ORDO AB CHAO

Free Collective Improvisation Concepts for Medium and Large Ensembles in Jazz: Historical Examples and New Approaches

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M. Mus. Mathieu LOISEAU, B. Mus.

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Presented by:

Mathieu Loiseau (Matrikelnummer 0873366)

Has been evaluated by a jury composed of the following individuals:

Franz KERSCHBAUMER, O.Univ.Prof. Dr.

Franz KRIEGER, Ao.Univ.Prof. Mag. DDr.

Jürgen ARNDT, Prof. Dr.

Thesis approved on this date: .....

SUMMARY

The art of free musical improvisation have sometimes led to moments of great musical intensity. For now over fifty years, certain artists have made free improvisation the (either temporary or permanent) main focus of their musical career. For the majority of them, this art have been performed either in solo or in small formations for many reasons, one of which being the possible lack of clarity and musical coherence a large number of improvisers playing at the same time can generate.

Improvising freely alone will, naturally, bring no problem of coherence for obvious reasons. When a small musical formation decides to do so, the difficulty to get good interaction between every player becomes exponentially greater as the number of musicians increases, each musician having to care about both his relation to the general musical result if the ensemble, but also his relation with every single other musician playing.

Following this logic, it becomes almost impossible, when freely improvising with a large ensemble, like a big band formation, to get instant coherence from every player. Trying to do so without setting certain rules or indications beforehand will almost lead to what one can call musical chaos: a big blur of indistinguishable, unintelligible and uninteresting sounds.

This thesis focuses on the methods some composers and musical directors (including the author) have brought forward to try to organize these potential chaotic situations in a relative orderly way. To do so, the author focuses on past personal experiences and experimentations on the subject, interviews he conducted with five composers and/or conductors who had to (or still do) deal with this reality and had different approaches to face it, some other historical examples of composers/conductors having dealt with this situation and a comparative and appreciative analysis of all of these approaches.

KEYWORDS

Free improvisation

Collective improvisation

Improvisation techniques

Composition techniques

Musical direction

Conduction

Musical notation

Musical graphics

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INTRODUCTION

Origins and evolution of free improvisation

By definition, free improvisation had to be the first form of collective musical production in the history of humanity. As soon as two humans decided to make noise for the beauty or entertainment of it, it had to be improvisation since they could not have written down or rehearsed what they were playing beforehand and it had to be free since no musical rule, whatsoever, could have existed at the time.

As children, everybody probably experienced making noise (by any means) with other children, spontaneously, without having even the slightest thought about musical regulations. One can thus assert free collective improvisation has always been part of human history, whether consciously or not.

Throughout centuries, in the western civilizations, certain musical rules and aesthetics began imposing themselves. At first, songs and pieces have been orally transmitted and, over time, societies gradually developed systems of original symbols to transcribe these oral traditions on paper. This allowed composers to share their artistic creations with people they would never meet, whether because of geographical or temporal impossibilities.

The invention and refinement of these graphical ways of representing music is what ultimately led the western civilizations into recognizing and appreciating the lifework of many great musicians and composers, even if the composers and their public have been separated by centuries. This is the reason why the music of Bach, Mozart or Beethoven can still be enjoyed by all today.

However, most people enjoying their music and recognizing them as great composers today tend to forget (or plainly do not know) they also were great improvisers and recognized as such during their lifetimes. Improvisation has always been an important facet of music performance in general and improvisation competitions or challenges were even common amongst the musical community throughout centuries, whether in private

parties and official public concerts like they used to organize in Vienna in Beethoven's era[1] or in New Orleans's bordellos in Jelly Roll Morton's period.[2]

The improvisations performed in these occasions had to respect a certain aesthetic, certain rules had to be followed by the improvisers in order for their improvisations to be enjoyed by their public. To simply improvise publicly without respecting these basic stylistic rules would not have been appreciated (or simply recognized as music) by the audience, whichever era it would have been performed in.

Naturally, there probably have been musicians improvising freely with each other in private occasions, but this must have been for personal entertainment purposes only. Free collective improvisation, in the general history of music, had never been recognized as an official and respected art form and, therefore, had never been recorded or performed (at least to the author's knowledge – and he extensively tried to find such performances) as such.

Then, things began to change, thanks in part to Lennie Tristano.

On May 16th 1949, Lennie Tristano, along with Lee Konitz, Warne Marsh, Billy Bauer, Arnold Fishkin and Denzil Best, stepped into Capitol's[3] studios and recorded what would be recognized as the very first official free collective improvisation recording of all time. Two pieces were recorded on that day: *Intuition* and *Digression*. These pieces had a free tonality and no main thematic material, but their aesthetic material is unlike what we associate today with what became the "aesthetics" of free jazz.[4]

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[1] One of the most famous improvisation concerts (or contests) to ever take place in Vienna was held in Prince Lobkowitz's palace and showcased Beethoven and Daniel Steibelt, one of the most renowned improvisers in Europe at the time. Beethoven won the contest so clearly, Steibelt decided to leave Vienna and to never come back.

[2] In the 1900's and 1910's, in New Orleans, particularly in Storyville which was part of New Orleans's red light district (the place where people could find brothels), bordellos were a place where people could, among other things, hear a new kind of music which did not have a name at the time, but gradually became known as jazz. Most bordellos would have its ragtime pianist and sometimes, music contests would take place, having two pianists facing each other in the arts of improvisation and interpretation.

[3] Capitol Records is a major American record label founded in 1942 by Buddy DeSylva, Johnny Mercer and Glenn Wallichs. Today, Capitol Records is a property of Universal Music Group.

[4] On this subject, Lenny Popkin (a saxophone player and a former student of Lennie Tristano) said: "*This is free harmony, but it is harmony nonetheless. This is where I make a distinction between Tristano's* free *and what has later been called* free jazz, *the meeting of musicians who, most of the time, were all blowing in their separate ways. With Lennie, harmony, melody and rhythm are all of equal importance, as is the spiritual communion between musicians. They play the same elements as people playing standards.*" (free translation from French) (Billard 1988, 41)

The term *free jazz*, however, would not make its appearance before 1960, when a young saxophonist named Ornette Coleman recorded an album entitled *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation*[5]. This album, although not Coleman's first[6], is considered by most jazzmen and analysts as the first album truly exposing the aesthetics of what free jazz would become and the first example of collective improvisation in an avant-garde jazz style.

From this moment on, free jazz had gained some degree of recognition as a valid form of music and a generation of musicians including great artists such as Pharoah Sanders, Don Cherry, Charles Mingus or John Coltrane, to name just a few, somehow followed these footsteps[7], developing the free jazz aesthetics.

Increasing complications

Most of these jazzmen, however, perhaps with the exception of Charles Mingus[8], would be performing free jazz in small ensembles, rarely exceeding five or six players. The reason for this is fairly simple to understand: when performing free improvisation, the more players there are, the hardest it becomes to play interesting music.

If a musician is freely improvising alone, he virtually can do whatever he wants musically. There is no possibility of lacking homogeneity as a group or of the

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[5] *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation*, Atlantic SD 1364. The Ornette Coleman double quartet, 1961. On this recording, Ornette Coleman plays with two quartets, one heard exclusively on the right stereo side and the other exclusively on the left side. This disc is often considered as a manifesto in jazz history, but this was not Ornette Coleman's goal when recording it.

[6] *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation* is, in fact, Ornette Coleman's seventh album. His fourth (*The Shape of Jazz to Come*, Atlantic, 1959) and fifth (*Change of The Century*, Atlantic, 1959) in particular are paving the way for what would later become free jazz.

[7] Many other musicians also contributed to the development of the free jazz aesthetics, including (but not limited to) Teddy Charles (1928-2012), Cecil Taylor (born 1929), Paul Bley (born 1932), Carla Bley (born 1936), Archie Shepp (born 1937), Jimmy Giuffre (1921-2008) and Eric Dolphy (1928-64). Jürgen Arndt, in his book *Thelonious Monk und der Free Jazz* (Graz 2002, Akademische Druk- und Verlangsanstalt, 276 pages) even presents Thelonious Monk as having a considerable influence over the creation of the free jazz aesthetics.

[8] Charles Mingus did write for larger ensembles, but in these cases, collective improvisation was scarce, to say the least. For instance, *Pre Bird* (aka *Mingus Revisited*, Mercury. Charles Mingus, 1960) and *The Complete Town Hall Concert* (United Artists UAJ 14024. Charles Mingus, 1962) show how, when it comes to larger formations, Charles Mingus writes complex and precise arrangements, leaving next to no room for collective improvisation.

improvisation becoming chaotic, as long as the musician has enough experience to know what he wants to do or express and where he wants to go musically.

If another musician decides to join in, then both musicians will have to listen to each other in order not to step on the other improviser's foot and for the improvisation to remain homogeneous. This is still a rather simple thing to do for musicians, as long as they have a minimum of good will or, even better, experience with this musical approach.

If a third musician decides to join in, then the difficulty is doubled: each musician has to listen to not only one, but two other musicians to make sure he plays in concordance with what they are playing, individually and as a duo. Although harder to do than simply freely improvising in duo, doing so in trio still remains a fairly uncomplicated task for somewhat inexperienced musicians.

However, as the band grows, the potential for problems arising from a lack of homogeneity, of provisional common musical vision and of listening to every other member of the ensemble rises exponentially. It takes musicians who are rather experienced in the field of free improvisation for a five or seven pieces formation not to become chaotic when freely improvising all together.

When it comes to larger formations, like big bands or orchestras, it becomes almost impossible to get instant coherence from everyone at once and, if musical coherence is reached, to sustain it for a certain period of time without getting too repetitive. Free collective improvisation, when it gets to these kinds of formations, will almost always become chaotic very rapidly unless the musicians begin following certain rules, or at least a leader.

As Ekkehard Jost puts it: "When the creative ideas of free jazz, developed for the most part in small groups, are transferred to a big band, the problems that arise are both musical and economic in nature. […] One of the musical problems is due to the fact that a larger group requires a larger measure of musical organization and pre-planning than a small group, in which spontaneous interactions between the musicians work out more smoothly. The "classical" big band, with its sections and settings, is opposed to individual development. Organized discipline leaves little room for spontaneous process of evolution. […] The problem of the big band in free jazz, then, lies first and foremost in employing the sound potential of a large apparatus structurally, without having to revert to normative

organization of the "classical" big band, that is, without having to reduce the individual creativity of a majority of the players to merely reading notes."[9]

Managing musical chaos

So, when it comes to larger musical ensembles improvising freely, how does one avoid – or at least try to manage – the musical chaos potentially resulting from it? What techniques does he use?

This is the main question this entire thesis will be trying to answer.

To do so, the author, having already experimented on the subject with a big band he has been conducting for a certain number of years, will, of course, refer to his own experience with the subject, but to stick to the conclusions he drew from these experiments would be extremely naïve from his part. Since many other musicians – and sometimes great jazz masters – have already experimented and perfected some collective free improvisation techniques, to get an (at least partially) accurate answer, one also has to look at these techniques which, for some of them, have been in use since the 1960s, try to extensively understand them, do comparative analyses of them all and try to find out which techniques work the best in given contexts.

It could, at first hand, seem relatively easy for one to complete these tasks. After all, there are a number of figures on both sides of the Atlantic who dedicated at least a part of their lives to put together large ensembles of experienced free improvisers and provide them with an appropriated repertoire.

In America, musicians like Charles Mingus, Paul and Carla Bley, Michael Mantler[10], Anthony Braxton, Sun Ra or many members of the AACM[11] all had, individually and collectively, their word to say on the development of free jazz and free collective improvisation for larger musical formations.

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[9] Jost 1974, 182.

[10] Although born and raised in Austria, Michael Mantler, for almost the entire free jazz period of his musical career, stayed and performed in the United States of America; which is why, for the purpose of this work, we consider him as being part of the American influence on free collective improvisation.

[11] The Association of the Advancement of Creative Musicians, or AACM, is a collective of mostly black musicians based in Chicago, Illinois, dedicated to experimental music, including free collective improvisation, and musical education.

In Europe, many young musicians took an interest in the American collective work and free jazz development and decided to try it on their own. Near the end of the 60s[12], many larger musical formations were experimenting on their own with free improvisation techniques they were developing. During these years, European free jazz players were mostly influenced by the American way of playing and conceptualizing free jazz, but considered it to be a starting point from which they could find their voices. These voices would eventually take the form of a mix between African-American jazz influence and typical folkloric, popular and "classical" European musical tradition.

The European free jazz players, just as their American equivalent before them, wanted to throw away the old ways of playing jazz so to bring new ways of creating music forward. The Germans invented the word *Kaputtspielen* to describe this new musical concept.

Although European larger free improvisation formations soon began to develop their own typical sound and particularities[13], they all somehow influenced each other, which helped everyone evolving in their specific musical approaches to this new music. Interrelated free improvisation techniques spawned in this environment.

However, anyone trying to extensively study these techniques, whether finding their roots in Europe or in America, will soon realize, just as the author did, there are three major difficulties he has to face:

1- Almost no reliable and valid source of true documentation on the subject exists.[14]
2- Free collective improvisation scores, by the very nature of what free collective improvisation is, are either hard or impossible to find, are simply incomprehensive without explanations or plainly inexistent.
3- Contrary to most written music, one cannot truly rely on recordings or recording transcriptions to understand which techniques have been used and how so.

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[12] Peter Brötzman stated in an interview with Didier Pennequin, that "1968 was the year of the big orchestras, where we [the free jazz scene musicians] would meet together to play like crazy." (free translation) (in Jost 1987, 112-113)

[13] Ekkehard Jost, in his book *Europas Jazz: 1960-1980*, mentions, as an example, the intensive use of bass instruments and larger rhythmic sections in the German jazz orchestras.

[14] There is a certain number of books in existence concerning some of the main figures of free collective improvisation for medium and large ensembles, but, although very interesting and instructive on the life of their subjects (like Sun Ra), they will put very little focus on the specifics of the techniques they use (or used) to get their musical results.

To palliate to this problem, the author decided to go directly to the source and to do extensive interviews with musicians who had found their own original solutions to the potential problem of chaotic collective free improvisation. Once this had been decided, the author had to choose who would be best suited to be interviewed.

It has been decided the sum of the interviews would have to fill four essential conditions:

1- The interviewed musicians must have been active on the musical scene for a respectable amount of time, so to speak from experience.
2- The interviewed musicians must have reasonably different approaches of the subject from one another.
3- The interviewed musicians, although fairly known in their fields, must not have been the main subject of a great number of books (like Charles Mingus would have been).
4- There must be a comparable number of musicians originating from Europe and America, so not to focus too much on musicians having the same basic musical background and influences.

Keeping these four conditions in mind and after having conducted extensive research on many potential subjects, five names[15] came up as particularly promising:

- mathias rüegg[16] (Austrian), leader of the late Vienna Art Orchestra, who gradually left free collective improvisation behind,
- Barry Guy (British), leader of the London Jazz Composers Orchestra and the Barry Guy New Orchestra, who makes use of flashcards and alternative musical notation, such as symbols, to achieve his musical goals,
- Dieter Glawischnig (Austrian), leader of the NDR big band from 1980 to 2008, who has a very practical approach of collective free improvisation and had to impose free music to the establishment,

[15] Of course, there could have been dozens of other musicians, composers or musical directors the author could have interviewed. However, doing so would have proven repetitive and, dare we say, ultimately somehow futile on most technical aspects. Therefore, a choice has been made to limit the researches and comparisons to these five figures which, by their complementarities, are enough to cover most of the collective free improvisation techniques, aspects and evolutions one could have encountered by studying the vast majority of the artists dealing with the subject of this thesis.

[16] According to Mr. rüegg's demand, throughout this thesis, his name will be written with no capital letter, just as he does himself.

- Butch Morris (American), inventor of a technique called *conduction*[17] which allows the musical conductor to freely "play" any musical formation, using it as if it was an instrument by itself
- and Marshall Allen (American), current leader of the Arkestra, who somehow carries the torch left by Sun Ra at the time of his unfortunate passing and has a spiritual approach to free collective improvisation.[18]

We will also dissert about two figures some respected specialists and researchers consider unavoidable when dealing with the subject at hand, Michael Mantler and Alexander von Schlippenbach, although not as extensively and without the help of interviews.

Of course, as mentioned earlier, the author also writes about his own experiences and the techniques he used during his experimentations, not as someone with the experience and wisdom the others have, but as a naïve point of reference and comparison. The first chapter of this thesis is greatly drawn from a previous work the author had produced after having worked on free collective improvisation techniques with his band, but before doing any research on any of the above-mentioned composers/conductors. After having done those researches and conducted the related interviews, the author read back this paper (he had almost forgotten about it) and realized how naïvely accurate his experimentations, analyses and conclusions were when put in relation with the researches he had done in the context of this thesis. He therefore decided to include it, almost untouched[19], as a point of comparison for the eighth chapter of this thesis, in which every composers/conductors' techniques are put in perspective and relation to every other.

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[17] Conduction® is a registered trademark owned by Butch Morris himself. We will see how and why this came to be in CHAPTER V Butch Morris: conducting freedom (p.82). In this thesis, in the sole purpose of lightening the text, we will omit the registered trademark symbol (®), except for official conduction names and titles.

[18] Sun Ra might be the exception when it comes to the rule of interviewing people who were not the subject of many books, but, firstly, the interview was naturally not done with Sun Ra himself, but with Marshall Allen and, secondly, although many interesting books were written about Sun Ra (see the bibliography for suggestions), not many of them extensively focus on his composition and conducting techniques, unfortunately.

[19] Although almost untouched, the original paper was in French, so the author had to freely translate his own work, but tried to capture all the naivety of the original text.

Additional difficulties and explanations

In many cases, getting in touch with the above-mentioned people was no easy task. Getting them to accept being interviewed has not been easier. However, although some of them have been surprisingly easy to convince (they know who they are), after sometimes a few months of harassment from my part, they all have been generous enough to devote a few hours to the extensive interview I wanted to conduct with them.

Like in every private interview lasting this long, there has been a few "off the record" moments, which is why, when listening to the provided audio versions of these interviews, one can notice some obvious cuts. It was something the author had promised the interviewed he would do.

Also, with the exception of Barry Guy who extensively went over the transcription of his interview to bring corrections and enlightenments to its final version, the decision have been made not to bring any corrections, including grammatical ones, to them in order to keep the original spirit and the spontaneity of the answers intact. It was also decided not to indicate every English mistake made by the interviewed with a "(sic)" indication, since, for some, more than half the transcription would have required some.

When hearing the interviews, the listener will often notice a white noise lasting about a second each time. This is due to the interview being conducted over the phone and through a computer for recording purposes. The author did not find any way to cut it out afterwards or to make it stop as it was happening. To this day, the author still does not know what caused these inconveniences and apologizes for them.

Finally, when transcribing the interviews, the author sometimes could not clearly understand certain words or names. When this happened, he asked the concerned interviewed person for enlightenments and usually got it within a reasonable amount of time. However, in Marshall Allen's case, because of his pronunciation and the poor quality of the phone he was using, a substantial amount of information is simply incomprehensible[20] and since Mr. Allen could not be reached again (he has no phone or e-

[20] The author even had to rely on paid transcribers from southern United States to perform a first transcription on which he could rely to make his own, since the transcribers did not know musical terms and musicians' names well enough for them not to do mistakes.

mail address of his own), the author had to do with what he had, which was still considerable.

CHAPTER I
Naïve experimentations

Prologue

Over the last twenty years, my musical journey led me, when the opportunity arose, to look for what we could classify under the terms *pure music* or *naïve music*. This can be described as simply playing, with the first musician to come around, spontaneous music, purified of any defined beforehand rule. It might seem like a child's play, but it is far from being easy to succeed in letting every musical barrier drop so one can manage to really communicate with another musician, without consideration of his instrumental level and the musical and cultural background – thus the preconceived ideas – he drags with him. The magic does not always operate. But when it does, it results in moments of a huge artistic intensity, each of these moments being unique and memorable.

Several factors can affect whether or not we get access to this musical symbiosis: the atmosphere of the place where the experiment is tried, the state of mind of the participants, the number of previous occasions where the musicians played together and, naturally, the number of participants. Let's focus on this last aspect for a moment.

Just as it is much easier for a duet or a trio than for a symphony orchestra to put together a musical piece without a conductor, it is much more difficult for a large ensemble than for a small formation to interpret totally improvised music worth listening to. When, as in the case which interests us here, we are talking about an ensemble made out of some 17 musicians, this automatically comes with certain problems we need to address, so that the ensued musical product stays interesting.

We shall group here these difficulties together under two categories: the homogeneity and the listening of the other one. By homogeneity we mean the fact of succeeding in the creation of a work where the musicians seem to musically converge toward a common point, which is something much more complex than it might appear and by the listening of the other one, we want to express the musician's awareness of its role in something bigger than himself and thus to question himself on the relevance of its musical interventions.

The purpose of the present work is to share the approach which led me to create techniques and exercises of collective improvisation for large ensembles which can compensate for the above-mentioned difficulties.

Before getting to the heart of the subject, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the musicians who accompanied me – and who still accompany me – throughout this beautiful adventure. They have always shown a great sense professionalism doubled by an extraordinary opening of the mind. Without them, this current work would not have been possible. Thus, thanks to all the musicians, with permanent chairs or just replacing, who played with the Moineauphonik big band. You were, are and will always be a source of inexhaustible motivation for me.

The time

It is not all, when one wants to create an interesting musical piece of collective improvisation, to have the same musical route, to know where we want to go with this piece; we still need to reach our collective destination at the same time. Since, in the music which interests us here, there is no rhythm or even defined pulsation, it is essential for every member of the band to become aware of the time passing by in an absolute way. To assert his temporal position within the piece, it is impossible for the musician to look at which measure the group is, just as it is impossible for him to become aware of the relative place where he is at this precise moment in the piece (e.g. measure 75 in a 125 measures long piece or measure 75 in an 8000 measures long piece).

Furthermore, a playing musician easily loses his sense of how much time has passed by. The best way to demonstrate this fact is a simple experiment which any musician can attempt: without a clock or any indication of how much time is passing by, try to improvise freely for a three minutes period then, when you believe to have reached this duration, stop and verify how much time actually passed by. By repeating this experiment several times, you will be able to notice the difference between the duration from one improvisation to the other as well as between the estimated and actual duration of every single improvisation.

To counter this phenomenon as well as to standardize the perception of the relative place where the musicians are, I adopted the quite simple technique of the informative cue cards. This simply consists in taking a required number of white sheets big enough so that

one can write an information on it which the furthest musician from the director can easily read – in this case, the time remaining before the end of the piece (e.g. 2:00 minutes, 1:30 minutes, 1:00 minute, 45 seconds, etc.) – and to present them to the musicians at the required moment.

This technique presents several advantages for the conductor. He can, as he pleases, play with the time duration flexibility it offers him. This way, if the leader finds the improvisation is developing particularly well, it is easy for him to slow down – or even to suspend in a sense – the passage of time by delaying by some extra seconds the moment when the next cue card is presented. The opposite is also true.[21]

The imposing idea

As previously mentioned, one of the big problems one has to deal with when making an attempt at collective improvisation with a large ensemble is listening to one another. The first reflex of any musician (or, at least, jazz musician) when being told to play free music is, indeed, to play. More often than not, a musician with little experience in this domain will play something which, although musically very attractive in itself, does not automatically fit with what the rest of the group is playing. When many musicians have this same reflex at the same time, the musical result is almost always a very dense mass of sound, without any personality and of uniform color; some kind of "noise block", particularly uninteresting and aggressive to the listener's ear.

To remedy to this unpleasant musicians' automatism and to help developing the musicians' automatism of playing in symbiosis with the rest of the group, we developed a technique similar to almost every other technique concerning every other musicians' defect to be corrected: technical exercises aiming solely at this very goal. In this perspective, we developed the technique of the imposing idea. It is a very simple exercise, but one which, when repeated frequently, is formidably effective after a fairly short period of time.

In every rehearsal, a period of 15 to 20 minutes is dedicated to improvise in a completely free way, without any connecting thread or indication other than the

[21] We shall also use this technique to pass on other information to the musicians in certain circumstances. It will be particularly useful for us in the musical story telling technique which we shall approach further in this chapter.

compulsory time limit. The duration of every exercise should be relatively short, especially at the beginning. We propose a duration not exceeding three minutes for the first tries.

The basic principle is quite simple: to play whatever one wants within a compulsory duration, but it is imperative, at the end of the exercise, for all the musicians to meet around a single idea. This idea can be a note, a rhythm, a musical cell, a riff, a groove, an effect (e.g. glissando downward) or pretty much any other common point around which the musicians can gather. As I like to repeat to the musicians every time we practice this particular exercise: "Do not try to impose your idea, but try to recognize the idea which imposes itself. Ask yourselves, before making an intervention, if the global musical result will be positively affected by it and play only if your answer to this question is positive."

As mentioned earlier, the results can be observed within a surprising short amount of time. Very quickly, the musical result is not one of the exercise nature any more, but rather of the performance one. After only a few weeks, only some seconds are needed to reach a musical consensus and the remaining assigned time serves the development of this main idea. From this moment on, it becomes adequate to increase the duration of the exercise so that it can also serve another purpose: the development; the fact of developing the idea through a certain period of time instead of simply repeating it over and over in a somehow stagnant way.

The peak(s)

If there is but one aspect of composition which remains constant throughout all styles and ages, it surely is structure. By definition, a musical piece must possess an appropriated structure. Naturally, when we are discussing free and improvised music, the definition of what can be considered as structure must be widened in comparison to more defined musical forms as the sonata or the rondo. In the musical styles we are studying, the notions of themes, repetitions or modulations have no place and are even totally incompatible. Thus we shall here define structure as a general state providing a certain deliberate musical direction to the improvisation.

The first experiment we tried in this field was to simply decide on a peak for dramatic tension. The experiment was quite simple: to improvise a piece of defined duration and to determine in advance for its peak to take place at a predetermined moment, this moment

being situated around the two thirds of its length. This would give, in theory, some sort of vague *crescendo decrescendo* form.[22]

Let us note here that it is, in the attempted experiments, the first real intervention of the composer in a sense that something else than the duration of the improvisation is imposed on the musicians. It is thus from this experiment on that we can begin to refer to controlled collective improvisation. The musicians are free to musically go wherever they like, to follow the path they wish, as long as they reach a precise point at a precise moment.

Of course, when the first experiments which we have just described have been concluded in a way so that the whole band is satisfied, the next step is to become even more specific about the moments of tension and relaxation as well as their intensity. In this way, and with a little preparation, it becomes possible to determine not only the place of the main and secondary peaks, but also (and most importantly) the intensity of the contrasts which will ensue from these choices. A good way of making the musicians easily and quickly understand all the subtleties which the composer is looking for, is to present them with a simple graduated scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the equivalent of the biggest possible tension and 1 is the opposite. Then it is only a matter of arranging these indications on a time line. In theory, it would thus be possible to elaborate improvised pieces where the structure, described as moments of tension and relaxation, would be just as elaborated as any traditional composition, where every note, rhythmic figure, nuance and articulation is written down.

Let us also take note that, in spite of a certain role of the composer in the final musical result, this technique requires only a very slight, if not marginal, participation on behalf of the musical director. Its only utility is to make sure the musicians know where they are in the timeline by means of informative cue cards. It is true that he can still play with the evolution of the time factor, but too much abuse of this resource, from our point of view, would distort the very concept of this particular exercise.

In spite of all the above-mentioned theoretical advantages of this technique, the results seemed to us, most of the time, rather disappointing. The musicians seem to have a big difficulty gradually increasing or decreasing in intensity. If a *crescendo* or a *decrescendo* spreads out on a duration superior to a few seconds, the aimed nuance will be reached well

[22] As we will later see, mathias rüegg would call this a dramaturgical bow.

before its prescribed moment. In short, it seems very difficult for the interpreters to execute a *crescendo* or a *decrescendo poco a poco*. Furthermore, reaching a real standard when it comes to the value of a numbered intensity (e.g. intensity 3 is always interpreted the same way, which is different from intensity 2 or 4) would require an astronomical sum of diligent work for a result which would probably not be worth the effort.

Besides, and we consider this to be a major problem, during these exercises, the attention of the interpreters is so focused on the nuances and a graduation of the intensity, they start to neglect listening to one another. The net result is thus a certain loss of homogeneity.

We do not pretend it always results in an uninteresting performance; at certain times the experiment was more than satisfactory, but unfortunately, those exiting moments were the exception and not the rule. Our evaluation in percentage of these experiments' success rate would be situated in the surroundings of 20%. The conclusion at which we arrive concerning this particular technique is that it is necessary to find a way for the musicians to follow these indications without having to focus on this aspect; to elaborate a technique where the tension / relaxation aspect would be implied and not one of the explicit factors which the musicians must necessarily follow and focus on.

The two hands

After the above-mentioned experiments and having found a certain role for the composer, we wanted to elaborate a technique of collective improvisation requiring a more active implication on behalf of the musical director. To do this, we developed what we called the two hands technique.

The musical director controls three aspects of what is played and can use them as one pleases. With the left hand, he controls the volume. A left hand held high tells the musicians to play loud and, to the opposite, a low left hand tells them to play quietly. As for the right hand, it controls the pitch. A right hand raised high tells the musicians to play in the higher register of the instrument, whereas a low right hand tells them to play in the lower register. The fingers control the number of played notes. To move fingers quickly tells the musicians to play several notes quickly, not moving fingers means playing long notes and closing hands into fists tells the musicians not to make any noise.

With the help of these basic rules, we wanted to give the opportunity to the conductor to get total control over the musical product, to allow him to literally play the orchestra as if it was an instrument. Furthermore – and mainly – it allows him to improvise with his instrument: the orchestra. Naturally, one question immediately arises. If a single person controls everything, can we still speak of collective improvisation? Our humble opinion is, indeed, that we can only speak of collective improvisation if a collective group of individuals does improvise. However, this exercise was not a goal in itself, but only a tool which, once mastered, could serve occasionally when, in a longer musical piece, the need for it was being felt.

The first observation which appeared to us was that the improvisation was extremely difficult to produce in an interesting way. This new instrument, the big band, was, for the conductor, just as any other new instrument: difficult to master at first. It did not take a long time to reach the conclusion that with so few parameters at the conductor's disposition, it was indispensable, to avoid redundancy, to follow some sort of lead sheet previously conceptualized alone and with a clear head and then written down.

At the following rehearsal, we thus equipped ourselves with such a lead sheet. Nevertheless, after a certain number of trials, we had to face the fact that this new instrument was particularly difficult to master. It might prove to be possible to eventually get to some interesting results by using this technique, but the quantity of time required to get there would be more than considerable.

Furthermore, it turns out to be of very little interest for the musicians – especially jazz musicians which have been used to a certain amount of personal freedom when it comes to musical performance – to work with these very restrictive techniques for long periods of time. It is also pretty demanding for these same musicians to remain musical in their performance when their attention is focused on the slightest movements of the musical director.

We thus came to the conclusion that this technique contained too many flaws to be pushed further ahead. If we did want to give a more important role to the conductor, we would have to find another path to follow. It would prove necessary for us to find a new technique which, while leaving most of the initiative to the interpreter, would allow the

musical director to give certain indications to the musicians in a sporadic way, when the need for it would arise.

Divisions within the orchestra

Before going further ahead, it seems important for us to take a brief moment for some explanations on the composition of the group which lent itself to these experiments. It is a musical formation which we usually refer to under the term *big band*. Just as most groups of this type, it is composed of four sections: saxophones (a soprano and an alto or two altos, two tenors and a baritone), trumpets (four), trombones (three tenor trombones and a bass trombone or a tuba), and a rhythm section (piano/keyboard, guitar, electric bass/double bass and drum kit).

When it is necessary to divide the group so to be able to exploit more than one musical line or plan at the same time, or for simple purposes of orchestration, the simplest formula and by far the most often exploited remains the division by sections. Very frequently, you will find four trumpets together on one line, five saxophones gathered around another line and four trombones (tuba) united around a third different line. It is an effective formula which proved to be successful over the ages and which we also often use.

Other divisions are also possible. Asides from this last one, we often used other divisions and subdivisions within the orchestra, in the framework of the researches and experiments exposed here. Among these, we can briefly mention the brasses combined together against the saxophones; bass trombone (tuba) with baritone saxophone, tenor trombones with the tenor saxophones and the trumpets with alto/soprano saxophones as well as variants of this last one.

When it comes to the rhythm section, it becomes quite peculiar. Although it can be a complete band in itself – it could make an entire jazz show without the help of any wind section – it can also be – and it very often is – only some sort of musical mat which role is not to particularly draw the attention on itself, but rather to provide some kind of rhythmic stability and harmonic cushion onto which the wind section can make melodic interventions, which will themselves have the function to draw the attention of the public. In the musical experiments subsequent to those already quoted, the function of the rhythm

section will essentially be to assure this sort of cushion, to be a kind of background on which the other sections can play a front-stage role.

Naturally, we shall not speak of harmonic cushion here, since strictly speaking there is no harmony, nor of rhythmic stability, the pulsation being non-existent in a practical sense in our performances. On the other hand, the rhythm section assures certain continuity, an auditory stability for the listener when exchanges are happening between the other musical plans.

Finally, one has to mention there is also a great array of other, less often used possibilities. The most common examples are, for trumpets, the use of the flugelhorn and of various mutes; for trombones, also the use of various mutes; for saxophones, uses of flutes, clarinets as well as bass clarinets; for the rhythm section, uses of various effects and pedals for the bass and the guitar, the bow for the double bass as well as practically any conceivable sounds one can think of on keyboards. We also exploited these resources, sometimes in an organized way under the directives of the musical director / composer, other times in a more random matter under the initiative of one or another of the musicians following its inspiration at a moment's notice.

The story

It is while meditating on the conclusions at which we arrived after the previous experiments consisting in the application of the peaks technique that we elaborated the basic concepts of a new technique which we shall name the story technique. This technique consists in imagining a very simple scenario and in asking the musicians to interpret it musically. To do so, the composer makes informative cue cards on which he beforehand wrote the main lines of the scenario and presents them in a given order to the musicians.

When one uses this technique, it is essential to always keep in mind that the pursued purpose is the musical product and not the story in itself. The auditors will probably never know the intrigue of the scenario; therefore it is the scenario which is at the service of the music and not the other way around. A mediocre scenario can be at the origin of an extraordinary piece of music and vice versa. We shall return later on the elements which, in our opinion and experience, constitute a good story.

This technique has the advantage of gathering the interpreters behind something intangible, like impressions or feelings. This becomes a way to resolve a major problem faced during the application of the peaks technique, the lack of listening of the other one and the homogeneity of the musicians resulting from too much of their focus being put on the intensity indications, while leaving the composer with the control of the allocation and fluctuations of this intensity throughout time due to his scenario choices.

It even allows him to influence certain aspects which previously were not under his control. For example, an informative cue card where one can read “They tenderly kiss each other.” will probably reach the same level of intensity as a cue card where one can read “He leaves, containing his anger.” but will not generate the same type of musical reaction from the interpreters. The first one will most probably generate round tones, less defined articulations and continuous melodic lines while the second one will probably generate shrill tones, dry articulations and maybe even no melodic line strictly speaking or, otherwise, many breaks in these lines. These are some aspects which could not be influenced by the composer under the aegis of the peaks technique, unless reached by pure serendipity.

The role of the musical director is, here again, somehow limited if one sticks with a strict interpretation of the composer's story. On the other hand, we consider it to be morally more acceptable here for a musical director to play around with the timing stipulated by the composer, since this one cannot be entirely sure of what musical reaction each one of his cue cards will create. Furthermore, it becomes possible, and still morally more acceptable, for the conductor to modify the chronology of the story when he feels there is a need for it by taking some steps (cue cards) back or by deciding to omit a cue card which he considers, on the spot, to be musically less relevant or interesting.

With this new influence which he now possesses on the final musical product, the role and the responsibilities of the composer are all the more crucial. This forces him to be all the more cautious and intelligent in the conceptualization of the musical piece at hand. It makes it even more important for him to make a sensible choice of the elements which will form the story to be interpreted.

As we mentioned earlier, the story in itself is of marginal importance. What is important is the music resulting from it. It is most imperative for some sort of structure, a

certain sense of musical direction to emerge out of this. It requires at least one highlight of dramatic tension as well as certain variations of musical intensity. Furthermore, it is important for the composer to indicate to the conductor the duration of each "musical scene", on each of these informative cue cards. What seemed to us like the most effective way to compose an interesting story was to work in the opposite direction than the one of the musicians; to start with a musical plan and then to find a connecting thread which has enough coherence to get the attention of the musicians and which is suggestive enough to inspire them. In this context, the old Hollywood scenario clichés are, for example, some kinds of catalysts susceptible to create predictable musical reactions. This way, it becomes easier for the composer to generate the effects and dramatic intensity which he wishes to reach with very slight chances for errors.

So to better be able to make the vague principles which we are trying to express here understandable, we shall quote a typical story example which carries out the desired effect. The group is, on the occasion, divided into three parts: the saxophones which interpret what concerns character # 1, the brass instruments which interpret what concerns character # 2 and, finally, the rhythm section which, in optics of continuation and musical stability, serves as a background on which the rest of the group can express itself. Nine informative cue cards are necessary for this story which stages a typical couple.

Cue card # 1) 25 seconds, character # 1 – *I love you, tenderly*

Cue card # 2) 25 seconds, character # 2 – *I love you tenderly*

Cue card # 1) 15 seconds, character # 1 – *I love you tenderly*

Cue card # 2) 15 seconds, character # 2 – *I love you tenderly*

Cue card # 3) 20 seconds, character # 1 – *I love you passionately!*

Cue card # 4) 20 seconds, character # 2 – *I love you passionately!*

Cue card # 3) 15 seconds, character # 1 – *I love you passionately!*

Cue card # 4) 15 seconds, character # 2 – *I love you passionately!*

Cue card # 5) 20 seconds, character # 1 – *I am mocking you!*

Cue card # 6) 25 seconds, character # 2 – *I am mad!*

Cue card # 7) 50 seconds, both – *We fight!*

Cue card # 8) 40 seconds, both – *We love each other passionately!*

Cue card # 9) 30 seconds, both – *We fall asleep lovingly…*

One could not stress enough the importance of the previous exercises for a smooth application of the story technique. For the performance to be homogeneous and musically interesting, the mastery of the imposing idea exercise is particularly crucial. It is indeed of the outmost importance for the musicians to be able to meet almost immediately around one common musical idea to pass on an impression of homogeneity to the listener. It is thus in this kind of situation that the rhythm section and the effect of continuity it brings to the improvisation takes all its sense, so to maintain a common direction through the changes of atmosphere.

Another element can influence positively the proper functioning of the exercise: to take some minutes before the beginning of the performance to discuss the story with the musicians. This makes it possible to arrive at some sort of consensus on how each of the musical interventions must be interpreted and thus the general spirit of the upcoming performance.

After close consideration of all the aspects of every technique we experienced up to now and their practical and artistic results, we come to the conclusion this technique remains, until now, the source of the best collective improvisation experiments. Other experiences in this direction are sure to follow.

General musical directions

Throughout rehearsals and over the course of the above-mentioned experiments and exercises, a certain confidence, certain complicity eventually grew between the leader and the musicians. Once this complicity is established, a world of possibilities opens itself to the musical director for him to intervene and influence the performance of the group in any chosen technique. The conductor can, among other things, by simple movements, silence the band, appoint a certain musician or a certain section to be put forward, or propose the use of mutes or some effects. It is however important to mention this kind of intervention has to be the exception and not the rule for it to always be effective. One has to keep in mind it is all about collective improvisation and thus, by definition, the interpreters have to be the first source of what is musically created.

Moreover, the balance between the freedom of expression of the musicians and the imposition of ideas by the musical director is very fragile. If the musicians feel bullied in

their freedom of expression, the public will be able to hear it immediately! Furthermore, the conductor will want to use his influence only when he is persuaded his intervention is justified since, if he wants the musicians to follow him each and every time, practically every intervention must conduct the band towards an almost exceptional musical event or take the group out of a potentially dramatic situation, musically speaking (e.g. when there is redundancy in the performance and the band seems to have difficulties getting out the loop).

Nevertheless, it is important for the musical director to keep in mind that he is the best suited to judge and appreciate the entirety of the musical product. He is the only one in the band to have a global vision of what is musically taking place. In other words and to take a time-honored expression, the musical director sees the forest in general while every musician mainly sees the tree.

If the conductor has the wisdom to apply the principles we have just exposed, the complicity and the mutual confidence which will develop between the group and him can lead to surprising applications. Therefore, the author had the chance to watch (and sometimes be part of) some groups where, within a written chart during a live performance, the musical director decides, under the inspiration of the moment, to completely drop out of the score, so to bring the band in an unsuspected direction, sometimes for a very impressive duration, before getting back again into the score to the place where he had left or, sometimes even, somewhere else completely. However, to do so, one naturally needs a level of complicity which can only be reached after numerous experiments and having proved repeatedly to the group that, during similar occasions, there is no doubt the leader will make the band fall back on its two feet without the slightest problem.

Written indications

While experimenting with the two hands technique, we noticed blatant flaws, the enumeration of which we have previously made. We then came to the conclusion it was necessary to find a new approach offering the conductor the opportunity of bringing the group towards a certain musical direction; to make it possible for him to sporadically give indications to the musicians while leaving them relatively free in their performance. In this perspective, we developed the written indications technique.

This technique, as the name tells, consists in writing beforehand certain (more or less precise) musical directives so to create a bank of effects into which the musical director can dig whenever he feels the need for it. This way, it becomes possible for him to interact with the group when he wishes to and to somehow "play the orchestra" while leaving most of the control over the final musical product to the band. Furthermore, with this technique, the conductor can choose not to intervene at all during the course of the interpretation if he judges no intervention to be necessary.

To better enlighten the reader, here is a practical example of the application of written indications. In the musical piece *Maudite bonne toune pour partir un show*[23], we have tried, very shyly, to include the possibility of resorting to this technique during a section featuring a free trombone solo. This solo, of indefinite duration, begins at measure 122 and stays free until up to and including measure 128[24].

During this section, the musical director can, if he estimates there is a need for it, resort to four indications, labeled in the score under the name **Q1** to **Q4**, each of them being totally independent from the others. For three of them (**Q1**, **Q3** and **Q4**), there is no particular tempo, the speed of execution of the first one even resting completely on the guitarist's free will. In the fourth indication, the pitches are determined by every musician on his own, as long as the second note played is higher than the first one, the third higher than the second one and so on.

The conductor can thus choose to use none of these resources or, on the contrary, to use all of them, in the order indicated or not, resulting in this section having every chance of being completely different each time it gets interpreted. The only indication which is absolutely imperative to use is **Q5**. This was conceptualized to be a transition between the free improvisation section and the following one, which happens to be a very standard jazz structure: a rhythm changes[25].

After a few tries with the band, the application of this technique on the section in question turned out conclusive. We shall thus try, in the future, to develop a bank of

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[23] Piece composed by Mathieu Loiseau in 2007.

[24] See appendix 1 (p.ix).

[25] A rhythm changes is a piece based on the harmonic and formal structure of the piece *I Got Rhythm*, from George and Ira Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess*.

indications to which the band and the conductor can refer during the interpretation of future written musical pieces and collective improvisations. This bank will have to contain indications of pitch, volume, rhythm and even, as much as possible, tone so that every aspect of what composes music can be exploited and managed while leaving to the interpreter the leading role, the major control over the final musical product.

