

TAPPED TEETH— TRY DIFFERENT SPEEDS

Notebook Extracts, 1978-96

FRED FRITH

A-A-A-AD-AD-AD-ADV-ADV-ADVA-ADVA-ADVAN-ADVAN-
ADVANC-ADVANC-ADVANC-ADVANCE-ADVANCE-ADVANCE!-
ADVANCE!-E ADVANCE-E ADVANCE- WE ADVANCE!-WE
ADVANCE!- WE ADVANCE!-WE ADVANCE!- CAN WE ADVANCE?-
CAN WE ADVANCE?- CAN WE ADVANCE?- CAN WE ADVANCE?-
CAN WE AD-CAN WE AD- CAN WEIRD- CAN WE?-CAN WE?-CAN
WE?-CAN WE-C WEAK-WEAK-WEAK¹¹⁹

NO APAGUEN EL FUEGO DEL ESPIRITU¹²⁰

1977-78

1. Timbre of amplified pizzicato violin with flute.
2. Metal bowl on strings, bowed (use compressor).
3. Voice chord loops with leader inserts as "breath."
4. Dance as ritual/dance as symbol/dance as demand/dance as response.

"our secret longing from the very beginning—the victory over gravity, over all that weighs down and oppresses, the change of body into spirit, the elevation of creature into creator, the merging with the infinite, the divine."¹²¹

5. Improvised structures—the perception that they mostly consist of "boring" bits that lead to "exciting" bits; but if you attempt to cut out the boring bits by making very short "exciting" pieces, the result is the creation of stereotypes, self-conscious attempts to excite, predictable ways of manipulating the audience...easy to fall into traps, but better to resist simplistic definitions in the first place. Learning to empty yourself before playing. Reminds me of Tai Ch'i seminar with Patrick Watson.

Young man, smiling knowingly: "This is all very well, but what use is it going to be when some guy pulls a knife on me in the street?"

Patrick: "If you understand Tai Ch'i principles, you won't be there!"

119. Text for *The Entire Works of Henry Cow*, created by editing one line of an Art Bears song, contributed to the *Miniatures* compilation L.P.

120. Found painted on the wall when I moved into my 13th Street apartment.

121. Curt Sachs, *World History of the Dance* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1937).

6. Edited version still needs editing.
7. Tight, well-played, unconvincing.
8. Isolated rhythmic events/don't worry about repeating something throughout/a few strokes here and there/a drone for two bars/a mosaic of single moments taken from hundreds of disparate elements.
9. Use extreme background and foreground (like screams and fairground music in Hitchcock).
10. Tense serenity—leaves reflected on a brick wall, wind blowing—
simple (silhouettes) complex (wind patterns)
not moving (wall) moving (trees)
kids playing, security guards with night sticks, radio static.
11. Colouring of our actions by what we feel is expected of us. How to resist such impulses. How to remain true to an integrated idea both of self and of purpose.

1979/80

Aigrette garzette

Héron poupré

Flamant rose

Buse variable

Busard St. Martin

Cochevis Huppé

Milan Noir

Faucon Crécerelle

Avocette

Rossignol philomèle

"Now he discovered familiar patterns everywhere, only weirdly mingled and combined, and in this way often the strangest objects fell into order in his mind. Soon he looked for analogies in all things, conjunctures, correspondences; till he could no longer see anything in isolation."¹²²

122. Novalis, from *The Disciples of Süss*.

1981/82

12. Idea of interference—events breaking into/out of the superstructures, surfaces of pieces.

13. Accidents—accept, embrace, ignore, incorporate, develop, avoid.

"As one conditions oneself by time and by working to what happens, one becomes more alive to what the accident has proposed for one. And, in my case, I feel that anything I've ever liked at all has been the result of an accident on which I've been able to work."¹²³

123. Francis Bacon.

14. Hairdryer blown between mike and speaker to offset recording technicians' obsession with cleanness.

1983/84

15. Trigger sound more transparent? (treatment?).
16. To get a better bass sound—hop x-y through light chorus, all top filtered out of chorus channel to make low frequencies move a little...
17. People have started to leave things on my table to see what I'll do with them.
18. Taps/tears/water boiling in a pan/washing machine emptying and spinning 6-string bass/mini-guitar v. abrasive/cardboard box, biscuit tin, double-bass bow.
19. Tokyo subway/ crows in Meiji Shrine/ tapped teeth (or cheeks?)/ try different speeds (slowed down?).

