



"Little Sun Flower smiling in this time of the bug."

- Joe McPhee



Since the lockdown has made it impossible for most, if not all, musicians to tour, I've been using my time here at home to reflect on some of my past travel experiences. Here's a story that I would like to share which took place on a train during one of my early European tours.

I was traveling on a train in Poland back in 2004. Ken Vandermark and I were on tour and were heading to Poznan after a nice concert in Krakow the night before. Traveling with us was the tour organizer and label owner Wawrzyniec "Laurence" Makinia. (Laurence used to help organize a lot of Ken and I's concerts in Poland in the early part of the 2000's). Along with being a great presenter, Laurence also helped run the record label and distribution company Multikulti, releasing a ton of great music from across the spectrum of improvised music.

Somewhere in the middle of our journey, Laurence pulled out CD-R of a live concert that I did at the Hungry Brain in Chicago a couple of years earlier. He asked if I could sign the CD sleeve.

First of all, I had no idea that this performance was even recorded...let alone that a CD-R had made its all the way over to Poland. (These were the days before "instant" recordings could be made and then downloaded and distributed via YouTube minutes after your concert was finished.)

I asked him how he got ahold of the recording...
he smiled and replied "we have our ways."

This was the first time in my life when I realized that the music I was helping to create was having an impact outside of the Chicago scene that I was a part of.

My mind was blown.

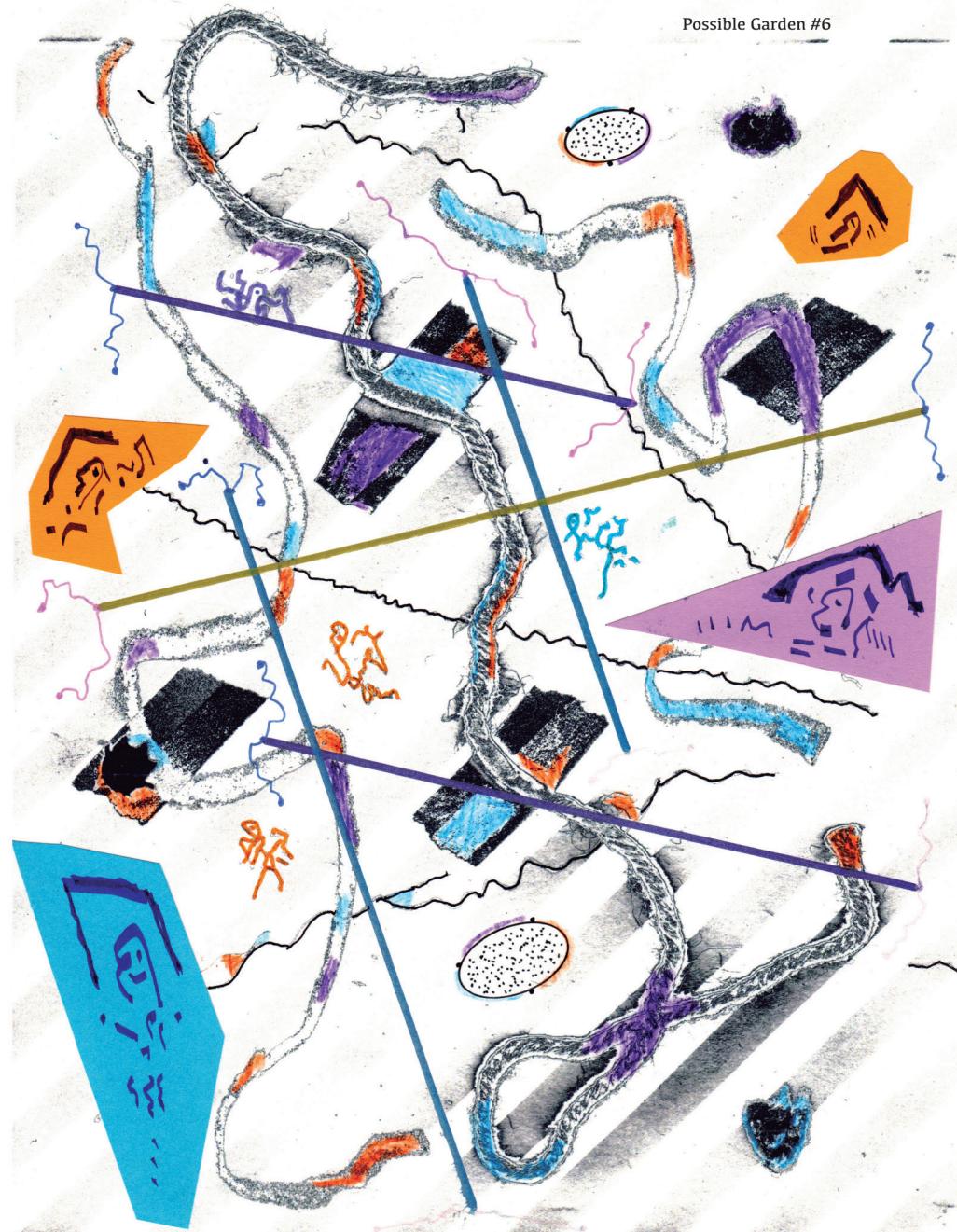
-Tim Daisy

Evanston, Illinois, 2020

from

JAA P B L O N K

Possible Garden #6



Garbage Collection #10b



Friendly Ghosts #5



For "Garbage Collection #10b":

The series "Garbage Collection" consists of collages made of scraps of paper and other cheap stuff or trash material, which are then scanned and digitally processed. Only colours are changed, not shapes.

For "Possible Garden #6":

The "Possible Gardens" are based on digitally processed photos, printed in black and white. I then draw and paint on them by hand.

The processing is done with programs I wrote myself; I don't use standard photo software. All these images feature my personal scribbles: distant heirs of my sound poetry notation symbols. I hope to publish these series in (limited edition) books, as I have done a number of times before.

These are the two most recent ones:

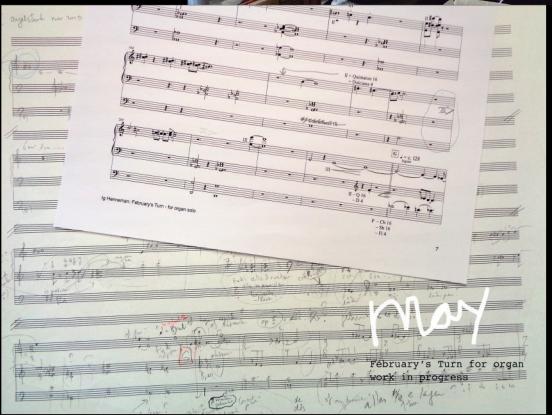
Antonin Artaud (2020): http://jaapblonk.com/Pages/a_na.html
111 Recipes (2019): <http://jaapblonk.com/Pages/111R.html>

Amsterdam

- Inside and outside during

the
first Corona months

1. March_ view from my studio
- 1b. March_ around the block_ The plane tree
2. April_ two piano players in the house who try to master Kurtág's Bach transcriptions for four hands
3. May_ work in progress on the organ solo February's turn



BRANDON LOPEZ

INTERVIEW

Tuesday, August 11, 10am EST

DO: Where are you now and what's been going on since the pandemic hit and your gigs dried up?

BL: I've just been hunkered down and practicing, that's about it. Before the pandemic I had steady work through September 2020, and now that's mostly gone. I was supposed to be away from NYC most of May, part of June. But in a way it's great. It's nice to just be in one space and practice. Fix some technical issues and develop some other ideas. Just kind of turning out a ton of recordings that have been sitting in my computer for a while. It's nice to sit and refocus and think less about ... um, making this sustainable, I guess. I was getting unemployment, the funds were extremely helpful.

DO: Wow, that's super fortunate.

BL: Yep.

DO: I wanted to ask about the online performances and what that's been like for you. You know, I saw your performance at the Catalytic Sound Festival, and you did something else with ESS and an Art for Arts thing, right? When you played with the Whit Dickey Trio was that remote or were you all together in the same room or?

BL: Actually, that was pre-recorded at this studio in Flatbush. I also did some stuff with Gerald Cleaver and it was also pre-recorded. I'm into it. I don't have to travel in order to get paid [laughs]. Now I can either go to a studio or, ya know, be in my underwear in my apartment and play into a live-stream. Though it is different, ya know, the experience of playing in front of people is a different thing, it has a different energy. So that I do miss.

DO: How do you think that change, that difference in energy, affects your playing?

WITH

DANIEL OWEN

(poet and director of Ugly Duckling Presse)

BL: I don't think much, actually. I played a live gig last week, the first live gig in five or six months. It felt strange. I've kind of always had some stage fright issues and if I'm not working that muscle, if I'm not consistently playing in front of an audience, it feels like I regress in my own performance anxieties. Whereas if I'm just playing in a room, you kind of just hit a space bar and go. I don't think it changes my process much. Some musicians, for instance my friend Steve Bazkowski, live streams pose an issue. His definition of music is largely contingent on the idea that music exists inside of a space with other people. I think there's truth to that, though I'm a little looser with my definition as to what makes music.

DO: That brings up another question I was thinking about, which is about your experience of making a recording versus performing live, even though so many of your recordings are recordings of live performances, and what that dynamic is like for you. How do you think about this product that's been made from the live performance on the one hand, and then how it's different, if it is different, from going into a studio without an audience and making that into the recording, as opposed to being in a space with people listening?

BL: Well, a live performance, at least in my experience with improvised music, feels like you're not only engaged with the players, you're engaged with the listeners to a certain extent, and the room itself, which is I think really the only variable, the only difference between a live performance and a recording for me. The process does feel very very similar aside from whether or not there's an audience there. Though, again, there seems to be a difference between a live performance and a recording. I think when something gets recorded it becomes ephemera, whereas being in a room, playing in a room, feels a bit more direct or concrete. You can go into a recording and change things. You can have repeated listenings of a recording, the ability to replay that recording gives a sole listener a myriad of experiences. Recording, for me, also feels more about capturing a moment, whereas you don't really have that variable in a live performance. You have to just deliver, or, you and the listener have to deal with if something's not quite working. You can't just edit it out, you have to work with that. Anyway, I feel the same urgency in a live performance as I do in a recorded performance. Or I try to feel that urgency.

DO: I wanted to go back and ask how you came to be a musician in the first place and how you came to be the musician that you are, in the specific positions you're in as a bass player. What initially inspired you to become a musician?

BL: As a kid I was always into making shit. I was more into visual art when I was a preteen, early teen. There was a point where a friend of mine got a guitar. He showed me some chords and some classic rock song and I just got hooked. I begged my parents to get me one, and once they capitulated, I couldn't put it down. And for whatever reason, pretty much from the get-go, my focus was in playing solos and improvising.

DO: How old were you when your parents got you your first guitar?