Conclusion

As the reader can already probably realize, we have only begun to scratch the surface of the vast possibilities which conducted collective improvisation is offering us. Two techniques stood out from the rest of the experiments as being very promising: the story and the written indications. Concerning this last one, the path to be followed seems quite obvious: to create, and then to enrich, a wide bank of indications to which one can refer when the opportunity or the need arises. As for the story technique, several possibilities and variations seem interesting.

Nevertheless, at the moment, two of them seem particularly promising and it is on those two we shall focus our immediate efforts. One of them is to try to create live movie or theater music. The other one would be to have a short film (probably animation) created on our music. To do so, we would like to improvise some music inspired by a short comic strip produced for the occasion and then, once the music is recorded, to produce, by means of a computer, a very simplistic and probably abstract short film which mission would be to support and visually express this recorded music.

With these experimentations, we have, until now, only barely explored the multitude of possibilities which collective improvisation offers. We still have to deeply dig if we want to succeed in pulling out all of the treasures our extremely brief and rare experiments allowed us to catch a glimpse of.

CHAPTER II
mathias rüegg: going the other way

Born in 1952 in Zurich, Switzerland, mathias rüegg is probably best known for putting together and conducting the Vienna Art Orchestra from 1977 until 2010.

He received a school teacher formation and taught for some time in special needs schools. He then studied classical composition and jazz piano (with Harald Neuwirth) in the Musikhochschule in Graz.

"I actually started with free jazz and then I went back to the roots"

Just as so many musicians, he first started by learning classical music, but then soon moved to rock. In 1971, he decided to leave the rock scene to focus on free improvisation, but after just two years, he somehow came to the conclusion that free jazz was not leading him anywhere and decided to study jazz in Graz. He stayed there for three years – from 1974 to 1976 – before deciding to get to Vienna to work as a freelance musician.

This is where, in 1977, tired of playing alone, he put together the Vienna Art Orchestra, which will become one of the most internationally recognized big bands of its era. This reputation was based mainly on two factors: on one hand, the musical exactitude – what many jazzmen call tightness – of the band and its great soloists and, on the other hand, mathias rüegg's imagination and evolution as a composer and a show conceptualizer.[26]

[26] Of course, with the Vienna Art Orchestra, just as with any other band, the business/managing aspects – which were also under the responsibility of mathias rüegg – are to be seriously taken into consideration when it comes to the success and recognition of it; but since this is not related to the main subject of this thesis, we will only talk about the rehearsal managing aspect of it.

Composition according to mathias rüegg

When it comes to composition, mathias rüegg, like most composers, has some principles and ideas about what should and should not be done. As an example, he never works with graphic notations, feeling it "makes no sense at all, neither [in jazz, nor] in classical music."

Another thing which doesn't make sense to him: jazz composers who write stuff so complicated, nobody can play it.

"If something is difficult, but it makes sense, then one has to work on it. If it's difficult but it makes no sense, then it makes no sense to work on it."

This is something he is trying to teach his students today.[27] First, a composer has to be able to write simple stuff as perfectly as possible. Then, when one knows how to do this more or less every time – and only then – should one consider writing complicated chords or rhythms. But one should always be able to avoid musical mistakes before getting any further.

This can be said, because, according to mathias rüegg, musical mistake is pretty much always avoidable. He strongly believes in the Pythagorean concept of harmony. Music – and especially the harmonic aspect of music – has rules and one should respect them. Pretty much every mistake, every little part which does not sound right can find its explanation in this Pythagorean concept of musical rules. All existing sounds have physical relations with one another.

One of the techniques often used by mathias rüegg is to write too much stuff – or, at least, more than less. For practical reasons, he prefers, as an example, to write too many backgrounds and to cut some out when rehearsing than to write not enough. Of course, it is way easier to tell the third and fourth trombones not to play a part than it is to tell them to play a part which is not written, or not written yet; or to find oneself in a situation where something does not work and have nothing to replace it with.

[27] Mathias rüegg is currently also a teacher at the Institut für Popularmusik, which is a branch of the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Wien.

However, one also has to think in terms of practicality. If one wants to tour with a band, it is not enough to write flawless music, one also has to compose music which can be played at 17:00 in a concert hall as well as at 2:00 in a jazz festival and music which the musicians will still have fun with and be motivated to play after 40 times.

A good way to do so is to compose in terms of programs rather than in terms of single compositions.

A very important aspect, when it comes to the work of mathias rüegg, is the ever-growing importance of the project or the program throughout time. This was taken to another level in 1992, when he "decided a concert must have a dramaturgical bow", just like we teach composers a musical piece must have.[28] This made it very difficult for him to command other music than his own since he had to be very specific about what kind of musical pieces he wanted for the band if he didn't want to end up with "ten up-tempo tunes with tenor saxophone [solos]."

This is one of the reasons nothing much was changing during the tour of a program, so not to interfere with the dramaturgical bow[29]; but this doesn't mean there never have been any changes at all during a tour. Sometimes, the order of the show could be revised at the last minute in reaction to what would have been played just before them. In these cases, there were even sometimes arguments between mathias and the band, but after mathias having been proved right a few times, the band learned to let him decide what is best for it without complains. However, most of the time, when a program was set and rehearsed, it would be played as planned for the whole duration of the tour.

"The balance of a big band is genius. It's perfect."

One of the formations of predilection for mathias rüegg is the big band. For ten years he has been working with this formation. It made him able to go acoustic, which he liked a lot. But unfortunately, after ten years, he started having ear problems and, since he

[28] Mathias rüegg was particularly prolific in this domain. He wrote from one up to three of those programs each year.

[29] As we will later see, another reason for him to be inflexible with every program was his knowing of his musicians and the difference between jazz and classical musicians in a rehearsal context.

evaluated he was also running out of inspiration for this formation, he turned the band into some kind of chamber orchestra with jazz soloists.

Having jazz soloists playing over a chamber orchestra formation is one thing, but what happens when the solos must be performed by classical musicians? To be sure everything would sound right, mathias rüegg would write the solos himself; but he did not stop there. He actually wrote different solo possibilities for the players to perform, mostly by heart.

This has to be somehow hard for the performers to deliver well, since they not only have to learn one solo but several possibilities of solos and be able to switch from one to the other without problem.

This is a method he also brought to more classical pieces. As an example, he showed the author a trio for piano, violin and cello in which there were many passages offering more than just one possibility of interpretation, sometimes up to three options per instrument for every instrument. In those cases, the interpreters do not have to learn all of the options by heart, since it would be almost inhuman to do so.

This also means loads of work for mathias rüegg himself. Not only does he have to conceptualize and compose twice or three times more solos than one would normally have to, not only does he have to make sure everything fits together whatever option any musician chooses to interpret, but, since he always writes every chart by hand, it also means a lot more copying job.

“I write all the charts by myself, handwritten. I always write funny stuff in it.”

Perhaps, this is why he writes so many comments and jokes on his charts. It’s hard to find a hand-written chart by rüegg with no comment on it whatsoever. It could be little comments like “Did you ever think about that?” or “Why are contemporary pieces always so hard to understand?” as well as dirty jokes or a newspaper article he found interesting and thinks could also catch the interest of the musician.

Another thing he likes to do to catch the musician’s attention (or just to make him laugh), is to change the titles. For example, depending on the origin of the player, *An der*

schönen blauen Donau[30] can become *On the Blue Rhine* or *À la Rhone Bleue*. Of course, to do those jokes, the composer has to know exactly who is playing which chart[31], but it must bring a sense of proximity between the player and the composer, proximity which we have seen lacking so many times in other bands!

This is another very important aspect in mathias rüegg's relation with the Vienna Art Orchestra: he knows his players and writes specifically for them. This means, when he writes a chart for – let's say – the second tenor saxophone, this is not just a chart for any second tenor, it is a chart written specifically for THIS saxophonist.

He realizes there are many different types of tenor[32] players and it is important to give the right chart to the right type of player, especially when it comes to solos, or else "it never really works. So this is important."

"The history of large ensembles was always the story of the leader. And […] you know the musicians if you are a good leader. And you know what they need."

In his mind, a good leader should be able to know how to musically feed his musicians, he should know firsthand what it means to be soloing and give everyone what he needs, what could motivate, inspire him to do the best solo he is capable of; because as a composer or arranger, one has to share the responsibility and the success of the music one writes half and half. "50 percent is you and 50 percent is the soloist. And this is very important."

This does not mean one cannot impose himself as a composer to the musicians and soloists. For example, in the program entitled *Duke Ellington's Sound of Love*, rüegg arranged the piece *Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue* with a 27 choruses long solo in it. At first, no one in the band wanted to play this solo, being depressed the whole day when one knew he would be the one to play it at night. But one year later, by the end of the tour, "they all wanted to sell the right to play the solo on the tune, because everybody wanted to

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[30] Literally, "At the Beautiful Blue Danube" – or *The Blue Danube*, as it is usually called in English.

[31] Actually, it happened a few times for musicians to think they did not have the correct chart when the band playing the composition/arrangement was not the one the charts were originally written for.

[32] We use the example of the tenor player because this is the example which was given in the interview, but, of course, this theory applies to every musician, whichever instrument he plays.

play the 27 choruses." This has to be a good indication the composer is somehow doing a good job!

Another sign which indicates he has done a good job is when some musicians play the whole program by heart. According to mathias rüegg, "if musicians play a program by heart, it means that [what they have to play] makes sense. […] Because if not, they would never memorize it, if it's written against the music."

In his mind, musicians have an excellent sense of musical intuition. As soon as they play something once, they will almost instantly know if it can sound or not, whatever the difficulty level of the musical fragment. But when it came to the Vienna Art Orchestra, most of the times, it would be mathias himself who would decide to cut some parts, because he would very quickly realize what and where the mistake was, even before the musicians.

"I prefer to hear written music well played much more than a bad improvisation."

When it comes to the subject of freedom within the Vienna Art Orchestra repertoire, none have more than the soloists. These are the ones who get the real freedom and the challenges which come with it. This is no surprise. The orchestra always had immensely talented soloists of whom mathias rüegg always took advantage. In fact, with time "practically every tune turned into a concerto for soloist and orchestra, like in a classic sense."

In these concertos, the soloists are usually completely free: "I wrote a symphonic piece and then, Matthieu Michel, he just had to play over it, no indication. […] This is, in a way, free improvisation. It's a free improvisation over very complicated structure, but the soloist is completely free."

Other examples of freedom or free improvisation in the Vienna Art Orchestra's repertoire can be found in those musical interludes between (or within) pieces when doing a live performance. In those cases, mathias rüegg would decide a line-up of two or three people to play together, give them the mood and time and then, would let them play whatever they would want without intervention by the conductor or the orchestra.

Of course, in those cases, the freedom of the musicians would still be limited because of what was played before and after their free interludes, since the goal of those interludes was to create a relation between themes and structures, or simply to be an introduction for what was coming up. Therefore, the mood had to be right, so to keep certain coherence within the program.

As an example, the indications could have been "no longer than five minutes and, […] at the end, […] this [would be] like an up-tempo or whatever. So this was fixed but then they could do actually completely whatever."

Another way for rüegg to decide the character of those free interventions without really imposing anything to the musicians themselves would be by deciding the lineup. Knowing his musicians as well as he did, he would know what to expect by pretty much every lineup possible and, therefore, could decide who to choose within the possibilities the Vienna Art Orchestra offered him for the result to match his musical expectations.

Another aspect of free improvisation – if one can call it so – is the cues he used to give the band at the time of its first appearances. In those days, there would be specific sounds played by the orchestra whenever cued by the conductor. There also would be principles of following the conductor's movements.

However, as the band evolved, there would gradually be fewer jazz musicians left, which means fewer musicians who had the ability – or desire – to improvise, whether by themselves or as a group.

Mathias rüegg didn't see this as a problem, but rather as an opportunity. Since he always enjoyed the act of composition, "this was a good reason [for him] to compose structures, to compose melodies and to compose ideas in a different way." In a sense, one might say having fewer jazzmen in the orchestra is one of the main reasons mathias rüegg became such a prolific and experienced composer.

Another reason he gradually narrowed freedom in his compositions to just a few aspects is, as we have seen earlier, the importance of the dramaturgical bow in his work. Leaving aspects of music to the musician's free will means taking a risk of tempering with this dramaturgical bow. As he says himself, "this dramaturgical bow works exactly the way it is planned; and it does not allow anything else, because then, sadly, if this is too long, then the tension gets lost and then this does not work anymore. […] This was the

reason I sacrificed this other system which always ends up in a way in which things are too long and the tension does not work anymore."

"Actually, I don't like to conduct at all."

For mathias rüegg, the fun in music does not reside in conducting the band on stage, or even hearing the music; what he prefers is the conception of the programs and getting everything right. "I like to rehearse. You know, I like to bring everything on a top level, and then I like not to conduct. Then I like to hang around on stage and do just that."

He did sometimes just conduct the work of others, but not very often. And even when he did, he would sometimes change some aspects of the music he would conduct, most of the time to the great satisfaction of the composers being interpreted.

However, when everything has reached this top level, the main concern for the conductor should be to get the right tempi. That should be the ultimate challenge for whoever is conducting a band, according to Mr. rüegg.

This aspect might be even more difficult for him, since he conducts everything completely by heart. This does mean he has to learn everything – or at least all the important points and cues of the program – by heart. Since he sometimes writes some difficult or *out* music, as he says himself, he tries, as a composer, to keep a mathematical order; to write things "in a way which, for the conductor is easy to memorize."

In his mind, this added difficulty is completely worth the troubles it might bring. First of all, he does not like how a stand looks on the stage and the fact that the conductor must show his behind to the public the whole time. Second, not being tied to a stand means you can manage not to hide anybody when the focus is supposed to be on them. Third, a conductor which can move around on stage can give better cues to the musicians who really need it, since not every musician needs every cue all the time.

He also tends to conduct less and less with time. This is true for the long run as well as from a shorter perspective. He conducts much less at the end of a tour than at the beginning and he also conducts generally less today than 30 years ago.

"So actually, I conducted with the lights."

There was even a show[33] in which he was simply not on stage and was taking care of the lights himself, since there were so many complicated light cues. Therefore, he was giving the cues by turning the musicians and the stage lamps on and off. This anecdote is a little less surprising coming from mathias rüegg than it would be coming from another composer or conductor, since for him, the visual aspect has always been very important; it even became something like an artistic obsession almost as important as the music itself at the beginning of the 90s.[34]

This is the reason why, after every rehearsal, the day before a concert, he would work with the light technician to make sure all the light cues were understood and ready. The lights, just as the music, were an essential part of this famous dramaturgical bow rüegg insists so much on.

This visual aspect is also the reason why every soloist had to learn his solo(s) by heart, because mathias "did not allow any player to play a solo with a music stand. That does not exist. It has not existed since ten years. Everybody who is there [in the solo spot] has to play by heart."

These two aspects, musical and visual, have been interlinked in every program of the Vienna Art Orchestra for the major part of its existence; and the public and the critics seemed to be pleased by this, or at least the great majority of them, since it is simply impossible to please everyone and every critic at the same time.

One thing mathias rüegg found out very soon about the critics is that they do not seem to see the same show the same way. "If you have a French jazz magazine and a German jazz magazine, you think: 'We don't speak about the same music.' […] Which critic do you want to satisfy? Maybe the one from *Downbeat*[35]or rather the one from your local town?"

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[33] *Fe & Males*, 1991. A show performed by two septets, one composed of women and one composed of men, both on the stage at the same time.

[34] Actually, mathias rüegg pinpoints this very moment as the *La Belle et la Bête* production, in 1992.

[35] *Downbeat* is an American magazine devoted to "jazz, blues and beyond" based in Chicago, Illinois, founded in 1934 by Albert J. Lipschultz.

Consequently, he very early learned to appreciate the critics for what they bring to an artist: “The critics show you your market value, point.” He found out pretty early that they “are actually not really writing about your music. They [are] writing about politics.” Realizing this, he also realizes the Vienna Art Orchestra, at its beginning, “satisfied some kind of cliché” they wanted and this is part of the reason why the orchestra was so successful. Since then, just as he worked on finding the right balance between what he would like to compose and what motivates his musicians, he also realized he has to find the right balance between being satisfied with himself and the business.

Musicians according to mathias rüegg

As mentioned earlier, it is important for mathias rüegg to have a great relation with his musicians. He shares the merits of his compositions with them and tries to feed them what they need in order to perform. He also writes for every musician and soloist specifically, which is why there were practically never any substitute musicians in the Vienna Art Orchestra.

One also has to understand the psychology of musicians in general and the differences between a jazz and a classical musician. According to mathias rüegg, there are two major differences: focus and improvisation/reading.

Jazzmen lack focus. “If you work with classical musicians, you say [something] once, nobody speaks and they got it forever. In a jazz context, first, you have to say it five times until everybody understands it; and then you have to play it ten times until everybody really does it. I don’t know where it comes from, but it’s like that.” This is one of the reasons why, when a program has been rehearsed and everything works fine, mathias will practically never try to make any changes to it. It would prove to be very hard, if not impossible.

Also, in general, a jazz musician can improvise very well, but can be lacking some reading skills as, for a classical musician, it works the other way around. This does not mean one is better than the other. It is pretty hard to become a good classical player and it is just as hard to become a good jazz player, especially if you want to become a good – or even great – improviser.

In his mind, a great jazz improviser should know the vocabulary of every jazz style, including the free jazz vocabulary. For him, today, free jazz has become a style which a decent jazzman cannot ignore, just as it would not make sense for any jazz improviser not to know the bebop esthetics. "Free jazz is a historical direction like Dixieland or New Orleans. […] You have to know about that and you have to be able to use some sounds and things out of this time."

When it comes specifically to free jazz improvisation, one has to also have a great sense of the time passing. This is extremely difficult, but to be good at free improvisation, according to Mr. rüegg, a musician should be able to tell just for how long he has been playing, and fairly precisely; but only a few can. This is a problem with free jazz players.

Another problem with jazz players, in general, is, ironically, that they like to play! "Jazz musicians, in the end, they just want to play of course. […] They want to play a super solo and for the rest they do not really care in general." But once again, instead of taking this fact as a problem, mathias saw that as an opportunity. This is why, in the Vienna Art Orchestra, practically every jazzman is a great improviser and has, almost every show, a nice opportunity to show it with so many pieces being built as an almost-concerto.

However, a good musician – and a good artist in general – should simply focus on doing his job right and not try to reinvent the wheel. "It is already difficult enough to change the art, but if an artist thinks he has to change the world, he can't be a good artist."

A musical director also has to be conscious certain musicians work better with some than with others. This is why, when one finds a good combination of musicians, he should keep it. In the Vienna Art Orchestra, such smaller lineups often played together when the musical circumstances were demanding it.[36]

These were the times when the musicians could let themselves go and play whatever pleased them. "In 2002, I did a first set, 25 minutes, and every night there was another lineup. […] Everybody could do what [they] wanted." This didn't mean necessarily free jazz; it just meant they could play what they wanted, whatever it was.

"I would not call free jazz open-minded in general."

[36] Such as those introductions to certain pieces and the musical interludes between pieces mentioned earlier.

For mathias rüegg, being open-minded goes beyond free jazz and its derivatives and the world of music and musicians is no different than the rest of the world. In both cases, open-mindedness is somehow hard to find. "If you find 15% of the population who is open-minded then it's already much. I would say bellow 10%, but it's the same thing with the musicians in the end."

He makes the same comparison between the general population and the music community in general – and the improvising community in particular – when it comes to leaders and followers. "It's a social question in the end. There are always people who are dominant; there are people who cannot listen, who are not able to listen for example, so, others can…".

However, he somehow thinks this proportion, when it comes to music, classic and jazz, might be a little higher in America than in Europe. He explains that fact because the relation Europeans have with tradition might be very different than the one the Americans have.

He also thinks today's younger generation is more open-minded than his as well. "Today's generation, let's say people between 17 and 25, are more open-minded in a way because they are not ideological." Since this generation is not using music as a way to change things in society, to make a political or a social stand, they are able to just like or dislike, enjoy or be bored by any kind of music. They are not expected to like or dislike any specific kind of music simply because it's the right thing to do.

He does agree it is more difficult to find loads of young musicians to, let's say, organize a free jazz workshop as it was in the 70s or 80s, but this does not mean the musicians are not open-minded. As we have seen before, in his opinion, free jazz is now just a style in history, exactly like any other.

He also realizes there are more musicians today, especially among the younger generation, than 30 years ago, but not many of them make or will make great musicians. As he says: "Today, you have ten times more musicians, but on the top level, you don't have more than in the 80s."

So one could think it would be fairly hard to find the right musician to fill an empty spot in the Vienna Art Orchestra. Not only does the musician need to be a "top level" player, but he also needs to like playing in a section, be caring about the sound, be able to

read (more or less), like to travel and last, but not least, be able to play something very individual. When one thinks about it, it is not easy to find any "top level" musician who also has all of these qualities/specifications, but somehow, mathias rüegg managed to always find exactly the one right-fitted for the job.

Then again, he did not have to search very often for newcomers. Taking the longevity of the band in consideration, the staff of the Vienna Art Orchestra did not fluctuate much. Many players stayed in the band for over ten years. Matthieu Michel and Andy Scherrer stayed with the band for 17 years. Harry Sokal joined the band at its very beginning in 1977 and stayed with it practically for its whole existence (33 years), taking only a four years break at some point.

Considering this very long and intimate relation between the musicians and the band, one can easily understand why it has been so hard emotionally for every player to leave the Vienna Art Orchestra. "For every musician, there was something like an emotional ending because, I think whenever someone played in the Art Orchestra, he was very much involved in a certain way. So he really gave a lot."

When people did have to leave the band, it was practically never because of an artistic difference. As mathias rüegg says himself: "They trusted me and they said: 'Whatever he does, I will follow him.'" This was a nice leap of faith from the musicians, especially since life on the road with the Vienna Art Orchestra was rather demanding, particularly when it came to rehearsals.

Every day before a concert, there would be a full sound and full light rehearsal, so to be sure everything was in order for the following show. These rehearsals would start at 12:00, so the rhythm section had to be there at 10:00 and the saxophones and brasses had to be there at 11:00 to make sure everybody was ready to play at precisely 12:00. The rehearsal would last as long as it would need to and no one would need to leave the room, because mathias rüegg always had someone hired just to take care of everything any musician might need, like coffee, cigarettes, lunch, etc.

"I never rehearsed in Vienna."

This "on the road" discipline was starting even before the actual tour. Since there never were any weekly rehearsals with the band, they would only practice five or six days before the tour started and it was very important for mathias rüegg for these rehearsals not to take place in Vienna because "half of the musicians are coming from Vienna. If you are rehearsing in Vienna, […] then you have to go to mama, you have to do this, you have to go to the dentist, no! Rehearsals started like: you had packed your things like you had to be on tour and you don't have to think of anything else, you have no girlfriend, no nobody, no nothing. You are already on tour. And you have nothing to do but rehearse."

Those before-tour rehearsals were very intense. They would sometimes last over nine hours and nobody would leave the room within these nine hours. There would be ten minutes breaks every 50 minutes and just one longer break to eat, which would last between 30 and 45 minutes, but since everything was taken care of for the musicians, such short breaks would be enough for them to do what they needed without losing focus on the rehearsal itself.

In many of those rehearsals, mathias would divide the band in three – the rhythm section, the brasses and the saxophones – and he would rehearse with the rhythm section. The other two sections would rehearse on their own and they would meet near the end of the rehearsal to put everything together. During the sectional parts of the rehearsal, there would be no designated leader for any section except rüegg himself for the rhythm section; every other section worked as a group.

Then, as mentioned earlier, after the musical part of the rehearsal would be over, Mr. rüegg would work with the light technician to check out all of the light cues.

At some point[37], this way of rehearsing five to six days before going on tour changed. Mathias decided to record the CD before going on tour, so it could sell better. From that point on, since the heavy rehearsals had already been done before the studio recording[38], he could organize rehearsals for just a couple of days before going on the road and still have the top level quality of playing he was expecting from his band.

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[37] Mathias rüegg says it started with the *Big Band Poesie* project, in 2004.

[38] The recording was taking place about six months before the actual tour.

"Everything needs time. That's the difference between a project and a band."

The Vienna Art Orchestra has been widely recognized as one of the tightest, most homogeneous big bands of the planet. We have seen many reasons for this, among which the strict rehearsals, mathias's knowledge of what to write to make everybody sound as good as possible and the raw talent of his well-selected musicians, but two other aspects are not to be forgotten: longevity and stability.

As mathias rüegg says himself: "A leading band or an orchestra is not a project, because it's living. And when you make something once, you know, it's always a project. But in a project, you can never find out; it never goes to the substance. It always stays on the surface because music needs time in general; especially for a larger orchestra. So music needs time."

"Traveling for big band has become more or less impossible."

As mentioned earlier, mathias rüegg thinks the big band formation is, along with the symphonic orchestra, one of the most perfect acoustic formations ever put together, even though he had to quit writing and conducting this formation because of ear problems and lack of inspiration after such a long time.

However, in his mind, the era of the professional big bands might be something of the past, since, nowadays, not many producers are willing to pay the price it costs to invite a big band from out of town to perform. "The organizers say: 'We want to have 20 guys on stage, so we take the cheapest ones; we take it from our town and so on.' But for the professional bands, it's not very good."

This is probably the main reason he dismantled the Vienna Art Orchestra. "I saw that the touring stuff does not work anymore." So at some point, he was left with some options: give the orchestra for free, have the Vienna Art Orchestra become a local big band[39] and play when the opportunity arises or simply dismantle the band. He could not accept to let

[39] Or a "Monday big band", as he calls them, because they rehearse every week, very often on Mondays.

his band go for less than what he thinks it was worth, especially since he had his musicians get used to some more than respectful salaries[40] and he was simply not interested in becoming a local band, therefore, dismantling the band was the only respectable option left.

"The Vienna Art Orchestra was always the only really international big band."

Today, he realizes there are many more big bands than there used to be 30 years ago, "but on a total amateur sector. I mean not for the playing, but you know, you meet once a week, you play every Monday – there are hundreds of Monday orchestras – everybody gets, I don't know, 40 Euros, or 25 or 30, so it's on a total amateur level, which effect is that pretty much every festival can present a local big band."

In his mind, taking the economic perspective in the balance, there might never be another band like the Vienna Art Orchestra, composed of so much talent from all over the world. "Throughout the years, I guess I had nine or ten different nations. […] It was also a meeting point for musicians and the first language was always English and the second was French and so on, so it was always really international. And the habits changed, you know, so you could meet people from another culture and so on."

Free improvisation according to mathias rüegg

As we have seen earlier, mathias rüegg has a long history with free improvisation. As a young musician, in 1971, he focused solely on this mode of expression for two years. He then, at some point, thought it leaded nowhere and decided to start studying jazz seriously. As he says himself: "I started first with classic music, then I played rock music, then I played free jazz, so actually only jazz was left!"

He is very conscious free jazz is a hard thing to play. Not only a musician should have the technique, vocabulary and ideas to entertain the audience, he also has to know by instinct for how long he has been doing so.

[40] He mentions he paid every one of his musicians 30,000 Euros for a three months tour in 2007.

What is hard to do alone becomes exponentially harder when more and more people join in. "Alone, it works in a way, because you know your own vocabulary and… it's more difficult with two people, with three it's even more and even more. […] And, if you are more people, you have to think."

He even tried to do such a thing as to try total free collective improvisation with the Vienna Art Orchestra, and this experience proved to be a failure. "I tried it once and, it was a kind of experiment. […] I said: 'Let's try to do one collective piece, like twenty minutes long, and I just give a two bars ostinato to the bass player and let's try to build it up over twenty minutes.' No way. […] After five minutes, everybody played fortissimo like hell and we couldn't keep it."

What he thinks it needs in order not to become so chaotic is structure; because otherwise, it always leads to the same point. However, structures need work and mathias rüegg's experience with musicians lead him to think that, in general, people who are free improvisers don't like to work too much.

This is also a principle he tries to teach his students. He makes them do an exercise where three or four musicians are playing a simple and soft cantilena over which five girl vocalists improvise freely.[41] This way, it gives some very basic structure to the exercise and brings perspective to it. "I use this thing because it gives a certain identity and it sounds different then if they just improvise collectively, […] it gives a kind of identification."

"I think that, in general, the meaning of the word improvisation is much overrated for me."

Mathias rüegg insists they "never really did free improvisation in the Vienna Art Orchestra. […] I mean… there were always free parts, but the quality of the orchestra was actually we tried to play very tight." It did happen, especially at the beginning of the band, but as we saw, he gradually left this aspect of music to focus on the dramaturgical bow of the programs he wrote.

[41] He also did these kinds of exercises with his choir when he was conducting one.

However, when he did work with free improvisation, he would not work ON it. This was – and still is – one of mathias rüegg's philosophies when it comes to free improvisation. He would not do any improvisation workshop or anything in those lines with his musicians. He would not even normally rehearse the free parts of a program, because he would not want to spoil the first, the most spontaneous idea the musicians could come up with. What he would do, would be to work on the structure and spend a considerable amount of time explaining what he wants to the musicians, but would not let them play too much, so the spontaneity would not suffer. "Every time you rehearse, already one idea is lost. […] All such Dadaistic happenings, they must also be surprising for the musicians themselves. If it gets to be a routine, it's not that funny anymore."

So in the end and over time, the free elements in the Vienna Art Orchestra's repertoire got limited to either just some parameters, some interludes or introductions between or before pieces and the solos.

However, when it comes to the solos, the freedom could be almost total. Sometimes the soloist would not have any chart or score to guide him throughout the piece; no indication whatsoever. Soloists would just listen to the piece a couple of times and record their solo over it in studio.

The other occasion where people could do almost what they wanted was those interludes and introductions. In these cases, as we have seen, mathias rüegg would only let small formations, mostly constituted of two or three musicians, take care of this part. However, even in these cases, the musicians would have to consider mathias's indications concerning the mood, tempo and time and they would have to aim at their final destination, which was the beginning of the next piece or theme.

To influence the music without influencing the musicians too much, mathias rüegg also had a hidden card: just by choosing the lineup, he already had an idea of the final result, without being completely sure of what this result would be. This is what we call calculated risk and many times, this is what free improvisation, whether it is collective or not, is all about.

CHAPTER III
Barry Guy: the improvisation architect

Barry John Guy was born in London in 1947. He has been an important figure of the improvisation scene for over 45 years[42] as a double bass player, but is also recognized as a performer, composer and conductor in the fields of early music, contemporary music, jazz and, of course, improvisation. He is well-known for putting together the London Jazz Composers Orchestra and the Barry Guy New Orchestra.

"Whether it's from text, whether it's from painting, whether it's from architecture, there is a sense for me of wonderment about the ability of human beings to organize things in beautiful ways."

Before having a successful musical career, Barry Guy studied and worked in the field of architecture. This is probably what led him to his musical fascination with structure and the occupation of space, physically and temporally. He wanted to understand what makes a building stand up and stay up, what preserves its integrity and prevents it from collapsing under its own weight. Of course, the principles he discovered found their way into his compositional approach.

One of the first times he ever thought of music in these terms was when he first heard of Monteverdi's early use of stereophony in the *Marian Vespers of 1610*.[43] In this religious musical work composed over 400 years ago, Monteverdi makes use of two choirs which many believe would be placed in different locations within the church where it would be performed. To Barry Guy, this was a revelation as well as a confirmation that space in

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[42] Barry Guy's first recording was *Withdrawal (1966-7)*, Emanem 4020. Spontaneous Music Ensemble, 1966/1967.

[43] *Vespro della Beata Vergine 1610*; SV 206 and 206A. Literally translated *Vespers of the Blessed Virgin, 1610*, but commonly referred to as the *Marian Vespers of 1610*, this major work by Monteverdi is believed to be what got him the job of *maestro di capella* in Venice's St-Marc Basilica in 1613. It is known to be the most ambitious piece of liturgical music before Bach's work. There are no historical records to prove if Monteverdi ever conducted the piece in Venice.

music could refer to more than just a temporal approach, a way of referring to how one makes use of the time allotted for building a musical structure. Space could also mean an actual physical area to fill musically as one sees fit, with sound being produced in one specific place, in another place or in both places at the same time – and these places do not necessarily have to be fixed.

The understanding and the use of space to its fullest is an ongoing and lifelong quest in Barry Guy's mind. He spends a lot of work trying to understand how to interact with and within it, but when it works, it's worth all the effort.

He compares this approach to musical space to the art of painting and the use the painter makes of space provided to him on the canvas. Moreover, he tries to be surrounded by paintings as much as possible. The refreshing properties of color and structure found in paintings, especially abstract paintings, is something which influences his thoughts when composing.

In the early 70s, influenced by Michael Mantler's and Carla Bley's New York based Jazz Composers' Orchestra[44], Barry Guy founded a British version of it: the London Jazz Composers Orchestra, which was composed of the best musicians the British free jazz scene of the late 60s could provide.

Originally put up to play one of his imposing compositions, *Ode*, Barry Guy chose this name with a naïve hope that Michael Mantler's band and his own could exchange scores and have them played by their respective bands. Of course, this never happened since, at the time, Barry Guy did not even know how to get in contact with Michael Mantler. So, in a way, the name of the ensemble was meant as a tribute to the New York version of it, but it also meant what it meant: the group consisted mainly of composer-musicians and Barry Guy thought they would all chip in when it came to the repertoire.

Even though the band has been active on – and many times at the very front of – the musical scene for over 35 years, at the time this article was written, their last performance was now over five years old. This is not due to a lack of interest from Guy or his musicians; it is simply due to a lack of opportunities to go around touring with such a large

[44] The Jazz Composer's Orchestra was an American jazz band created in 1965. Michael Mantler and Carla Bley were probably the most influential members of the orchestra when it came to the artistic direction of the project, but many well renowned jazz musicians also contributed to the group. Their last recorded performance dates from 1975. See chapter 7, p. 124.

ensemble.[45] In his mind, the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra is still active and given the opportunity, he could put the band back together at a moment's notice.

As mentioned earlier, the Orchestra's first recording and original reason for existing was *Ode*: a piece of symphonic proportions where he first attempted (and succeeded) bringing improvised music and monumental structure together. In Barry Guy's career, this is surely a turning point; there is a before and an after *Ode*.

Strongly influenced by Buxton Orr who was Guy's composition teacher at the time, this masterpiece is a great mix of improvisation and written music or, as he presents it himself: "a scenario of free and ordered space." *Ode* was an original and efficient solution to the problems studied at the time by people like Michael Mantler in the USA and Alexander von Schlippenbach in Germany: a fusion between written orchestral composition and improvisation in a free jazz style approach. Ekkehard Jost presents it as "the most successful attempt at a combination of orchestral writing and free jazz improvisation in the surrounding of year 1970."[46] The degree of musical and compositional maturity Barry Guy demonstrated with *Ode* could, at the time, perhaps only be matched by Michael Mantler's and Carla Bley's Jazz Composer's Orchestra.

The written parts provide the improvisers with the needed material to develop their improvisations, whether this improvisation takes the form of a featured solo or of a group jam. The arrangement seems to constantly renew itself by means of constant textural and dynamic changes. The written parts can even sometimes be as dense and as intense as the busiest collective free improvisations.

But as the composer admits itself, *Ode* also had its fare share of challenges when it came to the performance part. One of its main logistic problems – among others – resided in the temporal notation the conductor had to use for the improvisers to follow him. Time was presented in a chronological form instead of the usual metric one and this gave the musicians hard times.

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[45] Depending on the program, the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra may need to rely on more than twenty musicians. As we will further see, this proves to be a major inconvenient in today's artistic economy.

[46] Jost 1987, 317 (free translation).

Ode was a turning point in Barry Guy's career not only because it established him as one of the most accomplished composers in the world of free improvisation and gave the London Jazz Composers Orchestra a reason to be, but also because of what came after.

Following the success of *Ode*, Barry Guy's compositions became more and more complex and this brought its load of tensions within the band. These tensions ultimately lead to Barry Guy leaving the band altogether.

According to Guy's analysis, a big part of what led to this situation has to do with him assuming everybody could read music at his level when it was clearly not the case. Even though he was already in a state of mind where he was trying to clarify his musical objectives, with his music becoming more and more complex and the musicians becoming more and more specific about what each of them wanted to play, the breakout seemed unavoidable.

If he could do it all over again and with the experience he has today, Barry Guy might try to write something which would lead to similar musical results, but with another approach concerning the musical notation. Fortunately, he learned a lot from the entire experience and not only did this situation never present itself again with another group, but it also prepared him for his triumphant return at the helm of the London Jazz Composers Orchestra for conducting and composing in the 1980s. Meanwhile, if it had not been for Buxton Orr who almost miraculously kept the band together, the orchestra might not have survived for Barry Guy's return.

When questioned about the history of the London Jazz Composers Orchestra, Barry Guy always describes it as having gone through three distinct phases[47]:

1. 1972-1976: A research phase trying to find efficient ways of bringing together written composition and free improvisation. *Ode* is, without any doubt, the best and most successful realization concerning this musical philosophy.
2. From 1978 up to the mid 80s: A phase during which other musicians than Barry Guy (musicians like Tony Oxley, Howard Riley, Paul Rutherford and Kenny Wheeler) contributed to the repertoire of the band with their own compositions or musical concepts.

[47] This can be put in relation with another very influential larger formation on the European free jazz scene: the Globe Unity Orchestra which, in its debuts, started with very structured written music, then went through a very free period before finding good balance between these two techniques.

3. From 1987 on[48]: The musical formation modifies itself due to some older members leaving the group while having new musicians joining it, as well as reaching a certain maturity concerning musical writing.[49]

From this third phase on, Barry Guy speaks of the band as being essentially an ensemble of soloists, mostly because of their extraordinary competence in this matter and of the pieces structures designed to put these individual skills forward.

"I'm really working on the presentation of the graphic score to, in a way, portray the music."

Another crucial event in Barry Guy's journey as a composer was when he had to fill a command in 1992 in which everything had to stand on two pages and live adjustments could be made to fit the soloist's improvisation. This led to *Bird Gong Game*, the piece which introduced graphic elements into Guy's compositional work.

The piece may be compared to a conversation between three interlocutors: the soloist, the ensemble and the conductor. It was conceptualized so that if the soloist stopped playing, the music director could make the ensemble play group music. On the other hand, if he thought the soloist needed more space, he could silence part of the ensemble to provide him that space. If the soloist started playing in a ballad style, there were enough modules to provide him an appropriate musical background, or to lead him in another direction.[50]

To do so, he had to seriously reflect on a way to truly mix improvisation and written music. He had to figure a way to please Alan Davie, the one who commanded this piece, and the five musicians in the group Davie imposed him. As we saw, Guy found the solution to this problem in the use of graphic elements in his music, but also in the use of

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[48] This phase started with a performance of the band at the Zurich's Kulturzentrum Rote Fabrik (Red Factory Culture Center).

[49] *Harmos* and *Polyhymnia* can be considered as good examples of this musical writing maturity.

[50] This is not unlike John Zorn's musical games, of which *Cobra* is the most famous and accomplished. "Cobra *is like the sum total of working with these games.*" (Zorn in Bailey 1992, 76) For more information on *Cobra*'s concepts and rules, see Bailey 1992, pp.76, 77.

flashcards to conduct the ensemble.[51] Although he used this flashcards technique in many of his subsequent graphic pieces, this will not become an immutable law and some of them will not require any card at all.

"I'm very interested in graphics and that comes probably from the architectural days. I like to see good graphics and I feel comfortable with that."

This whole experience gave Barry Guy a reason to get back to his drawing board and to somehow relive his architectural days in terms of drawing and structural approach. He enjoyed the experience so much, this event marked the beginning of a prolific graphical compositions period for him. To this day, his repertoire includes over twenty graphic scores, each addressing a different approach in terms of musical creation.

Since *Bird Gong Games* was a command from Alan Davie and since Alan Davie is a painter himself, it seemed natural for Barry Guy to get inspired by Davie's art for his graphic score.

Very often, Davie will use ancient symbols representing concepts of sexual fantasies or spiritual quests in his paintings. Therefore, Guy used some of the most recurrent symbols in his graphic score and on the flashcards he uses to conduct. These symbols will eventually become recurrent in his own work, since they can be found in some of his other graphic scores, like *Witch Gong Game*.

One cannot expound on the graphic scores of Barry Guy without mentioning their pure aesthetic beauty. He dedicates a lot of energy and attention on their presentation and beauty not only on the musical level, but also on their layout, their fonts. He possesses several books regarding beautiful graphics and therefore reads a lot on this topic.

The resulting graphics are simply amazing. Many people, including the author of this text, own reproductions of these graphic scores to hang on their walls. A considerable portion of these people cannot even read music, but own and exhibit them simply because they consider it as visual art and, to some extent, it indisputably is.

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[51] This flashcards technique was also used by other composers during this period, including, among others, Alexander von Schlippenbach and, a bit later, John Zorn with his musical games.

“I like to keep this idea of flexible music as part of the compositional procedure.”

As so many other composers dealing with improvisation, Barry Guy’s composition’s process and philosophy vary depending on the situation, the musical context and, naturally, the number of musicians. The compositional procedure will be different whether he has to deal with a solo piece, something for a small band or a composition for a large ensemble. The degree of freedom will also vary from a formation to another.

For instance, when playing alone, the form will very frequently consist in a head or theme followed by a solo, so a classic jazz structure. In these cases, the proportion between composition and improvisation is basically equal, 50% composed music and 50% improvisation. He likes to have some sort of idea of what he will play before he gets on stage, the great lines of the journey he wants to take the audience on. Once this is decided, he can always adjust live to his own music, depending on the moment’s inspiration and general mood.

On the other hand, there are times where none of the above rules apply, he will simply pick up his bass and play whatever comes to his mind, but this can be considered uncommon.

He also wrote solo pieces note for note, without any trace of improvisation whatsoever; however, this does not necessarily mean improvisation isn’t welcome. For example, Celebration, Inachis and Aglais are three solo pieces he wrote for Maya Homburger, but he frequently joins her on stage and improvises freely on the double bass while she plays the written music on the violin.

“What I want to do is to have the improvisation come seamlessly out of the defined music. So that’s my compositional exercise, really.”

Barry Guy also has the habit of playing in and writing for small ensembles such as duos and trios. When it comes to these kinds of formations, the creation process varies from one association to another.

When it comes to his trio with Mats Gustafsson and Raymond Strid, the Tarfala Trio, the issue is simple: it's free improvisation from the start of the show to the end of it. This might sound a bit simplistic as a concept, but the results speak for themselves. Furthermore, playing in a small ensemble such as a trio, especially without any written material is no easy task. It becomes incredibly important for the improvisers to continuously analyze the ongoing musical exchange. As a consequence, the musician must not only play notes, but also be aware of the road covered and how his interactions with his colleagues are evolving.

On the opposite, every member of the trio formed by Agusti Fernández, Ramón López and Barry Guy are composing for the ensemble. It is not automatically the kind of composition we usually think of when we think of a trio, but it is structured music nonetheless. For instance, Fernández's small compositions will not rely on truly concrete music, but rather on ideas or concepts.