"Half of my painting work is disrupting what I can do with ease."¹²⁴

124. Francis Bacon.

20. Metal rods through strings (open tuning), hit with *soft* beaters/ metronome balanced on strings as pulse.
21. Interlocks, especially using chordal possibilities, creating "melodies" out of interchanges of chordal, timbral and single note patterns.
22. Rapid variations of attacks using volume and other pedals.
23. Melodic material divided through the three voices and made into interlocks, sometimes with three different but related pulses counted simultaneously (not ONLY hocketed).
24. Don't worry about making songs—let it happen at its own pace. Words can be available and 'improvised' as appropriate to the context (not ONLY shouting!).

Later, from the train window
 water, wires
 smell of diesel fumes
 Southern serves the South
 dead sky
 red light on a scaffold pole
 tropical tropical tropical

welcome to dreamland

25. Remove bass under end of sax solo for more clear re-entry.
26. Remember to trigger Zorn (but not all the time!)
27. Raindrops wouldn't hurt, introduced half-way through.
28. Careful with extra note!
29. Cut voices from 1' 14" onwards/ remove bass altogether/ introduce Wayne one-third of the way through/more Arto?
30. One static, two mobile, extreme use of physical space, imitation, quite sexy.
31. Construct melodies out of recordings of long notes on different instruments/timbres cut up—record even lengths and edit precisely into loops. (Mellotron principle)

I'm still here and I know what time it is.

32. Limit Tenko's voice (graphic?)
33. What can be taken away?
34. Drum sounds—room? gate? artificial vs. natural/tuning? drum skin rings? oil?
35. Good but not dangerous.
36. Needs de-hissing—lacking middle bite—some fading problems.
37. Gating one instrument with another to tighten up sound.
38. "Dismantle" kit/ different treatments of voices.

"Lovely penguins are popular with us. Their humming makes us feel dancing like a conjuring trick."¹²⁵

125. Seen on a T-shirt in Japan.

39. Utsonomiya-san's analogue techniques:
 - hand-turned Leslie speakers
 - sandpaper the oxide off back of tape
 - noise reduction by putting snare drum near sound source when recording, then cutting relevant frequency in mix
 - change mikes and mike positions for each word or line of a voice track to change character of sound in subtle ways
 - chorus—flap paper over the cone of a magazine attached like a horn to a tiny loudspeaker
 - constantly changing reverb. chamber surfaces and sizes (shiny? dull? open? closed?)

"There is no convenient time to break your leg
 there is no convenient time to submit to force
 there is no convenient time to find your soul
 there is no convenient time to have a child
 there is no convenient time to starve
 there is no convenient time to lose your will
 there is no convenient time to have a flat tire" ¹²⁶

126. Robby Sharp, from
 "You May Find a Bed."

40. Linn Drum—acceleration/deceleration/ very slow elastic tempi/ use of extreme speeds to create precise melodies/ harmonies (tom triads?)/ triggering (both ways)/metronome calculations to match tempi/ rapid co-ordination without over-density (beyond human capacity, say)/ Use of drum patterns to cue unison elements in unpredictable places (can be left out in the mix, e.g.)/ relative tempi.

41. Linn Drum II—additive/ start from basis of full open relationship between two pulses, then prune—write instrumental lines around the pruned drum parts/ contradictory pulses/ how to improvise...?

1986

42. Energy field

switch switch faint heart

43. Record several (many) sections of different lengths (from two to twenty measures) united by common elements (time signature, tempo, harmonic basis) which can be mixed down in different guises and edited and re-edited into a variety of structural forms.

44. Cut up the mixed 1/2 track tape into random lengths à la Cage, shuffle, re-edit at random without regard to tape direction. Listen. Re-edit until satisfied with structural shape. Notate the resulting music precisely. Create parts, record the edited version back on to the multi-track tape, learn and play the parts along with the edited version on whatever instruments seem appropriate, re-edit as necessary.

45. Two mixes should emphasise opposing elements.

46. Perhaps melody needs to be more broken up—insert trombone playing only parts of it...

47. Shouts, clicks, hisses, gasps, panting.

48. Invent a series of connecting factors that emphasise opposite functions—to exaggerate continuity, or to emphasise fragmentation.
49. City system of grids...geometry underpins emotional reality...city as a series of solid structures full of fluid attempts to create living/moving ones. Try to "paint" music into the walls of the city...
50. Remains at the same level for a very long time.

