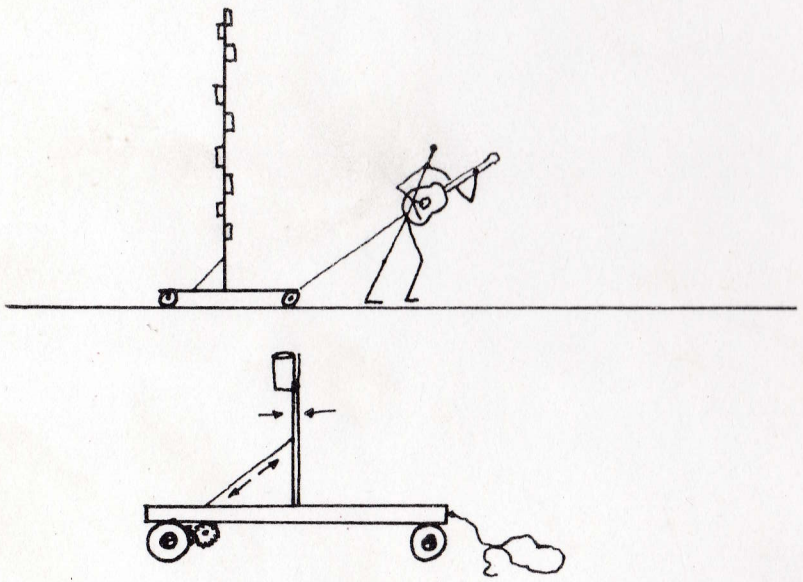
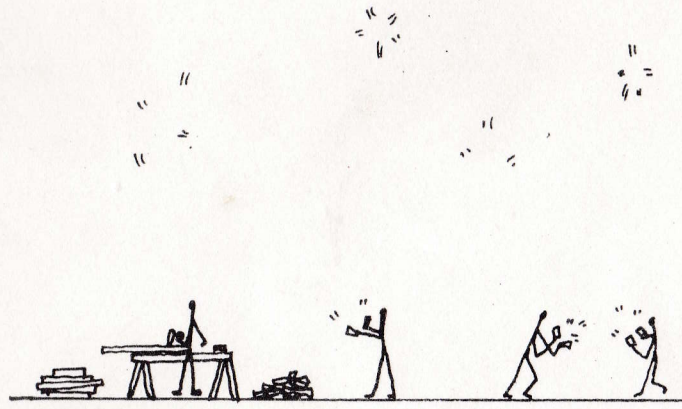


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# AND MUSIC

BRISTOLMUSICIANS'CO-OPERATIVEBRISTOLMUSICIANS'CO-OPERATIVEBRISTOL





# ... AND MUSIC

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otherwise stated



by Ian Menter

Our third festival, our third magazine: Unpopular Music, Co-operative Music and now . . . and Music.

Once again we invited many people to submit contributions to this magazine and the items included are more numerous than ever. This may well be due in part to the demise of Musics, the magazine which came out every two or three months from London, and was more or less the staple diet of improvising and collective musicians. The last issue, Number 23, came out in Autumn 1979. At the one day festival organised by us at the London Musicians' Collective last November, a discussion was held to consider ways of replacing Musics.

This meeting was very well attended by people from all over the country and there was general agreement that some kind of regular publication was essential. A further meeting was held in Birmingham to draw up plans: an editorial group was set up comprising people from several disparate locations. More meetings ensued but the original plans have now been dropped. Perhaps the scheme was ambitious and impractical but it is regrettable that it failed.

Attention will now focus on an expanded newsletter from the London Collective (LMC, 42 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1), which will include news and other items from all around the country.

The three or four centres that are especially active remain in fairly close contact but there are many other smaller centres and an unknown number of very isolated musicians and others (see Lonely Hearts, p.72) for whom some regular publication is absolutely essential. The other important function of such publications must be to assist in other perpetual attempts to reach more people, to interest more people in the music. One significant step in this direction will come through the publication of Derek Bailey's book, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (Moorland Publishing). As the publishers say: "this will be the first book which seriously examines, and from the viewpoint of practising musicians, what is probably the most widely practised and least documented or understood aspect of music." The publishers also say that the market for the book is "musicians and listeners of serious music" which sounds like a bit of a joke but they're probably right. Collective members being pragmatic, are mostly just as anxious to reach "non-musicians" and listeners of non-serious music in their smaller (lighter?) magazine-type publications. However, Derek Bailey's book is important, helpful and likely to be very influential. We welcome it.

Here in Bristol, with our "hyperactive Musicians' Co-op" (thank you HTV) it's hard to remember the depth of cultural isolation our founding members felt five or six years ago and hard to imagine the effect of having no-one to talk with about the music, let alone anyone to play with.

We can only manage one magazine of this kind each year. But it's been really heartening to see other publications emerging recently.

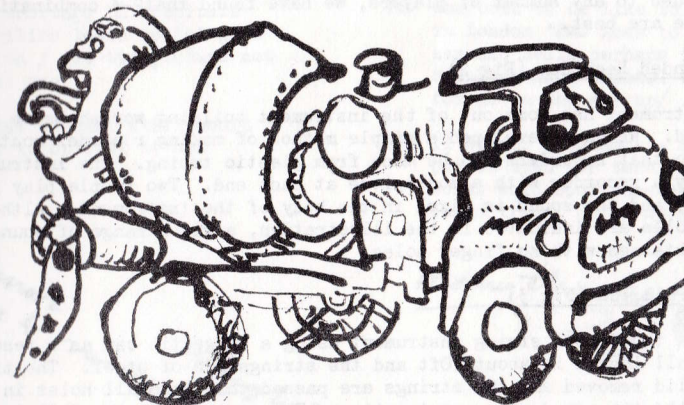
"This is This" is produced by the Tyneside New Music Group (10 Deuchar Street, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne). The first issue sold out in a few days.

Also the Southampton Musicians' Co-op produces a substantial newsletter which includes concert reviews and general articles (SMC, c/o Ray d'Inverno, 26 Thornbury Avenue, Shirley, Southampton 2).

Perhaps then, this indicates the way ahead for the time being - publications from several different places which may not come out all that often. These plus the LMC newsletter coming out monthly as basic information and news service - (although it is more than just that even at the moment, in its unexpanded form).

Our magazine traditionally (?) reflects, to a greater or lesser extent, the flavour of our festival. Of the three "and musical" activities prominently featured in the festival, instrument-making, voice and dance, only the first two get coverage here. Many articles however reflect general interests which are common throughout the new music scene - interests in the relationships of music-making to many diverse spheres of social activity - politics, economics, education, history, language and so on.

Intellectual interests maybe, but not esoteric in themselves, and in the long run they are fundamental, if our common activity, that of making music, is to have any meaning, any progressive influence.



Martien Groeneveld



by Will Embling  
and Barry Leigh

Multi-person instruments are instruments that two or more people can play simultaneously. Clearly, certain traditional western instruments could be considered as multi-person, eg piano played in duets or church organ where labour is divided between organist and bellow pumpers. However the instruments we have been working with all have two important elements that make them a bit special. Firstly, each player has an equal opportunity to creatively affect the sound. Secondly, the points of interaction in the sound production system occur earlier and produce much more physical feedback between the players.

So far we have developed four main designs:

1) Multi-Person Horn (Fig 1)

In our experiments we used a sousaphone for a horn and plumbed in three mouthpieces using various lengths of  $\frac{3}{8}$ " plastic tubing and two T fittings. The sousaphone was laid on the floor and each player had a selection of mouthpieces that were adapted to the tubing. Alternatively, the player(s) could choose not to use a mouthpiece and vocalise directly into the tubing. We have successfully used this instrument with many different mouthpiece combinations, selecting from: horn, single reed, double reed or ballon reed. From the illustration it will be seen that the sound from the mouthpieces is mixed before entering the horn. Although the principle could be extended to any number of players, we have found that 2-4 combinations of people are best.

2) Double Ended Recorder (Fig 2)

This instrument has come out of the instrument building workshops we have organised. We have developed a simple method of making recorder mouthpieces so that recorders can be made from plastic tubing. The instrument is simply a recorder with a mouthpiece at each end. Two people play simultaneously and the sound is mixed in the body of the instrument. Although finger holes are indicated in the illustration, a wider range of sounds can be obtained with no finger holes.

3) Push Me Pull You (Fig 3)

This is a two-person string instrument using a large tin can as a resonator. The overall length is about 10ft and the strings are of steel. The tin can has the lid removed and the strings are passed through small holes in the base of the tin can during construction. The strings run the full length of the instrument. The wood strut supports the can and bends when the strings are tensioned. The two players hold the instrument against their bodies and by pushing towards each other or pulling away, they alter the string tension. The strings are vibrated by using bows, sticks, plectrums, fingers, etc.

4) Glass Turntable (Fig 4)

The instrument comprises a 36" diameter plate glass disc mounted on a bearing so that it's free to rotate in a horizontal plane. The disc is moistened with water and the players position themselves around the discs circumference. Each player has a selection of resonators; wood or bamboo

Fig. 1. MULTIPERSON HORN.

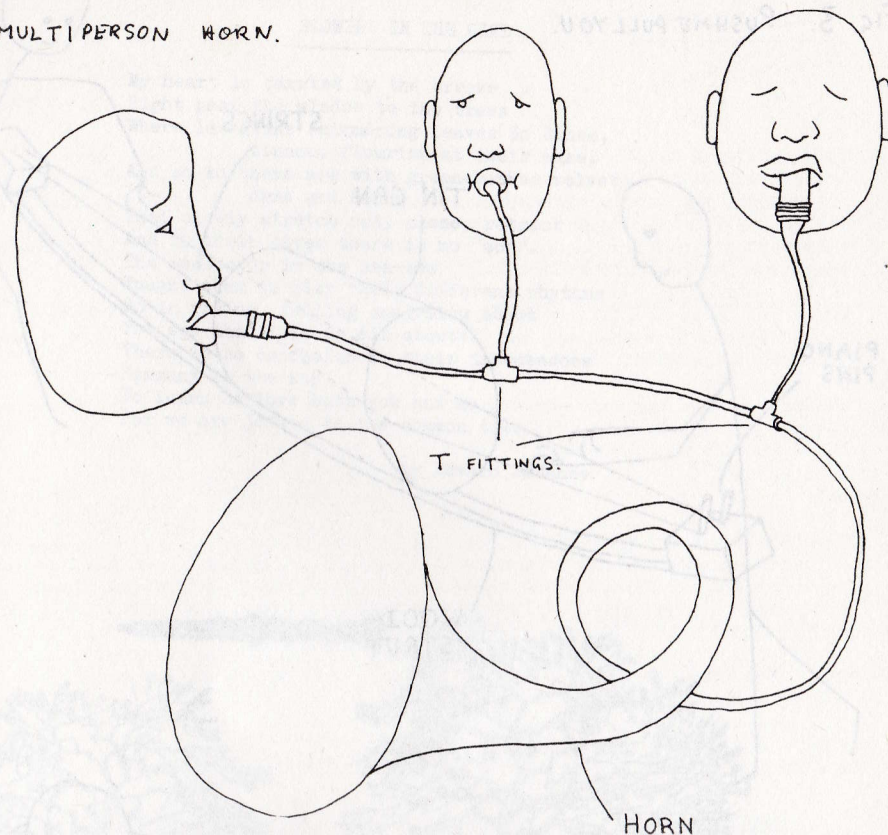


Fig. 2. DOUBLE ENDED RECORDER.

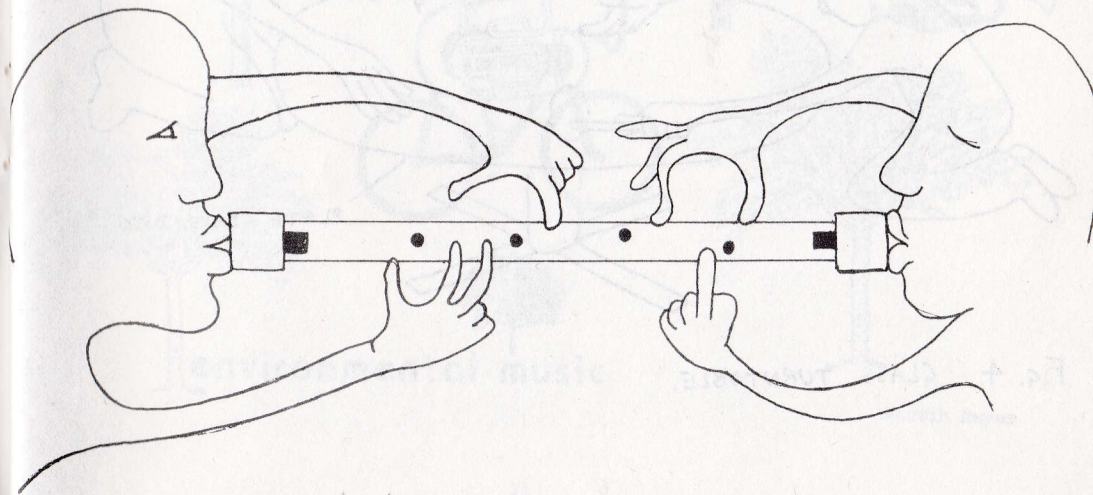




Fig. 3. PUSH ME PULL YOU.

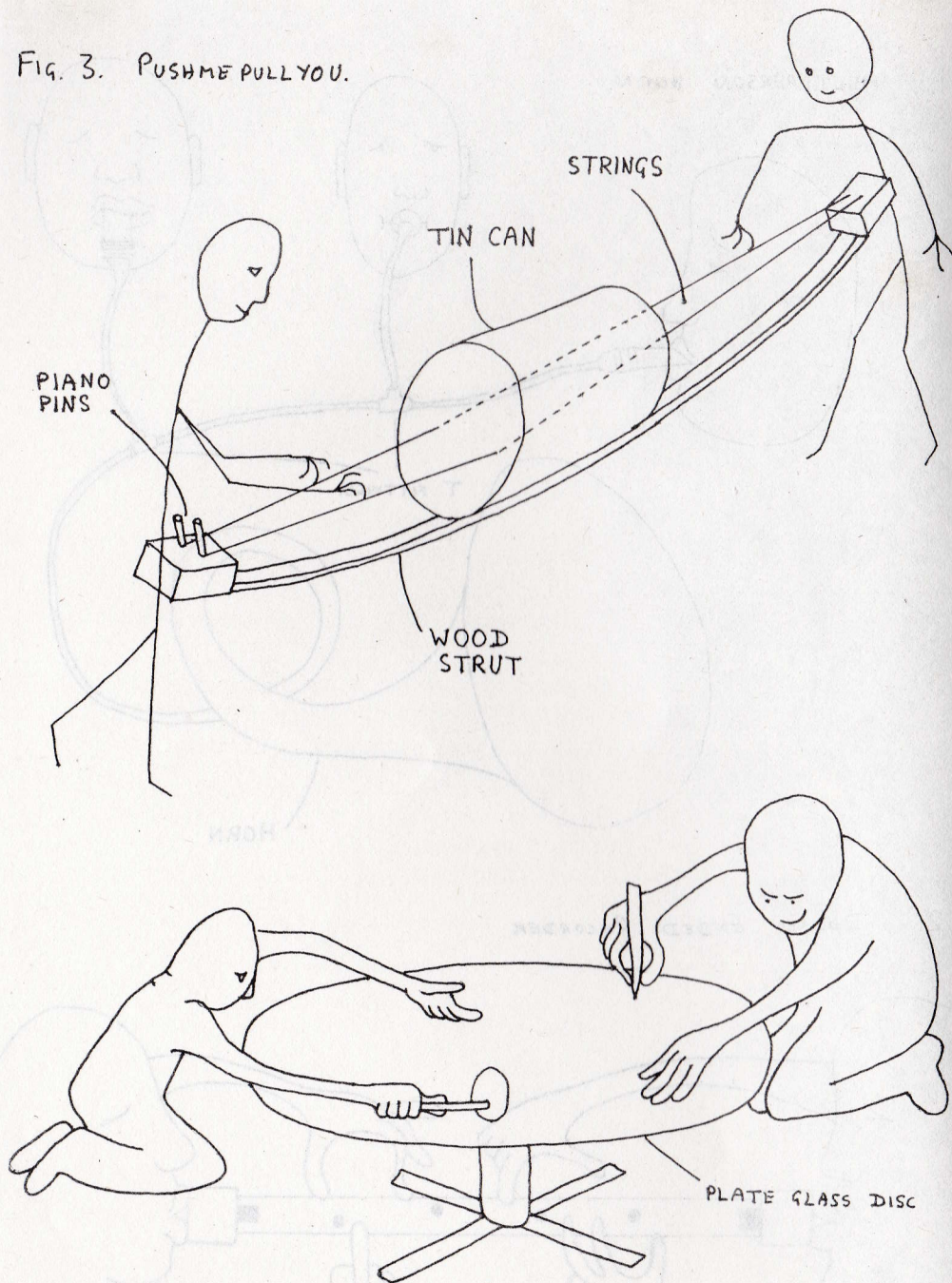
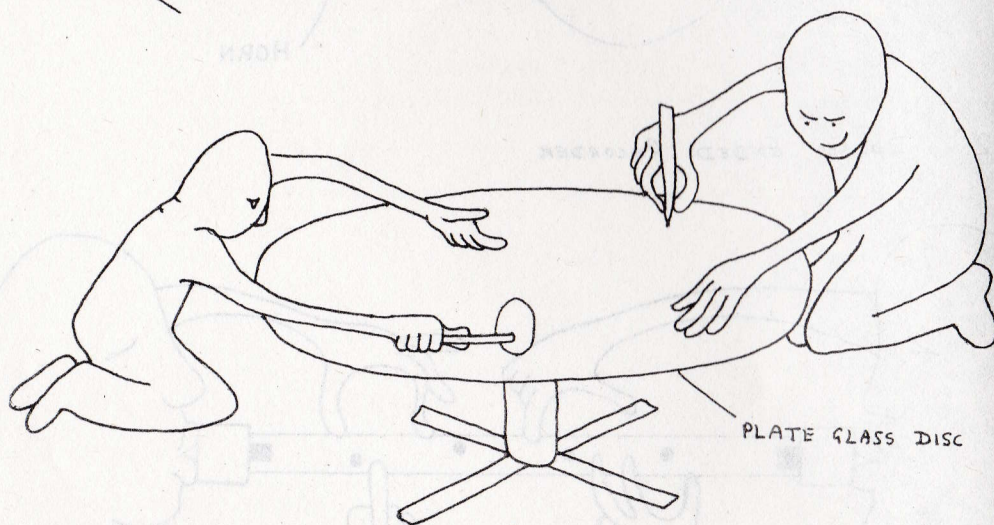
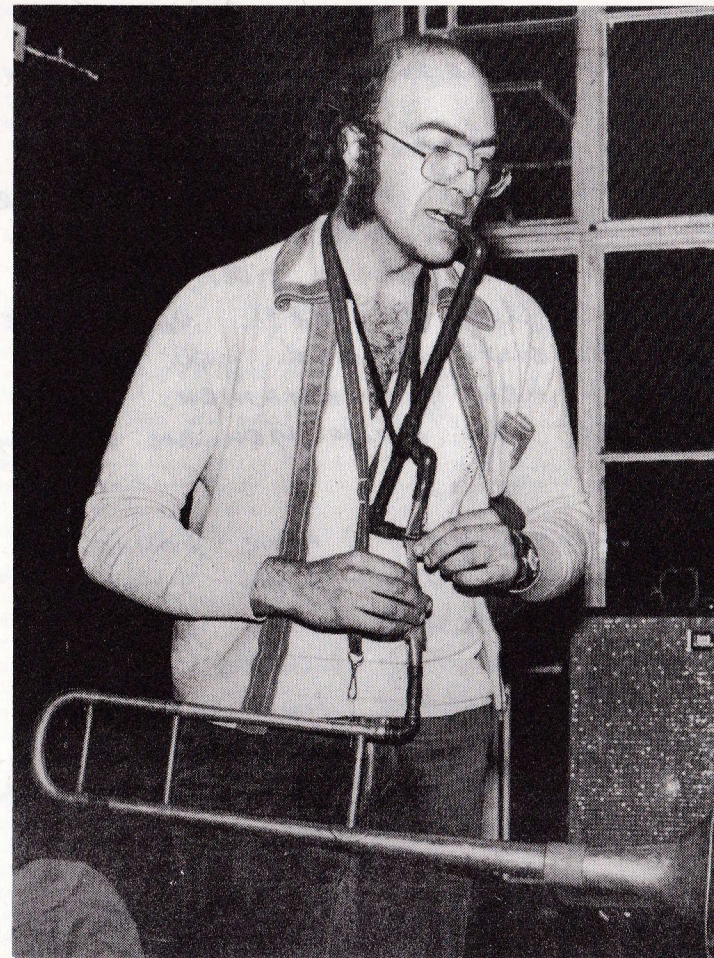


Fig. 4. GLASS TURNTABLE.



reeds, hardboard, plywood or softboard cut-outs attached to handles, polystyrene in various shapes. The disc is rotated by hand and the resonators are pressed on to the glass surface. Friction between the resonators and glass produces sounds that are amplified by the disc. The three most important variables are: the applied pressure, orientation and relative speed.