The particular sound of some trios can be exploited in compositions for larger ensembles since every member of both the Tarfala and the Parker/Guy/Lytton trio are also members of the Barry Guy New Orchestra. However, if Guy chooses to exploit the sound of the Parker Trio in a free section, he needs to generate music which would justify the presence of the trio. To do so, he would try to operate a preparation in the score which would "elevate Evan Parker into the free space."[52]

The number of musicians isn't the only musical aspect which affects the degree of freedom left to the performers; the musical style is even more important. The closer to the classical music spectrum, the stricter the musical notation will become. For instance, Barry Guy once wrote a piece for a Swiss ensemble to which, of course, he asked the degree of freedom they would like for their piece and they answered they did not want any. Since that was not a problem for him, he just wrote a piece where every note, every articulation and every nuance is decided by the composer and the performers would only have to play the piece as accurately as possible.

At the time of the interview, Barry Guy was in the process of composing a significant piece which he considers to be a nice hybrid of the two approaches. It is a piece for three

[52] This technique of putting forward small musical groups within larger ones was also used by Alexander von Schlippenbach. In this case, Lothwesen compares it to musical islands (Lothwesen, 2009, 145).

voices and string orchestra in which two of the voices have utterly written parts while the other voice is completely improvised. Naturally in this case, the improvised part will be vastly influenced by the two written ones, but this is also a general rule: written music defines the character of the moment when freedom can express itself.

In that sense, he likes to work with musicians who move ahead with the freedom suggested in the score, since, due to the ideas they bring to the music, that music is never fix and the sense of wonder keeps coming back every time. Maybe the best way to understand this is by using Barry Guy's own analogy: it is like walking in a forest. The place is filled with trees and the musician has to use a path through those trees to keep going ahead. But at some point, he comes to a clearing, there are no more trees and the path is completely clear, one can go anywhere he pleases. Of course, the forest is the written music which will lead the player to the improvisation point, where he can play whatever he wants.

To get to that point, he can use a number of techniques. One of these is to start with something which is much defined and to make it become freer and freer until there is nothing more to say musically but to let the improviser be himself. Another technique he uses is to build up orchestral textures and complexities up to a very dense point and then go into a completely different direction, often with a solo.

Kai Lothwesen, in his book *Klang Struktur Konzept*, has put forward three of Barry Guy's most redundant musical writing techniques (Lothwesen, 2009, 175):

1. Clusters: It often happens for Guy to make use of consecutive tones and semitones within a given range as if it was very tight harmony. Sometimes, he will let his musicians choose within a given number of notes, imposing a given rhythm – or not![53]
2. Glissandi: This can be used as loop forms in which musicians are "sliding" down and up in a continuous motion within a given (precise or approximate) interval, or as a sliding motion in a determined direction (up or down) with a precise landing pitch.
3. Sound surfaces: These are either dazzling musical textures, characterized by obfuscating defined pitches by means of multiple possible processes, or selective

[53] As we have seen, the author also uses this technique, from time to time, in his compositions.

musical textures, characterized by small subgroups within the orchestra providing a given background musical colour.

Lothwesen also puts forward two recurrent rhythmical aspects in Guy's compositions (Lothwesen, 2009, 184):

1. Patterns: These are basically repetitions of small rhythmic motives, sometimes broken, sometimes having small silences between one another.
2. Topics: These are simply small rhythmic patterns, usually played at a fast pace.

Guy's graphic scores are also a way to get to the improvisation clearing. He defines them as simple depictions of precise musical articulations heading towards spaces open for improvisation, these spaces being open precisely because of what preceded them. He tries to anticipate what the musicians will play when they get to the free improvisation part instead of writing something which would basically tell the musicians to just play the music up to a point, and to just start improvising when that point is reached.

In other words, if he is to make use of a soloist improviser, he will write the music differently so to let the musician improvise. There are many ways to get there.

Graphic notation can also be used as an efficient way to ease the musician's job while still getting the musical result desired by the composer. For instance, if the composer wants to get a complex sonority consisting of staccato notes, he does not necessarily need to write down every single note; there is a good chance the musicians will lack the skills to read them anyway. For him, it is much more efficient to do a graphic representation of it and to briefly explain what he wants to the musicians.[54]

"I'm not a great fan of conduction, but everybody does it."

As we saw, Barry Guy sometimes uses flashcards to somehow give a certain direction to and gain a certain degree of control over some improvisations, but it always leaves a considerable amount freedom to the improvisers. This is very important for him. It is why

[54] In this approach, Barry Guy and Dieter Glawischnig seem to agree.

he never uses nor is he a big fan of conduction[55], although he is very conscious of the popularity of this technique in today's improvised music.

The way he sees it[56], if some improvisers or simply people consider composition as a somehow fascist gesture since the composer is giving orders around and every musical aspect depends only on one person's good will, this judgment should also apply to conduction. In his view, the whole concept should be somehow even harder to accept when being an improvising musician since conduction means the conductor is in charge of the entire available space the entire time.[57] At least when it comes to composition, by the means of articulations, tempi and breathing, the interpreter can take a little more liberty with the music than with conduction, where every aspect of music is decided live by only one person.

Naturally, in Barry Guy's music, the musical results of every interpretation depend greatly on the musicians' mood on the event, but there is another aspect coming into account; an aspect not many other players and composers take in consideration: difficulty of the score.

Over the years and through his experiences, Barry Guy came to realize that somehow, complex music can be complex plainly because the musical results would be different if the piece had been composed in a simpler way. Therefore, the difficulties caused by an intricate interpretation can generate a musical result which would have been different otherwise.

Of course, this all works in theory. In practice, he prefers not to follow this philosophy and to simplify things. This does not mean minimalistic music either; it simply implies he does not want his music to get so complex that musicians cannot read it anymore. A balance has to be found. Today, with the Barry Guy New Orchestra, the combination of his

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[55] Conduction is a group improvisation technique developed by Butch Morris. Consult CHAPTER V Butch Morris: conducting freedom (p. 82) for more details on the subject.

[56] Here, the author wants to insist on how respectful of Butch Morris and of conduction Mr. Guy has been in the interview. Therefore, this is in no sense a personal matter, but simply a professional point of view from a fellow composer and improviser.

[57] John Zorn seems to agree with Barry Guy: "*An improviser wants to have the freedom to do anything at any time. For a composer to give an improviser a piece of music which said, 'play these melodies – then improvise – then play with this guy – then improvise – then play this figure – then improvise', to me, that was defeating the purpose of what these people has developed, which was a very particular way of relating to their instruments and to each other*" (in Bailey 1992, 75-76).

music presentation evolution and his choice of musicians makes it possible, if not easy, for him to rapidly reach the musical goals he tries to reach.

In that perspective, he thinks many of his larger ensembles' recordings display a certain struggle from the band to manipulate the music, to carry out the piece. However, he does not mention whether this is a good or a bad thing in his view.

As we saw, the complexity of his writing was one of the factors leading to the tensions and ultimately to the breaking point between him and the London Jazz Composers Orchestra in the post-*Ode* era. Although he might be saying he would write his pieces differently today, Barry Guy is wise enough to realize the band had accomplished what it had to accomplish at the time. The music sounded as it did in part because of the way it was presented to the musicians. If he had to write it in a different way, it would probably sound completely different than it did and there is no way to know if the results wouldn't be catastrophic.

As a young composer at the time, his music was greatly influenced by his composition studies – so by Buxton Orr – but also by his favorite composers at the time, mainly Berio, the Polish composers and, perhaps mainly, Romanian composer Yannis Xenakis with whom he worked.[58] Xenakis, just as Guy, has also been an architect and composed music based on architectural concepts: *Metastasis*, an orchestral work entirely relying on mathematical processes, which were again used by Xenakis to conceptualize the curves of the Phillips pavilion for the 1958 Brussels universal exhibition.[59] This influence certainly had an impact on Barry Guy's way of presenting his music, the types of sonority and density he uses. Of course, since then, these musical figures lost most of their influence as he found his own voice and his own way of presenting his music, although it's a lifelong journey to find the most appropriate way to do so.

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[58] In *Klang Struktur Konzept*, Kai Lothwesen presents, on page 192, a very interesting chart analyzing parallels between Xenakis, Guy and his music.

[59] "It's his [Xenakis] relationship to architecture that's terribly important – architecture being one of my main subjects. Probably my library has more architecture books than music books." (Guy quoted in Marley, 1998, 47).

"If there is one thing I have learned over the years, it is to try to be as clear as possible. I haven't always managed it, but it's always a good goal, it's a good objective."

Today, with the Barry Guy New Orchestra, the combination of his music presentation evolution and his choice of musicians makes it possible, if not easy, for him to rapidly reach his musical goals, what he has in mind; but it did not happen overnight. Throughout the years, he constantly tried to improve his musical notation in the perspective of being as easy to interpret as possible. This is far from an easy task. He candidly admits he does not always have the right answers. He even thinks it's not possible every time to come up with the right answer, the right way to share a complex musical idea.

In that sense, every time he begins a new composition, when it applies, he asks himself what did not work the last time and in what other way he could reach the same goals. In his mind, a composer should spend his lifetime trying to adapt instead of trying to push everyone in the same mold.

Adaptability, of course, goes hand in hand with clarity. Clarity of the scores and music sheets not only helps tremendously the musician to understand what he has to do, but also helps his self-confidence. This is a lesson Barry Guy learned at a very young age.

As a younger musician himself, he used to play a lot of young composers' contemporary scores. Sometimes, he found it simply impossible to understand what the composers were trying to express. This is how he learned a valuable composition lesson: if one wants his compositions to be played, one must write them as clearly as possible for the simple reason that musicians do not have a lot of time to spend on trying to decipher unclear music. This is the reason why he always puts a lot of efforts on the clarity and the visual attractiveness of his musical product, whether he is working on a symphony, a jazz piece or a graphic score.

For decades now, Barry Guy refined his notation and did a great job of it, but he will very humbly admit his quest is not over, at least when it comes to writing for great ensembles. He still is trying to find the best, simplest and most efficient way; but as he puts it, it is the work of a lifetime. To achieve this task, he usually tries to rely on his

musicians, but it is not an exact science. Furthermore, musicians often change their minds about how they would like the music to be presented to them.

To give an example of that principle, we saw he found a way to express to the musician he wanted him to create a complex sonority with staccato notes and realized it was better to do a graphic representation of this than to write every single note, notes which the musicians might not even be able to play adequately.[60] Therefore, this is what he did, but then a number of musicians came to him asking him to write notes so it would be easier to rehearse personally. When Barry Guy pointed to them he wrote it this way according to their earlier demands, they replied that now, they would like some notes…

As another example, he tried to refine the drums partition because the drummers were asking him to give them more indications on what was happening with the other musicians. He then started to indicate them more cues and graphic notations of what was happening around them. In response, the drummer came back to him and argued that having cues was confusing and that he had ears anyway.

So the quest for perfect musical clarity is never over. It sometimes seems to him as if whatever he does as a composer, he should have done the opposite. There is no single way to represent music and to give freedom to a musician; it all depends on where one wants the music to go. Every composer has his own way of dealing with music representation problems and the only thing a composer can do about it, is to try to give the most honest representation every time and keep his mind open to comments and new ideas.

Over the years, as he was finding his own vocabulary, he began to use some composition techniques more often than others. These can be regarded as some kind of repetitions from piece to piece, or musical clichés. For instance, we already mentioned the technique of building up orchestral textures and complexities and then, going into a complete different direction musically. One could say the following characteristics can generally be found in Barry Guy's music:

- Massive musical forms, usually relying on principles of musical contrasts like mood, musical density or orchestration
- Sound structures made out of a superposition (stratification) of sound elements such as clusters, glissandi or sound surfaces

[60] See page 53.

- Imposition of fixed musical concepts, such as "themes" to be played on Guy's demand (mostly by the means of gestural language or cue cards), collective improvisation or controlled tempi changes.[61]

He also likes to sometimes conceptualize and put very long musical structures together, like in *Portraits*, lasting almost two hours.[62] Another technique he uses to produce longer structures is to put together smaller pieces which could also be performed or heard individually, as in *Three Pieces for Orchestra*.

Barry Guy is quite aware of these clichés, these musical formulas, and assumes them completely, not seeing any problem in repetition. He sees them as methods which can be adapted depending on the instrumentation and which are quite useful to bring the music where the composer wants to.

In his mind, it is better to be aware of your musical reflexes and use them to their full potential. It is a lot like improvisation. Trying to fight against this principle is a lost battle since it is human's nature to develop reflexes. These are embedded in every musician's and composer's mind since they are a result of the experiences, the history the brain has accumulated, so they will unavoidably influence the musical performance of anyone. Furthermore, there will be similarities from time to time simply because some people are good at some things and not at others.

In Barry Guy's opinion, there is a right and a wrong way to deal with this fact. The wrong way would be for a musician or a composer to learn a few musical patterns and to be satisfied with it thinking these are enough. In his mind, this attitude has no goal, artistically speaking.

The right way would be to use those reflexes as a launching pad to musically get somewhere else. Simply by modifying little details within those patterns, one can suggest different resolutions. After all, as he says, most of the time, people will have to deal with only twelve notes and whatever musical idea one wants to express, there is a good chance he will do so with those twelve notes!

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[61] Barry Guy says he was greatly inspired and influenced by Charles Mingus concerning his ability to switch tempi and the musical space in which his musicians' playing was evolving.

[62] 1 hour, 54 minutes and 44 seconds to be precise.

So in composition just as in improvisation, one cannot renew himself every day, simply because we are human; but if one practices hard and regularly enough, one can succeed in modifying his patterns in a way to avoid the typical clichés. In this situation, of course, the articulations, harmonic approaches and basic patterns will still be a considerable part of the produced music. It is what defines a musician's style. This is how a trained listener can tell a musician or composer from another solely by ear. As Barry Guys presents it himself, he can recognize an Evan Parker solo based on his articulation, his polyphonic uses, his global musical signature and basically because "Evan Parker is, well, Evan Parker!"

One could therefore ask himself, based on his recordings, how Barry Guy seems to avoid repeating himself, which is a very dangerous trap when it comes to free improvisation.

When confronted to this question, the composer seems to doubt the interviewer's judgment. Somehow, he seems to be more severe about himself than the one asking questions. He then explains that, in his view, despites the inevitable patterns being part of a certain musical signature, the improviser or composer will always try to find different resolutions for them; repetitions are unavoidable, but if one is resourceful enough, one's music should always sound somehow renewed. This is why rehearsing, alone or with the ensemble is crucial for any musician. Naturally, all of Barry Guy's roles when it comes to music (performer, composer, musical director, improviser) have an influence on one another and on his music in general.

"I would rather have something work with a good feeling than just impose details because I'm supposed to be a composer."

Of course, there are many approaches to rehearsals and it is important to choose the right one for the right band. One thing Barry Guy hates is rehearsals where everyone is shouting at each other. Through his years of experience, he realized it is better to consider the musicians' comments instead of trying to impose his point of view every time. If there is a problem, it will always eventually come back to the surface at some point unless the

concerned people talk about it and fix it as soon as it appears. Diplomacy is the key, which is why he always tries to be as nice and as constant as possible during rehearsals.

To Barry Guy, consistency comes hand in hand with clarity. Some composers, especially in the jazz field, build their compositions with the trial and error technique. They build some, if not most, of their compositions during the actual rehearsal and modify it as it goes along, day after day. Guy had to work with some musicians like this over the years and he soon realized he preferred a more traditional approach to composition in the sense that what he brings to his musicians on the first day of rehearsal is practically what they will play on the day of the concert.

Although he acknowledges the trial and error approach as valid and, in some cases, productive, he finds it a little frustrating for the musicians. The reason is, the composer will often change his mind on an almost daily basis and the musicians don't always know which way the wind will be blowing. This does not mean Barry Guy does not respect nor admire some people using this methodology – or any other. Having worked with Cecil Taylor and Anthony Braxton, for example, made him realize there were many ways to achieve music and confirmed to him his method was the best suited for him.

With his method, the toughest aspect in rehearsals is to put everything into place, for everybody to understand what the notation means. When everybody understands what is expected from them, the rehearsals are pretty much focused on structure. This means his bands do not spend a lot of time on the free aspects of his compositions, but mainly on the transitions between them.

"I don't expect magic to come out of a rehearsal."

Naturally, sometimes, musical tensions[63] will build up, either because it is needed to proceed with a transition or because the band is rehearsing backgrounds for a solo. In this situation, the band will start by rehearsing the backgrounds by themselves to define the articulations and other musical aspects; then they will rehearse it with the soloist. But

[63] By musical tension, we mean the result of the musicians investing themselves emotionally and, sometimes, physically, as they would in a show or during a studio session.

whether it is for rehearsing the backgrounds or the transitions, the musicians will always be wise enough not to push themselves too hard if they have to play again on the same day.

In fact, when rehearsing, if the musicians have to play a piece in which there is improvisation, the soloists will hold back their playing a little for two reasons: first, because the material they have to play is very demanding; second, the rehearsal is often on the same day as the concert, so Barry Guy asks the musicians to restrain themselves a little, to work mainly on the mechanics and to let themselves go wild when the show comes on. Also, since time is precious in a rehearsal, they all agree for the free solos to be relatively short.

Not trying to push themselves too hard during rehearsals is therefore a practical choice here and not a philosophical decision. When exposed to mathias rüegg's theory on free improvisation in rehearsals,[64] Barry Guy simply states that his musicians always give their all during shows. Even if the musicians sometimes go a little bit wild during a repetition, he has never seen a situation where one of his bands would have less intensity or lack energy during a performance. Not rehearsing improvisation has more to do with stamina then fear of something magical happening during the repetition.

It is also because everybody in his bands already knows pretty much how the other members will play. Therefore, Barry Guy does not think it is worth spending a lot of time on rehearsing the free parts, especially when it comes to his trios, since they already know each other inside and out.

One could think musicians such as the ones playing with Mr. Guy would have had to work on some free improvisation exercises to come to know each other so well, but it is absolutely not the case. He is very categorical: he never does any collective improvisation exercise.

He did some in his early years as a young musician. When working with the Spontaneous Music Ensemble[65] in the 70s, John Stevens would regularly bring free improvisation exercises or even compositions based on these exercises. One of these

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[64] Mathias rüegg never rehearses free aspects in repetition because, from a Dadaistic point of view, he judges that if a good musical idea is played in rehearsal, it is lost for the show. See CHAPTER II mathias rüegg: going the other way, p.26.

[65] The Spontaneous Music Ensemble was a collective of musicians focused on free collective improvisation. Founded by John Steven and Trevor Watts, it was mainly active during the late 60s and the 70s on the London jazz scene.

exercises Barry Guy remembers well was called a click piece. Everybody would have to mentally define the repetition of a pattern at their own speed and the point was for everyone to adjust his tempo until all the musicians would fall together, on the same "click". This would become the end of the piece.

The purpose of this exercise would be for everyone to focus on the ensemble and on himself at the same time. The musicians would have to focus on their own sound while also listening to five or six other musical elements, trying to predict where these elements are going and how they intersect with each other.

The time Barry Guy doesn't devote to free improvisation exercises, he devotes to conception, drawing and explanations. Once the conception process is over, he will spend a certain amount of time producing the graphics for his score and his flashcards, making them as clear and beautiful as possible. Then the musicians come into action.

He will show and explain all of his flashcards to the musicians, do the same with the score and then the band will start the piece. From this moment on, it all becomes very flexible and spontaneous. Some symbols might be used only once in his whole repertoire. They are specific for one piece only. Other symbols, on the other hand, are recurrent throughout Barry Guy's work and can be found in many of his graphic compositions.

For instance, a yellow moon symbol will always represent something very slow, very spacious. The Celtic cross will be the solo symbol: the musician concerned by this card will take the lead. On the other hand, a tutti will be represented by a colorful party hat.[66] Barry Guy uses all of these symbols as flashcards both in rehearsals and live in shows to somehow conduct the band while still giving the musicians enough space to express themselves properly. This way, everyone will bring his personalized signature to the final result.

Barry Guy's use of the flashcards will be relatively simple. He can, for instance, present a musician with the solo card, the Celtic cross. The musician will then build a solo from a choice of six fragments, aligning them in any fashion he wants. At the same time, he can ask another member of the band – or other members – to play very, very slowly, under the yellow moon card, to build some sort of counterpoint.

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[66] As mentioned earlier, many of the recurrent symbols in Barry Guy's repertoire are borrowed from Alan Davie. He recurrently uses them in his paintings.

Naturally, to do so in an efficient and musically interesting way would mean for the conductor to be completely aware of many aspects: each card's implications, its potential effect on the music, every musician's playing reflexes and all of the resulting musical textures. One has to know who to cut and when, who should continue and for how long, who should be brought to the front and how to do it in the most effective way. Barry Guy compares this art to juggling: one can have many balls (musical aspects, counterpoint, etc.) in the air or bring every ball, everybody under the tutti card.

Surely, the absence of free collective improvisation exercises has to do with how experienced Barry Guy's musicians are. He even states that most of the people he plays with don't even need a discussion beforehand. They just know instinctively what to play, as long as the concept is not too farfetched. Over time, he even seems to enjoy giving more and more freedom and responsibilities to his musicians. This evolution is in complete opposition to mathias rüegg's evolution. When confronted to rüegg's analysis of his own evolution, which basically consists of leaving less and less freedom to the musicians because the music he hears in his head gets clearer and clearer over time, Barry Guy simply states he tries to go the other way.

This assurance his musicians show when confronted to free parts of his compositions clearly lacks when it comes to less experienced musicians. When Barry Guy has students rehearsing his pieces under his direction, the same question almost always arises: "What do I (or we) play when there are no more notes?"

Even though Barry Guy tries to explain to these students that this is a place where they can play whatever pleases them, however they feel, whoever they are, they will always come back asking about what notes they should play. This is clearly due to a lack of experience on the students' part and shows how free improvisation familiarity can be crucial for a musician when asked to do so. If Barry guy does not need to do free improvisation exercises, it probably is because most – if not all – of the musicians he plays with have done some related exercises in their past, whether in group or individually.

"In my bands, I compose specifically for the people in the band."

This means his choice in musicians might be one of his greatest qualities. He knows how to select them and experience showed him how to keep them at his side. Some of his collaborations, like the one he has with Paul Lytton, have lasted for now over 40 years.[67] This constancy might be attributed to Barry Guy's open mind when it comes to musicians' suggestions. Almost all of his music is negotiable, as he puts it.

He encourages his musicians to take part in the edification of his pieces, as long as it doesn't lose its original direction, its original musical purpose. He is always happy when someone submits him a way to improve a piece; he is not one of these composers for whom every note is sacred and can't be touched. It is crucial for him to consider the needs and desires of the performer. A happy musician is a performing musician.

Instead of imposing every detail, he prefers a good feeling in the band, even if it means putting a little water in his wine. He presents his ideas, musicians present theirs and if there is a technical problem, they try to find a way to express the original idea in a new way, usually with success. With the London Jazz Composers Orchestra, a few situations arose in which the musicians' general opinion had been that a part of a piece simply did not work either musically or technically. When facing those situations, Barry Guy now simply cuts the part out of the piece. So the original idea, although overall respected, might be a little modified in the end, but that is just part of the natural evolution process of a piece.

"There is always a new generation of ideas that can come out of the previous ones. So when you put the final bar line on a composition, it doesn't mean to say necessarily that that is the end of it."

A piece evolves with time, at least in Barry Guy's case. He thinks it is the case with every piece which mixes composition with improvisation. If a band is lucky enough to be able to play a repertoire for a certain period of time, the pieces composing this repertoire change with time, they evolve. Those evolutions almost always concern the solos; somehow the ensemble becomes tighter as the freedom becomes looser.

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[67] Naturally, like most musical relationships, particularly in the jazz field, these relations were not exclusive and were therefore intermittent, but common projects were still performed on a regular basis.

Barry Guy uses a good analogy to explain how, after a while being played by the same band, music becomes tighter. He compares this interesting phenomenon to green wood. In the beginning, the wood is very moist. If one builds something with this wood, after some time, it begins to crack and becomes dryer, but all the while, it also becomes harder and begins to twist. At some point, it becomes almost impossible to even drive a nail in it. In a group, humidity represents new ideas. When a band begins to rehearse a piece, there are a lot of new ideas. With time however, the band becomes tighter, just as the wood.

On the other hand, this analogy has a little flaw. In a group, as the music gets tighter, the improvisation becomes freer since the musicians begin to know the piece exceptionally well. They can see their moment of creativity approaching and when the time comes, they have incredible energy to deploy because of all the anticipation. Barry Guy compares this to the moment the gates open at the horse race. During the rehearsals, the gates are closed and everyone is somehow confined in his place. Then, during the shows, the gates open and the musicians can give their all.

Guy has always been pleasantly surprised by how a piece can develop its own personality when played enough. It's always a pleasure for him to see an entire band go in a certain direction with one of his compositions.

On the other hand, if a piece can reach maturity, it also means it can somehow be immature. Unfortunately, according to the composer, most of his recordings present the music before it matured enough. Sometimes, when listening to old recordings, he considers the band could have beneficiated from more rehearsals and shows before getting into studio.

In a perfect world, a studio recording of a piece should be the last step. First would come composition, then a lot of rehearsals, followed by a lot of shows and then, after touring with a show for a year or so, the band would get into studio or do a live recording. Unfortunately, this is not a perfect world and one has to deal with economic reality.

Anybody leading a large enough band will agree: tours are getting harder and harder to get. Large groups are hard to book if traveling is involved. A large band has to jump on any opportunity it gets and most of the time, the timing is far less than ideal. Barry Guy considers most of his bands could have beneficiated from a more important number of

shows before the recordings, but since they couldn't book an important number of concerts, they had to do with what they had.

This is almost always the case. Bands do not have unlimited amounts of time or money, so they try to make the best of what they have. When Barry Guy composes something, most of the time, he will somehow find the money to put up a show and takes advantage of all the musicians getting together to get into studio or record the show, although the show is usually quite young.

The positive result of such approach is that most of his recordings represent quite accurately the period when it was written. The negative side is that most people cannot hear his pieces when they finally reach maturity since most people do not have the chance to hear Barry Guy live and must rely on his recordings. With the Barry Guy New Orchestra, because of its relatively smaller size[68], they were able to go on tour with some of the programs he composed for it. Over time, the pieces they go on tour with become more and more interesting because the musicians start to know them more and more. Ideally, Barry Guy would like to rerecord them.

A good example for this is *Inscape*. It is an imposing piece divided in seven movements. Barry Guy wrote this piece for the Barry Guy New Orchestra and they recorded it in 2000[69]. When he listens to it, Barry Guy is still proud of the result, but he says the recording does not sound like the piece sounds today. Today, the *Inscape* show is a lot looser and tighter at the same time.

Based on these facts, one could conclude there is never a real sense of finality when it comes to Barry Guy's compositions, but this would be an erroneous assumption. When a score is finished, it is a final version on which he will probably never come back. There are two reasons for this: first, he prefers to move on with other projects and, second, because producing a score and its parts is already a very expensive process. To simply add a new box in a score would probably mean at least a week of hard work and a substantial sum of money to reprint everything, so when a big piece is finished, it's permanent.

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[68] The Barry Guy New Orchestra is composed of eight players as the London Jazz Composers Orchestra is usually composed of 18 musicians or more.

[69] The CD was released in 2001 under the Intakt Records label. Intakt CD 066.

It is important to focus on the "big" in big piece. There is a sense of finality with the bigger pieces because of what was just mentioned, but this concept does not apply to smaller jazz pieces. In fact, when it comes to a small jazz piece, Barry Guy does not believe in finality. A piece like that is never quite final, it always evolves with time and experimentations.

These evolutions happen to please the musicians' inspiration and for the sake of music itself, not to please the critics. In that matter, Barry Guy has a lot of integrity. Critics don't even come into consideration for him. Never will he compromise or artistically modify something for them; he does what he does and if the critics don't like it, it truly does not matter. He pretends he doesn't read them much, anyway.

"If you can hang in there, not die, if you can get passed sixty, they give you some kind of respect."

Sometimes, it happens for him to read comments from critics whom have followed his career throughout the years. He finds them a bit redundant. Usually the articles will mention he is still active on the musical scene after 50 years and that, therefore, there must be something valuable in his art for him to survive in this industry. Of course, it would make him proud for the public – and even the critics – to recognize the integrity of his musical process, his communication and energy, but he would not modify any of his pieces just to get shows or please critics. He does not see the point to it, nor does he find any motivation or inspiration into it.

His inspiration, he finds in musicians, artists and human kind. The interpreters will inspire the composer and vice versa. Even in thoroughly written pieces, the interpretation, the powerful musical playing of some interpreters moves Barry Guy so much it drives him to keep on composing – and living! As mentioned earlier, other forms of art, especially painting, also inspire him very much. In fact, what drives him is humankind. Even though it can be very self-destructive, humankind is also capable of incredible creativity. All of those elements are food for his brain. It's what drives him to find new ways of composing music.

This inspiration drove him to a prolific career both in the free improvisation area and the completely composed music, for solo, duo, trio, small and large bands, classical or jazz; a career now over 50 years old. Throughout these years he never had trouble finding musicians open-minded enough to play his very peculiar style of music.

When comparing today's age to his learning years, he believes musical education has improved a lot. He is quite satisfied and positive about the musical schooling young musicians receive. In his view, young musicians today are more adaptable to every aspect of music performance, whether written or improvised.

He is also optimistic about the future of big bands or large jazz ensembles in the sense that he met many young promising musicians whom put up their own big bands. There certainly is a pool of talented, intelligent and innovative young musicians who like to play in these kinds of large formations. These youngsters can certainly provide artistic continuance and innovation for the generation to come. Their problem, in Barry Guy's view, won't be artistic. The upcoming problems for these young musicians will be political and economical.

The new ways in which the political scene changes the musical scene worries him. Festivals and artistic events are losing their subventions all over the world. It has always been hard, but it's even harder today to get access to the artistic scene, to get a chance to expose new artistic ideas to a large public, or to simply get concerts.

The only solution Barry guy sees to this already critical problem is for artists to get involved into politics. Although he realizes the political arena isn't always artists' favorite playfield, he still hopes that, with its energy and determination, the young generation will be able to make a place for itself, would it only be to keep the torch alive.

CHAPTER IV
Dieter Glawischnig: practical freedom

Dieter Glawischnig was born in Graz in 1938. Pianist, trombonist, composer, arranger, conductor and music teacher, he has been one of the firsts Austrian free jazz players to get international recognition. Although his compositional work is very vast and touches to many medias including concert music, jazz, free jazz, television music, theater music and radio theater music, he is mostly recognized for his work with Ernst Jandl, for conducting the NDR Big Band[70] for over 25 years[71] and as a piano performer (his true passion), noticeably with the jazz trio Neighbours.

Dieter Glawischnig's career took off in the 1970s with Neighbours, a free jazz trio composed of him and two of his real life neighbors at the time, namely Edwald Oberleitner, double bass player, and John Preininger, drummer and percussionist. Their music at the time was very much influenced by Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and the entire London free jazz scene of the time[72].

Although the trio had hard times gaining popularity in its own country, they achieved certain recognition after their first world tour. This is when Austrians really adopted the trio as something to be nationally proud of and as being a typically Austrian phenomenon, which always left Mr. Glawischnig somehow bitter.

The trio liked to work with small musical motives around which they would build their improvisations and, therefore, their entire pieces. Since at some point they had to put a

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[70] Founded in 1945 and originally known as the Radio-Tanz-und Unterhaltungsorchester (RTUO) Hamburg (the Hamburg's Radio Dance and Entertainment Orchestra), this orchestra was first conducted by Willy Steiner and later by Franz Thon. The NDR Big Band is the official big band of the Norddeutsche Rudfunk (North German Radio). Today, it is conducted by Jörg Achim Keller.

[71] First invited as a guest pianist in 1973, then as a guest conductor during the same year, Dieter Glawischnig became the official conductor in 1980. He led the orchestra until 2008, when he retired and was replaced by Jörg Achim Keller.

[72] In these days, the free jazz movement in London, England, was very much influenced by the work of the Jamaican born saxophonist Joe Harriot (1928-73) and the musicians he played with, including his famous quintet composed of him, Ellsworth "Shake" Keane (1927-97) on trumpet, Patricia (Pat) Smythe (1928-96) on piano, Coleridge Goode (born 1914) on bass and Phil Seamen (1926-72) on drums.

name on what they were doing, the musicians came up with "motivic and formal exposed free jazz", which Dieter Glawischnig also simply calls "freedom within limitation".

Even though their shows were almost completely improvised, the musicians had some idea of where they wanted to go musically before stepping on stage. Mr. Glawischnig still sees it the same way today, some forty years later, when he plays in trio since, as he explains it, there are simply so many possibilities when playing with this kind of formation: solo playing, duo playing and improvising all together as a trio. In that sense, it is possible, if not easy to walk on stage with a vague idea of the possibilities one wants to exploit without everything being definitely fixed.

Being a teacher himself and since he always liked musical theory and challenges, over the years Dieter Glawischnig built up his own harmonic and melodic system based on twelve intervals[73]. Within this system, he developed ways to play with feelings. Therefore, using this system, one can play in a very light, aggressive, melodic or intimate way and, just like with any other harmonic or melodic system, if a note is played when it should not be, he considers it a mistake. This fact does in no way means he never plays "outside" pitches – sometimes even on purpose – when he decides to use this system, it only means his system is just like every other is, a basis on which he builds his improvisations, a basis which can be cheated for aesthetic reasons.

This system is not used by Dieter Glawischnig alone. Sometimes, he imposes this system to other musicians he plays with, but it is always solely for the intellectual pleasure and challenge it brings. Mr. Glawischnig realizes he cannot truly impose his own harmonic and melodic system to other improvisers or they would feel limited in their musical expression and, consequently, artistically frustrated, which is never a good thing in a musical group.

Very often, Dieter Glawischnig has gone – and still goes – onstage for a concert with other improvisers to do an entire show completely improvised. When asked how the musicians prepare beforehand, what they plan to do before performing in front of a live audience, he keeps it very simple. In his opinion, if the musicians have enough experience with this kind of performance, or if the musicians have already played together once or

[73] Not to be confused with a twelve tone system like Schonberg's dodecaphonic principles. To further understand this system, we recommend reading his article about his musical approach in *Jazzforschung 5*.

twice in the past, nothing needs to be said. They just go onstage and perform using the common feeling of the moment. He considers that, if one knows the other musicians, even just a bit, one should know what to expect from the musicians and how to react to it.

But playing with people you already know could easily become an artistic trap. When playing free music with a small group, Dieter Glawischnig will try to surround himself with musicians which inspire him to musically go to places he would not have thought of going when the music meets stagnation. But when it comes to musicians one has played with for a long time, it seems to him like the music becomes almost only repetitions of musical motives, which he considers almost like mainstream music and not what free improvisation should be all about.

In 1973, Mr. Glawischnig was invited by the NDR Big Band as a guest conductor. For the occasion, he had composed three big band pieces: a mainstream one, one based on musical patterns and a free piece. The first one was no problem for the band. The second one proved a little more difficult for the musicians. The third one had to be simply forgotten, the musicians forming the NDR Big Band at the time being completely unable to play this kind of music.

In fact, when Dieter Glawischnig first worked with the NDR Big Band, the band was composed of musicians from an older generation. They knew how to swing, but did not know anything about the newest influences in jazz. Luckily for Mr. Glawischnig, they were old enough so to be close to retirement. So when he became the official musical director of the band in 1980, he simply had to wait for them to leave on their own by the means of retirement. At the time, this was probably a great relief for this new director. The original musicians did not know the necessary references for interpreting “modern” jazz, so there was not even a point in discussing with them to try to explain what Dieter was expecting from them. Most of them did not even know John Coltrane that well, so there was no point in telling them he wanted an Eric Dolphy or a Carla Bley kind of sound!

Therefore, at the time, Dieter Glawischnig did not play many free pieces, except for one or two composed expressly by the musical director for the band – and these have proved to be very problematic! Fortunately, over time, guest performers like Anthony Braxton were invited and the band adapted itself to those styles. Today, every member of the NDR Big Band can play every style of music, including solos and free music. But to do

so, the band still has to rehearse the parts of the pieces where free is expected, which is not uncommon to larger musical formations, even if they have certain experience with these musical styles.

A technique which would not be uncommon to the members of the NDR big band after Dieter Glawischnig took command would be to improvise a buildup. It is a technique he likes to use in his compositions. It consists in giving the improvisers only the tonality in which they shall improvise and let them do the rest, starting quite gently and creating more and more movement and playing louder and louder until the band reaches a musical climax. Of course, this would not be the entire piece in itself, but simply a part of a bigger piece, mostly written down in a more traditional way.

One can understand why the composer uses this technique: it is much easier, in this case, for the composer/conductor to tell the musicians what he wants to hear than to write and rehearse every note, so to sound, in the end, like a chaotic buildup.

Another technique Dieter Glawischnig likes to use is to give the musicians all the information about the formal aspect of the piece, the length of every part, who is supposed to play and with who, but not to write any actual note, or almost none. The musicians can virtually play anything they want.

One can notice how those two techniques differ in their goals, although being similar in their application: no actual note is written down and the useful information is given to the musicians, but the first example's goal is to simplify something which would have been fastidious to write and play while getting to a very similar (and perhaps better) result, as the second one's goal is to stimulate the creativity of the musicians while allowing the composer/conductor to keep some control over the final result.

These are two examples of free improvisation techniques which Mr. Glawischnig sometimes use for larger ensembles, but most of the time, when he composes for larger ensembles, he will use a more traditional approach, with defined structures, sections, tonalities, melodies, backgrounds, etc. This is also something he enjoys. He takes pleasure in composing and conducting "straight ahead" pieces, like a big fat traditional swing, in the styles of Count Basie or Duke Ellington.

However, even within these more traditional pieces, he might sometimes play a little bit with the structure. If, for example, he feels a solo should be lengthened, he will make

the band repeat a section, while trying to play with the orchestration. Instead of a five pieces background, he might only use three musicians, or other similar subtleties, to keep the interest of the public and help the soloist with his inspiration.

Of course, this is more an exception than a rule. Like most composers using free improvisation, in Glawischnig's mind, the more musicians there are in a group, the more precise his indications shall get. This is all in the purpose of keeping a certain musical cohesion.

He sometimes had contracts to compose for even bigger ensembles than big bands: symphonic orchestras. When he did, it was mostly pieces designed to bring a musical background for poetry[74]. In this case, he considers it the music's role not to come too forward, to get too obvious or present to the public, but to simply be a way to accompany the words, to bring them forward, whether free improvisation is present or not.

When writing for a specific formation he knows well, like the NDR Big Band, Dieter Glawischnig will always try to compose specifically for each musician, always asking himself which musician – or musicians – would be best suited for a specific melody or solo. If a piece written in this state of mind has to be conducted by him but with another band, the first thing he will do to ensure its success will be to get informed on who are the best musicians in many categories (best straight ahead improvisers, best free improvisers, best melodic tones in the band, who is the drummer, etc.) so to adapt the piece accordingly and to give the appropriate parts and solos to the appropriate musicians, but will not change much more than that. In his mind, once a piece is composed, it is pretty much final. He does not have the interest – nor the time – to make big changes in a piece which already works fine.

In this sense, one can consider Glawischnig as a very practical composer. And the more one studies the man, the more one realizes this. Not only doesn't he rework his pieces for other formations, not only does he sometimes use free improvisation as some kind of compositional shortcut, but one will also never see Dieter composing a piece without the express warranty the piece will be played. He also will not try to rearrange classic jazz pieces if he considers it to be already fine the way it is.

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[74] As mentioned earlier, Dieter Glawischnig often had the chance to bring a musical ambiance to the poems of Ernst Jandl.

In his opinion, an arranger has to be amazingly clever to be able to rearrange pieces from the great jazz masters. He has to find a new, unprecedented way to present the older pieces – which is very hard because these are practically always near-perfect compositions on their own – or there is no point in the exercise. Furthermore, he does not really see the point of playing the old original arrangements either, since everybody already knows them and, if not, there are already great recordings of them. So why do art if it is in the sole purpose of repeating itself?

When it comes to free improvisation, whether as a conductor or as a musician himself, he will try not to impose his ideas too much without solely being a follower either. According to him, in an ideal world, free improvisation is a communion between everybody involved. Of course, as a conductor, he might indicate to his free improvisers what he expects from them and make adjustments when he judges it is needed, but he tries not to do it too often, so to let the musicians as free as possible.

As a conductor, he might even "improvise" with a piece's structure live in concert. Naturally, the changes he will impose then will be relatively modest and simple, so not to confuse the musicians. He could, for instance, prolong a solo, repeat certain sections or skip – forward or backward – to a specific section of the concerned piece. To do so, he will use his hands to express a specific code he put on together over the years. Mostly, he will tell the musicians which section is concerned by showing them the measure number of the beginning of this section or the letter associated to it and then, if he feels it is needed, he will do a sign with his fingers, resembling two "peace and love" signs fallen on their sides and facing each other, which makes the fingers look a little like this: < >.

He could also decide to have a musician improvise on the spot by pointing him or to tell a musician or section to stop playing by looking at them and closing his fist. He can, of course, also play live with nuances by raising and lowering his left hand or play with other musical aspects, like tempo, simply by doing the standard and appropriate signs, but this is simply standard conducting.

One must stress, however, like Dieter Glawischnig does himself, that these signs and techniques are mostly approximate and exceptional. Usually, he will conduct in a most standardized and classical way. These indications are not as precise and as elaborated as would be indications imagined and applied by someone like Butch Morris. If they are

understood by his musicians without problem, it is mainly due to years of working with him and there is no guaranty a group working with Glawischnig for the first time and composed of young, inexperienced musicians would understand what he expects from them. In this case, he tries to be as precise and clear as he can in his indications, but would also stay on the safe side, not pushing the envelope too far – if any – when it comes to live changes in the interpretation.

Other than for these specific indications, Dieter Glawischnig will try not to impose himself too much as a conductor. He will indicate tempi or meter changes, show up for the beginning and the end of a piece, indicate essential cues, but other than that, he will try to be as unseen as possible. According to him, a conductor should not stay in front of his band if the tempo is stable and there are no essential cues to be given. If anything, staying in front of the band, waving hands and beating the tempo during a steady piece is not only useless, but counterproductive: it only makes the musicians nervous, especially the bassists and drummers. When a chief isn't needed, he should be on the side, letting the orchestra play by itself.

In fact, when a piece stays in time for its whole duration, he thinks imposing a conductor is plainly stupid. This is why, when this type of pieces is played during a concert, he will be in front of the band for the first and the final eight measures. Other than that, one can find him on the side or backstage. So yes, for some shows, he will spend most of the show backstage just enjoying the music, all to the better appreciation of the musicians, he assures. These are the easy pieces.

When it comes to harder pieces, pieces which demand a certain amount of interpretation and artistic choices, it is always possible for small conflicts to appear. When a larger band is concerned, Dieter Glawischnig and his musicians are no exception. We mention the dimension of the band because when a smaller group of musicians is concerned, like when playing in duo, trio or quartet, this almost never happens to him. When forming these smaller bands, Dieter tries to always choose musicians with whom he has played many times before and with whom he knows he will not have artistic differences, usually old friends.

Otherwise, in larger groups, conflicts can and did appear, mainly due to differences between his idea of how a piece should be interpreted and other opinions on the subject

within his band. In these cases, he will try to always be very careful not to hurt the musicians' feelings and be as diplomatic as he can, while still imposing his ideas. He assures, competent musicians immediately understand his vision and comply with it.

In his mind, everything can be obtained if one focuses enough on diplomacy and the musicians' feelings, which is why this is the most important and first quality a good conductor should possess. This way, he can even decide to change soloists for a piece if he considers a musician's solo style to be more efficient than another for a specific piece or mood, but when a soloist is chosen, he can do anything he wishes during the solo, as long as it fits the mood.