BL: I was 13. So I guess fairly late. Or early, depending [laughs]. At that point, I was more into rock music, classic rock, blues, Hendrix. At some point, my aunt got me a bunch of different records. There was this one Impulse! compilation record. It had some Mingus and some later Coltrane. I heard that and, for whatever reason, that moved me. I started learning jazz guitar, formally. When I went to college, I switched to upright bass. Maybe, I think, because I felt like the way that I learned the guitar was fairly claustrophobic.

DO: How did you learn the guitar? Were you taking formal lessons, at school, or outside of school?

BL: I was taking formal lessons outside of school. I found a jazz guitar teacher in Jersey by the name of Peter Prisco. He was a Tristano disciple, and student of Sal Mosca. The Tristano school it's own small world within the small world of bebop, and, to me, it felt fairly restrictive. Possibly, because it takes so much time and effort to make something as harmonically and melodically restrictive speak. Or, possibly because I felt like I was wearing someone else's shoes, which were really big shoes to fill. Either way, I just felt like I didn't know how to break out of that type of thinking, so when I switched to the bass, I figured I'd just teach myself how to deal with it and figure out what I wanted from it. In college I had a friend who was from New York City proper and he was exposed to a lot of the stuff going on in the downtown scene, he was a big fan of Derek Bailey, and we started freely improvising. I didn't quite know what that was, but, for whatever reason, it stuck. I became really interested in doing that, and devoted a great wealth of my time learning how to do that when I went to conservatory.

DO: When you first went to college what were you doing?

BL: I first went to a state school in Jersey, doing music. Dropped out within a few weeks. Went to Berklee for jazz guitar, dropped out after a semester. And then went to NEC [New England Conservatory of Music] for contemporary improvisation and did not do well, academically. I didn't want to go to college in the first place, and I think a lot of people from the generation, the millennials, were kind of pushed into higher ed. I just kind of treated conservatory as a place for me to develop my own sensibilities as opposed to dealing with more of the academic responsibilities, for better and for worse.

I'm still without a bachelor's [laughs]. I always thought of music as a creative endeavor, whereas I think a lot of conservatories/music school treat music more as a vocation.

DO: At Berklee or NEC, what were you being trained to do, vocationally? What were students there... the thing that you didn't want to do and didn't do, that they wanted you to do, what was that?

BL: Well, the "jazz language". Jazz academic studies are largely based on bop. Bebop theory has become academic, it feels codified. It doesn't feel like there's a lot of room for developing your own sensibilities, which feels antithetical to how that music was created. There are so many books written about the "correct way" to play over these harmonic changes and you need to learn these licks/tropes before you can go about making up your own shit. There's something to learning changes, understanding resolution points, but what the fuck is that? You don't need to learn any of that to make an arresting musical statement.

DO: Right, the old "you have to learn the rules before you can break them" kind of thing.

BL: Yeah, again, I think there's something to that line of thinking, but, for me, there's a big piece of what music-making is that's missing from the academic approach. There's also an intangible thing that you can't codify. But I don't know. I know so many really great academic jazz players, who ... I can't remember what they sound like... but if you check it out on paper, within that construct, they're excellent. If that makes any sense?

BL: I practice jazz [laughs], and I practice Bach [laughs]. Very academic! I guess the focus of my practice right now is just dumb technical aspects I glossed over; loosening up the body, being able to continuously produce a big sound, playing in a more formalized and traditional way seems to help to control and execute certain ideas. And as far as what I'm practicing conceptually ... I wish I could actually put my finger on what it is that makes or drives whatever concept I'm dealing with, but it's some pretty messy stuff. There's a strange desire to continue doing it. I can't put my finger on it.

I guess I could talk about what I do think about when I am creating, or when I am trying to execute, but I think that would be ... I don't feel like I actually understand what that is. And whenever I do feel like I can put my finger on it, ya know, it changes. So, it's a little too messy to talk about, what's happening conceptually. Like, I've got a student who's making recordings and he was asking me to critique his playing and his improvising from a compositional standpoint and I don't feel comfortable doing that. Because what I'm looking for changes frequently, it's like, when you're just listening to music at home or something like that, you're not always putting the same criteria of judgment on everything that you're listening to, and also that criteria, of what you want from the music, or what you think you want from the music, changes significantly every time that you listen. So yeah, it's too fucking abstract, ya know [laughs]. That's the best thing about music, it doesn't really make any sense. It functions. But you can't really put your finger on why it functions or what that is. I mean, I think the best, or at least my favorite, works of art in any medium are like that. You have this experience with it and it's not something that you could, I mean it is something that you could intellectualize, but I think that minimizes what it actually is.

DO: Along these lines, I want to ask you about the idea of lineage and tradition. I'm particularly curious about your take on the whole, ya know, free improvisation and free jazz, there's such a strong narrative of historical trajectory and lineage and i'm really curious about how you relate to all that. Do you consciously relate to people who came before you, coming up with similar approaches to making music?

BL: Yeah, I mean, that's a really complicated question as far as what lineage is, what that means. I think that the jazz or the American lineage or ... oh god, this is a hard one ... I think the fundamental difference between the European tradition and the American tradition is that the Europeans seem to get rid of, or, seem to deal more with the page and ... I mean, I think the fixation is more bureaucratic, you're essentially working with the page and parts and playing those exactly, whereas the jazz tradition, the American jazz tradition, I think the focus is a bit more streamlined... Improvisation is a bit more direct an action than staring at a page. I'm interested in the extreme of that. I find myself far less interested in pulling off a set composition and really just kind of delving into something that's a bit more intuitive and messy. And for me that's a big part of the lineage of American music, I mean, whatever that means. Because there are tons of people of course improvising all over, it's been a big part of many cultures' practices, ya know. To say that one thing is owned by a specific culture is tricky, it's a difficult thing to talk about, but ... I feel like the academy has a fixation on an idea of a European ideal which is more about product as opposed to process, product not necessarily meaning a ... what do I mean by product? It's not a consumer product, it's more about the execution of an idea as opposed to the process. I'm more interested in process than execution, though I'm concerned with execution.

As far as where I fit into a tradition, it's too messy for me to know.

DO: Maybe one way of focusing that is solo bass improvisation. You do solo bass improvisation, plus you lead groups, plus you play in other musicians' groups ... or, another way of thinking about the tradition question: on The Sodom Salt there are tracks dedicated to Cecil Taylor and to Henry Grimes, which is a clear tribute to musicians who have come before you.

BL: Absolutely, I mean, Cecil ... He seems, to me at least, to be the person in the jazz lineage to really reject the "supremacy" of composition or harmonic changes or some sort of constrictive structure and really just focus, really focus on process and I feel like he really changed how I listen to music and I think a lot of other musicians and listeners, how they listen to music. It wasn't about listening for tunes or listening to the execution of someone playing a specific set of harmonic changes or playing a specific set of notes written on a page. It was very much about someone developing a musical idea through a process over a long period of time, and their ideas of development and structure. One huge thing that I got out of Cecil's music is the idea that form—whatever your mind lets in, it makes sense of whatever you're open to. I owe a lot to Cecil. It's hard, as an improviser, to not deal with Cecil. He's that elephant in the room. He was maybe the first to really approach, at least in this culture, to approach music as process... extremely radical. His music is not feeding you any bullshit.

You very much need to meet it on its own level. It's not placating the listener, it's not feeding into nostalgia or anything like that, no, you very much have to meet it on its level in order to deal with it. That's very important to me. To treat the listener as an equal and not try to satiate what they think the music should be.

And I think that's a big thing that's overlooked. When a lot of people talk about tradition they think more of a formal or structural basis, for example playing the blues or playing bebop or playing jazz, there's this very restrictive idea of these forms that you have to learn and deal with and play over and over and over again. I think that's how a lot of people see tradition, as something that's very set in a formalized way, whereas I feel like the tradition of American music is radical, a radical sound, a radical noise. It's about breaking boundaries as opposed to fitting within a set tradition. Whereas I feel like European thought has a tradition of "correctness".

DO: What is that breaking of barriers, that radical noise, for, in a larger context, for you? At least in the way you approach playing bass or approach improvising. I mean, why is that important to you as a person? To do this thing with your life that most people would think is pretty fucking weird or ridiculous or pointless?

BL: Well I mean it's because everything is completely fucking ridiculous and weird and pointless. I mean, every single structure that we impose on ourselves is ridiculous and pointless, and music as radical as Cecil's really shows that you can have this insanely deep experience with something that is so outside of the tradition, that breaks so many boundaries. It's important for me because I think there are a lot of rules and ways of thought that are seen as natural laws which are actually just imposed human societal laws that marginalize or straight up destroy groups of people or ways of thinking, and I think that the more that we push boundaries, or, at least for me, the more that I push myself to listen to stuff that was really outside my comfort zone, it led me to see how ridiculous certain predetermined notions of structure, morality, aesthetics, how ridiculous those things are and how oppressive those things are. I guess it's very postmodern, I guess, in a sense. Where there's this constant questioning of every aspect of our society. I don't know, that music has made me question some important things in my life, whether it's philosophically, spiritually, or intellectually.

I mean, Cecil's music, as well as someone like Samuel Beckett. You read later Beckett and it feels like you're just reading bullshit, like shit shit shit, and then something happens and you have this experience with it and you're like "what the fuck, that really spoke to me," but you have no idea what exactly, if that was intended or if that was just your own mind dealing with this kind of insane nonsense, like The Unnameable or something like that, where you're reading this drudgery, it's difficult to read and it's constant repetition, and then when something so profound arises from this pile of shit... what does that mean about perception? What does it mean about my own perception of things and also my perception of other works, ya know? And my ideas of form, ya know, what ideas I took in, where there's a correct way to do a certain things, those types of things just sort of blow the roof off, in a way.

DO: I want to ask you more specifically about some of your recent projects. We first met in 2014 I think, when I saw you play with Vape Drip, opening for Marisa Anderson at Trans-Pecos. At that point you hadn't been in New York that long, right? When did you move to New York?

BL: I moved to New York in 2012.

DO: And you seem to have been extremely active since you first moved here, is that right?

BL: Uh, no. Or maybe it was 2011 when I moved here actually. So there was a period of time where I was working a catering gig and doing absolutely no music. But then I somehow got a show series in the West Village on Sullivan Street at this weird bar, totally by chance. I went to Winter Jazz Festival with a friend of mine and we couldn't get tickets, it was sold out, so we ended up going to this bar, and we talked to the bartender. There was no one in there and he was like "yeah, i'm a musician," and i'm like "yeah, me too," and we got to talking and I ended up booking a weekly series there, and that's when I really started working, I guess that was 2013 ... or 2012 ... but I became super active after a certain point, yeah.