In spite of the low technology of these instruments when compared to modern conventional instruments the sounds produced are very widely variable and very controllable. These are the four most developed of the designs we have worked on so far. However, they only represent a beginning in multi-person instruments. There is a lot of work to be done refining each of these designs and many new areas remain to be explored.



Barry Leigh



## Clay musical instruments

Clay seems to be a quite uncommon material for making musical instruments today and in the past. So when I decided to write something about this, it was difficult to find any information at all about it.

A reason for it could have been the absence of the material - clay -, but this thought is ridiculous, because clay is earth of a specific consistency and you can find it nearly everywhere depending on how deep you are digging.

The first things I have found pictures of, were some terracotta rattles (enclosed forms with an airhole and tiny pellets inside) in animal-shape from Western Asia (2000 B.C.) Those were not used in making music/sounds but for soothing babies.

In general clay has been used for making percussive instruments: drums, rattles, bells and for wind instruments: flutes, ocarinas

and some sort of trumpets in Asia, South America and mainly in Africa.

I couldn't find any information about stringed clay instruments, but a reason not to use clay for them might have been the porosity of the fired clay body, which gives a less good resonance body than wood. Although today you can fire clay to an absolutely dense state, where it gets almost glasslike character. Another reason might have been the weight of clay, which is of course much higher than that of wood.

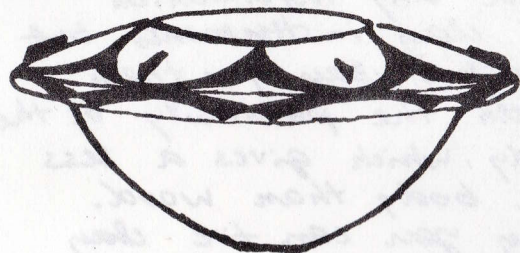
The most commonly known clay drums are coming (today) from North Africa / Morocco. They have a goblet-shaped body, are made out of white clay and are always tied together in a couple of a small and a bigger one.

Another type is made in South Africa from the Zulu tribes. Those drums are black round pots with incised patterns. They are used only by women while the men are dancing.

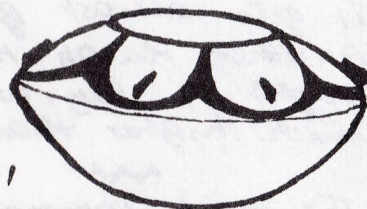
When I decided to make drums out of clay I had to consider several things beforehand.

First the volume of the pot and therefore the shape because the bigger the volume the deeper and broader the sound gets. So I made two kinds of drums. The first is rather small in volume, quite flat looking, the second is bigger in volume and more tallish.





These are the leather, smaller ones. The left one with bottom hole the other one without.



Another thing was how the width of the opening, over which the skin is pulled would alter the sound; and how should I fix the skin to the drum to get a good tension. What sort of skin should I use, thick or thin and from which animal and should I use skin at all, because I am a vegetarian. Well that gets too complicated. Which sort of firing I should use, a high one to give the walls density or a low one to leave them porous.

While I was making the first ones, somebody suggested, that I should leave a hole in the bottom of the pot to give the skin the possibility of vibrating more freely and therefore to get a better sound.

I did some of those as well and a two sided one because of this same reason.

That is how far I got in making clay drums without judging yet, if they are better or worse in sound than wooden ones. Anyway they are different and it is fun to make them.

Clay trumpets have been made in the Mochica culture in Peru. They have a curved tube, holes for altering the pitches and a very simple shaped trumpet mouth-piece. The flaring end of the tube is always modelled in form of a human head or animal body/head.

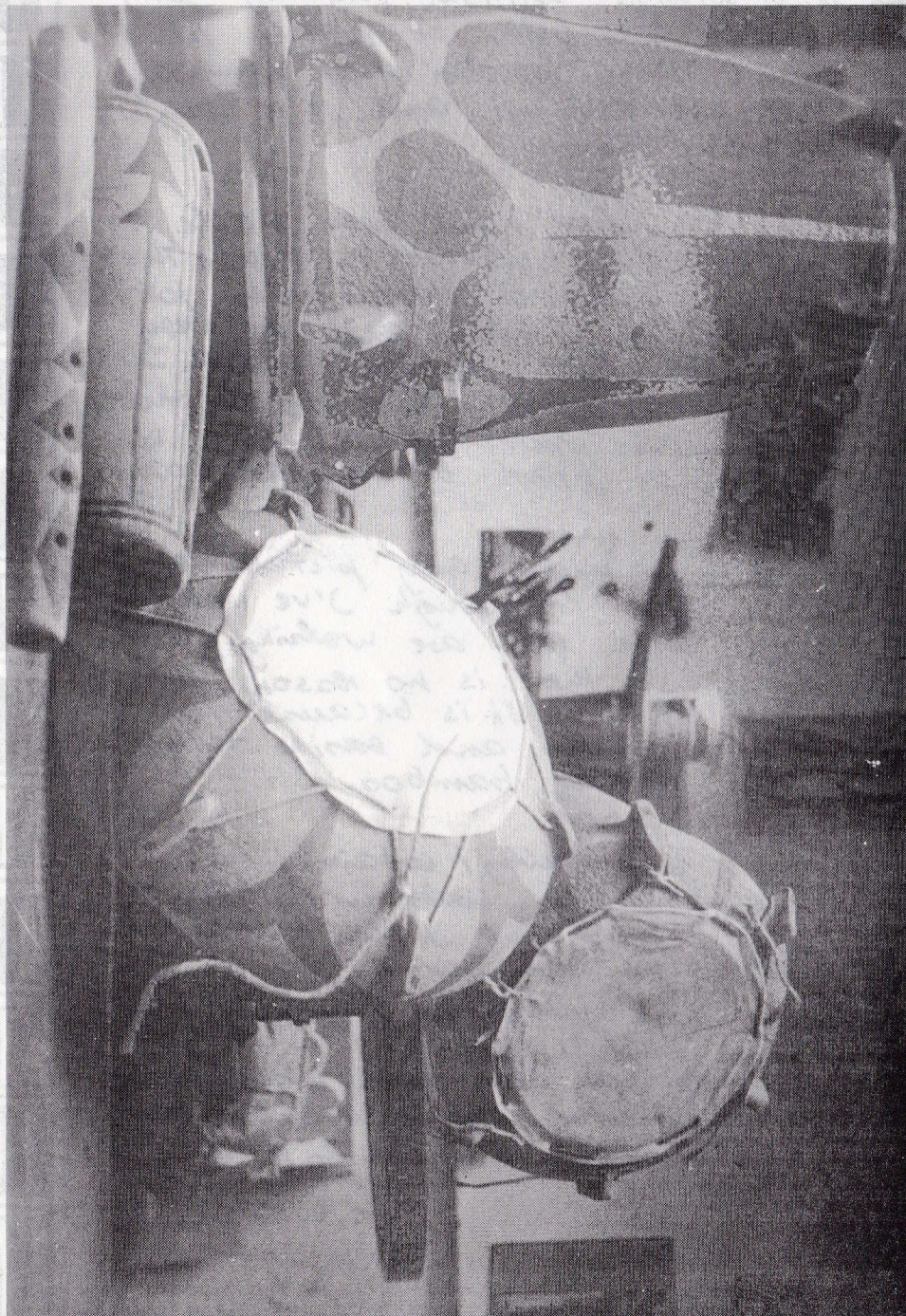
I haven't found any pictures of clay flutes although I've made some and they are working pretty well, so there is no reason for that. Maybe it is because it is much quicker and easier to make them out of bamboo.

That is probably/certainly not all what one could write about this theme, but I don't want it to get too boring.

The most interesting thing for me is, that it is amazing what you can do with clay and how different the sounds are, coming out of clay instruments to any others.

Urs. Wiedli





Ursula's clay instruments (photo: Urs Waechter)

by William Pryor

Words in (the shape of) a poem, written on paper, typed, printed, would seem to be fixed as such. They are more than a notation, they BEAR meaning which is interpreted, inflected in the performance, the reading of the poem. Like when you read these:

improvisation - music  
not 'made up' as you go  
not 'found' pre-existing  
but extension. mind  
extended to include and release.

immanence.

cat's leap for the window  
is the thought of it.

as blind-men know through sticks  
what surrounds them  
we sound what we do  
through instruments  
and how is the interaction  
tasting - an exchange  
in formation  
as talk is express  
is connect is  
partsong

partlisten the reading, the voice, but from a source, a score, the marks on the page. At another time and place the poem is agonised over and written down, in solitude above all. And yet poets have this urge to combine the performance of poems with that of improvised music, and some musicians seem keen to go along with that.

So, the problems involved: that the poet knows what's coming next, while the musician don't; that the poet cannot react to the music else he would lose the inflections that give the meaning he wants, while the musicians are free to react to the poem (although not to individual words or images - that would come out too much like programme music), to the rhythms above all; and, as outlined above, that there is a basic imbalance between the requirements of the more or less fixed sense (however ambiguous) of a poem to be heard without distraction and the freedom of the improvisors to make whatever noise they like. Despite these difficulties, maybe because of them, more attempts are made to perform already-written poems with spontaneous music.

Why?

For my part, as a poet, it is because I ENJOY improvised music and find that it parallels and expresses much of the emotional process and rhythmic concern that goes into my poems. I first attempted to combine the essentially 'strange' phenomena of reading poems aloud to an audience with live music in 1963. It was in Cambridge with Dick Heckstall-Smith and Art Theman - beefy bop music - each 'number' had its music carefully 'tailored' to fit round the poems - quiet patches to allow the words through. There was one exception - a poem written in the same rhythmic pattern as Bobby Timmons' tune 'Dat Dere'; which I read in synch with the band playing the tune.



But it was basically unsatisfactory - in the end the poems and the jazz got in the way of each other. I have tried it a few times since then - with other jazz groupings, with an R&B band, with a quartet from Chester playing in the early Archie Shepp mould, and more recently, with the group I play keyboards with (Lou Gare, tenor, and Clive Kingsley, synthesiser, alto, flute, etc). Only with this last group has it begun to be satisfactory.

The 'Dat 'Dere poem only seems to be a solution - to write poems FOR the jazz, for the improvisation is an abdication, a cop out - much better to write songs. Another solution, another way is with so called 'concrete' poetry, where there is no concern to make 'sense' of groups of words, but to, as it were, let the individual words speak for themselves, to let them 'sound' and of course to explore the limitless area of extra-verbal speech. But I am not interested in this area of poetry and resolutely hold that there is a way through for poetry as I write it to be successfully wedded to improvised music without abdicating the informational and language-magic elements.

The above methods are using the poet's voice primarily as a novel kind of wind instrument - one that can utter words and phonetic sounds, but doesn't necessarily sing, as such. And, of course, this element will be an essential part of performing a poem with improvised music - the musicians can and do react to a speaking voice for its rhythmic, pitch and textural variations, as much, if not more than, for the sense of the words it is uttering. And the dilemma between the 'fixed' nature of the poem and the spontaneity of the music is a false one - a poem comes out differently each time, but also one can regard the range of a drum, or of a saxophone come to that, as having the same 'fixedness' as the words on the page of a poem.

In other words, each performer does have a pre-determined fixity in the range of the noises he can produce (their pitch, rhythm, texture) that is limited, first of all, by his technique and, more importantly, by his previous experience with the kind of noise/sound/texture/rhythm he has found that fascinate him.

But that line of argument won't get me where I want to get, rather let me come in from the angle of me as poet playing keyboards. I find I want some other dimension, some other way of participating in the music we make. If I read a poem, Lou and Clive want to work out some way to let the poem(s) come through, but still be playing their own dialogue with the sound of my voice and its patterns. So it is as though I were playing a special kind of instrument, one that uses language, which requires a special ambience - an intimate setting. They don't have to listen to the words as poem to be able to play sympathetically.

The key to its working is that it be intimate - this overcomes all problems of balancing the voice with louder instruments and allows for a more instantaneous response between us.

The answer to all the problems is to regard the poem to be performed as an instrument, UPON WHICH one can delicately improvise, ie, extend one's mind to include and release. A great aid to the right kind of intimacy is familiarity with each other's instruments, the sounds and textures they make:

to 'wood shed'  
jazz men said  
bought fluency:  
to as-say the heart  
relay its dart  
play changes

tune to admit  
weight the song  
sings against

out in the wood  
pile, driven  
densest grain  
knots in oak  
logs pain  
that sap will up

come what cracks  
and squeaks in burning  
is all music  
blood breathes: dead  
wood on fire, said  
passion

So, it is, yes, a special kind of improvised music that includes a poem, a special attention to the 'partsong partlisten' aspect if it. Just as it is a special kind of music that goes with abstract film (another combination I've tried) or, I imagine, with Dance.

But it is no more special than other improvisation - part of the intrigue of this music for me is that it is always 'special' to the social and physical environment in which it is played - it is an expression of the gestalt in which the musicians find themselves.



Will Menter, Sam Menter, Mark Langford performing  
at Bracknell Festival





John Eaves: Improvisation 2, Bradford-on-Avon  
(Crayon) 1978

FAR (1972)

Oblivion Comes Branded in Innocence (for, or of, J.C.)

"So the Eternal Stranger to the Light places, the  
drowned husk memory, Mine to close the  
dust-spaced door, drag away these retrospective hours,  
for there are no more to hold as dear . . .  
Those who are beyond have carried the message,  
each to the next, down to where/  
I lie, bent in the old dry straw, too old and  
infirm to more than Live/this Answer . . .

Live for me our last, for We have been all  
that has gone before, and there is no other  
for which to wait . . .

Oblivion comes Branded in Innocence, and  
when We were young I took no heed until  
Forked with barbs I cut at the blackness; He  
cast not his dark veil aside, rather  
pitched it further over Me, until I could hear  
Nothing, only the scouring motions of the  
Pale Horse scything away the Will of Light . . .  
Is there no resurrection for the Fallen?  
In a trance you have waited, have traced  
the coming and going of feet and find only Our  
Shadow, grey and brittle of years . . ."

Heed no longer, the light has drawn away,  
and you must go willingly . . .

NEAR (1980)

Creation (Microcosmos and Macrocosmos)

Either side of Eternity  
is a long shot, rippling  
to and from a Mirror Cave  
Phoenix annihilating and creating  
from dawn to dawn . . .  
Back and forth we come,  
Singing down eons of pain to nothing,  
Singing back, inverted, bleeding,  
Forever pulsating in many-textured spasms . . .  
Death gives life to death;  
Life gives death to the Sublime . . .  
Until the Mandala opens, leaving us gasping  
No longer/Black Hole absorbs tense rages  
Leads us beyond form and anger  
to Cycle's Finis/Rest  
for Creation . . .

Dreamers:Awaken:  
One White Light burns Incandescent . . .  
Until such another moment that, Self Conscious again,  
Time/Spawns the dream once more . . .

by John Boulding





This could be subtitled 'or their unco-operativeness?', for I often ask myself what is the point in having a musicians' co-operative, of being a member of one. This pondering stems from a relatively limited experience of Bristol Musicians' Co-operative (a year's membership only), but also from involvement in other forms of co-operative working. These different situations, and the problems that arise in each one of joint action, communication and organisation, have led me to assess what it is that is particular about a musicians' co-operative:

- . . . in what sense is it co-operative
- . . . how far can it work co-operatively
- . . . are there inherent limitations to its co-operative nature
- . . . if so, how do they affect its organisation and development
- . . . are there guiding principles, that is, a philosophic basis to a musicians' co-op
- . . . should there be???

Much of this article arises from a frustration at the apparent lack of 'co-operative' understanding among musicians, and a need to reaffirm (for myself also) the principles that exist to sustain and promote a group of people with common interests . . . however that is presuming more than is yet established.

#### WHAT'S IN A CO-OPERATIVE?

A co-operative, by definition, is an organisation characterised by co-operation, that is, collective action for mutual profit or common benefit and, in a business co-operative (and for some in BMC, music is a business/profession) it is seen as an association for buying and selling to the better advantage of its members or participants by elimination of middlemen profits.

Very briefly and succinctly we describe BMC as a 'self-help organisation for creative musicians'. From that we understand the Co-operative exists to help musicians promote themselves and their 'creative' music. In BMC this has commonly been taken as musicians involved in music with little possibility of a platform elsewhere. However, with that mention of 'self', the individual creeps in, and it is over this question of the role of the individual in a co-operative of musicians that the root of the question 'the co-operativeness of co-operatives' lies. In my understanding of individual involvement in co-operatives, self-help should be thought of as self-awareness. This leads to an individual initiative which then motivates collective action for a common benefit, where the common benefit is a benefit shared equally and is not directly the result of the initiative nor of the activity. Of course the benefit is a result of the success of the activity, but the individual should not gain independently from the success of the initiative. In one's more cynical moments it seems that (co-operative) self-help can often be equivalent to (individual) self-interest, where individuals use a collective organisation to promote individuals for individual profit, whereas the individual should be promoting the ideology for collective gain (i.e. including himself but not exclusively).

However this simple analysis does not completely cover the working of BMC, for we have chosen to deal with the collective organisation and promotion of the individual as well as the ideology, the music. This can prove to be quite a dilemma in a co-operative system as the individual initiative, that is the creativity of the musician/organiser, and the activity, that is the performance of the music, are inseparable and the profit is directly related to the com-

Drawing by Maria Carlota Silva to music by Linda Martin



...  
bination. One could imagine a musicians' co-operative existing to promote only the 'creative music'; where the self expression of the performer was seen as an aspect of the creativity of the music and not of the individual; or where individual initiative was not related to individual gain but to the continuing ability to promote the music. (The re-direction of the often prominent musicians' ego would be an interesting phenomenon to experience.) However, we now understand a fundamental aspect of the co-operative nature of BMC - it is an organisation where individual interest and common ideology attempt to co-exist on an equal footing.