When it comes to rehearsals, to be honest, Dieter Glawischnig does not rehearse a lot with his bands. With him as a conductor, there is not much work done on subtleties. A piece sounds right or doesn't and that is all there is to it. He has a very pragmatic vision of rehearsals and interpretation. Rehearsing a piece is simply going from point A to point B, and to start B over if tightness or nuances didn't sound right.

One will never find him imposing improvisation or interpretation exercises on his musicians. As we saw earlier, he will, when needed, work a bit with his musicians on the parts where free improvisation is expected from them, but just to make sure they play within the parameters imposed by the mood or the purpose of these free parts. Sometimes, he does have to explain to the musicians what he musically expects at a specific moment within the piece. Sometimes he even has to correct them, but he will always try to be as gentle and diplomatic as possible in his approach. This is what he calls his "Austrian side".

He even believes this "Austrian side" and his accent (also Austrian) are a big part of how diplomatic his musicians see him. Although he finds this fact stupid, he truly thinks his approach and accent are pleasing to his German musicians and that it puts them in a mood which makes them a bit more open to his approach.

This "Austrian specificity" has also helped him avoiding conflicts between the NDR big band musicians and the NDR redaction team. He does not want to get into details, but he assures his diplomacy (and accent, he assumes) has been of great assistance when having to lower tensions between those two factions, which is also, sometimes, the role a musical director has to play, unfortunately.

When it comes to public performances, Dieter Glawischnig and his musicians play it on the safe side. Never has it happened for the musicians to surprise Glawischnig live in shows with something which was not expected from him. Never has a joke or a special twist on something they had rehearsed (or not) been performed on stage without him knowing about it firsthand. He assures, it would have been taken with a smile on his part, but it never happened, nor was the mood adequate for that, it seems.

Except for one or two very special occasions, the program, the order in which the pieces were supposed to be played in the show, never changed on the spot to accommodate the mood the public seemed to be in. The program was decided in advance and was almost unchangeable.

When the NDR played for a public in the area around Hamburg, their repertoire was pretty conservative, so to give the public what they were expecting. This is a principle Glawischnig holds dear: to give the public what it expects. Never will he try to force the public to evolve. In his mind, to do so is the best way to alienate your public and to make it feel stupid.

Following this logic, when playing in Hamburg itself, the repertoire will be composed of new, more modern pieces, since this is what the Hamburg public expects from his band: a certain degree of artistic audacity, for their musical convictions to get shaken a bit. If, in these cases, the band would play good old Duke Ellington, the audience would be disappointed. They expect more and, therefore, Glawischnig gives them more. This way, the public – and the critics – go home happy and satisfied with their musical evening.

Of course, this would have been pretty different some 30 years ago. Since the 80s, Glawischnig has seen the public, or at least a part of it, evolve in its musical choices and appreciation. Unfortunately, the people open to this new kind of music still remains marginal compared to the general public and this saddens him a bit. On the other hand, he does not know if the repertoire he plays today during those Hamburg shows would have been as appreciated by the same public 25 years ago… It is always hard to predict what the public will appreciate in advance. This is a lesson he learned a long time ago as a composer.

The first big orchestral repertoire he composed was based on Ernst Jandl's poems and has been a great success. He then composed another cycle of pieces in the same style and

with the same purpose… Whether from the general public or from the critics, it did not get the success the first one did, not by a long shot; so there is no secret success formula.

If there is one type of people which never gave him bad critics, it's the composers and arrangers. Never has he received bad comments from them on the interpretations of their pieces he performed with the NDR big band. In fact, if anything, the composers and arrangers are simply happy to get a commission and to have the opportunity to be played by such a competent group. It is always a big honor for a composer to be interpreted by a professional band, especially one with such a reputation as the NDR big band.

To make sure the interpretation respects the original idea of the composer, if there is any doubt in Glawischnig's mind about how a specific section should be approached, he will simply call the composer directly and ask for his opinion or directions. Sometimes, this is the only contact which will occur between the composer and the conductor since, more often than not, the composer will not even be present for the performance – or even creation – of their work. This is due to financial incentives. Depending on where in the world the composer lives, it would be much too expensive for the NDR administration to pay for flight tickets, hotel and meals for the composer, simply to have him take a bow at the end of the concert…

It might seem odd for some, but Dieter Glawischnig's musical adventures as a big band conductor were mostly accidental. As for many musical directors, this was not his initial ambition. As a young man, he simply wanted to play trumpet. He never even liked big band music that much and for most of his life, and even somehow today, he considered himself primarily as an improviser.

In the 70s, as a young music teacher at the *Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Graz*, he was one of the few – if not the only one – to focus on free improvisation. Today, according to his observations, the university is a bit more open to the concept, although still somehow conservative. But overall, today, in every major city in Austria, Germany or any western country, he can find musically and artistically open-minded musicians. However, being from Graz himself, he is a bit disheartened to see it is, all proportions taken into consideration, easier to find those musicians in Vienna than in his home city, which is a complete turnaround compared to his early years.

He remembers Graz as being, in the late 60s and 70s, the jazz capital in this European region – or at least in Austria. Today, quality jazz can be found in many major cities of the region: Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg, as well as Graz. When asked why this is, he always comes back to one name: mathias rüegg, one of his (short time) theory students, and his Vienna Art Orchestra.

Nowadays, probably because the free improvisation scene has developed, he finds it easier to find more than decent free improvisers in any city he performs in than 25 years ago. It is also easier to find musicians opened to his type of composing than in those days. Many young musicians today would actually enjoy very much performing with him, which was almost unthinkable 25 years ago.

In those years, students would almost exclusively study and perform mainstream jazz. This is, in his mind, a legitimate purpose, but sticking to this style is an incomplete musical formation. A complete jazz musician should be able, of course, to play descent Count Basie and Duke Ellington pieces, but also descent free jazz.

He expresses this point of view in a book he is currently in the process of writing about esthetics, but it might actually be a while before he finishes and publishes that book, if ever, because right now, he simply wants to play as much as possible. He missed the interpretation part of music during the last few years, having played the part of a teacher so much…

In his mind, music (including jazz) esthetics has to take as much history and theory as possible. He somehow despises what is currently considered as "popular" music. In his opinion, the younger composers using keyboards and synthesizers can – and sometimes do – find interesting sounds, but they lack general knowledge about music, its theory, its history… and it shows!

His philosophy as a teacher has always been to present and impose every style (at least every jazz style) to his students, whether they like it or not. He always thought a student should know, at least, everything between Art Tatum and present jazz. He often imposed "classical" to his students. Even if they wanted to only play jazz, they would have to also play Chopin, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, etc. Even if, at first, the students are reluctant to this approach, in the end, they learned to enjoy these composers and the esthetics coming with them.

These composers are still being played and recorded today and, in Glawischnig's mind, this is natural and somehow a good thing. When a piece of music is good and well written, it becomes immortal. In that sense, he would like to record many of his compositions so to be played and enjoyed many years from now, but it is unfortunately not the case. Producers refuse to let him record some of his work, especially his work for larger bands.

Their argument is primarily financial. They argue that, for a CD to sell, it has to be followed by a tour. If there is no tour, not enough CDs will be sold and, as producers, the artistic argument is far from enough to go into studio, unless it is paired with a certain margin of profit which the tour would bring. Unfortunately, everybody in the industry will agree that touring with a big band is a very hard thing to do from an economical and organizational point of view.

This might be the biggest problem any big band formation has to face today. The administrative aspect of keeping a big band together and, somehow, profitable is amazingly heavy, particularly for just one man. One has to take care of the booking, the standard and internet promotion, calling the producers (not to mention the musicians), asking for grants and financial help, etc. If all of those aspects are well taken care of, then there is hope for survival… perhaps.

Dieter Glawischnig mentions he was lucky he never had to take care of organizing anything else than the musical and artistic performance for the NDR Big Band. The NDR had what he considers to be an excellent organization team for what concerned every other aspect of its administration. He considers having to organize everything for his trios Neighbours and Cercle was enough anyway!

In this perspective, Dieter Glawischnig greatly admires mathias rüegg who did all that work by himself for the Vienna Art Orchestra. If it was not for this aspect of rüegg's implication, he strongly believes the Vienna Art Orchestra would never have reached the number one rank for big bands in Down Beat[75] magazine.

He also believes a big band without financial help, whether from the state or from private entities, cannot survive today. This help is needed to pay – at least half-decently – the musicians, composers, arrangers, conductors and even just to pay the rent for a place

[75] Established in Chicago, Illinois, and first published in 1934, the Down Beat magazine is one of the oldest and most respected magazines in the jazz field. Unfortunately, the author could not find the specific issue of the magazine in question.

where a big band can rehearse. Once this is all paid for, one still has to find money to pay for the tour. Busses, hotels, musician salaries and decent (but not exaggerated) per diems sum up to more than what producers are usually willing to pay.

This is one of the reasons why today, many great jazz players will agree to tour with popular artists, even if it becomes very frustrating for them not to be able to play at their full artistic potential. They simply need the money and this is sometimes their only way to make a living. Basically, in the current economy, Dieter Glawischnig does not think a larger band can survive on its own without being associated to a big pop (or sometimes jazz, but that's exceptional) star name.

This is why, today, Glawischnig is basically always playing in smaller formations. Except for a solo or duo performance, he doesn't consider the salaries to be adequate… or even plain descent!

Luckily for him, today he does not have to rely on these small paychecks to make a living, getting a pension from the university and the NDR. He can take or refuse any contract he wants simply based on how artistically interesting the contract is, which is not something most of the musicians he plays with can say. Surely, this is the reason why he often refuses his performance paychecks, so they can be equally distributed among the less fortunate – but just as talented – musicians he plays with…

CHAPTER V
Butch Morris: conducting freedom

Lawrence Douglas Butch Morris was born in 1947 in Long Beach, California, and died in 2013 in New York City, New York. A Vietnam War veteran, he was an American cornetist, a composer and a musical director, but will be mostly remembered for creating, exploiting and being a defender of a musical concept called conduction. He defined conduction as being "*a vocabulary of ideographic signs and gestures activated to modify or construct a real-time musical arrangement (of any notation) or composition. Each sign and gesture transmits generative information for interpretation and provides instantaneous possibilities for altering or initiating harmony, melody, rhythm, articulation, phrasing or form.*"[76]

Just over a year before his passing, he had the generosity of allowing the author to perform an extensive interview with him over the phone. At the time, he did not know he had just a few months in front of him. The following article is, to a great extent, based on this interview.

"I'm a student of music and everybody is a student of conduction."

As a conductor, Butch Morris was known to take an active part in defining what the resulting sound of an interpretation would be. He conducted the music of many other composers including Misha Mengelberg, Billy Bang and David Murray, to name just a few. Each time he would take over their compositions and do a very personal and free interpretation of them, all the while scrupulously respecting the specific indications these composers would give him.

As an example, Misha Mengelberg wanted him to put the improvisational aspect of his written music at the forefront; David Murray would let him do whatever he wanted with his

[76] MORRIS, Lawrence D. Retrieved from http://conduction.us

music, as long as it did swing; Billy Bang would simply lend him his music and tell him he could do absolutely anything with it, without limitation. All of these composers – which were also recognized improvisers – wanted to hear their music, but with the Butch Morris touch…

At the time these interpretations were performed, which was the late 80s, he considered them successful accomplishments, but some 25 years later, he considered he had evolved so much that if he had conducted them the same way in the years near his passing, it would have sounded a bit simplistic to his liking.

However, being able to do these kinds of interpretations was, in some way, one of the primary goals of what the whole concept of conduction is. He first created the principles of conduction to make it possible for a musical conductor to manipulate musical notation.

He was very well aware he was not the first to attempt this form of art. According to him, if one studied the history of orchestral conducting assiduously, one would realize a certain variety of conduction has always existed in one form or another and with more or less applications for the past 4000 years and beyond.[77]

As for himself, he started developing the idea of conduction during the 60s, but only had the courage to make his firsts attempts, trying to somehow put the theory into practice, during the late 70s, so about ten years later. In the beginning, in fact, he very humbly admits he only thought he knew what he wanted – and what he wanted, at the time, was only to find some way of being able to manipulate written music.[78]

Before developing the foundations of what would become conduction, he had already seen other people, like Alan Silva and Charles Moffett do similar things in concert, but he considered, at the time, their techniques needed a bit more development, some further in-depth examination of the topic.[79]

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[77] In fact, he mentioned since 2400BC, but the author could not find any relevant reference to that period of history, which would be the Sumerian era. Some theorists suppose there were conductors at the time helping to keep the tempo by hand clapping and foot stumping, eventually possible head nodding…

[78] During the mentioned interview, he insisted greatly and recurrently on this aspect; on the fact this was, initially, simply a system designed to give the possibility to the conductor to play with written music during a live performance.

[79] As mentioned in the chapter concerning him, Alexander von Schlippenbach sometimes also makes use of gestural indications to impose musical ideas or concepts.

In fact, one of his foremost preoccupations on the subject was to find what could lie between musical notation and improvisation, alongside finding a way to maneuver music over its written form. He gave himself the mission, the purpose of finding some kind of lexicon, a vocabulary with which he could take a written note and vary its length (longer or shorter), its pitch (higher or lower), its volume (louder or quieter) or its speed (faster or slower).

To do so, it took some ten years between the elaboration of his first concepts of what conduction could be (or become) and his initial practical attempt at it. He explains this delay by the fact that he was intimidated by the vast array of possibilities these concepts opened, all that it could represent musically and philosophically.

In 1984, he attempted what he considered a first significant conduction experience, based on a Beethoven's string quartet. This whole experimentation was to find out if he could do some kind of improvisational artistic achievement based on written music. This experience is not considered as one of the 199 official conductions[80] he performed during his lifetime, but has been a major step forward in the elaboration of what conduction would become.

The very first official conduction has taken place in New York on February 1st 1985 and was called *Conduction® No.1, Current Trends in Racism in Modern America, a Work-in-Progress*[81]. It was based on no written music whatsoever.

Little did he know at the time, but the fact that this first performance was not based on any written music would shape the vast majority of his later work. From that point on, he decided to try to discover the entire potential of these gestures and signs he was elaborating before returning to his first idea of how to modify musical notation in a live performance.

Since this is, essentially, an endless quest, very few (between 15 and 20, according to his memory) future conductions would actually be based on any kind of written music; and even the ones which were, were often based on a very minimalistic form of written music.[82]

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[80] As we will later see, many – if not the majority – of his conducting performances were not accounted as official conductions. This was his choice. A very extensive (but still incomplete) list of these official conductions can be found on the official conduction website at http://www.conduction.us/page2.html

[81] Performed by Frank Lowe (sax), John Zorn (saxophone/game calls), Christian Marclay (turntables), Thurman Barker (marimba/snare), Curtis Clark (piano), Brandon Ross (guitar), Zeena Parkins (harp), Eli Fountain (vibraphone), Tom Cora (cello) and Yasunao Tone (vocal).

From that point on, he tried to develop a technique, a musical approach which anyone could use, all the while keeping it in some kind of logical continuity with what traditional musical conducting has always been. He wanted to shape it so to be able to work with any musician – or any type of musician – willing to work with him.

In his mind, if there was such a gap between what traditional music notation and what improvisation had to offer, he wanted, through conduction, to find out what could be found between these two concepts. To do so, he had to put up a vocabulary which could articulate what traditional music notation could not.

When he began conceptualizing his method, he was not even able to imagine the possible musical results it would entail; he was only able to vaguely picture the resulting possibilities. He was trying to simply clarify the idea itself in his mind, not the possible musical results. But the more he kept working on the concept, the better he began to hear his ideas' possible musical outcomes.

To succeed in being able to communicate with each and every musical communities and aesthetics (classical, jazz, traditional music, etc.), he had to find means for communicating certain information in a way which would exclude other, more specific ways of communication targeting only a specific spectrum of the musical community.

In this matter, he considered to have achieved success, since, with the help of conduction, he worked with symphonic orchestras, jazz bands, native traditional musicians and pop musicians, always being able to bring them together in a single group to create wonderful and very complex music. In his mind, this was one of the goals of this whole journey: to find a form of expression which could bring every other musical style together, to sublimate them.

When he first started experimenting with musicians, they had loads of questions for him, which he thought was a good thing since it forced him to find answers. These answers raised other questions, which he also had to answer and so on. The more questions he had to answer, the clearer the whole concept came to be.

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[82] To show what he meant by minimalistic written music, he mentioned Conduction® No.26 or 27 (most likely Conduction® No.26, Akbank II, performed in Istanbul, Turkey, by Le Quan Ninh (percussion), Bryan Carrott (vibraphone), Elizabeth Panzer (harp), J.A. Deane (trombone/electronics/drum machine), Brandon Ross (guitar), Steve Colson (piano), and the Suleyman Erguner Ensemble: Hasan Esen (kemence), Mehmet Emin Bitmer (ud), Goksel Baktagir (kanun) and Suleyman Erguner (ney), 7:04 minutes long), which was entirely based on only 8 bars of written music.

So when he started to teach these techniques, he himself had to learn very fast because, by the bias of their questions, many students – and teachers – were forcing him to decide this gesture meant this while this other gesture meant that. Therefore, every evening when he was getting out of rehearsals, he had to go back to his room, sit down and face all these interrogations so to find answers for everyone for the next rehearsal.

Near the end of his life, he deplored the fact that musicians seemed more afraid of asking questions…

As the experimentations went by, it seemed to him this "monster" he had created was becoming bigger and bigger and it started to somehow scare him more and more since he had the uncomfortable feeling he would never see the end of it, that he could never fully understand how the result could ultimately sound like – and to a certain extent, he thought it was still the case at the moment of the interview.

"When you lose the attention of the ensemble, you're lost."

The author of this text, as it has been explained in a precedent chapter, also experimented with techniques very close to what actual conduction is. Very soon, he began to get the feeling he was not progressing fast enough in front of his musicians to keep their attention from rehearsal to rehearsal and that, consequently, they were beginning to get bored of these techniques. When confronted to this fact, Butch Morris stated he never really faced this problem himself.

Of course, in the beginning, he did have more difficulty keeping the attention of the musicians, naturally lacking experience in this matter, but he very swiftly gained experience and this aspect never really became a problem for him.

However, he was humbly admitting it took him about six or seven years before he could truly gain confidence and stop being repetitive about what he was doing and where he wanted to go musically. It also took him years before being able to truly develop the necessary means and reflexes to feel at ease and to develop the mental rapidity needed to express what he wanted musically without being repetitive. In fact, he was blaming the fact

that, in his early years as a conductor, he was not letting himself go enough, that he was simply auto-analyzing himself too much as he was conducting.

He was explaining this situation by the fact that, even after having performed conduction for over 35 years, and even if he would have had the possibility of conducting ensembles once a week (which was far from always being the case), this could still be considered very few occasions to practice his "instrument" compared to a normal musician. Adequate conduction is not an ability one can get overnight since it needs the conductor to develop skills from the bottom up. No one is born with these skills. Just like for mastering an instrument, it needs time, patience and practice.

Therefore, just like anyone would, he had to develop his skills one step at a time and it came gradually. There has been no precise moment in his life where he thought to himself: "Now THIS is conduction! From that point on, I'm proud of what I'm doing."

A few years ago, Butch Morris decided to trademark the musical application of the term conduction. He did so because he wanted to be the one defining this discipline he created. He chose the term "conduction" because of its link to physics and its definition in this field, which describes the transmission of heat between material bodies.

When he first created the concept, he originally named it "comprovisation": composed improvisation. As he was using this first appellation, people started using it for their own concepts, which were close to his, but not exactly the same. He then decided to name his own technique "conduction". Unfortunately for him, people followed him and started also naming their concepts "conduction"… This situation led to the idea of getting a trademark for the concept and name.

When asked about the necessity for a trademark for this name, since many similar techniques have been in use through time, he was comparing it to the Pepsi Cola/Coca Cola situation, arguing over and over that he wanted to keep control of the definition mankind would make of conduction. In his mind – and perhaps he was right – time itself would allow future generations to make a distinction between his concept, conduction, and other similar, yet somehow different concepts other musicians have developed.

For instance, people like Frank Zappa, Sun Ra, Charles Moffett, Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss or Earle Brown only worked with musicians from their own community, whether it was the classical or the jazz one. In Butch Morris's mind, they were limiting

their understanding of what conducted improvisation could be by limiting themselves to only a part of the musical community; they could only be interpreted by so many musicians. They were, therefore, coming to certain conclusions which, although valuable in themselves, did not allow them to understand the totality of what this art form had to offer.

With his approach, which he considered more comprehensive, more holistic, Butch Morris considered that, whether conducting traditional musicians from Japan, Korea or Turkey, the musical result would remain their interpretation of what he is doing, not their own improvisation in itself. He did not think in a stylistic matter, never thought a performance would have to be in a jazz style, or classical, or pop, or R&B, etc.

In his mind, conduction was a way for someone to learn more about music – and not only on conduction itself – which one could not learn otherwise. He never wanted to chain anybody with his ideas, his point of views. The only thing he was pretending is that with him and his techniques, some people could learn more on music, in a broader sense, and on themselves.

The ultimate goal of the exercise was for the group to make something they already knew evolve and, subsequently, for the audience to have a whole new musical and hearing experience on each and every representation with the same basic music.

"A directive […] is solely a symbolic stimulus. Just like notation is a symbolic of music. Just like writing is a symbolic of speech."

Butch Morris often said conduction is a content-structure exchange between the composer, the director and the musician interpreting it all, which provides alteration possibilities and musical initiatives; that it was an exchange between the chief and the musicians on the structures' content. The director imposes the structure and the musicians define its content. What the musicians provide to the director in relation to their comprehension of the structure, that's the content, the real substance.

In other words, conduction is a game of influences which starts at the beginning of the first day of rehearsal and ends at the end of the final performance.

He never tried to anticipate what he was going to hear in advance, did not want to define what he was going to do before doing it. It never seemed hard for him not to think about what he was going to do beforehand during a conduction.

When he stepped on a scene, he had no prior idea of the musical journey he was going to embark on, of which musical road he was going to travel; did not know – and did not want to know – how the conduction would commence or finish. This was all improvisation from his part. He never tried to think ahead in a chronological way, from beginning to end, since it was simply not the nature of what he was trying to create.

This does not mean Butch Morris was not capable of picturing extensive and precise musical forms – he did so in a few written compositions – but it simply was not what he intended to do when it came to a conduction context. Furthermore, even if he did attempt to do so, the chances for his intended predefined form to come to life in the way he would have wanted would have been somehow slim, to say the least.

Trying to express a precise musical idea in a conduction context is, as he made the comparison himself, a little bit like trying to execute an American football play: one tries to anticipate theoretically and practically every aspect of the play, but when the play starts, everybody on the team tries to adapt to what is happening live, since virtually no play will ever go exactly as intended. If one wants to hear something precise, then conduction is probably not the appropriate technique to use.

Certain musical ideas can only be expressed with traditional musical notation; others can only be translated into a conduction context and would not be able to exist in a free improvisation context. One has to know how to journey between these three concepts to find the best way to express his ideas, to achieve his musical goals.

Butch Morris considered he had a compositional mind and an improvising mind and wanted to for those two aspects of his musical creativity to work in symbiosis. He was well known for his conductions, but asserted he was composing (in a traditional way) everyday.

He proved that, for one to evolve through conduction, to be able to find true potential in this concept, one needs a lot of patience. It is a “process oriented music”, to use his own words. He viewed this fact as something which brings conduction close to jazz.

In jazz, just as in conduction, one has to constantly evolve in his musical expression, step by step. This is, according to him, in opposition with classical music where the

musician, once he had reached some musical standard, does not evolve anymore; he only gets on the scene and presents the prewritten music he rehearsed.

In continuity with this philosophy, he would repeat over and over to his students that, if they did not have questions rising when they were rehearsing, they had a problem… and if they were not trying to answer these raised questions, they had an even bigger problem!

He took it as a duty to always pay very close attention to what his musicians were giving him musically. He thought there was a big difference between reacting to his indications and answering them: a musician reacting to his indications was limiting himself. He often saw musicians reacting and thought to himself that, if they could simply relax a bit, they could answer his indications in a more adequate way while keeping their own musical personality.

In this sense, he wanted to give as much responsibility to the interpreter as possible. This is the reason why he considered the "pedestrian" sign[83] to be more powerful than a "solo" sign: it came with a greater responsibility, had a better justification for itself to exist.

In his conductions, he never spoke of modulations in the traditional sense. Instead, he was talking about harmodulations, which he described as the ability to make things move around, to musically shift the "weight of sounds" from one place to the next.[84] So in a modulation sense, he considered free improvisation to be relatively close to conduction, but without the precision conduction brings to the interpretation, the precision of being able to tonally move from one place to another.

"Improvisation is not a god."

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[83] As we will see later in the text, the "pedestrian" sign means for the musician, among other things, to bring new ideas to the group, to somehow take the lead. Many analysts wrongly associated this indication with what we call "solo" in jazz.

[84] This approach to modulation is very close to Ornette Coleman's principles of harmolodics, which has as many definitions as there are free musicians, but is often described as a shift in music which not only includes the scales the musicians use (they sometime do not really use any "scales" in the traditional sense of the term), but also the tonal center, the rhythm, the tempo, the melody or simply the general feeling of the music in a broader sense. It can also be related to a card called "music change" in John Zorn's musical games. Its role is for the style of the music to change, while the group remains the same.

Butch Morris always had a lot of respect for improvisation. He considered it something very, very important, but not an absolute, not an ideal. He considered it as a certain advantage, a plus for someone intending to play conduction, but not something essential to master. There is no indication, in his conduction vocabulary, which means "improvise" or "take a solo".

He believed in improvisation and in musical freedom, but his approach of the subject was somehow relatively far from the definition most musicians generally associate with the terms. When talking about his work, he was never using the terms improvisation, or free improvisation, or free jazz, except for comparison purposes.

Many of the interviewers he met have written he was doing free music or free improvisation. He considered this fact a real problem. When he had a saying, he did not allow people to say this because, in his mind, free improvisation is an art form which is trying to get into a precise direction.

He often mentioned that, if people wanted to build something based on free improvisation, they were more than allowed to do it, but they should not link it to conduction, since it is not; it has a link with free improvisation and he did not consider he had any relation to that art form or philosophy.

This problem was also something he had to clarify with groups when he was first rehearsing with them. Many musicians would ask him why he was giving them so many indications when, in their minds, this was supposed to be free music. Every time, he had to explain that, no, this was not free music and that if they were beginning to describe the music before it even began, then surely, there would be a problem somehow.

One cannot do just anything in conduction, everyone has to follow indications; this is the nature, the essence of this music. One simply has to try to give some kind of sense to the directives.

As mentioned earlier, there is no indication meaning "solo" in Butch Morris's gestural vocabulary. The sign which many people think means "solo" is actually called "pedestrian". It means for the musician to contribute to the global integrity of the structure in progress and to find – or create – a way to favor its elaboration and its development.

The musician receiving the "pedestrian" indication can let himself get inspired by musical information which was already present in the conduction to modify them in a

qualitative or quantitative way, or try to bring new musical information to the ensemble so to influence or foster the development of the conduction.

Every indication given by the conductor should always be understood and interpreted in its context. Butch Morris had a gesture meaning "repetition", but repetition, depending on the context, could have five different meanings.

If he was giving the "sustain" indication (which is one of the most elementary indications in the conduction vocabulary), musicians had to understand there are literally hundreds of ways for someone to sustain a sound and ask themselves which is the most suited way to sustain the sound in the moment's context.

As we saw earlier, Butch Morris's conductions were in a constant state of harmodulation, which is a mix of, among other things, tonality, melody and rhythm. Not once in the 199 conductions he had performed has he discussed tonality or even tonal centers with his musicians. Yet, very few of his conductions can be described as dissonant.

He was explaining this particularity by the fact that, in his opinion, if there is a fair balance between harmony, melody and rhythm, one can make almost any kind of "harmonic progression", jump from one tonality to another, to another, to another without anybody noticing.

During his career, many analysts with high studies have asked him how he had written this or this part of a conduction, arguing there was, at this specific moment in the piece, a clear melody, or rhythm, or modulation. To their astonishment, his answer has always been that nothing was written and that one could get these results simply by applying the rules of conduction.

If he had a complex musical idea coming to his mind during a live performance, he would try, to the best of his ability, to steer the group towards what he had in mind. But when a complex idea came to him and he was not performing, he would simply sit down at his desk and try to lie it down on paper like any other composer would do. From that point on, if he wanted to integrate this musical idea into a conduction, he would present it to the musicians during a rehearsal, never knowing where it would lead once it was in the musicians' hands… But this did not happen very often.[85]

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[85] As we saw earlier, on the 199 conductions he performed, only 15, perhaps 20 (according to his evaluation) have been relying in any way on written music.

If it did happen for a group to rehearse a certain written music, like a groove or something among those lines, and for the group to master it at some point, he would always stress this was simply a possibility for them to use during the performance, not an obligation.

When Butch Morris was facing a new group, whether for an atelier or a future official conduction performance[86], it took some time before the musicians would be able to play a single note. First, he always would need to have an extensive discussion with them, clarifying what his indications and gestures meant.

In a somehow simplistic way, one can extract three main aspects he was trying for them to understand: who (who does this indication applies to), what (what does this indication mean) and when (when does this directive start to apply).

One of the ways Butch Morris used to get the attention of the musicians was to not provide any music stand for them. Since this was unseen for many of them, especially for the classical musicians, he was getting their attention right away – not to mention they did not have anywhere else to watch but him!

One of the first and hardest aspects of conduction he would focus on, usually until the fifth day of rehearsal, was to obtain a certain execution speed from the musicians. They had to get to a level of comprehension where it would become possible for the conductor to rapidly give some indications to a musician and then, without delay, move to other indications for another musician without the first one having any doubt about any aspect of the indications he had just received.

There have not been any specific exercises he ever imposed to the groups he worked with. Most of the time, having ten or less days to rehearse with them, he did not feel he had time for this. But if he had a year or more to work with the same musicians, he thought he would have imposed some kinds of listening and direction exercises.

A good and clear relation between the chief and the musicians is essential to a good performance. One of the ways Butch Morris found to be as clear and precise as possible to the musicians is to spread them as much as the stage allows it. This way, the “who” aspect of the indication has less chances to create confusion within the group.

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[86] The difference between these two concepts is explained further in the text.

Since, before a conduction is performed, there has been a number of rehearsal days, a good chief will pay close attention to his musicians and, therefore, be able to determine which musician will most likely give him a lot, a little or next to nothing, musically speaking. This good chief will, of course, conduct accordingly to these observations.

According to Butch Morris, the toughest aspects to rehearse with any group will always be clarity and understanding. Strong from his years of experience, he came to the conclusion that, most of the time, these aspects can be clarified within ten days of rehearsal, but can never be so in just three.[87] This is the main reason why, in his last few years, he decided never to accept to present official conductions (public performances recognized as part of his 199 official conductions) without having at least ten days of rehearsal prior to the performance.

When he had less than ten days to work with a group, he was offering an alternative which he was calling conduction ateliers, where the public could, on a daily basis, watch the rehearsals and observe the group's evolution. On the last day of these ateliers, he and the group would usually offer a certain public performance, but this performance could very well be interrupted at any moment for him to clarify certain aspects. Of course, this performance was not recorded as an official conduction.

Another huge difference between an atelier and an official performance was that an atelier served the purpose of understanding all the theory of conduction while trying to put that theory in practice, while in an actual performance, anything could happen.

He judged that there was a humongous difference between a presentation after three and ten days of rehearsal work, but that it did not mean the musical result would automatically be better after ten days; it only meant the group would have a clearer vision of what it had to do… which at the time was what he was looking for.

As mentioned earlier, he thought one of the main keys of success, if one wanted to create musical magic in conduction, was clarity. He considered that when the parameters were clear, one could do almost anything with it. If one succeeds in having good clarity and certain focus, the result would be a great conduction.

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[87] John Zorn seems to agree with Butch Morris on this point. About Cobra, Derek Bailey (1992, 76) writes: "*Rehearsals, I found, is crucial for Zorn's piece and […] rehearsal is a kind of training. There's nothing specific, nobody is told what they should play, but there's a training in how to incorporate the instructions into their playing and an investigation of the possibilities opened up by them.*"

In this sense, he was not able to determine which conduction he considered the best ever, but that it had to be the one where the group and he had the most focus and concentration, the best comprehension of what was happening live.

Part of this comprehension the chief needs starts at the very first day of rehearsal. When the chief is explaining to the musicians the signification of the indications he will be using, it is of the foremost importance for him to pay attention to how the musicians are interpreting these musical stimuli, so for him to be later able to use them in the most effective way possible within the context.

The chief has to learn to know his musicians because some of them will watch him during the whole conduction, while others will not watch him once. This is why the chief has to find a way to catch their attention. This might be one of the hardest things to do for a conductor, but if he pays enough attention to what the musicians are willing to give him musically, he can stay away from one of the biggest traps of conduction, which is repetition.

In that trail of thoughts, Butch Morris considered it would have been theoretically possible for him to do a conduction performance with a group he never rehearsed with, but that the possibilities would have been extremely limited and that they would have fallen into the repetition trap after a very short time.

Sometimes, he considered minimalism to be the best way to deal with a group: a chief could build something very interesting with only four or five indications, as long as he is particularly conscious of how he is going to use them. He was saying a chief could play with the same indication for a long time while still remaining musically interesting (and interested).

It happened for him to tell musicians they were adequately satisfying a certain indication, but that they have been interpreting it the same way for over 25 minutes and to ask them if they could not find another way to do so. He thought it was a good thing to challenge the musicians so for them to start thinking about the indications in a broader sense. Otherwise, they might become lazy and, if the musicians start being lazy, the chief starts being lazy. If the chief becomes lazy, he becomes boring and, therefore, the musicians become bored and the interpretation becomes uninteresting.

In conduction, Butch Morris considered that the size of the band is something not to be taken lightly. He thought a band composed of 70 musicians was not to be dealt the same way as a band composed of only 10 musicians; it has to be approached in a different manner because it is a completely different beast to tame. It is a completely different way of delimiting sections, subsections and even individuals.

There has to be a connection between the director and the band since, if the chief gets on stage to demonstrate one thing to the group and the group wants to do something else, there is simply no point in the exercise. If one gets in front of a band without knowing what to say to the musicians or how to explain it, then one is done for. The chief imperatively has to find a way to obtain and keep the attention of his musicians at any cost.

Then, when the concert comes, the chief can feel confident since he knows and understands what the group can give him musically, what he can and cannot get from it, and he has learned how to get the best of what the musicians have to offer, even if he does not really know in advance what he will do or ask them.

There is a fine line between improvisation and interpretation within the whole conduction concept and it is essential for the conductor to understand it. To lead a conduction is a bit like playing an instrument: one has to watch out not to constantly come back to familiar territory, to already travelled roads.

A conductor learns and grows as he gets more and more experience with conduction, just like Butch Morris did. He develops new listening abilities, new ways of doing things or simply learns new aspects of collective participation. A conductor can learn a lot about developing new abilities on how to manipulate sound or musical information.

In Butch Morris's point of view, the essential difference between a classical and a conduction chief is the fact that the classical musical director gets on the stage to exhibit exactly what he and his group have rehearsed, while the conduction chief gets on the stage and does not exhibit what he and the group have rehearsed, but something else.

"Sometimes I think this music was really made for unschooled [musicians]."

Butch Morris did not think the perfect musician for interpreting conduction was a jazzman, or a classical musician, or a traditional musician playing mainly orally transmitted music; he thought the ideal musician for his art form was simply the one who understands music in its broader sense.

He argued it was not true a classical musician would be better at conduction because he is used to watch a chief; often, they watch the chief during rehearsals but stop looking at him when concert night comes.

He often faced classical musicians who would refuse, at least in the beginning, to accept one can play music without having a written musical sheet. Many of them even left rehearsals because of this.

He argued it was not true a jazz musician would be better at conduction because he is used to improvise and to understand, live, the general feeling and musical direction a piece is taking.

In a conduction context, the jazzman feels harnessed, restrained in his habit of musically expressing himself freely.

Some free improvisers communities only work when following certain specific predetermined musical ideologies, some sorts of manifestos, doctrines. If their principles allowed them to work within the conduction parameters, then Butch Morris would have had no problem working with them. But if their dogmas would keep them from receiving imposed live indications, then working together would simply not be a possibility for him.

He loved to conduct musicians who mastered their instrument as well as possible… as long as they stayed open to his musical ideas. A better instrumentalist does not automatically mean a better conduction interpreter.

He thought that, often, an intermediate musician, or a student in music could be the best in the group when it came to conduction interpretation, simply because they would understand better how to contribute to the musical ideas.

Contrary to what most people thought, he found out over the years that having musicians who were virtuosos of their instrument did not mean they needed any less time in rehearsal to become good interpreters of conduction. In fact, his experience had shown him that virtuosos were even somehow refractory to new ideas and musical concepts, which is a major handicap in a conduction context.

He had conducted musicians who were considered as some of the best worldwide improvisers, but who did not know how to approach his kind of music. He attributed this to the fact that interpreting conduction demands a certain discipline which acclaimed improvisers do not usually appreciate and do not want to impose upon themselves.

Sometimes, some musicians would even get angry at him because he was challenging them so much.

He had every kind of musicians (free jazz, jazz, classical) simply leaving a rehearsal right in the middle of it because they did not appreciate getting live and imposed indications. But often, they would come back to see and hear the final result and would ask him why he did not tell them, right at the beginning, the whole thing would result in something so beautiful!

So it sometimes seemed to him, the less influence the musicians have had in the past – like one has had when graduating from a music college – the more open they were when it came to follow a chief's indications, since they did not have any pre-established concept of what music should be and how it should sound like.

He also had very good musical experiences with many autodidact musicians, musicians who wonderfully contributed to what he was trying to build. This is why he sometimes thought his music was best suited for musicians without "musical education" in a scholastic sense.

When it came to the geographical origins of the musicians, Butch Morris did not consider there was a place in the world (Asia, Europe, etc.) in which the musicians were more likely to understand his musical concepts more rapidly than another, no specific place where it was easier for him to be understood musically. According to him, one could find "gems" anywhere on the planet.

Naturally, it was easier for him to communicate his ideas in places where he could be understood in his mother tongue, but this was simply from a practical point of view. It often happened for him to go to places where the presence of one, even sometimes two translators was needed, but the musicians came to understand his music very well nonetheless.

From a geo-cultural perspective, he came to realize there were some interpretation differences between musicians, but he was not willing to take the step of saying musicians

from one country were better adapted than musicians from another country to perform conduction. In fact, he loved to lead ensembles in which many musical cultures were represented[88] and for all of them to come together under an interpretation of what he wanted to hear.

He also thought musicians were more open to his concepts in the years 2010 than 25 of 35 years before, when he first attempted doing conduction. It seemed to him, musicians were getting more open-minded as time got by.

Some musicians he met over the years were excellent interpreters who immediately understood the principles of conduction and how to maneuver within this concept. They even understood very rapidly how they could, somehow, bend the rules so to play a little bit more of what they wanted to play.

When musicians came to really understand the essence of what conduction is, its theoretical and practical applications, they could find a way to navigate within its parameters and somehow play what they wanted to play, impose their ideas at the detriment of the ideas the chief wanted to impose. Butch Morris had a very good comparison to explain this phenomenon: the pedestrian and the red light.

In some cities, when a pedestrian comes to a red light, whether there is a car coming or not, it would be unthinkable for him to cross the street. To stop at a red light is the law and, therefore, it has to be respected.

In other cities, when a pedestrian comes to a red light, he takes it more as a suggestion, an indication crossing the street may be hazardous, but nothing to be taken too seriously if there is no danger in sight. In these cities, the pedestrian might actually decide to cross the street if he considers he has a good reason to.

The same applies to the interpreters in a conduction context. Some will consider indications to be imperatives and would not even think about transgressing them, while others will consider them as mere suggestions, rules which should be somehow followed, but which could also be bent if they consider there is a good reason for it.

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[88] Butch Morris claimed he conducted an ensemble where nine different cultures were represented, playing seven different traditional instruments.

It even happened, in very few occasions, for Butch Morris to meet musicians and to realize, after just five or ten minutes, they were simply perfect for conduction, that everything would work perfectly with them. These were the ones he called "gems".

What he learned by conducting other musicians, he tried to apply to himself when he was the musician. When playing as an instrumentalist with a new ensemble, he always tried to understand, in the broader possible sense, what the ensemble expected from him; what they wanted for him to give to this kind of music. He was always asking himself what instrumental contribution this particular music was soliciting from him.

Art, in his mind, was a discipline in itself and demanded the artist's efforts to better understand himself and the essence of art, or in this case music, itself. He thought music had to be essentially conceived in the spirit and heart of its creator and that if a musician did not take that into consideration, then surely problems would not be far behind.

He thought there were still things to be discovered when it came to music.

"I want to make a point. I'm not always sure exactly what that point is because I'm discovering. I'm discovering all the time."

There was clearly a philosophy in what Butch Morris was doing, but he was not able to clearly explain what it was, except for the fact that, in his mind, there was more to music than simply what we could hear.

He wanted to understand music in a very large way; not only improvisation, but to understand the wide range of possibility improvisation had to offer in a musical context. As he said so himself, his language was music.

Since he considered himself still in a "discovering mode" when the interview was conducted, he considered it, at the time, impossible for him to put down on paper a complete and extensive theory on conduction. He was in a process of writing a book on the subject, but thought he still had too many unresolved problems, unanswered questions, too many things to discover and clarify before being truly ready to finish it.[89]

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[89] Luckily, the author had a confirmation from Mr. Morris's family this famous book was in the process of getting published. According to the latest information, it should be printed and available sometime during the fall of 2016.

He thought he would have needed two or three years – ideally five – working with a steady band for him to consider he had gone over every possibility conduction had to offer. He was waiting for an institution to provide him with a group for five years before considering he could answer every question he was asking himself about conduction. He thought if he did have this five years relation with a band, the clarifications he could have brought on his work would have been incalculable, incomparable with what he could clarify with a relation of only days or weeks.

Therefore, he was always very enthusiastic to be working with the same ensemble for a certain period of time, so to be able to explore in a deeper way the musical possibilities it provided. This does not mean he did not enjoy having worked with many different ensembles. He thought it was something he also needed.

He considered that many of the other chiefs who were also doing conduction, or even the ones who were doing something only similar to conduction, were limiting themselves, while he was not trying to impose himself limits. He claimed he was trying to work between the parameters of what the idea of conduction itself had to offer.

In his view, one of his most important aspects as an artist was that the composing and improvising facets of his mind were able to work together in symbiosis, that there was no real separation between these two. He wrote a lot of music in the "traditional" way, but had the feeling people were forgetting this aspect of his career.

"If I had one ensemble for one year, two years, or three, or five years, my God… the things that could become clear!"

In conduction, at the beginning of a relationship between a chief and a group, there simply cannot be an equal relationship. In the beginning, the chief certainly has a greater influence over the musicians than the other way around, but as time goes by and the more the musicians understand the concepts and parameters of conduction, the more the chief and the musicians become equally influential one over the other.

Once this level of understanding is reached, Butch Morris considered a conduction indication simply as a musical symbolic stimulus, just like musical notation is a symbolic

representation of music or like writing is a symbolic representation of speech. He considered it simply natural, after a while, for the influence of the musicians over the chief to be just as great as the influence of the chief over the musicians.

Even when he was getting off the conductor stand, he pretended he was not hearing the music. He was hearing something, but could not explain what this something was since it was in constant evolution, constant change.