DO: Right, so I guess we met after you'd become super active. I remember there was a point where I saw you play and then a week later there was an event at the Silent Barn, a magazine launch or something, and you were there playing with a group that was very different sounding than Vape Drip, kind of indie-rock sounding. I was really into Vape Drip and then I heard that group and thought, huh, it's curious that this is the same person playing bass. And then I heard Celosa when we were looking for bands for the 6x6 party which ultimately Avery's Boys Club, I think, played... Was that the name?

BL: [laughs] oh yeah, oh my god ...

DO: Which was fun!

BL: Yeah, ya know, it was weird. I mean, I was just trying to do as much as possible, trying to play as much as possible. Again, that was pretty early on, and a lot of what I was focused on was kind of finding a place that actually made sense for me. after conservatory I kind of got a little burnt out on improvised music, ended up doing a lot of indie rock, which, as a non-white person I got burnt out on that very very quickly. I feel like indie rock had its thing in the 90s or maybe the early 00s and then it became this very formalized private school thing and I just ... didn't vibe with those bastards [laughs].

I mean I was just doing that because a lot of the people I stayed close with from school ended up converting from jazz to doing these kinds of indie rock gigs. I mean, some of them were actually working, ya know, getting paid. I don't come from money, and I had so many traumatic experiences in jazz school, and I mean the jazz scene here can be a bit abusive to newcomers, and I'm a pretty weird player so I was really hesitant to go more along that route, so I wanted to just find a way to work. And I ended up hating it. I hated every single second of doing that stuff, it was not fun. So I ended up trying to start my own series and make my own places to play the music that I was interested in, with varying degrees of success.

DO: Shortly after that you were doing a series at Manhattan Inn, right?

BL: Oh yeah.

DO: I mean it definitely seemed like a lot of those gigs that you were organizing at that time definitely did not pay very well.

BL: Oh, awful. I still have not recouped from that series.

DO: That was weekly right? And it went on for awhile? There was some really great music there.

BL: Yeah, there really was. Ya know, I didn't have many places to play, no one knew who I was. I worked there, my friend Max started a weekly drum series there and then eventually it turned into multiple bookings a week, and I was booking kind of weirder music there, and it gave me a place to cut my teeth and develop as a musician. It was invaluable in a certain way, but I also paid out of pocket and did a lot of work. I did a lot of work. To a point where I got extremely burnt out. I'm still hesitant to book my own series or my own gigs, because of the amount of shit that you have to deal with.

DO: So, in a practical sense, and also in a more ... impractical sense I guess, how did you pick up work, how did you go from the Manhattan Inn and all these gigs you were organizing yourself to playing with all these working small groups and playing with the large groups of really major musicians like Weasel Walter and playing with William Parker. It seemed like a very quick succession of events, you were all of a sudden playing with these really amazing, well-known musicians at much more high-profile venues, which I imagine must pay a lot better too.

BL: Yes, they do ... but again, the pay margins aren't really that big [laughs]. I guess I don't know, ya know, there's just a point where things kind of took off. And it snowballed. Being a bass player as well, ya know ...

DO: And having a unique sound, right, I mean you have your own sound, which you were saying you weren't sure if it's what people wanted but ... one thing that everybody remarks on is the uniqueness of your sound, this idea of ... oh, it reminds me of something William Parker wrote in his tribute to Henry Grimes after he passed last April, "Henry was not hired to fill the role of a bass player; he was hired to be Henry." I hear something similar in your playing, and in what you're saying, where I imagine people hire you to do your thing and not just, ya know, play the bass part.

BL: Yeah, ya know, I make that known [laughs]. I want to be more of a collaborator than a side man. That's really what i'm interested in. I'm interested in collaboration rather than just kind of hammering out someone else's idea.

DO: So what about this notion of being a sideman or being in a group led by someone else? How does that differ for you from playing solo, say, or a group where you're the leader, like the Brandon Lopez Trio, Brandon Lopez's The Mess, etc., are there differences as far as how you approach the music and how it feels to play the music?

BL: Well, the solo stuff I have complete control over, it's just me. Whereas, for example, the trio that I "lead," the compositional choices are really just personnel. People have their own concepts. I'm most interested in bringing different concepts together with great improvisors in order to make a music, to make something. I think the traditional sideman role is a very ... ya know, I'm very uninterested in just kind of hammering out parts and being a cog in someone else's wheel, and I think my approach to leading groups is very similar.

BL: I mean, it's great. The people working there are top notch, not just in organization, but on a human level. It's satisfying to pay your collaborators and also having a little bit of money to live. A place like Roulette, I feel pretty free to do what I do, I don't feel like I need to fit into some kind of schema or make it seem more institutionalized. I don't want that at all. I don't want to feel boxed in like that. I'm not here to make people happy [laughs].

DO: Oh don't worry, it doesn't sound that way.

BL: Let me rephrase that, I don't want to make the wrong people happy [laughs].

DO: How have you seen your audience change or grow?

BL: Um ...

DO: Or have you?

BL: Uh, yeah, I guess. I try not to pay attention to that. I feel that the new people that I meet through playing gigs in different countries or whatever, I mean, they all have a similar mindset. I mean, the people who are interested in the music, it's a very small group of people [laughs] worldwide. So, if anything, if people from the institution reach out, there's a possibility of me offending them.

DO: You've worked in Chicago and in Europe and of course mostly in New York, where you live... What are these different worlds like?

BL: I feel like that type of "fuck you" attitude is a particularly New York metropolitan area thing...

DO: You're from North Jersey right?

BL: Yeah, i'm from North Jersey. But again, the people I have the tendency to be drawn to work with have that kind of attitude and they're from all over, whether they're from Italy or Argentina or whatever, I mean they're not trying to placate anyone. I like difficult people.

DO: As far as the socio-economics of the scene you're involved in, or the kind of funding or venues for audiences in New York, how do you see that situation these days? It seems like many things have changed in many ways (in extreme ways very recently, of course).

BL: Yeah, tons. Everything seems to be moving at light speed. But yeah, certain venues and certain things close down and things just open back up again somewhere else.

DO: They do keep opening back up again somewhere else though?

BL: Yeah, in different forms. Like in my neighborhood, I live in Ridgewood, when I first moved here there was Trans-Pecos, which used to be the Silent Barn, and that was it. And now there's a bunch of venues within walking distance, and people were putting on shows in ... ya know, again within walking distance of my house. But I feel like people just end up making places to play, finding places to play. The socio-economics of the New York scene I think are going to be aided by this disaster we're dealing with.

DO: That's an optimistic way to think about it.

BL: Ya know, I've just been praying for some sort of fall out in New York so ... ya know, I feel sometimes the most interesting stuff happens in times of famine. Or, maybe that's not necessarily completely true. But hypergentrification doesn't help with sustainability for most things so ... who fucking knows? Maybe New York will just end up like Paris? Too expensive to sustain a community of weirdos.

DO: Where do you think you would go if you left New York?

BL: It's not clear. It's very unclear. I mean, I could go to Europe and live an easier life, but I feel like still New York has some of the best musicians in the world, I mean the most technically apt or ... people with great concepts kind of just congregate here and I like being around that. But if that changes, I don't know. It doesn't seem clear at the moment.

DO: Right, not much seems clear at the moment.

BL: No.

DO: So how about all these new recordings you've been putting up on Bandcamp recently? It's a lot of stuff you're released, are these the recordings you were talking about getting together?

BL: No [laughs]. I mean, that Bandcamp day that they have has been pretty valuable, an actually monetarily valuable resource. And whatever income I can make, that's what I do. A lot of the recordings I've released on Bandcamp have been seconds or just rough takes of the stuff that will be released in the coming year.

DO: Cool. Something to look forward to then. And how about Quoniam Facta Sum Villa, your vinyl record on Astral Spirits from last year. It feels to me like a more fully realized thing, as a whole, is that right?

BL: Ummm... It was two concerts, or there's one track from one other concert, but it was a live concert that I played at the May Chapel in Chicago and Astral Spirits asked me for something and they took that. As far as that being a more realized thing, nah. I don't think so.

DO: It's just the packaging that makes it look that way.

BL: There it is [laughs].

DO: So would you say then that pretty much all of your recordings are ... well, I guess this is what you were saying before about relating to recording as an improvisor, the difference is one of them someone hits record, one of them someone doesn't, is that it?

BL: Pretty much. Yeah. Pretty much. At least for me, it doesn't change my process much.

DO: Are any of these studio recordings?

BL: The last thing I put out, which was last Friday, was a studio recording. The entirety of it will be released on Catalytic Sound in September, I think. The trio record I put out with Gerald and Steve, that was a studio recording, but I feel like the mixes weren't really quite there for a CD or a record release, but overall I think the sound was good. There are a bunch of studio recordings that need to be mixed that are on their way out, and I think those will be released.

I like dealing with other people, other people's concepts of music and forming my concept to that and making those things work.

DO: So, say, the various trios that you work with, both as a "leader" and a "sideman" (Whit Dickey Trio, Rempis/Lopez/Packard, The Mess, Baczkowski/Lopez/Cleaver, et al.), the approach to the actual making of the music, is it similar?

BL: No, it's really different actually. As an example, the trio I have with Steve Baczkowski and Gerald Cleaver. There's a trio also, which was Gerald's idea, which is me and Brandon Seabrook and Gerald, and the way the music is approached is really quite different actually. Once you take one person out of the equation, the music changes, the aesthetic changes.

DO: Are there any kinds of compositional structures, outside of the individual player's proclivities and personalities and concepts? Is there anything spoken or written down as a structure for improvisation with any of those groups?

BL: Uh, no. Not at all. It's all more intuitive than instructive.

DO: So is the difference in approach more in your relationships with each other going into it?

BL: Yes and no. Again, people's concepts of music vary widely. The difference between the way that Brandon Seabrook improvises as opposed to someone like Steve Baczkowski is really really different, and that affects my playing, that affects the way Gerald plays. I guess I'm more interested in dealing with that, dealing with the personalities, and just being present with what needs to be done and also what I want to have happen. And sure you have some ideas going in as to what's going to happen, but as far as what happens, it's quite different, and you have to be prepared for that, and I'm most interested in that. I'm most interested in dealing with that type of precariousness, because it forces you to deal with something that's very present as opposed to something that's been practiced and learned. A lot of the people I find myself working with, the stuff that I enjoy doing the most, the most challenging music for me, is the stuff that is that, as opposed to something where we're playing someone's written music or something like that.

DO: I saw that you recently played at the New York Philharmonic in this piece by Ashley Fures, "Filament." In that context where you improvising?

BL: No, [laughs] no, not at all, no, no, it was like a straightjacket, ya know, like "learn these very hard parts and pull off the shit that's on the page," pull off the dance moves.

DO: You were a featured soloist in this piece, along with Nate Wooley and ...

