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Message from the President



As we look forward to our upcoming Cross-cultural Improvisation Workshop at York College and Roulette, I am more convinced than ever about the importance of this work. Few areas of life are as powerful as music in transcending cultural, ethnic, racial, ideological and other divisions. And within music, the improvisation process is unmatched in this capacity. In a newly released book, I emphasize that “the central pulse of the musical world lies not in the discrete compartments that pervade much

academic and commercial practice but in the common reservoir from which all lineages extend and into which they flow.” Improvisation is the primary vehicle for navigating this confluence. I also talk about how “improvisatory ecologies”—the intimate connections between performers, listeners, and environment— can inform efforts toward sustainable natural and sociological ecologies. And how an “improvisatory hermeneutics” can enliven our capacity to see deeply into a given situation and fathom the underlying patterns and premises that may need to be altered if genuine change is to come about. In my concluding chapter, titled “Planet Earth Takes a Solo,” I argue that the challenges of our times require that the kind of creative decision-making and problem solving that occurs in a jazz trio or quartet need to guide the seven-plus billion member improvising ensemble called Humanity.

I see positive signs of a growing awareness of improvisatory creativity in this expanded light and hope ISIM can shine like a beacon in helping this awareness further expand. Our Cross-cultural Improvisation Workshop series, which began in Ann Arbor in 2011 and which will continue both this year in New York and at a 2014 event yet to be announced, is a step in this direction. I hope to see many of you at these and future ISIM activities.

Ed Sarath

MIKE HEFFLEY: ASIAMERICAN DREAM MUSIC 3: A PROGRESS REPORT

Dr. Michael Heffley is an independent scholar whose work includes *The Music of Anthony Braxton* (Greenwood Press, 1996) and *Northern Sun, Southern Moon: Europe's Reinvention of Jazz* (Yale University Press, 2005). He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2006 to produce his third book, and has a chapter in *Euro-jazzland* (Northeastern University Press/University of New England Press, 2012), *New Horizons in Jazz Research* (Japanese language, Artes Publishing, 2010), and *Musical Prodigies: Interpretations from psychology, music education, musicology and ethnomusicology* (Oxford University Press, in press). He wrote the liner notes booklet for Mosaic Records' reissue of Anthony Braxton's Arista recordings circa 1975-82. A longer version of the booklet was published by John Szwed's Jazz Studies Online web journal for the Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia University in January '09. See <http://jazzstudiesonline.org>. He also published a paper on Braxton's opera for George Lewis's guest edition of *Journal of the Society for American Music* (2/2 May 2008) that was re-published by John Szwed's Jazz Studies Online web journal for the Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia University in January '09. See <http://jazzstudiesonline.org>

See amusicosm.com and <http://wesleyan.academia.edu/MichaelHeffley> for more than you'll ever want to know about him. His recorded music is for sale online at www.heffleyrecords.com.

ABSTRACT: The combined bodies of work by Asian-born musicians Jin Hi Kim, Sainkho Namchylak, Wu Man, Min Xiao-Fen, and Mei Han comprise a catalyzing motherlode of musical information to feed deep and wide meditations on global issues of gender, confluences of history/tradition/(post)modernity – shamanism, Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism speaking with Western philosophical/religious counterparts, and with science – the female voice and stringed instruments, and a gorgeous patchwork quilt of cross-cultural connections. They comprise a dizzying array and range of collaborations with illustrious non-Asian and Asian-American composers, performers, and improvisers in pop, folk, art music and experimental music cultures. Those (mostly) American and European collaborators – examined here, Randy Raine-Reusch, Miya Masaoka, Pauline Oliveros, Tatsu Aoki, Jason Kao Hwang, and Fred Ho – provide the parallel Western lens that give the stereoscoped third dimension to this meditation on East meeting West, swallowing up and digesting its dichotomy as two complementary servings on the single plate of a balanced 21st Century global meal.

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Asiamerican Dreamusic 3: A Progress Report

In a piece I wrote for the Spring 2011 (7/1) issue of the ISIM newsletter, I briefly alluded to a book project then in progress on Asian and Asian-American voices in improvised music. That project has since progressed, but is still *in progress*. By way of a progress report – something I keenly feel I owe both my Guggenheim funders and, even more, the musicians who gave me such generous interview – here I will share some of its highlights and themes, with links to parts of the research and writing posted on my website amusicosm.com.

First, I invite those most interested to the website that contains research and writing that, while itself only the tip of an iceberg of same, is yet far more detailed and substantive than anything I can put in a short paper. The pages titled [CD Reviews](#) and [Interviews](#) feature extensive interviews with most of the above (as well as with Vijay Iyer, and Rudresh Mahanthappa) and CD reviews (most originally published in *signal to noise* magazine) of recordings by about half of those, and by others including Tatsu Aoki and others on the Asian Improv Records label, Sang Won Park, the Pan-Asian Ensemble, Kaori Osawa, and Park Je Chun. [Conference Presentations](#) features some comparative looks at work by Oliveros and lone, and Wu Man, Mei Han, and Min Xiao-Fen. I also worked closely with Jin on pre-production editing (for idiomatic English) of her manuscript of her own memoir about her life and work, which was an education in Korean traditional music and culture in itself.

Second, some words about what the book will not be. I first conceived it as a working survey, something covering the terrain as comprehensively as I could, with a chapter each for Mongolia, China, Japan, India,

and Korea. Those countries were where most of the artists I was most aware of and interested in come from, and where most of their Asian-American counterparts trace back to. I also thought to frame it as a kind of Pacific Rim bookend to Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic conceit. I felt that framework would help me avoid a Self/Other kind of scholarship for the Asian subjects, and a mainstream/subaltern kind for the Asian Americans. It held more promise of including all parties ethnically Asian and not, including me (as both author-observer and participant-musician who had worked and/or played with some of my subjects or their collaborators) and the many significant non-Asian collaborators in the book's story, in a virtual garden of egalitarian trans-Pacific exchange.

As I set about the research and writing for that, I quickly realized it wasn't the book I wanted to write. I truly hope it gets done by the right person – say, a tenured senior scholar with a research team of grad students – because there is so much more activity coming out of Asia and the Pacific Rim: more people, more cultural angles to explore, more diversity, than I suspect most fans and scholars realize, and that I felt I could do justice to alone. It would be an exhilarating and pleasant surprise for the artists themselves to read too, painting a kind of "Asian abroad" and "Asian-diasporic" picture that could gather them together from the hard-won individuations of their respective activities in relative mutual isolation, to a new sense of home and identity in coalition.

However, my own m.o. as music scholar has always been more dialectically micro/macro-sopic than laterally encyclopedic. That is, I like to pick a narrow vein with a rich yield – an artist, or group, or a handful of same chosen for their different angles of interest within clear if loose pan-musical connections – to closely and exhaustively drill down on for the trans-musical implications of their work. I've also tended to pick subjects I had personal and/or professional connections with, something more than the usual more distant removes between most academic authors of such studies and their subjects. When I worked as a more public and interactive musician (as opposed to private/solo, more on which ahead), I would often write about musicians with whom I had worked or played, or with whose bandmates or collaborators I had worked or played. I felt this gave me an insider's edge of insight and savvy about the music, about what questions to ask and what themes to pursue, and that it relaxed then stimulated my interviewees best.

Finally, I'm most drawn to mature artists who have or are well on their way to a master-level of well-rounded, wide-ranging work under their belts. The work is the pudding that both proves and defines their potential, in ways that are only half in their own control. It takes on a narrative arc of its own they can't have foreseen, which half-belongs to the world and its own larger life; that world includes writers like me, who interpret and explain it in our own voices and interests. The happiest results of that fact of life come when all parties – writer, musician, reader – feel well informed, gratified, and edified rather than compromised, violated, distorted or shorted.