In fact, when he was doing conduction on stage, he was hearing the conduction in a certain way, but could listen to the same thing later and hear things he did not hear while on scene, whether these things were positive or negative.

It did happen, many times in fact, for him to walk off stage and not be satisfied with his own performance as a conductor. It also happened for him not to be satisfied with the performance the musicians have given him, for him to be disappointed of the musical content they have offered him. This is one of the main reasons why, near the end of his life, he would not offer performances after only four or five days of rehearsals. In his mind, this was one of the main factors for a possible lack of comprehension.

However, near the end of his life, having a respectable discography and strong from his many artistic achievements, he did not care too much about what his critics could think of his work. He was pretending, like most artists, not to work for the critics and, somehow, not even to work too much to please the public, at least not at any cost or consciously.

Nevertheless, he admitted that, perhaps on a subconscious level, the public might have had a certain influence on him.

For example, it seemed to him the Italian public has always listened to his music from a melodic point of view. This might be why he always tried to use melodies when conducting in Italy: because he knew that, by using melodies, he could more easily bring the Italians with him on his artistic process and offer them a musical journey they would appreciate. He was not sure of this fact, but it would explain why he often made use of melodies when performing in Italy, while he almost never did while performing in Germany, Austria or Holland…

Another explanation for this fact would simply be it was a good excuse for him to incorporate certain melodies he had written and he appreciated into the idea of conduction itself and not really to please the Italian public or critics.

Just as he was expecting it, when he first started performing his art, the reactions were mitigated. At that time, the negative critics he received did not affect him too much, since he was considering he understood something these critics did not and that it was this fact in itself that made them be on the defensive.

Still, he would have appreciated for some people not to be as aggressive towards him and his work, particularly in his early years, but also throughout his career; but ultimately, he thought it was their own problem, not his.

He was considering the negative reviews he got to be motivated by the fact that his detractors were scared by the deepness and vastness of the possibilities conduction had to offer, just like it scared him in his debuts, during the 60s and 70s, since conduction would certainly lead to places still uncharted and which still had no history of their own.

Naturally, since that time, many opinions have changed, just like the people expressing them.

There also have been people appreciative of what he was doing and who followed him and his work for 25, 30 years. He deeply believed that, if these people had been alive for a longer period of time, they would have made it possible for him to reach a higher plateau of comprehension of what conduction is, or could be.

Many other musicians were pretending they were doing conduction – he personally would not have necessarily chosen that term – because they first started by learning from him.

At the time of the interview, he estimated there were 18 musical formations describing themselves as improvisers orchestras which have been put together since 1997. He attributed the formation of these groups from this year on to the fact that they had realized he had been doing this for over ten years and that, therefore, there must have been some potential in this form of art. One of the things these orchestras had and he never did was a long-term relationship between the bands and their musical directors.

He always tried to get his hands on every CD of every formation pretending to do conduction, in the hope of noticing a certain kind of evolution from one CD to the next. Unfortunately, for the vast majority, he could not consider he did and it saddened him because, in his mind, one of the main reasons so many people were doing conduction should have been the evolution possibilities it provided.

Still, he considered the more people would decide to play conduction or its derivatives, the better. However, these people should always keep in mind they needed to have a long-term vision of this form of art, not a short-term one.

He found it somehow funny that some people would tell themselves they could do better than him because, after having tried it twice or trice, they were already starting to repeat themselves.

Butch Morris, on the other hand, almost never did. Many musical directors who were performing conduction went to New York to watch one of his Monday night performances[90] and told him, afterwards, they did not realize one could do all this with conduction… His explanation for this was they were only trying to find answers to make their ideas go forward – which is good – but almost never came out with new ideas altogether.

One thing Butch Morris was very scrupulous about was the definition of conduction. He hated when people were calling what they were doing "conduction" when it was not. Many people were (and still are) using similar, but not identical techniques while still calling it conduction. He simply did not understand why these people were persisting in doing this. To him, if someone was doing something different, why not call it with a different name?

To the best of his knowledge, there were about 40 other people pretending to do conduction, but since they were all going in their own personal ways with it, he himself would not have called their art conduction.

Some people were pretending they have been doing the exact same thing as him a long time before he came up with the conduction principles. He always answered them he had much more publicly available documentation than any of them. He was simply asking them, if they had done that for the last 30 years like they were pretending, where this information proving what they were saying is true and dating from 30 years was.

He truly enjoyed the fact that there was a certain growing community of musicians and formations which were inspired by his work and trying to perpetuate a philosophy and musical techniques which he thought were called to become important in the evolution of a somehow improvisation-based music.

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[90] This refers to a series of presentations he performed during a few months in 2011 and 2012.

He thought conduction would take a lot of time, much more than his lifetime would permit him to observe, to evolve, but that, in the end, people would come to understand his vision, which was different than what others were doing.

The most important thing in his mind was for the idea to keep on progressing, with or without him; for someone, or many people, to keep an interest in applying his principles for large ensembles. But he thought no one would really want to take over the responsibility concerning the future of this art form given that he considered he himself had not really done that since he was only following his own ideas.

Luckily, today, with all the tributes to him and the conduction.us website, we know he was wrong…

CHAPTER VI
Marshall Allen, Sun Ra and the Arkestra: the spiritual approach

Sun Ra might be one of the most eclectic and controversial figures the jazz scene has ever known. More than once during his lifetime has he been accused of charlatanism when it came to his musical concepts and his music in general. However, as Ekkehard Jost states it[91], Sun Ra had a more than respectable pianistic technique and knew what he was doing musically; therefore, the charlatanism accusations do not stand. Born in 1914 in Birmingham, Alabama, his birth name was Herman Poole Blount. He changed his name to Le Sony'r Ra when he started being part of the jazz scene.

His first noticeable public appearances were as a pianist for people like Fletcher Henderson, Jesse Miller, Stuff Smith and Coleman Hawkins, to name just a few. His first recording was as a sideman for Gene Wright as part of his *Dukes of Swing*.

In 1953, Sun Ra put together a quartet composed of John Gilmore, Richard Evens and Robert Barry. This quartet will soon evolve into a big band: the Arkestra[92]. In these days, the band lived in Chicago, Illinois. In 1961, coming back from a few months of performances in Montreal, Québec (Canada), the band decided to establish itself in New York City and, since rents were very expensive and the band did not have enough contracts for its members to afford individual apartments, they started living communally. This fact, along with the band's general eccentricity[93], made a lot of people compare it to a sect.

In 1968, the band moved to Philadelphia where they staid (apart for the numerous tours they made all around the world) until Sun Ra's death in 1993.

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[91] Jost 1974, 180.

[92] We generally call Sun Ra's band the "Arkestra" (which is a name chosen by Sun Ra himself, in part because it starts with "ar" and ends with "ra", Ra being the Egyptian god of the sun), but along the years, it got many names, including the Myth-Science Arkestra, the Solar Myth Arkestra, the Astro-Infinity Arkestra, the Jet Set Omniverse Arkestra, the Blue Universe Arkestra, the Intergalactic-Research Arkestra and the Cosmo Discipline Arkestra, to name just a few.

[93] In shows, the band was dressed with eccentric Egyptian-themed costumes and was playing more and more avant-garde music with time passing, which sounded weird to most people at the time. Sun Ra's general declarations on his trip to Saturn when he was a student and the relation between mankind, aliens, cosmos and music certainly also had something to do with it…

Over the years, the Arkestra has been associated with many jazz styles including (but not limited to) ragtime, swing, bebop, hard-bop, jazz fusion and even Walt Disney's cartoon's music, but since the mid 60s, with the album *The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra*[94], the band has been associated with avant-garde music[95] which included a good part of free collective improvisation.

For his part, Marshall Allen (born in 1924, in Louisville, Kentucky) joined the Arkestra in 1957. He is a well respected alto saxophone player, but also plays flute, piccolo, oboe and an electronic valve instrument known as the EVI.

Sun Ra died on May 30th 1993 in Birmingham, Alabama. After his death, John Gilmore took musical direction of the Arkestra until his own death in 1995. Since that time, the band is led by Marshall Allen. The Arkestra still does public performances today.

The influence of Sun Ra is still very present in the Arkestra. Their repertoire is still vastly made up of Sun Ra's compositions and most of the musical lines they still play are from him. He left the band a great number of interesting and moving small musical pieces and harmonies, as well as a way of approaching metrics and syncopation.

In Sun Ra's mind, music had a great relation with energy, mainly because he was playing a lot with syncopation and upbeats. One can play music mostly composed of downbeats, but Marshall Allen compares it to the sound of nailing wood, while mostly upbeats-composed music has a tendency of naturally "bouncing off". These two particularities are the reason why there is such a great difference when playing one way or the other. The Arkestra prefers playing music which "bounces" than music which "nails".

The repertoire Sun Ra has written is immense and very diverse. Some of it is conceptualized in a more traditional way where everybody plays together and in harmony, but some of it is meant to sound as if everybody was playing a different piece; it was not meant to sound as an ensemble playing together. Sun Ra designed those pieces so the resulting sound can be compared to a big incoherent noise, where everybody just seems to blow in his instrument, playing something only for himself, a bit like big band players warming up.

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[94] The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra, ESP 1014. Sun Ra, 1965.

[95] In his book *Free Jazz*, Jost states: "There is absolutely no foundation for styling [Sun Ra] a prophet of free jazz." He considers the album *The Futuristic Sounds of Sun Ra* (1961) to be somehow conservative in comparison to *Free Jazz* (Ornette Coleman, 1960) and *Into the Hot* (Gil Evans & Cecil Taylor, 1962)

One of the techniques the Arkestra uses is for every musician to play a different ostinato, often not even based on the same tempo, so to sound completely uncoordinated. This was also a way for Sun Ra to try to somehow musically reeducate his musicians. Most of them were used to read music and play with big bands in a somehow traditional way, simply playing the written notes. Sun Ra wanted to destroy this in some way by imposing them new sounds, new syncopations and new ways of doing things, of playing music.

Those individual lines, those ostinati, although seemingly unrelated, incoherent when put in relation, all have, in fact, the same foundation. This foundation might not be musical in the strictest sense of the term, but spiritual: they are all based on the day's impression, the spirit of the moment.[96] In general, the musical development in Sun Ra's pieces greatly differs from the musical theme in itself. Usually, a theme is presented and, for a relatively small amount of time, it serves the purpose of converging the orchestra's musical ideas and energy, but does not have any incident on the subsequent evolution of the piece. Jost compares the notated composition in the musical action to a fire-eater stunt, stating one is simply an episode in the musical action, as the other is in the stage action. In Sun Ra's arrangements, the musicians had to understand the vibrations and the spirit of the day. This is what he used to call "space music".

In the Arkestra's New York period, improvisation was omnipresent. He was giving the musicians a great amount of musical freedom; they basically had to play what they would consider appropriated in the moment's context.

Marshall Allen explains certain coherence can be reached when using this technique if every musician focuses on the musical phrase. In fact, he states one can be playing a single note for 30 seconds and the note will have meaning, it will tell something to the audience as long as the musician is focusing on the musical phrase which comes with the note when he plays it. A quarter note will always be a quarter note, but it is in the way of interpreting it, visualizing it longer, or shorter, or offbeat, that a band develops its personality.

For most bands, it works the same way as for the Arkestra: they have a particular way of playing certain music, a sort of language they are developing. According to Marshall

[96] "There are clear indications in *Heliocentric Worlds* that Sun Ra's real 'thematic material' is found in the titles of his pieces, that the 'themes' are thus formulated verbally and not musically" (Jost 1974, 188)

Allen, if one wants his band to develop its own language, this is the way to teach the musicians musical phrasing.

If the musicians were not following this principle, it would happen for Sun Ra (and later for Marshall Allen) to simply tell a musician his playing or solo is not appropriated for the piece and sometimes to simply change soloists.

In the Arkestra, choosing the right soloist for the right piece is not simply a question of instrumentation, but also of personality. The chief has to evaluate who plays his instrument in the most appropriated way in the piece's context. Only the chief can decide if a solo is suitable or not in the piece's context. However, the responsibility for a good solo or not is not only the musician's, but also the composer's: one has to compose music which fits his musicians. This was a principle Su Ra – and Marshall Allen after him – never forgot. In this sense, Jost is right when he states: "This shows how close Sun Ra's conception [of composition] is to Duke Ellington's. Both know their players style characteristics and musical capabilities from years of contact with them, and both do not write *for* their orchestras but compose *with* them. […] What players like Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney and Cootie Williams were for Duke Ellington, and Lester Young, Harry Edison and Buck Clayton for Count Basie, saxophonists John Gilmore, Marshall Allen and Pat Patrick are for Sun Ra."[97]

When Marshall Allen is composing a musical piece, he naturally always leaves space for soloists to improvise. These solos are supposed to represent what the music inspires into the soloists' eyes – or ears – whether the soloists are improvising one at a time or all together. In this second case, there is always a risk for the solo to become somehow cacophonic, but this risk is greatly reduced if everybody has understood the basic foundations of the piece at hand.

However, the musical result of such unorthodox methods of composition and interpretation might sound a bit shocking to the untrained ear. This is why Marshall Allen thinks the public's ear needs to be trained. He compares the human ear to a sort of (inexistent) harp: there are strings which are played all the time and to which the average ear is used. These sounds are appreciated and somehow comfortable, reassuring because we know them.

[97] Jost 1974, 190-195.

Then, on this very peculiar harp, there are strings which are almost inaccessible to most harpist, they are simply too far for most musicians to play. When these strings are hit, people might get shocked – or at best, become curious – because they produce sounds which most people are not used to. But if one plays them often enough, the ear will eventually accept the resulting sounds and learn to appreciate it.

The same theory can be applied to musical concepts: at first, when they seem new, people might not appreciate them, but if you keep bringing them back, a little at a time, then the public will soon learn to understand and welcome them. The secret to reach this goal is dosage. One should not abuse of these "strings" usage, so not to drive people crazy. In other words, one can shock the audience, as long as it's not too much.

Just like most other bands flirting with free improvisation, the influence of the chief (Sun Ra, John Gilmore or Marshall Allen, depending on the period) over the musicians, is about just as important as the influence of the musicians over the chief. The chief imposes his ideas to the group and vice-versa.

In his days, Sun Ra considered what he was teaching the Arkestra was "kindergarten music" and that the musicians were simply not ready for his "senior" music. In that sense, he was trying to guide them the best he could in what they were able to do best. "Kindergarten music" was way enough for Marshall Allen. He considers this music to be hard enough in itself, that it took a long enough period of time for the musicians to learn to broaden their musical horizons, to somehow absorb everything Sun Ra was giving and transmitting them.

So with time came evolution for the Arkestra. Certain pieces which were played a certain way at a certain period were played in a completely different way at a later period.[98] Today, when Marshall Allen conducts the Arkestra, he considers the resulting interpretation as a sort of hybrid between his and Sun Ra's musical visions: he conducts the band in his own, very personal way, but most of what they are playing is still based on Sun Ra's ideas.

In a sense, this can be compared to a classical symphonic interpretation. Just like two interpretations of a Beethoven's symphony can be very different depending on the conductor while still essentially being Beethoven's music, there is still essentially a Sun Ra

[98] Ekkehard Jost seems to associate some of the evolution in Sun Ra's music – as well as other free jazz musicians of this era – "with the change of consciousness that took place in the Sixties among the American black population." (Jost 1974, 199)

influence in what the Arkestra is playing today[99], even if today's interpretations are clearly Marshall Allen's vision of it.

Marshall Allen has always considered it was his duty to perpetuate Sun Ra's traditions and teachings while bringing his own ideas and views into the music of the Arkestra, somehow like somebody inheriting a company or product.

Even when confronted to Sun Ra's affirmations about his travel(s) to and back from Saturn, which most people would consider physically impossible, Marshall Allen very wisely answers one can take whatever he wants or needs, whatever can be applied to his own evolution, his own benefit from whatever anyone says, no matter how improbable these sayings can be.[100]

Sun Ra was often talking to the Arkestra about the universe and how they should introduce people to all kinds of new sounds and rhythms. The Arkestra have always tried to include these concepts into their music and, most of the time, the public does not really know how to react, what it should do when confronted to them.

Marshall Allen always found Sun Ra's teachings very interesting because no one else had ever taught him music this way before, talking about spirits and foundations. This allowed him to realize interpretation mistakes he was doing at the time and to correct them. Today, after having heard Sun Ra talk so much about music, spirituality and the relation between these two concepts, Marshall Allen considers he has taken and kept what he wanted from his teachings and applies it to the Arkestra, like a graduate student applies what he has learned from his classes into his real work.

In fact, Marshall Allen considers himself as a simple follower of Sun Ra and, if the maestro was to come back to life today, Marshall Allen would still follow him. He considers Sun Ra's message to still be actual today, even after all these years and that, with Sun Ra's teachings, one learns to play broader music. This might be the reason why he stayed in the Arkestra for such a long time. He is not the only one to have stayed around

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[99] One should not forget Sun Ra left a pharaonic repertoire of written arrangements, melodies and musical gestures to the Arkestra.

[100] Interesting anecdote about this subject: Marshall Allen once asked Sun Ra how his interstellar travels could even be physically possible. Sun Ra then answered him he was not interested in what was possible, but in what was impossible, that he wanted to play music which was impossible, do what was impossible…

Sun Ra and the Arkestra for a much longer time than is usually the case when it comes to other big band formations.

In 1974, Jost was already amazed by the longevity of the relation between Sun Ra and his musicians. He considered it to be the result of a shared system of values in which money had a relatively small part to play. This is why, in his opinion, the group was able to stay united and evolve in such a steady way throughout the years, despites periods of time in which work was hard to find. He also attributes it to a very special link Sun Ra was able to establish with his musicians, a link much stronger than the usual musician/conductor one which can be found in most musical formations.

In an interpretation, adding or cutting a musician from the band, whatever instrument this musician plays, can change everything. Every musician brings his own vibrations to the ensemble and these vibrations can change the general sound of the piece, which is why it becomes essential for every musician in the band to understand the foundations of the pieces at hand.

For Marshall Allen and the Arkestra, when it comes to musical interpretation, everything is based on each piece's spiritual foundations. If the foundations are clear for every musician and they all understand the musical codes associated with these foundations, it becomes possible to reproduce music which has the same spirits, even if it is not the same music, the same pieces the musicians are playing. According to Marshall Allen, Sun Ra's music was firstly based on foundations, then on codes.

When codes are associated with certain sounds, certain pieces, everything becomes related. When this happens, one can still play on the harmonic structure, which might become somehow boring, or one can play something based on the spirit of the piece, which can lead the musicians to play fewer and different notes than they would have otherwise.

Sun Ra was trying to make his musicians realize they had to learn to trust the spirits, that the spirits would guide them in what they would feel and the vibrations they would produce. He was telling them that, when they did not know what to play, there were spirits they did not know which could guide them; that one could use his conscious knowledge to play, or abandon himself to the spirits and let them guide him. When the musician decides

to go with the second choice, the spirits will surely bring him to places he would not have gone to if he had followed his intellect.[101]

However, sometimes the music just goes too fast for the musicians to be able to let themselves be guided by the spirits. This is why it is important to always pay attention and follow the lead of the musical director. Sometimes, only he can truly follow the spirits. In fact, no matter who is conducting, the spirit of the group will always go in the chief's direction.

When Marshall Allen joined the Arkestra in 1958, he knew how to sight read and properly do everything a professional musician should, but this was not what Sun Ra wanted from him. He wanted him to do something else which Allen had trouble figuring out at first: understanding the spirit of the moment, the spirit of things.

Sun Ra did not want musicians joining his band to do and play how and what they already knew, he wanted them to play what they did not know, what they could not yet understand. Only this way, he thought, could the spirits take over and guide the musician, which, ironically, would probably make the musician play better, not knowing anything. One had to learn to recognize and trust the spirits.

The spirit of the moment, the spirit of the day is what causes this huge gap between a rehearsal and a show interpretation of the very same musical piece. What one feels and does today might just not be the same tomorrow.

When performing in shows, the Arkestra did not (and still does not) play the same pieces or do the same interpretations than when rehearsing since they had to deal with the spirits of the public and of the place. This changes everything.

The Arkestra had a very vast repertoire, mainly because Sun Ra was composing practically every day. This repertoire included daily sound exercises, Count Basie-like[102] big band pieces, old popular songs or simply anything that came to their minds or in their

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[101] On this subject, Jost considers that renouncing to an emotional musical aspect (as one could find in some contemporary music, for instance) does not automatically result in bad music, but more often than not, it will result in relatively uninteresting jazz.

[102] Many of Count Basie's earlier big band pieces were "head-arrangements": arrangements which are not written down, but somehow memorized or improvised by the musicians. These basic arrangements were mostly built around soloists and basic riffs and required the musicians' attention to what was musically happening around them.

hands. Even though the Arkestra plays many popular pieces played by many other bands, it prides itself in having its own very personal language and way of interpreting them.

The band always had a vast repertoire so to play for different places, different moods and different publics. Furthermore, the Arkestra's musicians always enjoyed playing every style of music. In fact, they pride themselves in "playing everything". Marshall Allen even states Sun Ra and the Arkestra were doing rap music many decades before it became a recognized and popular art form. But the Arkestra's signature style has always been avant-garde music.

However, everything changes with time and, according to Marshall Allen, today more rapidly than fifty years ago. Therefore, the Arkestra's music also changes and evolves, but they try to always stay ahead of their time, to always be a part of the avant-garde and to always play music which some people consider as simply noise. This is somehow funny because Marshall Allen judges that what they were playing a few decades ago, and which was considered as "just noise" in those days, is now very much accepted!

This fact is part of the reason why Marshall Allen finds it important to try to push the public's acceptance for new music a little further all the time. As stated earlier, he thinks a band can play some music the audience does not really appreciate, as long as it does not play too much of it.

When the Arkestra is playing avant-garde music, they mostly create this music on the spot. It then becomes of the outmost importance for the musicians to truly listen to one another and play accordingly. Marshall Allen considers this technique to be an arrangement technique in itself.[103]

In his days, Sun Ra almost never used traditional music symbols[104] in his arrangements or compositions. He would simply explain and demonstrate what he wanted to hear, how certain musical phrases were to be played by the musicians. The way for the musicians to be phrasing the music was described orally and it was their responsibility to remember it when the time came.

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[103] This "live" arrangement technique can be put in relation with the arrangements of Count Basie, since his band was doing almost the same thing, but in a very different style at the time.

[104] By "traditional music symbols", we mean symbols indicating nuances or articulations.

When composing in his own personal style[105], Marshall Allen almost never uses traditional music symbols either. He considers he does not need to do so, since he has his own way of telling the musicians what he wants to hear from them. In fact, both he and Sun Ra wrote only the notes on the music sheets and it becomes the musicians' job to learn to play them in a certain way.

To do so, Marshall Allen has his own way of conducting and the musicians always understand what he expects from them because they are used to his gestures and what they stand for. Most of these gestures have nothing out of the ordinary, but still, some of them can be understood almost only by his musicians since he developed his own personality when it comes to musical conducting. As an example, he developed signs to tell the musicians to do upwards or downwards glissandi and other musical effects such as these.

He also uses what he calls "classical" gestures, which most – if not all – musical directors use to tell the ensemble basic indications, like tempi and nuances.

There have been certain differences between Sun Ra's, John Gilmore's and Marshall Allen's ways of conducting. Each one of them had their own ways of transmitting information to the musicians, their own ways of dealing with time, their own visions of music and ways of thinking. When a new chief takes over a musical formation, Marshall Allen considers it is of the outmost importance for the musicians to try learning how he conducts, what is particular to him, his vision of music if they want to be able to adequately follow his lead.

In the world of music, certain musicians can be somehow stubborn. Some musicians only want to play jazz (and some of them, only a particular type of jazz), or rock music, or pop, or concert music, but the Arkestra's musicians take pride in knowing how to adequately play all of these styles; although this is only the conclusion of a long personal and musical process.

When they first joined the Arkestra, most of them were jazzmen; if music did not swing in the end, they did not want to hear about it. It took a considerable amount of time for most of them to first accept to play every possible musical style and then to start enjoying it; but in the end, all of them are glad they did. Today, they consider it a good

[105] This is in opposition to composing in more traditional styles, like classical music for which he considers the use of traditional music symbols to be appropriated, if not necessary, since this is part of the proper language for this style.

thing to be able to play and appreciate almost any music imaginable: it does not only give them more opportunities to play for almost any occasion, but it also makes them more open to music in a broader sense and more musically malleable. It makes them able to blend with other musicians at a moment's notice.

On this subject, Marshall Allen tells about a contract the Arkestra had some time ago for which they were supposed to play Chinese traditional music with traditional Chinese musicians. They were not aware of this (rather important) detail before getting on the job. This could have been an artistic disaster for most musicians, but they were able to immediately understand the spirit of this music and to join the Chinese musicians on their traditional instruments while playing them appropriately. At the end of the night, everybody, including the audience, had had a great time!

However, as stated earlier, this is the result of a long artistic and personal journey. At some point, every single musician who joined the Arkestra had to learn to show humility. They all believed, when joining the band, they were great players because they had loads of experience and musical knowledge; but this was not what Sun Ra wanted from them. They all had to relearn everything they thought they knew.

Sun Ra was trying to show them they did not know how to interpret his music, even if they already knew how to read and think musically. They had to learn to somehow capture the spirit of a musical piece and, once they could do that, the piece could go in another direction. Some musicians with excellent reputations and who were known for being able to do anything have joined the Arkestra throughout the years, but at first, just like everybody else, they were not able to follow the band's music because it seemed to them it was simply going in every direction… until they learned to understand the spirit of things.

Sun Ra was trying to bring back his musicians to a childlike state of mind, when no musician really knew how to play his instrument and simply let himself be guided by the spirit of things since they did not know any better. In consequence, the technique Sun Ra was using – both in rehearsal and in concert – seemed particularly hard to master for musicians who had studied music and learned the "proper" way of playing all the classics.

Even if it took years and a great amount of practice for most musicians, being firstly jazzmen, to learn how to cope with all these new sonorities and to succeed in incorporating them into their music, the bandleaders never really had any problem finding musicians who

were willing to open their minds to this art form anywhere in the world. However, to truly join the Arkestra, one did not just have to be willing to open his mind, but to also be willing to cope with the rehearsals, which was just as demanding, if not more so.

Marshall Allen compares the rehearsals under Sun Ra's musical direction to nothing less than a marathon.

In those days, musicians would get up in the morning and practice the whole day until around midnight, taking only a break to have lunch or in the afternoon. Each day, Sun Ra would bring them one, or two, or sometimes three new pieces to work on.

The ultimate goal of putting together daily rehearsals was not automatically to refine or polish the interpretation of technically difficult arrangements, but instead to rehearse the musicians' reactions to musical, emotional or spiritual stimuli. Naturally, rehearsing so much also made the band tighter than the majority of big bands.[106]

He could also be talking for hours at a time during those rehearsals. This was considered to be part of rehearsing, to be a natural thing: this way, things were becoming clearer and it was allowing the musicians to better understand what the chief was expecting from them. They were also somehow appreciative of those long speeches because playing all this time was physically very demanding. Marshall Allen remembers it could get physically painful for his mouth to be playing so many hours a day, seven days a week.

He also compares being a musician for Sun Ra as being like a fireman in his casern: one had to always be ready to rehearse, no matter the time of the day. If new ideas came to Sun Ra in the middle of the night, like at two o'clock in the morning, he would simply wake his musicians up to make them try or develop this idea. It was not uncommon for Marshall Allen to go to sleep fully dressed, just to be ready in case Sun Ra would need them.

It was even possible for the musicians not to be able (or aloud) to get a job. This is how demanding the Arkestra was. It required complete and total devotion.

Today, Marshall Allen assures times have changed. He does not work with the same intensity as Sun Ra and does not demand as much from his musicians. He never wakes them up at two o'clock to try a new musical idea!

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[106] In *Free Jazz*, Jost compares the Arkestra to Schlippenbach's Globe Unity Orchestra, stating Sun Ra's formation had already recorded much more music and that Schlippenbach's public performances were not as good as Ra's, a phenomenon he attributes to their lack of group rehearsals.

The musicians now have three hours long rehearsals and then impose themselves to stop. If they did not impose themselves this discipline, they know things could go on indefinitely. This allows the musicians to actually have some kind of life outside the Arkestra, which might seem natural for most of us, but is a big change compared to Sun Ra's period.

In those days, if a musician had to go out for an hour or so – let's say for a medical reason –, they were completely lost when coming back. They had no idea what the band was playing because they had missed a part of the evolution the band had made, they had missed being exposed to new ideas.

One had to pay close attention, had to truly keep his focus during rehearsals. A brief lack of concentration could get the musician lost in the repertoire. He could even not be playing the right piece. This is how fast things were sometimes moving when rehearsing with Sun Ra.

Marshall Allen states there have been hundreds of songs and interpretations they have rehearsed but which were never published or even recorded, which is somehow bizarre since he also states they were recording everything they were playing during rehearsals, good or bad, seven days a week. This was a way for them never to really lose a good (or bad) idea since they always could listen back to it if they ever forgot the details of what it was.

Of course, this also means Marshall Allen today has something like seven or eight industrial garbage bags full of tapes. Sometimes, what Sun Ra would record would be very small things, like one-musician pieces, but that did not matter, he wanted to record everything.

This is a tradition Marshall Allen perpetuated up to this day. He personally has a room full of carefully identified tapes, so not to get lost. He records everything he does, even if he is just doing personal practice.

Sun Ra always kept his musicians on the edge. They could never truly be relaxed during a rehearsal and assume they knew the piece at hand well enough; and for a number of reasons.

First, they never knew if what they were rehearsing, what they were working so hard on and putting so many efforts in was ultimately going to be useful or not. They never knew if it would ever be used in shows.

Second, it frequently happened for the parts to change hands. Somebody would come late to the rehearsal and one would have to give him his part and learn a new one. This was always emotionally hard for the one who had to give away the part he worked so hard to learn to the best of his abilities.

Another reason which made it impossible for the musicians not to be on the edge was that it would often happen for the band to work on something very hard and, when they finally were able to play it the way Sun Ra wanted it, he would change his mind and bring the piece at hand in a totally other direction. In concert, the signals he would use to indicate a change of mood or to create some other collective musical reactions, whether these signals were visual or auditory (like a predetermined musical line, an ostinato or a percussive event), were often quite subtle; therefore, the musicians had to stay on the edge during live performances, just as in rehearsal, so to be assured not to miss any cue.

Finally, there almost always was a huge difference between the interpretation of a piece the Arkestra would make during rehearsal and the one it would make in shows. One was one thing and the other was another. This is part of the reason why they were rehearsing everyday: they had to be able to seize the spirit of the day, every day.

It was a common thing for the band to be working hard on certain pieces and for Sun Ra to assure them it would be played in their coming show, but when the moment came, for him not to use anything they had rehearsed at all. This could become frustrating for the band to be working so hard each and every day, simply for them not to be able to show any of their work in concert.

Today, even if he most probably shared the musicians' frustration upon this fact during Sun Ra's time, Marshall Allen admits he sometimes does the same: in shows, the band does not automatically play what it has rehearsed. To do so would probably work, but it did not for Sun Ra and it still does not for Marshall Allen.

When he learned music, Marshall Allen did it in a traditional way and, when he was not playing, he learned to put his instrument on his lap and politely wait until he had to play again. This method was out of question in the Arkestra, it would not work with Sun Ra. If

a musician had nothing to play, he would have to get up and dance, or play drums[107], or do something else which would bring a contribution to what was happening on stage.

Sun Ra wanted to have a show band, which, for him, meant a band in which people would dance, sing, frolic; a band in which there would be dancers, clowns, acrobats, anything one could think of. A show with Sun Ra always had nice side dancers and dance lessons. He simply loved to dance on the music.

Today, unfortunately, it would be economically impossible for the Arkestra to put on such large-scale shows. Most of the time, the band is composed of three trumpets, three trombones, five saxophones and a five-piece rhythm section. When the band has the occasion of playing in their hometown, New York City, Marshall Allen will find the money to hire two or three conga drummers or something along those lines, but when the group is on the road, this simply cannot be possible.[108] In these cases, the musicians, in addition to playing their own instruments, also have to play drums, sing and dance.

When in show, the Arkestra usually plays a little bit of everything, every style. This way, if they give the audience something it likes, they do not give too much of it, but if they play something the spectators do not appreciate, it is also somehow good because they do not play too much of it either.

It is (or at least was) not uncommon for the Arkestra to go play some dance music in one club, then go to another (like the Village Vanguard[109]) and play some space music and then go to a Latin club and play Latin music, all in a night's work. This was something which Sun Ra enjoyed doing.

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[107] About the importance of percussions in the work of the Arkestra, Jost denotes, from the early recordings of the formation, how crucial a role the percussions are playing. This role is not confined only to provide a certain pulsation, but he also mentions the solos and duos of percussions and tympani in *El Viktor* and *Street Named Hell*, as well as the long percussion-only musical passages on *Sun Myth*, *Cosmic Chaos* and *The Cosmos* (*Heliocentric Worlds*).

[108] Already in 1974, Jost was writing: "*When the creative ideas of free jazz, developed for the most part in small groups, are transferred to a big band, the problems that arise are both musical and economic in nature, and the latter unfortunately very often decide whether an orchestra stays together or breaks up*." (Jost 1974, 182) What was already true in 1974 is even more accurate twenty years later, unfortunately.

[109] Located at 178, 7th Avenue South, in Greenwich Village, New York, the Village Vanguard is one of the most important jazz clubs in the world. It opened in 1935 and became an all-jazz club in 1957. The club is known for having had (and still having) the greatest jazzmen performing within its walls. It also helped launch a great number of jazzmen careers by offering them a place to perform and often record their live performances.

Sun Ra had the capacity of understanding what the people in a place wanted – or needed – to hear. Marshall Allen thinks there are bands, public personalities and singers who seem to be born with this ability. Sun Ra, being one of those, gave the audience a little bit of what they wanted and a little bit of what they did not want to hear. It was his philosophy.

If he felt the public in a place was leaning a bit more towards a particular type of music, he would usually start the show with this musical style, which was something he musically could afford to do personally. Even as a young pianist, he would not limit himself to only one musical style, but would instead try to adapt his playing and technique to the emotion of any room he would play in. He was very open-minded in that sense when it came to new musical technology, which he considered as a useful tool to try to reach new emotive expressions. He was one of the first jazzmen to truly try to include all the advantages of alternative keyboards (as Hammond or other electric pianos) and to try to let himself get inspired by these new possibilities at the time.

Marshall Allen remembers a time when the band came to a hall in which most people were wearing suits with black ties, so Sun Ra got some classical music out of his book and started playing it since he felt the vibrations of the place were more classical than anything else.

The band then started the show with classical music, then moved to some blues, then to avant-garde, then to Dixieland, then played some bebop since they were able to play a very large amount of musical styles. This way, everybody got a little bit of what they liked.

Often, it would happen for Sun Ra to have the band play a piece and end it after only two choruses, or even after just one chorus and a half, right in the middle of the form. He would say he liked to do this because it was something between two other things, it fitted his way of seeing things. This was fairly appreciated by the audience because it was enough for it, but not too much. The spectators would not get to the point where they would want to put their fingers in their ears.

Sometimes, when Sun Ra saw it fit, the Arkestra would play the same piece for a long time until people started to go crazy, jumping all over the place with smiles on their faces and feeling good; other times he would prefer to play for a smaller amount of time, but to play in a very nice way.

It seems easier to Marshall Allen to find people open to avant-garde music today than 50 or 60 years ago. He claims that everywhere in today's Europe, kids are listening to this kind of music, or a hybrid style between avant-garde and other styles. In the old days, people seemed a bit more stubborn about what style of music they enjoyed: some people enjoyed only rock music, others enjoyed only pop, etc.

In those times, when a band was introducing avant-garde music to most audiences, they would put their fingers in their ears – literally. Today, when the band plays avant-garde music with all the weird sounds which might come with it, the youngsters are loving it and asking for more. Marshall Allen thinks it might be because, even during Sun Ra's time, they were already playing 21st century music; that this would explain why, when confronted to this musical style, the younger people go crazy.

Throughout the years, the Arkestra had to face harsh critic. Marshall Allen explains it by the fact that it does not happen often in a generation for people in the general public to be able to accept their art form in its integrity, with all its dancing and its exuberance. He thinks it is mainly because the band was going to extremes that the Arkestra was so often compared to a sect.

This fact might lead people to think the band never compromised to please its public or the critic, but this conception would be somehow misleading.

It does not really bother Marshall Allen when people tell him what the Arkestra should play. People can tell him what to play and he does not see it as a compromise if they do because it probably already is in the band's book. If people like Dixieland, then the Arkestra will play Dixieland. In his view, if a band can play just about anything, like the Arkestra can, then there is no compromise in playing anything.

Being able to play everything, every style, means you can give the audience mostly what it wants and still be able to push a little bit of what it does not really want into the equation. Marshall Allen thinks that if this is to be considered a compromise, then it is a happy one with which he has no problem coping.

When it comes to what the future holds for large ensembles such as the Arkestra, Marshall Allen is very positive. He believes that, as long as there will be music, people will find a way to dance on it.

He defends this theory by pointing out there used to be a great number of ballrooms for people to have a place to dance and, although the ballrooms have almost completely disappeared, they have only been replaced by other places where people still gather to dance. This, for him, means there will always be a demand for music on which people can dance.

He likes to hear larger musical formations composed of 12 to 15 (or more) musicians because he likes the blend and harmonies these formations can provide. He says it makes the bottom of our souls vibrate. He also likes church music, with its choirs. He enjoys the harmonies which result from these 15 or 20 (or many, many more) singers. Therefore, why not have large musical formations? Why not keep the big band tradition alive?

One could argue these are personal tastes and that it might not represent the vast majority of people, but Marshall Allen thinks everybody likes large formations, big bands, great parades and marching bands. He gives the example of the Mummers parade[110] in Philadelphia where, every New Year, there are huge parades filled with marches, all types of music, costumes, dances and everything that comes with it. And people seem to love it each and every time!

To him, this proves there is still and always will be a place for larger (and smaller) bands. Always.

Marshall Allen also thinks the future for formations playing creative music is assured because he says if people simply continue playing and producing it, there will always be a public for everything. Therefore, he encourages the younger generations to keep progressing with their music and to keep on exposing all sorts of people to all sorts of music, all sorts of sounds!

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[110] The Mummers Parade takes place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, every New Years day. The tradition has been inaugurated on January 1st 1901 and is believed to be the oldest folk festival in the United States. The parade usually lasts almost the whole day (from 9AM to a bit before 8PM) and the participants compete in four categories: comics, fancies, string bands and fancy brigades.

CHAPTER VII
Other historical examples: Alexander von Schlippenbach and Michael Mantler

Naturally, many more musicians, composers and/or musical directors around the world have dealt with free improvisation for medium and large ensembles and each one followed his own personal path throughout the adventure. Almost every one of these stories would be worth exploring, but it would prove to be impossible within the limits of the current work.

As we have seen, the choice of the above studied musicians was based upon the fact that most technical aspects and techniques one would encounter by studying everyone having dealt with this art form can also be encountered by studying only these five individuals. Having said that, among the multitude of other musicians having dealt with our current subject, we will only mention two others which can be considered as unavoidable due to the influence they had in both Europe and America on the ones who followed them, often in their footsteps: Alexander von Schlippenbach and Michael Mantler.

Alexander von Schlippenbach

Born in 1938 in Berlin, Germany, Alexander von Schlippenbach is a well respected pianist and composer. He is also known for putting together and conducting the Global Unity Orchestra and the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra. He is considered to be one of the first and most influential Europeans, amongst others like Peter Brötzmann and Manfred Schoof, to have brought a modern approach to the big band formation in Europe in the late 60s. These formations would form the basis for the following emergence of numerous internationally recognized smaller formations.[111]

Alexander von Schlippenbach began his musical formation at the tender age of eight with piano lessons. He would later continue his formation by studying piano and

[111] See Jost 1987, 118

composition at the *Kolner Musikhochschule* (Music High School of Cologne). This is where he met his composition teacher and, somehow, mentor: Bernd Alois Zimmerman.

As a pianist, one can notice clear influences of Cecil Taylor and Thelonious Monk in his keyboard technique.[112] One can also somehow notice the influence of John Cage and Henry Cowell since Schlippenbach also have played on prepared piano. When doing so, he usually prepares his piano with simple but effective means, like pots and metal pieces while playing the keyboard in a somehow conventional way.

In the early 60s, he played in saxophonist and vibraphonist Gunter Hampel's band, whose first album[113] is considered to be one of the first true affirmations of a typically European free jazz development.[114]

In 1966, for the purpose of performing *Globe Unity*, a composition of his, at the Berliner Jazztage (Jazz Festival in Berlin), he put up together what would become the Globe Unity Orchestra by unifying two existing groups: the Manfred Schoof Quintet (which included certain members of the Gunter Hampel's band) and saxophonist Peter Brotzmann's band, along with other musicians coming from all over Europe. As a consequence of this musical union, the resulting musical formation had two bassists and two drummers. This performance was recorded and it resulted in the album *Globe Unity*.[115]

The name Globe Unity refers to the existing equivalence between composition and improvisation. The latter being, in fact, spontaneous composition, Alexander von Schlippenbach considers these two principals, composition and improvisation, to be the same. As we have seen, Barry Guy's *Ode* was also conceptualized to be an answer to the same problem: trying to find a way to fuse together the concepts of orchestral writing and free improvisation.

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[112] For a detailed analysis of Monk's and Taylor's influences on Schlippenbach's pianistic style, see Arndt 2002, p.159.

[113] *Heartplants* SABA 15026 ST, 1965.

[114] Also see Jost 1987, 42-44

[115] Formation for the 1966 *Globe Unity* performance: Manfred Schoof, co, fl-h; Claude Deron, tp; Willi Lietzmann, tu; Peter Brotzmann, as; Gerd Dudek, ts; Kris Wanders, bs; Willem Breuker, bs, ss; Gunter Hampel, bcl, fl; Buschi Niebergall, b; Peter Kowald, b; Jacki Liebzeit, dr; Mani Neumeier, dr; Alexander von Schlippenbach, p, tubular bells, tam-tam, gong.

Up to date, there have been three recordings of *Globe Unity*. In fact, although these three recordings are all based on the same composition, alterations to the original piece were made by Schlippenbach before each performance. Therefore, these three performances gave birth to what is usually considered as three independent (although closely related) pieces:

- *Globe Unity*, performed in 1966 at the Berliner Jazztagen,
- *Globe Unity 67*, performed in 1967 at the Donaueschinger Musiktagen (Donaueschingen Music Festival),
- *Globe Unity 70*, performed in 1970 at the Berliner Jazztagen.

In the 1967 version, the compositional bases of the original version were preserved, while the 1970 version takes more liberties. However, all three versions have the same basic principles: the unity is preserved in a sense that the improviser is the main attraction while the written parts serve the purpose of putting him in the spotlight and to encourage his creativity.

The history of the Globe Unity Orchestra is usually considered to have three phases.[116] The first phase, taking part between 1966 and the early 70s, is mainly characterized by the compositions and musical concepts of Schlippenbach. During the mid 70s, free musical concepts and compositions were submitted by a great number of the formation's musicians. This was a very free period, musically speaking. The third phase, which occurred at the end of the 70s, marked a general return to stricter and better planed compositions, while still keeping a freer side to the ensemble.