BL: Rebekah Heller, who works with ICE, she's well-known new music community.

DO: Uh huh, interesting. What was that like?

BL: uhhhh ... [laughs]. That was a fucking head trip man. I have a lot of big feelings on that ...

DO: Do tell, I'm curious.

BL: Well, I mean, the whole structure of working with an orchestra and working with a composer, someone who's used to having players do exactly what they want, I mean, it was a fucking pain in the ass, a lot of stress, a lot a lot of stress on all sides. And, ya know, in that world there's a lot of classism and racism. So it's dealing with those aspects, plus having, ya know, none of the people at the New York Philharmonic know or wnat to know who the fuck I was. I was essentially some meathead weirdo that was hired off the street... it was very difficult, it was very very difficult. It was a lot of stress.

DO: Was that the most institutional space you've performed in?

BL: Yes, yes. Yes. absolutely.

DO: I guess it doesn't get more institutional than that, really.

BL: No!

DO: That particularly struck me as interesting when I saw it online somewhere, because the spaces in which I first met you and encountered your music were from totally DIY to pretty DIY, so to see this video on youtube of you ... well you're not playing, it's these people playing 3-d printed, uh ... and you're kind of standing on a pedestal and like, what's the name of that basement place where Rogers and Bedford meet?

BL: Oh, uh, 49 Shade!

DO: Right, right, so I'd been used to seeing you play there and stuff like that, so it was funny ...

BL: Oh, it was so fucking bizarre for me, man. I mean, I made it a point to not bow. I wore jeans and I wore shitty Doc Marten boots and I made it a point to not fucking bow. Yeah, it felt very antithetical to who I am. It just felt wrong. I mean, the money was great, so I couldn't... it was one of those gigs where you don't really want to say yes, but you can't say no.

DO: Yup, I get that.

BL: And I one-hundred-percent worked for that money. I mean, that felt like work, yeah.

DO: And you also had these residencies and a fellowship at Roulette and Issue Project Room around the same time, right?

BL: Yeah, I got a fellowship from Roulette and was the artist-in-residence at Issue Project Room at the same time, and then I got another, I got a commission from Roulette. Yeah, I one-hundred-percent prefer working in places like Roulette. I mean, there aren't any other places like Roulette. Jim Staley, who has been doing Roulette, I mean he started in his loft. So, while it is an institution, there's a lot more humanity there than the horrifying bureaucracy of something like the New York Philharmonic.

DO: What's it like working at Roulette and Issue Project Room in comparison or in relation in some way to playing at super DIY venues like 49 Shade or Luxury Lounge? Or, I guess what I'm saying is, you have a punk aesthetic going through a lot of your work and your presentation of it, an anti-aesthetic, and I'm curious about what it's like to bring that to a space like Roulette, I mean the music obviously didn't change, but what was it like working in these different contexts?

DO: I'm curious about Catalytic Sound, having become aware of it through, I think, Instagram and then I watched that streaming festival a little while ago. How does Catalytic work? What's the deal?

BL: It's an artist collective and it's going to be a streaming service. I think that's the end goal for the recordings, so basically it's a collective of musicians from Europe, New York, and Chicago, and across the states who work in improvised music and release their own music.

DO: Did it come out of a way of addressing the lack of actual gigs during the pandemic or did it start before that?

BL: It started before that. I think it's been working for about 5 years. I just recently joined the collective.

DO: How does it work if you're a member of that collective, what does that mean?

BL: Well, for example, I'm working with them, I'm doing some grant writing for them in New York to host a festival next year, hypothetically. Basically you just kinda send your music and send your CDs and then they sell things through their site and everyone pools the money together and gets a paycheck at the end of the month.

DO: So the money gets distributed evenly to everyone who's a member and then individual members do other kinds of work and stuff ... which is paid or not paid?

BL: Yes, it's paid

DO: Cool. How's that going so far for you?

BL: It's cool, I'm into it. It's just a good way to create some sense of community within this music. The business aspect of this thing sews a lot of division, and feeling like you're part of a larger collective makes it a lot easier to have some sort of camaraderie rather than playing mercenary. It's nice to have a larger sense of community and to work towards that, or work for that. You put people under the umbrella and I think it feels a little bit more like a collective than it would otherwise. Even though ultimately we're all kind of working towards the same goals, I think it's important to have that just through the construct.

DO: Anything else you want to say for the record?

BL: I think I'm good. I can't think of much more to add. Some records dropping in 2021, some stuff on the Relative Pitch label, the trio with Steve and Gerald as well as some quartet tracks with Cecilia Lopez, a duo with Cecilia Lopez, a duo with Gabby Fluke-Mogul, a solo record, a physical record I mean. There are some other things on the horizon as well.

That's about it.

by KEN VANDERMARK

HUSTLERS / OF THE WORLD, THERE IS ONE MARK YOU CANNOT BEAT: THE MARK INSIDE

-Naked Lunch: The Restored Text (Grove Press: 2001),

written by William S. Burroughs, edited by James Grauerholz and Barry Miles, pg. 11

On March 5th of this year I had a solo concert in De Pere, Wisconsin, through an invitation from Mark Patel to perform at his restaurant/performance space, Luna Cafe. Though I have been committed to developing this aspect of my music, the gig at Luna Cafe was probably my first solo performance in over a year. I've struggled to find a methodology for that format which would continue to resonate with me and that I could develop over time (using "template" structures for the first solo recording, Furniture Music (Okka Disk: 2003), then references to "aesthetic portraits" on Mark in the Water (Not Two: 2011), then a move to a "Paul Rutherford strategy" of not having a plan in the years following that, plus the work in extreme acoustic environments that was documented on Site Specific (Audiographic: 2015). In 2016, I started working with improvisational "studies," which remained my ill-defined approach toward working with solo music up to and including the show at Luna Cafe. Over the years, I'd sometimes include interpretations of Joe McPhee's, "Good-Bye Tom B.," and Albert Ayler's, "Love Cry," at certain performances.

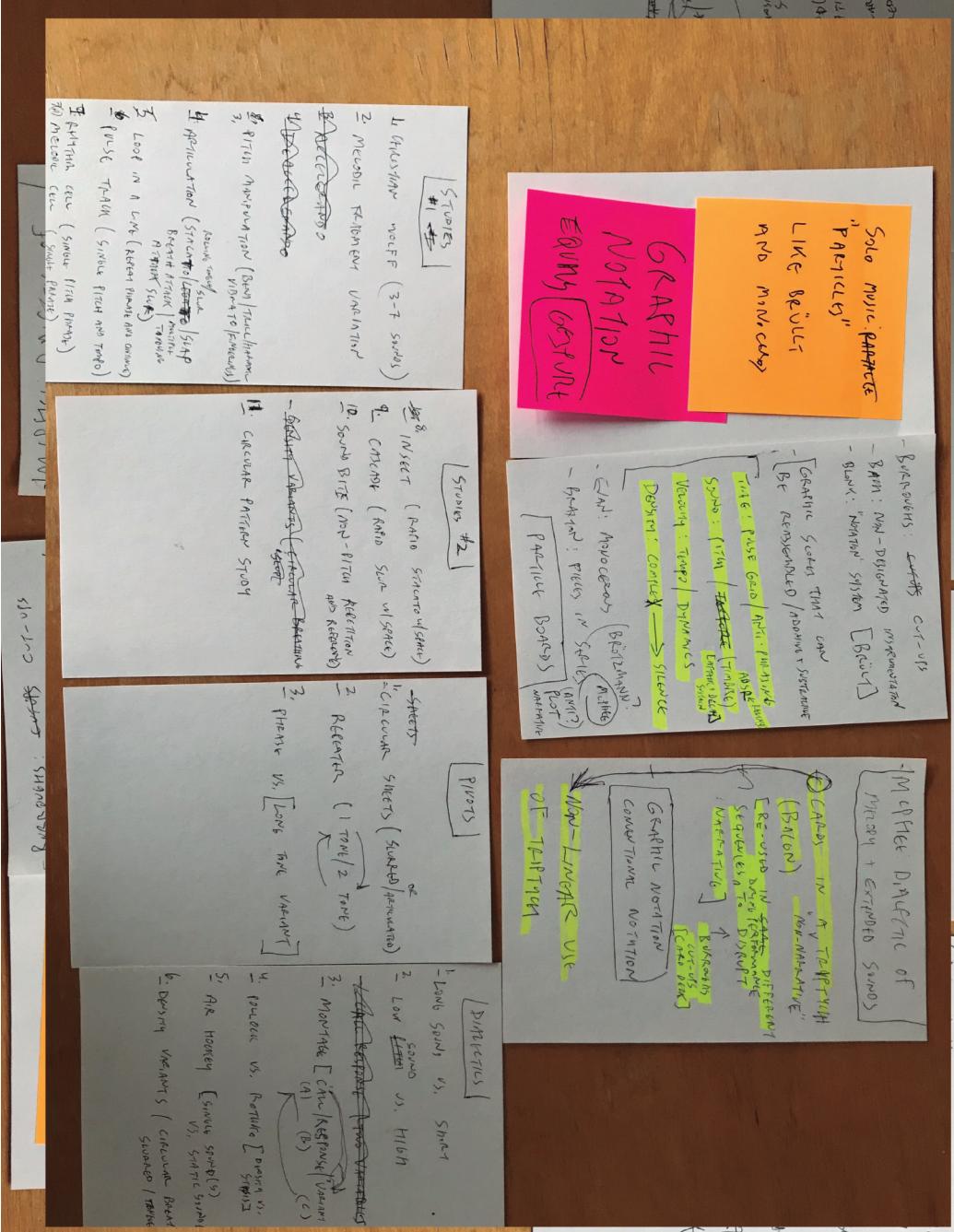
After the performance in De Pere in March, I was frustrated creatively and determined to find another solo methodology. Once again I felt at an expressive dead end and was discouraged by the fact of being unable to resolve what is, for me, the inherent paradox of solo improvised music. So much of what I love connected to improvisation is its ongoing potential for surprise and creative risk, and the ability to reinvent time and time again, performance after performance. For me, the solo format raises a very challenging question- when all the improvised material is generated by one individual, how can they be surprised by what happens next? In every other improvisational context the opportunity and possibility exists for musicians to make spontaneous, unpredictable musical decisions. Since all of these choices can't be anticipated by the other players, it makes it necessary for the musicians to make ongoing, creative decisions in real time.

When you're on your own, how do you shock yourself? I feel that this is an intrinsic contradiction connected to solo improvised music, this conflict between the fact of self-awareness and the act of spontaneous surprise. After the gig at Luna Cafe I was determined to find a better solution to this problem. A week later the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States.