That scholarly m.o. has served this project as well as my previous ones, guiding and narrowing my selection of subjects in the usual way – but it quickly morphed into something different and more, through some new responses I had to their music and stories. I still like the Asian Pacific Rim framework, and look forward to theorizing around it; the focus on seasoned rather than budding artists is holding fast too. What is different about this project is my position as a musician in the scene I'm writing about, thus my relationship to my subjects; and my professional position and goal as a writer. I'll explain how and why those are different and relevant after I summarize and characterize the material and my treatment of it to date.

This book moves stepwise through eleven musicians from different Asian countries and Asian-American musicians whom I've worked and/or played with, or who have worked and/or played with musicians I have, and/or whose work I have gotten to know very well as fan/journalist/scholar. They are: Asian-born musicians Jin Hi Kim (Korea); Sainkho Namchylak (Mongolia); Wu Man, Min Xiao-Fen, and Mei Han (China); Miya Masaoka (Japanese American); Tatsu Aoki (Japanese expat in America); Jason Kao Hwang and Fred Ho (Chinese American); and Randy Raine-Reusch and Pauline Oliveros (European American).

I include the ethnic identity markers because they are parts of the picture I'm painting, but some of them figure more prominently than others. Specifically, the Chinese stream looms largest, because

- a) it's the one most cut off from Western discourse until most recently, thus the one I want most to learn and write most about;

- b) its culture/history has been the source of or influence on much of Korean and Japanese traditions, and has drawn from past Mongolian influences (from stringed instruments, not the same influence I find most significant today, in Sainkho's voice) in extensive/expansive ways;
- c) its presence on the world stage is coming on in a big way for the foreseeable future; and
- d) its American-diasporic culture is one most familiar and significant to me personally, born and raised as I was in the San Francisco Bay Area, in several visceral ways from childhood to the present (two influential teachers, several friends/lovers, musical partners/subjects) that will make for the most familiar entry-point connections to the least-so Chinese stream.

Exploring such trans-musical dimensions as a country's/people's history/tradition/culture through a sliver of its music is, of course, an art that can be performed poorly or well. I see my trek through it as an ethnomusical back door, if you will – an entry point into an Asian study as an “improvisationist” rather than as the more academically conventional “Asianist” (an “improvisAsianist”?). I also conceive it as an expansion of the power-over-v.-power-of trope around race in the New World (in my first book) and class in the (Western) Old World (second book) to, as it happens, gender in the whole world. Retracing the steps of my encounters with “Asian and Pacific influences on improvisation” (to quote Jin Hi Kim's words to me describing the theme of this issue of the newsletter) will map the route that led me to that expansion.

[Jin](#) is the first on my list to cross my radar screen, in the mid-1990s, and the first among the other Asian women to establish the richly discursive kind of presences, both musical and music-scholarly, with which they've all come to grace the West. I'll take my cue from her choice of words quoted above to summarize the specific influences on *me* she and the other Asian musicians of my focus had.

Jin and I first met in the mid-1990s, in the natural course of moving in the same circles then. She was already a well-established and accomplished voice on the new-and-improvised music scene at that point, having been in the US working as both musician and music journalist for well over a decade. We'd both done projects with Oliver Lake; her partner oboist Joseph Celli and I worked together in an Anthony Braxton project; she did some workshops/performances at Wesleyan when I was there.

Seeing the latter piqued my interest in interviewing her as a scholar for three main reasons: she had a Korean-based aesthetic/notation system for her work as both composer and improviser, her Living Tones (her translation of *shigimse*) concept of musical-universe-in-a-grain-of-sound, drawn from Buddhism and shamanism; her instrument (*komungo*) was a plucked string instrument; and she made some of her music in tempi that were so slow I could at first hear no regular periodicity, until she counted it out loud for me.

The last two of those were of sheerly musical-mechanical interest – an instrument and a concept of musical time from a culture unfamiliar to me not just as a random American, but as one with a specialist's knowledge of much Western, American, and African-American music history and contemporary aesthetics. The fact that she was meeting me more than halfway with her Asian information *there*, in that musical discourse where I was, rather than as a Korean guest sharing her goods with a Western host, gave me an immediate access to an immediate expansion of my Western home turf.

The first (and primary) influence of the Living Tones system that contextualized her instrument and concept of time worked as an articulation of the spirit and meaning behind their strictly musical information – and again, expanded my own Western ground on its own terms. It did so not by entering that ground on the West's most conservative, traditional/conventional terms, but by joining that part of it that was itself leaving those terms behind, the “new-and-improvised” part. Her Living Tones universe was not purely Korean-traditional, it was her idiosyncratic personal concept/construction, like Braxton's Tri-Centric system, or Butch Morris' conduction – something she'd improvised/composed from the tradition she'd inherited, to serve her creative needs.

Let me step back to construct an abstraction of those three gifts that will serve my accounts of the other Asian influences on me. (Formerly East) German percussionist Günter Sommer introduced me to a similarly (to “living tones”) idiosyncratic rubric of his own devising that he translated to me as “semantical information.” What he meant by it was not strictly logocentric, as is its usual sense; for him it denoted trans-musical information and meaning that was transmitted solely by music, not by language, about its cultural and other contexts.

He explained this to me with the example of how he felt he connected with his Asian counterparts, percussionists who played Asian instruments in their Asian ways. He was confined (like a prisoner, he said) to his East German state, so his sole direct access to Asian culture was what he heard on recordings; when he received their ritualistic sounds of gongs and drums, he felt the phenomenon of the sound itself gave him direct access to the inner affects and outer effects described in words about Buddhism, shamanism, shintoism, etc. He felt he could then generate and transmit those same states and results in his own playing, with practice and intent. (This is also the same prisoner's trick he played to get himself ensouled with the New World modernism of early and mainstream American jazz drumming, by the way, and why fellow East German bandmate pianist Ulrich Gumpert felt and demonstrated such affinity for the blues and Charles Mingus in his own work.)

One of Jin's early CDs with Joseph Celli and guests (*No World (Trio) Improvisations* 1992, O.O. Discs Inc.) captures the concept well in its liner notes: "In improvisation as in composition the individuality of the musician is essential to creating a personal approach *reflective of person, place, time, culture and environment*" (my emphasis).

I tweaked Günter's phrase to make it "*semusical* information" – a more precise neologism, self-evidently – and came up with my own template with both his version and mine to apply to this improvised world music ecumene Jin helped to launch, and to which others have increasingly flocked since her:

semantical information	themes/theses/theories	overarching/mutable/speculation
	history/culture/tradition/ social/political/personal	
semusical information	instruments/aesthetics/gestures	foundational/fixed/reportage
	performance contexts	

This signals all the facts of the music on the bottom and the interpretations and explanations of them on top. What that signifies for me as author is that I'm responsible to getting the facts as right and as thoroughly as I can, in a way that is true to the artist's experience, knowledge, and understanding of them – but after that, I'm also responsible to my own role and my readers to dig into the back story of the historical, cultural/traditional, and social/political/personal contexts of those facts, and to draw from those my own themes, theses, and theories about what those facts mean to me and potentially to others. What the schema signifies for the artist is the fundamental and definitive primacy of his or her own work, and the more arbitrary, derivative, ultimately inadequate nature of the semantical information – words – to match that work's musical details and totality (its semusical info).

I define the two layers as fixed and speculative to capture a couple of my own basic truths: first, the semantical information is for me-as-author the more mutable/speculative too, in the sense that I will inevitably construct my back story from the general data subjectively, selectively, ultimately arbitrarily (others could draw on different parts of the back story from the same fixed facts); secondly, I will further arbitrarily draw from that back story my own pet narratives. That said, once I do make those choices, in that responsibility to those facts, and commit myself to both facts and choices through to my finished product, my product – my words, in a fixed text – themselves become fixed and foundational, in the same way the music itself works its way through from mutable potential to fixed recorded object.

Herman Melville wanted to describe and explain the facts and the spirit of whaling in the 19th-Century Pacific Rim; in doing so, his *Moby Dick* became his own literary music that was a match-and-more in relationship to his subject, just as his subject was a match-and-more in relationship to his book – the difference between a Venn diagram and a circle within a circle, say.

