is such an indelible and indicative aspect of culture. It is significant in gardening, fine arts (in terms of papermaking or painting on bamboo), martial arts, and architecture – bamboo is important to the entire culture. So that was a real affirmation.

We grew up with bamboo as well. It's used for a number of crucial things, including architecture, rafting, tools, the roots we used for making balls. The root is very solid, and we would weave over it and make a ball.

I began flute-making with bamboo, from the 60s right up to the 80s I'd been working with bamboo, honing my skill with manipulating it. It's a good servant but a bad master! So when I went to Japan it had a huge resonance for me. After I heard Goro Yamaguchi's *Bell Ringing in the Empty Sky* recording I wanted to go to Japan – the power of the sound, the Zen influence, the Shinto influence, and the very discipline of it. It was always the idea of sound. The idea of Suize blowing Zen – that one could reach Nirvana if they found the right sound. Perhaps that's what all musicians, all sound-makers, look for.



*Jl: It sounds like the time in Japan especially influential for how your instrument-making has developed since your time in Japan.*

I had tremendous support in Japan. Sabu Toyozumi was a drummer who had come to Chicago and studied with the AACM, particularly Steve McCall. I met him when he was in Chicago, and later before I went to Japan I wrote to him and let him know I was coming on this fellowship. We stayed with him initially, and he found us a place in Yokohama. Our host in Yokohama, Sato San, was in Theater. He introduced me to some people who had a very particular kind of original handmade furniture company called Marginal. Going there, I had access to almost any kind of equipment I could have imagined. They granted me space in a nice size room to work in, and while I was working in there, I was able to experiment profusely. I had funds to get pretty much anything I wanted. And if I ran into a problem, those master craftsmen would stop what they were doing and come help me out. So my skill and understanding of bamboo, of techniques of working with wood, vastly increased because of having so much time to experiment. That was a tremendous kind of support system to have.

I was fortunate to return a year later on a six-week tour, with Joseph Jarman and Aki Nakamura, who is a fabulous shakuhachi player with whom I had studied, and later I studied with his teacher, Tatsuya Yokoyama, as well. Those two extended periods of time deeply increased my passion for bamboo. I feel that once we get more in tune with ecology, we will use more bamboo paper, because it grows so quickly and rapidly. In a day, some species can grow up to three feet. The tradition of shakuhachi making is hundreds of years old, and it's a very fine art. And the sense of the value of these things – it can be hundreds of dollars for a piece of this wood, depending on the species. Meanwhile here someone might look at it and not even comprehend this value.

I remember, performing in Japan – every night people would bring flowers and gifts ... incredible bouquets. There was no room to bring all these flowers home! And going to temples. On the tour we were able to perform at temples, and see the scholastic, artistic, meditational, and spiritual aspects of it. The monks take care of the grounds, the landscaping, the gardening; the raking of stones. It's art from the bottom up ... and out!

In that culture the people that you support would come and support you. For example, here, I've never had had the grocery person here come to my concert ... or the dry cleaner. There, the person who works at the market says "What do you do" and I say "Ongaku des!" and they say "Let me know when you're playing next". You

might say that here, but there, if they say that, they come, and they bring their husband or wife and their children!

*Jl: Did your time in Japan affect how you approached your ensembles here in the time since you've been back?*

Oh, without a doubt. And I've had the opportunity to travel to many other places for a prolonged period as well. In Australia I went to aboriginal communities, where the didgeridoo comes from. I've also spent time in Indonesia, in Bali, listening to the gamelan. I studied carving for a form called *Jegog*, in western Bali, where they have a bamboo gamelan. I've also spent time in Africa. That was one of my first trips – in 1972 I spent three months in Ghana. We helped build a school there, and I was exposed to a lot of Ghanaian drumming, from the *Akan* standpoint ... Witnessing their dance and ritual was important. Almost every weekend we traveled to some unknown area, always seeking the arts – the music and dance that you can only get exposed to if you go to a place and you're involved in a community, instead of just being an observer. I've also been to Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, and Brazil. So there are a lot of influences for me.

You know, most lessons you don't get the whole thing right away... it might be years before something will don on you. And it's like this with experiencing different cultures. Everywhere you go, if you're interested in the culture, the people, the cuisine ... if you're really interested, it must be multi-tiered in that way. You're already just skimming the surface, but if you're not taking in the culture in its entirety, then you're just skimming the skin!

*Jl: It seems like a lot of your projects really pull things together from all these directions – the AACM, the various cultures you've visited, the electronic music.*

Before I even began my formal studies in music, I played around with tape recorders. I remember having a miniature reel-to-reel, and use to play around with tape delay. This was in the early 60s, even prior to playing an instrument. Then when I went to Governor's State, George Lewis and I went together. We experimented with ring modulator, flanger, etc. I've had the opportunity to work with David Behrman, Richard Teitelbaum, and David Wessel. So my interest in sound is pretty wide, in terms of incorporating ideas into what I do. My idea is to be inclusive, and to make my interests integral to my work as an artist in these various areas-- visual, sonic... they are inseparable in many aspects. One helps to augment the other, to make the work interesting to myself and to others. It's a microcosm of life.