This should see me out

As if on a steep hill looking down

past the houses at all that ice

51. A bunch of beginnings that never come to fruition. Some kind of underlying connection but I can't find it. If fragmentation is the important thing, make more of it. Keep shortening fragments and then release into a long flow of movement...Too predictable!

"...apart from the moment of decision as to when to throw, and apart from the consistency and choice of colour, and apart from the choice of the part of the painting at which it is to be thrown, there is also the angle and force at which it is to be thrown, which obviously depends very much on practice and knowing the kinds of things that happen when the paint is thrown at a certain velocity and at a certain angle."¹²⁷

127. David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

52. Sudden very short interruptions.
53. Spirals—each loop progressively changing—pitch, length of leader tape, introduction of external elements.
54. Duration? how to keep energy up? what to add? melodic/timbral content? overlaps?
55. Distorting mirror...foreground = rapid pulses fading. Feeling of lack of control...
56. Tension between formal musical representation and the "real" (found sound, sampling).
57. Not only blocks of different speeds, but acceleration within blocks.
58. Recognition patterns of speed-ups and slow-downs—*same thing* must be heard in each unit. Use Linn Drum to calibrate speed changes.
59. Continuous *mix* variations in blocks—adding and subtracting tracks. Multitrack loops.
60. Record different lengths of reverb and insert into master tape instead of leader.

61. War going on in the distance.

Red table
silver light
a grapefruit on the table
a cut out of it which
does not reveal the flesh
in the newspaper
Le Pen's teeth
head thrown back
an article on
genetic engineering
the radio's droning
but I can't hear who it is
shuffling feet and pages turning
outside it's still snow
never stop till Spring

62. Each repetition must incorporate a change.

63. Rattles—water? shimmering, articulate...treat tune *heavily*, background/
foreground.

64. Music box, slow pulse, accordion, Tom singing, *Birds* starts in bits.

"...the great function of art is communication, since mutual understanding is a force to unite people, and the spirit of communion is one of the most important aspects of artistic creativity...Art is a meta-language, with the help of which people try to communicate with one another; to impart information about themselves and assimilate the experience of others...Self-expression is meaningless unless it meets with a response."¹²⁸

"IF YOU ARE MUSICIANS, PLAY!"¹²⁹

128. Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (London: Bodley Head, 1985).

129. Border guard to Skeleton Crew, Czech-Hungarian frontier, November 1986, 1:00 a.m.

1987

65. High intensity solo right from the start.

66. Tension between unison and breaking out of it/ surfaces overlapping.

67. Roof below under three feet of water gradually turning orange. Bath of starlings. Trees make a difference.

68. Orchestration of environmental sounds progressing/digressing towards music.
69. Dissassembly.
70. Continuous very quiet melody merging with sounds in the action, e.g. gear-shift, cornering, factory sounds, train, etc.
71. Insects slowly transformed into radio static.

1988/89

"I don't think you can separate childhood from adulthood. I think you are the same person all through your life. So all the sensibilities that energise you as a child sort of flow through. And being an artist means that you can use them."¹³⁰

72. Frailty/quality of decay like bad lungs.
73. Use fast forward defeat sound, v. far away with violin 'stacks.'
74. Use of very slow rhythmic macro-structure containing faster rhythmic micro-structures (Messiaen, Korean music).
75. In multiple counterpoint sections relative levels should be constantly changing.

130. Richard Long.

MEN OF ALL AGES PLAYING CARDS FOR MONEY ON THE TRUNKS OF PARKED CARS¹³¹

131. In Rio de Janeiro.

76. Structure based on a series of episodes which may or may not be thematically linked (in normal musical sense) but which accumulate a certain power of inexorability. Narratives. Journeys. Metaphorically a lot more relevant than expositions and developments? *Memories of Fire and The Book of Embraces* (Eduardo Galeano). Or Béatrice's collections of tiny images...