That brings me to the difference between this book and my earlier ones, and between what I'd planned and what it's becoming. But first, more facts.

The late German bassist Peter Kowald introduced me to and spoke at length about the significance of Tuvan vocalist [Sainkho Namchylak's](#) influence on the global improvised music scene. He spoke of her as his "teacher" (his word) in a way that called to mind the central role of women from her place and culture in the ancient history of shamanism. He had developed from her influence a guttural kind of throat singing that he

did while bowing his bass's low strings that clearly functioned as a kind of musical meditation device to ground and center his energies at the beginning of some improvisations, especially in solo performances.

If Jin opened up the terrain of plucked stringed instruments in the music with her electric *komungo* solos and duos with other string pluckers from around the world, Sainkho did the same for the female voice as an instrument. That terrain had begun to open with singers such as Shelley Hirsch, Diamanda Galas, Maggie Nichols, Urszula Dudziak, Julie Tippet and others, but Sainkho, for my money, has emerged as first among those sisters since her international debut through Leo Records and FMP in the early '90s.

My own visceral response to her work matched that of Kowald's. As I wrote in 2005 (Heffley, p. 251), Sainkho "bears a striking resemblance to my daughter's Native American (Nez Percé) mother's side of her family." (Geneticists categorize Native Americans as "Asian," tracing them back to their Siberian ancestry; this will be a submotif of my book.) The more my ears delved into her sounds, the more they evoked the deepest, most personal and intimate nuances... as well as opening up the "semusical information" there for all to hear, about the Central Asian tradition of shamanism and its proactive, detailed integration with the natural world.

Lara Pellegrinelli rightly makes several points in her contribution to *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* (Rustin and Tucker, eds., 2008) "Separated at 'Birth': Singing and the History of Jazz": the voice-as-instrument was indeed generative to that music, was more a woman's than a man's terrain, and was shunted aside unduly by historians and scholars of the music for sexist and classist reasons. Her essay's project was to correct jazz historiography for that, and to de-marginalize/re-centralize the female voice in the way we hear and think about the music, both historically and moving forward.

Kara A. Attrep also makes a good point in her review of that book (2008, p. 3) when she writes that "there is a need for gender studies scholarship in jazz outside of North America and Europe—particularly in western and southern Africa, Central and South America, Asia, and transnational considerations of jazz...".

It's unlikely that Pellegrinelli or Attrep would have had Sainkho in mind as an example of the kind of jazz vocalist under their discussion, but I will appropriate both of their points for my thesis anyway, with the support of these words from Sainkho:

I like to listen to Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday and Sarah Vaughan. I would like to sing like them, but I sing the way I can, the way it is coming to me, the way I feel. And I know I am getting better and better with all those African and Latin-rooted rhythms. It is like my throat singing is natural stone and the rhythm of jazz is sculpturing this ancient sound. At the end every improvisation here is like craftwork (in Namchylak, 2010).

Sainkho grew up in her nomadic Tuvan folk tradition, challenged the convention of male privilege in the throat-singing style, was trained in Moscow in *bel canto* operatic style, and had wide exposure to jazz as well. Her early recorded work on Leo and FMP is added to on other international labels since; she has done solo work and collaborated with American, Russian, and European improvisers and sound artists.

I want to argue that Sainkho is doing for the field of international improvised music with the female voice what, for example, Louis Armstrong did for early American jazz with the trumpet: establishing that instrument as an iconic generative channel of such music, in from whatever margins Western art music, jazz and other male-dominated traditions she herself has trained in and engaged have consigned it to. I want to ground that preeminence of hers in the ancient one of women in her Central Asian culture's mix of shamanism and Buddhism.

I see her as that "first among the sisters" who are staking out an area only they can (the female voice), who are thereby also staking out the wider area of the *human* voice that men too could be taking on, but don't seem to be doing as much as the women, and as much as they are taking on all the "artifactual" instruments (and making new ones of their own).

The primal primacy of woman's voice thus established, I move back to strings for most of the rest of the study. Not only do my three Chinese-born subjects (I think of them alternately as the Han triad/troika/trifecta)

play them, more than half of their American counterparts do as well. (I'll explain my interest in that particular Asian influence on improvisation at the end.)

The Chinese *guzhengs* [Mei Han](#) plays descend from the zither family of instruments most closely associated with the Confucian educated elites known as the literati. The *qin*, featuring variations with from one to seven strings, was most often used for private and solitary playing, as a kind of meditation tool – something like the Pythagorean monochord's Eastern cousin that unfolded down a more central-holistic, less esoteric-scientific role than Greece's from their respective Axial Ages.

Mei plays *guzhengs* that have 16, 21, 23, and 26 strings, and in various tunings. Like her fellow Han *pipa* colleagues, Mei is retraining the voice of her ancient instrument in contemporary improvisational contexts of (in her case) her adopted Vancouver, BC home on the Pacific Rim, in collaborations with husband Randy Raine-Reusch, pianist Paul Plimley and others from the city's NOW Orchestra community, and in her own projects and groups drawing directly on Chinese traditional material and rearranging it to serve similarly contemporary (also improvisation-inclusive) presentations. She's also presenting the music of one of the 55 non-Han ethnic minorities to the wider world, the Dong people, in her role as professional ethnomusicologist.

[Wu Man](#) is probably the most widely known of my subjects by mainstream audiences, and the least engaged with intensive improvisation and the improvised-music discourse that would be ISIM's natural membership. That said, her work is fascinating for its semusical info about the *pipa* in the context of performances of works by contemporary composers, and of projects of her own conceptions as a composer with the Kronos Quartet. Most interesting to improvisers, perhaps, have been her turns toward the non-Han ethnic minorities, especially Uyghur, Tajik, and Hui collaborators nearest the Central Asian regions from where the *pipa* first came to China, collaborations that pushed her own musical envelope (including through improvisation) while also (like Mei, in collaboration with ethnomusicologists) exposing the world to what China has to offer in the way of roots music typically played down by the Han majority in favor of the more classical/commercial side of things.

By contrast, [Min Xiao-Fen](#) is probably the best known and affined to the ISIM aesthetic, for her adventurous work with giants such as Leroy Jenkins and Derek Bailey, and working bands with New York jazz/folk/bluegrass improvisers such as bassist Mark Dresser, Dean Johnson, and Steve Salerno, and other cutting edge Asian improvisers such as cellist [Okkyung Lee](#), *sheng* player [Wu Wei](#), and *sheng* player and vocalist [Xu Fengxia](#). Using their different styles and gestures as a kind of scholarly Rosetta Stone, I am enjoying comparing and contrasting the different CDs of Chinese-traditional repertoire Min and Wu Man have put out, some featuring the same material, as a way to expand myself as an "improvisAsianist." (Of all my subjects, only they and Sainkho have put out conventional CDs of the traditional repertoire, though the others have drawn on it directly for their own statements.)

[Randy Raine-Reusch](#)'s work, to shift to the American side of the Pacific Rim, stands as something like the best equipped and prepared ambassador to meet those Asian influences more than halfway. His work has been to gather together as many traditional instruments and to learn as many traditional systems and practices from Asian cultures around that ocean as he can. He's traveled extensively throughout many Asian countries, learning their traditional ways and means, sometimes even re-introducing their Westernized youth to their own traditional music. He's also introduced those instruments into the discourse of improvisation with masters such as wife Mei Han, Barry Guy, Robert Dick, Stuart Dempster, Jon Gibson, Barry Truax, Bill Smith, and [Pauline Oliveros](#).

Oliveros too is important to the American side of my picture, for her evolution from the Maverick school of American avant-gardists of her early career to a deeper embrace of Eastern philosophies and musical practices, and her more improvisational-corporeal Deep Listening paradigm, and collaborations/associations with artists such as [Miya Masaoka](#) and other Asian, Asian-American, or non-Asian players of Asian instruments in her DL catalogue. Masaoka's koto-based work as an experimental composer and with improvisers such as Reggie Workman, Joëlle Léandre, her all-star Masaoka Orchestra members, Larry Ochs, Fred Frith and other such make her a bright star on my radar screen.