I don't see anything as being far afield from what I'm doing as a sound-maker, as a composer, as a citizen, someone that occupies the earth. So for me, it's important that my students not only learn music, but learn about the things that are essential to our survival on the earth. For example, the piece I will be doing on Thomas Buckner's Interpretations series is called *'Water Is Tops'*. I grew up in an environment where water was really valued. You couldn't just run the tap... to do the dishes you had your soap water and your rinse water. You couldn't just leave the lights burning and so on ... Part of it was economic, because people didn't have money to throw away, but we also valued the idea of not wasting things away, not throwing things away or conducting yourself recklessly because things were at hand, but rather, to value them.

### **Submit Your recordings & publications for review in the Winter 2013 ISIM Newsletter!**

We would like to feature your work in these pages! We will be dedicating more and more space to spotlight the activities of ISIM members, and we want to hear from you!

If you have new CDs, LPs, or publications, please let us know!

**Submissions for Winter 2013 must be received by December 15, 2012.**

**Digital Submissions are Preferred. Please send to:** [james@isimprov.org](mailto:james@isimprov.org)

*Submissions will also be accepted via mail:*

James Ilgenfritz  
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One of the things that I do is make instruments out of crutches, tennis rackets, oars, skis ... these are durable items that are often thrown away because maybe they lost some of their ability to function in their originally intended way. But we can transform them into other things. I call them *Crepuscular Instruments* ... they are in the twilight of their original intent, of their original function. But they can be transformed – so that twilight is a transitory moment.

'*Water is Tops*' coalesces with these ideas – the importance and value of water, appreciating the finite aspects of water. For me to value finite things like this is intrinsic, it's not conjured or postured ... you feel it. I've also experienced having to carry water uphill in five-gallon portions to fill 55-gallon drums when I lived in Jamaica as a young boy. My grandmother grew up in rural conditions. Their value of things is very different. They were so serious that if the sides of a pot were good, they would put a new bottom on it! These days, it's good to buy fancy shoes... But will they last? And are they good for our feet to begin with? With the cheap manufacturing, getting a shoe resoled isn't something people do much here. So '*Water Is Tops*' is about conservation, about respecting how fortunate we are to have things – water in particular, in this piece. It's about recognizing the difficulties that many cultures have with water. Today, Water Wars is a reality, and it is an imminent threat for everyone as rivers and streams become dumping grounds.

Also - I'd like to add that in many cultures, women can't get an education because their job is gathering the water. It's a laborious task, one that is time consuming and that sometimes entails walking for miles and carrying water in a very strenuous manner to get a few gallons to a remote community, over and over throughout the day. So many young girls don't get the education that they could have had they not had this responsibility. And if we weren't so wasteful we could do more to help some of the less fortunate in society. We don't always think about contributing to making a change possible.

The *Tops* aspect of '*Water Is Tops*' is my interest in encouraging people towards the sciences. I see a Top as a toy and an implement, which can teach mathematics, astronomy, balance, and other practical lessons. We could bring a physicist, mathematician, or acoustician into the fray of doing a piece using water, with movement, dance, and music, then having someone from the sciences come in and talk, and help expose people, particularly young people, to the sciences in a practical and applicable manner.

It is important to have that kind of integral connection between the arts and sciences, between the practical the esoteric. If we can do that, then we'll make the condition and the environment for our young people a lot more broad, a lot more flowing. They won't have the trepidation about what it is they can study or what they can become.

Jl: *I also wanted to ask about your involvement in organizations like ISIM and many other arts organizations – these sorts of associations go all the way back to your work with the AACM.*

I'm involved with ISIM, the AACM, the Minnesota Composers Forum, the Jamaica Minnesota Organization, Healing Arts Collective, and Diasporial Rhythms, a collective in Chicago I've recently joined for visual artists, particularly collectors and curators. There's an interesting idea of who determines the value of things: Who determines what one should collect, or what the value of those things would be, like if you or I as individuals help to determine the value of things ... at one time that was the sole province of the rich, and is still dominated by institutions. A lot of it, as Sun Ra would say, 'Myth more powerful than reality'. So we must develop our own myths and our own ways of evaluating things.

### Contact ISIM:

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There's an importance of collectives in self-determination – supporting artists of your own time. You don't have to have a lot of money to be a supporter of the arts. You're also helping the currency of the arts, by purchasing art from artists now, supporting their work, going to see live music, contributing 20 dollars here or there as a group or segment of the public can be a very powerful and affirming conduct, and it's crucial. And being in control of the images and myths that we are making to live in – to realize, hey, this is the same thing that people with money are doing, but we no longer have to use what they've done as a measuring stick. In fact, we recognize the importance of the antithesis of that, which is that poor people have power too. They just have to recognize it and propagate it, cultivate it, share it.

Forming organizations and being a part of a collective is an important thing, and each of us has to be the one that determines how important things are to us. We must be involved in these mechanisms in order to survive, to thrive, and to pass on the information that we've gathered from those that went before us, to pass that on to those that are in front of us. For that I think organizations like ISIM are crucial. If each of these organizations is doing a little bit on the positive side, then we can make a difference, as activists, as educators, performers, or parents.