1990

77. *Helter Skelter*: React

Don't take any notice
Be influenced
Keep your own direction
Play/don't play with the others
Play/don't play in spite of the others
Play in parallel with the others

- Find a personal language that's coherent, simple, efficient, especially in the context of the ensemble. Don't try to do too much.
- STREETWISE—super-consciousness of the movements and intentions of others. Be aware of everything that's going on—when not playing you should be as aware and as focused as when you are.
- Use the narrative and dramatic aspects of the work to concentrate your energies and give you an emotional context.
- Limitations.
- No music without tension:
 - sound/silence
 - development/stasis
 - passion/self-control
 - the past/the present
 - optimism/pessimism
 - what happened?
 - what's happening?
 - what's going to happen?
- No music without movement:
 - starting with the fact that all sound consists of the movement of air

78. Someone or something is trying to prevent you from playing.

79. Music heard across a wall—sometimes a door opens, but immediately it's closed again.

80. Monumental but fragile.

132. François-Michel Pesenti.

81. Violence hidden behind form.

“Between the violence of a memory and the fact that it isn't theirs.”¹³²

82. Effect of trying to talk through loud music.

83. Keep repeating senseless actions.

84. Gradually losing the thread of the written parts and starting to invent.

85. The actors are tired of acting but they can never escape from it.

no sleep coming, nor any prospect of even one bad dream

86. Change frequency picture radically from traditional verticality.

87. Constantly breaking through, but never clearly identifiable.

HOLDING UP A SKULL FOR A SEEING EYE DOG

CERTIFIED LIKENESS OF A BUTCHER'S HOOK

DOCTOR I'M IN TROUBLE WON'T YOU TAKE A LOOK?

88. Sample Didier's lungs/ tight, no gaps/ chains and bells not needed musically/ keep pulses quiet.
89. Make *Dark* more of a shadow of *Mirror*.
90. Wolves much shorter/ let voices penetrate by keeping ending quieter.

1991/92

91. *Portraits d'Inconnus*/ basic principles:
 - simultaneity—use of different acoustic spaces and reverbs (especially using analogue methods)
 - abuse of recording media (physical manipulation and destruction/ reconstruction of tape, for example)
 - varying densities—from one tooth of a music box to several sources at once.
 - random volume—each playback will be at one of several randomly determined levels.
 - random selection—each sensor will be able to trigger several different sources, selected at random to avoid identifiable sensor—sound relationships.
 - lengths should also differ widely to ensure that permutations of combinations are as varied as possible.
 92. Enigmatic mechanical repetitions, laughter, incomprehensible voices recorded through bad microphones and replayed at wrong speed, anxiety, suddenness of events.
- “photography is a way of shouting, of freeing oneself”¹³³
133. Henri Cartier-Bresson.
93. As each recognisable melodic element returns it should be more and more mutilated, distorted as if by memory.
 94. Don't be afraid not to use things, however important they may have seemed.
 95. Keep voices primary and tense.
 96. Lose seconds here and there if it helps keep things in motion.
 97. Highly amplified small and mundane sounds used as rhythm elements.
 98. Grid—consists of timed moments at which a limited number of elements are heard in varying relation to each other.
 99. Snatches of pre-recorded music synchronised with grid, but distant.

100. Soloists or small groups playing in fixed but unmatched time relations
(use phantom click tracks).

101. Grid elements—rice in metal bowl or on guitar strings
whirled sounds
eating/laughing/bricolage intime
train
footsteps in snow
drummed bass
drone elements

102. Losing control is a discipline like any other.

103. First eat, then cook with love.

Finely tuned tremor earthquakes aftershocks
intuition the wind stealing through leaves
ghost in the machine being fearless uncertain
this isn't meant to be 'new'
oblique oppositions and attempts to reconcile them
fragile armour tender stone splintered sure
perpetual motion marching loitering lurching
reaching out falling over leaping sleepy inevitable
you're always faced with choices power
but there's no time strident who decides?

ignore what just happened patience
catch it
pick it apart or break abrasive away
this isn't meant to be 'shocking'
but it's passion excite second nature
silence sudden winter night
illusions as when a tiny sound very close under stars
to your ear chatty lyrical
seems like a huge one heard from a distance

Attack decay repeat delay advance

birds call discreet interference to lake waves lapping
the continuous dialogue between what the musicians know
quiet conviction their technical resources their pasts
and dropping a packing case out the back of a truck

discovered every time they play
sly erotic irreverent
try again
animal cries it
swings¹³⁴

134. Contributed as notes to Jim Staley's
Don Giovanni CD.

1993/94

104. Eat, clap, hiss, newspaper, sandpaper, shh, tap cheek, sing very quietly, hum quietly close to mike (intimate versions of vocal melodies).
105. Make timing grid more subtle, less systematic.
106. "Il faut nous arrêter au lieu de marcher, marcher..."
107. Mechanical encounters/ mechanical responses.
108. No repetition.