To wrap up this tip-of-the-iceberg summary of the Asian and Asian-American streams I want to tap, [Fred Ho](#) and [Jason Kao Hwang](#) are two with feet both firmly planted in the African-American pioneers of post-jazz improvisation of the 1960s, from Coleman to Coltrane to Ayler to Braxton and the AACM and its other

torchbearers, and in their own Asian roots, feeding their American shoots and fruits in their various bands and projects. Bassist [Tatsu Aoki](#) is an elder in the Asian-American scene with whom Wu Man recorded one of her early American CDs. He played a founding role with [Asian Improv Records](#), a group with close proximities and affinities with the AACM. While I had to leave India and Indian-diasporic voices out of this study – it needs a book of its own, and/or a thick chapter in the survey I decided against doing – I will draw on scholarship by Vijay Iyer, Rudresh Mahanthappa, and Michael Dessen to inform that side of things.

There, then, is an overview of the semusical information – the facts – I want to present for my own consideration and that of my readers. I hope to do it well enough to do just journalistic/scholarly service to the artists, in a way that will recognize, honor, and be of use to them and their work. My goal is to put those write-ups together on one website dedicated to that over the course of the next year or two. My table might schematicize it so:

semantical information	Era of yang giving way to era of yin	Overarching / mutable / speculation
	Mongolian/Chinese/Korean/ Japanese histories/cultures of shaman- ism/Confucianism/Daoism/ Buddhism/shintoism/nationalism/communism	
semusical information	Woman's voice, stringed instruments	foundational / fixed / reportage
	New cross-cultural and solo musical gestures improvised & composed	

However, such a site would take me only halfway through the book I want to write. Chinese traditional music is tightly interwoven with folklore and literature. At a certain point in listening to both the traditional Asian and the new Asian-tinged material, I started getting inner visions of a novel growing out of the scholarship. I roughed it out in notes, refined and expanded it as my research shaped and suggested. This happened sometime in the second year in, and those notes are now a blueprint as detailed and structured as the non-fiction body of semusical and semantical information.

Rather than a conventional academic monograph, I think of the work I've been doing as something akin to, say, Norman Mailer steeping himself in the nonfiction details of ancient Egyptian history, or of beekeeping, to become the instant expert on those fields he needed to be to produce two of his novels. I've essentially been working on two books myself, which I plan to weave together when both are done; the fictional part is the farthest along, which explains why the conventionally academic part I proposed to my grantors and interviewees went dormant and dark, as far as most of them know.

Now I'm committed to produce this book as an experimental/improvised hybrid of both streams; the artists and their work will be presented true to their real-world details, but will also be set, like a wheel within a wheel, in an alternate history kind of tale that spans deep prehistory and farthest-flung future. Its central theme will be the saga of women qua woman in history and culture. My commitment is driven by the conviction that this music and its makers deserve more and better than even the best mainstream and academic press coverage has given, or can give (and I've given much of both). A novel like what *Moby Dick* was for whaling is definitely the next step for me, whether I pull it off or not, as well as for the world and the music if I do.

This Asian influence on my improvisations as a writer-scholar feels like equal parts the characteristics of the subject and my own age and stage in life and work. The former lies in the yin spirits of shamanism and Daoism, and the yang-moderating influences of Confucianism and Buddhism, embodied contrastively in spirited, confident, risk-taking women, and in men whose yang qualities serve rather than attack them; the latter lies in the balancing-out of yin and yang that comes to both men and women in their later years, and in a turn away from the wide public world to a narrower private and inner one. The combination of that balancing and that turn seem to further direct my choice of women-qua-woman as theme by generating personal reveries and meditations of my life's experiences with same in response to the music that's attracting me.

Another aspect of it is my turn as a musician from the (yang) brass wind instrument of my youth and middle years (trombone) to the modern descendant of the plucked strings (piano) of my late (yin) period. As my

bonds with the trombone and wider world influenced my choice of subjects and musical issues to explore in my first two books, my relatively new bond with the keyboard (at a decade-plus now, and that as a hermetic soloist, working it like an old literati working his *qin* in solitude) is doing the same here. The details of those string-specific issues are too many to mention here, but they are as generative and fecund to the stories I want to tell about improvised music as were their wind counterparts before, and as distinct.

If improvisation and composition both can be defined as the existential power and responsibility to define one's own terms of expression and endearment, I have to say that the first half of my own life as musician and writer have done that almost entirely in the context of European and African America, and of Europe. Whatever music I've heard and made in that context has led me to the semantical information of those cultures' histories and ways.

The Asian influences on the world at large are and have always been at play, of course. Their recent and burgeoning influences on this particular art form and discourse are just those influences manifesting in the patch of the cosmic quilt we music maniacs make up. They are working on my work slowly, like the subject of Abraham Lincoln did on Doris Kearns Goodwin (ten years). Some books come fast, some slow; this one's definitely come far enough for me to see the life of its own, which is worth the wait, and its weight on me.

The working bibliography below will signal some discursive points on the map I've sketched out. I invite those of you with the knowledge and interest to suggest to me additions to it. (Any tips about grants or fellowships that might help me finish the project up would be welcome too.)

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ISIM Cross-Cultural Improvisation Workshops And Performances

June 29-July 1, 2013

Workshops at York College, CUNY, Queens, NY
June 29-30 10am-5PM

Performance at Roulette Brooklyn, NY
July 1 8pm-10pm

Guest artists:

Gamin (*piri/taepyeongso*), Korea

Hyun-Sik Shin (*ajeng*), Korea

Elliott Sharp (*guitar*), USA

Jane Ira Bloom (*soprano saxophone*), USA

Jin Hi Kim, Program Director



Ensemble Participants: Amanda Schoofs (Voice), Andrea Wolper (Voice), Anton Kotikov (Saxophone), Bill Johnson (Trumpet), Billy Satterwhite (Bass), Bob Gluck (Piano), Brogan Woodburn (Guitar), Christopher Bakriges (Piano), Ed Sarath (Flugelhorn), Glen Whitehead (Trumpet), Jeff Fairbanks (Trombone), Jeffrey Roberts (Guitar/electronics), Jin Hi Kim (Electric Komungo), Lynn Book (Extended Voice/Sound FX/Whistles), Maja Radovanlija (Guitar), Malcolm Lynn Baker (Sax), Matthew Endahl (Piano), Michael Titlebaum (Saxophone), Nora McCarthy (Voice), Paul Musso (Guitar), Paul Sinclair (Clarinet/bass clarinet), Phil Fried (Upright Electric Bass), Richard Robeson (Guitar), Rob Kaplan (Guitar), Roman Stolyar (Piano), Rui Li (Trumpet), Stephen Nachmanovitch (Violin), Tim Tsang (Electronics/synthesizer), and Thomas Zlabinger (Bass).

ISIM's Crosscultural Improvisation Performance series began at its 2010 Festival/Conference, held at the University of Michigan in collaboration with the U-M Center for Korean Studies and Confucius Institute. At this event, Korean and Chinese musicians presented their traditional improvisational repertoire and improvised with ISIM members. This year ISIM presents the extended Workshops and Performance with jam sessions, cultural exchange, and discussions of the unique historical differences in improvisation. The event presents an ideal opportunity to gain exposure to wide-ranging creative strategies and approaches to improvisation pedagogy, as well as to interact with top-level musicians from highly varied backgrounds. The three-day event will culminate in a final performance at Roulette, an internationally recognized NYC venue for improvised music.