One of the things I'm emphasizing to my students is the fact that when they come to school, they shouldn't be so reluctant to meet other young people. Often in my classes there are students who after 14 weeks have hardly met a new person... and I want them to see that this is one of the important reasons for being in school is to make a support system. Some of my greatest allies, like George Lewis, Henry Threadgill, Rita Warford, or Amina Claudine Myers, Mwata Bowden, J.D. Parran, Dee Alexander, Ann Ward, Mankwe Ndotsi, Edward Wilkerson, Dushun Mosley are people I've known a long time. They are my support system. There's a lot of interplay, a layered relationship. This, to me, is the basis of education – exposure, meeting new people, encountering new ideas, embracing ideas that are different from yours, not just the ones that illuminate your ideas but those that are opposed to your ideas. It's an important part of diversification, and of being strong in yourself. This is what makes strong thinking, strong conduct, strong people.



The advertisement features a photograph of a jazz quartet performing on a stage. On the left, a pianist is seated at a grand piano. In the center, a saxophonist and a double bassist are standing and playing. On the right, a drummer is seated at a drum set. The background is a warm, reddish-brown color. The text 'University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance' is in the top left, 'where excellence comes to spark' is in the top right, and a list of degree programs is in the bottom left. A blue banner at the bottom contains the text: 'Superior conservatory training at a world-class research university. Prestigious, resident faculty and exceptional student talent. It's all here: [www.music.umich.edu](http://www.music.umich.edu)'.

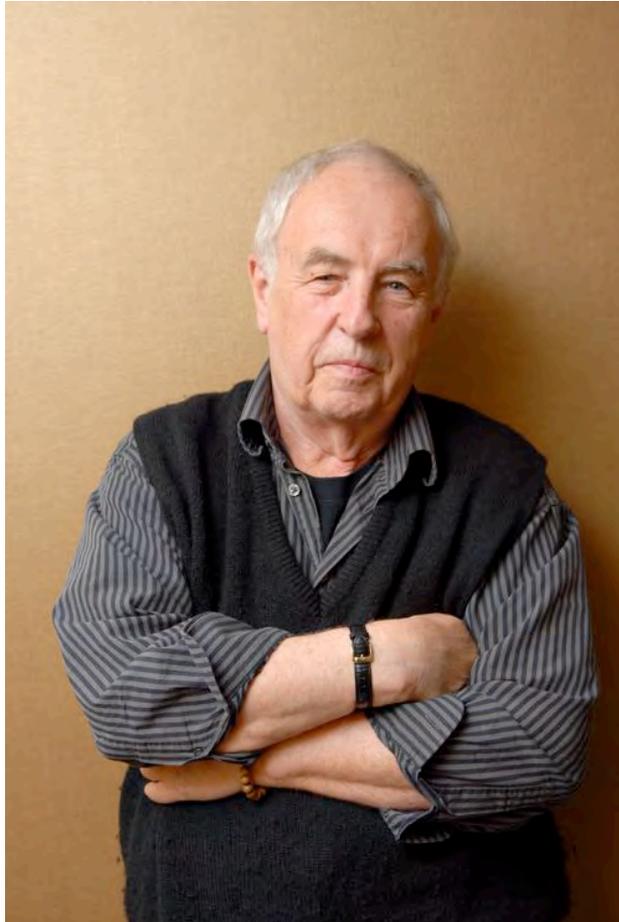
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## ISIM: AN INTERVIEW WITH KARL BERGER



The Creative Music Foundation was founded in 1971 by musicians Karl Berger, Ingrid Sertso and Ornette Coleman. Its initial advisory board, comprised of legends from all aspects of music, the arts and philosophy, included composer John Cage, conductor/musician Gil Evans, philosopher/educator Buckminster Fuller, composer George Russell, and composer/conductor Gunther Schuller. Their goal was to establish a nonprofit organization focused on improvisation and musical cross-pollination that complemented musicians' academic studies, a place where music as a universal language could be explored and expanded.

The Creative Music Foundation's mission is to foster the keen awareness and focused practice of musical expression and interactions, and to support the understanding of music as a universal language by providing environments where musicians from different backgrounds and traditions share and explore together their personal musical interpretations.

For most of its 40 years, CMF's main program was the Creative Music Studio, a physical location in Woodstock, NY where musicians from all over the world lived, played, interacted with each other and created a body of music broad and deep. Based on a 45-acre campus with multiple residences, workshop rooms and performance halls, hundreds of Guiding Artists,

including several MacArthur 'Genius' Award winners (George Lewis, John Zorn, and Cecil Taylor, Charlie Haden), lived, played and shared musical wisdom with thousands of participants, many of whom are now well-known musicians, from Steven Bernstein and Cyro Baptista to Peter Apfelbaum and Marilyn Crispell. Over 400 concerts were recorded and are currently being digitized as part of the CMS Archive Project. The CMS Archive is being housed at Columbia University's Library, with some performances being included on upcoming recordings, the CMS Archive Selections Series, a co-production of CMF and the American Composers Forum.