As with all musicians, my concert work and touring was cancelled, ongoing and into the future, but I was given something I don't normally have- time to contemplate. I started to think about solo music in terms of sonic autobiography. When did thinking about my own music really start? The answer for that was easy, it began when I heard Joe McPhee's, "Good-Bye Tom B." I'm sure that everyone who listens to and/or plays improvised music has a similar breakthrough recording. One that transformed their perspective and opened the door to the living history of this art form. In my case, this was true in regards to McPhee's piece. Everything I had heard before, live and on record, which made no sense to me (The Art Ensemble of Chicago, Sam Rivers, Cecil Taylor) suddenly became more clear, and after that moment I was permanently hooked on finding the most innovative music in the field, contemporary and otherwise.

But "Good-Bye Tom B." did more than dismantle my musical preconceptions. It also helped discover an aesthetic methodology that I've been following since I was 17 years old. McPhee's piece combines strong, melodic, pre-composed material with spontaneous improvisation that's derived from pushing the tenor saxophone past the boundaries of conventional technique. Many years later, when I formed the Territory Band in the early 2000, it was to organize a large ensemble that purposefully combined Chicagoans I worked with alongside Europeans who were experts with extended techniques on their respective instruments: Johannes Bauer (trombone), Axel Dörner (trumpet), Per-Åke Holmlander (tuba), Paul Lytton (drums), Paal Nilssen-Love (drums), Lasse Marhaug (electronics), and David Stackenäs (guitar). The idea of combining conventional elements with unorthodox materials had expanded from the context indicated by Joe McPhee's solo work, to one that involved more than a dozen musicians.

The other key autobiographical fact I considered was that, since the start of composing for the Vandermark 5 in 1995, I have been obsessed with finding alternatives to the circular/head-solos-head structure found in most music connected to the history of jazz, which has been in place since the start of the last century. With the V5 I worked to develop a linear or narrative form, but I found that once an improvisational "roadmap" for a composition had been discovered there was a tendency to stop looking for an alternative route. Even before the line of activity with that quintet concluded in 2010, I began to look for strategies that would dismantle the possibility of a "roadmap." For more than a decade I have been developing methods of composing for improvisers that make it possible create spontaneous form through the material itself. So far, the most successful ventures in this direction have been Made To Break and Marker.

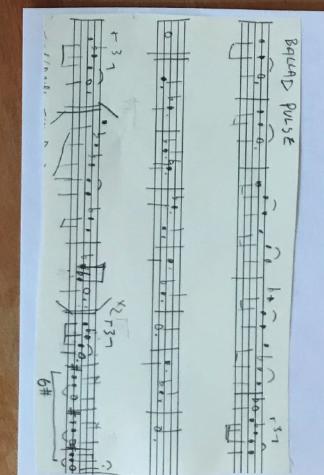
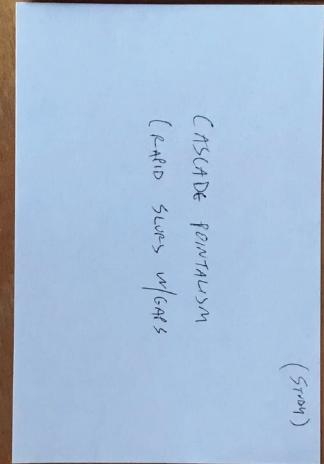
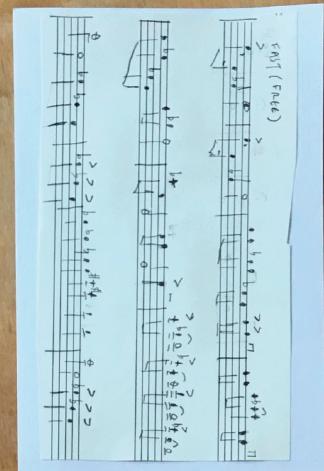


Both of those cases, however, are comprised of multiple players, all of whom have a lot of creative leeway to make decisions that can and will alter the structure of the compositions and improvising in real time. For the new solo music, I was determined to develop a methodology which would also make it possible to create spontaneous architecture that would oblige me to deal with unplanned challenges in the midst of playing. This led to the organization of a card system which integrated notated themes (one set in pulse-time, one set in "free" time) with different kinds of musical "events": studies, pivots, and dialectics. These cards would be shuffled and put together in triptychs that could be "read" from left to right or utilized for jump cuts between each card. This would allow me to practice the specific material on each card without the possibility to pre-determine the selection or sequence of components for a piece. This system had the potential to create the risk and surprise I was looking for in a solo context, while letting me explore the dialectics between composition/improvisation and convention/innovation that I am most curious about.

Not long after I began composing for this strategy, I was invited by the Corbett vs. Dempsey gallery to perform on their first Sequesterfest, which took place online on April 6th of this year, almost exactly one month after my concert in De Pere. There is nothing that motivates me more than a deadline, especially during a period where so few seem to exist. That gig made me feel that I was onto something. Further tests were made, on a second solo set as part of the online Catalytic Sound Festival 2020 on July 10th, and for a third solo set as part on the TVL REC/CICLO RUIDO Streaming Festival on July 25th. Each of these concerts helped me develop the material further, and I give my thanks to all the people that made those opportunities possible, especially to Experimental Sound Studio for their assistance on these festivals and for their Quarantine Concert series which has been taking place since the beginning of the pandemic.

During the month of September I began work on a new collection of notated material, based on a "cut-up" approach to recorded fragments I had been making, along with a two new sets of "events": music of changes (dealing with pitch/noise/dynamics/silence), and mecano (dealing with rhythm cells). I've been finishing these materials and practicing them during the last several days, and today and Saturday (September 25th and 26th) I will be recording them for a special series of recordings that the Corbett vs. Dempsey gallery and record label are organizing. These pieces will then be selected, sequenced, mixed, and mastered in time for that album to be released before the end of 2020. Very large thanks in advance to Sam Clapp and Dave Zuchowski for all of their help in realizing this project, and of course to Corbett vs. Dempsey for the invitation. By the time this article is published the record will be completed, a document of nearly seven months of work to find a new path for my solo music. I'm excited by the discoveries so far and I feel that this road will be ongoing, with many more stops along the way.

-Ken Vandermark, Chicago, September 25, 2020



Notes from Bogota, March 2020

Ingebrigt Håker Flaten on his three-week teaching residency at the Javeriana University, and two-day residency (with The Young Mothers) during Matik Matik's 12th Anniversary Festival—interrupted by you-know-what.



I was invited by guitarist Kike Mendoza to be a guest teacher for three weeks at The Javeriana University in Bogota from March 1st – 20th. I was going to be teaching 18 hours a week working with 2 Ensembles in addition to workshops in improvisation for 6 different instrumental groups, sadly it got cut a week short.

I flew into Bogota Sunday night March 1st - after a week of performances in Mexico City - and got picked up by Santiago Botero, bass player in a ton of local bands and the first musician I got to know in Bogota after my first visit there in 2016. Santiago has been a key figure in the creative music scene in Bogota for years through running his own label Discos Chichigua and being involved with the club Matik Matik - which has been a very important place for the creative music scene now for 12 years, and is run by French music connoisseur (and amazing guy) Benjamin Calais.

I got situated in my new home in the Pablo VI neighborhood of Bogota and got to meet my new sweet hosts for the next weeks: Luz Marina (Kike's mother) and La Tata, her nanny. None spoke English, but I immediately felt at home, and aside for a few misunderstandings we had minor issues communicating throughout the whole stay. Kike and Santi also lived in the same neighborhood.

First thing I had to sort out at the University the next day was my visa! I'd been dealing with this for a month already but my first attempt got denied by the Colombian authorities, and I was forced to enter the country on a tourist visa while telling the immigration I was teaching for three weeks at one of the biggest Universities in Bogota, which didn't seem to bother them at all. I could enter the country with no problems but I still had to get my Visa to be able to get paid and it took another week before things were sorted and contract could be signed.

Javeriana is a private university offering higher education in jazz, classical, traditional and dance performance. Students there start classes at 7 am and worked extremely hard! I saw and heard students practicing in their rehearsal rooms and playing in the hallways and cantinas throughout the whole building. I heard everything from classical and jazz to great singer-songwriter stuff, from morning to night. It was a trip and very inspiring to observe this!

Some of my days started at 8am and they could go on until 9pm and I spent about 5-6 hours a day at the University except for Wednesdays. when I had the day off. My main purpose there was to show them my approach to improvisation and composition, and talk about how/why I became a jazz/improvising musician.

In my workshops with the instrumental groups I talked about my jazz education during the early '90s at the University in Trondheim, a place that focused their jazz education solely on ear training inspired by the "Lenny Tristano school." I played records I've been inspired by and albums I've participated on. I was playing with the students in duo and group settings, and later we were discussing with everyone about the experience. I found the conversations we had very inspiring and confrontational in the most constructive ways.

For my ensembles I brought in my own compositions that I've been writing with this residency in mind. The goal was to present a concert that would conclude our work on March 18th. The students I worked with in the two ensembles was all highly skilled players and all well rooted in traditional jazz, as well as traditional Colombian music with its very particular rhythmic approach.

In addition to my teaching residency I also brought The Young Mothers down for two shows at Matik Matik for their 12th Anniversary festival on March 6th and 7th. We played on Friday night March 6th for a packed house on the actual day of their anniversary, and a second show on Saturday night in addition to an exciting collaboration with the local band El Ombligo, a group bringing together Cumbia, Afro-Colombian and tropical traditions with experimental jazz. Both Santiago Botero and Kike Mendoza play in this group together with drummer Pedro Oyeda from Los Piranas, one of the most in-demand drummers from the traditional and experimental crossover scene in Bogota. Santiago wrote some simple structures we all rehearsed during soundcheck and the concert was a huge success! This collaboration got taped for a November release on the local label Sello InCorrecto.

Juggling the logistics of 'managing' The Young Mothers while dealing with my busy teaching schedule was a big undertaking, but despite all this, it felt incredibly rewarding once they arrived safe and sound, and I am confident we started a long collaboration and relationship with both musicians and audiences in Colombia! Also, knowing how fast everything locked down during my time in Bogota, I am extremely thankful that I was able to bring The Young Mothers that weekend while everything was still running 'normal'!







I was happy to be part of other concerts during the anniversary as well: Thursday, March 5th I played in an ad-hoc constellation together with the long-standing duo of Santiago Botero and singer Juanita Delgado, plus Frank Rosaly on drums. We shared the night with another duo, Tortuga Alada, with cellist Violeta Garcia from Buenos Aires and the local reed player Maria Valencia from the Meridian Brothers. On Thursday March 12th, I played in an electric bass duo with Santiago Botero. We shared the bill that night with another band of cellist Violeta Garcia together with reedist Chris Pitsikos, drummer Juan Manuel Jaramillo and electric bassist Carlos Quebrada.