Crosscultural improvisation involves communication between musicians from different traditions across the globe. Although Korean music is less known in West, it has a rich improvisatory heritage with much to contribute to this crosscultural interaction, including a particular style of tone quality, shaping of sonic fragments, rhythmic cycles, elastic time sense, and breathing within an ensemble framework. Sinawi, the traditional ensemble improvisational form, Sanjo for solo instrumentalist, and Pansori for solo vocalist have been established for over 100 years and were derived from Shamanistic music traditions. While Western composers and improvisers have long been interested in and influenced by world music, current free improvisation would gain significantly from more in-depth grounding in the profound improvisation history that reflects the global reach of today's culture. We hope that in the future, improvisation programs, as exemplified in this event, will have world musicians as an essential part of the mix and are informed by the diverse approaches and rich contributions they have made to improvisation. Through this shifting direction, we can look forward to a musical future invigorated by an expanded and inclusive vision of improvisation and world music.

In 2014, ISIM will continue the crosscultural improvisation, but within the more expanded ISIM festival/conference format that also features papers, panel discussions, and a broader array of daytime and evening performances.

Special thanks to Arts Council Korea to supporting travel expenses for Korean guest musicians, Thomas Zlabinger for hosting workshops at York College/CUNY, Jim Staley at Roulette, and ISIM board members Ed Sarath, William Johnson, Stephen Nachmanovitch, and Billy Satterwhite (staff).

A Word from the ISIM Advisory Council

An Interview with **Darryl Harper**

by James Ilgenfritz

Darryl Harper began working professionally on clarinet at the age of sixteen in his native Philadelphia. He has performed for over twenty years in venues throughout the world and has recorded several albums on the HiPNOTIC Records label. His credits include opening concerts for Max Roach, The Billy Taylor Trio, and The Wynton Marsalis Quartet; dates with Freddie Bryant, Orrin Evans, Tim Warfield, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Carla Cook, Roscoe Mitchell, Dave Holland, and Uri Caine; and a two-year stint with Regina Carter. He holds music degrees from Amherst College, Rutgers University, and New England Conservatory and currently teaches on the faculty at Virginia Commonwealth University. Harper's projects as a leader include The Onus Quintet, The Onus Trio, Into Something, and The C3 Project.



How did you get involved with ISIM?

Going back to before ISIM, I met Steve Nachmanovitch in the late 1990s. I'd read his book *Free Play*, and reached out to him to come to talk to the faculty at the high school/middle school where I was working in Baltimore. I set up a "professional day" to discuss improvisation. I was head of the arts there—Music, dance, visual arts, etcetera. But I wanted everyone to get a chance to hear what Steve had to say—English, foreign language, the entire faculty.

We all read the book before the conference. I knew different people would have a different response, and some took to it immediately – others didn't. But we then had a day of workshops, and it was a nice chance for the faculty to interact and learn about other faculty's curriculum. Steve gave the keynote, then there was a panel at the end of the day. It was a very positive experience.

Steve later told me about ISIM, and I went to the Santa Cruz conference. I'd met Ed just a bit before that. At that first conference I attended, I presented my work with the C3 project. There was a panel with Andy Jaffe, choreographer Min Shau-ping, and filmmaker Salem Mekuria.

Is the C3 Project your most recent project?

Most recent in terms of inception. It had its start in 2004. I'd been doing a lot of listening to chamber settings for jazz, like the Uptown String Quartet, Jimmy Giuffre, and I had a friend studying with Bob Brookmeyer at the time. I said to him, "why don't we do something together in this format." So my friend wrote a piece for string quartet and clarinet for an upcoming recital. I saw myself in this place with all these composers and performers, and I realized how much I wanted to build on this concept!

The C3 Project has a compositional focus but within the jazz language, using improvisation in a more supple way than blowing over a head/solos/head form... The improvisations are spread out over tune as if it were any other type of compositional device. This makes for what seems to me to be the biggest difference from standard jazz formats – is it requires musicians to learn the composition itself rather than the style, or relying on a memorized standard structure.

So some of your other projects already going at that point?

My first project as a leader was the quintet, which started while I was at Rutgers. I'd always been attracted to the guitar. Guitarist Freddie Bryant was one of my mentors as an undergrad. I had done some playing with him and that had a lot to do with becoming attracted to the sonority of clarinet/guitar frontline. Everyone in band did writing, and there was a strong sense of teamwork. So the quintet proved to a great launching pad for a lot of things.

The Trio project came after that, as something of a force of necessity. We had a long-term gig at this club in Baltimore, and the bandstand too small for the full quintet, so we tried every combination possible of sub-groups. Clarinet, bass, and drums stuck! I had been experimenting so much with changing instrumentation on different nights for this gig, we improvised a lot, and the repertoire developed around that, so this project naturally evolved into one that focuses more on various improvisation approaches.

These bands all have records on HiPNOTIC. What are your thoughts on the pros and cons of what goes into documenting our work these days?

Well, like you said, it's about documenting our work. Economics changed so drastically, it presents a lot of challenges. There are also a lot of ways to make a record now. With *Stories In Real Time*, we tried to make a real audiophile's investment, in terms of our approach to the use of microphones, engineering, and so forth. So, ironically, is lost on mp3. But we went in with our eyes open that this was for niche market. Wanted to get attention of folks who would be connected to our references, like the Uptown String Quartet, and Jimmy Giuffre. We knew that these folks would appreciate our attention to detail in regards to the sound.

Tony Haywood runs the label. He and I are longtime colleagues. Went to college together, and have always shared a love for the music. Freddie Bryant is one of Tony's artists, and he just released his own HiPNOTIC record in 2012. So there are lots of associations. The Onus guitarist and the bassist both have a release on the label. It's like the old days, where you'd see Joe Henderson on Kenny Dorham's record, then vice versa, etc. My association with bassist Matthew Parrish is 20 years old. My association with Butch Reed is 25 years old. That sense of community is a huge part of the draw with this type of label.

The sense of teamwork that distinguishes the band is also right there with the label.

Right. For historical perspective – with Riverside, the initial idea was to document Monk. He was controversial at that time and had some detractors. But Orrin Keepnews took a courageous stance that his music needs to be documented; that this is the right thing to do. All the commercial success came later. I think Tony works with that spirit in mind. He wants to support projects he believes in. I feel fortunate that he's supported my projects for so long.

It sounds like a lot of your professional work was going concurrently w/ schoolwork, you met and worked with so many amazing people, and it seems like he mentorship, the academic career, and your own music all developed together.

Right. You'd mentioned Wynton earlier. He and I were sharing a stage for an event in New York; my band opened and he was the headliner. This was the beginning of his big education campaign, which now is quite a big project. I was also working with Regina Carter, and we ended up working with Dee Dee Bridgewater because she appeared on Regina's album, and that was special for me. I'd heard her the first time when I was six, and I'd played with father Cecil Bridgewater, so that was a special moment. Roscoe Mitchell came to NEC and I was put in a group to perform with him, that was also quite something.



Some of the deeper connections were with people like Max Roach—he was on faculty at U Mass while I was at Amherst, so I went to some of his classes and he coached some of my ensembles and we shared a stage with our respective bands.

Yusef Lateef was perhaps even more deep. He was on faculty at Amherst, and his work was the subject of my Doctoral Thesis, his *Clarinet Sonata* in particular. We spend hours talking, interviewing. We spent a lot of time together. I was honored to have him in the audience when performed the *Clarinet Sonata* in 2006 in Boston.

It's amazing, I can see in these relationships, the way our creative paths and our professional development work hand-in-hand... it might be different than we heard about as kids, but it's still happening.

This can also go back to the business talk from before—there's the entrepreneurial bit: You have to make rent, buy groceries, and so forth, but the interaction with colleagues is the key to personal fulfillment.

A lot of these things are so provisional. I'm teaching a jazz history class, and we were listening to Fletcher Henderson's and Benny Goodman's two versions of King Porter Stomp. And while Benny Goodman got so much fame, but Fletcher Henderson did the same chart 10 years earlier ... and there are various reasons: race issues, the Great Depression.

So that puts Fletcher Henderson's work in a certain light, to be committed to innovating, even if it means someone else is going to reap greater benefits for your work.