Even without a physical 'campus,' the Creative Music Foundation has been remarkably active. In addition to the CMS Archive Project and CD compilations, CMF Programs include the CMS Oral History Project, a partnership with Columbia University Jazz Studies Program; The Improvisers Orchestra Fellowship Program, ongoing residencies, workshop and performances in New York City, Woodstock and around the world. And to celebrate its 40th Anniversary in 2013, a variety of educational and artistic activities are planned, including: a CMS Documentary; Creative Music Master Awards; Scholarship and Fellowship programs; initiation of an annual commission for compositions; a CMS Reunion/four-day 'intensive' retreat for Guiding Artists, alumni, and students; and a 40th Anniversary Concert tour. And, finally, the Creative Music Foundation hopes to find a new, permanent facility in which musicians can live, play and learn from each other.

James Ilgenfritz: *In the early days of the Creative Music Studio, things were much different ... I've always heard there was a real dearth of opportunities for creative improvisers, and CMS sort of filled that empty space. It paved the way for many amazing things, but in some ways, that innovative approach is perhaps still unsurpassed.*

Yes, well, the setup of academic programs is different. You can't do what we did. The atmosphere has gotten much more conservative in this country. When Reagan came into office, things changed with arts funding, and it definitely affected what we were doing. But the need for this is still there. Many people are making a difference, but what happened with CMS at that time can't really happen again. It was a meeting of the minds – people came to study with their idols, people who were touring, and weren't necessarily teachers. It was more coaching, or collaborating, than teaching.

Jl: *Was there always a focal person who was a featured guest artist?*

There were essentially three strains of CMS... the second one had a visiting artist who changed each week – they took over the main part of the program. That was the core – whether Braxton, Konitz, Giuffre, or Nasconcelos... all the guest artists would come in with something very different in mind.

In the first strain, we would always start with the question of what is common to all musics. Students came from a lot of different types of musical backgrounds. Improvisation is certainly one thing. But the common denominator would be the overtone partials, and other fundamental unifying sound ideas. This was what formed the basis of the 'morning practice'.

The main part of the day would then be with our featured visiting artist. In the evening was the third part: people would form groups and work on their own thing. This work was also documented on the weekly Friday concerts. And then on Monday we would listen back to last week's recordings.

Jl: *And there were also 'intensives', right?*

The 'intensives' were a different thing. These were much shorter. There was the New Year intensive and the Summer intensive. Entire groups would come in as the visiting artists: The Art Ensemble of Chicago, or the Cecil Taylor Unit, or Dave Holland's band, for example.

Jl: *Lately CMS is back with various activities – there's the large group that is often made up of various alumni from the old days, and workshops that invite the contributions of younger emerging artists. There was the residency at the Stone, and some workshops at the Jazz Gallery, and others.*

There are CMS events now. The Improvisers Orchestra usually has four or five people who were at CMS – for example Steve Bernstein, or Peter Apfelbaum. Then there are younger players who probably would have been at something like that if it were around in the 1990s or 200s.

The musicians involved in the Improvisers Orchestra events now are not students at all. They are players who are all quite active on the scene. New York has a surprising level of musicianship, and there are a lot of them. It seems the more difficult it gets for music, the more musicians there seem to be! I've been doing these workshops in New York, and it's so many people. And the level of



musicianship is very high! There's a generational thing – going back to the early days in the 1960s, it was a small group of people involved in this music, and when I came it was not long before I'd met everyone. Now, there are so many people involved. Many musicians meet for the first time when they come to an Improvisers Orchestra event. It's grown from a group to an army!

The concept is about trying to get to the bottom of how a large group can blend, and harmonize sounds as improvisers. Everything you know about music, you can FEEL. This is why folks who don't learn to read music can still be amazing ... I'm thinking of Chet Baker, some folks in the Basie Band, Errol Garner. Getting more in tune with the dynamics will open up the feeling. So we always start with the blending, then work on lines. We will play something by Ornette, or work on some world music ideas, or one of my pieces. But it's all taught by rote. In over 50 concerts we haven't read any music yet! Things should start in the Fall at the Jazz Gallery again, alternating with Steve Coleman's group on Mondays. So it will be a smaller group there, since it is not a large stage area. The big group stuff would happen up on 104<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, at El Taller.

*Jl: Are the dynamics different for creative improvisers now than during the days of the CMS?*

It has changed for the better musically and for the worse business-wise. There is such an abundance of great music and very talented players – but the scene is deteriorated. 20 years ago you could do a 4-week tour around the US, and these days, you're lucky to get three gigs. And one of the things that are different is that there are so many more musicians competing for gigs now.

Cultural support has also disappeared, even in Europe. Over there, it used to be that every town had a budget to support concerts. But both here and there, that money is no longer around. Rather than this subsidized arts situation, they now have festivals, which will be sponsored by businesses. And they tend to get the same ten acts each year, which is great if you're one of those ten acts, but all these emerging talented musicians are having a hard time getting their chance to do their work.

*Jl: Some of your recent CDs include the solo disc for Tzadik, a great duo with John Lindberg, and a brand new duo with Dom Minasi. How has your work as an instrumentalist developed in the past few years, since your work in the old days with Don Cherry and the vast array of artists who were involved in CMS?*

I've had a number of things, those you mentioned, and many projects with Ingrid Sertso. We did a record for the German label Konnex. In 2008, there was a Creative Music Studio Celebration at Symphony Space. Anthony Braxton, Ingrid Sertso, and I did a trio, and John Zorn played duo with Sylvie Courvoisier. John heard the set with Anthony and Ingrid, and suggested the solo piano recording idea based on what he heard that night. I hadn't planned on something like that, but it brought out some great things! Zorn has also offered to do a 3-4 CD compilation of unreleased stuff. There will be a lot from the CMS days, and also stuff from before that even, and also stuff from recent sessions at my home studio.