During the 1980s, the formation will only sporadically make public appearances before putting the whole project on hold from 1987 to 2001. Between year 2000 and 2010, the band will again sporadically appear on scene and produce a few recordings[117] essentially celebrating its faded glory.

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[116] It is interesting to make a comparison with the history of Barry Guy's London Jazz Composers Orchestra. Both have had three phases and those three phases can be somehow comparable: firstly, a phase in which the band is put together to play a difficult piece of music and, after the original performance, mainly plays the repertoire of the founder; then comes a phase with new musical concepts brought forward by other members of the orchestra; finally, a more mature phase in which a balance is found between composition and improvisation.

[117] *Globe Unity 2002*, Intakt CD 086, 2002; *Globe Unity – 40 Years*, Intakt 133, 2006.

In general, one can say the Globe Unity Orchestra was mainly an event formation in a sense that it would not be put together or rehearse unless it had a very specific representation in which to perform. Already in the 70s, Jost[118], in a comparison between the Globe Unity Orchestra and Sun Ra's Arkestra, would mention the latter to be more effective and prolific than Schlippenbach's orchestra, stating it most probably was due to a lack of rehearsing on the Globe Unity Orchestra's part. In Schlippenbach's defense, one can argue how difficult it is to keep a steady large musical formation together[119] and that the Arkestra's longevity and steadiness can be considered as an exception and not the general rule.

Schlippenbach, like any musician or composer, had many influences in the development of his musical language, but one of the most obvious and important clearly is Bernd Alois Zimmermann. Their relation began as Schlippenbach being a student of Zimmermann at the Musikhochschule from 1959 to 1963 and has continued over their lifetime with them collaborating on a number of musical works and recordings.

One of the most obvious illustrations of Zimmermann's influence on Schlippenbach is the approach of the musical concept of time as a combination of structural and chronological events, which is clearly present both in Zimmermann's late and Schlippenbach's early work. Having interpreted Zimmermann's work during his youth and musical formation can clearly be taken in consideration in Schlippenbach's compositional and musical development. Lothwesen puts this influence in evidence and demonstrates the relation between many musical aspects of the two musicians, including musical symmetry, sound flow, musical quotes and their musical development process.

Naturally, over time and experience gain, Schlippenbach has distanced himself from Zimmermann.

Schlippenbach's music was also – and perhaps mostly – influenced by the jazz tradition and the occidental music, particularly the European aspects of it. When analyzing the compositional and sound organizing techniques he uses, one realizes just how much his music reflects the aesthetic influences of free jazz and contemporary occidental music:

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[118] Jost 1974, 183

[119] As an example of this, the Vienna Art Orchestra would only be put together and rehearse a couple of weeks (sometimes even just a few days) prior to a tour or a studio session.

- The unification of the compositional and improvisational aspects,
- The contrast between the formal structure of the solo and of the collective improvisation,
- The formation and stratification of musical elements by the means of repeated musical patterns,
- The use of atonality with the help, amongst others, of elements close to dodecaphony,
- The manipulation of the musical metric aspect by the means, once again, of musical patterns.

In his work for larger formations, formal planning is an essential element of Schlippenbach's compositional method. From this element follows the improvisational freedom he offers his musicians. In this perspective, as we have seen, he does not differ from the other composers and musicians we have explored earlier. He will also often leave a number of parameters open to his musicians' liking, such as pitch or duration, so they can bring their contribution to the composition in itself.[120]

Another technique Schlippenbach often relies on is the use of graphic musical notation to indicate to his musicians what he expects of them. For instance, in the score for *Rigaudon No.2 aus der Wasserstoffmusik*, composed for the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra[121], only graphic notation is used. Some indications can also be imposed live by the gestures of the conductor (as with Butch Morris's conduction) or cue cards (like Barry Guy would do). These techniques give Schlippenbach the liberty to spontaneously control the band, adjusting the musical result to the mood of the moment.

It also happens for him to identify a smaller subgroup within the larger formation as an improvisation unit, distinct from the rest of the band, a bit like what Barry Guy often does. Lothwesen compares these subgroups to soloists islands.[122] Schlippenbach will also often make use of ostinati backgrounds.

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[120] Often, however, these choices left to the musicians will be limited. They can choose, but only between a certain number of predetermined options.

[121] The Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra is another musical formation under the lead of Alexander von Schlippenbach. It was active between the late 80s and the mid 90s. The compositional style for this formation was a bit less focused on the free improvisation aspect in itself, but it gave a large place to certain parameters being left to the musicians' liking.

[122] Lothwesen 2009, 145

Sometimes, using both these two techniques together, he will subdivide the entire ensemble in subgroups and every one of them will have its own polyrhythm originating from their common initial pulsation. This will result in an overall impression which cannot truly be associated to a specific tempo, but instead a sort of somehow vague pacing impression. In fact, making use of so many different rhythmical layers generates an obfuscation effect on the tempo.

The sound mass deriving from this stratification of ostinati or of individual improvisations can always get coordinated and conducted by external interventions (cue cards, gestures, written indications) which will themselves serve the purpose of determining formal points and new formal targets. Using this technique, Schlippenbach can play with the density of events (the number of distinct sounds, of attacks by time unit) and the density of sound (the number of instruments playing at the same time).

With time passing by and without ever denying or disavowing the influence of his old teacher Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Alexander von Schlippenbach gradually got closer to the music and musical philosophy of György Ligeti, by the use, amongst others, of musical patterns repetitions forming a rather dense and complex texture. The use of this technique is quite obvious in *The Morlocks*, a piece Schlippenbach composed for the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra. In fact, as Lothwesen demonstrates it[123], *The Morlocks*, just as Ligeti's *Melodien*, is a piece based on three musical levels:

- 1st level: melodies (or melody fragments) appearing at the forefront of all the musical levels,
- 2nd level: ostinati interlacing one another in a rather confused way,
- 3rd level: a musical background formed of long notes.

Another proof of the influence of contemporary occidental music on Schlippenbach's latter work is his using of sound pitch series (or tone rows), not totally unlike Schönberg's use of dodecaphony, but without ever adopting it as an absolute system. Instead, he will use atonality as a basic material, using strict serialism in a sporadic way, if and when he feels his music needs it.

This aspect of Schlippenbach's musical techniques should not come as a surprise. Historically, in European jazz in general, musicians have extracted their ideas and

[123] Lothwesen 2009, 159-162

influences (whether for composition or improvisation) from three main musical pools: folkloric or traditional music, popular music and "concert" music. As Lothwesen already pointed out in an article[124], Albert Mangelsdorff recorded old folk songs; Willem Breuker would sometimes quote passages of Kurt Weill songs; Alexander von Schlippenbach uses tone rows in the structure of some of his pieces. These are all, in a sense, a sort of reuse of what the European musical legacy has left in its wake.

However, notwithstanding the clear influences of Ligeti and Schönberg on his music, one will always be able to notice the basic influence of Bernd Alois Zimmermann in Alexander von Schlippenbach's music when it comes to the principle of linking composition and improvisation in a single (global) unity.

Michael Mantler

Born in Vienna in 1943, Michael Mantler is a well known and respected composer and trumpeter on the jazz and contemporary music scene. He was at the heart of the free jazz blooming in the early 1960s, having worked with most of the musicians who first made free jazz history. Because of this and of his extensive post-free jazz career, he is most certainly, with Joe Zawinul, the Austrian jazz musician and composer who had the greatest influence and recognition internationally. However, concerning the greatest part of his career, Michael Mantler considers the association people make between him and improvisation or free jazz to be a burden. He considers – and is right to do so – it has been a very long time since he moved on, since he had outgrown these styles and musical techniques.

In 1962, at the age of 19, Michael Mantler came to America to study at the Boston Berklee College of Music, after having studied classical trumpet for five years at the *Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Wien* (Vienna Music Academy). From the very beginning of these studies, he was attracted by composition and worked to learn all he could in that field.

In 1964, he was invited to New York by the Lowell Davidson Quartet and took part in what became known as the *October Revolution in Jazz*. He would never go back to Boston.

[124] Lothwesen 2012, 2

In 1965, he joins the Cecil Taylor group as a trumpet player. This is also the year when he joined the Jazz Composer's Guild and put together, with Carla Bley who he will be married to until 1991, the Jazz Composer's Guild Orchestra, which will later become simply the Jazz Composer's Orchestra and will be composed of, amongst others, Archie Shepp, John Tchicai, Steve Lacy, Paul Blay (Carla Bley's first husband), Roswell Rudd and Milford Graves.

In 1968, he puts together and conducts the Jazz Composers Orchestra which united giants of the free jazz aesthetic such as Cecil Taylor, Don Cherry, Larry Coryell and Pharoah Sanders. As this is happening, Michael Mantler is not even 25 yet. This will not stop him from achieving, with the Jazz Composers Orchestra, a free compositional maturity level which nobody before him and only a few after him will reach for larger ensembles.[125]

Jazz Composers Orchestra's scores often used graphic notations inspired by Messian or Varese's work and each piece was conceived for a particular soloist. Michael Mantler's motivation for putting the Jazz Composers Orchestra together was to put the musicians in a context which would magnify their playing so to put forward its beauty in a more essential matter. He knew the strengths and weaknesses of each of his soloists. This way, he was able to let them play freely in his compositions, whilst making them react to the written parts, which were conceptualized to amplify their expression. To do so, he could suggest musical material for the soloist to use, but no precise melody or rhythm.

Having such great musicians within a musical formation does have indubitable musical advantages, but it also comes with its lot of inconveniences. One of the main ones being the difficulty to gather all these legends together in the same place and at the same time for rehearsals, which is why the Jazz Composers Orchestra did not rehearse very often. Some would say this fact was compensated by the immense individual talent of the players, but others would state there is no substitute for rehearsing all together.

Even during the very motivating period of the Jazz Composers Orchestra, Michael Mantler already thought of free jazz as something somehow rapidly boring, mostly because he thought free solos were often too long and repetitive, without any real innovation.

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[125] Amongst the few who will later reach or surpass this level of free compositional maturity for larger formations, one has to mention Barry Guy's *Ode* and Alexander von Schlippenbach's *Globe Unity* which were also addressing the problem of a fusion between orchestral composition and improvisation in a free jazz esthetics. See Felber 2012 and Lothwesen 2009, 166.

After the release of the double album *The Jazz Composers Orchestra* (ECM, 1968), it will take over five years for Mantler to present the public with another album as a composer. During this time, his musical esthetics fundamentally evolved, as one can observe by listening to *No Answer* (WATT/ECM, 1974). Although not prolific as a composer, he was still, at the end of the 60s, one of the only Europeans to be part of the main free jazz scene in New York. He also got very much involved in the development of his wife's jazz opera and triple album project *Escalator Over the Hill* (JCOA Records, 1971) as a producer and coordinator.

Already in the 70s, Michael Mantler will leave free improvisation behind, stating it was "*exhausted for [him] as a field of interest*"[126], and will instead move towards jazz-rock. His only 70s' album still showing a certain interest in free improvisation would be *13* (WASS/ECM, 1975).

In fact, his 1974 album entitled *No Answer* (WATT/ECM) is much more representative of the musical direction Michael Mantler is taking: despite the small formation (trio), the album offers an undeniable orchestral conscientiousness, a preference for tonal harmony and repetitions of minimalistic musical patterns.

Leaving free jazz behind until the mid 2010s, he will still continue having a brilliant career as a composer with albums such as *The Hapless Child* (WATT/ECM, 1976) and *Live* (WATT/ECM, 1987). He explains this lack of interest for free jazz and free improvisation in these words: "*Improvisation can be fantastic, but it usually is not. Because improvisers often repeat themselves. […] I think there are not many interesting soloists, to whom I would like to offer the freedom to play whatever they would like.*"[127]

Paradoxically, although he does not consider himself as having a jazz musician profile and does not sees himself as one, he does not consider himself as a contemporary music composer either, but more as a kind of hybrid, something between these two, having a clear interest for contemporary western music and having developed relations with composers such as Phillip Glass and Steve Reich.

As a trumpeter, he practically never puts himself forward in his compositions, arguing he does not feel the need to hear trumpet all the time. The usual theme-improvisation-

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[126] Felber 2012

[127] Ibid.

theme structure featuring a soloist (him, in this case), which is the traditional way for musicians/composers to put themselves forward, is of no interest to him. He prefers variety. Today, he evens considers pop and rock vocalists to be better suited to express certain emotions, which is why he now makes use of them more often than classical or jazz singers.

When it comes to what the future holds concerning more evolved musical styles, he considers the internet and its distribution mode to be a nuisance. He states the musical direction of a given album (the musical relationship between a given piece and its place, its position within the album as a whole) is now probably lost forever since people can now download music one piece at a time. In his view, this does not look good for the future of larger, more complex musical concepts such as what he often tries to put forward…

CHAPTER VIII
Observations and comparisons

Free improvisation goals and direction

When, in 1949, Lennie Tristano recorded *Intuition* and *Digression*, free improvisation was an experiment. When, in 1960, Ornette Coleman recorded *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation*, what would be later called free jazz was a philosophy.

Fifty years after Coleman's recording, free jazz seems to have evolved into a language, a defined aestheticism. For a long period of time, Butch Morris has fought not to be wrongly associated with this musical style and its clichés. Mathias rüegg and Dieter Glawischnig considered free jazz should be a part of the musical background a professional jazz musician should master; this is why they always taught their students this musical language, the same way they taught them Dixieland or bebop.

To some people, free jazz even seems to be leading nowhere. Rüegg candidly admits he left the free jazz scene as a young musician because he thought it was not leading him anywhere artistically. Michael Mantler seemed to have more or less the same analysis. Even a free improvisation loving musician like Dieter Glawischnig attests it becomes repetitive after some time if one often plays with the same musicians without imposing any limits, any rules for the musicians to play by.

Degree of freedom

To counter this problem, he came up with certain limitations to play with. Naturally, today he has his melodic/harmonic system built on intervals, but even in Neighbors' active period, they would try to build their improvisations around small musical motives.

He also states the larger the formation, the more precise the rules will become and the more important it gets for every musician to follow them if one wants to avoid musical chaos. Barry Guy mentions the composition procedure to be different depending on the nature and the size of the band.

When he gets on stage alone, there (sometimes) are themes he wants to play with but it mainly is a free performance. This is even the case when he gets on stage with Tarfala, but when it gets to larger formations like the Barry Guy New Ensemble or the London Jazz Composers Orchestra, there simply has to be foundations and rules for everyone to follow.

The question then becomes which aspects of interpretation should be left to the musicians' free will and to what extent? On this subject, everyone has his opinion.

Butch Morris found his answer in conduction. With this method, he was taking care of the structural aspect of the pieces at hand, while leaving the musical content within these structures to the musicians. The question this technique raises about whether conduction can be associated with collective improvisation seems a valid one. Even if Butch Morris had no idea of the musical journey he was to embark on when stepping on stage, Barry Guy raises the question of freedom when stating this technique is even more frustrating than interpreting a written composition.

To some extent, Butch Morris seemed to agree with Barry Guy. He was very aware of the possible frustrations his technique could impose to the musicians, especially when these musicians come from the jazz field. Not only was he aware of this fact, he was somehow advertising it, telling anyone willing to listen that his technique had nothing to do with free jazz and that being a good improviser did not mean being a good conduction musician.

As mentioned earlier, the author also experimented with techniques which could be associated to conduction – although Mr. Morris would have stated it was not conduction by its own right. Not only has the author came to the conclusion this technique was somehow frustrating for his musicians (mainly jazzmen), but he also noticed the musicians had some problems being musical in their approach towards it. They were so focused on following the chief's indications, their musicality suffered. It becomes difficult to let oneself "go" musically when there are so many movements one has to focus on.

This potent frustration from the musicians' part can be heard by the audience. A musician has to feel free and not bullied around if one wants the musical result to sound free. This is the conclusion the author came to after his experiments, at a time when he never even heard the name of Butch Morris. But everything changed when he heard actual conductions…

Since Butch Morris has been able to present such musically convincing performances with his technique, the author must come to the conclusion it is not the technique in itself which makes it so hard to get interesting and beautiful musical results, but the author's own lack of experience with the technique. Perhaps, had he persevered in this way, would he have come to another, more positive conclusion. After all, Butch Morris always stated he wanted to give as much responsibility to the interpreter as possible, within the conduction's limits.

This means he, just as Marshall Allen does, thought it was important to get to a level where the influence of the conductor upon the musicians is just as important as the musicians' influence upon the conductor. This cannot be achieved easily and after just a few rehearsals; it takes time.

Even Dieter Glawischnig seems to agree with them on this subject. Whether performing as a conductor or an interpreter, he will try not to impose his ideas too much without solely being a follower either. He might, as a conductor, explain to the musicians what he expects from them when doing free improvisation and, sometimes, even make a few adjustments, but he tries for this to be the exception and not the rule, so to let his free improvisers as free as possible. Some of his pieces are entirely written based on this philosophy.

Sometimes, he will only indicate the formal aspect of a composition (like who plays with whom, when and for how long) without truly writing a single note, leaving this aspect to the musicians. This can somehow be considered as written conduction, since both techniques aim for a same goal: imposing a structure to the musicians while leaving them with the responsibility to musically fill this given structure.

The only one who might seem to go in the other direction is mathias rüegg. Although he leaves total freedom to some of his soloists[128] and to a few musicians during interludes[129], he likes to control every other aspect of his music. When he first started doing music with the Vienna Art Orchestra, there were a certain number of free parts or

[128] One of the composition techniques mathias rüegg enjoys working with is to compose everything and then to ask a good improviser, like Matthieu Michel, to improvise over it, without any indication or having seen the score beforehand.

[129] He also lets musicians (usually a small number of them, like two or three) do free improvisation between written pieces during a concert, only telling them the mood he expects from them and the duration of the interlude.

aspects during shows, but over time, it limited itself to only very few aspects and scarce occasions, rüegg being willing to sacrifice this freedom in the favor of his famous dramaturgical bow.

Barry Guy, on the other hand, claims he evolved in a completely opposite direction. If anything, he states he enjoys giving more and more freedom to the musicians over time. He still likes to keep a certain control over the final musical product, often by means of flashcards, but always leaves a considerable amount – if not the majority – of freedom and freewill to the improvisers.

Compositional techniques

With *Bird Gong Game*, Barry Guy composed in a matter which left most of the interpretation decisions to the soloist, the rest of the ensemble and the conductor being somehow at his service. It was conceptualized so the musical director could conduct the band so to be at the soloist's side and to take over when it seems the soloist is running out of ideas or inspiration. This would lead to other pieces conceptualized in the same fashion, mostly conducted with flashcards.

Another technique Guy enjoys taking advantage of is to start with something almost completely written down and to get freer and freer until there is nothing left to do but to let the improviser(s) take over. He also likes to make things gradually denser and denser until it sounds almost chaotic, simply to leave this density behind and go into another direction, often with a solo.

Getting this density is something many composers enjoyed doing. Sun Ra used to reach this level of density by asking each musician to play a different and independent ostinato. The result would be something which sounds completely uncoordinated, like if everybody was playing a different piece.

With Dieter Glawischnig, he would use free improvisation instead of writing everything down to reach this same level of musical density. This would prove to be a very practical use of free improvisation to reach a goal which could also be reached by writing and rehearsing every single note, but to do so would mean a lot of rehearsal so to sound chaotic. So why not take the easy way out if the results are most comparable?

It is somehow interesting to notice how two very similar techniques can have two very different objectives. Sometimes Dieter Glawischnig will use free improvisation to let the musicians express themselves freely and see what happens from that point on, other times he will use free improvisation as simply a tool to easily get the musical result he wants in a somehow traditional composition.

As for himself, the author has tried almost every technique recognized by the other composers he had interviewed, but came to the conclusion the most promising one was something none of them talked about: the story technique. With this technique, just as the others do, he controls the pacing and structure of the piece at hand, controls who is playing when and for how long, but also inspires a (sometimes complex) mood.[130]

However, using free improvisation within any composition technique means taking a risk with the ultimate musical result. For instance, with the story technique, if the entire band does not gather around a single musical idea, the results can become much more chaotic than expected.

This risk is exactly why mathias rüegg decided to gradually leave free improvisation behind: leaving musicians with even partial freewill means taking a chance of tempering with his dramaturgical bow and he was not willing to take that chance. The technique he sometimes uses to keep complete control over the precise pacing of his shows while still giving his musicians some freedom is to offer more than one interpretation possibility, like he does with some of his solos or even within the regular non-soloist music he writes, just as he did with this trio for violin, cello and piano where musicians sometimes have to choose between three interpretation possibilities.

Some could argue there always is a way of greatly diminishing this risk of chaos with the help of exercises, precise gestural indications and cue cards, but diminishing a risk does not mean eliminating it – and even if it did, it would somehow also get rid of the whole purpose of free improvisation…

Naturally, not every music is adequate for free improvisation. Every composer we have interviewed assert they also write note-for-note music, depending on the musical style in which they write, and everybody seems to agree one of the musical aestheticisms requiring

[130] One could argue Barry Guy also imposes some mood aspects with some of his symbols, but the complexity of those is somehow limited. With the story technique, there is no limit to the range of emotions which could be expressed.

the strictest possible notation is western classical music. For everyone, the closer to the classical music spectrum one gets, the stricter his musical notation will become.

However, even with strict written music, one can have fun improvising over it, like Barry Guy sometimes does, playing over Maya Homburger when she is playing one of his note-for-note written solo pieces.

On the other end of the spectrum, there is the Arkestra playing avant-garde music created on the spot. Such an approach proved to be risky if the band is not appropriately prepared for it,[131] but if a group has had enough preparation, it can lead to great music.

When Butch Morris stepped on a scene, he did not have any idea of the musical journey he would bring his musicians on. Everything was improvisation on his part and execution on his musicians'. Most of his conductions, in the image of his first one, were based on no written music whatsoever, and even the ones which were not usually based on an elaborate written vocabulary.

One of Morris's goals was to be able to influence the course of a collective improvisation so to make it his own and to do so, he had to put up a vocabulary which could articulate what traditional music could not. He is not completely unlike Barry Guy: both of them wanted to be able to influence – if not take control of – what the musicians were playing in front of them. Butch Morris developed a gesture language; Barry Guy developed a flashcards language.[132]

Another way of influencing greatly the improvisational results – and thus diminishing the risk of undesired chaotic music – is by applying one of Barry Guy's general compositional rules: written music defines the character of the moment when freedom can express itself. *Ode* is, by itself, a great example of the application of this rule. The improvisers cannot help but being influenced by the musical material the written parts provide them.

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[131] One should not forget the catastrophic experience mathias rüegg tried with the Vienna Art Orchestra, when they tried this technique in a live show and it ended in an incredible blur of chaotic sound.

[132] The author also naïvely wanted to develop such a language with the help of cue cards. It originally was one of his goals during his doctorate studies, but after becoming aware of Butch Morris's work, this came to seem somehow futile.

This rule can also be turned around. With the Barry Guy New Orchestra, he will compose pieces with the purpose of bringing the whole orchestra towards putting one of his trios[133] forward.

This relation between free improvisation and written composition can also get influenced by the number of musicians involved. As Butch Morris said, a 70 musicians orchestra is a completely different beast to tame than a 10 musicians group, it has to be approached in a different matter. The author shares this point of view. When a band is composed of 18 musicians, possibilities of subdivisions within the band have to be considered by the conductor/composer.

Naturally, this does not apply to a trio or a quintet. For most of his career, mathias rüegg did not trust having more than two or three instrumentalists improvising at the same time.

When Barry Guy gets on stage alone, although it sometimes happens for him to simply play without any preconceived idea of where the music will lead him, most of the time he likes to follow some kind of classic jazz structure in which there is a theme (or something similar to a theme), improvisation and a theme again. This brings the proportion between improvisation and preplanned interpretation to about a half and half relation.

Usually, for Barry Guy as well as for most composers dealing with free improvisation, the smaller the ensemble, the freer the compositions will get. If one has to deal with large ensembles, the degree of freedom will get restricted. Barry Guy also thinks pieces written for smaller ensembles seem to have a better ability to evolve. There is a certain sense of finality a composer can find in pieces written for a large ensemble, simply because it is difficult to try new experiments with them.

Of course, this rule, like every other, has exceptions. The Arkestra worked with this trial and error concept for the greater part of its existence, no matter the number of musicians involved. This comes in complete contradiction with Barry Guy's philosophy: he prefers to conceptualize everything himself beforehand and for the band to simply play what he wrote, whether it is notes or simply structure. He claims the time he does not devote on trials and errors or on experimentation, he spends on conceptualizing his compositions,

[133] Every musician of both the Tarfala and the Parker/Guy/Lytton trios play in the Barry Guy New Orchestra and their particular sounds can therefore be exploited within the larger ensemble.

setting up their rules, drawing his beautiful graphics and explaining the whole thing to his musicians.

To conceptualize compositions in which free improvisation is involved often means deciding on the rules the improvisers will have to follow, just as any kind of composition means deciding which rules (if any) the composer decides to follow.

For people like mathias rüegg, this choice is quite simple: music has Pythagorean rules and the composer should follow them. If something sounds bad, it most probably is because the composer has not respected one of these rules. However, rules which apply to one composer's style might not be appropriate for another composer – or conductor.

Butch Morris has never mentioned tonality or tonal centers before a conduction and yet, almost none of them sounds dissonant. Tonality, when applied to conduction, is far from rüegg's definition; it almost becomes a state of mind. What the tonal center actually is becomes less relevant than the moment when it changes, whatever it was or became, as long as everybody changes at relatively the same time.

Rules can also become a source of challenge or welcomed limitations. Already in the 70s, Dieter Glawischnig and the members of the trio Neighbors would impose themselves with what they called "motivic and formal exposed free jazz", which consisted in improvising and building a piece around little musical motives. Later in his life, Glawischnig would impose on himself an even more restrictive concept: an intervallic melodic and harmonic system, mostly just for the challenge of it.

Some rules seem intangible. Sun Ra claimed (and Marshall Allen still claims) the music of the Arkestra was and still is based on spiritual foundations and codes. The pieces they play, even when they sound completely chaotic (sometimes by the use of different and independent ostinati for each musician), are supposedly based on the spirit of the moment and of the place.

Following rules, however, can lead to a major problem in free improvisation (and in improvisation and composition in general): repetition. Most improvisers and composers will agree there is no point in creating something musical if it resembles something which has already been done, at least from a creative perspective.

Sun Ra had a very practical and quite drastic way of dealing with this problem: he could simply decide to cut off a piece right in the middle of it if he felt it had nothing new to bring to the listener.

Another way to deal with repetition is to simply accept it as part of one's vocabulary, as long as it does not mean the end of the improviser's (or composer's) artistic evolution. Barry Guy is quite conscious of having developed musical clichés over time, but assumes them completely, describing them as part of his own vocabulary. He even has learned to use these clichés as formulas to bring him or the group somewhere else musically.

For his part, the author has had problems with this aspect in his experimentations, particularly when working on the "two hands technique". After a relatively small number of tries with this technique, he realized he was getting repetitive and was therefore losing the musicians' attention and interest, which is one of the biggest problems one can face when doing something similar to conduction.

To remedy this situation, the author decided to conceptualize beforehand the musical journey he was going to take his musicians on. This was the only way he found not to fall into the repetition trap, but it had a major flaw: it was contradicting the ultimate purpose of the exercise, which is free improvisation. If the conductor simply follows a chart, even if it does not truly have any traditional musical indication, and if the musicians simply do what the conductor indicates, what is the difference between this and traditional music?

What the author should have done, assuming he would have had the required talent, was to persevere and rehearse alone so to become as interesting and imaginative as Butch Morris. He seemed to have faced the same problem in his beginnings and found a way to simply become better at what he wanted to do.

The author also had the idea of simply putting together certain written cues which he could use if and when he would see fit. Depending on the cue, the indications were more or less precise. After experimenting with them, the author had a vague project of enlarging this cue bank, so to make it as elaborate as possible, the cues being able to be combined, since some of them would focus on only one musical aspect, like pitch, rhythm, dynamics or tone. However, after doing some research on Butch Morris's conduction, he realized this work had somehow already successfully been done. One can learn the rudiments of

conduction and simply decide to use what he needs from this technique if and when he sees fit, like in solos.[134]

The key to success when using this technique – and any other one – is clarity. Butch Morris, strong from his decades of experience and experiments, was stating good clarity and focus were the basis for a good conduction. To get as clear as possible, the conductor had to make sure everybody understood three basic pieces of information: who, what and when.

One could think getting these aspects clear would never be a problem if the person conceptualizing the music would simply use basic traditional musical indications, but one would be wrong. Most musicians having played on the contemporary musical scene (whether it was the jazz scene or the "classical" western musical scene) have faced music which was either simply too complicated to be realistically playable, or simply unclear. Mathias rüegg, for one, thinks music so complicated nobody can play it simply makes no sense.

This is the reason why Barry Guy works so hard on his graphics, so to make them as clear and as neat as possible, although he candidly admits he was not always completely successful in doing so. Today, without getting minimalistic, he tries to compose music which is not so complex, nobody can read or play it. He wants to make his graphics so self-explanatory, everybody (who knows his musical vocabulary) can understand them. He clearly considers the time he devotes to perfecting his graphics worthy, if the result is clarity.

Sun Ra, on the other hand, preferred investing his time in long and fastidious explanations to his musicians. In the end, both techniques would aim at the same goal: clarity. However, both would also have flaws, although different in their nature: once everything is printed out, it becomes next to impossible for Barry Guy to change his mind and decide to make modifications to his compositions; and it would also become next to impossible for Sun Ra to get a decent interpretation of his pieces from any other band than his own, unless he spent another considerable amount of time explaining once again what he wants to hear and how.

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[134] This would however be ironic in itself, since, in conduction, no indication meaning "take a solo" exists.

Graphic notation

Aiming for clarity might also sometimes be the reason for the use of unconventional notation. Although some people never use graphic notation because it does not comply with their musical philosophy (like Butch Morris) or simply because they consider it "makes no sense at all, neither [in jazz, nor] in classical music" (like mathias rüegg), other composers find graphic notation useful.

As we saw, Dieter Glawischnig sometimes uses graphic notation and oral explanations to get musical results similar to what he would have gotten by writing every single note and spending a considerable amount of time rehearsing it. This is also a technique Barry Guy uses; it can be considered as some kind of shortcut for getting complex musical results.[135]

Barry Guy is, by far, the composer who uses graphic notation the most. An important amount of the recurrent symbols he uses comes from the work of his painter friend, Alan Davie, for whom he had to write his first piece using graphic notation.[136] However, he also used a few non-recurrent symbols over time. When these symbols occur, Barry Guy takes all the time needed in a rehearsal to make sure everybody understands them perfectly.

One of the most important and recurrent symbols he uses is the Celtic cross. It can somehow be compared to a solo indication: the musician concerned by this card will take the lead. It can also be compared to the "pedestrian" indication in Butch Morris's conduction vocabulary, although Mr. Morris considered the "pedestrian" indication to be more meaningful and to have more implications than a "solo" indication.

Most of Barry Guy's graphic scores are designed in such a way as for the written indications and symbols to serve as springboards to put the upcoming soloist(s) forward, trying to anticipate what he (they) will do and play. To make sure the group can adapt to the soloist, in case this adaptation becomes required, Barry Guy will also make use of flashcards to conduct the ensemble. He does not use this technique systematically in every composition subsequent to *Bird Gong Song*, but it can still be considered as frequent in his work. On these flashcards, one will mostly see his recurrent symbols.

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[135] In fact, oral explanations are often more effective than having to write everything and every rule down. John Zorn states: "*If you write the rules out for the game* Cobra *they are impossible to decipher. But when someone explains the practice of it, it's very simple. These games like* Cobra*, have kind of an oral tradition.*" (from Bailey 1992, 76)

[136] This piece was entitled *Bird Gong Game*, see p.48.

The importance of structure and how to play with it

Perhaps with the exception of Marshall Allen, every composer interviewed for this work has mentioned and put a certain emphasis on the importance of structure, particularly when free improvisation is concerned.

Barry Guy's impressive graphic scores and general work shows how, as a formal architect, structural construction is at the heart of his musical creations. Dieter Glawischnig explains how, in his free compositions, he decides of the mood, the length and who plays with whom, when – which is virtually the definition of what structure is. He also likes, on rare occasions, to play with it, to make a solo longer or to repeat a certain section, although this happens mostly with more conservative pieces.

In Butch Morris's case, he is the structure. One of the primary ideas of conduction is for the musical director to decide of and impose the structural aspect of the conduction, while leaving the definition of the structure's content to the musicians.

But the one probably having the greatest obsession with structure just might be mathias rüegg. With his fixation over the dramaturgical bow – it has to be present within a solo, within the entire piece the solo is a part of, and within the whole program of the concert the piece is also a part of – one can assume structure is of the outmost importance for him.

This is part of the reason why he gradually restricted his musicians' freedom to only certain aspects, like solos or interludes between more substantial pieces. He came to realize free collective improvisation needs structure to avoid always getting the same result: huge chaotic noise. The problem, as he sees it, is that structure needs work and discipline and he judges these are two concepts free improvisers do not appreciate, so it becomes easier to simply forget about it or restrict it to a minimum. This way, one can be sure the structure the composer decided on will never get altered and, therefore, the dramaturgical bow will stay intact.

Somehow, this is not far from Barry Guy and Dieter Glawischnig's vision. When it comes to pieces for large ensemble, they both consider once a score is finished, it is and will forever remain a final version. Barry Guy says there are two main reasons for this to be: first, he prefers to move on with another project than to come back on an old one and, second, producing a score and its individual parts is already expensive enough when done once, he does not want to do it twice.

However, when it comes to pieces for smaller formations, Barry Guy seems to be more open to modifications (or evolution) than Dieter Glawischnig. Guy considers, in these cases, a final bar is never truly final since, the fewer musicians are involved in a piece, the better chances it gets to be in constant evolution, although there is a fine line between evolution and truly tempering with the piece.

Once again, on this aspect, Marshall Allen and the Arkestra go completely in another direction. According to Sun Ra's philosophy, a musical piece, by definition, is never final since its interpretation is fundamentally based on the spirits of the moment and place. One can never find two audiences which are exactly in the same mood; therefore, the interpretation will never be exactly the same. In the Arkestra, most pieces which were played in a certain matter at a certain period evolved in such a way they were played very differently a few years later – and the Arkestra would have considered it an artistic mistake to play it the same way on both occasions.

The only other example we found of someone not putting much emphasis on – and sometimes even openly tries to work against – structure when dealing with freer aspects with relatively large ensembles is John Zorn. With some of his freer compositions or his "games" as he calls them, he does not aim at a pre-established order in which events will happen. He does not even aim at a possibility for the conductor to impose order to his musicians. What he does is to try putting a network of possible relationships within the band in which each and every member of the ensemble can decide on the structure at any given time.[137]

As mentioned earlier, it would often happen for Sun Ra to change his mind on the interpretation he wants of a complex musical piece after the musicians had worked very hard to bring it at the level and the way he originally wanted it. This is the kind of trial and mistake composition technique Barry Guy would abhor.

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[137] However, this philosophy about structure is the result of a long compositional process. John Zorn states: "*I began composing my game pieces by using a timeline but abstracting everything away from sound and talking about people.* […] *Where I really started eliminating the time line, eliminating the idea that the composer has to create in an arc, was a piece like* Cobra *where the sequence of events can be ordered at any time by anyone.*" (from Bailey 1992, 76)

Integrity of the score

The first reason why Butch Morris created what would later become conduction was to make it possible for a musical director to be able to play with the score, to manipulate musical notation. Ultimately, it was intended to serve as a way of offering a possibility of evolvement to pieces which the audience had already heard. With this method, people could listen to two concerts featuring the same pieces and still have a new hearing experience.

Somehow, Butch Morris and Sun Ra had the same basic goal – for a piece to be able to evolve and be played in very different ways from one interpretation to the next – but took different paths to reach it. Butch Morris wanted to be able to control the interpretation, while Sun Ra was trying to give it up and simply let the Arkestra follow the flow (what he called the spirit) of the moment. Other composers were more pragmatic in their approach.

Mathias rüegg would often consciously write too many musical backgrounds so he could decide to cut some off. It is always easier to decide, in rehearsal, for some musician or section not to play something which is written than to try to add something which is not. Cutting something out is always easier than composing something.

If Dieter Glawischnig wanted a section of a composition to go longer – like a solo, mostly – he would do it by indicating the bar number the musicians have to go back to or by putting his fingers in a position which looks like this: < >. However, when he does this, he often will try to play with the orchestration, cutting out some musicians or sections (like saxophones or trumpets).

This technique is very similar to mathias rüegg's, except rüegg would do that in rehearsals to decide on the final and official version of a piece, while Glawischnig would sometimes (but not often) do it during a live performance; although when he did, the indications he would use to do so would be mostly standard and approximate, very far from Butch Morris's techniques.

Sometimes, when the composer is also the musical director, it happens for him (or his musicians) to realize there is a problem with something he wrote. When this happens, both Barry Guy and mathias rüegg have the same (somehow drastic) approach: to simply cut off the part(s) where the problem resides. This, of course, happens during early rehearsals.

Most of the time, mathias rüegg will notice the presence of a problem before his musicians do. In the case of Barry Guy, it sometimes is the musicians who will complain about a certain musical passage. When this happens, he tries to be as open to new ideas as possible and not to get stubborn about his composition. As he puts it, almost all of his music is negotiable.

Others, like Sun Ra or Marshall Allen, do not even have to deal with these situations, since everything they write (or wrote) was not to be strictly played as written. The musicians had to seize the spirit of the piece at hand and, once they did, the piece was able to evolve in another direction.

Concerts and rehearsals

To some, a concert needs to have a certain degree of unpredictability. To others, everything has to be meticulously planned and execution has to be extremely precise for them to be satisfied, since they spent a considerable amount of effort conceptualizing and taking care of the pacing of the show, sometimes even before a single note had been written.

With his dramaturgical bow, mathias rüegg is definitively part of this second group. He considers a show to be an oeuvre d'art by itself, like most composers simply consider each individual piece within a show to be one, each of them being almost completely independent from the rest. When one pays attention to mathias rüegg's concerts, when one listens to his CDs, it becomes easy to understand why: he was not simply composing music, he was putting whole concepts together within a show. Since, therefore, a show was an artistic entity in itself, it became simply logical for it to be integrating the whole concept of this famous dramaturgical bow, like most composers are taking advantage of this concept in their individual pieces.[138]

Even when playing alone, most of the time, Barry Guy will like to have at least an idea of the journey he wants to embark the audience on. Once this is decided, he can still

[138] Perhaps it is because the author did not ask specific enough questions on the subject when conducting the interviews, but except for mathias rüegg, none of the interviewed composers/conductors have specifically mentioned a concept of peaks when it comes to composition or collective improvisation, although they all have insisted on the importance of structure. The only one exposing having thought of this specific question is the author himself with his "peaks" experimentations and technique.

change his mind once on scene, depending on his inspiration and the reaction and mood of the public. However, it does happen, from time to time, for him to step on the stage having no idea of what he is going to play in a few seconds and where his musical journey will take him.

This might be the exception for Barry Guy, but it was generally a rule for Butch Morris. Having rehearsed a certain number of times with the musicians, one can assume he at least had some idea of who to exploit most in a given situation, but he always claimed he had no idea of his upcoming musical journey prior to its start.

Following this philosophy, no one, including the musicians and their chief (whether Sun Ra, John Gilmore or Marshall Allen) could truly know what was going to happen when the Arkestra stepped on stage. The band did not even know if what they rehearsed in the days prior to the performance would be exploited in the show. If this can seem destabilizing – or at least challenging – for some when the band is composed of only musicians, it gets worst when it came to Sun Ra's show band, since for him, a show band should not only be composed of musicians, but also of dancers, singers, acrobat, clowns, fire-eaters and anything one could think of when doing so about a festive show.

Even if the Arkestra would be playing in show a piece they had practiced in a previous rehearsal, the chances for the performance interpretation to be similar to the rehearsal one would be almost inexistent. Since the Arkestra's philosophy is to let itself be guided by the spirits of the place and moment, it would be next to impossible for the interpretations to be influenced by the same energy; and if the energy changed, everything changed.

In Dieter Glawischnig's case, when free improvisation was involved, rehearsing it was simply a matter of practicality. Since a considerable portion of what he wrote as free improvisation had a specific, very practical goal, he had to make sure the musicians had understood it the right way before performance night or the desired effect could be jeopardized. Even if the goal of the collective improvisation is of a more artistic than practical nature, the band still has to rehearse the parts where free improvisation is expected, simply to make sure the concerned musicians get the mood right.

Mathias rüegg's philosophy is (or was, since collective improvisation is now practically out of his musical vocabulary) never to rehearse free parts of his compositions. Following a Dadaistic philosophy, he would spend considerable time explaining to the

musicians what he wants and expects from them and their improvisation, but would almost never rehearse these parts so not to waste any good idea which could emerge from it. He thinks collective improvisation should be a happening and rehearsing it would mean taking the risk of it becoming of a routine nature.

When exposed to this theory, although being very respectful of mathias rüegg's opinion, Barry Guy states it makes no sense to him: never has he seen free improvisations being better or more interesting in rehearsal than in show. When a piece needs to be rehearsed and if this piece includes a free improvisation segment, his musicians and himself will rehearse it all the same, although not pushing the envelope too far.

This decision of not pushing themselves to the limit when rehearsing free improvisation is not of a philosophical nature, but simply of a practical one: the musicians he plays with usually already know each other well enough to know how to interact with one another. Therefore, although having the advantage of being fun, there would be no point in spending a substantial amount of energy rehearsing the free parts extensively.

Mathias rüegg was not the only one taking time to explain what he expected from his musicians when it comes to free improvisation, every composer/conductor interviewed for this work, including the author, does it in certain occasions.

As mentioned earlier, Dieter Glawischnig will explain what he expects from his musicians before trying it in rehearsals and he will not hesitate to stop the whole thing and demand adjustments if he feels it becomes needed.

Barry Guy will allow certain time in rehearsals to explain his scores and their use of nonrecurring symbols.

Butch Morris would spend most of the time of his first rehearsal with a new group to explain what conduction is, his gestures and their signification. It would take a considerable amount of time before the musicians would even be allowed to play their first note.

When the author is making use of the "story technique", he thinks it is of the outmost importance for him to take all the time needed to explain the story so that every musician understands the feelings he is supposed to musically represent.

However, it seems the prize for spending the most time explaining what he expected from his musicians by far goes to the garrulous Sun Ra. His musicians considered it part of

a normal rehearsal to listen to him talk for hours. It would be the customary technique for them to understand all the subtleties of the pieces they were rehearsing, or about to rehearse.

Since Sun Ra almost never used traditional music symbols (except for notes) in his arrangements and compositions, it became of the outmost importance for him to transmit orally and by the means of demonstration what he wanted to hear and how certain musical phrases were to be interpreted.

It usually was the musicians' responsibility to remember the indications Sun Ra had given them for the future, but since memory has the property of fading over time, the Arkestra did not take any chance and recorded everything they did in rehearsals. This way, if they forgot how to play a particular piece, they could always listen back to its last interpretation and start from there.

This technique would not necessarily be effective for every band, particularly if the band meets once a week or so to rehearse, but since the Arkestra would do so practically every day for the whole day, indications seemed to stick around.

On the other hand, even if they would have remembered every single indication, the interpretation of almost every piece they were playing was vastly different in shows than in rehearsal. This is not unlike Butch Morris's work, which he claimed was very different in rehearsals than in shows: the rehearsals were a bit more formal and technical, while in shows "it's an open door", as he was saying.