We make the decision that we commit to several things: One is that we have to make a living. So we develop a strategy: "I'll be a sideman, tour all over with any of these various bandleaders touring around at any time," or "I want to teach, be a part

of the Academy, get a job at university or conservatory." But when talking about creating the music, we have to be conscious of what we are contributing to the "new knowledge." In Academia we are always talking about "what's your research?"... The new creative expressions we make as artists is what we are bringing to the world, what we are contributing to the development of collective knowledge. That's the reason I'm committing these resources and effort; it's to put these ideas I have out in the world. That's where the commitment comes from.

How did you get started with the clarinet, with music in general?

Music was something my mother was always enthusiastic about. As a child she wanted piano lessons, but her mom couldn't afford them. So she was determined that her child would get the opportunity. She had me in these early childhood music classes. One of my earliest memories is being quite tired and my mom walking me home from one of these children's music classes.

When I was around six I started clarinet through public school. We had a great music education specialist named Deborah Fitzgerald. A lot of us started around that time. Philadelphia has one of the leading community music schools in the country, Settlement Music School. They had subsidized classes for lower income

families. I was able to take clarinet, chamber ensemble, composition, theory, orchestra, band, and choir. It just seemed like what everyone was doing, but now I realize how fortunate I was to have such an opportunity. And because these classes were subsidized, we didn't have to pay a penny.

Around the time when I was 16, there was a young teacher named Anthony Hurdle. He was a real jazzhead, and he came to the school and charismatically gathered a group of kids. He had us listening to Temple U's jazz radio station, checking records out of the library, absorbing the style. He'd show us things on the piano, and formed us into a small jazz combo, had us touring the city and brought us into the studio. This gave us a rich experience. He'd take us to clubs so we could hear jazz musicians play. The very first time I saw great live jazz onstage was my moment of "oh my God that's what I want to do". It was a major turning point for me.

It's a shame that these days, schools don't have this kind of music education funding, and kids rarely have access to instruments and good musical training at school.

Opportunities are definitely not as rich as they once were. We are all tightening our belts in this trouble, but actually cutting arts funding as opposed to general cuts is extremely dangerous. And we can say "you can't do that," but at that point we're already playing defense. We must position ourselves so we're not always reacting. We have to embed ourselves into policymaking. This must be across the board, so others can have a more healthy understanding about why these things are important.

We get very myopic about the way we train students to deal with music. We can get into the idea that we concentrate resources to training the next orchestra musician, etcetera, but that leaves us far removed from public discourse. We as artists need to have these skills to do numerous jobs well, like how to shape public policy, affect mentalities about how music can affect community development. So being more deliberate about activism and influencing policy is essential. We do a good job training musicians to go into schools starting kids at a young age, and they are going to do great. But if some of those well-trained educators can move up to occupy a role that has influence across the spectrum, such as principal, superintendent – then we can affect how the shape of institutions develop long-term.

Amazing point... this will be an ongoing struggle for a long time probably. We're watching things get reduced to these teaching artist opportunities where we get maybe an hour a week with the general population. While those are great gigs that work well with the type of diverse work freelancing artists do, nonetheless we're constantly getting marginalized. What you're talking about would certainly be a way to affect long-term change!

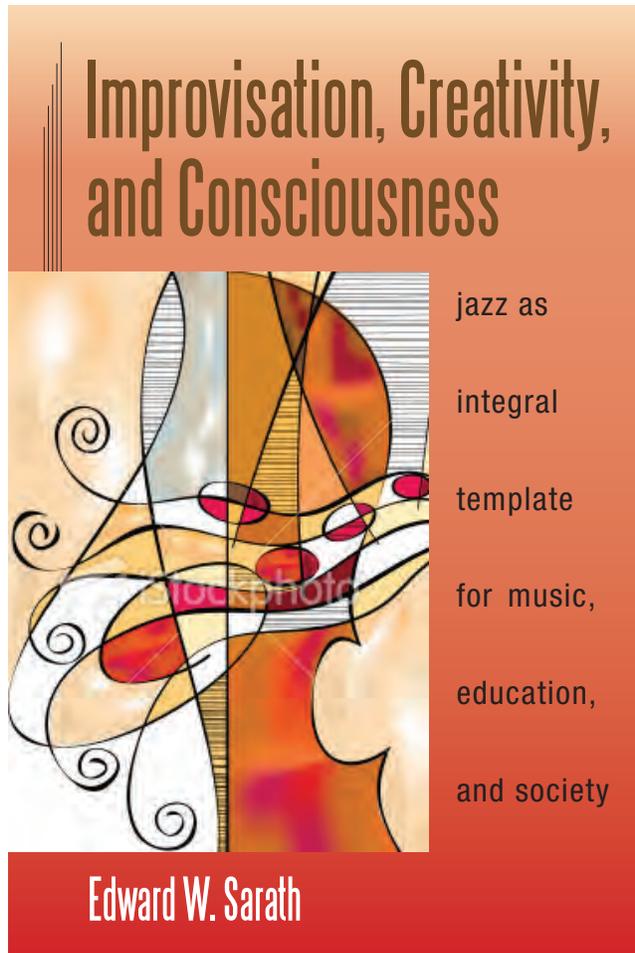
We of course need the arts programs that go into schools, but we need the administration to be conversant in the arts the same way they're conversant in other subjects. We keep turning our backs on this stuff... I just had a colleague arguing against more resources for music for general student population. But we can't just train a bunch of specialists and widening the gap. We need to articulate our experience in a meaningful way, so when the time comes for people to make life decisions, people understand value of what we're doing.

Wonderful... thanks so much for sharing these ideas... I'm sure this is going to give a lot of folks something to think about! And thanks so much for your time!

Thank you, James.

Improvisation, Creativity, and Consciousness: Jazz as Integral Template for Music, Education, and Society (SUNY/Albany, 2013)

A new book by Ed Sarath broaches inner workings of improvisation process



What is improvisation? How does it serve as a vehicle for the transcendent states of consciousness commonly reported by jazz musicians and creative individuals across fields? What insights does a consciousness-based understanding of improvisation reveal for its role as a catalyst for trans-cultural musical understanding and synthesis? What role will improvisation play in the music school of the 21st century? What might improvisation have to offer overall educational and societal reform?

In a provocative new book, Ed Sarath tackles these and many other questions from the standpoint of an emergent, consciousness-based worldview called Integral Theory (IT). Though predicated on the creativity-consciousness relationship and the importance of the arts in human development, the integral framework has until now been scarcely applied to music—Sarath’s book is a first in this regard. New perspectives are offered on a variety of topics, including: the inner mechanics of the improvisation process, the improvisation-composition relationship, the improvisation-transcendence link, the importance of Black music in today’s global confluence, the need for foundational overhaul in academic musical study, the pervasive role of the materialist worldview in music, education, and society, and the role of jazz and improvised music as catalyst for global change.

ISIM MEMBER PROFILE: Kris Tiner



Kris Tiner is a California-based trumpet player, composer, and improviser. Featured on NPR Music as one of a handful of new trumpet voices impacting modern music, his playing has been described as *“extraordinarily inventive”* in Signal to Noise Magazine, and the LA Weekly claims *“Trumpeter Kris Tiner can turn barbed wire to beauty.”*

Tiner’s compositions explore connections between improvisational world music traditions and systemic compositional practices, blending deep jazz roots with references to many diverse streams of contemporary and experimental music. His music has been performed on five continents, his 45+ recordings have been enthusiastically reviewed in the international jazz press, and he has been recognized with

awards from ASCAP, the American Composers Forum, Chamber Music America, the International Association for Jazz Education, Montalvo Arts Center, and the John F. Kennedy Center. He is a member of the acclaimed Empty Cage Quartet, and he collaborates with New York guitarist Mike Baggetta in the duo Tin/Bag.

His own trio features bassist Scott Walton and master drummer Donald Robinson. He performs with the Industrial Jazz Group, Chris Schlarb’s Psychic Temple, the Los Angeles Trumpet Quartet and the Jeff Kaiser Ockodektet, and has collaborated with Wadada Leo Smith, Vinny Golia, Kraig Grady, Tatsuya Nakatani, Mary Oliver, Nels Cline, Lukas Ligeti, Gerry Hemingway, Motoko Honda, Phillip Greenlief, Ken Filiano, Sara Schoenbeck, and Harris Eisenstadt.