*Jl: One thing I wanted to ask about was the diversity of some of your work. You've recorded with Don Cherry, New York No Wave artists The Swans, singer Natalie Merchant, bassist/producer Bill Laswell, composer Fredrick Rzewski ... do you actively seek this diversity, or is it more about the diversity of the field of people who have been influenced by your work?*

I think it has mostly to do with the principles developed at CMS. It's always about what's common in different music. So that one's own sound can come out in any style. Musically speaking, personal stuff is different from stylistic stuff. Doing string arrangements for a session produced by Bill Laswell, or for Jeff Buckley, it's still my sound. A player's signature goes with them to any style they play. These days, a school has a classical department, a jazz department, et cetera. So at that point in students' development, things are already taught as being separate. There should be a ground level where you simply learn MUSIC. But that is a very fundamentally different perspective.

*Jl: Do you feel that some of the activities taken on with organizations like ISIM are contributing to a shift in that perspective?*

Absolutely. At the recent conference, working with Michigan's Creative Arts Orchestra was great. The Students picked up on the principles very well. With them being still students, they did absolutely excellent work. So the preparation at University of Michigan is very high. They are open, they are definitely teaching about finding a fully developed sound. I was happy to meet Douglas Ewart, who had come by CMS a long time ago. His work with children is impressive; it takes a lot of patience to think in that way.

So what we can really do about how things happen at academic institutions remains to be seen. ISIM is a great chance for people to connect who otherwise wouldn't meet. We will need this kind of cross-pollination, as it will start by sharing ideas with individuals and they can take that and affect change wherever they are.

*Jl: Any final advice for people who are on the path searching for their singular sound?*

When you play, the process must be spontaneous. Thinking is too late! You're either too early or too late when you think. So lean to rely on the Music Mind. The spontaneous mind is the Natural mind. We all have this ... it's how we instinctively avoid accidents and so forth. So learn to rely on the intuitive mind. I always tell the players in my orchestra, 'Don't play something you want to play because you've already been thinking about it'. Everyone who is a musician, it's because you experienced that intuitive musical mind, and said 'that's what I want to do with my life'. So let your thoughts go.



*Karl Berger conducts the Improvisers Orchestra at the Stone in New York City.*

## ISIM MEMBER PROFILE: THERESA WONG



*Photo by David Gerhardt "From a performance of 'Burrow' by Carole Kim*

**Theresa Wong** is a cellist, vocalist, composer and improviser actively exploring the intersection where music and performance meet with the creative spirit of experimentation and design. Raised in upstate New York and the San Francisco Bay Area, she studied classical piano and cello from an early age but took a hiatus to pursue an interest in design, which led her from Stanford University's product design program to the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and to a fellowship at Fabbrica, a creative laboratory in northern Italy. While living in the transportive surroundings of Venice, she realized a vision to create performances by uniting a lifelong love for music with an inquisitive and experimental process. Venice as a city was a mirror to conjure the impossible, absurd and ephemeral in art and to seek its transformative potential.

Since returning to music, Wong has completed an MFA at Mills College and collaborates with many singular artists, including Fred Frith, Ellen Fullman, Luciano Chessa, Annie Lewandowski, Søren Kjærgaard, Carla Kihlstedt, ROVA Saxophone Quartet and dance pioneer Anna Halprin. Her recent projects include a debut release on Tzadik, *The Unlearning*, a collection of songs for cello, violin and two voices inspired by Francisco Goya's *Disasters of War* etchings and *O Sleep*, an improvised opera which explores the conundrum of sleep and dream life.

Wong has presented her music internationally at such venues as Fondation Cartier in Paris, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, Fabbrica Europa in Florence Italy, Unlimited 21 Festival in Wels, Austria and at The Stone in New York City and has been awarded artist residencies at the Headlands Center for the Arts, Yaddo, Montalvo and Civitella Ranieri. She is the recipient of grants from the Center for Cultural Innovation, American Composers Forum Subito Program and Meet The Composer. Wong currently lives in Berkeley, California.

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## ISIM MEMBER NEWS: FALL 2012

**Lynn Book** performed *The Phaedra Escapes* (excerpted at ISIM conference in February) with Shawn Decker in Vienna at Amann Studios (recording forthcoming) and also in an underground tunnel beneath a Soviet era bus station in Topalcany, Slovakia in July. Currently she is developing *Unreading For Future Bodies*, a 3 suite video book for text/voice/sound/image and will be a Guest Artist in Residence at Sarah Lawrence College Fall, 2012 to develop the second suite, *Derangements*. Also, in October, Book will perform a voice and sax duet improvisation with Herman Rapaport, Derrida specialist and saxophonist, in conjunction with CageFest, organized by Louie Goldstein at Wake Forest University as part of the larger 100 year celebration of the birth of John Cage. On the academic side, she will publish a book of selected essays in spring, 2013 on creativity and entrepreneurship with Edward K. Elgar Press.