And it is these two factors: common ideology and individual interest that form musicians and others, with specific interest in the music, into a group. One aspect of the common ideology has already been mentioned, that of providing a platform for musics that otherwise would have difficulty being heard. On the face of it that principle speaks for itself where individual initiative asks for collective action, in that musicians with ideas ask for venues for performance. Then, as co-operative not only refers to the external action of a group but also the method of working within the group, some kind of democratic decision about the suitability of the idea can be taken. (Providing all are clear about the principles upon which the decision is being made.) However this poses two other questions concerning the co-op and the individual - how far should the co-op as an entity be responsible to, or for the individual? This question has application (1) in the financial realm: should the co-op be funding individuals directly for the performance (i.e. being responsible for them), or allow individuals to take responsibility for their own initiative; (2) in the musical realm: should the co-op be concerned about the quality of the individual's initiative? Are there collective standards, does the co-operative have a public image, a reputation? Should it have? Both difficult questions. Firstly, as I understand it, there is no clear cut decision because of the dual nature of the co-op already discussed, and decisions rest on how far one sees individual interest dominating and how far collective ideology. For my part, and for reasons I will expand on later, I feel that the co-op should be seen much more as a vehicle for action rather than the place of action (though literally it does provide a place). That is, it is the means to an end rather than the end. The machinery is available, constructed on a common philosophy for the use of the individual who wants to understand and work the machine. For that reason (in answer to my first question), I would use all the available finance for co-operative action . . . the oiling, the maintenance and development of the machine. The area of development is seen not only as one where the co-op expands in membership/audience/efficient organisation, but also one where new parts of the machine are unable to move into, and open up, unexplored areas for the music and the performer. Also where new areas are glimpsed by individuals, the co-operative can back their investigation (funding for special projects). If one takes the analogy of the vehicle for action to its limit, then the machine will certainly have a style, an image, but neither a cohesive nor a complete one. For the style will be as varied as the number of members and as bitty, eccentric, dubious, brilliant as they are. However there would be a fundamental clarity, one would hope a beauty, honesty, experienced which should emanate from the underlying, binding philosophy of co-operativeness and this would be the standard and the reputation of the co-operative. (c.f. penultimate paragraph: co-op shouldn't align itself with specific music but with a specific ideology.)

There are other aspects of the common ideology worth mentioning. One of our regular BMC activities is organising a weekly workshop where musicians can come along and join with others to experiment and develop their music. It is a place where new musicians to Bristol, people just beginning in the field of music and others can meet, exchange ideas . . . the possibilities are endless.

...  
However lately attendances had been generally poor with only the 'special feature' workshops receiving much attention. At a monthly meeting a motion was put forward to discontinue the weekly workshop, and without much apparent thought or discussion it was carried. The following meeting the original presenter of the motion asked for it to be reversed commenting on how contrary to our co-operative principles the first decision had been. There are two areas to be understood from this; firstly the principle that the Co-op exists to encourage the performance and development of music and musicians and surely workshops are the primary example of collective action in self development; secondly the decision, or non-decision, to stop them was an obvious example of participants in a co-operative group being totally unaware of the reasons for being part of that group (I include myself). Individual interest (in this case non-interest) completely dominated common ideology. For me an example of the 'unco-operativeness of co-ops' and a limitation of the dual nature of the co-op we have.

Another aspect of the ideology, supporting my understanding of BMC as a vehicle for action, is that, in providing a platform for music that the 'establishment' shuns, the co-operative is making a stand against the narrow-mindedness of the establishment. Then, to be at all effective as a campaigning tool, the co-op cannot become establishment in its own way. It must be an active mechanism living through its members and not a fortress protecting them, for them to hide behind. Equal participation is the name of the game, each individual must be prepared to take a stand. But this cannot be seen as, in any way, a stand against one another. It is a collective stand. Our co-operative respects the individual. It exists for individuals to express themselves, to develop, to 'move on'. It also exists to combat the 'commercial' scene of destructive competitiveness, of back-biting, where individuals can only see a way ahead by 'scoring' off their colleagues. A co-operative is democratic. There is no competition for 'gigs', save that of time - and we all know everything comes in time. All individual initiative is given a hearing. For that reason the co-op machinery must provide general information for all. There can be no individual power bases, the structure of work must be as non-hierarchical as possible. But that means YOU must be involved, there is no room for anyone to be spoon-fed. The co-operative, as machine, must be constructed and continually changed to suit organisational variation and to respond to external influences. Sharing of the collective (usually organisational) activities must be widespread among members. Of course some people can be more efficient in specific areas, but where an organisation is intent on promoting individuals as well as the cause, the individual must be aware of the structure that is there in support by assuming responsibilities in it. It is, then, incumbent of those with specific interests to delegate to those unaware of them. And further, to achieve this co-operative working, an essential ingredient will be trust.

I hope this explanation of 'why co-operative?' answers to an extent one of the perennial laments that one hears from musicians . . . 'but I only want to play the music'. That statement could only become plausible having found a wealthy patron of the musical art and can only harm a co-operative bent on collective action of music and self, without that middleman.

A final area of discussion (for this paper anyway) lies around the question of how closely one defines the 'non-commercial'/unpopular/creative music that the co-operative supports. It is said that BMC welcomes any musician who feels that they could benefit from involvement in a music co-op. This, I feel, should be expanded to that phrase previously used . . . and who cannot find a platform for their music. Initially, BMC was set up to support the neglected, young and growing field of free improvisation. A great deal has happened since then (1975), with much success. Although one could certainly still say free improvisation was a young, growing, neglected field, it is said in a different



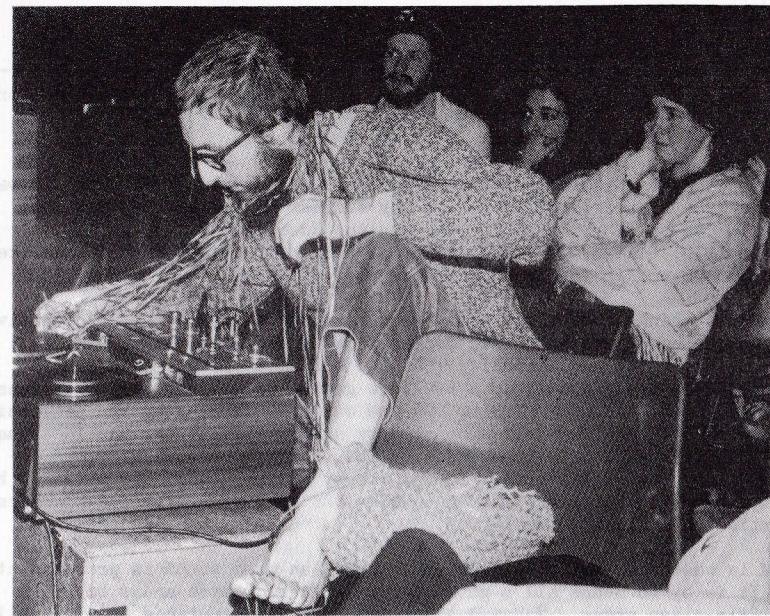
way, for now much strength is gained from the knowledge that there are many more musicians with common interest, ideas and approaches to the music. Then, from this strength, the initial need to reject other forms of music, thus bolstering one's own case (as I simplistically understood the rather introspective - social - approach of free improvisation groups) recedes. This makes it possible for the other fields of music without a conventional platform (ethnic musics, jazz, in fact much of the root music of free improvisation) to be recognised as areas also in need of 'self-help' organisations for their promotion. For surely, from our previous discussion on the nature of our co-op, BMC shouldn't be seen to align itself with a specific music but rather a specific ideology. NB the co-op isn't an end in itself. With this broader spectrum of forms and common ideological basis, music and musicians can interact, expand without threat to their individuality but gain from a rich variety of surrounding influences in close contact. While, additionally, providing a greater exposure to the public for those musicians and musics represented at any given event by the Co-operative.

#### WHY/HOW CO-OPERATIVE?

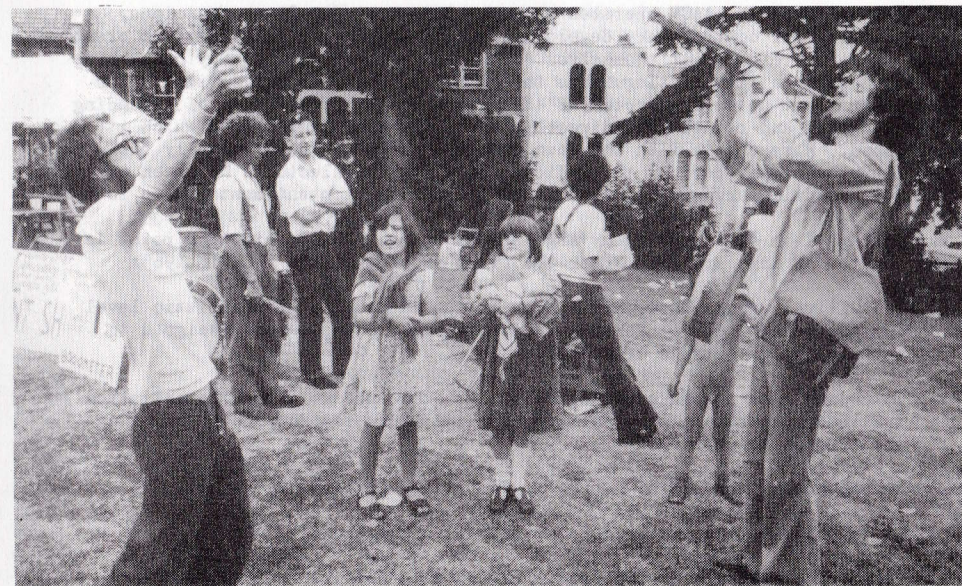
Let's hope these observations shed some light on the reasons for, and for being involved in, a music co-operative. At least I hope it will cause one to think twice before saying, 'it doesn't matter whether it's BMC or not' . . . for co-operative means quite clearly it does.



Peter Brotzmann, Linda Martin, Bill Clarke,  
Peter Kowald: Workshop at Bristol Arts Centre



Bob Helson



Montpelier Summer Fair 1979

Bob Helson, Will Menter



by Will Menter

AACM stands for Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. It was founded in 1965 and is thus older than any similar European organisations. (The Berlin Co-op FMP started in 1968 and the Musicians' Co-op in London started in 1970.) Also, its very different cultural context makes it unlike the European Co-ops in fairly fundamental ways.

In England, I think it is true to say there are two poles to the co-operative movement which sometimes co-exist, and are sometimes separate. I will call these professionalism and community. On the one hand the original London Musicians' Co-op was effectively a pressure group for professional musicians and operated on an exclusive basis. On the other hand, many of the provincial co-ops place much more emphasis on community and participation; the idea that everyone can take part. It seems that in the present London Musicians' Collective these two poles have a fairly uneasy co-existence. In Chicago, by contrast, these two poles are subsumed under the general concept of Blackness. Black artists and Black community.

The AACM is based in the South Side of Chicago, an area which is predominantly Black. It is by no means all a ghetto; it includes ghetto areas but also Black middle-class areas. Muhammad Ali lives there for instance (that is Ali the Champ, not Ali the drummer). Also, significantly, right in the middle of the South Side lies the University of Chicago and a small racially-mixed 'intellectual' neighbourhood called Hyde Park. Heavily guarded by University security police, of course, but nevertheless right there, next to the ghetto.

In this context, the AACM operates as an organisation for Black musicians, specifically for contemporary developments of Black music, free jazz, or creative music as they refer to it themselves. It seems to be more than anything this question of race that distinguishes the AACM from European collectives. For the AACM is set up as a guardian of the Black tradition, as a way of extending the tradition and relating it directly to the Black community from which it developed. However, as with the jazz tradition as a whole, especially the avant-garde of any period, the audience of white intellectuals has been crucial for its economic survival and ultimately its musical content must relate to this.

But perhaps I am anticipating my argument too much. A good starting point is the charter of aims drawn up after the first meeting of the AACM in 1965:

- A) To cultivate young musicians and to create music of a high artistic level for the general public through the presentation of programs designed to magnify the importance of creative music.
- B) To create an atmosphere conducive to artistic endeavors for the artistically inclined by maintaining a workshop for the expressed purpose of bringing talented musicians together.
- C) To conduct a free training program for young aspirant musicians.
- D) To contribute financially to charitable organizations.
- E) To provide a source of employment for worthy creative musicians.
- F) To set an example of high moral standards for musicians and to uplift the public image of creative musicians.

...

- G) To increase mutual respect between creative artists and musical tradesmen (booking agents, managers, promoters and instrument manufacturers) etc.
- H) To uphold the tradition of elevated cultured musicians handed down from the past.
- I) To stimulate spiritual growth in creative artists through participation in programs, concerts, recitals, etc."

From this we may make a number of inferences about absences from the already existing musical scene in Chicago. The absence of adequate work for overtime musicians, the absence of an adequate educational system for creative musicians, the absence of public respect for the activity of making creative music, etc, etc, and, in general, the absence of a structure by which musicians who feel strongly about these things were able to take positive action.

The context for the forming of the AACM was both the deterioration of the jazz scene on the South Side in the late 50's and early 60's and the social character and public image of the post-bebop jazz musicians of the period.

Going right back to the 1920's and Louis Armstrong and Joseph Oliver, the South Side had been a thriving centre for jazz and blues. Of course, it had its ups and downs and never actually regained the historical eminence it had been in the 20's, but in the late 50's things became much worse as Joseph Jarman explained to me:

63rd and Cottage Grove was a whole strip. You could walk from Woodlawn to Cottage Grove and you could hear all the great local musicians - Johnny Griffin, Gene Ammons, Van Freeman, Wilbur Ware - and also some of the New York musicians - Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis.

Also at that time they played music in the streets - like the record shops - the popular music then was so-called "jazz", "bebop" . . .

There was music all over the city, but the forces that be eliminated all that. There was too much happening, so they closed down much of the South Side, some of the West Side and all of the Downtown places . . . I think just politics caused it. Mayor Daley and his attitudes towards what the city needed, what was good for it.

The way in which the closures were instigated was by imposing an expensive licence fee on places that employed more than three musicians, and it turned out that only the clubs on the more affluent North Side could afford it.

The closing of South Side clubs meant not only the loss of employment for musicians and the loss of entertainment for the community. It also affected the structure of the developing Black culture by taking away the educational system:

They used to have places where you could go and learn. You could learn one song, then you could go to a different place each night and play your one song. You could learn one blues. You could play it and then listen to all the others do one song. And if they were on a better level they'd do two songs!

But now there are only two places I know of where you can do this.

The outline, then, was being repressed. And the dominant ideology of the bebop musicians was incapable of fighting this repression, as journalist and early

...



...  
champion of the AACM Jerry Figi has commented:

Bebop lived in a world of shadows, a sub-culture of scuffling and share-cropping, of second-class citizenship despite longstanding acknowledgment that jazz is America's most unique contribution to the arts. The social outlook of the beboppers was essentially negative, that of the hip slave, a can't-fight-city-hall cynicism, a sly rationale of self-protection by evasion, frustration muffled by cool stance.

(from Chicagoland and FM Guide, November 1968)

Of course it was the economic and cultural conditions which Figi mentions that influenced the negative outlook of the beboppers but by the middle 60's with the general growth of Black consciousness, the musicians were to change both the material conditions and their own 'social outlook'. It is this response that is documented so eloquently in the charter of the AACM.

From its inception up to the present time the AACM has remained faithful to its conception of combining artistic activity with social concerns. Different members place different weight on the two things and it relates partly to their own activity. John Jackson, for example, who has carried much of the administration burden for the AACM, is a professional social worker employed by the City Welfare Department and only a part-time musician. He defines his priorities as social:

We consider ourselves a positive and civilising force in the community . . . we've kept down a lot of untoward situations, a lot of violence, but we don't think we've got the response that we deserve. When I look upon the situation where the federal government will pay out thousands of dollars for somebody to study the sex habits of the fly or the moth!

As rich as this country is, every person should have all of his medical needs and all of his cultural needs. Even the poorest of people here are rich compared to their counterparts in other countries.

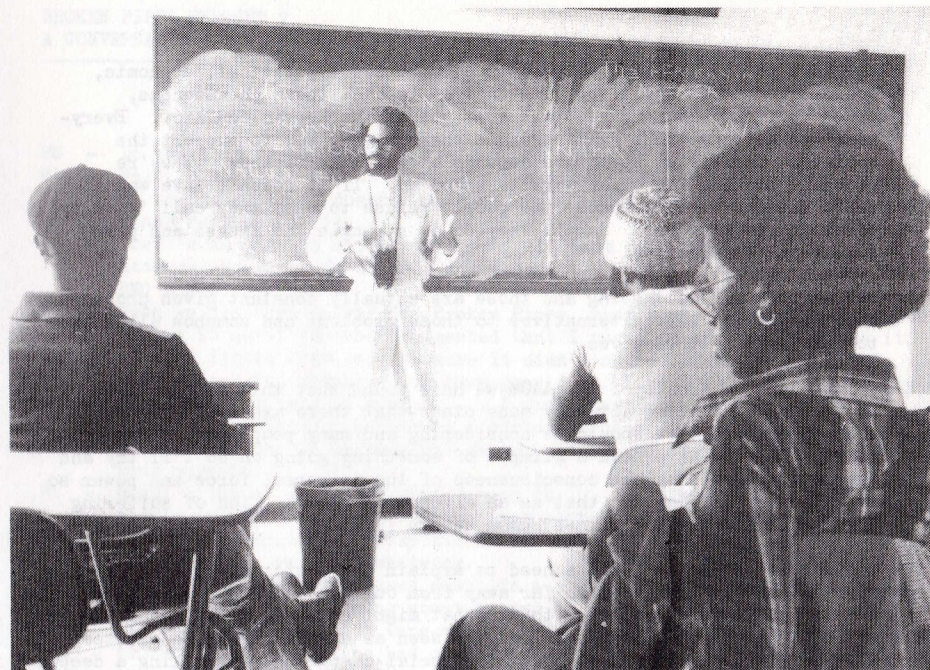
So what the AACM is trying to do is to get our society to reorder its priorities.

To me the AACM represents more than just an excursion into the seriousness of music. We're trying to change attitudes, change stances and we feel that the music might be used as an 'open sesame' to get people to change other ideas. A lot of folks have said we're revolutionary. We're revolutionary in that we want more people to change in order perhaps to create a better society.

Our basic thing is to protect our Black children and to raise them up to be strong and broad-shouldered and proud. This is the undercurrent behind the AACM, this is why we go and play free in schools sometimes, go out into the community. as I said.

Several of the members have actually stated that it was specifically the AACM that rescued them from the street culture and hustling of the ghetto. George Lewis and Joseph Jarman are two of the better known musicians who have said this.

In Jarman's case, as a full time musician, he explains the music in personal and spiritual terms as a way of avoiding being totally dominated by social problems:



Music of the African in America - Kahil El-Zabar



Piano class - Adegoke Steve Colson (photos: Will Menter)



...  
You have to look at the whole world perspective - political, economic, sociological - at any given time that we look at these phenomena, yeah? ... The country had just come out of the Korean conflict. Everything was getting tight again because there was no war to support the society. Capitalist structure depends on war like Vietnam. They're probably looking for other wars to spend on. If it doesn't have war it can't sustain itself because the people refuse to what they call 'give up' something they've got. So all they do is strangle the masses and perpetuate the bourgeoisie.

But all of this is ongoing and those are actually constant given problems. The thing is to seek alternatives to those problems and somehow allow them to take care of themselves.