Tiner holds an MFA from California Institute of the Arts and a BA from CSU, Bakersfield. He has lectured on both music and visual art, and currently teaches courses in jazz and popular music at Bakersfield College. He recently founded Epigraph Records, an independent label dedicated to the documentation of new creative music recorded live in Bakersfield.

www.kristiner.com

ISIM MEMBER NEWS: WINTER 2013

The Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice research project explores musical improvisation as a model for social change. Please join us September 4-6, 2013 for the Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium, "Sound Knowledges: A World Artist Summit." Two books are also forthcoming from Duke University Press: *People Get Ready: The Future of Jazz is Now!* (eds. Ajay Heble and Rob Wallace) and *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Co-Creation* (co-authored by Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz). To view ICASP Project Director Ajay Heble's recent TEDx talk (Improvisation as a Model for Social Change), and for information on all of ICASP's projects, please visit www.improvcommunity.ca.

Thomas Buckner has been traveling the globe, this past season with performances in Macau (China), Dublin, Berlin, New York, Washington D.C., San Francisco, Helsinki, Krakow, etc. Some composers he presented were Annea Lockwood, Robert Ashley, Matthias Kaul, and David Behrman. He is also looking forward to an upcoming tour of Australia (Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide) with three other distinguished improvisers, Mari Kimura (violin), Tim Brady (guitar), and Lori Freedman (bass clarinet).

Ron Coulter recently improvised with the Tone Road Ramblers during a residency at the University of Texas-Austin in February and a concert at Roulette in March. Coulter performed a concert with William O. Smith and the siu Improvisation Unit as part of the "Outside the Box New Music Festival" at SIUC on April 4, 2013. Coulter continues to curate the Southern Illinois Improvisation Series (SiiS) which will feature a residency with guest Chris Corsano, April 21 and 22, 2013.

This Fall/Winter saw the release of **Bob Gluck's** new book "You'll Know When You Get There: Herbie Hancock and the Mwandishi Band" (Univ of Chicago Press) and a two-piano and electronics duet recording with Aruan Ortiz, "Textures and Pulsations" (Incus Records). Gluck has followed up these new releases with two-piano concerts, book talks across the United States, and quartet performances of music from the Mwandishi band, with bassist Christopher Dean Sullivan, trumpeter Eddie Allen, and drummer Tani Tabbal. He has continued to produce music improvisation artist residencies at the University at Albany, where he teaches, and where he has made progress towards establishing an ongoing center for improvisation.

Bassist and composer **James Ilgenfritz** has been busy performing in a variety of contexts, improvising or premiering new works with Gordon Beferman, Anthony Coleman, Marty Ehrlich, Either/Or (performing the music of Giacinto Scelsi), Jason Robinson, Michael Jefry Stevens, Steve Swell, and John Zorn. He also contributed string arrangements to Issue Project Room Artist-In-Residence Sabisha Friedberg's performance/installation *Hinterkante, Resonanz (Hoffe Axiom)*. Upcoming projects include appearances with his quartet Colonic Youth (with Dan Blake, Philip White, and Kevin Shea), the premiere of a new set of compositions for electric guitar, bass, and two percussionists with his group S T R E S S ADDICT, and a performance with violinist Jon Rose and former Kronos Quartet cellist Jeffrey Zeigler. He will also participate in Ostrava Music Days 2013 in the Czech Republic, where he will premiere a new work for acoustic bass, contrabass clarinet, and percussion.

Guerino Mazzola has published a CD "Dancing the Body of Time" (Cadence Jazz Records 1239 CD) by his trio (Guerino Mazzola p, Heinz Geisser & Shiro Onuma ds), a CD "Passionate message" (Silkheart 1239 CD) for two pianos (Guerino Mazzola & Joomi Park). With coauthors Joomi Park and Florian Thalmann he has published a book "Musical Creativity—Strategies and Tools in Composition and Improvisation" (Springer Series Computational Music Science, Heidelberg et al. 2011). He has given a lecture-performance "Cecil Taylor's Dancing Fingers- An Introduction to Extremal Piano Techniques Using Musical Gesture Theory" at the London International Piano Symposium, February 9, 2012.

Paul Scea and Eric Haltmeier have released Space Genetics Volume 4 on April 2nd, 2013. Continuing in their tradition of exploring the possibilities found at the intersection of jazz, improvisation, and electronic music, Space Genetics – the duo of Paul Scea and Eric Haltmeier – present their latest release, Volume 4. With

their previous three releases each exploring various perspectives of interactions between woodwinds and computers, Volume 4 presents eight compositions and improvisations that examine the ways in which electronic and acoustic improvisations play against a wide variety of rhythmic textures. It is available for download on I-Tunes, Amazon mp3 store, and other similar outlets.

Trumpeter and composer **Kris Tiner** has been steadily increasing the audience for creative and improvisational music in central California. He has taught at Bakersfield College since 2004, and has curated a new music concert series in Bakersfield for over a decade. Last year, with support from the American Composers Forum, he launched Epigraph Records to document these concerts. The first LP release features a live trio recording by Tiner, percussionist Tatsuya Nakatani, and guitarist Jeremy Drake. Tiner continues to tour regularly with his own projects, which include the acclaimed Empty Cage Quartet, the trumpet-guitar duo Tin/Bag, and his trio with bassist Scott Walton and drummer Donald Robinson. He was recently awarded a Composers Fellowship at the Lucas Artists Residency Program at Montalvo Arts Center, where he collaborated with Parisian artist Stéphane Thidet on a video performance entitled *for emptiness*.

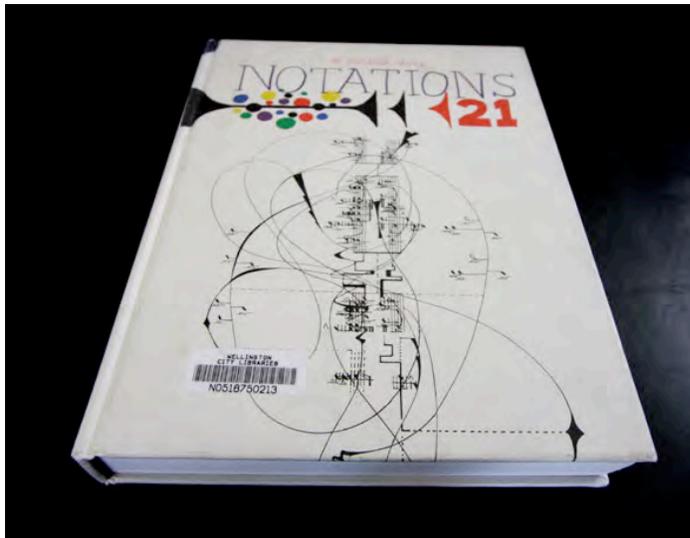
Sarah Weaver is co-presenting "Virtual Tour: A Reduced-Carbon Footprint Concert Series" is an unprecedented series of telematic concerts featuring world-class improvisers performing together in different geographical locations via Internet2. The Virtual Tour concerts pair a core quartet in San Diego (Mark Dresser, Michael Dessen, Nicole Mitchell, Myra Melford) with a different remote ensemble each night: Amherst MA on April 5 (Marty Ehrlich, Jason Robinson, Bob Weiner), Zurich on April 6 (Matthias Ziegler, Gerry Hemingway), Stony Brook NY on April 7 (Sarah Weaver, Jane Ira Bloom, Min Xiao-Fen, Ray Anderson, Matt Wilson, Doug Van Nort). The tour overall presents world premieres of 12 new compositions created specifically for the telematic medium. The concert can be attended in-person at any of the performance sites. A high-quality audio/video recording will be made of the concert for future release. <http://virtualtour2013.com>

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ISIM member review/interview: Theresa Sauer's NOTATIONS 21

by James Ilgenfritz



Theresa Sauer's book *Notations 21* is a personal collection of works submitted to her by 160 composers, assembled in an effort to draw attention to the multiplicity of approaches to notation that populate contemporary music. Included in this book are well-known graphical scores like Earle Brown's *December 1952*, Pauline Oliveros' *Primordial/Lift*, and James Tenney's *Beast*, as well as a vast array of works composed in the 21st century.