**Thomas Buckner's** many years of performances and recording continue with engagements through 2014, which include The Berlin March Festival, the University of Ireland, Dublin, the Macau Festival in China, and the University of Adelaide, in Australia, and the San Francisco War Memorial and Art Center. New works will include Robert Ashley's *World War III Just The Highlights*, Matthias Kaul's *Talking About Air*, and Larry Polansky's *Three Pieces for Tom and Joe*. Recent and future recording releases include *The Particle Ensemble*, *Heidelberg Concerts of Bun-Ching Lam*, (Mutable Music) and Annea Lockwood's *In Our Name*. (New World Records). Buckner has recently given class/workshops at the Art Institute of Chicago, San Francisco State University, and the Krakow National Conservatory.

**Ron Coulter** recently released his second CD, *The Next Step*, with the duo duende entendre on the Kreating Sound label. Coulter continues to curate the Southern Illinois Improvisation Series (SiiS), which will feature a residency with guest Chris Corsano in Spring 2013.

**Bob Gluck's** book *You'll Know When You Get There: Herbie Hancock and the Mwandishi Band* was published in August by University of Chicago Press. His recording of duets for two pianos and electronics, with Aruan Ortiz, "Textures and Pulsations" will be released on Ictus Records in November.

**Dirk Freymuth** will be teaching a new three-term course in Improvisation at Western Oregon University. The course will explore a wide range of Western and non-Western improvisatory traditions, historical performance practices, and various "psychological" topics such as left brain/right brain duality, personal expression, performance anxiety, etc. The first term of this course is required for all music majors and thus provides an ideal opportunity to introduce students foreign to improv to its importance. As a new comer to ISIM, Dirk hopes to connect with other educators also teaching improvisation.

**Jane Galbraith** has recently completed a Doctor of Creative Arts at the University of Technology, Sydney. Her thesis is based on the Australian free improvising group The Necks. The group is currently performing the theatre piece Food Court as part of the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival 20-22 September.

In 2012 **James Ilgenfritz** released two new CDs: *Compositions (Braxton) 2011*, a 77-minute solo contrabass recording of the music of Anthony Braxton, and the debut of MiND GAMeS, an highly unorthodox jazz quartet with Denman Maroney, Andrew Drury, and Angelika Niescier. Earlier in 2012, as part of Hunter College's exhibit *Notations: The Cage Effect Today*, he gave a second performance of his opera *The Ticket That Exploded*, based on the 1962 novel of the same name by William S. Burroughs, which premiered in 2011 as part of his residency at Issue Project Room. He is currently writing music for a three-day run of Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* at the Yale Cabaret in New Haven, CT.

**Gianni Mimmo** recently released *Live at Bauchhund*, a soprano sax duo with Harri Sjöström that has toured throughout Europe with concerts in Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, UK and Finland. The duo is again in Italy for four concerts at the end of September 2012 and next March 2013 booked for concert in Amsterdam, Holland and Geneva and Thun, Switzerland. Mimmo is proud to be soprano saxophone soloist in the Electro-Acoustic Orchestra EAO in the extremely well reviewed album *Llikeidos*. Mimmo will be performing in the US, in San Francisco, Oakland, Santa Cruz University. An upcoming release, *Wild Chamber Trio* on NotTwo records, features a collabora-

tion with pianist Elisabeth Harnik and cellist Clementine Gasser. Also recently released on Amirani Records is a duo with cellist Daniel Levin, *Turbulent Flow*, recorded during the Italian tour in November 2011. The duo performed at the Vision Festival's Evolving Music series last May 2012 and in three other concerts in New York.

World Premiere **Claudio Parodi** *Vitesse 0'30"* (SACEM) and video *cerva biche doe* [music by Claudio Parodi (SACEM)] September the 15th Sguardi Sonori 2012 MOLE VANVITELLIANA ANCONA Italy [www.faticart.org](http://www.faticart.org). Claudio Parodi *Le lendemain n'existe pas 11'09"* (SACEM) is taking part to Electronic Music Contest [www.musicworks.com](http://www.musicworks.com) and to Visiones Sonoras 2012 [www.visionessonoras.org](http://www.visionessonoras.org). Claudio Parodi *Vitesse 0'30"* (SACEM) is taking part to 60x60 2012. Video *cerva biche doe* [music by Claudio Parodi (SACEM)] is taking part to Stuttgarter Filmwinter2013 [www.filmwinter.de](http://www.filmwinter.de). Video *Pasta di Fuoco* [music by Claudio Parodi (SACEM)] is taking part to Videonale.14

Double bassist **Billy Satterwhite** has relocated from Ann Arbor, MI to Austin, TX after finishing his Masters of Music in Improvisation at the University of Michigan. Since his arrival back to central Texas, Billy has become the bass player with the highly sought Austin-based jazz band, The Kris Kimura Quartet. The KKQ performs hundreds of popular and lesser-known jazz standards from the Great American Songbook. In addition to performing and teaching private bass lessons, Billy was recently hired on as an administrative assistant with ISIM.

**Paul Scea** & Eric Haltmeier released *Space Genetics Vol. 3* in April ([SpaceGeneticsMusic.com](http://SpaceGeneticsMusic.com)).