So through the ideals of the AACM we have found that this is possible - to survive. Coltrane actually made clear that there are other forces in the universe that we should be considering and many people are considering them. I myself have seen a glimpse of something going on so I'll try and advocate the reality and consciousness of the universal force and power so that people can consider that as an alternative to the kind of suffering that the mundane world forces human beings into.

For the English reader, I feel a need to explain these statements to a certain extent because they both seem so far away from our own culture. Jackson's pride and Jarman's mysticism are things that might cause a little unease in the reader. However, I think both must be seen as a striving for a greater intensity of purpose both in fighting for social change and for making a deeper more expressive music. This is simply the context of Black culture. A culture which is still in many ways repressed. I think it is also in this intensity that the musicians feel the link between their music and the Black community, being mediated through individual consciousness.

Well, what of the actual activity, the facts?

There have been two continuous strands of activity from the beginning: the free school and presentation of concerts.

The school operates every Saturday morning in a college building in the South Side and now offers instrumental and theory classes at different levels and also a philosophical/historical class called 'Music of the African in America'. From the classes I sat in on, it seemed that the teaching generally took the form of combining straight European musical techniques (scales, notation, harmony, etc) with a special emphasis on concepts that have been important to the jazz tradition (strong sound, rhythm, swing, etc). The tutors include members who are now well known such as Malachi Favors and Don Moye and the present president Kahil El-Zabar, as well as members known only locally such as Ed Wilkerson and Wes Cochran. There is one tutor, Douglas Ewart, who actually learnt to play in the school himself.

The students are mainly Black girls and boys ranging from age about 12 upwards and seem to have a wide range of interest and commitment. The eleven classes available had an average of 5 to 15 students each.

Concert presentations have been mainly in the South Side often in or near Hyde Park where they are accessible to both White and Black audiences. They have varied in frequency from one every night to one every few months.

In the 15 year history of the organisation there are three stages which are easily identifiable. The initial period from 1965 to 1969 was highly active,

...  
with many concerts, the establishment of the school and other community activities. Also some of the members recorded on the local Delmark and Nessa labels, (Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarman, Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, Lester Bowie).

The sudden death of two of the young members in 1968 and 1969 prompted the second stage which has been called a mass exodus. Eight of the most active members left Chicago and went to live in Paris, where in the post 1968 cultural climate their radical music met with immediate success. Meanwhile in Chicago the AACM kept only a low key activity going, held together principally by the chairman and original inspiring force Muhal Richard Abrams and by John Jackson.

The third stage began with the return to America of these musicians although only three of them actually settled in Chicago. New younger members came into the organisation and carried it forward. It gradually became a sort of base organisation in Chicago held together by the younger members and the few older ones who didn't travel, hosting visits by the more established members such as Braxton, Leo Smith, the Art Ensemble of Chicago (although three of them still live in Chicago). The established musicians, for their part, provide useful contacts and opportunities for some of the younger members. (For example, Braxton has featured many of them on his records.) In 1977, the AACM received its first major funding from the government with a grant of \$8,500 from the National Endowment for the Arts, and concerts gradually evolved from shoe-string presentations towards less frequent grant-aided events including a festival every summer. At the same time the music has actually become more saleable and many of the members have moved to New York in response to this.

Through these stages the basic structure of the AACM has remained the same. It is essentially a brotherhood. Musicians must demonstrate their commitment and sincerity in some way before joining and then must be approved by the majority of the membership. There are officers with specific duties and even a system of fines for members who don't fulfil their duties. In Chicago itself, when I visited in 1977, there were about 20 active members, but there are many more in other places who still keep in contact.

#### Conclusion:

The AACM is concerned with creative music, which has been defined by Leo Smith in a way that makes it synonymous with improvisation:

creative music is dedicated to developing a heightened awareness of improvisation as an art form

but the specific way that improvisation is understood by the AACM means that the "anyone can do it" element of many English co-ops is totally absent. For the AACM, improvisation is not primarily a way of making an original personal music but is a tradition. The tradition includes within it the value of making highly original and personal contributions, but more importantly for the AACM improvisation, creative music is their tradition. The terms creative music and Black music (or even Great Black music) are often used interchangeably and their tradition stretches right back through the whole history of jazz and blues, through the work songs and field hollers of the plantation to Africa and African music. Thus the concept of community in the AACM is closely connected with tradition - it means making the Black community more aware of the richness and strength of their own cultural traditions and giving it back to them. So it can be seen how important the school is to them, for it is not only a training school for potential professional musicians, it is also a community school of Black culture. Most of the students will never become professional musicians but are interested in learning about their own culture through participation. In the context of



the tradition, then, there is no contradiction between the professional and community aims of the organisation.

I haven't said much about what AACM music sounds like. I think the major point is that it is an extension of the Black music tradition and with a pronounced leaning towards more collective forms. Further than this it is better to listen to the music itself, and I recommend some records below.

However as a final point, since I have been talking about Black music, I think it should be noted that it isn't a self-contained form operating solely in the Black community. Ever since jazz left New Orleans in the 1910's it has been both a music for the Black community and a music "acting out" the concept of Blackness for a White audience. That this duality is maintained in much AACM music is, I think, a cause of much of its subtlety and interest. So, for example, it is an essential part of the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago that their reinterpretation of Black musical history should seem authentic to European audiences, because that is where they get a lot of their work and, therefore, money. And in their case they somehow manage to incorporate that fact into the actual message that comes across in the music, so the relationship between music and audience becomes exceptionally complex. But that's another story . . .

#### Recommended Records:

Roscoe Mitchell	- Sound (Delmark DS408) 1966
	- Old Quartet (nessa N5) 1967
Lester Bowie	- Numbers 1 & 2 (Nessa N1) 1967
Joseph Jarman	- As If It Were the Seasons (Delmark DS417) 1968
Anthony Braxton	- Three Compositions of New Jazz (Delmark 415) 1968
Richard Abrams	- Levels and Degrees of Light (Delmark DS413) 1968

In my opinion these are the best of the early recordings. More recent ones have become too numerous to deal with really, and a good principle would be: if it turns up secondhand (which a lot of them do) buy it!

#### Further Reading:

Valerie Wilmer	- As Serious As Your Life (Chapter 7 - Chicago's Alternative Society)
Bill Quinn	- The AACM (in Downbeat Yearbook 1968)
Muhal Richard Abrams,	
John S Jackson	- The AACM (article in Black World, November 1973)
Leslie B Rout	- The AACM (Journal of Popular Culture, Fall 1967)

The writing on the blackboard read something like:

"Listen to the music, and using the water and materials provided, improvise along."

I asked about this:

"Yes, we do some improvisation. The children do a lot of group work. With water, we often record it and slow it down - the younger ones particularly like to make sounds that relate directly to the subject we're playing about. It helps them to be able to hear inside more complex music and see how the sounds relate. We use the tape recording a lot - as a document of what we've done as well as a way of treating sound."

"With the young ones we give them a chance to bang or scrape or blow anything available - not orchestral instruments, but purpose-built ones that I have."

"We often work from texts - like the beginning of Under Milk Wood; we actually use the words whilst playing. We use a notation system I have invented - which is very similar to many others; a graph of (for instance) pitch against time with conventional dynamic markings and rhythmic markings if we need them."

"We use conventional notation too - children who go on to exam groups need to do it. We listen to records - perhaps pop records that they listen to anyway, but with an end point in view - listening critically."

"It all boils down to encouraging the pupil to take music seriously - to see that it is no less important than physics or french - but also to see it realistically, what really happens in the rock industry. Try to break down the prejudice and ignorance people have about music."

(Mike Cornick, Head of Music)

There is a very interesting booklet called Music Guidelines, produced by ILEA Publications Unit, 1/4 King Street, WC2. On evaluation of instrumental tuition it says:

"The teacher should evaluate the process of learning by asking:

- 1) Are the pupils learning about sounds?
- 2) Are they listening?
- 3) Are they concentrating?
- 4) Are the pupils using an idiom in which they can express themselves naturally?
- 5) Is the teaching showing them new ways of causing sound?
- 6) Are the pupils aware of the contribution of others in the group?
- 7) Are the pupils aware of the individuals contribution to the group?
- 8) Are they enjoying themselves?
- 9) Are the pupils gaining fluency in improvisation?
- 10) Is the intonation satisfactory?
- 11) Are the pupils developing aural perception?
- 12) Are the pupils developing manipulative skills?"



Southfields is a mixed London Comprehensive of 1300 pupils (medium-sized). Each class of 30 has two 35-minute lessons a week of music. There is one full-time, two part-time teachers and eleven outside instrumental teachers in the music department.

The school has several small practice rooms as well as a music room. The hall is acoustically very good for large groups. There is a studio with limited recording facilities and a small synthesiser.

There is a junior band and a concert band which rehearse simple swing and pop tunes in the lunch hours. The school also operates as an evening institute and runs a swing band and a jazz workshop.

In the science department I was asked to teach about sound to the 4th years. I "taught" three groups, using home made instruments and unusual sound sources. The plan of the talks was just to show that sound was vibration, higher frequency meant higher pitch and discussing ways of producing different pitches, leading to overtones, tone, etc.

I was also asked to help Mike Cornick with an exhibition of all types of musical instruments and sound sources using oscilloscopes to show their wave forms.

I had arranged to observe some lessons given by Mike Cornick but unfortunately they did careers that day . . .

I asked various pupils what they did in music lessons:

"We listen to records and stuff - all sorts, not just classical - pop and jazz too. Sometimes we play instruments - organs and things. We get 3 lessons a week. It's alright - sometimes it's OK but sometimes it's boring. We have to say what instruments are playing. I like Madness and the Specials." (Terry, 1BM)

"I don't know. Nothing much. I used to play a trumpet, but I gave it up . . ."

"Do you listen to records?"

"I don't know. I don't listen. I don't like it much. We play instruments he's made. Like a thing that clicks and you can turn it up faster." (Graham, 2CH)

"Listen to rock and roll. Write about it. Play instruments and stuff - synthesiser, vibes. I listen to reggae. We've just been doing Elton John." (Jason, 2BW)

Amidst much comments and laughter from her friends:

"God, it's really boring, we've just come from there. All he does well is play the piano, I suppose. Oh, don't write that down. We ought to do rock and roll." (Denise, 3AW)

(Whilst Nicola watched with widely surprised eyes . . .)  
(3AW is a consistently creative group. Mike Cornick)

"Listen to records - all sorts - Elton John last week." (Vanessa, 3BM)

"We could have done more theory lower in the school. I do biology and chemistry but I really want to be a classical guitarist. We don't do that much theory, sonata form and things. We use a very good book: A Concise History of Music by William Lovelock. We have to identify music - what composers and when it was written - stuff like that. No, not just classical, last week he played "Take the 'A' Train". That's Ellington."

(Oh, I thought it was Billy Strayhorn - Brett)

"I listen to heavy metal - Def Leppard, Rush. The only guitarist I like is Laurindo Almeida." (Stephanie, 4 ACA)

"A lot of history. We're an exam group. Follow the development through to the modernists. Listen to music and analyse. Daniel is doing a project on 20th Century music. You can do anything you like as a project. At home I have an instrument like a wire on a piece of wood with a diaphragm and a horn on the bottom. We play with this £400 bass that sounds like nothing on earth. I don't play it in school." (Paul, 5<sup>3</sup>)

"He's got this bag of toys and things too - toy cars." (Daniel, 5<sup>3</sup>)

"I don't want to study music at college. I do the three sciences and it's nice to do music as well. I do a bit of art too. We have to study an instrument. I do piano but I haven't been for months. It's an outside teacher who comes in. Yes, we do ear training - sight reading - playing weird instruments sometimes." (Paul, 5<sup>3</sup>)



Pops Lemon's Lemon Pops Show, Arts Centre, November 1979



by N Kulbin

From: The Blaue Reiter Almanac

NOTE: The Blaue Reiter Almanac dates from 1912. It is a provocative work (originally in magazine form) on art, art theory and culture of that period. It was edited by Wassily Kandinski and Franz Marc: Its aims were to make accessible to the European avant-garde modern trends in art (including music, etc). It came at a time when art was "dying". As Victor Aubertin said in his work Die Kunst Stirbt ("Art is Dying"), "Art is dying of masses and of materialism . . ."

Aaron Standon

### Theses of Free Music

The music of nature is free in its choice of notes - light, thunder, the whistling of wind, the rippling of water, the singing of birds. The nightingale sings not only the notes of contemporary music, but the notes of all the music it likes.

Free music follows the same laws of nature as do the music and the whole art of nature.

Like the nightingale, the artist of free music is not restricted by tones and half tones. He also uses quarter tones and eighth tones and music with a free choice of tones.

This disturbs neither the simplicity nor the search for a basic character, nor does it lead to a photographic reproduction of life, but it facilitates stylization.

In the beginning quarter tones are introduced. (In antiquity, when man was still rich in original instincts, they were used as the "enharmonic scale." They still exist in the old Hindu music.)

### The Advantage of Free Music

- New enjoyment of unusual tone combinations
- New harmony with new chords
- New dissonances with new resolutions
- New melodies

The choice of possible chords and melodies is very much enlarged.

The power of musical poetry is magnified. This is most important because music is mainly poetry. Free music has many more possibilities for affecting the listener and exciting his soul.

Delicate combinations and changing tones strongly affect man's soul.

The representational capacity of music is enhanced. The voice of a loved person can be rendered; the singing of the nightingale, the rustling of leaves, the delicate and stormy noise of the wind and the sea can be imitated. The movement of man's soul can be represented completely . . .

### Study and Use of Coloured Music are Facilitated

These close connections also create musical paintings, which consist of special

planes of colour that merge to form progressing harmonies, similar to contemporary painting.

### The Music of Free Tones

Progress in music is possible when the artist is not bound to notes, when he can use any interval, e.g., a third tone or a thirteenth tone.

This music provides full freedom to inspiration, and it has the previously mentioned advantages of natural music: it can represent subjective experiences and, at the same time, the poetry of moods and passions as well as the illusions of nature.

### Practical Performance of Free Music

The performance:

The performance of free music is very simple. As works with quarter tones can be performed, the improvisation of free tones by singing, by playing on the double bass, the cello, and some wind instruments can also be accomplished without any change and without a different tuning.

The harp can be tuned to quarter and other tones. The "chromatic" harp is best for this purpose.

The finger boards of the guitar, the zither, the balalaika, etc, must be changed.

The piano can also be tuned differently, but the number of octaves will be reduced and the keyboard will lose its significance. To avoid this, two rows of strings and two keyboards could be arranged.

Other instruments are also easy to use and adapt.

The simplest way to study the characteristics of free music is to use glass bowls or glasses and to fill them with different amounts of water.

It is also easy to build xylophones at home.

The writing of free music:

The staff remains almost unchanged. At the beginning it will only be necessary to add symbols for the quarter tones.

The improvisation of free tones may for the time being be taken down on Gramophone records.

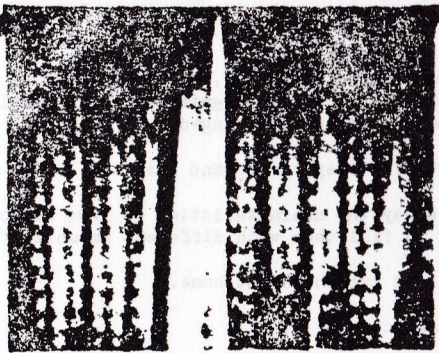
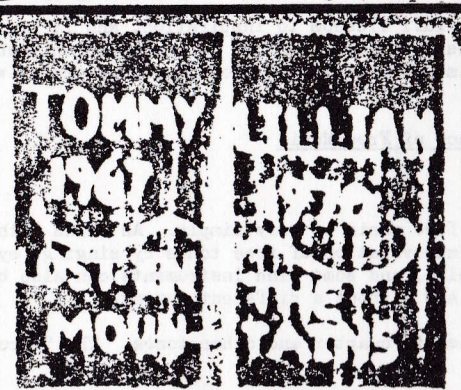
They may also be depicted in the form of a drawing with rising and falling lines.



by Hannah Charlton

The following conversation between David Toop and Hannah Charlton took place at David Toop's house in February 1980. It was intended as an interview for the music press but it got rather longer and more interesting than was likely to be acceptable. So it seemed natural to print the conversation in the Bristol magazine - especially as at the time of sending this to Bristol, the IPC dispute makes the likelihood of the interview appearing in "Melody Maker" even more chancy than usual.

- DT - I'm not very interested in talking about myself. I think what I would be interested in is talking about writing and music writing and where it falls down . . . all this pop music is occupying a lot of thought.
- HC - Quite healthily so . . .
- DT - Oh yes, but it means I'm not thinking obsessively about improvised music - I'm thinking about what it's all about to be suddenly involved with this monster, the music business. About trying to resolve all the contradictions . . . well not resolve them but become aware of the contradictions in that, beyond the obvious ones.
- HC - I actually felt that in that duo gig last night with Steve Beresford, a lot of the time you were operating independently within your own spaces without a great deal of reference to each other.
- DT - Yeah . . . I think that's fairly deliberate.
- HC - I don't know. It's weird. I mean sometimes in the Alterations gigs - an obvious parallel and probably not a very good one - I feel dialogues going on much more than last night.
- DT - Yes, there's very little conscious dialogue in that duo which is why it's interesting. Because actually we're both working to the same ends - that's obvious. There's a lot of tightness in the music. You couldn't say it was just two people just paying no attention to each other at all. It's just about something else. I think it's probably just that it's the most extreme example of people who are more concerned with the way of working than with the sound of music - than with the aesthetics of music. To me that's more and more important.
- HC - I had this feeling yesterday that the relationship with the guitar above all was what marked yesterday for me.
- DT - That's one of the things that has been happening in Alterations. In Amsterdam we ended up as a rock'n'roll band - two electric guitars, a bass and a drum kit. We were playing rock'n'roll and the gig in Brussels which was very, very heavy indeed - fighting in the audience and stuff - was similar in a way. I don't know, it's good to do it on the continent because rock music means something entirely different there. Peter Cusack has got some very good ideas about why jazz means something completely different on the continent to here and why rock music means something, completely different. I'm so totally against this music being labelled jazz now that I would almost rather not get involved in listening to music now or anything like that which characterised it as jazz. For me it's just ridiculous. You know, I started as a rock musician when I was fourteen and we're on Top of the Pops tonight and it's never been any different for me. But it's a very different perspective. I think here jazz means something completely different.
- HC - It always has done, hasn't it?
- DT - On the continent rock music is like the music of acquiescence almost - it's real status quo music (I don't mean the group). And you just get sickened by the pressure of it and the effect of it - it just symbolises the growing conformity of youth culture and life style which is actually alternative to nothing.
- HC - I think that on the continent the kind of 'freedom' people find in the jazz is very much to do with a more intellectual approach . . .



sacophones

falling

part

my

window

 Barry  
 Edgar  
 Pilcher



DT - It's also seen as political music on the continent which it isn't here, at all. So it's quite a strong statement to stand up in a jazz club and play rock'n'roll in Holland because you're reversing all the codes and you actually can shock people quite strongly. There's a very strong feeling amongst people involved in the avant garde of being completely anti-rock. Which I think is terrible because it means they are just stuck with a certain tradition. And never move out of it. And you can see the way that people develop, as they get older, they get more involved in that tradition - a bourgeois avant garde tradition. They sort of collapse back into it after a rebellious youth.

I just think it's got to the point where jazz writers are incapable of writing about improvised music because they just cannot go beyond their own limitations in the way they perceive music. To go back to that duo with me and Steve being concerned about a way of working and what works and what doesn't work, it's quite all right on an aural level to abandon something that doesn't work. I don't think that most writers can actually see that as a valid practice.