Based somewhat on the John Cage / Alison Knowles book *Notations*, this collection seeks to raise awareness of what has developed with notation over the last 50 years. The works included

range from game structures to abstract graphical imagery, to comparatively more traditionally notated works that incorporate very unique notational constructs. But what is amazing is the astounding diversity that is included over these 300 pages.

One of the many insights included in this book is a brief quote from Stuart Saunders Smith: "To standardize notation is to standardize patterns of thought and the parameters of creativity. Our present abundance of notations is as it should be. It makes our differences more clear." This prescient quote gets to the heart of what it means to be creative – to operate not based on standardized practice but to follow one's own path, interacting with standardized practice however one sees fit.

Jl: Your background was in music, but at some point you became interested in visual design and improvisation, which led to creating this book. Can you talk about that whole development?

TS: When I was studying music, it was during a time when the twelve-tone row was basically the only type of composition taught. Although, I found it challenging and interesting, it left me wanting. I was interested in the work being done by Philip Glass, Steve Reich, La Monte Young and also studying the ideas of John Cage, Cornelius Cardew, Morton Feldman and others from the past. After many years, I decided to go to The New School to study visual design and typography and open my mind to new ideas. This led me back to *Notations*, the book of experimental notation put together by John Cage and Alison Knowles in 1969. Questions started flooding my mind about how the world was changing in the last 40 years and I wondered if composers were still developing new notation and in what way on a global level.

Through a series of emails my research began. It was an improvisational journey that led me from one new innovative score to another, from one country to the next. At the end of about a year and a half, I found that I had collected almost 800 self-invented scores representing over 45 countries. I realized then, that a new and strong movement in new experimental notation was in progress and wanted to create something that would express these worldwide voices. These were genreless scores that redefined the meaning of "composer." John Cage once said that "When a musician writes a score that must be mechanically carried through, compelling the interpreter to follow it as if he was a machine...what is the sense to make it for a human being if it

can be made for a machine? A music score that imposes such a severity has no sense. Ideas must be free and the musicians who will play must be creative.” These free ideas in music notation are celebrated through The Notations 21 Project, which conducts ongoing research concerning notation and communication systems within the arts around the world.

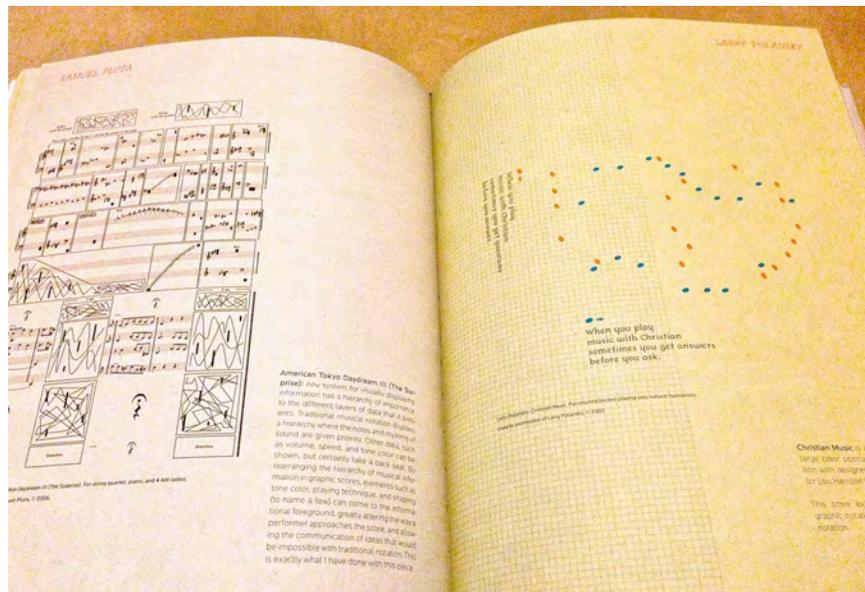
Jl: Your book contrasts with other volumes on notation in that, while most of these other texts are based on a rigorous selection process and committee approval, this book is more of a unique, personal work, a distinct expression of your viewpoint.

TS: Notations 21 is my own personal artistic voice hopefully representing the many voices within; without judgment but allowing those voices to speak freely. Even the design itself, represents the ephemerality of time and space and I think that composer Henrik Rasmussen said it very well in an email to me when the book first came out. He said, *"When I first browsed through the book and regarded various pages – it is not a book you read – I thought about the small pieces of "tape". They seemed to indicate, that this was just a collection of sheets, fixed to the pages to keep them in touch ... which of course it is! It is like a scrapbook. There is no single common philosophy, but a plurality of ideas and thoughts, and one of your important achievements with this book is the assurance, that the concept of graphic notation is very much alive around the Globe, and kicking! Graphic Notation may not be a solid continent, but it is a huge archipelagos; it did not die with John Cage and his contemporaries. Personally, it is a great inspiration to see the many works I did not know, and also to know, that this is only the surface of a huge mountain; there is much more underneath! Bravo!!"* -Henrik Rasmussen

Many composer/artists found each other because of the book. This was the life the book has of its own beyond anything I have done. I just wanted to create a “home” for the work to grow.

Jl: How do you see the relationship between notation and improvisation? I find that often there are improvisers who are resistant to using scores, and also composers and performers who are resistant to the idea of a performer being a creative contributor to the realization of a score.

TS: There seems to have been and yes, still exists a “separation” between those who perform with notation and those who improvise without notation. I have been witness to almost a hostility, a prejudice that has developed between these artists. The open scores that lend themselves to improvisation today are meant for inclusion of all performers. I recently read an article about notation and improvisation by Nina Polaschegg and she says, “In recent years, however, more and more composers and improvisers have found this thinking in stereotypes to



be outdated and have recognized new challenges in composing for improvisers which are concerned with no less than our notions of musical work and practice, of musical time and perception of sound as a whole. On their side, improvisers see in open scores and in structural prescriptions (made by others or by themselves) a setting free of creativity by means of imposing limitations – and not any more an inhibition of spontaneity and freedom.” I agree with this concept and find in the works of Carl Bergstroem-Neilsen, and other Intuitive Music composers, the inclusion aspects of composition opening up new thought and performance responses that might have not been considered before. In my own compositional process, as found in *The Circle Se-*

ries, I wish to begin a dialogue with color, texture and shape. I also offer an idea or conversation starter in the performance suggestion page, to which the performer may choose to respond. This may lead to a wide range of responses that I call “the human tapestry of response.” This is just another form of collaboration, setting forth a potential ignition for sound performance. My experiences with this have been extremely enlightening thus far.

I would also like to mention the need for creative expression that shows itself in many forms. The self-invented score *is* a form of creative expression, an invitation many times for participation with those who do not have a musical background but wish to explore creativity. This inclusion and collaboration of diverse minds is part of the human experience. Take, for example, the work of Makoto Nomura. Makoto Nomura has pioneered new forms of collaborative composing, directly involving others –including ‘non-musicians’ – in the creation of his works. Using musical games and wordless discussions as starting points for compositions, he has involved community groups, residents of old people’s homes, children, people with disabilities and dancers, in making improvisatory works. One of Nomura’s innovatory compositional strategies is Shogi, which he describes as ‘a kind of recipe for collaborative composition among various people with different musical backgrounds and various musical abilities. It is just like playing cards around a table.’

The works in Notations 21, which include musician and non-musician composers, come together to question the boundaries and blur the lines between notation as music and notation as art. It is this kind of alliance and cross-fertilization, represented by innovative notation, that gives such life to the global soundscape today.