The intensity of the Arkestra's rehearsal schedule had a few motives. Since they wanted to seize the spirit of the day when playing, they had to rehearse almost every day to learn to adapt to every spirit they could encounter in shows, but since the arrangements were continuously in a modification mode and the charts were incessantly changing hands for many reasons, the musicians were always on the edge and could never assume they knew the pieces well enough so to be relaxed about playing them publicly.

The Vienna Art Orchestra also rehearsed for entire days (sometimes for up to nine hours per day), but the philosophy behind this fact was of a totally other nature than the Arkestra's. The goal was to learn a complex show as quickly as possible, usually within five or six days, and to bring it at the zenith of musical perfection. Then they would begin touring with it. There never were any regular daily or weekly rehearsals with the Vienna

Art Orchestra; it somehow was a happening orchestra, even if there have been many, many happenings (sometimes up to three different tours per year) over its existence.

What would be someone's nightmare could also be someone else's dream: mathias rüegg would have hated for the Vienna Art Orchestra to become a weekly rehearsals band (what he calls a Monday orchestra), while Butch Morris would have loved to get his hands on one of those. He thought, if he only could have gotten a steady musical formation for a few years, ideally five, he could have accomplished and understood a number of things about conduction incomparable to what he had the chance to comprehend within his lifetime.

Problems and remedies concerning free collective improvisation

The first and, most of the time, biggest challenge one faces when doing free collective improvisation is for the musical result not to become cacophonic, to simply become a large mass of undistinguishable sounds. This usually would be the result of a lack of listening from the musicians' part. When a musician has the opportunity to play, there is a good chance he will take it; and if many musicians have and take this opportunity at the same time, there is also a good chance cacophony will soon follow.

Mathias rüegg, in the early years of the Vienna Art Orchestra, once tried letting the orchestra play total free collective improvisation in a festival. Unsurprisingly, after five minutes, everybody was playing very loud and quickly. Rüegg considered this experiment a failure and decided never to try it again.

Years later, he now tries to bring some kind of structure to free collective improvisation in classes he teaches at the *Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien*. The technique he applies consists in having three or four musicians playing a cantilena over which five girl vocalists improvise freely. Having the cantilena as a basis upon which the improvisers can build something gives an identity and some perspective to the whole exercise and helps the singers not to fall into the cacophonic trap.[139]

[139] One also has to consider another fact when analyzing why this experiment seems to work and the free improvisation experiment with the Vienna Art Orchestra failed: instrumentation. In any given situation, five girl singers have much less chances of becoming cacophonic than an orchestra mainly composed of brass instruments and saxophones…

In the author's opinion, what led to the Vienna Art Orchestra's fiasco was simply a lack of experience with free collective improvisation from the musicians' part. Perhaps a few simple exercises would have prevented this experience from resulting in the failure it has been. However, perhaps with the exception of Marshall Allen, none of the maestros the author has interviewed ever does collective improvisation exercises, for different reasons.

Mathias rüegg has never done it because of his Dadaistic theory on wasted good musical ideas. Barry Guy never does it because he does not feel the need for it since almost every musician he plays with is well versed in the art of free improvisation and have probably done all the needed exercises in that sense in the past. Dieter Glawischnig, being practical as he is, will simply see if the free improvisation segments of pieces the orchestra has to play work during rehearsal and will bring the needed adjustments, if adjustments are needed.

In Butch Morris's case, the reason he never truly did any free collective improvisation exercises was simply a lack of time. If he did have had a few years to work with steady musicians, he stated he would have liked to have imposed some kind of listening and direction exercises.

This listening exercise Butch Morris would have like to try is one of the first the author has tried with his own orchestra. The whole concept of the "imposing idea" exercise was for the musicians to try to listen to each other while still paying attention to what they were playing themselves; and the exercise proved to be so benefic and successful it rapidly evolved into what one could call an "imposing and evolving idea" exercise.

As he was younger, Barry Guy also had free collective improvisation exercises imposed to him by his teacher. Although different in their approach, the "click" pieces seemed to have the same purpose as the "imposing idea": to get accustomed to focus on the ensemble sound and yours at the same time and to become able to put them in relation. Had the Vienna Art Orchestra been exposed to these exercises, there is a significant chance the experience would have been successful to a certain degree.

The author comes to this conclusion after witnessing the immediate success of the "story technique" (he later came up with) when trying it with his band, as opposition to other musical formations – which had not practiced the imposing idea exercise beforehand – he had tried this technique with. With this technique, it is indeed of the outmost

importance for the musicians to be able to meet almost immediately around one common musical idea to pass on an impression of homogeneity to the listener.

However, for the "story technique" to be successful, one of the secrets is also to be as clear and precise as possible when exposing and explaining the story to the musicians beforehand. This makes it possible for everyone to arrive to some sort of consensus on how each musical intervention must be interpreted. It therefore helps the homogeneity of the ensemble's view on the general spirit of the upcoming performance.

This vision is not far from the Arkestra's. They were (and still are, simply not as intensively) working on everybody being able to understand and let themselves be guided by the spirit of the moment. To the author, these two concepts seem to be two faces of a common medal. The only difference is one is trying to intellectualize the approach while the other is trying to spiritualize it. The first one tells the musicians to open their ears and to grow as experienced musicians while the other tells them to open their minds and to come back to this wondering childlike state of mind we all once were at.

Yet, the author also realizes and admits many factors Sun Ra and Marshall Allen would identify as spiritual indisputably come into balance when performing free collective improvisation, whether in rehearsal or doing a public performance. The atmosphere of the place where the exercise or performance is executed and the general state of mind of the musicians will naturally affect whether or not the performers will get access to complete or partial musical symbiosis.

Another recurrent problem when performing free improvisation, whether collective or not, is the notion of passing time. When improvisers are performing freely, they seem to lose the notion of how much time has elapsed. Mathias rüegg mentioned this common difficulty and thinks a good musician should know by instinct for how long he has been improvising. He realizes what is hard to do alone becomes exponentially harder the more people join in.

The author has developed and applied some exercises to address this problem which mainly consist in asking the musicians to freely improvise for a relatively short given time and to stop playing when they think this given time is over. Once the band is able to stop in the surroundings of this given time, then the musical director can ask them to improvise for a bit more substantive length of time and so on.

Although it somehow helped the musicians in their passing time evaluation, the results were not conclusive enough for the need of live time indication to vanish. The author then decided, when he felt there was a need, to simply provide the information about time passing and remaining by the means of cue cards.

However, it is important for the musicians not to focus so much on how much time has passed that it would result in a lack of spontaneity, which it sometime does. Time notation has been a major problem in some of Barry Guy's compositions (including *Ode*) because time was presented in a chronological form instead of the usual metric one and it gave musicians hard times coping with it.

Most of the problems (and solutions) exposed up to now mainly affect musicians. However, certain problems concern specifically the musical directors.

Whether he does it by using flashcards or gestures, it becomes extremely important for the musical director, when interacting with the musicians, to understand and anticipate every (sometimes potential) aspect of every indication in real time and to provide good reactions and reflexes to what the musicians are playing. This is very hard work and both Barry Guy and Butch Morris learned this very early in their experimentations.

The author also quickly learned trying to "play" the orchestra live by the means of gestural or card indications was the same as learning any new instrument: very difficult to master at first. Butch Morris explained it takes some time to be able to master this art because the conductor has to develop the needed skills from the bottom up. He persevered and eventually became an expert in this art, but the author has to humbly admit he did not have the same patience or talent as Mr. Morris. He considered it would have asked too much time and effort for him to become able to be at the origin of performances which would prove interesting both for the public and his musicians, so he tried to find another way to get to the same results.

Just as Butch Morris, the author came to the conclusion there were two major difficulties when trying to "play the orchestra". One was for the chief and his musicians to develop and master a language which would make it clear and quick for the musicians to understand a given indication without any doubt about any aspect of it. The second is simply to avoid repetitions.

Although Barry Guy considers repetitions to be unavoidable, he still considers it is of the musician's (or, in this case, the musical director's) responsibility to become resourceful enough so for his music to always sound renewed. Butch Morris seemed to agree with this ascertainment, stating doing conduction is the same as improvising with an instrument; one has to watch out not to constantly come back to already traveled familiar territory. Both saw (or see) the answer to this problem in rehearsing on the appropriated instrument, except in this case the instrument is usually not something one can rehearse on every day.

Being only able to "practice" the orchestra a couple of hours a week (and doing only exercises in this perspective the whole time being out of question so not to bore the musicians too much) and, most probably, not having Butch Morris's talent for it, the author simply decided to abandon the project of becoming an interesting "orchestra improviser". Even for Mr. Morris, with all the undeniable talent he had for it, it took about six or seven years of practice for him to become somehow proud of the way he was directing conductions, not getting too repetitive anymore and having developed the necessary reflexes to feel at ease expressing what he wanted musically.

In the early years of the Vienna Art Orchestra, mathias rüegg used different cues to indicate the band specific sounds he wanted to hear from their part. In those days, there also would be principles of following the conductor's movements. Since then, as we have seen, these kinds of experimentations have been over with the Vienna Art Orchestra.

The Arkestra, on the other hand, still lives by similar rules. Over the years, just like Sun Ra and John Gilmore had done before him, Marshall Allen developed his own way of conducting the band and his own specific gestures. Apart from the traditional gestures for things like time and dynamics, he also has other, more specific ones which are understood by his musicians, but might not be as clear for other players. These gestures usually refer to musical effects, like glissandi or punches.

Dieter Glawischnig never truly developed specific gestures related to precise musical effects. He also uses the traditional gestures for things like tempi and dynamics, but apart from these, the only indications he might give are what has already been exposed earlier (playing with the structure) and indicating a soloist to play or stop.

For his part, Barry Guy might say he is not a fan of conduction, he still sometimes gives indications to his musicians, only not by means of gestures but of flashcards. This is

not completely unlike the author's method of exposing informative cue cards describing a scenario in the "story technique". Naturally, this technique will be more linear then Barry Guy's flashcards indications since the story usually goes in a chronological order, but nothing stops the chief from deciding to go back or skip to other indications than what has originally been planned.

In the same vein, the "two hands indications" which worked fine can also be used by the author with his band whenever he likes. Although the "two hands indications" technique was not a complete success in itself, its primary purpose was simply to provide musical vocabulary to the chief, vocabulary he could use at any given time if and when he felt a need for it.

Most of the time, after having worked with a band versed in the art of improvisation for a certain period, almost every chief will develop a certain complicity and trust relation with his musicians and will become able to give them indications like silencing the band, appointing a certain musician or section to be put forward, propose the use of mutes or special and simple musical effects. The nature of these effects and the vocabulary used by the chief and musicians will greatly depend on the chief himself.

As Marshall Allen states, when a new chief takes over a musical formation – just as he did – it becomes of the outmost importance for the musicians to try learning, as quickly as possible, how he conducts, what is particular to him and his musical vision if they want to be able to follow this lead. To the Arkestra, no matter who is conducting, the spirit of the group will (or at least should) always go in the chief's direction. He is the one determining the context in which any indication should be understood and interpreted.

Musicians

Everybody seems to agree[140]: one has to compose music which fits his musicians. Mathias rüegg states there are different kinds, different types of players and it is important to give the right chart to the right one[141], especially when it comes to solos.

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[140] Perhaps with the exception of Butch Morris, to whom this principle, by the nature of his art form, does not really apply.

[141] John Zorn states this fact very clearly: "*It's true I pick up the bands and in that sense the Ellington tradition, the selection of the people, is very important. Everybody is vital. You take one person out and the chemistry is going to be different.*" (in Bailey 1992, 77)

As mentioned earlier, Barry Guy's graphic scores are usually paving the way, preparing the field for a specific soloist to be brought forward. This is also the case when wanting to put one of his trios in the spotlight for a while within a larger piece for a larger formation like the Barry Guy New Orchestra.

Choosing the right improviser(s) is also a way for the chief to influence the final artistic product. Deciding on which musicians would do the improvised interlude was a way for mathias rüegg to decide on the character of those free interventions without really imposing anything to the musicians.

Even when playing other compositions than his own, Dieter Glawischnig could decide to change soloists for a piece if he considered a musician's solo style to be more efficient than the one who was originally supposed to do it for a specific segment of a piece or general mood. However, once chosen, the soloist was given the permission to do practically anything he wished during his improvisation – as long as it fitted the mood.

In the Arkestra, the choice of the soloist with the right spirit for the right piece is more than a simple question of instrumentation, it also is a question of personality. It was not uncommon for Sun Ra to tell a musician his solo or general playing was not appropriated for the piece at hand. He sometimes would simply change soloist when unsatisfied with the original one's results.

When it comes to conduction, naturally, no written chart is involved and, therefore, it becomes impossible to give the right one to the right musician. However, as Butch Morris mentions, a good chief will pay close attention to his musicians during the rehearsal he has with the musical formation and will therefore be able to establish who will be able, when the time of the performance comes, to give him a lot or next to nothing, musically speaking. He will therefore take this in consideration and give more responsibility to the musicians being able to take and do something with it.

Some musicians seem to be born with the talent of knowing how to interact with other players and what to play (and not to play) when, but for most musicians, these abilities will come with free collective improvisation experience. Usually, there will be two key factors which will influence the musicians' degree of chemistry with the other members of the group: the individual experience the musicians have freely improvising with others and the number of previous occasions where the musicians played together.

If Barry Guy's formations do not need to do any free improvisation exercises, it most likely is because practically all of the musicians he plays with have a huge experience in free improvisation and probably did exercises in this sense earlier in their lives.

This fact becomes obvious when he is confronted with students rehearsing his pieces under his musical direction or supervision. Due to their lack of experience with free improvisation, they almost always ask him what they should play when there are no more notes on the music sheet. They get afraid of playing the first thing (if any) which comes to their mind. Getting familiar with free improvisation, naturally, compensates this fear and questioning on their part.

Perhaps, for such musicians, Butch Morris's conduction principles would be best suited. It has always been one of his goals for conduction to be a technique which any musician could work with. He wanted it to be equally appealing to and exploitable for musicians from different musical backgrounds and tried conducting as many different types of musicians as he could, whether from the jazz, classical, pop or traditional scene.

This is part of the reason why he thought of conduction as a broader technique than the sometimes similar ones of other people, like Sun Ra and the Arkestra in general, and therefore thought his conclusions were more valuable than theirs. He considered, because the Arkestra was practically dealing exclusively with jazz musicians, the conclusions they came to when it comes to conducting a free improvisation were, to a certain extent, erroneous.

In the author's mind and according to his own experience, it is not completely wrong to assert jazz musicians might get more easily artistically frustrated when being told what to do musically in a somehow free improvisation context. Butch Morris came to the same conclusion. He also stated virtuosos, although amazing in other musical contexts, usually have problems with concepts like conduction since they seem refractory to new ideas and, in general, musical concepts other than the ones they are used to.

This impression is shared by Marshall Allen since, over time, he observed musicians having studied music for a long time and having learned the "proper" way of playing seemed to find it particularly hard to learn to work with the Arkestra. They find it hard to have to leave a lot of what they had learned behind to be able to embrace a new, broader view of what music is.

Over time, as the Vienna Art Orchestra evolved, fewer and fewer jazz musicians were left and they were replaced with classical musicians. This is one of the reasons why improvisation became less and less important in the orchestra: the band had fewer musicians with the ability and desire to improvise.

This fact is the reason why mathias rüegg developed a technique for the classical musicians to still perform solos, although not completely improvised ones. To palliate his musicians' incapacity to improvise, rüegg would write the solos himself, offering different interpretation possibility for the player to perform. Just as the real improvisers in the orchestra had to learn the harmonic structure of their solos by heart so they would not need a stand while improvising, these "classical improvisers" had to learn the written solos by heart, with all the possibilities they were offering.

Mathias rüegg has a paradoxical relation with improvisation. On one hand, he claims he grew away from it since he knows more precisely today what he wants to hear than when he first started composing for the Vienna Art Orchestra, but on the other, over time, most of the pieces of the orchestra turned into a feature piece, something like a concerto for a soloist and an orchestra. For many of these "concertos", the soloist can improvise in a completely free way, he has no limits.

Sometimes, mathias rüegg will not even let the soloist see the score or be told of the harmonic progression of the piece; he has to let himself get inspired by the entirety of the piece itself. This can be put in relation with Sun Ra's technique of not truly soloing on the harmonic structure of a piece, but to try to play something based on the spirit of the piece and of the moment.

Unlike these two who often use solos as one of the foundations a piece can have, Butch Morris never truly made use of solos. Unlike Barry Guy who uses the Celtic cross symbol to ask someone to take a solo, or at least take the lead, Butch Morris never even had an indication meaning "take a solo".

The closest thing he had to this was the "pedestrian" sign. This indication meant for the musician concerned by it he could bring something new to the ensemble, or let himself get inspired by elements which were already there to bring the musical ensemble somewhere else. Because of these added responsibilities, Butch Morris always considered

the “pedestrian” sign to be more powerful than a “solo” sign, that it justified its existence in a more meaningful way.

The public

There is no doubt free collective improvisation, in most of its manifestations, is a marginal art compared to classical or popular music. Some of its enthusiast supporters consider it becomes the musicians’ and musical directors’ responsibility to bring it forward and get the general public used to this form of art. Others say it should only be played when a public is expecting it.

Dieter Glawischnig’s philosophy is to simply give the public what it wants. He considers there is no point in making the audience feel stupid by exposing it to something it is not ready for. If one knows the audience likes and somehow expects some good old Count Basie style swing, why not give it to them? If they want to hear more progressive music, they will buy a ticket for a concert which features more progressive music, even if it means having to go to the city to watch it.

On the other hand, if someone is never exposed to new forms of art, how can he ever evolve as an art consumer and appreciator? This has always been the underlying question behind the Arkestra’s artistic philosophy, whether under the artistic direction of Sun Ra, John Gilmore or Marshall Allen. They always thought the public’s ear needs to be trained and this is why they always tried pushing the envelope a little bit further than expected in every public performance they offer, whatever the occasion.

Mathias rüegg thinks, in any given strata of the society, there will always be only about ten to fifteen percents of people with open minds. These are the people who make the general population evolve, but it takes time. However, it seems to be working.

The oldest, most experienced musician we have interviewed for this work, Marshall Allen, mentions what the Arkestra was playing a few decades ago which was considered as “just noise” back then is now very much accepted, especially when played for a younger audience. This might just be the observation one needs to focus on if to try coming with new ideas for this complicated but beautiful art form which is free collective improvisation.

CONCLUSION

After having read the entirety of this work and when looking back at the first chapter of this thesis, one can truly appreciate its title – Naïve Experimentations. Although the author seemed to have had good intuition, these experimentations and the conclusions they inspired him clearly were naïve.

Over the years between when the author wrote the French version of what would become the first chapter and the moment he is writing this conclusion, he had a few opportunities – although not as many as he would have liked – to do experiences of the same nature with other formations than the one he originally experimented with.

He tried out the "story technique" with both a university big band and two choirs, but without having time to previously have the ensembles work with the imposing idea exercise. The results concerning the choirs were not conclusive, to say the least. Like most choirs, the vast majority of singers, although mostly jazz singers for one of these choirs, had never experimented anything like free improvisation before, especially collective free improvisation! Most of them, therefore, not only could not regroup around a common musical idea or mood, but simply did not know what to sing at all or were too afraid to do so.

Musicians in the big band did not have any problem playing, but the final product, although somehow interesting, clearly lacked homogeneity. Too many musicians were simply having fun on their own without paying enough attention to what was musically happening around them.

This confirmed in the author's mind the necessity of the "imposing idea" exercises prior to using the "story technique", unless, perhaps, the vast majority of the musicians in the big band would already be well versed in the art of collective free improvisation.

The author also tried a modified (so to be closer to the principles of conduction) version of the "two hands" technique with one of the two choirs and two chamber music orchestras. The results were similar every time: after a certain amount of time making sure everybody understood the few gestural indications (because of the limitation of time we had to deal with when working on these experiments, the author wanted to limit the

indications possibilities to a minimum), the musical formations reacted well and the musical results could have been interesting. We say *could have been* instead of *have been* simply because the author faced the same basic problem he had faced when first experimenting with this technique: a major lack of talent and/or practice from the conductor's part. In other words, the author, when using this technique, is still as boring today as he was years ago!

In the conclusion of what became the first chapter of this thesis, the author stipulates two paths he intended to follow for the future: mixing the "story technique" with live pictures and creating and enriching a bank of written indications. Since then, he did not get the chance to assiduously work with a professional steady musical formation and, therefore, did not get the chance to further work on these projects. However, had he gotten that chance, the experiments would not have been exactly what he intended them to be at first.

Since the ultimate goal of all the experiments he tried is supposed to be the musical results it brings, the author does not truly see a purpose in experimenting the story technique using live pictures or comic strips instead of simple cue cards indications. This does not mean these experimentations are out of question, but if they occur, it will be out of curiosity and pure fun instead of being in an evolution process logic.

As for the project of the potential bank of musical effects, this is still something the author would like to work on, but having discovered conduction, he at least had to put this whole concept in perspective and ask himself if it was still relevant. He did and came to the conclusion it might still be, would it only be for saving time explaining the meaning of the gestural indications and to remedy to his lack of talent/practice and inspiration when trying to do conduction (or any technique similar to it). However, the cues which would constitute this bank would probably be vaguer than what he first thought of. These cues could include, for instance, *play long notes*, or *more agitated*, or *quieter*, or *sustain*, etc. Perhaps, for these kinds of indications, would symbols be a bit more accurate…[142]

In the introduction, the author raised the question of what technique one does (or should) use to avoid potential musical chaos when having medium and large ensembles improvising freely. To avoid this chaotic situation, it seems responsibilities have to be

[142] To use symbols in this matter would definitively bring this technique closer to Barry Guy's flashcards than to Butch Morris's conduction, even though it originally was a technique (unconsciously) derived from conduction…

shared between the composer, the musical director (which, in some cases, also plays the role of composer) and the interpreters. Each of these participants must have control – whether total or shared – over some aspects of the music at hand. These aspects can be regrouped in three basic categories: structure (who plays with whom, when and for how long), overall sound and feeling (busy, stressed, relaxed, generally long or short notes, loud or quiet, etc.) and precise playing (the exact notes and rhythms the musicians play). Depending on the technique one uses, the responsibility of every one of these aspects will not be given to the same participant(s).

Every composer/conductor interviewed for this thesis (and the author) agrees the structural part of the improvisation should not be of the musicians' responsibility. This aspect should be taken care of by either the composer (like in mathias rüegg's, Dieter Glawischnig's or some of Barry Guy's pieces) or the chief (like in Butch Morris's, Marshall Allen's and Barry Guy's pieces, when Barry Guy is using flashcards).

The overall sound is also an aspect which, with the occasional exception of Marshall Allen[143], the composers and chiefs usually keep control over, unless there is a featured soloist or ensemble, as with mathias rüegg's interludes and Barry Guy's feature trios within the Barry Guy New Ensemble.

Most of the time, when speaking of free collective improvisation, the only (although not negligible in the least) aspect left to the interpreters' freewill is the precise playing. With the occasional exception of mathias rüegg who will sometimes simply offer a few choices of prewritten music to the interpreter, everyone this thesis has focused on tries to leave this musical aspect to the musicians' freewill.

Having made these observations, this does not answer the question of which technique is best suited to avoid musical chaos and propose something worth listening to when collectively freely improvising. The author had to come to the conclusion that the answer depends on two major factors: the size of the musical formation at hand (how many musicians are part of the group) and the musical background of its musicians (if they have studied improvisation or not).

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[143] With Marshall Allen and the Arkestra in general, this aspect can be decided by the general feeling of the band or, as he would put it, the general spirit of the moment and place.

If these musicians are not versed in the art of musical improvisation, two main techniques seem to be most appropriated depending on the size of the formation. In the case of a relatively small formation[144] (from two to around five musicians), the best technique might simply be one of mathias rüegg's: to write (note-for-note) a few possibilities of interpretations and let the musicians navigate between the choices at hand. This will ensure a great cohesion from the ensemble and will give some degree of freedom to the interpreters without risking having them getting so nervous and insecure they might not play at all.

If the ensemble gets larger than five (or at most six, but one has to keep in mind composing multiple musical choices for a certain number of musicians represents a colossal load of work for the composer) and the musicians are still not versed in the art of improvisation, then the best technique, for a medium as well as for an enormous ensemble, would probably be conduction. With this technique, the musicians can rely on someone else than themselves to take the hardest decisions and they simply need to produce the sounds and musical effects expected from them, while still being somehow free to choose most of the notes and rhythms they will play.

If the musicians are versed in the art of improvisation, if they have learned not to be scared when being asked to play without having notes or very precise musical indications, many techniques can be appropriated depending on the size of the ensemble.

For a small formation, the best technique would probably be to simply play together and listen to one another, like Dieter Glawischnig or Barry Guy would do. A small formation of experienced improvisers should be able to play by its own without facing much problems. The problems start to appear as the bands get larger.

For a medium-sized formation of improvisers, since chaos becomes a possibility (if not a probability) and something the musicians should start being aware of, it becomes important to decide on some kind of guideline, but to still have the musicians being able to express themselves relatively freely. Keeping this in mind, it appears to the author two main techniques seem particularly appropriate. If the band wants the guideline to be more of an intellectual nature, then Barry Guy's graphics and flashcards technique seems perfect

[144] Improvisation for small formations is not the main subject of this thesis, but since the subject has been discussed with most of the interviewed composers/conductors, the author feels free to give an educated opinion on the subject.

for the occasion; the musicians are relatively free, but the structure is clear and, if any problem arises, the chief can take relative control of the ensemble so to avoid musical disaster. If the band wants the guideline to be more of a spiritual nature, then trying to follow the "spirit of the moment" (as the followers of Sun Ra would do) might be the best road to travel, although one has to be aware of the dangers this technique implies if the musicians are not used to play with each other and if they do not agree on the nature of the "spirit of the moment". Of course, in this case, the band should put its attention on the leader and let him decide on what the spirit wants, where it should lead the band from moment to moment.

This "spiritual" technique can also be the appropriated one, if the general mood calls for it, when we get to larger musical formations – let's say between around 12 and 20 musicians. However, when getting around these numbers of participants, the risks for the musicians not to agree on the spirit of the moment increases. If, with these larger formations, one wants to take the intellectual approach, the author considers the technique with which he got the best results is his own "story technique". It provides a large amount of freedom to the musicians while still ensuring certain homogeneity and direction, musically speaking, to the interpretation, as long as the "imposing idea" exercise (or something similar) has prepared the musicians for the application of this technique.

However, when it comes to enormous formations, ranging from 20 to 50 (or 200, why not?) musicians, the story technique might get a little risky. It would prove hard for so many musicians, sometimes not even being able to hear one another because of inevitable physical distance between them, to gather around a common idea, even if well versed in the art of improvisation. This is when compositions techniques like the ones Barry Guy used for *Ode*, Michael Mantler for *Jazz Composers Orchestra* and Alexander von Schlippenbach for *Globe Unity* become essential. This way, musical cohesion is assured when musicians are playing what is written and still assured when it gets to the improvisation parts either because of what musically came before the improvisation or because of the limited amount of players improvising at the same time.

Naturally, one can always bring up the question of whether these techniques can still be designated as "free improvisation" since freedom unavoidably becomes somehow limited. Although this question is more of a philosophical than of a technical nature (What

is freedom? Where does it begin? Where does it end?), one can always refer to free improvisation in a jazz context as letting the musicians musically go as far as they want. But just as, in “free” societies, personal freedom ends just before it steps on someone else’s (one cannot rape or kill someone because he feels like it) or the society’s (one cannot steal from its government or not pay his taxes since, if people did, society would fall apart and cease to exist, at least as we know it), then can one say musical freedom should perhaps stop where the interests of the global musical result would be irremediably and negatively affected and the purpose of the piece at hand would cease to exist…

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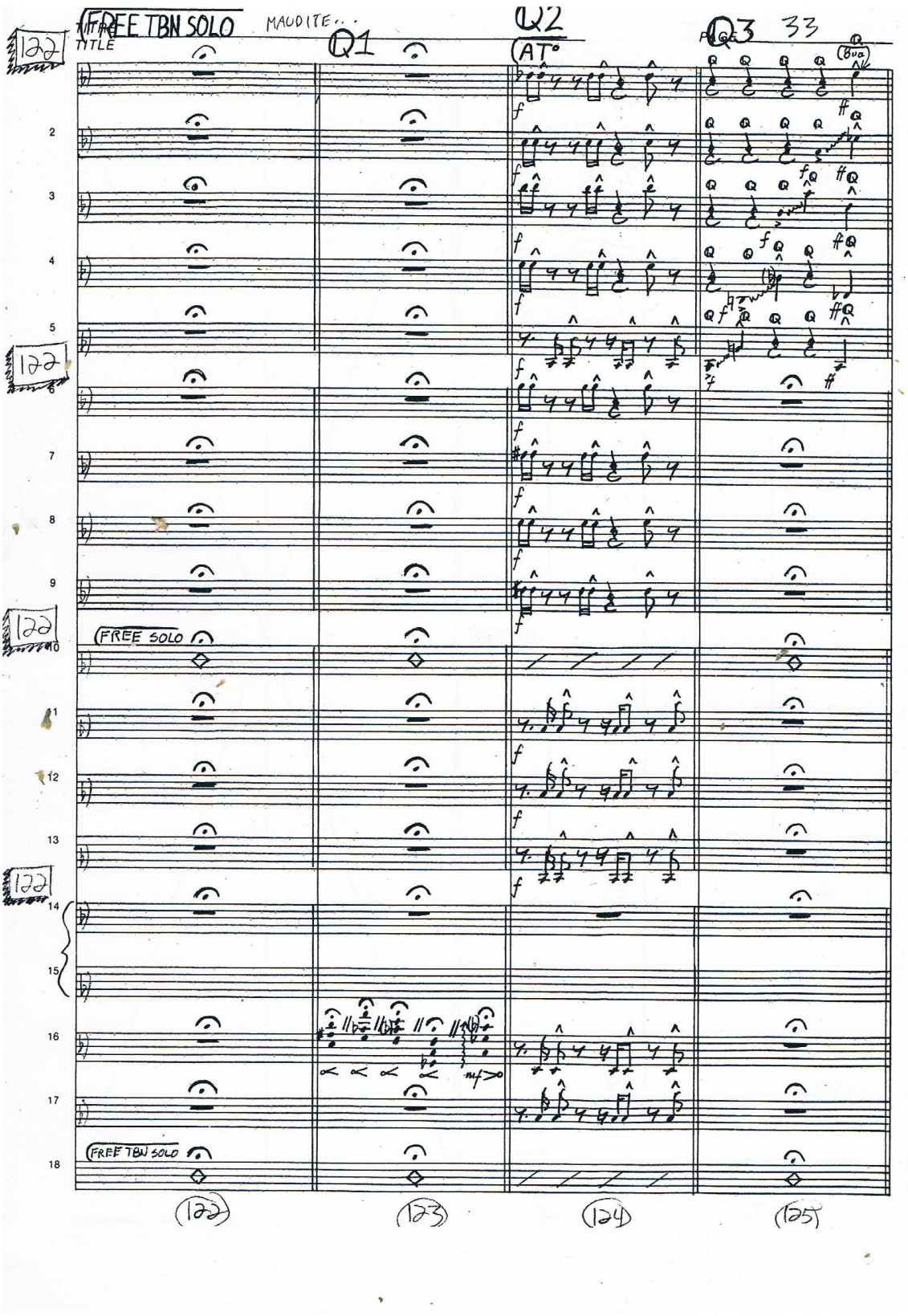
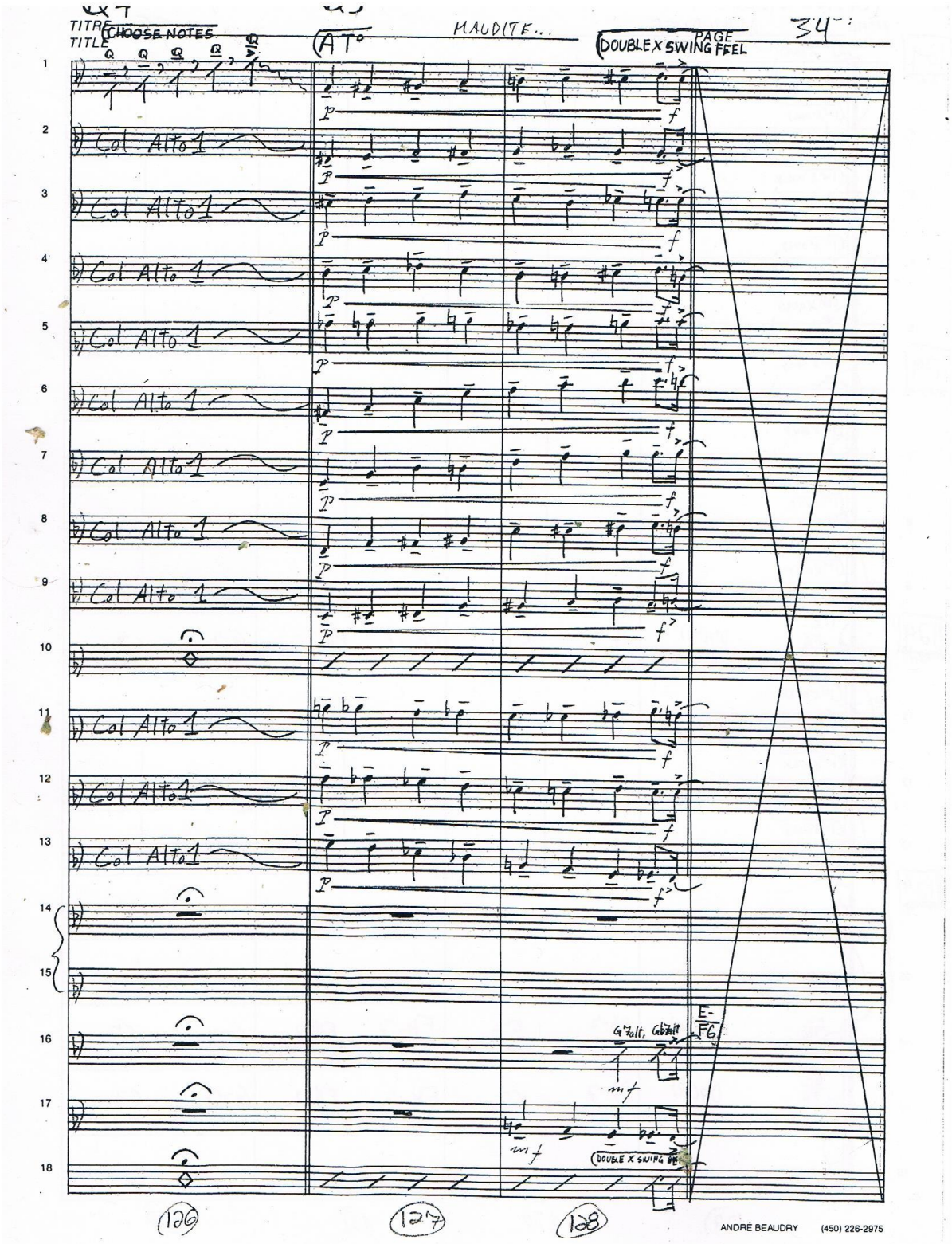
APPENDIX

APPENDIX I
Extract from Maudite bonne toune pour partir un show

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APPENDIX II
Interview with mathias rüegg

ML - Just to start, I always ask this question to everybody I meet… Of course, you have done in your early life – I haven't heard much of you playing in the later years, but – you started as a keyboard player when you left Graz and you came in here [Vienna], you started as a keyboard player. I don't have any recordings of that…

MR - That's good!

ML - That's good!? (laugh) OK! But I guess you were already at that time improvising kind of freely, or was it straight ahead jazz?

MR - Well actually, when I stopped playing rock music in 71, then actually I fell completely into free improvising, totally for two years. But then when I went to Graz, of course, I realized for myself that this does not lead really to somewhere so, then I decided to, actually to learn, to work on jazz. But I already did it for two years.

ML - And, since you actually have done free improvisation alone and, I guess, you have done it in, I guess, trio before the Vienna Art Orchestra began to grow larger and larger, and you did it also with larger ensembles, what do you think are the differences between playing alone, playing when you are two or three and playing when you are fifteen or twenty when it comes to free improvisation?

MR - Well, actually… I mean we never really did free improvisation in the Vienna Art Orchestra. Actually not. I mean… there were always free parts, but the quality of the orchestra was actually we tried to play very tight. And… OK, just like in the first year, the concerts were more happenings. And there were a lot of parts where we'd write and… where things just happened. But then after one year, there were more or less jazz musicians left. And then I had to… Actually I like to compose. I always liked to compose, so this was a good reason to compose structures, to compose melodies and to compose ideas in different ways. And, of course, over the years, I started to write more and more. And at the end, the freedom and the challenge were for the soloists; because practically every tune turned into a concerto for soloist and an orchestra, like in a classic sense. So the soloist had to work a lot on it. And of course, I discovered different rule models, like for example, I wrote a symphonic piece and then, Matthieu Michel, he just had to play over it, no

indication, a little bit like focus, from Eddie Sauter and Stan Getz. Stan Getz did not have any music, he had just this call. But, I mean, this is, in a way, free improvisation. It's a free improvisation over very complicated structure, but the soloist is completely free. And, of course, I kept his ideas, but I worked of course with the structures.

ML - So the more people there are, the less freedom you give them…

MR - Actually yes.

ML - … and the more the structure is important. If you had to play today just for fun in a bar, solo, and you wanted to do free stuff all alone, would you actually start by saying – before you even start playing – would you actually think: "OK, I'm going to do this and that"? Would you actually today have a structure in your head even if you're playing solo or if you're playing in duo or trio or is this just for when it's for large ensembles.

MR - Well, if I would play solo, I don't know, since I don't do it. But then I think I have enough knowledge and experience to develop things and so on, so… I would pick up different stuff and… But alone, it works in a way, because you know your own vocabulary and… it's more difficult with two people, with three it's even more and even more. So, alone it works always perfectly. And, if you are more people, you have to think. It's a social question in the end. There are always people who are dominant; there are people who cannot listen, who are not able to listen for example, so, others can… So what I did sometimes, there were always also free parts, you know like free interludes and so on and then I just gave it to two or three people. I was working with these different lineups or whatever.

ML - So that's your way of trying to bring structure into chaos: to say: "Chaos can be OK but no for too many people at the same time."

MR - I tried it once and, it was a kind of experiment. For technical reasons, we couldn't play our program. So I said: "Let's try to do one collective piece, like twenty minutes long, and I just give a two bars ostinato to the bass player and let's try to build it up over twenty minutes." No way.

ML - It didn't work?

MR - No way. After five minutes, everybody played fortissimo like hell and we couldn't keep it. And this takes a lot… Actually, one should train. It's very very difficult. And there are very few musicians who are able to think in a… who have a feeling or a relation to time. I mean not to time, but to time.

ML - Yeah, not the pulsation, but the time passing.

MR - *Genau*. So you have twenty minutes. And this is very difficult, but if one wants to be playing collective improvised music, one should be able to do things like that. But, jazz musicians like to be that… They're jazz musicians! This eventually could work with classic musicians maybe better; or with few jazz musicians. But the jazz musicians, they want to play.

ML - Yeah, that's the biggest problem. That's always what I write when I'm starting to explain the problem of free improvisation for loads of people. When you ask a jazz musician to play something, he will play. And if there are fifty of them, the fifty will play, unless you structure the thing.

MR - But on the other hand, I think, in general, the meaning of the word improvisation is much overrated for me. And it's interesting that jazz, the beginning of jazz was not improvisation. It was sound and phrasing. This was jazz. When you hear all the old cats' heads, they all had a fantastic sound; I mean a really great sound! And they would play the theme, or sometimes they would play one solo, they played it every night. They would play the same note, but not with the same expression, of course, they would change it. And I think that, actually, this was a European idea to bring the jazz on a political level; to say – especially in the 60s of course and later alike – "This is an expression of a new society of whatever." And this happens in jazz. But actually it was a big misunderstanding at the end. And, whether to say a jazz musician is better because he can improvise and a classical musician is not because he cannot improvise… I mean, a jazz musician normally cannot play a classical chair; he cannot read music. Not really. Except trumpet players because they never have many notes. But, I mean, in general, this started into a fight of, like, conservative, progressive, left, right. But it had nothing with their development of the music. And I always say: "I prefer to hear written music well played much more than a bad improvisation."

ML - I couldn't agree more!

MR - And the other way around too. And actually, jazz improvisation is difficult. It is very, very difficult. And only a few students who finish a jazz calling in Europe are able to improvise in a sense that they create music. And if not, they try to play more or less right, but it never really works. Jazz is very difficult actually. Very difficult. I mean straight ahead jazz, all kinds of straight ahead jazz; but also to play over a modal work tune, or whatever. I mean to create something, not just to play any note. This is very difficult.

ML - I do agree. I have four big themes I want to talk about. The first one – and I think that might be actually the one you prefer if I understand your character right – is about conducting and composition. First of all, you kind of already answered that in some kind of way, but I was wondering, when there are free parts in your compositions, how much freedom is actually left to the musician in a sense that, can you tell him: "No, don't play that, that's really not what I want" or do you say: "OK well, I left you free, so"…?

MR - But you speak for the soloist or…?

ML - Well, you are telling me sometimes you are going to say: "OK, there is going to be two or three people, at most, who are allowed to improvise freely."

MR - When this happened in the early years, actually, I gave them the mood, more or less… the mood and the time, in this case.

ML - And as long as, I'm saying "This is sad, or this is a flirting kind of mood, or you are actually very angry at that", that's it. And as long as you say "Play angry" and he plays something that sounds angry, that would be OK for you?

MR - OK, but I would never… I would not really call it angry, but I would say: "OK". I work if in keyboard like: impressionism, expressionism or laugh solo, whatever. But also, or sometimes, they have to play an introduction for what is coming up, so they have to create a relation to the following theme or structure, or whatever.

ML - And would you say that you impose more of your ideas to the musicians or if you let them impose their ideas to you?

MR - No, but actually for this unit – and I always had those unit people who play often together. And then, this already exists and you can work with existing material. This

is very good. And always in the Art Orchestra, it was like that, that smaller lineups were formed because of the musicians waking the orchestra. Or, I did it in 2002, I did like a first set, 25 minutes, and every night there was another lineup. So I'd just set the lineup, then they would… whatever. They would play a theme form them or they would play a standard, or I would tell Adrian to play didgeridoo, solo, so I would use a bit of all of what was existing. And this was actually… Yeah, totally… Everybody could do what he wanted. It was clear it was no longer than five minutes and, what I did, I fixed the dramaturgy. So it was clear that, at the end, for example, this was like an up-tempo or whatever. So this was fixed but then they could do actually completely whatever.

ML - OK. So you give them a lot of rope, actually.

MR - In this case, yes and, actually, they had to give me the title because I made the announcements. Very important! But in this case, we speak more about freedom than free improvisation. When they play a… When Stöger plays *Giant Steps*, then it's not free improvisation. But it's about the rule model of freedom in this case. But I guess sometimes there was also, yeah, just free improvisation. Solo, duo, but mostly I preferred to play a tune.

ML - You were saying sometimes you would say: "OK, you start a tune, but the final point is there. So at the end it has to be an up-tempo in D minor."