HC - A lot of jazz in this country seems more and more about presenting a style of playing . . .

DT - But jazz has always been a music of style . . .

HC - But the point is about people's response. In fact a lot of people have thought there were similarities in both areas but it's becoming apparent that those things are not the same. It's probably better if we define what we think about jazz here because you obviously have got areas where there is overlap.

DT - I think a lot of jazz musicians have tried to break out of . . . their jazzness, you know. If you look at some of the examples, you can see that most of them have failed - whether it was Louis Armstrong singing 'Hello Dolly' or Charlie Parker with strings or Sonny Rollins making disco records. You know, they are good or bad failures really. I just think it really is a music of style. Even Miles Davis who has managed successfully to explore more different avenues and has always taken risks . . . I think he is one of the most interesting people in jazz because he is actually taking a way of working and he is interested in what the sound is, but it can change radically. He can apply a way of working to any kind of sound or configuration and get results which to him are satisfying. He's probably come the closest to improvised music in the whole of jazz I think - more so than a lot of so-called improvisors within the jazz tradition. If you listen to a record like "Filles de Kilimanjaro" it could have gone both ways - at that point. And he chose to go into rock'n'roll. But he could have chosen to go into improvised music because he's very rigorous about a certain way of working. I think if you take that to its logical conclusion then you can get the kind of music that Steve and I were playing last night, which is maybe very hard to listen to because we don't have any precedents for it. But the thing about the guitars, to go back to that, I was just worried about whether working in pop music would affect the music adversely. And I don't think it did at all. Because I think we've been quite stringent in all this other stuff, maintaining an idea of the way we want to work. That is the difference between deciding to make a pop record and sitting down and writing it or actually having a means of working together collectively which happens to produce a pop record. It could equally happen to produce music which is extremely difficult to listen to. Which is fine . . . I'm just not so interested in the aesthetics at all any more. Because I just think that what meaning music has to do with the discourse that surrounds it.

HC - Can we just establish then . . . discourse being relationship or multi-relationships really because there is the context of the song being

HC - produced, for example, being performed and the response from the audience and those relationships exist both within various social and time structures.

DT - Oh yes . . . it's obviously very wide. But I don't feel that there's any intrinsic meaning in music itself.

HC - Can we go back to this thing about aesthetics - you're presumably saying that you place very little faith now in conventional aesthetics?

DT - Yes.

HC - Do you think in any way you are working towards a different kind of aesthetic understanding or response? We've still got to find out about the whole thing to do with cerebral/emotional response . . .

DT - But I think that's problematic in itself. As soon as you bring the word 'emotional' into a discussion about music. One characteristic about music writing is a sort of essentialist philosophy which presents the music as the ultimate projection, you know . . . distilled emotion. It's like a Holy Grail of writing - especially rock writing. And actually if you listen to the best examples that those writers could muster of an essential rock music you often find that that is the most precise calculated music. Maybe Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps - it's really razor sharp in terms of timing. Those people had a certain way of working which was right on the ball and I'm sure the musical results were quite accidental because it was such early days for that particular fusion, you know, country music, RnB and all the rest of it. I'm sure they didn't know what they were doing in terms of an aesthetic. In terms of a way of working, they knew exactly what they were doing - it was so sharp and each of those tracks they did was like a little gem of precision and timing. If you listen to someone like Little Richard - the difference between his classic records and the ones which weren't so good are to do with emotion because he was still projecting the same sort of total hysteria in that demonic fervour. It was the timing and the precision that made those records classic - everything was right on the ball.

HC - Let's talk about this way of working which still involves certain notions of pre-arrangement - if there is any. I take it that what you're saying is you've got a situation where you set up an idea or you have an idea of an effect and then collectively or on your own - solo - you work towards that?

DT - I don't know. I don't have much idea of an effect or working towards anything. I just abandoned the whole idea of having any continuity in what I'm doing. That's part of the art tradition - the idea of a logic or continuity about their life's work is something most artists are obsessed with. I think if you get truly involved in collective work then you have to be prepared to abandon that more or less and go wherever the activity takes you. Obviously if you work with a lot of different groups then it can take you all over the place. I think you have to be prepared to commit yourself to a number of directions which you might be a bit unhappy with because they're part and parcel of that means of working which is a very difficult and unusual way for westerners.

HC - But in fact you are going to get the most problems when you come up against writers who think very much in a linear way - saying where does this and this come from and fitting it into a tradition . . .

DT - Well of course most people who are writing about music spend their whole time talking about your background. And it's just impossible to say. I mean you can make a broad outline of how the music in general has developed but most people's ideas on it are so way off beam . . . it's a laugh.

HC - It's so often like a neatly analysable chain of influences . . . reducing the end product to defining it as segments from here and from there . . .

DT - Yes, you can but you'd be completely wrong . . .



... .

HC - It's much harder to come to improvised music where you are much more on shifting sands, where none of those things apply.

DT - That's right. It's a general obsession certainly in music writing with objectification.

HC - By that do you mean just being able to percolate off the qualities of a performance?

DT - I mean being able to create an object which is part of the process of becoming a consumer. People seem to have more of an idea now, that music is a social construct - that it's not a pure art any more than anything else. And that's . . . probably changed.

HC - I think it's also more accessible than most people ever dreamed it could be. I mean people like the Door and the Window can get up and make their music with a degree of confidence and a knowledge of using the world which I think is relatively new. I think that's very healthy but at the same time it will raise problems about . . . how you talk about them.

DT - Yes, they are actually discouraged in the music press - almost every review I've ever read of their records wilfully missed the point of what they are up to and demolished the music. I think the music press is by and large involved in discouraging people from taking up music. Just by the way the concepts which are concealed or stated outright in week to week criticism. So since 1976 there hasn't really been that much advance in the discourse on music. Because some of the most fundamental points have been missed - and it's such a basic idea integrating the idea of music as a social construct that I don't see that there has been much of an advance - even that has only occurred in rock writing. If you look at writing about any other kind of music it's absolutely non-existent. If you read folk writing or jazz writing, those writers are still in some sort of fog, you know, about what music is all about. I don't think there's any hope for people like that to understand what improvised music is. I really wish they's leave it alone and . . . well, give up writing and take another job.

HC - There's one thing I'd like to raise there because we still talk about improvised music as if it was some sort of homogeneous music . . . which it isn't.

DT - Well, it can't possibly be. If there are a number of people working in the way I've been referring to then it can't possibly be homogeneous because the music could sound like anything. One of the interesting things at the moment is that it's beginning to sound like anything. The period when it sounded like Incus records or free jazz or something has come to an end. Which I think is great. The music can begin to sound like anything at all. That's what I mean about abandoning the idea of an artistic continuity - if you abandon that and you're working in a quarter or something, then it can go in any direction. It can sound like anything. There are people around who really think you can't have metre or harmony or things like that which is just nonsense.

HC - You've also got the danger that certain writers get stuck because they don't apply the idea of change to themselves - they are actually reinforcing the idea of some kind of finished product. I'm aware too that there is a part of the improvising scene which is interested in frameworks - in establishing a tradition of improvised music.

DT - Yes, well they are encouraged by the media because people are now starting to talk about 'musicians collective' music. And I think those people should be fucking shot. It's just ridiculous but I think you can get away with it, get away with ideas that are self-defeating and for a time make it look as if you're achieving the same results as people who have a radically different conception of the processes involved. I think some people just haven't thought it out, which I find very dangerous. I'm profoundly suspicious of the old artist attitude of 'you don't talk about it, you just do it'. Especially in improvised music.

... .

... .

HC - It is to do with much more than just the sound that comes out.

DT - That's one thing but also you're going to be involved with a lot of people who might have very different ideas to you for making music. As it is a collective, inter-active and time-based music I would have thought it was essential to have some notion of what people you are working with are involved in, what their motivations are . . . the whole strength of improvised music lies in some of those possibilities. I think the points about technical ability and so on are absolutely irrelevant. What is important is the skill of improvising.

HC - What's the difference then between working with someone you know . . . who they are, what they are, what they are likely to do, or unlikely to do . . . and say working with someone you don't know - absolutely cold?

DT - I think there are quite a few differences. But . . . I don't think they necessarily matter that much because I think if people are working in the way I'm talking about then they won't be particularly predictable anyway, except on an obvious level. Everybody has their limits as to what they're going to do and what they're going to use.

HC - Going back to the thing about a way of working - is it a skill or is it a desire to work together?

DT - No, I think it is a skill. I don't think a desire to work together will ensure good music. A lot of people like working together but in fact they should probably give up and go and work with someone else, which is just like a marriage or something. Creating these kind of marriages - that's another thing encouraged in the media.

That's one good thing about Steve Beresford and I being involved in pop music; we're just getting more opportunities to work with other people in different situations, like doing a session with Prince Far I last week. But if we weren't in that situation where we were making pop records and getting publicity and so on it would be an impossible thing to break into.

HC - In fact there are certain areas of music that are quite easy to go from one in to the other but you would never have the chance, given the way things are, to walk into a black club and play there.

DT - Oh sure, but in any kind of music like that, there's the question of race. For instance, in Salsa the fact that a player might be Japanese or Jewish or a woman - well, that's a talking point.

HC - I think in a way vinyl hasn't helped that, it's only aided and abetted the whole thing. It often fixes the sound of a particular band whereas in fact the record is the sound of a particular recording moment in time.

DT - Sure, but I don't think that records have created that situation - I think they have cemented a situation that was inherent in the whole development of theory and practice in our society. And I think the reason records were developed was because it was a logical extension of those tendencies. Which is to complete the process of objectifying music into a consumer activity - complete alienation of consumers from producers. And well . . . I don't know, if you accept that then you can listen to records, I guess. Obviously I do!

HC - One of the problems that continually comes up when talking about music is that one is stuck in a tradition whereby writing about it means evaluating it.

DT - You mean that you want to be able to say this is good music or this is bad music?

HC - I think that is inherent or tends to be in what is expected of music writing.

DT - I don't know how much it's possible to say that any music is good or bad. It's like a bete noir, you know, this thing about improvised

... .





David Toop (photo: Hannah Charlton)

music 'how can you evaluate it?'. But on the other hand, how can you evaluate any music? Once you've gone beyond clear aesthetics, gone beyond received notions of structure in music, harmonic development and all those kind of things, which one would hope people had gone beyond because the music has gone beyond that (but obviously they haven't gone beyond it).

Once you stop criticising music as if it was Wagner or whatever - then how can you say music is good or bad beyond this objective? People do say that and they expend millions of words every week on doing so - it usually amounts to absolutely zero. What it adds up to is people saying 'I like this music' or 'I hate this music'. And those ideas can change anyway - the people who said 'I hate the Sex Pistols' and a year later it was the only thing they were talking about. Or the people who said 'reggae is boring' and six years later it's all they talk about. It's like what is fashionable or how perceptions change. As far as free jazz goes, how many people have said anything sensible about Albert Ayler? His music had very few of the aesthetic qualities that writers on aesthetics actually demand that the music have that they like. In fact to go back to what we were saying about emotion in music I think Albert Ayler is one of the only people I can think of in recent music who was able to make emotional music. I think most people who make so-called emotional music are a sham. They are projecting emotional states or portraying them. There is something extremely emotional, genuinely emotional about his music which is, I think, almost impossible to write about. And on some level you can't say it's good music or it's bad music, beyond the subjective unless you take a completely different approach to it. That is maybe being developed . . . or the possibilities are there, a kind of discourse about music to be developed, which makes some sense of it, you know, which is contemporary. But I don't think it's necessarily happening within the main stream. I just think most writers are totally reactionary and absolutely unable to grasp what it is that a lot of musicians are trying to do and consequently impeding the understanding of potential listeners. That whole level of discourse creates the sort of . . . I don't know, for a lot of people it creates the ground they start from.

I refuse to accept this idea that you shouldn't criticise writers or worry about the press and you shouldn't annoy the press because the press is deeply affecting what thousands of people think. I mean it's not forming their opinions as such, it's creating the context in which they think. People will write letters to the press saying 'I hate you for slagging off the Led Zeppelin record' or whatever but they won't say it in a way that is outside the terms of reference that the press uses. So in fact their context of thinking is actually shaped by the media and the same goes for radio and TV.

- HC - How much do you go along with the idea, which I've heard voiced from several people, that improvised music is about doing it, making it, rather than sustaining an audience relationship. I mean that it is for the musicians rather than the audience. We've talked about the skills and maybe it's going to take time before people want to go and watch how different people use improvising skills.
- DT - Well, I think it does demand a new kind of relationship. I don't think it necessarily excludes listeners. I like to sit and listen to music but I must say that with a lot of music I get very impatient - I find it very difficult to concentrate on it for long periods of time. For me it's the same with books - I read very few books from cover to cover. I just scan them or I have them around or . . . as you said, read bits very intently . . . and forget the rest. I do find it difficult to sit



around listening to music - any music really.

HC - But it's like the one paragraph in a book which has a high density of meaning for you. If in a whole performance my concentration is quite loose but then it's utterly and absolutely caught by a few moments which illuminate something, maybe very personal, then presumably that's all that matters . . .

DT - I think it relates to the problem of narrative that in cinema criticism has gone into and got itself into a dead end over. And the problems of, you know, identification and plot that narrative leads to. I think you can make comparisons with music in that a lot of music does have an equivalent to a narrative. Some music actually does have a narrative like a music of literature or a music of cinema. In those cases it's a bit like a novel or a movie . . .

HC - When you said music of literature and music of cinema?

DT - Well, music which tells a story - I mean actually tells a story. There's a lot of music like that, like the new Cliff Richard single 'Carrie' for instance, tells a story that you can follow. And you can make a music of theatre from that and obviously there is a lot of music around which is like music of theatre or cinema which has a sort of continuity . . .

HC - Classical romance . . .

DT - I'm talking about music now, I think that comes from the romantic tradition in fact.

HC - Because in fact you could say there was a narrative in some jazz . . .

DT - Yes, I don't think it's any accident that Richard Strauss was so popular with rock groups.

HC - I think the music narrative I'm talking about is non-verbal but which works by a fairly linear idea of emotional reactions, you know, building up to a climax and then coming down. So you work very much by juxtaposing contrasts . . .

DT - It's very easy to talk about that because it works within stereotypes of emotional projection. Because it has a linear development and has developed a language of balance and signification, it's extremely easy to talk about and it's very popular. It's interesting if you compare it with Punk in 1976 which had no narrative, virtually no story, no dynamic variation, no highs and lows and no emotional balance to it - that was fantastic. I think that one of the reasons people find improvised music really problematic is that it has very little of that narrative quality.

HC - Sometimes it has . . .

DT - Sometimes it does but in the worst possible ways I think, usually in that it can be virtually programme music and is very thematic. What I'm interested in now is actually being able to use elements of narrative. Maybe the same crisis is coming that has come in cinema. Maybe rigorously excluding narrative is self-defeating in the end, in that you have to go back to narrative to find ways of using it which don't create patterns of identification which in turn create that alienated relationship of producer to consumer. But . . . I don't know, I'd always foreseen a music which was able to upturn that particular relationship without ever being able to see a form of it, you know? And I think listening to a lot of so-called ethnic music and studying it a lot was a way of understanding different relationships in different societies between music makers and non music makers but even so it was just . . .

HC - Can you give any kind of examples?

DT - I mean obviously from the records I've got I've listened a hell of a lot but even with that and reading a lot and so on, it was an immense shock to me actually to be in Amazonas recording Yanamamo Indians doing what they did and to see that relationship first hand, which was absolutely extraordinary because there was no concept of producer and consumer at all. Things were just done and people tended to ignore them completely. That was just like a revelation to me even though I'd read

that it happened. To be in the middle of it was overwhelming. It was a simple thing that a group of people could make music and it was an important or essential social activity . . .

HC - To them?

DT - To everybody. But most people would just totally ignore it and I just thought that was amazing, that it was completely central to their activities.

HC - But is that their equivalent of hearing church bells and knowing that people are going to church even though they personally are not?

DT - No I don't think it is because church bells have virtually lost any meaning . . .

HC - Yes, sorry I was just trying to find a way of relating it to here . . . because obviously there is a contradiction there of an event of social significance taking place and yet you ignore it.

DT - Yes. People have always criticised improvised music for not having an audience you know. And sometimes I think you could just collapse and give up on that point. I've felt like collapsing and giving up on that point many times.

HC - You're saying the music has been criticised for not having a following?

DT - Yes.

HC - Which is surely one of the most blatant producer/consumer concepts . . .

DT - That's what I am saying. I think any music which is genuinely trying to define that relationship is bound not to have a following.

HC - So where to from there!

DT - Well, the music has a chance to develop by itself but it also suffers in that there is no language developing to come to an understanding of it - beyond the descriptive or the subjective.

HC - What do you think about solo work? What are the skills in improvising on your own? Do you set up some sort of self-dialogue?

DT - Mmmm. I don't know - I'm not very interested in solos and I don't do them - very rarely anyway. There are probably a lot of people who work that way but who would disagree that they do or wouldn't know because they hadn't thought about it, but there are very central figures that work that way. Derek Bailey works that way. That's what Company is all about - it's about a way of working and if you look back to what he's said, then you find that Company was based on the way so-called second generation improvisors were working. That there was a constant flexibility of groups and what was important was that there was a way of working which was transferable from situation to situation. On the other hand, someone like Nigel Coombes is interesting to me, who plays continual violin sonatas or something and is virtually uninterested in pushing the range of instruments even though in fact I think he does to a certain extent. But the point is, it comes back to the way of working again, a way of improvising if you like. And how you do it doesn't matter at all - except to yourself, because obviously there are certain ways of playing that are extremely limiting and eventually you are going to have to confront that problem because it's going to stare you in the face all the time. But you've got to a point where you can't think of anything to do any more which doesn't seem tired and worn out, so it's not just a question of 'do what you like'. There are a lot of hidden skills within improvisation that most people fail to see. And that's one of them. Certainly not a 'do what you like'. One aspect of meaning in improvised music is whether the degree of interaction going on is actually interesting to the people who are playing it and to the people who are listening to it.

HC - What interests me is how you evaluate a gig yourself. How do you say well, that worked or it didn't work, what state of mind were you in, what came out of it? My perceptions of what happened may be very different to yours - and where does that difference lie? Either we put a value judgement on that difference or we say it doesn't really matter.