"specialised products will be accurately served by our
trained personnel"¹³⁵

135. Announcement heard on
Italian Railways.

From notes to "*Nous sommes les Vaincus*":

109. Buckets filled with gravel sent by wire, tipped onto metal sheets.
brushes on metal clothing.
breath, mud, grinding percussion.
110. String instrument: two metres long, metal neck, timpani as sound resonator, moveable frets, to be played with beaters, sticks, fingers, bow, mounted on bicycle wheels for mobility...

Giant bagpipe: vertical pipes, air provided by foot-pump, operated by two people.

Wind instrument: based on Swanee Whistle, but very large, constructed from PVC piping, use sax mouthpiece.

1995

111. From pre-edit questions to choreographer Paul Selwyn Norton:
Do we need silence? If so, how much?
Do you hear anything that's not there?
How flexible do you want the material to be?
Is it useful to edit it into a fixed order?
Do you have any feeling about beginnings or endings?

Do you have any idea what it's about?

Are substantial alterations necessary; if so, in what direction should they go?

112. Turn whole building into a performance space, like a labyrinth from Art of Memory. Audience has to keep moving. Events timed with stopwatches. Fifty pianos! Live sampling forms basis of final event in the auditorium. Key factor is mix of choral and non-trained voices, texts on theme of refugee. Abrasive interventions from the Rock Department. Oud? Dance element? Duration at least three hours...

"I suppose the whole of art lies in this mysterious conjunction of being able to let go and yet being able to remain sufficiently apart to see where one has to stop."¹³⁶

136. David Sylvester.

Recordings and other composed work to which the above notebook extracts are relevant:

1. "The Entire Works of Henry Cow" from *Miniatures*, a compilation of one-minute pieces produced by Morgan Fisher in 1979.
2. *Gravity*, an exploration of world dance music recorded in 1979/80.
3. *Speechless*, 1981.
4. *Cheap at Half the Price*, home recordings from 1983.
5. *Who Needs Enemies*, a collaboration with Henry Kaiser in 1983 that made extensive use of the then new and exotic Linn Drum
6. *Dense Band*, a David Moss recording with John Zorn, Arto Lindsay, Wayne Horvitz and others, produced and co-composed by FF in 1984.
7. *After Dinner*, very radically produced by Yasushi Utsunomiya between 1981-83.
8. *Welcome to Dreamland*, a compilation of Japanese music produced by FF in 1984.
9. *The Country of Blinds*, Skeleton Crew's second LP, mostly written in 1985.
10. *The Technology of Tears*, dance music for choreographer Rosalind Newman, composed and recorded in 1986.
11. *Jigsaw*, as above.
12. *Long on Logic*, commissioned by Rova Sax Quartet in 1987.
13. Soundtrack for Peter Mettler's *The Top of His Head*, 1989.
14. *Allies*, music for choreographer Bebe Miller, recorded in 1989.
15. *Dropéra*, collaboration with Ferdinand Richard, 1989.
16. *Helter Skelter*, a project to create opera music through working with "young, unemployed rock musicians from the 'quartiers défavorisés' of Marseille," 1990.
17. Jim Staley's *Don Giovanni*, produced by FF in 1991.

18. *Portraits d'Inconnus*, a gallery installation in Paris with painter Béatrice Turquand d'Auzay, created between 1991/93.
19. *The Previous Evening*, music for choreographer Amanda Miller (and a tribute to John Cage), composed in 1992.
20. *Nous Sommes les Vaincus*, music for invented instruments designed and built by Claudine Brahem Drouet, for the dance production by François Verret, Paris 1993.
21. *Second Nature*, a grid composition for 13 guitars, contributed to the Sub Rosa "Subsonic" series, recorded in 1994.
22. *Rogue Tool*, for choreographer Paul Selwyn Norton, composed in 1995, premiered in Tel Aviv in 1996.
23. *Impur*, for 130 musicians, large building and mobile audience, performed at L'École Nationale de Musique, Villeurbanne, France, in May 1996.