Friday March 13th became my last full day of teaching at the Javeriana, I was preparing the ensembles for the final concerts and still thinking I would finish teaching as planned next week, but later that day the school authorities decided that the school would be closed from Monday March 16th next week and they booked my return back to the US for that Monday, a week early! Later that night there was a concert with Carmelo Torres y Los Toscos at Matik Matik. This project is a melting pot of the San Jacinto Accordion-based Cumbia Sabanaero tradition that Carmelo is famous for all over Colombia, mixed with the experimentation of the Afro-Colombian, Tropical and avant-garde elements that Los Toscos represents. Seeing this band live at Matik Matik on the night of Friday March 13th - as the rest of the world was locking down in fear, was a strong and intense document of the powers of music!!

Early Saturday morning March 14th I drove with Maria Valencia and Luis David to Ubaté, a beautiful small town in the countryside 1.5 hour drive outside Bogota, Mange owns a house there that she got through her family. Violeta Garcia, Carlos Quebrada and their friend and Peruvian flautist Camilo Ángeles came a little later and we were spending the whole Saturday night at her house in this heavenly place eating Arepas, local AMAZING fruits, drinking wine, and listening to Luis Daniel (Vega) spinning the best possible mix of jazz and Afro Colombian music from the Pacific, while discussing music and life in front of the fire place until early morning!

Sunday was spent packing and wrapping up my stay, saying by to my lovely hosts and to Santiago and Kike! Next day I started my travel back to Norway, I decided last minute to go back to see my family there during this crisis. Maria Valencia drove me to the airport and more than 50 hours and 6 flights later I was back in Oppdal, in my village in the mountains where I was born and raised preparing for a 14 days quarantine alone in a cabin! The last days and weeks contrasts couldn't have been any bigger but at least it gave me time to think and digest!!

Little did I know then that this was my last trip overseas - for months to come - which led me to relocate back to Norway and to the city of Trondheim, after 14 years abroad.

Playlist for Javeriana:

- Terje Rypdal 'Bleak House' (1968)
- Terje Rypdal / Bjørnar Andresen / Espen Rud 'Min Bul' (1970)
- Svein Finnerud Trio 'Plastic Sun' (1970)
- Jan Garbarek Trio and Quartet 'Til Vigdis' (1967)
- Keith Jarret / Jan Garbarek / Palle Danielson / Jon Christensen 'My Song' (1977)
- Keith Jarret / Jan Garbarek / Palle Danielson / Jon Christensen 'Belonging' (1974)
- Sonny Rollins 'Live at The Village Vanguard' (1957)
- Miles Davis Quintet 'Live at The Plugged Nickel' (1965)
- Miles Davis 'The Cellar Door Sessions' (1970)
- Miles Davis '1969 Miles – Festival de Juan-les-Pins' (1969)
- Circle (Chick Corea / Anthony Braxton / David Holland / Barry Altschul) 'Paris Concert' (1971)
- Jimmy Giuffre 3 'Thesis' (1961)
- Lenny Tristano Sextet 'Crosscurrents' (1949)
- Steve Lacy 'Momentum' (1987)
- Duke Ellington / Charlie Mingus / Max Roach 'Money Jungle' (1962)
- Charles Mingus 'presents Charles Mingus' (1960)
- Sonny Rollins 'Sonny meets Hawk!' (1963)
- Paul Bley 'Paul Bley with Gary Peacock' (1970)
- Lee Konitz 'In Harward Aquare' (1954)
- Lee Konitz 'Motion' (1961)
- Louis Moholo Octet 'Spirits Rejoice' (1978)
- 'Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath' (1971)
- Kenny Wheeler 'Gnu High' (1975)
- John Coltrane 'The Olatunji Concert' (1967)
- John Coltrane Quartet 'Crescent' (1964)
- John Stevens Spontaneous Music Ensemble 'Karyobin' (1968)
- Derek Bailey 'Ballads' (2002)
- Derek Bailey 'Guitar, Drums 'n' Bass' (1993)
- Charles Lloyd Quartet 'Live at Monterey Jazz Festival - Forrest Flower' (1966)
- Steve Lacy & Roswell Rudd Quartet 'School Days' (1963)
- Joe Henderson / Charlie Haden / Al Foster 'An Evening with Joe Henderson' (1987)
- Bill Evans Trio 'Waltz For Debby' (1962)
- Bill Evans Trio 'Sunday at the Village Vanguard' (1961)
- Archie Shepp / Nils Henning Ørsted Pedersen 'Looking at Bird' (1980)
- Archie Shepp 'The Magic of JuJu' (1967)
- 'Bach: Goldberg Variations' by Glen Gould (1955 and 1981)
- 'Cello Concerto in E minor' by Edward Elgar
(Sir John Barbirolli, London Symphony Orchestra)
played by Jacqueline du Pré (1965)
- Yosuke Yamashita Trio 'Chiasma' (1976)
- Yosuke Yamashita Trio 'Clay' (1974)
- Jaap Blonk 'Kurt Schwitters - Ursonate' (1986).

HUMMING ROOM

A SOUND ART PROJECT IN PUBLIC SPACE - JULY 2020 TO OCTOBER 2020

as part of GrazKulturjahr2020 in the public park Augarten, Friedrichgasse 41, 8010 Graz/Austria
(in front of the Museum of Perception MUWA)

Concept & Composition: Elisabeth Harnik

Acoustics: Jamilla Balint

Architecture: Milena Krstic-Stavric

As an artist I work with different processes of listening. Through the act of listening I locate myself in the world. Active listening transfers me into a state of connectedness and presence. Listening in all possible ways also has a political dimension for me. Even the slightest shift in attention can make a difference.

In 2016 I had completed my Deep Listening Certificate at the The Center for Deep Listening @ Rensselaer, New York. During that time I wrote a Sonic Meditation for voices based on my listening experience mentioned above. Since then my vision grew further into a sound installation.

The origin of my idea of the sound installation Humming Room goes back to a sensual experience I had during a hike in Croatia. An everyday sound, the buzzing of bees, was redirected through the walls of a ruin and transformed into a profound listening situation that has accompanied me ever since. Based on this auditory perception, I designed the installation in order to extract and transform the traces of the sound impression from my memory.

The sound and perception installation '**HUMMING ROOM**' is a walk-in spatial-dynamic construction based on the honeycomb form with six movable wall elements that form a common structure and are played by the humming sounds of bees. Depending on the configuration and design of the walls, the listening experience is subtly sensitised. The arrangement of the wall elements follows a choreography from July to October 2020, which will also become a choreography of listening. The Humming Room cautiously raises awareness of the bond between man and honeybee and functions as a bridge between real (sound) architecture and virtual auditory impulses, which places the immediate surroundings, spaces and interspaces in a new context. The boundary between urban sounds and bee buzzes blurs and appears like an infinite sound installation, formed by the surrounding architecture. Recipients are invited to explore the installation with their whole body listening and have the freedom of action and interpretation to shape their own holistic experience. The focus is on the exploration of perception. In the final phase of the project, the honeycomb structure will be broken up for sustainable use and six individual sculptures will be distributed throughout the Graz area. In the long term, these can be transferred to insect hotels.

I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to realize this interdisciplinary sound art work in close cooperation with Milena Stavric and Jamilla Balint. We managed to set up the sound installation despite Covid 19-related difficulties (lockdown, total stop of permits, delivery problems...). The continuous work on the project and the resilience we have built up as a team during this time of uncertainty has helped me to have complete confidence in my own inner strength and to weather the effects of the pandemic well.

Infos: <http://elisabeth-harnik.at/humming-room/>

Photo during the filming by Astrid Rampula:

Humming Room in the dark with video projections by Astrimage Film X

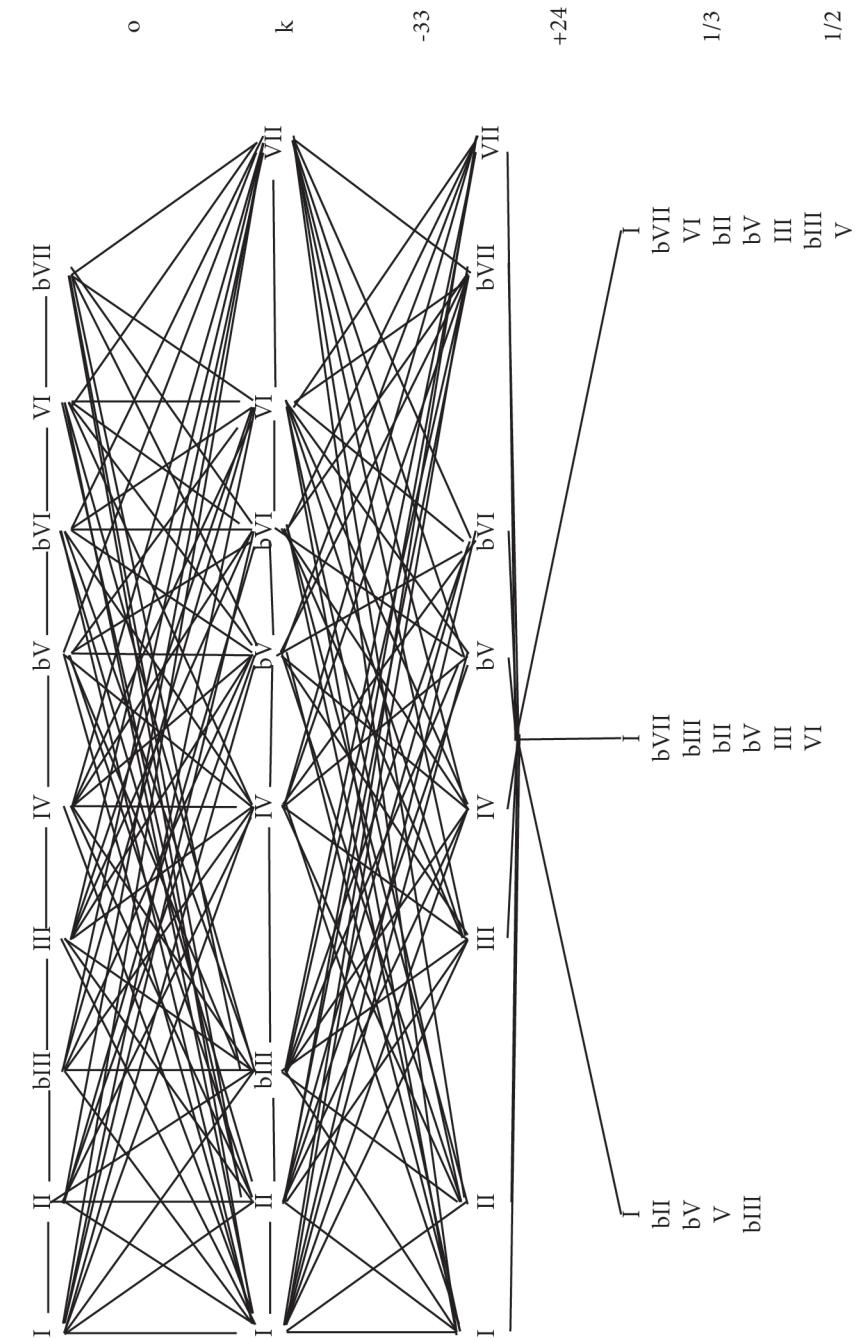


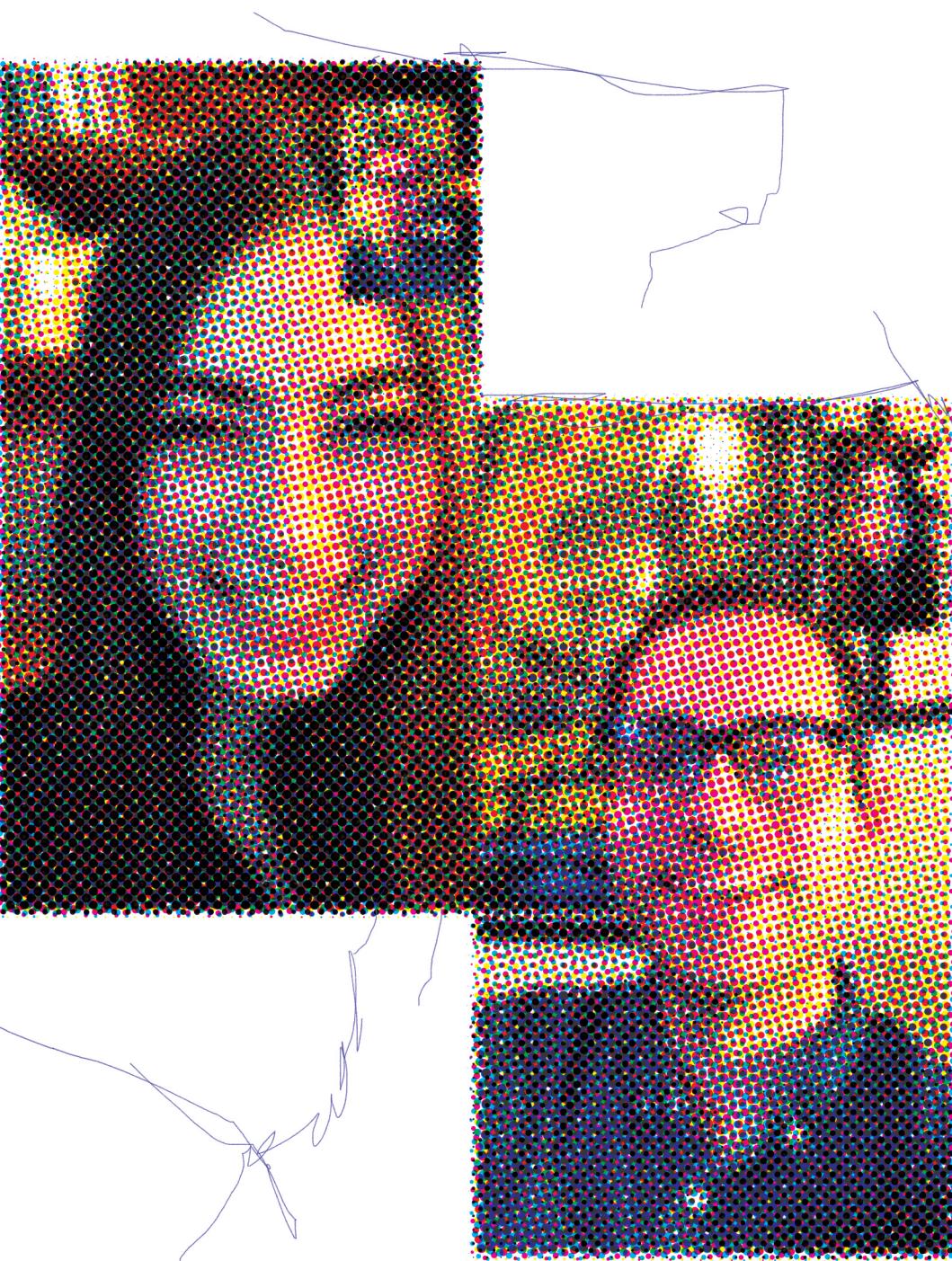
Right around the time my quarantine began, I ran across an article written by composer James Tenney about John Cage's concept of the harmonic field. Although my understanding was incomplete, I understood that Cage defined the field as all the pitch information given at a certain time. This played a large part in how he put together certain sets of pieces, including the number pieces. Regardless, I was reading the article to get to Tenney's construct on the same idea, which was to talk not just about pitches, but every frequency that happens in time. Tenney used this as a way to introduce alternate tuning systems into the compositional conversation, which was interesting to me (and why I got the article in the first place) but fell short in my mind.

As improvisers, we swim in harmonic fields. Every concert is a different field depending on our own predilections, ability, and language, and those around us. I have been working toward a certain totality of the trumpet that takes every aspect of the physicality of playing it—valve position, mouth shape, articulation, intonation, direction and speed of air—into account in order to see how far I can get into making a full language of that particular machine. The harmonic field idea seemed to make sense as a way of creating small taxonomies of things to practice as I am improvising at the end of my day. So, what is attached here is my first attempt.

This score is based on one I made for a duo with John McCowen, in which we perform starting in a specific harmonic field (pitches, durations, dynamics, and articulations) and add to it when we find a moment of confluence between the two of us, until we are improvising completely off the score, or out of the field. This version has three very similar scales (shown in the capital roman numerals as scale degrees) and all their connections from one to the next. Below that 'web' is a series of harmonic motions that these three scale break down to if you make triads out of them, and to the right is a series of modifying timbral factors to the pitches I choose, from top to bottom: no articulation, "k" articulation, 33 cents flat, 24 cents sharp, valved depressed just below its normal position, and traditional half valve position.

Reading within this harmonic field forces me to slow down and pay attention to each sound and how it connects to the next. As I've played it, things have gotten faster and more dense, the elements of the web becoming more familiar and their own language. I performed solo pieces based on this web for the first time for a streaming festival in Buenos Aires in August.





This is an excerpt of a FaceTime conversation between claire rousay and Alex Cunningham on September 24th, 2020.

Alex Cunningham is a violinist, improviser, and visual artist based in St. Louis, MO. His work explores free improvisation, drone, noise, and minimalist composition. Cunningham has recently performed with Mark Shippy, Sandy Ewen, Damon Smith, Stefan Gonzalez, and Lisa Cameron and has ongoing collaborations with Chris Trull (under the Apathist! moniker), Kevin Harris, and claire rousay.

<https://www.alexcunninghamviolin.com/>

Alex's Recommended Listening:
Nina Nastasia - The Blackened Air
Joe McPhee - Nation Time
U.S. Maple - Talker
Gloria Coleman Quartet - Soul Sisters

September 24th, 2020

claire rousay - How have you been the last seven months?

Alex Cunningham - Haha, sorry to laugh. I wasn't expecting 'months' at the end of that. It has been *seven* months!

CR - Yeah, it has been seven months because I was supposed to see you in March.

AC - Yeah, I think about March so often. The LP [with Mark Shippy] was recorded on March 7th. Mark was here and he left on the 8th and then everything crapped out within a week.

CR - Yeah, you were supposed to record, then have a week and then be here [in Texas].

AC - We were supposed to leave on the 20th or something like that. I am doing a lot better now than I was in the beginning of this. I have found more of a rhythm and I've been able to have enough time to adjust to the reality of what this is, instead of being in freefall like a lot of people were, myself included. So much changed overnight.

CR - Totally. Do you think it is due more to a routine and certain events you can look forward to everyday or coping mechanisms that you came to learn?

AC - Probably combinations. I am relying on routine and spacing out the things I'm looking forward to, making plans to do things that before this didn't seem like plans in the same sense that they do now. I never would have done that in the past. I never would have planned out on a calendar, "I'm gonna call so-and-so tomorrow!" I would have been more spontaneous. Weaving these things in between things you're doing so you have something... and finding routines for working on projects and stuff as a whole. And then everyday life routines. It was really hard at first. I feel there was this weird idea or hope that everyone had that [the pandemic] was gonna be three months. Or things would be more normal over the summer or something.

CR - Right. Like when everyone pushed their tours back to "the fall".

AC - Yeah, seems quaint now.

AC - All the musical things I've been looking forward to involved playing with other people. I like doing solo things as a challenge but I don't like being told I can only do solo things or send things back and forth with people. It is a more normal thing now so I am like, "Well if I have to do it then I will". At first I was thinking, "What am I doing? Why do I need to record right now? There are going to be a million statement albums titled like 'home' or some shit like 'home session'".

CR - Music for the bedroom, music for the living room. That shit. I totally get that. As far as the coping mechanisms or routines go, are there any things you want to mention? Any regular routines you have or something you do everyday that is helpful? Or not helpful, haha.

AC - Um, trying to do creative stuff in the morning has been helpful and spacing out the day with more mundane things like taking my dog out X amount of times. Going to bed at the same time every night too, which I was not doing.

CR - That is crazy! I haven't heard that one before.

AC - Approximately, haha. At least be in bed and winding down and reading at a certain time. I didn't do it until recently. It helped. Little things like that help combat the amorphous, "What is this amount of time? What is this period?" thing that I was really struggling with.

CR - Did you ever have that before? Going to bed at a regular time?

AC - No, haha. I feel so powerless in a macro-state-of-the-world type of way that I've honed in on controlling—not micromanaging—but exerting some sense of control over the things that I can do. That helps. At least I am not powerless in an area where I do control certain things. Little things like that.

CR - Every email now seems so pointless.

AC - I thought about that so much in the beginning and we've talked about it. "Why the fuck are people releasing music right now?"... but think of someone who doesn't play music and wants that side of things... on an independent level, not Taylor Swift's people. It is like, if you run this small label and it is the thing that is keeping you distracted and functional right now, I totally understand. This has made me look differently at, specifically with music, how I view productivity for myself. I am not thinking, "For me to be productive, I have to put out a million things". I haven't put out a million things.

CR - I envy you.

AC - You're the first person to say that.

CR - Hahaha.

AC - Looking at productivity was like, "I am playing an inaccessible form of music on an instrument [violin] that isn't even considered one of the three things most associated with this genre". I am doing it because I like doing it and there's a part of my brain that likes putting things out. I like making things. But because I am at a spot where the only people hearing my music are people that are digging or people who know me, or people I play music with, I don't have anyone to answer to, like people saying I have to put out a million things. I felt some weird thing at the beginning like, "Now I am at home and I see friends are putting out a bunch of shit and I need to put out stuff too." Then I thought, "Why? Who cares right now? Maybe slow down." I am having to accept that playing your instrument for an hour everyday *is* productive. Living in a capitalist country, we are all programmed to, even in DIY or progressive spheres, become good little emulators of capitalism in our own ways. To some degree we internalize this model where we view our own worth as GDP.