- DT - I think it's crazy because you can change your mind about certain things just by talking to the other people involved. Like the Alterations tours we've just done. I think with a lot of the music we felt different at the time of playing and sometimes we would listen to the tapes and like Terry Day would say 'that was really horrible until half-way through' and Steve Beresford would say 'that was really fantastic until half-way through' and then maybe we would talk about it, and we'd all change our minds about whether it was good or not.
- HC - Because you had been given someone else's interpretation of it?
- DT - Yes. I think one of the problems is obviously that your feelings tend to be centralised rather than collectivised just through the social habit of learning to be an individual. You tend to think - well, I couldn't think of what to do or I had to work very hard to fill up the spaces or I seem to be following what everybody else was doing but not actually initiating . . .
- HC - But all those things become to sound very achievement based . . .
- DT - They are self-obsessed and they are achievement based. I think those kinds of disturbances can be wiped out if you actually talk . . . then go on to talk as a whole group because you start to get a picture of what it was like collectively - which is what somebody sitting in an audience will get unless they are obsessed with so and so's playing and couldn't give a shit about anyone else's. And I'm afraid it's always got to come back to there being a feeling of whether it was good or not, you know. And how on earth you explain that, I don't know. People are always talking in a semi-mystical way about the way music can suddenly come sharply into focus and you just feel that the whole room has got an awareness of that. You feel that very strongly as an atmosphere. The trouble is that atmosphere is one of the great undefined words in the language.
- HC - Precisely because it's so neutral and so loaded at the same time. In itself it means nothing because it's like mass nouns such as colour or even crowd. Until they're qualified, they don't mean very much. And that goes on to the problem of writing again. I'm thinking of that ultra subjective writing which came into MUSICS - you know the sort of thing like 'I ate a sausage roll through the performance' which was an attempt to get away precisely from saying the atmosphere was electric! But that sort of subjective writing also has its bad side because as a reader I'm not particularly into whether someone was eating a sausage roll at the time. What I am interested in is the problem of expressing a communal experience with its different significations.
- DT - For which there is virtually no language because we're not that kind of society.
- HC - Like the gig yesterday with you and Steve Beresford where I was struck by how Steve kept hovering round his guitar which I saw in one light. He told me it was because the piano was so bad he needed to use the guitar more. So multiple meanings for an event. And maybe that's an approximation.
- DT - I think it's one of the avenues to discussing improvised music which no-one has explored yet. Actually to explore the multiple significance of the actions that are going on. Because . . . to take someone like Steve Beresford, it can get very complex. I remember a very good duo he did with Lol Coxhill in which Steve made a number of references - for instance using a toothbrush on a 3D photograph which was about toothbrushes and 3D photographs but it was also about Hugh Davies. There was also the thing he played, I think, a trumpet into water and that was about me having received a manuscript from Charlie Noyes about water in music. And at that point wasn't even published, right?
- HC - So who's supposed to know about that?
- DT - So who's supposed to know about it - there's a level there which is like a time delay mechanism. I mean you could read that Noyes article

or see Hugh Davies a year later and think 'Christ, I saw Steve Beresford do that'. Alternatively you could see it as a version of the sound properties of everyday objects, blah, blah. Or you could see it as part of a tradition, like . . . you could have your own article about water in your mind and you could think 'ah yes, there's a Richard Maxfield piece where a clarinet is played into water and water is used by North American Indians in drums and blah, blah, blah'. So you create your own history about that. Or you could see it as a funny thing to do, or a stupid thing to do. Also it might sound good.

I think one of the current problems in improvised music is that a lot of people have no idea of the history, the tradition. I'm not suggesting that people should be obsessed with techniques as if they are completely new, and that becomes the whole of your music then you're in trouble. Because in fact you could say well, so and so was doing that ten years ago, it's not new and there's no point in it being the 100% totality of your music. I'm not saying you have to be new for its own sake, but if you're saying this is so important and so new, that it's the main motivation behind my music, then everything you are doing is completely empty really. I think there are a lot of people using techniques in a very self-congratulatory way which I maybe saw 15 years ago. Just to go back to that problem of the relation between consumer and producer, you know, redefining a relationship which destroys or transmutes those terms and those concepts. I used to go and hear AMM a lot when it was a quartet and a quintet and the first time out of the number of times I saw them I felt they had succeeded in redefining those relationships. The first time I saw them was at a rock concert at the Roundhouse where they were playing opposite Geno Washington and the RamJam Band and The Cream. I think I was one of the only people in the audience who realised there was actually a group on stage playing. And that completely changed my life.

- HC - When was that?
- DT - 1966/67. I mean it didn't just change my music - it changed all my thinking. I was completely stunned; it was a complete revelation to me that people could be up on stage playing music and nobody would be aware they were doing it. It sounds ridiculous put like that - pseudos corner stuff!
- HC - No it doesn't - not after you talking about the Yanamano Indians, except there is obviously some horrible contradictions between the two situations.
- DT - Of course. I don't think there's any comparison really in the end except just on a formal level. But that strongly relates to what you were saying about criteria because years later I talked to Victor Shonfield, MUSIC NOW promoter, and he said 'Oh yes, I remember that gig, they absolutely hated it, it was a terrible gig for them'. You see. But they had actually changed somebody's life and maybe it's really insignificant because it was probably only one person's life. But I saw them on other occasions and similar kinds of things happened. Like I went with Stuart Marshall to see them at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and they played for hours and hours and there was no interval. Stuart and I kept changing seats. We eventually went and sat in the front row and half the group had stopped. Cardew was bowing a gong, someone was pouring water in a bucket, Keith Rowe was just chatting and they were obviously going to just go on all night. Stuart and I - both complete fans - realised it was absolutely stupid to sit there and watch it as if it was obligatory. So we stood up and walked out and as soon as we stood up and walked out, the whole of the Queen Elizabeth Hall got up and walked out because they'd all been rivetted to that formula. I used to go and see them at The Place a lot and that was very nice because it was just a small room and they occupied it all - there were a few chairs around that you sat on, a few people there and you could just sit and be enveloped by it but not in a passive unthinking way. I really got very stimulated to think about all those kind of re-



lations and the social meaning of music and all the rest of it. But there was no way it imposed on you. And I think at the moment it is very hard to do that for some reason.

HC - To be stimulated and yet not be imposed on?

DT - Yes. At the moment for instance Alterations is getting in to using PAs and all that kind of thing, just because that seems to be the way to do it at the moment - to break up those kind of patterns. I think there are certain people around who are trying to do it the other way, who weren't around 12 or 15 years ago and they are failing. It just seems the whole social ambience is wrong.



Ian & Will Menter, Linda Martin, John Fairbrother  
Bob Helson, Piers Mostyn

## BROKEN PIPES EXPOSED 2 A CONVERSATION

by Robert Lawrence  
and Paul Shorthouse

- PS - Do you think we ought to talk about our interior vision?
- RL - Well, that's put across through our music. Just because nobody turns up to the concert, doesn't mean we haven't got a vision but nobody ever finds out what it is.
- PS - There's an opinion around to the effect that concerts aren't very well attended because of, there's not enough . . . there's too much made of BMC music.
- RL - When we did that poster for Broken Pipes, that's why I didn't even write BMC on it until somebody suggested that I ought to and then I wrote it in tiny little letters. Because it didn't matter whether it was BMC at the concert, people would have gone oohh, like I go oohh, now. They'd recognise the type of music . . . I don't particularly enjoy it.
- PS - I like improvising but there's a certain type of improvising.
- RL - You used to say it was musical masturbation, you seem to have changed your opinion.
- PS - Well, a lot of it is but what I mean is . . . the music where you are really composing as you perform, that sort of concept, like when you listen and receive and play all at the same instant, that sort of, when you're really aware of whatever.
- RL - See, I find most improvised music in a concert fairly pretentious, because it's got this thing about having an audience. I mean, why not simply record it onto a tape-recorder and then play the good improvisations to people and the bad ones, you don't play to people. You don't expect people to come along and have to listen to anything, whether it's good or bad.
- PS - If it's taut y'know and then in an instant replying, I don't think there's any time for declination to flabbiness, just the structure you are composing.
- RL - Hmmm.
- PS - What were we trying to achieve through Broken Pipes?
- RL - It was intended as anti-art, for one thing. It wasn't a piece of art, it wasn't supposed to be something that you could admire. Nor to apply any of those evaluative terms you can apply to a work of art, it wasn't like that at all. It couldn't be, because then it would run the risk of just titillating people.
- PS - And why did we perform in the dark?
- RL - Well, there's that thing about putting them on the operating table, placing people under our control, really. And we surrounded them as best we could with the sound. It was unavoidable, there wasn't any hiding in dark corners, because the whole room was in the dark.
- PS - That's what I wanted in The Lambs, we've just done. Only I wanted it the opposite to darkness, I wanted a surgical light, so again there would be no dark corners and no romantic artist in the middle of some perfumed lighting arrangement. It would just be surgical, trouble was we didn't play surgical music, because some of it was quite . . .
- RL - Flabby.
- PS - And soft and reflective and human and so on.
- RL - Broken Pipes was a set of little scenarios really. He was in this sort of feeling, he was surrounded by this.
- PS - Yes.
- RL - But in fact it was immature and over the top.
- PS - Immature yes, but I don't think it was over the top.
- RL - Some of it went on for too long.
- PS - That's just immature.



...

RL - It was sadly not over the top in places. I think it should have gone a lot further than it did but of course restraint is often a virtue.

PS - What else was there about it . . . why did we make it an hour? Why was each piece a quarter of an hour long? And why did we avoid this in the one we've just done?

RL - Well, the idea of having everything labelled exactly, everything tied down completely, was that we wanted full control over what we were doing. We didn't want flabby edges. We didn't want to get carried away. Because we've got to be concise, nothing's more boring than not being concise. You've actually got to pare down everything.

PS - And why did we seemingly take a backward step by performing songs this time around, with The Lambs?

RL - Probably because we're afraid of doing it again.

PS - What, Broken Pipes?

RL - Yeah.

PS - Couldn't we do something different, come up with another hour of music?

RL - Yes but the message remains the same, you haven't changed what you're trying to put across.

PS - We'll just have to go further.

RL - You lose all hope and you have to go beyond this emptiness. You have to look for anything, really. You have to look for the cause.

PS - Maybe we're afraid of going beyond the emptiness.

RL - I mean, the ultimate Broken Pipes would simply be a tape recording of a talk about control, about power and about alienation. You've got to strive for an understanding of what's happening about you. 'Music for Darkness' was a nightmare, it was his mind, not his programmed mind, but his mind free of programming, free of the indirection, actually interrupting the whole. What his life was about, it was realising the insane horror of it.

PS - The form reflects the content.

RL - Music and message becomes one.

RL - The thing about entertainment is that you have to give yourself up to it.

PS - You're talking about entertaining, now.

RL - Well, that's what art is. It wants you to forget about your kidney problems and forget about your husband problems.

PS - So under that definition, the perfect anti-art would be to produce music about kidney problems and husband problems.

RL - We attempt to reflect and amplify that lifestyle until it becomes obviously unbearable. They have to face it. Broken Pipes was about people being aware of their kidney problems. All they could see out of their window was a block of flats. It was making them totally aware, it was giving them nothing to deflect the message with. And if you allow your work to be turned into art, it runs the risk of having its message over-looked. So anti-art . . .

PS - But in the end, people were entertained by it.

RL - That's because it was something new. In that sense, you have to go over the top, you can't be entertained . . .

PS - That's why we must play sharper points and then repeat them. It would be perfect for the subject matter.

RL - We're only talking about what Throbbing Gristle do, anyway. I don't understand it myself. I don't understand the idea of amplification and distortion making you aware of something. I'm sure that the process of amplification changes that which it amplifies. But they're creating sound and the real problem isn't in terms of sound but in terms of . . .

PS - I don't think they create sound, they're moulding sound.

RL - Yes sorry, create gives the impression of spontaneity and they're not spontaneous. If they were that, they might lose track and say something that wasn't meant to be said.

...

...

RL - I think we should explain why we think it necessary to employ method, the methods of technology. Why we should employ technology. Why we should use electronics. Why we should use tape-recorders. And why we should use video and film.

PS - Music can be much more communicative in collaboration with film. But why are we using tape-recorders?

RL - That's the point, the idea of the double-edged sword. Because whoever is in control, or whatever is in control at the moment, employs technology to its own end. It has to communicate, or to be presumed to be communicating with its puppets, when really it's programming you. I mean, the radio is a sort of programming, we all know that. The thing to understand is why people are putting pop music on the radio twenty-three hours of the day. And so we use the same means as those in control but to different ends. The methods of those in control can only be understood in terms of the technology which they employ. We're actually trying to crack the image.

PS - The shattered window of a travel agents is a static broken image and ours is a continual revelation of breaking of images.

RL - Yeah, but a broken window says volumes, really.

PS - I think there'll always be an audience for something.

RL - But you can like it, I mean there's nothing against liking it but the point is do you understand the reason behind the piece?

PS - Well, not liking it but appreciating it.

RL - You can't enjoy Throbbing Gristle . . .

PS - You can appreciate them.

RL - You can appreciate it and say I understand what they're getting at. Presumably once you've understood, because it has no entertainment value at all you say, I've no need to listen to Throbbing Gristle any more because I've understood what they've said. The music's boring, it's tedious and it has a message, I've understood the message, so why bother to listen to something that is now simply boring and tedious. I mean, that's what Burroughs does, he is essentially throwing a brick through the language window.

PS - (farts)

RL - Paul speaks volumes.

Our music can't be assimilated, because if it is assimilated without changing the structure to which it is being assimilated, then it has simply failed. Because the idea of the music is to change things for the better and if it doesn't and leaves things as they are, then it's just more decoration to what is already there.

It's very easy to point at yourself and say that is the end. You have to get outside yourself. You have to become impersonal, so that you can actually get away from your own personal hang-ups and understand what's really outside and what's really threatening you. I don't think you can do that from the inside, I think you have to become impersonal and create impersonal music.

Control is non self-determination. Determination from outside.

PS - Remote control. A series of remote controls.

NOTES: Broken Pipes Exposed, was the concert performance of a piece exactly an hour in length. Divided into four sections; Young Worker Faces, Music for darkness, Fork, They are Lost. Each section was a quarter of an hour in length. Each section comprising different aspects of an industrial landscape. The piece was performed throughout in total darkness. The title was taken from the book The Naked Lunch by William Burroughs.

LAMBS was a semi-rock concert performance of neat wave/metal music songs and pieces. Approximately two hours in length.

...



Throbbing Gristle are an experimental new wave band. Flaunting traditional rock formats, they attack the listener with their use of electronics, amplified distortion of tapes and sounds of the everyday, together with other medias to represent blind unstoppable power at its most ruthless. They proved a great inspiration point for Broken Pipes Exposed and to a lesser extent, LAMBS.



Broken Pipes 1: Paul Shorthouse, (Ian Menter), Robert Lawrence, Ian Shepherd (photo: J Mark Harrison)

Holding women's babes as blacks' music,  
Historicity, was, before, and, is, beside.

from "After" by Anthony Barnett

# ESSAY ON THE EAST WINDOW OF KILLAGHA ABBEY AND FIRST SKETCH OF A THEORY OF PERFORMANCE

Not certain and yet managing the journey:  
able to return in true form if only an  
echo or shadow of what he had seen, what  
he had seen through. He's up there on the  
eminence now, telling it all. It snaps be-  
hind him and recysts in time, and really what  
's left of him? We settle down, check knife  
fork spoon, switch off the main light. He  
persists. He won't have it any more closing  
on its own vector . . . he shifts northwards  
into the beam. We begin to see through him.

Look . . . there is no such thing, no self  
island you recognise your terminal as  
the heartneedle spins. There are drops of  
water in the water of the rotting deep and  
you sail over on a tin tray smeared with  
currency as long as it holds. Then you are set  
three into love where the contraries touch  
is closing distance, which ends us.  
Surely the moon is more constant it is  
our postmark as we walk again the thin line  
of gathered debris to where we be.

Telling-it-all, that's only another and  
complete departure from here where nothing  
but the skeletal body remains to be said, hardly  
worth an ear. Truly the flesh  
is blown off him onto the east wall, the map  
writhing in the heat cuts perspex frontiers  
across the heartspace, against the vein, purpose  
burning blue to the final signature: . . . green  
ideograms on the white sand, where horse and  
rider passed in the night, alone. There is  
no other journey. His forgery in our favour:

a calm, not a residue or a fall but an actual  
trade. Orange and bluegreen lichens spread  
over the hole. There is no other journey . .  
wall to wall, ground in, we intercept truth.  
Night by day the cavities in the graveyard  
transmit their messages across our workspace;  
here at the entrance, a tree of petal flames  
in front of us through which the sky is this  
or that or darker and lighter than it was but  
intimate to our best wished and extr. .  
ordinary determination, to end.

by Peter Riley



# one day at London Musicians Collective

42 Gloucester Avenue London NW1

A NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF IMPROVISED MUSIC

Ten hours of music played by over fifty musicians from Co-operatives and Collectives all over England

including: Aaron Standon/alto Bob Helson/percussion Paul Shorthouse/guitar Kim Burton/piano John Eaves/flutes Robert Lawrence/keyboards/etc John Fairbrother/percussion Will Menter/soprano Mark Langford/tenor/electric piano Ron Caines/saxes Ian Menter/alto/trombone Linda Martin/alto Pete Brandt/bass Piers Mostyn/bass Pru Dawson/flute Larry Stabbins/saxes John Hurn/guitar Martin Mayes/french horn Barry Edgar Pilcher/tenor Eve Pilcher/cello Phil Durrant/violin/etc Anthony Barnett/percussion Peter Cusack/guitar David Pantou/piano/percussion/alto Terry Day/percussion/etc Paul Buckton/guitar John McMillan/live electronics Nigel Harvey/percussion Simon Fell/bass Ross Moore/percussion Mike Cooper/guitar/electronics Johanna Pyne/dance Brett Hornby/tenor Mark Pickworth/soprano Philipp Wachsmann/violin Richard Beswick/oboe Tony Wren/bass Marj McDaid/voice Mark Rowson/guitar Trevor Lines/guitar Ros Plotkin/voice John Sanderson/tenor Pagga Riley/bass Bronek Szerszynski/guitar Colin Brewster/guitar Steve Harvey/drums Tim Powell/trumpet/etc Paul Jolly/reeds Simon Reeves/alto Tony Bevan/soprano heuristic music Chamberpot Both Hands Free The Quintet Bande One Music Ensemble

Programme: 12 noon - 5 pm. music  
5 pm - 6.30 pm discussion  
7 pm - late music

RECORD & MAGAZINE STALLS - REFRESHMENTS - OTHER EVENTS

Discussion title: Improvised music and its own communication network

ADMISSION Day - £1.50 Afternoon or evening only - £1.00

For further details ring Ian Menter 0272 559226 or Bob Helson 0272 658795

sat 3 nov noon-midnight

presented by  
BRISTOL MUSICIANS' CO-OPERATIVE



Johanna Pyne, Mike Cooper

## BRISTOL MUSICIANS CO-OP London Musicians' Collective

'One day at the London Musicians' Collective' (organised by the Bristol Musicians, Co-operative) demonstrates the breadth, both geographically and musically, of improvised music in this country. Over 50 musicians from as far afield as Bristol and Cornwall to Leeds and the East Midlands travelled to London, performing for a proportion of their travel expenses recouped from the door takings.

With over 20 groupings scheduled to perform during the day, by the time the end was in sight (and the programme was inevitably running late) it was beginning to feel as if the musicians were being shunted through on a factory conveyor belt.

A haunting trio improvisation by John Eaves (flute), Martin Mayes (flugelhorn) and Clive Bell (flute and shakuhachi) is particularly memorable in the midst of the music produced during the day. It was delicately assembled from long suspended sounds and fluttering phrases which the musicians piled on top of each other. Mayes and Eaves established an immediate rapport to which Bell was able to add his compelling, and yet gently personal, shakuhachi work. The resultant music was full of subtle inflections; it was meditative without being turgid.

Terry Day (percussion), Pete Cusack (guitar) and Larry Stabbins (sax) played a set which confirmed each individually as a provocative musician whose music pitched momentum against detail to arrive at a compromise that was wholly rewarding.

Massed saxophones made their mark on the day, too. Whilst a saxophone quartet of Simon Reeve, Tony Bevan, Gary Bayley and Richard Leigh at times sounded somewhat stilted — with Leigh finding it particularly difficult to locate space in the

Southampton trio's exchanges in which to root his contributions — another quartet (of Linda Martin: alto/Aaron Standon: alto/Mark Langford: tenor/John Fairbrother: percussion produced a rich musical swell. The saxophones meshed intelligently running with a natural ebb and flow in which Fairbrother provided much more confident percussion than his tentative playing earlier with guitarists Richard Coldman and John Hurn.