**Mike Szekely** recently appeared as percussionist with the Anthony Braxton Quartet for a special concert commemorating the one-year anniversary of the Brooklyn-based creative music venue Roulette. In April 2012, New Braxton House records released the "rediscovered" tapes of Anthony Braxton's project dedicated to the music of Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz, Warne Marsh, and others, *Quintet (Tristano) 1997*, with Mike on percussion. Meanwhile, he continues to be active in the Philadelphia creative music scene as a member of ongoing projects, including the Dan Blacksberg Trio (which will be returning to the studio in November 2012 to make its second recording), *Transitional Objects*, and *Sod House: The Music of Paul Motian*. Mike also continues to teach and write in interdisciplinary humanities, especially aesthetics and the philosophy of music. A recent essay concerning jazz education, "Musical Education: From Identity to Becoming," appeared in the Oxford Handbook for Philosophy in Music Education.

**Tom Zlabinger** continues to teach full-time at York College / CUNY, directing two large jazz ensembles, the York College Big Band and the York College Blue Notes. He also teaches ethnomusicology and jazz history. Most recently, he founded the York College Creative Ensemble, which performs freely improvised music in addition to interpreting the music of Albert Ayler, John Coltrane, and others. This summer the ensemble performed at the Vision Festival in Brooklyn and has been invited to perform at the Jazz Education Network conference in Atlanta, GA in January 2013. He is currently finishing his PhD in ethnomusicology at the Graduate Center / CUNY and his dissertation is entitled "FREE FROM JAZZ: Jazz and Improvised Music in Vienna, Austria since Ossiach (1971-2011)." He also is working on a bibliography, filmography and other compiled resources on improvised music currently entitled *The Improvised Music Compendium*, which he presented at the most recent ISIM Conference and the Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium.



# David S. Ware

November 7, 1949 – October 18, 2012

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# Borah Bergman

December 13, 1933 – October 18, 2012

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## ISIM Curatorship at WFMU's Free Music Archive



### **ISIM recently partnered with WFMU's Free Music Archive to present recordings of music by ISIM members.**

The Free Music Archive is an interactive library of high-quality, legal audio downloads. Directed by WFMU, the most renowned freeform radio station in America, The Free Music Archive is a continuation of the important role radio has always offered the public as a source of free access to new music. The FMA offers a new structure for the legal presentation of new music, designed for the age of the internet.

With a schedule roughly coinciding with the release of each upcoming newsletter, ISIM will present a new series of legally shareable tracks from ISIM members. Our first post is available now, and features a variety of live recordings from ISIM members, from Kevin Norton's band at the 2012 ISIM Conference at William Patterson University to Jon Rose's field recording bowing the wire fences of the Australian outback:

**Susan Alcorn:** "Susan Alcorn/Steve Swell/Tom Hamilton Trio" 40:30

**Dave Ballou:** "Solo Metro Gallery 9.10.12" 14:38

**Oliver Lake with the Creative Arts Orchestra** Live at ISIM's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference 25:55

**Kevin Norton** with Angelica Sanchez, Esther Noh, & J.D. Parran: "ISIM Feb 18, 2012" 6:48

**Pauline Oliveros / James Ilgenfritz:** "Improvisation 1" 6:02

**Jon Rose:** "Fowlers Gap Fence" 8:21

**Roman Stolyar & Ed Sarath:** "Counterpoints" 5:29

**Theresa Wong:** "Night Watching" 5:33

We will be immediately accepting submissions for the first batch of 2013 tracks. Please send high-quality mp3 tracks to [james@isimprov.org](mailto:james@isimprov.org), and be sure to include the following information exactly as you would like it presented on the FMA:

Artist Name:

Track Name:

Album (if this track comes from a commercially available recording):

Composer Name:

# The Music School of the Future: An Integral Vision

## Graduate seminar

Instructor: Ed Sarath, Professor of Music

Registration: Jazz Special Topics, Jazz 554, 2 credits, permission of instructor

Time and place: Mondays, 12:30-2:30 pm. Room 201 Stearns.

**What might the music school of the future look like? How might it resemble and/or differ from the current model? What criteria might be important to this kind of visioning process, and what insights into conventional practice might it yield?**

This class responds to these questions through the lens of an emergent worldview called “Integral Theory.” Integral Theory (IT) maps the interior and exterior dimensions of human creative and spiritual potential, delineates a diverse range of epistemologies that promote inner-outer integration, and identifies the evolutionary trajectories by which this integration occurs over time. In the words of philosopher Ken Wilber, largely regarded as among the primary contemporary exponents of integral thought, Integral Theory draws from the “wisdom of all the world’s cultures—from the knowledge of the ancient shamans to cutting-edge developments in neuroscience—to offer entirely new approaches to the challenges of our times.” Although application of IT to music is a relatively recent development, the framework spawns profound ramifications for musical study. Among the most prominent include:

The prevailing specialization in interpretive performance of European repertory and its offshoots will open up to a broader profile that encompasses improvisation, composition and performance and a wider stylistic range; this is key to bridging the ever-increasing gulf between musical academe and the diverse horizons of today’s musical world. What George Lewis has termed an “Afrological” stream will share prominence with “Eurological” and other global musical lineages. Meditation and related contemplative/consciousness practices and studies, central to integral approaches in all fields, will be essential to music curricula. New and expanded approaches to most every area of musical study—from private lessons, ensembles, core musicianship studies and teacher training, to faculty profiles, research, hiring and promotional criteria, arts advocacy, and organizational structure, etc.—will characterize the integral school of music. Although there is no denying the radical nature of this kind of reform, the integral framework offers important insights into the change process and ways the emergent model does not jettison but in fact subsumes key aspects of the conventional approach. Indeed, the vitality, if not sustainability, of the European tradition may be dependent upon its integration within the broader fabric delineated by the integral paradigm in schools of music.