CR - Taking the freedom out of freely improvised music...

AC - Totally. I don't have anyone to answer to with my creative output and I *am* releasing things. I have something coming out next week. I have something I am working on. I have things coming out. I feel like in DIY and the 'tape world' that it is really amplified. You'll have friends who put out 12 tapes a year.

CR - Tape world is so stupid.

NOTES FROM QUARANTINE BY MATS GUSTAFSSON

Intense practicing and research on the horns every day. Extreme alto mouthpiece custom made by Canadian sax maestro Connor Bennett. Sheer power and excellence!

<https://www.cjbennettmouthpieces.com/about>

Going through my vinyl archive, finding some extreme music that keeps on blowing my mind. Enjoying every second of it.

Agreed on making a list of the best 100 Swedish jazz albums (stupid and impossible idea but FUN!):

<https://www.lira.se/mats-gustafssons-100-svenska-jazzfavoriter-pa-skiva/>

and heavy and essential finds (for a better living) during quarantine.

Too much time to deal with trading, Discogs and other (un)known techniques... but missing the real shops a LOT!

Posters:

Living Theatre 1962: Cecil Taylor Quartet, Archie Shepp Quartet

The Pocket Theatre (60's): La Monte Young with John Cale and Tony Conrad

Slugs Saloon (60's): Ornette Coleman Trio / Grant Green & John Patton

Keystone Corner (early 70's): Pharoah Sanders & Leon Thomas / Horace Silver

Vinyls:

511 Jazz Ensemble – Hard Luck Soul, Aragorn Records

Anima Sound – Musik für Alle, Echolette (silkscreen pre-press)

Byard Lancaster – Funny Funky Rib Crib, Palm Records

World Experience Orchestra – The Beginning of a new Birth, World Production Records

World Experience Orchestra – As Time Flows on, World Production Records

Donald Byrd – Byrd in Hand, Blue Note 4019

Sun Ra – Dreams Come True, Saturn 485 (Shower Curtain Cover!)

The Dream – Get Dreamy, Polydor

Roger Smith – Spanish Guitar, LMC 1

Anita Lindblom – ...Y Se Hizo La Paz, Sintonia EP

Zebra – I've made my mind, Novoia EP (with Agusti Fernandez, 1975!)

Venus - Satan Takes a Holiday, featuring Chet Baker & Ronnie Urini, EP

Jef Gilson – Soul of Africa, Le Chante Du Monde

Jef Gilson – Malagasy, Lumen

bpNichol – Motherlove, Record nr 3

The Masters of Unorthodox Jazz – Overground, HGB

Jarvis Street Revue – Mr. Oil Man, Columbia

Giorgio Gaslini – Nuovi Sentimenti, EMI

Bill Bissett – Awake in th Desert, see/hear

Human Arts Ensemble – Whispers of Dharma, Universal Justice Records

Clarence Peters – The Magnetic Atmosphere, private press

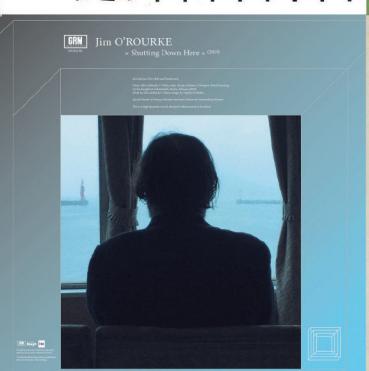
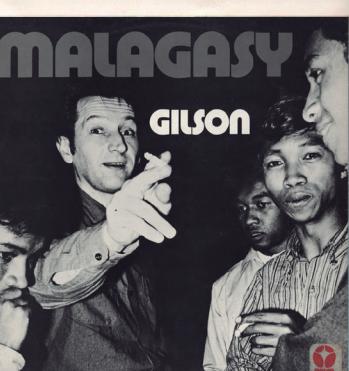
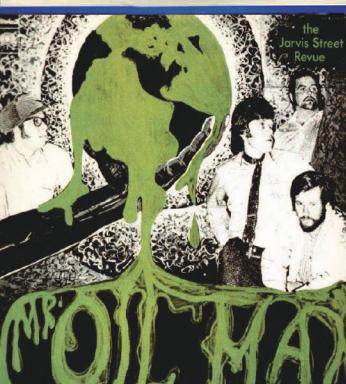
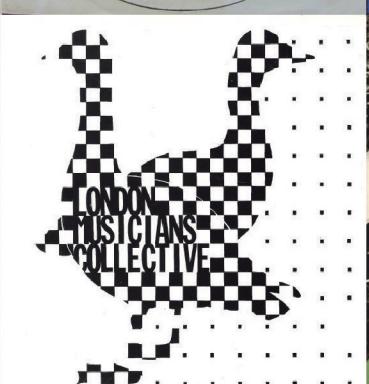
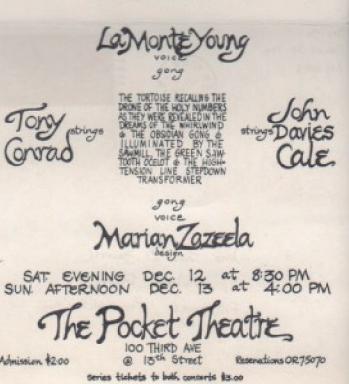
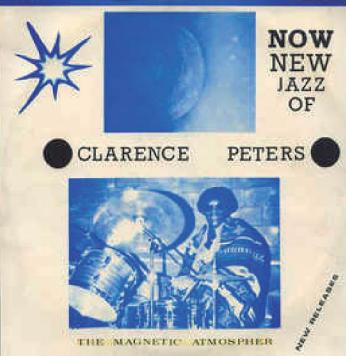
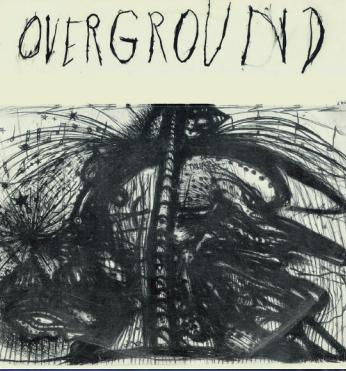
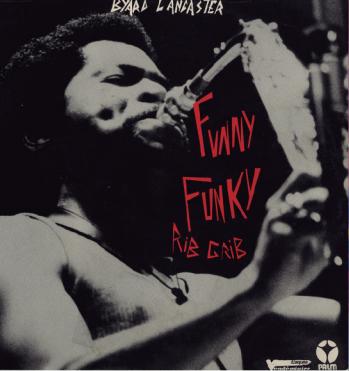
+ a handful of Colette Magny EPs and LPs, BRILLIANT STUFF!

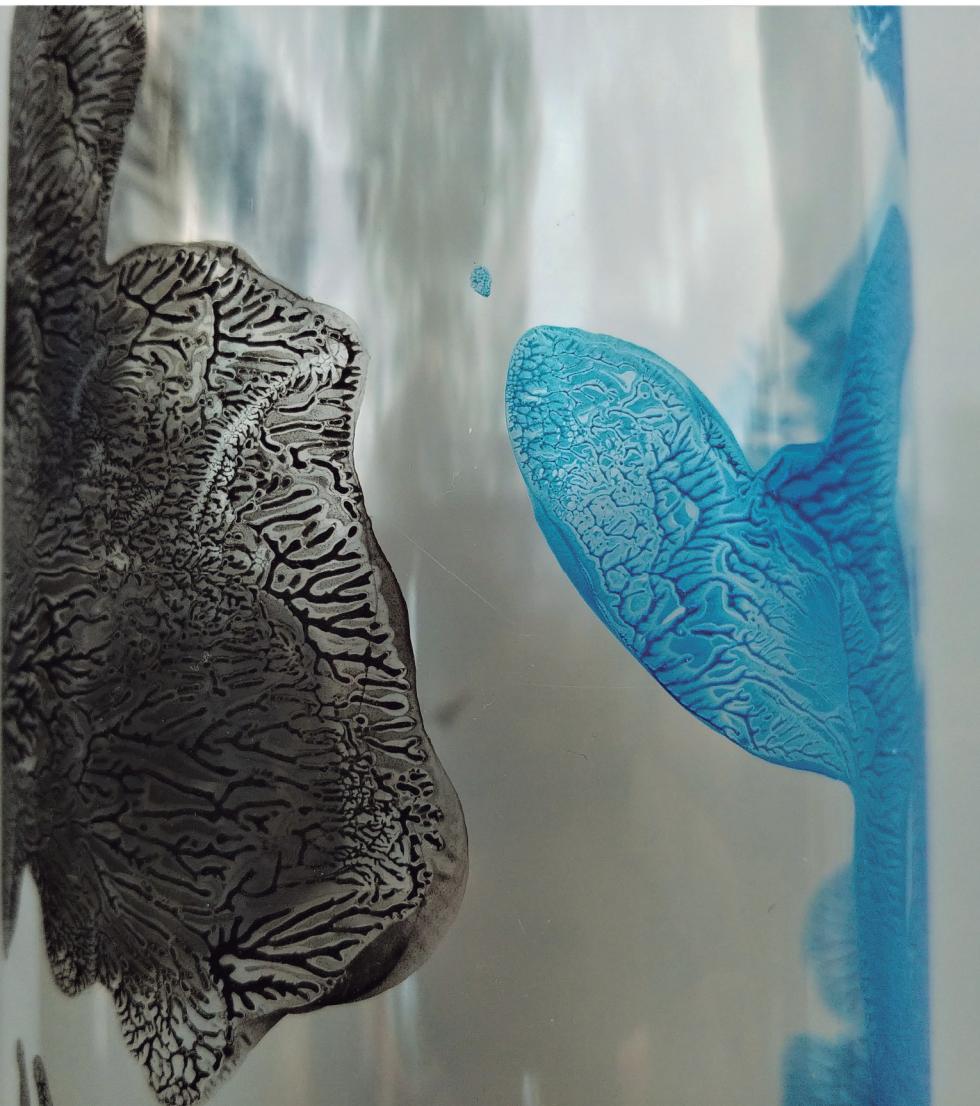
& Jim O'Rourke – Shutting Down Here, GRM/Mego (A TRUE Masterpiece!!!!)

One record a day keeps the doctor away!

(this is perhaps no longer true... but I try to live by it...)

R.I.P Bengt Andersson (1936-2020) / R.I.P Richard Wayne Penniman (1932-2020)







Paintings done by transferring acrylic paint back and forth between

paper and transparency materials.

-Chris Corsano



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