The torrid playing of the One Music Ensemble brought a warm response whilst John McMillan proved that it was possible to integrate his electronics into a group context where others in the day had failed, and Paul Buckton's guitar work shone in a number of settings. This gig went a long way towards dispelling the myth that to create a valid music a musician must live in London. Ken Ansell





Bottom left:

Ursula Waechter, Paul Jolly, Tim Powell and a violin player

Peter Cusack



by Ursula Waetcher

A try of a review of their performance at the 'Arts Centre' in Bristol on 2 May 1980. . .

'Toes and Tones' is a group of musicians and dancers from England and Holland who have worked together since 1978. This concert was a part of the first tour they did through England.

These are: Beppie Blankert (dance)  
Rob Heligers (dance)  
Harry de Witt (piano, percussion, bass clarinet)  
Phil Wachsmann (violin, electronics)  
Richard Beswick (oboe, electric guitar)

Before the concert started they handed out a paper with their ideas and aims on it to the audience and it is probably sensible to give you some ideas about it to repeat some sentences here.

'The group wants to present pieces and improvisations where the roles of dancers and musicians are closely intertwined.

'Wanting to make the relationship between music and dance less formal, the participants see themselves not just as musicians or dancers but more generally as performers, for it is not just the sound or movements that make the excitement, but the relationships of the people making them.'

The evening was conceived by the performers to be about relationships which were partly formalised and partly improvised.

Using the main part of the studio at the Arts Centre for their instruments and to make space for their dance performance the audience was squashed into a very small square, where normally the pianos are.

In the beginning I felt a bit awkward because of that, felt my being part of the audience and the audience as a whole as of little importance. But after a while I lost this feeling. The two dancers really needed the whole space.

From the very beginning there was an extraordinary close interaction between all of them and especially between the three dutch performers Beppie, Rob and Harry, and between Phil and Richard resulting out of their long experience of working/playing together.

The performance was organised beforehand into solos, duos, etc, and had therefore a very dense structure/texture which was even stronger because of Harry de Witt's percussion and percussive piano playing. His playing was very fast and tense and very rhythmical, using jazzy elements and doing a lot of inside piano playing as well, throwing stuff on the strings during playing, plucking the strings and hitting them with felted sticks.

In places the music got very rhythmical when Richard was playing his electric guitar using chords from rock music. To this Phil added a very different element improvising on his amplified violin deforming the sound electronically. His playing and Richard's oboe playing formed a unity contrasting very nicely Harry's playing.

I've never thought that electronics and dance could work together well, but it did.

Being quite rhythmical in parts the music was ideal for the two dancers, giving them points to start from. The whole dancing performance was unified through a certain kind of mechanical movement which was occurring at the beginning and every now and then and which was also characteristic for Rob's way of dancing throughout the performance. He used as well mime and athletic movement, eg at one time he fell down and it really looked dangerous and accidental but he repeated it several times just in the same way, having an amazing control over his body. His dancing had a feel of athletic crudeness about it which contrasted beautifully with Beppie's very flowing way of moving. Mime was an important part of her performance, for example, she followed things that she imagined moving in the air with her body. Her dancing was very dense and at any time I didn't have the feeling that she wasted any movement.

I especially enjoyed that musicians and dancers showed their relationships towards each other during the performance, making it very personal and unpredictable.

#### A PECULIAR POETRY

Curve for the paintbox metal colours would be shapes. Play the guitar brush paintbox shapes. If I had to sketch out a beach, the actual notes themselves, without the wave. If I had to sketch out a beach to that wise, maybe play the guitar brush metal paintbox, then guitar metal paint. Metal because lines and circles guitar pitched height piece without of the notes wave and for detail in a crab. Metal music when I piece without of the notes wave and for detail in a crab. I would reduce the picture guitar metal paint metal, because in the fretboard colours other picture to state without the wave the notes themselves by the preconception that is said to be low, the sea and presented be as I like crabs. The picture, improvise myself distance, pitch the lines. A structured sea presented colours fretboard of instrument pitch is determined and neat a gradual sand itself appears. Maybe itself appears to gradual, with metal colours would be curve, or is distance improvised by myself. Lines for me. Lines and circles late the pitch is determine heavy and neat guitar pitched highest guitar, sea guitar to be low when I play. Metal music lines to that preconception, when - dealing in water . . .

by Paul Shorthouse

-This piece was produced by artificial means



AMADU BANSANG JOBARTEH PLAYS THE KORA:  
KULLI KOUYATEH SINGS:

by Ian Menter  
and Willy Guy

"He (Dr Vansina) said that he had been on the phone with a colleague Africanist, Dr Philip Curtin; they both felt certain that the sounds I'd conveyed to him were from the 'Mandinka' tongue. I'd never heard that word; he told me that it was the language spoken by the Mandingo people . . . The word ko he said, could refer to the kora, one of the Mandingo people's oldest stringed instruments, made of a halved large dried gourd covered with goatskin, with a long neck, and twenty-one strings with a bridge. An enslaved Mandingo might relate the kora visually to some among the types of stringed instruments that US slaves had."

(Alex Haley in Roots)

On Saturday 3 May, the Musicians' Co-op offered Bristolians a rare opportunity - that of hearing a performance on the kora. As Alex Haley discovered, the kora is a 21-stringed 'harp-lute' which is played by the Mandinka (or Mandingo) people of West Africa, mainly in Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali and the Gambia. The concert was given by Jali Amadu Bansang Jobarteh, a man of about 65 considered one of the leading virtuosos on the instrument and by Kulli Kouyateh who is a well-known singer and is also from the Gambia. Both are professional musicians, a hereditary occupation among the Mandinka reserved exclusively for a special endogamous class called Jali.

An important part of the performance of many 'ethnic' musicians on the world stage today is the skilful re-creation of a former 'state of innocence' before recognition as an international artiste, but in this case there was no need of such imitation. In spite of a lifetime of performance in West Africa, Jali Amadu seemed puzzled when asked, through an interpreter, how the seating and lighting should be arranged; any way that the organisers thought appropriate would suit him.

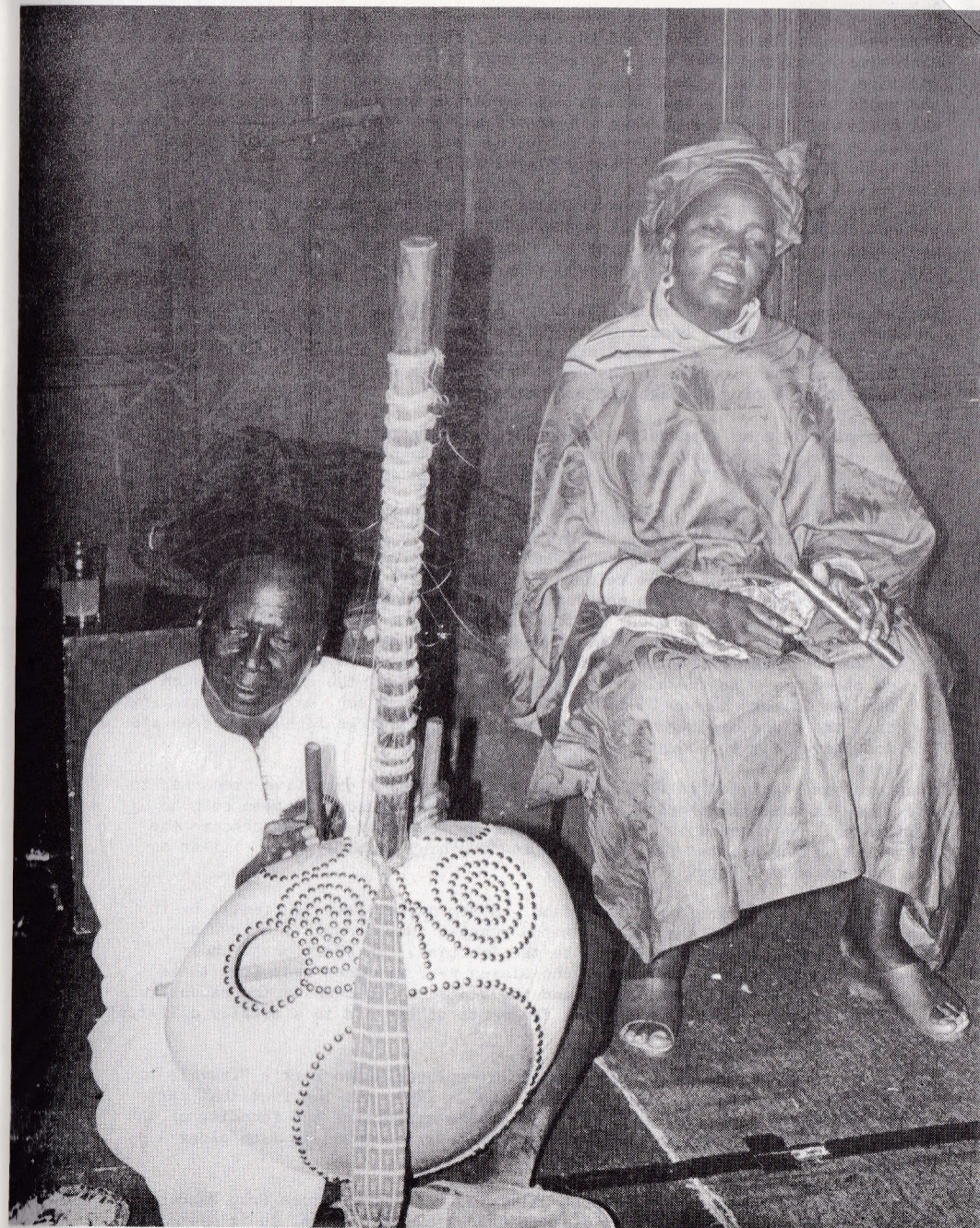
Jali Amadu's approach to playing was equally straightforward: from the start he was totally absorbed in his music, seated cross-legged on the floor, his spindly legs protruding from a voluminous white gown, he plucked and strummed the strings, while quietly humming what was something in between a musical accompaniment and appreciative murmuring at particularly satisfying passages. This pleasantly droning contrast to the bright, clear tones of the kora was reinforced by the buzzing of a metal resonator placed under the bridge of the instrument. Most of the time Jali Amadu bent slightly forward as if to hear himself better, only throwing his head back at particular peaks of intensity.

The music itself was marked by a distinctive rhythmic character - a gentle pulse yet at the same time a wonderful freedom of flow. To suggest an aural association of the pulse element with much guitar playing and of the flow element with some harp music only hints at an adequate description of the sound to Western ears.

Many of the pieces had bouncing and slowly shifting bass figures running through them, while the tune and its development were played on the higher strings. Occasionally the effect seemed equivalent to three guitars at once - bass, rhythm and lead.

Such intricacy of melody and rhythm might well have been entrancing had it not been for the very definite feel of the musician creating his own sense of time - not our time as listeners, but his time as a master musician on his instrument.

...



Amadu Bansang Jobarteh and Kulli Kouyateh



...  
This feeling is difficult to put into words, but perhaps it can best be communicated by saying there was a 'stretchiness' to the music, a kind of give and take, or internal elasticity. This was most apparent when the pulse of the music stopped for a few seconds and the break was filled by dazzling skirmishes of descending phrases played off against each other. The pulse was picked up sooner or later, but not according to a rigid form, rather by the intrinsic dynamic of the music being played as it was played.

This quality, so hard to express verbally, is something which is surely not present in most Western forms of music. Certainly it seems to be missing from most rock or straight music. However, there is, as several writers have pointed out, a similar feel in much jazz, and even more so in early and country blues.

In his sleeve notes to "African Journey - A Search for the Roots of the Blues", an American researcher, Samuel Charters, pointed to further connections between kora music and blues. Many Mandinka people were among the slaves gathered in the Carolinas and Virginia in the USA. Charters listened to a Jali playing the kora in a Gambian village and reflected that:

"He played in an alternating thumb-forefinger style I'd heard from many blues guitarists, sometimes tapping the instrument with his fingers with a rhythmic accent I'd heard from older bluesmen in Mississippi.

But what he was playing wasn't the blues - even though there were many things in it that had become part of the blues. The songs were historical, built out of tradition and history, instead of the personal experiences that the bluesmen sing about. The melodic form was freer, there was no basic harmonic pattern, the rhythm was without a stressed beat. But still I could feel . . . that I was close to the roots of the blues. I could feel it most strongly in the place that the singer had in his village and his society. He was the expression of so much in his culture that could be expressed in no other way - as the bluesman was, for many years, the only expression of his own culture in the United States . . . I could see, as I sat listening, that the blues had begun here, whatever other turnings it had taken on its long hard trip to today's America."

Charters was right not to force the analogy by seeing a primitive precursor to the blues in Mandinka playing and singing, for that would have been both to denigrate it as a music in its own right and more importantly to obscure the fact that it has existed for centuries in something probably very similar to its present mature form.

If anything, the overriding impression - after having been captivated by the grace and assurance of the music - was a renewed awareness of the loss sustained by the Africans transported to the Americas. In addition to their physical and emotional sufferings, the slaves were wrenched away from their highly developed traditional music and the blues can be seen as the reconstruction of a new tradition from partial fragments of the old in a totally different work.

The first known reference to the kora is in explorer Mungo Park's "Travels to the Interior Districts of Africa", published in 1799, but the fact that part of the basic kora repertoire of some 200 pieces celebrates the founding of the Mandinka Empire in the 13th Century suggests that the music is much older - and possibly the instrument too.

Some of the songs were about patrons of music or popular heroes from Mandinka history and even if we had been able to understand the words, their significance and associations would have been lost on us. Other songs had more universal and

...  
accessible themes. One in particular recounted the fate of a legendary white hippopotamus. This, we are told, is a great favourite with the Mandinka musicians because of its melancholy and lyrical melody. Jali Amadu's record features this song and in the accompanying booklet its text is summarised in this way:

"Being of a peaceful nature, the hippopotamus allowed people to approach him; gradually the people from the area grew to love and trust him. One day, however, a European hunter came and shot the hippopotamus, occasioning much grief among the people."\*

In spite of the disadvantage that the words were unintelligible to her audience, singer Kulli Kouyateh fascinated us. Even before she had started to sing her relaxed posture was totally at odds with Western expectations of a performer. Instead of sitting alert and slightly tense, she almost slumped in her seat, legs spread comfortably beneath her flowing robes. And when she eventually began it came as a shock that the harsh and slightly nasal voice flowed with the same untroubled ease as her limbs. Without straining to demand attention, the singing was powerful and intensely exciting even though in many of the songs, the delivery conveyed the impression that the words were spoken rather than sung.

Kulli Kouyateh also provided a rhythm accompaniment. To say that she beat time with two metal strikers makes its sound as though her instrumental contribution was purely mechanical. In fact her playing had a similar fluidity to that of the kora and, although without ornamentation, it created subtle rhythmic tensions by varying the played pulse and 'expected' beat - again, a corresponding freedom to that found in the blues.

The blues of course have had a huge influence on jazz, soul, and rock music and the link between kora music and the blues was one of the reasons why the Musicians' Co-op members were keen to promote this concert. Several others could be mentioned: the improvisational aspect which runs through most of our own activities; the direct contemporary influence of non-Western musics such as this on many Western musicians (as opposed to the indirect historical influence via slavery and the blues); the interest we all share in hearing a virtuoso on any instrument. But perhaps the overriding reason was in a sense not musical at all. It was that one of the Musicians' Co-op's prime aims is to present music that otherwise would get no or little hearing here.

In many ways it would not have mattered whether the concert had been a commercial success. Nevertheless it was gratifying that there was a packed audience which evidently appreciated the richness and sheer beauty of this unfamiliar music and communicated its delight to the performers.

Jali Amadu and Kulli Kouyateh smiled their thanks, seeming genuinely touched by the warm response. The following morning they thanked their hosts in a more personal way: utilising a traditional form, Jali Amadu improvised a song in praise of the children of the house in which they had stayed.

#### Recordings of Kora Music

Amadu Bansang Jobarteh: Master of the Kora/Eavadisc EDM 101  
Mandingo Griot Society (with Don Cherry)/Flying Fish FF 076. This is a fairly successful attempt at a kora/rock fusion music, made by a Chicago group.  
Lamine Konte: Senegal Vol. 2: La Kora/Arion ARN 33313. A disastrous 'popularisation' recorded in Paris, presumably with a particular market very much in mind (or so it seems).



...

## Readings

\*The record by Amadu Bansang Jobarteh includes comprehensive and concise notes on kora music, its history and social context, written by ethnomusicologist Lucy Duran. This review has drawn extensively on this material.

The African Journey records include a well illustrated booklet by Samuel Charters.

On African music in general, two introductory books are:

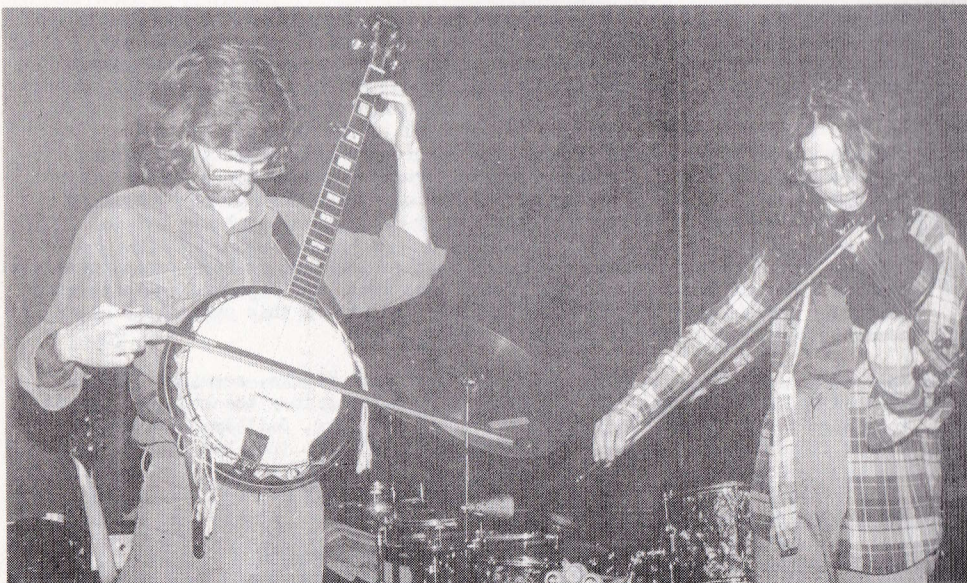
Francis Bebey, African Music, A People's Art, 1975, Harrap  
J H Kwabena Nketia, The Music of Africa, 1975, Gollancz

One superb book on the African origins of blues and jazz is:

Leroi Jones, Blues People, 1963, Morrow

A classic introduction to the subject of ethnomusicology, which is based on a study of the music of the Venda people of South Africa is:

John Blacking, How Musical is Man?, 1965, Faber



Davey Williams and Ladonna Smith

## THOUGHTS AND IMPRESSIONS GAINED BUT DEFINITELY NOT A REVIEW OF THE CONCERT BY LADONNA SMITH/DAVEY WILLIAMS AND JOHN FAIRBROTHER/JOHN HURN

by Paul Shorthouse

At seven-thirty, Ian Menter came to pick me up for the gig (my amp was to be borrowed for the night). The sun was still shining as we loaded into Mark Langford's van (borrowed for the night).

When we arrived, John Fairbrother was still setting up his kit and already a third of the floor space was taken up. This time his was a regular if un-orthodox kit, grouped around a series of unconnected stands; a plethora of cymbal, toy drums, an old Quality Street tin, plus squeaky toys (staple diet of free improvising percussionists).