**Course activities will include discussions, readings, and written assignments. For more information or to request a place in the class contact Professor Ed Sarath [sarahara@umich.edu](mailto:sarahara@umich.edu)**

## ISIM now seeking scholarly writing on Improvisation

As ISIM’s role in the creative music community expands, we are increasingly seeking to help create a forum for our members who seek to share their work with a wider audience.

**Beginning in 2013, the ISIM Newsletter will be start to feature scholarly writing on improvisation. From Improvisation pedagogy to theoretical analysis and beyond, we will be seeking to present our members’ critical and scholarly work in a formal context.**

We will be accepting submissions for the **Winter 2013** newsletter through **December 15**. Please include an abstract with your paper.

**Submissions should be sent digitally to: [james@isimprov.org](mailto:james@isimprov.org)**

## ISIM Member CD reviews

### TranceFormation & Steve Nachmanovitch

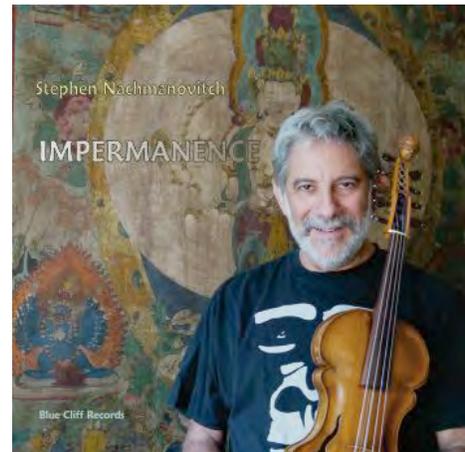


The Trio of vocalist **Andrea Wolper**, pianist **Connie Crothers**, and bassist **Ken Filiano** has been active for many years now, since the group's debut performance at the ISIM's inaugural concert at the University of Michigan. The album is recorded at The Stone and Korzo, two well-known venues in Manhattan and Brooklyn, respectively. The trio's unique instrumentation of voice/bass/piano lends itself to a uniquely lyrical and often surprising take on total improvisation. Freedom is paramount in this context, and this type of robust interactivity creates a true ensemble dynamic. This is not a group with a leader and backing band, but a true three-way partnership, where vocalist, bassist, or pianist might become the focal point at any minute, or serve as a solid contributor to a fluid whole.

Crothers, a former protégé of Lennie Tristano, is both a virtuosic player and a sensitive musical partner. On "The Fifth Stone", a duo with Andrea Wolper, the pair mix harmony and gesture, with Andrea's unusual clucks and chirps forming a perfect symbiosis with Crothers' phrasing. "Whale Song" revels in a mysterious atmosphere, whereas the Wolper/Filiano duo piece "Lines and Circles, Squared" introduces a more jazz inflection. "Love Within a Time of Turbulence" and "The Things You See In New York City" are both frenetic, in different ways – there is a warmth at the center of the former, whereas the latter, appropriately, has all the tension of a hectic day commuting and bumping into strangers throughout New York City. "Sea Island Sometimes" brings the proceedings to a tender closing, filled with whispered tones, lush harmonies, and plucked bass.

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**Steve Nachmanovitch's** solo recording *Impermanence* presents a striking relationship between improvisation and the Japanese concept of *Wabi-Sabi*, an aesthetic based on imperfection and impermanence that is as ubiquitous as the West's emphasis on perfection. Focusing on resonance and just intonation, the recording features a fascinating mix of western and eastern sonorities. This is noteworthy not just in the playing but in the choice such unusual instruments as the tenor violin and the *viola d'amore*, a period instrument that literally represents the crossroads of East and West aesthetics and craftsmanship. The sympathetic ringing of the extra strings on these instruments brings an otherworldly sound, and in the context of a record that also includes the drone of a *tanpura*, electronic processing or even overdubs on some tracks, there is a profound sense of sustain and resonance.



The overdubs on "Duende" "Desert Fathers" and quite notably the very beautiful "Möbius" call into question the concept of an improvisation—as noted in the liner notes, improvisation may be best measured on a spectrum, and the element of preconfiguration that goes on when improvising in the studio makes a clear definition of improvisation somewhat elusive, especially if you make an effort to take advantage of some of the unique opportunities that a recording studio has to offer, as Nachmanovitch does on these recordings. While there are some very visceral moments on the recording, notably "Skittering" and "Taking the Warlord To Tea", there is a pervading mindfulness of the fleeting passage of time. The opening track, "Midnight", and the title track both float over the resonant sound of the tambura and electronics, respectively, while the ethereal bow work on "Spooky Action" alternates between long, twisting phrases and short, skipping phrases that call to mind the Japanese 'flung ink' brushwork referred to in the liner notes.