First set, John Fairbrother and John Hurn:

From the beginning, John F explores the drumskin timbre, with the use of his elbows, and then splashes of cymbal to John Hurn's twangy guitar sounds. Good beginning but loses direction before picking up again. Bottleneck employed. Cowbell. Thwackle, snap, crack, pockle and choc, to the cowbell.

Always brittle, never settling into a pattern. One cymbal drops to the floor, as John H strokes his strings near the bridge. Intense and abrasive percussion. John Hurn's wayward and easily produced sounds. One working harder than the other. John F squats on the floor, exploring tambres of his extensive range. Bendy plinks, throps, good bottleneck. Whistle and cowbell. An abrasive corrugated sound and never resting. Setting the teeth on edge. Items played, John F lets them drop to the floor, or onto another item. Accidental percussion as his foot strikes something.

John F gets out his trombone and plays it with a mute. Audience laughter.

I Menter, "You've been practising your trombone, haven't you?"

John F, "No I haven't, actually."

Throughout the set, hardly converging on one another's territory, except for the occasional call and response, rather each furrowing parallel. John H kept up a close second. But underneath it all, I think he is an orthodox guitarist, still testing his instrument, at least in free music. John F is a fan of the music and started from scratch with household implements. Wanted to play, so he got up and did it. One of the most exhaustive and original percussionists I've ever heard.

Second set, Ladonna Smith and Davey Williams:

The high stool loaded with implements; what looks like a whisk, violin bow, toy ray gun, toy car, etc. Tricks of the trade, picked up through experience of playing.

Both employing instruments as a total sound source, an amplified body, or a body to be amplified. The music that is written by two people's lives.

Davey Williams staring into space. Ladonna Smith, hunched over, violin pointing to the ground (it says viola in the leaflet but I can only remember it as a violin).

Very together from the start. No warm up but straight into it. No effort before settling down to concentrate. A whole way of life.



...  
 Pluck strings on guitar, above pickup, rub arm on strings. Green toy gun, rattle on metal pickup. Toy car, piece of wood. Metal rod under strings, acting as a lever. Handful of junk to the bridge. Using bottleneck to produce harmonic drone, gregorian drone. Deep-throated distortion. I can try and describe the music, but only by focusing on the superficial, apparently eccentric performance of what went down.

The music that they play all the time together and the public can only witness certain episodes, in some ways it is a private music. John Boulding suggested I say that they played with great empathy. Will Menter suggested I say that they played with total empathy.

I enjoyed it, totally.



Brett Hornby

by Ian Menter

Listening to this record late at night I found it difficult to settle. I kept thinking I could hear one of my children upstairs waking up crying. Once I realised it was only Brett gulping air I relaxed. There is much here that one normally misses listening to recordings of saxophones. The air Brett releases from his lungs passes out of his mouth: some of it escapes directly, some goes into the mouthpiece, some escapes at the side of the mouthpiece, some goes into the body of the saxophone and emerges through open holes, some through left open holes and some even goes right through the instrument to emerge out of the bell.

At times it sounds like Brett's playing two instruments: the reed/mouthpiece with his lips and the saxophone with his fingers. The music from each is limited by the common flow of air and the control of that flow by lungs and tongue.

Much of the music is quiet and gentle although there are a few stirring excursions into post Ayler/Shepp fury.

What Brett proves is that the sounds that can be made, especially at the quieter end of the dynamic range of the saxophone, hold just as much scope for subtlety, multi-phonics, overtones, undertones (inner tones and outer tones) as a guitar (there seem to have been several solo guitar records on collective-type labels).

There are 8 pieces in all, of which 2 are short postscripts to either side. Each piece has a distinctive quality, apparently usually determined by the particular parts of his 'vocabulary' that Brett chooses to explore. Because each piece is limited in this way, much of the interest in the music comes from the detail and not from the overall "form" - the slight change in pitch or intensity of one overtone and how that affects another overtone for example. The fascination of the moment is great, as of the moment before and the next moment. But the moment before the moment before and the moment after the next moment are located elsewhere: at the moment.

("Insensitive" is available from Zyzze Records, 36 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6)



by Clive Bell

How about listening to Satie piano pieces while outside your window someone is demolishing a motorbike? Does that sound like your cup of tea? Never mind, all four of these records are in much better taste than that.

First, a new Bead recording of improvised duets by Steve Beresford (piano) and Nigel Coombes (violin): "White String's Attached". Beresford and Coombes have played together in a group called the Four Pullovers, which Coombes describes as "a rather large and unwieldy outfit". Having recently worn a lot of woollies in the Lake District, I'm inclined to agree. Anyway, the two Pullovers here have boldly tackled the problem of blending violin and piano, which they solve by an almost non-stop series of references to other musics, banal and otherwise. The idea may seem to be uninteresting, but the result is happily a tour de force, hilarious at times, since Beresford and Coombes both bring so much bravado, flair, élan, etc to bear on the "inimitable combination", as Coombes puts it. With typical modesty Coombes describes the music as a depiction of Beethoven's problems in trying to write his ten violin and piano sonatas, while Beresford suggests it sounds like "Yehudi Menuhin when he's pissed". However, one problem Beethoven didn't grapple with was attempting a review of virtually the entire history of the violin and piano in three pieces, which is what this feels like.

Of course, this undertaking calls for a high degree of empathy, which Coombes and Beresford seem to have buckets of, quite uncanny at times. In particular Beresford's imagination is so fertile it makes the Vale of Evesham look like the Gobi Desert. But do the instruments sound as if they hate each other, as Coombes claims? Sometimes a tug of war certainly takes place, when the violin and piano strike out firmly in opposite directions; at other times they gambol along hand in hand, but the music never lacks a considerable tension, as when you watch young lambs, which are famous for skipping, but look like they could easily break a leg.

"White String's Attached" is beautifully easy to listen to, and the simply designed red cover will look good anywhere in your room. The title is a mangling of the title of Joseph Sziget's autobiography, a double misprint found in Japanese record sleeve notes, which sends me into transports of delicatessen.

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Roger Smith often plays with Coombes and John Stevens in the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, and was another of the Four Pullovers; but before dealing with his solo guitar record, I'll make a general remark about one direction in improvised music - within this music, which is often associated with hard experimental integrity and a rigorous refusal to compromise, some musicians are exploring the possibility of whims, irony, references to other music, juggling the audience's expectations, and giving priority to pleasing the audience. Plenty of good music is going on quite apart from this tendency, but it can be a bizarre and refreshing direction, and may well be more rewarding than the music-theatre idea of musicians earnestly becoming temporary actors. Maybe the key word here is irony - I'm thinking of Misha Mengelberg and Han Bennink playing "Where is the Police?" (on ICP 010, recorded in 1971), and people like Peter Cusack, Terry Day and David Toop.

The Roger Smith solo guitar record is the first to appear on the new London Musicians Collective label. At first sight the front of the sleeve looks "inimitably" awful, but if you try hard you can see it as a clever mingling of the fashionable two-tone black and white check with the absurd subject of two geese facing in opposite directions. One of the geese has London Musicians

Collective printed on its left wing, but not a word about Roger Smith - so we can surmise that designer Harriot Cain is saying something about the combination of urban trends, rural longings and leftwing ideas at the LMC.

Fans of Roger Smith will readily recall his distinctive live performance style, his desperate air and distressed eyes, his puffing and sniffing, his perverse tendency to play quieter and quieter the more agitated he gets, as if about to implode. The record begins aptly with his breathing, and is well recorded by Max Eastley and David Toop (who were also responsible for White String's Attached). The sound is rich and intimate, and Smith plays an engaging, introvert music which invites the listener in to share his explorations. Irony is in the air, but with a light touch, and Smith's fingers share the same light touch, combined with a sort of self-contained intensity that can reach a feverish pitch - as when on side one he is apparently moved to stand up and walk around for a few seconds.

Smith's approach to the instrument is "traditional" in that he uses a Spanish guitar and only plays it with his fingers, very rarely letting his attention stray from the strings to the body. And whereas Peter Cusack uses a cheap guitar and explores a "cheap" nylon sound, Smith seems to have invested in a richer-sounding instrument. The real value of this record is in the display of Smith's wide range of tone, colour and striking ability to build long solo pieces, which are both difficult to appreciate in a less intimate setting or in a group. Definitely one of the masterpieces among improvisation records.

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Another new label is Rift, which sounds like Frith, and Rift 1 is Fred Frith's latest project, Guitar Solos Three. As on Guitar Solos Two, Frith shares the space with other guitarists, and here there are eight. It's characteristic of many improvising guitarists that, when watching them live, you can be distracted from the sound itself by the way the guitarist is producing it. Could he or she get that same sound if he wasn't using a cucumber and wearing slippers on both hands? Inversely, when hearing a record you can quite bemused try to work out was that really a fork lift truck driving over a Gibson 12 string? Or maybe an ambient crocodile with a glass toothpick? Here for example, Davey Williams uses an eggbeater, a slave-made mortar, and a 1970 Peavey Musician, which might be his 10-year old brother, or just a guitar.

This is a kind of sampler, so not surprisingly the quality is a little uneven, but there is a good range of styles and feelings. One or two of the pieces gain considerably from being limited to about seven minutes. However I feel four of the guitarists really stand out - first Frith's three short pieces in industrial mood, hardly sounding like a guitar, but concise and strong examples of this style. Eugene Chadbourne benefits from a fine, close recording (by Mike Mantler - lovely breathing Eugene!), and plays two pieces with a kind of manic restraint, a very incisive style, with his elbows, forearm slides and toy cars (?), all nicely integrated.

Perhaps the best pieces are those of Peter Cusack and Akira Iijima - Cusack accompanies his whistling on a nice relaxed guitar, leaves a bit of air around the sounds, and avoids crowding in too much. His composure is shared by Iijima (from Tokyo), who displays fine phrasing and a classical poise that could get improvisation a good name if we're not careful. Coming right at the end of the record, Iijima's couple of wild duck-type calls echo Frith's opening to Guitar Solos Two, a similarly beautiful piece.

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I'd just like to mention finally the Extempore String Ensemble, and early music group, who have a new record out on Meridian of instrumental music by Antony



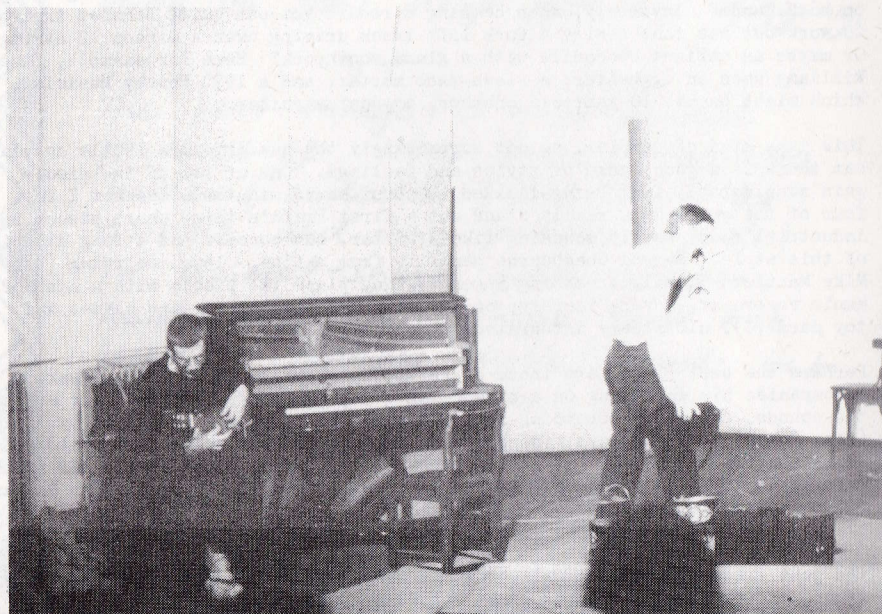
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Holborne (late 16th Century). As their name indicates, this group specialise in freely improvising on English string music of the 16th and 17th Centuries, a practice which was universal among performing musicians at that time. This type of improvising is a textural infill rather than soloing over accompaniment, and contributes to a rich texture and lively execution. Holborne himself was mainly known as a player of wire-stringed instruments, like the small cittern, the scallop-shaped orpharion, and the bandera, the bass of the family, all of which are used here to great effect - the spiky tone of the wire-stringed ensemble was particularly English apparently. Viols and various sizes of lute are also used here. The triple harp (forerunner of the pedal harp) can be heard delicately plonking an extemporization above the ensemble in "The Countess of Pembroke's Paradise", and the lute and tiny mandore decorate the tune of Muy Linda, a lively and rhythmically sophisticated dance.

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#### Records reviewed:

- 1) White String's Attached - Nigel Coombes, violin, and Steve Beresford, piano. Bead 16. Address; Bead Records, 1 Chesholm Road, London N16
- 2) Roger Smith - Spanish Guitar. LMC 1. Address; LMC Records, 42 Gloucester Avenue, London NW3
- 3) Guitar Solos Three. Fred Frith, Henry Kaiser, Chip Handy, Peter Cusak, Keith Rowe, Eugene Chadbourne, Davey Williams, Akira Iijima. Rift 1. Address; c/o Fred Frith, 51 Rossiter Road, London SW12
- 4) Music by Antony Holborne, played by the Extempore String Ensemble. Director George Weigand, Meridian E77027. Address; Meridian Records, PO Box 317, London SE9 4SF



Roger Smith and Steve Beresford in London Musicians' Collective (photo: Kazuko Hohki) 70

#### BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

My heart is carried by the breeze  
Right past the window to the trees  
Where lace-like shimmering leaves do dance,  
bounce, flourish at their ease,  
And so to there are with green-bushed velvet  
arms and hands  
That slowly stretch out, close, retract  
And in their lives there is no "act".  
The conductor in the heavens  
Taught them to play their different rhythms  
So in rising, falling squirming about  
You see what life is all about:  
There is no confusion in their crescendoes  
Harmony is the key  
To learn to love both you and me  
For we are joined to the common tree.

by Edward Desenne



Martin Mayes



by Torsten Müller

The improvised music scene in Germany is not at all as paradisiac as many British musicians and listeners think. The number of young musicians and co-ops here isn't even comparable to England; and even worse, the interest in the music (of both audience and organisers) is steadily decreasing. Most German musicians earn the bigger part of their money in the DDR (or Holland, where the interest is also rapidly falling).

There are in the FGR approximately 5 new music co-operatives. FMP, the group around Kowald in Wuppertal, the Aachen Kollektive, the Witten Kollektive and our Kollektive which is now about a year old.

Kollektive is a big word for a group of 3 people. Gerd Glasmer, Volker Steppat and myself have been organising concerts, etc, in Bremen for the past 6 months and the only reason we call ourselves "Kollektiv Freie Musik" is because it's the best way of attracting attention, grants and support from the city.

Gerd and I are the only two people playing this music in this part of Germany, so getting together with others for a play or doing concerts at other co-ops doesn't happen. Nevertheless we have managed (with small funds) to organise one concert a month at a little theatre with such musicians as Lovens/Lytton, Martin Mayes, etc. The attendance has always been poor, but if I'm not mistaken it's been rising recently. With a bit of help from the local jazz musicians' organisation, we will be having our first two-day event of improvised music in May.

All in all it may be flourishing in Bremen but there are a lot of reasons why the British co-op scene is still the most interesting.



Gerd Glasmer at Bristol Arts Centre

1 July '79

Hello Ian,

nothing in Devizes try to move/  
but no jobs except London keep in  
touch . . . more anon

Cosmic love and saxophones of  
reality

Barry Eve &amp; Woofer

15 Aug '79

Hello Ian

gradually working up material for  
concert, tentative titles 'watering  
the roses' 'conversation piece' 'on  
being in a happy place' 'chrome  
trippie trees' and now in final des  
... how you spell it ... despera-  
tion 'waiting for a miracle'

nothing came of our efforts to start  
co-operative or move to London

seems staff shortage in hospitals  
means authorities loath to let good  
nurses move on / get the picture not  
very pleasant one

but we do what we can still would  
like to move to Bristol if had  
chance

more anon  
Cosmic love & saxophones of reality  
enough is enough  
many thanks Barry  
Barry Eve & Woofer

21 August '79

Hello Ian

. . . still trying to move Devizes  
just a vacuum need right kind of  
energy to sustain me and it's not  
here

etc more anon yours  
ever disappearing  
down the neck of my race

Cosmic love & saxophones of reality  
Barry Eve & Woofer  
"looking for perfection & hugged  
the open window"

PS Ian/both of us like to perform  
in London 'BMC goes to LMC' tenor  
sax and cello perhaps if possible  
somebody from Bristol could call  
for us on the way up/

PPS 11 Winter programme - would you  
put me down for tenor sax and  
words solo spot somewhere we  
could travel up on my motorbike.



30 Grove Park,  
Rathmines,  
Dublin 6  
Eire  
23/4/80

Hello, could you send me  
some information about your  
forthcoming festival. If its  
similar to your first one I

would like to visit. I wrote you  
before that one but unfortunately I  
was not in a position to go and be-  
cause of a postal strike I didn't  
get your letter about the second one  
till too late. I got both of your  
magazines in London and found them  
very interesting.

I've been playing clarinet for a  
short time now and improvise with  
a guitarist who is the only other  
person I've come across (despite  
advertising, etc) who is interested  
in improvising. Musical perform-  
ance in Eire is mostly of traditional  
music of showbands. There is a  
small group of jazz musicians  
centered mainly around Louis Stewart  
but hardly any records are available  
here (not even Impulse or Atlantic)  
consequently most people are not  
aware of anything outside of what's  
on radio and TV.

We play in each others front rooms  
and also on the beach and in the  
country. (The pictures in your mag  
of street performances I find very  
exciting and also once picture in  
Musics of some trombonists and others  
playing in/at a river. We have some  
cassettes of ourselves if you're  
interested in hearing us. Most  
people either avoid us or are hostile  
when they hear us. (We are treated  
as a joke by the young musicians who  
aspire to the jazz clique.)

As we're both unemployed, I would be  
grateful if you would give me early  
notice of your festival dates  
(possibility of some work to pay ex-  
penses).

Best wishes

Paul Vogel

Dear Ian

Thanks for your reply. Yes you can  
use my letter for your magazine. I  
hope you didn't find it too de-  
pressing reading about the scene  
here. I would be interested in  
talking to others in a similar situ-  
ation. The only sense of contact I  
feel with other improvisors is thro'  
magazines like your own and "Musics"  
and records.

Also in getting some of Frank Perry's  
cassettes, I had some correspondence  
with him. This is of course very  
limited as there's no actual con-  
tact.

(Both Kevin and I have been to the  
Bracknell Jazz Festival and hated  
it for its conveyor belt presenta-  
tion of "acts").

I would be interested in finding  
out about the development of im-  
provisors who play regularly with  
lots of different people, also the  
effect of records on those in isola-  
tion. How many people are forced  
to "practise" on their own as  
opposed to some kind of group prac-  
tising.

Best wishes,  
Paul Vogel.

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Will Menter, Paul Shorthouse

Many thanks to Lorraine Butchart for typing.

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Cover drawings by Max Eastley:

Front Pieces of wood banged together produce echoes on  
the Quay at Bristol.  
Wood being sawn up with a power saw. The pieces of wood are then banged  
together to make a sharp sound which then produce echoes.

Back Buskers Maracas.

A maraca machine that makes rhythms when the busker walks along with  
the machine attached to a belt. Walking at different speeds  
causes different rhythms.