MR - No, when we had these five pieces, for example, it was important that each of these five pieces had a different character. So the character was given, more or less. The character was also defined thru the lineup.

ML - Of course. When you are composing and there is some kind of a free part for your musicians, do you use things like symbols, or drawings, or words in the parts to let them know what you want? Some people have weird symbols…

MR - No. Actually I never worked with graphic notations. I feel it makes no sense at all, neither in classical music. Some kind of aleatory stuff is completely… It looks good, but it's bullshit. No but, anyway, what I do is, I write all the charts by myself, handwritten. I always write funny stuff in it.

ML - You always write funny stuff! Like…?

MR - Yeah, funny comments. You know, I mean, it takes me like 2½ months, every day, to finish a complete program. Then, sometimes, to make it less boring, I write little poems or, I don't know, I'll write: "Did you ever think about that?" or "What did you do last night?" or "Play like you felt", you know! It's very ironic, but at the end the subject is always very clear. So I used to do quiet or choral repetition to explain the musicians the harmonic structure or the melodic possibilities. I don't know if you checked, I wrote a tune which was for chamber orchestra, actually for triangle and chamber orchestra and, then, I used it on this last lineup and Larry Sokal had to play over it. But this is, in a way, a very abstract tune. But then he made an analysis out of it and I made one. And if you look at his music, it's crazy. So he did it much more complicated than I. I did it, but he played fantastic over it and, also, in two or three spots he played every night the same, but for the rest he really played every night something completely different. And, of course, he had to memorize it because I did not allow any player to play solo with a music stand. That does not exist. It has not existed since ten years. Everybody who is there has to play by heart.

ML - Oh, I didn't know that. Interesting approach. When you are saying you are writing little sentences or what comes to your mind when you are writing the parts, just out of curiosity, if you are writing "Did you ever think about that?" is that going to be for all the saxophones together or for each musician?

MR - No, for each musician. And then, sometimes, when I do the pieces with other orchestras, suddenly people are starting to laugh because they discover these little messages. But actually I have written it for a concrete person, but in the end, you know..?

ML - Yeah, does that work when you change the lineup?

MR - Yeah, wait a minute. (Goes to take some parts to show examples.) I actually wrote a lot of notes, as for example, in a choir program… OK, this is not a very good copy, but it doesn't matter you know. For example, you know, I put any article out of a newspaper in it. This is the book everybody had. (Showing examples and laughing.) You know, there are always little comments. Well, not always, but… This was a process I had because I painted some graffiti in my house… There, there are some dirty jokes… However… "Nonachord: a chord with a ninth does not make any jazz

spring." And so on… "Why contemporary pieces are always so hard to understand?" But this was for everybody, so everybody had the same, because I have put everything in this book. But normally, of course, everybody has his own chart and then…

ML - And then, everybody has his own jokes.

MR - Actually yes. What I used to do, for example, I change the titles, especially when I did the Strauss arrangements. So everybody had his own… Like the Swiss guys had *On the Blue Rhine* and so on. The French had *À la Rhone Bleue*. So, sometimes, I realize, when I take it to another orchestra, everybody was totally confused because I said: "OK, let's play this tune." "But we don't have this tune!" (laugh)

ML - When you are writing something, are your compositions final? You know, when it's recorded, this is the way it's going to be played – of course the solos vary and everything – but are the compositions final or do they evolve with time and context?

MR - No, what I did, like in the last fifteen years, I always wrote a little bit more; which allows me then to cut stuff. But I never want to come into a situation where I wrote something and it does not work, and then what do I do?

ML - So you write a little bit more… when you are composing?

MR - Actually, yes. For example: backgrounds and so on. Actually I always wrote quite a lot and then one could cancel some of them. But in the last years, it happened only once to me that I really had to rewrite something. And it was a very strange situation. But otherwise, it was always like this. I write it and that's it.

ML - And if we play that tune today, we play it in six months, we play it in five years or in ten years…

MR - No, actually, I always did one program and then we went on tour with this program and there were only… We played every program nearly a hundred times – this is very much – and the Strauss program we played it… we played it also quite often. But in general, we went on tour and then I never picked it up again.

ML - So it's in the stone. This is the way it's going to be forever. This is a question which might apply to other people a little bit more than you because you mostly conduct your own stuff except for the Duke Ellington tour…

MR - I did a lot of arrangements. I did many albums just with arrangements.

ML - Yes, but my question would actually be… I mean word for word, what is written is: "Do you consider the compositions of others harder to conduct than your own?"

MR - I did it. I did it once. But the problem is, if you ask other people to write and you want to have a program and to tour with this program, then it has to be very precise. And most of the jazz writers, they don't like to say: "OK, you have to play a ballad, five minutes long, trombone solo." Because afterwards, it just don't work and you have ten up-tempo tunes with tenor saxophone and so. It does not really work. And it never worked in the history of music at the end. The history of large ensembles was always the story of the leader. And the problem is that, as a leader, you know the musicians if you are a good leader. And you know what they need. You know how you can feed them. If anybody sits there at home – and there are a lot of young writers – they have no idea about what is a soloist and how is it to play over it. And as a good jazz arranger and composer, you share. 50 percent is you and 50 percent is the soloist. And this is very important. And if you just write down jazz music and then nobody can play, it already makes no sense.

ML - I have nothing to add to that. So the question, like I told you in the beginning, does not really apply to you since… Or is it because you don't like to conduct other people's stuff?

MR - Actually, I don't really like to conduct at all.

ML - Really?

MR - Yeah, not really.

ML - Ah! This I would not have guessed. So, out of the blue, like that, if at the time they would have told you: "We need another tour for the Vienna Art Orchestra" but you actually know you cannot do that tour because there was something else, would you have liked to say: "OK, I'm going to write the stuff, I'm going to put it together and then you guys go and I collect some of the money"?

MR - I did it several times.

ML - Really? I didn't know that. I thought you always were with your orchestra.

MR - No, but there are other people asking for arrangements, so whatever.

ML - But that is actually something you like to do? Because it depends from person to person. I personally love to conduct my own things. I don't know; there is a godlike feeling to it.

MR - I see. That is clear, but if you write classic music, then anyway you will not conduct it by yourself, although I did it a couple of times. But in general, somebody else is conducting it. Or when somebody is asking you for music… There was just this Canadian ensemble who wanted to have an 82 program or so and they do it, it's cool. Of course, I don't have to be involved at all. Anyway, they are recorded so you know more or less how it could be; how it should sound. So, for the rest, I do not really care. Anyway, I practically write only classic music since a long time. And it is specially musicians who ask me. And they get the tunes, sometime I come, sometimes I don't even come.

ML - Really? You're more open than I am. That would not pass with me.

MR - Yeah, but I did so much. You can come and have a look, here.

(We both go to his score library, showing me the jazz shelf and his classical shelf.)

MR - So you feel a little more relax if you have written that much.

ML - So – you almost told me yes earlier but – have you ever found any kind of composition, your own or somebody else's, just impossible to conduct; to put on together, whether it's just too complicated, or…

MR - I have one thing to say. It's if something is difficult, but it makes sense, then one has to work on it. If it is difficult but it makes no sense, then it makes no sense to work on it.

ML - And who's to decide whether it makes sense or not? I mean, it really depends on the composer. I have seen things which to me don't make any sense at all, but to the composer, it's the alpha and the omega. So who's to decide what makes sense?

MR - I'm teaching composition too and now I force the students to write easy and logic stuff. If you are able to write something more or less perfect, in the sense there are no mistakes, first you do this and then you can come up with very difficult chords, and then you can come up with 7/8 and all that stuff. But what they mostly do is they write something very simple, but then there are certain parts where they get completely lost. And then, when the tune is played, it's very clear that all the

musicians will fall into a trap, but a trap which is not needed at all. And, for the playing musicians, if they feel it makes sense with this tune, then they do it. If they realize… and in this case the musicians are quite intelligent. They realize quite soon and say: "OK, but why do we have to do this? This will never sound." And that's the main problem. So, if it's difficult or not is not the subject. The subject isn't if it's difficult or not.

ML - Have you ever had any arguments with the musicians? With musicians who would say: "This doesn't make sense to me" and you would say: "No, it does make sense, you just don't get it."

MR - Actually, when we play in the rehearsals – we did very hard rehearsals – and if something does not really work, I'm the first who says: "OK, cut." And then `the musicians would say: "No, let's try this!" And I say: "No. We don't have to because, in this moment, I remember where I made the mistake." And it's always when things do not sound good; there is always a mistake and this mistake has mostly physical reasons.

ML - Such as? What do you mean by physical reasons? As in there is a logical music explanation or it is just not possible for a human to do that?

MR - No, but you can explain it in using physics, for example. Because all the sounds who are existing, they have a physical relation

ML - So you are talking about the Pythagorean…

MR - Exactly! And if you make certain mistakes, then you will hear that because it does not work sound wise. This is all concerning the sound. And I always say to students: "To create music is means to follow the musical laws and not to break them, because they are complicated enough. And follow what the music requests, not what you think you should do because you are original."

ML - So it's not because it has not been made before that it needs to be made.

MR - Exactly! This was one of the big mistakes in the second part of the 20th century.

ML - Tell me! (laugh) You told me you don't like to conduct too much but, briefly, when you…

MR - But I like to rehearse. You know, I like to bring everything on a top level, and then I like not to conduct. Then I like just to hang around on stage and do just that.

ML - (laugh) Have a beer and listen to the band.

MR - No, I had a fight against alcohol. So actually, nobody was allowed to drink anything during the whole day 'til after the concert. And then, everybody was allowed to drink a lot. And I always organized also the rehearsals; we always had a fantastic capturing, but only after, after the rehearsal. Because in a large group, it goes so quickly. And I didn't care when the musicians took drugs. I don't care at all. But alcohol doesn't work. It does not work.

ML - You tend not to listen to people when you drink.

MR - You play too loud and the concentration gets lost.

ML - But coming back to the conducting, do you have any special conducting technique? Since you already told me when a tune is rehearsed, that's the way it's going to played, so you are not going to change anything on the spot, I guess.

MR - No. I did it in early times, of course. You know, we had sounds on cue and stuff like that and following the movements. Of course I did it back then.

ML - And did you develop any technique with that, saying: "Well, I started with this technique and it didn't work; people didn't understand what I wanted so I switched to this one, which works better"?

MR - No, actually, the main spot for conducting for me was actually to get the right tempi. This is very, very difficult in a way. You know, that you never make a mistake in tempo. And mostly, I chained the tunes totally. So, for example, some people were still playing and then I get to the rhythm section and I count it in. So all of those tempi, they must be totally clear. And this is really, really important. When we did the Strauss, for example, between tunes, I always told a lot of funny stories. But normally, I never do. So normally, there is no speech between, but in the Strauss, yes. So the art was like: I spoke for one minute, told a nice story about Strauss or whatever and then, after the last sentence, I turned and count it in, without thinking before of the tempo. For this I was really good in conducting. For the rest I was not very good, but for this I really managed to get it without thinking before.

ML - This is not part of my questions, but, as a conductor myself, do you ever rehearse your tempi all alone? Do you sing that tune in your head and think: "OK, it's going

to switch at that point and am I OK to change the tempo?" Do you do that by your own?

MR - Actually I never had to do it. But what I did, since I never use music, no score on the stage, of course I had to learn the stuff by heart. I mean not everything, but all the important points. And there were some quite difficult programs, so I thought, as a composer, whenever I did difficult stuff or out stuff, I always kept a mathematical order. You know, when I work with the rhythm, there is one tune which works with a lot of uneven rhythms. But in the end, if you count in half time or whatever… So I do it in a way which, for the conductor is easy to memorize. But I really had to memorize and then I knew when I was there: "OK, now it's 8-9-8" for example.

ML - 8-9-8?

MR - Bars. Eight bars in 9/8. But not 7½, you know, not this stuff. But then it was always very clear. I did one tune, actually it starts with a 5/8 and then it's becoming a 9/4 and then like a 10/4 and then an 11/4. But for the structure, it's easy. But this stuff I really had to memorize. Because if you have no score, you have to be sure about that. But it looks much better because, first, a music stand in front of a band does not look good at all. This also means that, as a conductor, you always show your ass to the audience. So, if you conduct by heart, you can be anywhere, you know. You don't cover the drum, or you don't cover this, you can be on the side or you give the cues to the people who need the cue. Because…

ML - It's not the whole band that needs the cue.

MR - Exactly! The rhythm section needs a cue, so you are close to the rhythm section and so on. It makes complete sense to me. And I always wanted also that the audience sees that actually a conductor is not really required. And at the beginning, of course, I conducted ten times more, especially in the rehearsals. And then, when the program was played often, towards the end, I had not much to do anymore.

ML - You come on front just to give some cues and…

MR - Exactly. For giving the tempi; and of course, if you play a program often, near the end practically everybody knows it. And there are always players, especially Ron, he played the whole program by heart, for example. And this is also a very good sign for me: if musicians play a program by heart, it means that it makes sense, what they

have to play. Because if not, they would never memorize it, if it's written against the music.

ML - It does. I have never seen it in that way, but it does make a lot of sense. When we are studying your work, you seem to have started a lot with free jazz, free improvisation, giving a lot of freedom to your musicians and – correct me if I'm wrong, this is the impression I get from studying your work – over the time you seem to have let go of free jazz to focus more on classical music, but even when it comes to jazz, I would not say to go mainstream but, you seem to have let go of the free parts and…

MR - Actually yes!

ML - Why is that?

MR - Because I understood myself more and more as a composer and, actually, most of the musicians who were hired they did not play free at all anymore. And, what I started in 92 is… I was in a concert of Miles Davis and in one concert of Nina Hagen in the same week. And so, I decided a concert must have a dramaturgical bow – very important – and it needs light to support it. So from then on I started to work with lights and I started to work really on a perfect dramaturgical bow. And this dramaturgical bow works exactly the way as it is planned. And it does not allow anything else, because then, sadly, if this is too long, then the tension gets lost and then this does not work anymore. So I decided to take the responsibility that every soloist is in the best spot. And this was the reason I scarified this other system which always ends up in a way which things are too long and the tension does not work anymore. And I know jazz musicians, in the end, always want to just play of course. And they do not really care about the others. They want to play a super solo and for the rest they do not really care in general, but I knew a lot of people in the Art Orchestra played great solos, they really played great stuff. So this I wanted to work on and then the rest was not so important anymore. And they more and more liked the challenges they got; except maybe this one musician. But in general, they always liked it and they were always wondering what the next program is? What kind of solos were going to be in the next program. And for this trilogy, I made a complete chart book. I made a chart for every tune.

ML - You are talking about the 30 years of the Vienna Art Orchestra?

MR - Exactly. So I made charts and then, people came to me and I'd have a look and I said: "Listen, this, if you played in quartet it would work too." So I started another kind of working with the musicians. There was one on this *Art and Fun* program, there was like an integrated duo of Gansch and Breinschmid. So they could do quite a lot of nonsense, but I gave them three songs from myself, short themes, and then this was integrated in orchestral part. And I know how they'd play such tunes – like one was a waltz, the other one, a march or whatever – so they made a lot of fun out of it and conducting wise, I could react when the band entered and when not.

ML - So I guess we can say that leaving free improvisation behind was a conscious choice, it was not just something which, after ten years, you would take a look at an older score and would realize: "Hey, I don't do that anymore!" It really was something you decided to do; it was conscious of you.

MR - Of course. And, I mean, if I write a score, then I write a score and I don't write in this score this free aleatory stuff. If I want to do it, I can do it anyway. I can do it out with any straight ahead score as a conductor. But if so, if I write the score, then the things are written. And then, of course, if I want, this is a kind of improvisation, I can open things and can change things. But this is not needed to be written down at the end.

ML - And does this happen often? Whether you open solos or you change something.

MR - I mean, in general, not in the last fifteen years because everything was so clear and also so tight and… OK, what I did sometimes, I cut background, of course, or I took out, because I wrote too much sometimes, or the soloist said he would feel more comfortable if there would be one chorus less or whatever. But this is never a problem.

ML - These are very little changes. So you have let go of free jazz; were you scared of repeating yourself? Was your evolution something like a reaction to yourself?

MR - Actually I started the other way around. I actually started with free jazz and then I went back to the roots.

ML - Yeah, but it is still an evolution. I mean, evolution does not mean you have to start with Rameau and you end up with Berio. It can actually be the other way around.

MR - Actually, since I started first with classic music, then I played rock music, then I played free jazz, so actually only jazz was left! And of course, at the end it helped me a lot that I did different things; but free jazz also, in a way, was very contemporary and it was actually related to the mid 60s until the end of the 70s. But I just lost the interest and let's say the word "improvisation" stayed but the word "free" was left. But it does not mean now I like to have *unfree* improvisation!

ML - (laugh) YOU IMPROVISE THIS!!! Improvise an F!

MR - There was a story where Stockhausen did a contemporary piece and it was with a classic orchestra, Michel Portal played in it, and there were five singers and they had a microphone and had to walk around and come back after hours, but they had a wireless microphone. So then Stockhausen said: "OK, we start with a collective solo, so everybody can play what he wants." But actually, Michel Portal was in the second row, he played *badoobadoodi* (jazz phrasing) and Stockhausen said: "No, no! Not this! Not this one!" (laugh)

ML - (laugh) Play whatever you want… but not that!

MR - *Genau*!

ML - So, just between me and you… and the tape, since you had a career which was noticed by the critiques and all, have you ever done a project just to please the press? And if you want this to be off record, just say so.

MR - No, no! I mean, at the beginning, of course, the critics played quite a role for me. This is obvious. But already very early, I found out that people are actually not really writing about your music. They were writing about politics. And of course, we were young, fresh, unconventional, left, so we satisfied some kind of clichés. But very early I realized that, actually, it was never about the music, it was always about something else. And from then on, I separated two things. I said: "OK, the musician Rüegg, he does not care, but the man actually has to notice it" because, actually, the critics show you your market value, point. So I started to really see it in this sense. And this made me… independent, actually. So I always did what I thought is the best for the orchestra. And also to find a type of program, to find something which motivates me, as a composer, to create a music which an orchestra likes to play as well after 40 concerts and a program which works at 17:00 in a classic venue as well

as at 2:00 in the morning in a jazz festival. This is very, very important. So actually, in lots of cases I maybe did not write what I would write as a composer, but this is the difference, as a jazz composer, you have to share. And if you just write what you want personally, you can make it once, but it does not work as a touring program.

ML - So you have to find the right balance between being satisfied with yourself and the business.

MR - Exactly! And these were the things I was thinking of, actually. And they were important. And then, for the critics I noticed, since we played in many countries, the tastes in every country are a bit very difficult. If you have a French jazz magazine and a German jazz magazine, you think: "We don't speak about the same music", in general.

ML - "Have you seen the same concert?"

MR - Exactly! Which critic do you want to satisfy? Maybe the one from *Downbeat* or rather the one from your local town? Again, it makes no sense.

ML - Well, from the articles I could read from your hometown and the ones from *Downbeat*, you seem to have managed to satisfy both.

MR - (laugh)

ML - It's a good thing. Now I would like to come to a very important part of your work – the more I talk to you, the more I realize that – which is rehearsals. Of course, today and for the last fifteen years, you haven't done a lot of free improvisation together with the band and everything, but let's get back to the 70s and the beginning of the 80s, when that was the case, did you have free improvisation exercises which would not be part of a composition, just for helping people realizing they have to listen to one another?

MR - Actually, no. No, we did it more in a Dadaistic sense. For example, I remember we did – I don't know where it was, I think in Berlin – all the horn players were sitting in the audience, but they had the horns on the floor. And the idea was that, the musicians would stand up one time and go to the stage while playing. And the public did not know where the musicians were in the room.

ML - So the musicians would get up one by one in a particular order?

MR - No. OK, but if two would stand up, it would work too. So we had rehearsed maybe two or three times, but we actually rehearsed it for other reasons: because whenever a musician is walking with his horn, that's what I found out in all those years, also on stage, you have to make the way once. If not, you will fall. So, whenever there is something, at the end of the rehearsal I say: "OK, now everybody makes his way, where he has to go." So then they go to the audience and they have to know how to sit down, where they can put the horn. This is mostly more important. The problem is you can't really rehearse free improvisation because every time you rehearse, already one idea is lost. So I always try to work on the circumstances, anything else, on organization, but not really to do it before because all such Dadaistic happenings, they must also be surprising for the musicians themselves. If it gets to be a routine, it's not that funny anymore. So this is the stuff I was working on. Or I remember when we – I think this was not in Berlin – we had two concerts in 81 in Jazz Fest Berlin, live in ZDF (German television), so we were the first part, McCoy Tyner sextet was the second part, and we came from Paris. And in the flea market, I found pigeons and then, when we started, it was very difficult to find, we had lamps here (attached on glasses). So we were walking around with these lamps and some percussions in the audience, and then we were sending these white pigeons, meanwhile there was percussions all on stage and then we came all on and we started, for example. To do it was not a problem, but to organize this stuff was a big problem. We had bells and different percussions and we were singing; this was never a problem because we knew each other very well. But to prepare everything! First we went to have the idea, but then to do everything for it to really work!

ML - So, in conclusion, first, you never did any kind of improvisation workshop or anything just for them to learn to listen to one another, every time you rehearsed free improvisation, it was really for a specific point, and because you did not want to spoil the first impression the musicians could come up with, you would not work on it too much. You would work on the structure, you would explain a lot, but you would not let them play too much so the spontaneity would not suffer.

MR - Exactly!

ML - This is very wise.

MR - I did it actually once it this *Concerto Piccolo*, for example, then, when Lauren Newton says: "Tradition is dead", then there was a big applause from the audience, then: "The avant-garde is dead", there was no applause, then came this sentence from Ernst Jandl: *Phallus klebt allus*, and in this piece, I'm working with the sound of collective improvisation. You know, this directed stuff and very pointed in a way, but it was focused, and then there was the Coltrane chorus from *Giant Steps* for three saxophones so, you know, it's a bit post modern. My daughter discovered this, she came to me and said: "Papa" – there was a school exchange with Holland and there was a guy, and they had to prepare a musical presentation and so they had the idea they wanted to play something to the – she is 18 – to the others that they cannot understand. So she came to me and said: "Can you give me something very out?" I said: "Yes! I have one!" So I gave her this concerto and she said: "Yeah, it was really too much, but then, in a way they could understand that something is done with structure, that it was not just noise."

ML - I am getting away from my questions once again, but I had the feeling when listening to the *Concerto for Voice and Silence*, there is sometimes freedom given to some parameters of the music while some others were strict. Like saying: "You can play any chord you want, but the rhythm has to be ta-ta-ta-ta-ta (some rhythm I sing)." Am I right?

MR - I was working with this. I just wrote rhythmical stuff, but, for example, on this *Concerto for Voice*, there is another part where the two piano players just improvise whatever, and this is also what I teach to my students now, for example. So we take a cantilena, a very soft, very simple cantilena and there are three or four musicians who have to play this cantilena. They have to look at each other and they breathe together and they play it perfectly. But then we have five vocalists who are improvising completely freely.

ML - Over this cantilena structure?

MR - Actually I don't know; it's like parallel. But to make it more concrete, I use this thing because it gives a certain identity and it sounds different then if they just improvise collectively, those five girls. So it gives a kind of identification. I was working a lot with, sometimes these structures as well with the choir, with my choir

stuff that I used to mix this kind of checked out written part, and then completely free improvisation over it. So in a mixed form, I used to use it.

ML If there is something some people are playing together, some kind of structure, it gives a perspective to the free improvisation over it.

MR - Exactly! It is more dimensional in this case.

ML - When it comes to rehearsal, what do you think are the toughest aspects to rehearse or to put on together?

MR - I mean, what I did in the last 20 years, the first thing was actually that, when I started rehearsals – the night before, we always rehearsed in the theater with full sound and full light, so everything was set up the night before and we always started the rehearsal at 12:00. So the rhythm section had to be there at 10:00 and the horns had to be there at 11:00 to fix everything, and at 12:00 we started the rehearsal. Very important. And everybody knew that.

ML - And everybody was ready?

MR - Everybody was ready. Because in the Art Orchestra, if you were late, which is later than five minutes, you had to invite everybody for one drink.

ML - I love that rule.

MR - It's perfect. I'm out, but the musicians liked it, and no one likes to pay 25 drinks. Very simple. And the second point in the rehearsals was that I always had a full gathering – there was always one person who was in charge of the orchestra gathering – which means nobody had to run away. Nobody. Everything is in this house, you don't have to go out for a coffee, and I always worked with this system: I had 50 minutes and 10 minutes break. I learned it. It's a very old rule. 50 minutes, 10 minutes break. Exactly a cigarette break. I worked like eight hours, nine hours, and I would make only one longer break of 30 of 45 minutes. But everything is there, so they know exactly when the food will be ready, and then half an hour is actually enough. So the rule is to do it in a very short time and never to make a long break because... So the best time was between 12:00 and 20:00.

ML - You were about to say to never make a long break because… I would like to hear the reason.

MR - Yeah, because the people start drinking or they get tired. And one thing which was very important, I never rehearsed in Vienna. It has a very simple reason. It's because half of the musicians are coming from abroad and half of the musicians are coming from Vienna. If you're rehearsing in Vienna, the situation is not the same: then you have to go to mama, you have to do this, you have to go to the dentist, no! Rehearsals started like: you had packed your things like you had to be on tour and you don't have to think of anything else, you have no girlfriend, no nobody, no nothing. You are already on tour. And you have nothing to do but to rehearse. Very, very important.

ML - So you didn't have things like weekly rehearsals.

MR - No. Never!

ML - So it was: "we have this show, let's rehearse for three or four days in advance and that's it."

MR - It was longer. In general, we played for five or six days. Five or six days of rehearsals and then we went on tour. And then, just later, just with the trilogy, and, I guess *Big Band Poesie*, I started to rehearse and record it before; like half a year before we went on tour because we should have an actual CD and not just the one from the last tour. And in a way it was not bad because then, when we did the heavy rehearsals at the end, we already had everything recorded, so then, of course, before the tour, we met just for one or two days. And what I always did is I always separated the band and always worked with the rhythm section. And then the brasses worked together and the saxophones together. But I would practically never intervene; I would always work with the rhythm section.

ML - And was there a leader for every section to lead the rehearsal?

MR - Not necessarily, they would just work together. They would work together and I would work with the rhythm section, and then when the rehearsals were over, I always worked with the light technician to check out all the light cues and so on.

ML - Yeah, this concept of working with the light technician came at the beginning of the 90s?

MR - Exactly. I did this *La Belle et la Bête*, this Cocteau production and since then I worked with this. There were even productions where – I did this *Fe & Males* with

seven men and seven women with this double orchestra. There I did the light; I was not on stage. I completely did the lights. There were so many difficult cues, but it was fantastic. You know, you have the lights from the music stand. And it's very important you don't see these lights. OK, today there are better ones so that the stage doesn't look like a Christmas tree, but then whenever something happened, like an interlude, light was gone and when I opened a little bit the light of the lamp, this was the sign that this goes on. So actually I conducted with the lights.

ML - You told me you tried just a couple of times to do other people compositions or arrangements. It's not your major work, of course…

MR - I remember I was the conductor of the Vereinigten Bühnen, of this musical institution in Vienna, but at the beginning, everything seemed to look different so, actually, Bill Russo came and he was supposed to do one night in the theater with this orchestra and he asked me to do the rehearsals before. So I studied his music, and then – but it was late Bill Russo, not the young one; so there was a little cheesy stuff. I remember when I saw this I said: "Na, come on! This does not work if we play it swing, let's play straight at least." But then, when he came, he changed everything back.

ML - I am just sorry I only have a microphone right now and no camera, because your face was saying so much! But when you are conducting other people's music – and for obvious reasons I am not talking of Duke Ellington or Charles Mingus – but when the composers are still alive and you are conducting their work, do you like to work with the composers or do you adopt the "You have written your stuff, now let me handle it and bring my vision to it" philosophy?

MR - Actually, I mean, we did it only once and this was a workshop for young composers and we had to rehearse 35 tunes, which is crazy. And there, actually, in most of the cases, I did some little tricks and the composers were totally happy because they never expected it would sound this good. But I did one standing. There I commissioned Mike Westbrook and this was no problem. And actually, my favorite composer was always Uli Scherer who got completely lost in life. He wrote fantastic stuff, but it took him something like half a year to write one composition. But he did everything in his head, so… But he was so unreliable! But there are a couple of

tunes from him. He also did a version of Stravinsky's *Ragtime*, excellent music! Excellent!

ML - In shows, are there sometimes unpredicted musical surprises, either from the musicians or from your part? Like you saying: "OK, we did not rehearse it like this, but right now, I can feel the audience or the musicians want that, so I am going to give it to them"? So does it happen that you make surprises or that musicians surprise you with something unexpected?

MR - This, of course, it happened too, yeah. The musicians sometimes make jokes, but I make jokes too. But in general, it is like that. Jazz musicians are extremely unfocussed, extremely. If you work with classical musicians, you say it once, nobody speaks and they got it forever. In a jazz context, first, you have to say it five times until everybody understands it. And then you have to play it ten times until everybody really does it. I don't know where it comes from and why, but it's like that. So, for example, it means that, in a way, this is very inflexible. So, for example, during a sound check, when I want to change something, it's practically impossible, because it will not work! But what I did sometimes is that I changed the order of the program. This was already very much; it took a lot of discussion.

ML - Really? The musicians argue with you about these kinds of decisions?

MR - Sometimes. But anyway, they find out I mostly was right anyways. Because I remember that, with a program, we started with a very soft tune; very nice this was a muted trumpet solo. Then we were in Couches, the festival, and I said: "OK. Who played before?" And I said to the band: "We will start with *Such Sweet Thunder*." Then no. I said: "We start with *Such Sweet Thunder*." So we went out and we played *Such Sweet Thunder* and then we already had a standing ovation after the first tune. So then they knew they could trust me. Or, for example, it's interesting, this *Diminuendo and Crescendo*. So at the beginning, they all said: "This is a stupid idea. Nobody wants to play 27 choruses." And it was written in a tour ride. It was: "Ah! [yawn]" The guys were running around the whole day, depressed: "Ah! [yawn] Tonight I have to play 27 choruses!" One year later, they already wanted to sell the right to play the solo on the tune, because everybody wanted to play the 27 choruses! But it took one year to understand. So you can see that some things cannot be

changed so quickly, they need time. Everything needs time. That's the difference between a project and a band.

ML - What do you mean?

MR - A leading band or an orchestra is not a project, because it's living. And when you make something once, you know, it's always a project. But in a project, you can never find out; it never goes to the substance. It always stays on the surface because music needs time in general; especially for a larger orchestra. So music needs time.

ML - Just for the record, could you give me an example of jokes you have put on the musicians or the musicians have put on you?

MR - I did like a multimedia revue opera festival in Vienna in 87 and it ended up that there were empty metronomes on the stage until the audience realized it's obviously over. But then they came out and the whole band was there and it was a big session with some dancers. So, you know, on the last night, you always make jokes, so when the curtain came up, suddenly there were 100 empty bottles of beer.

ML - (Laugh) Did you ever lose your concentration in a show because of something the musicians did, like this?

MR - No, but there I did coordinate everything. So there were eight moving elements on the stage and they all had to turn, so I gave all the general cues. We had like a plot with 100 letters and then this was a cue for the light, for the sound, there was even a child involved, you know, and then there was one guy backstage and he told the people when they had to move, these moving rises and so on. So I did the general coordination. This was quite heavy, I have to say. And then, you know, you could hear that something does not work, so I had to immediately give a new order and so on.

ML - So everything has to be perfectly clear in your head.

MR - Actually yes. I always tell my students that good music starts with a cleared-up mind.

ML - Like I told you, I pretty much know the general reception you got from the public and the critics, but how do you think this reception evolved over the years? Did you see some changes, things you could do before which were very well accepted, but if

you did again, 20 years later, it would not be the same; or the opposite: things the public was not ready for 20 years ago but would be accepted now?

MR - I mean, in general, I never try to look back. I always try to look forward. And what was done was done and it is not that much interesting for me anymore. Except the Satie program we played. We played it a lot, maybe 60 times. But this was an exception, the Satie program. And Strauss is a little bit different because every time I brought one or two new arrangements and this was only played three times, three concerts. But in general, I just sort in which direction I could go and what inspires me, so in 98 I decided to turn the orchestra into a big band because it gave me the chance to go acoustic: no monitor on stage anymore, just one monitor for the soloist and the rest, everything is acoustic. And I liked it a lot. The balance of a big band is genius. It's perfect. It's perfect like a symphonic orchestra. It's a perfect formula. And then the only thing was that, after ten years of big band, I've ran a bit out of inspiration. And I started to really have ear problems. And so this was a sign for me to have a softer band. And anyway, I was working in this field before so I tried to make this like a chamber orchestra with jazz soloists. It was very interesting. Very hard to do, because you have to write everything down. And then for the classic soloists, I wrote them all the solos, but I wrote them several possibilities, so they could choose, and the idea was that they had to play everything by heart so that they can choose to switch from one to the other. Like, for introduction, one alto played this introduction, one alto played the other and I had to be certain it mixed well. And what I did as well is I wrote a piano trio… Actually, let me show you. (Goes to his working room to bring the score.) So what I did in this piano trio is… the idea was there would never be one version, because, for example, here the piano player has the possibility to switch from here to here. (There are two written piano parts for the same passage.) There are also two possibilities for the violin and for the cello. But everything has to work so that, when you play all the voices together, it still sounds good whatever they do. So, you know, sometimes it's like this, then it's like that and they can do whatever they want.

ML - Yes, but for the musicians, it is already hard enough to learn one line; was it possible for them to learn all of those possibilities?

MR - No, but this, they did not play by heart. Not this one, it would be too much. Sometimes there are even three possibilities, so, in a way, you never know how it will be. For example, let's take the piano. When the piano takes another version, it means that maybe it's groovier or whatever, so then the others might also change, like a chain.

ML - Like a big domino.

MR - Exactly. And you know, whatever possibility they take, at the end, it never changes the character of the tune.

ML - Very John Cage like.

MR - But in a straight harmonic context. Actually, it's the work of two piano trios.

ML - (laugh) But you only get paid for one!

MR - Exactly!

ML - When you compose, do you compose specifically for the players? For example, when you write for tenor two, you know who is going to play this part. Therefore, do you compose specifically for him and not just for any tenor two?

MR - Of course, of course.

ML - In that case, let's say you have composed for a specific big band; you knew these were the 18 guys who were originally playing this and wrote it for them and it just so happens that, six months later, you have to do the same stuff but with 10 new people out of the original 18. Are you going to change some things?

MR - This never happened, there were never substitutes. Sometimes the lineup changed, but anyway I would write a new program.

ML - Exactly. I think there was one big change where a lot of people left the band and a lot of new younger guys came in, but in this case you actually wrote new stuff.

MR - Anyway, I always wrote at least one, but there were years I wrote three programs. So anyway, this was never the question. And when I go somewhere, when I bring the music, the orchestral parts are not difficult, but for the soloists it's always difficult. So what I do in this case is I let the band choose what the musicians prefer to play. So they choose and that's it.

ML - So you just give the four trumpet parts and you let them decide which trumpeter plays which part.

MR - Exactly. But for the horn solos in the orchestra, because they know themselves better than I. So when I come for the rehearsal, mostly they already fixed that this guy plays over this tune, which often does not correspond with the original intention; but this does not really matter in the end. But of course, those musicians are, you could say, a certain type of musicians. So this tune, for example, is written for a certain type of tenor player, and there exists more than one. But if it's not the right type of musician, then it never really works. So this is important.

ML - Do you find it hard to find musicians open to your style of music in Austria, or in Germany, or Europe in general? Has it been a problem for you to find people about whom you can say: "He is going to like what I write" since you have your very specific style?

MR - No, actually I never need more than one and I always find the one I need. But of course, on a top level, the choice is not that big, and you must have musicians who like to play in a section –very important – and who care about the sound. They should be able to read, more or less, and so on. And then they should play something very individual, solo wise, and they must like to travel. So in the end, there are not that many left.

ML - But you never had any problem, you never had anybody in your band you thought: "That's not exactly what I would have wanted, but since…"

MR - It did not happen. It did not happen often.

ML - Once again, you might answer me the very same thing, but do you find it harder to find musicians open to many styles of music today or did you find it harder 30 years ago? Was it easier in 1980 to find musicians who would say: "Hey, I never played something like that, let's try it!" or is it easier today, if you had to compare the two eras?

MR - No, I think what changed radically since the 80s is that, in the 80s, there were not many musicians. Not at all. Today, you have ten times more musicians, but on the top level, you don't have more than in the 80s. But bellow, the choice is much much bigger. But for the real cats, it stays the same at the end.

ML - And when it comes to be open-minded?

MR - I would say this is the same percentage with musicians as with any other group of human beings. I mean, open-minded people… If you find 15% of the population who is open-minded then it's already much. I would say below 10%, but it's the same thing with the musicians in the end. Of course, it depends as well on the education, but if the teachers are not open-minded, then there will be no open-minded students! And if not-open-minded teachers choose other not-open-minded teachers… And in the States, people are more open-minded in the field of classic and jazz. They have another relation to tradition and it does not exist, like here, for example, that people are allowed to say or to teach that after Shubert, the music stopped being; you know, this would not be possible in America.

ML - That Shubert was?

MR - That after Shubert, there was not any music…

ML - That was worth studying.

MR - Exactly! This would not be in America.

ML - Correct me if I am wrong, but the impression I got from pretty much everybody I talked to who has a certain experience in Austria, was they seemed to have the feeling that during the 70s, during the 80s, one could ask any kind of musician to do anything and it does not mean he would do it right, but he would try. As for today – maybe it is because of the teachers, maybe it is the way music is taught in schools – but they seem to tell me that today, among youngsters, if one tries to organize a free jazz workshop or something like that, it would be hard to find 15 musicians willing to try the experience as, in the 70s or 80s, if one did the same thing, there would have been just too many people showing up.

MR - I think that's right, but you know, I would not call free jazz open-minded in general. But what I say to my students is today, musicians must know the repertory of sounds coming out of free jazz. Today, a jazz piano player must know how to prepare a piano, very simply. So I see it more in a didactic sense, or as I say: "Free jazz is a historical direction like Dixieland or New Orleans. And in a way, you have to know about that and you have to be able to use some sounds and things out of this time." I always wanted for musicians to be able to play from this vocabulary, which is, in a sound wise way, very similar to the very early jazz. It's a kind of intensity and

working with sounds. But, I mean, open-minded would be, for example, if you like Cecil Taylor, then you should study Leo Ornstein. Do you know Leo Ornstein? He was a composer born on 1900[145] from Ukraine and he was a star in the 1920s in New York. He was called Leo the Sheik, or I don't know what, and it must have been hysteria when he gave concerts, and he composed what Cecil Taylor played 40 years later. He was a big star.

ML - And in the 20s, they were ready for this?

MR - They were totally freaking out. But they liked very much Varèse, for example. Varèse was very popular. But they did not notice Charles Ives at all; they did not notice Carl Ruggles at all, beside the fact that Carl Ruggels wrote only 80 minutes of music, but the *Sun-Treader*, come on, what kind of music! But there were popular composers and the most popular was Leo Ornstein. And, you know, he was nearly two meters and, I mean, the girls fell down during his concerts and he was playing completely out stuff, but everything written down and composed. So when we speak of open-minded, you know, who knows Leo Ornstein? Or does anyone who knows Cecil Taylor know Leo Ornstein? I have the idea that today's generation, let's say people between 17 and 25, are more open-minded in a way because they are not ideological. They see the music more or less as it is, they say what they like or what they don't like, and I did these two ensembles, a free music ensemble and a blues ensemble – totally opposite – and I wrote twelve blues, one in every key, and every blues has a certain subject, again it's the whole history of jazz. And of course, more people wanted to come to the blues ensemble, that's right, but the other ones like very much to do this free improvisation stuff, and I think, in general, this generation is freer personally. They are not under this very strong ideological pressure as we had it.

ML - They don't feel like they have a mission to do in music, they just do the music.

MR - Exactly. Or they don't have to do more. So they see music just as music and not as any ideological instrument to change the world. I always used to say: "It is already difficult enough to change the art, but if an artist thinks he has to change the world, he can't be a good artist!"

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[145] Leo Ornstein was actually born in 1893.

ML - Since personally, as a composer, you had some major evolution, were any of your musicians reluctant about the changes you brought from project to project? Because sometimes, one project did not have anything to do with the preceding one, did it ever happen for someone to say: "Well, if this is the direction you are taking, goodbye, I am not following you"?

MR - In general, the musicians were staying for quite a long time in the orchestra, I would say; but for every musician, there was something like an emotional ending because, I think whenever someone played in the Art Orchestra, he was very much involved in a certain way. So he really gave a lot. OK, Harry stayed practically 33 years but with a break of 4 years, Matthieu and Andy have stayed 17 years, there were a lot of other people staying more than 10 years and so on, but it was mostly the case that the musicians said: "OK, now, for me, it's over." But not especially because of a project. It happened in a few cases, but in general, actually no; they trusted me and they said: "Whatever he does, I will follow him."

ML - That is a nice thing to know when being the director! So basically, it happened just a few times for people to say: "This is not my kind of music anymore; I do not recognize myself in it."

MR - This really happened in a very few cases.

ML - Now this is the question I ask everybody I interview and would hate to be asked, but I am asking it anyway! What do you think is the future of big bands and of any kind of large ensemble improvisation? These are two different aspects, but let us start with big band.

MR - What is the future of it?

ML - If you had to take a guess. You are not god or anything, but if you had to take an educated guess, what would it be?

MR - What will be the future? You're asking in which direction it will develop?

ML - Yes.

MR - There's one thing I'm observing: in the last ten years, hundreds of big band suddenly appeared, but on a total amateur sector. I mean not for the playing, but you know, you meet once a week, you play every Monday – there are hundreds of Monday orchestras – everybody gets, I don't know, 40 Euros, or 25 or 30, so it's on a

total amateur level, which effect is that pretty much every festival can present a local big band, but traveling for big bands has become more or less impossible. That's the difference, and the organizers say: "We want to have 20 guys on stage, so we take the cheapest ones; we take it from our town and so on." But for the professional bands it's not very good. And a lot of these Monday big bands, they all turn into repertory big bands, you know.

ML - But, I am just wondering, this touring aspect about big bands, it must have been the same in the 70s and in the 80s. I mean booking a hotel for 20 people is still booking a hotel for 20 people and asking for a descent salary for each of our musician – and of course a descent salary today is more money that before since 50 dollars in the 70s was not the same as 50 dollars today – but the problems must have been the same in the past as today, no?

MR - Well I always made it somehow, but one of the main reasons why I stopped was because I saw that the touring stuff does not really work anymore; and I don't want to make a local big band. I mean, I still have quite a lot of money, but to do what? So if your personal market value goes down, then you can give the orchestra for free, which does not work either; but I really kept it on a highly professional level and I always paid the musicians very well. In 2007 was a three months' period in which everybody got 30 000 Euros, so it was quite much.

ML - Nice!

MR - So that's approximately the level. But that's what I think about the big band, and most of those bands will keep the direction of projects, you know? They look at some local guy to write something, you play it once and that's it.

ML - So unless there is help from the outside, unless there is help form the government, the big band is – I would not say "doomed" – but it is going to be a local thing: every town has its own big band and every big band plays pretty much the same repertoire.

MR - Yes, actually yes. So it's not really interesting and, you know, the musicians are coming from the same thing. The Vienna Art Orchestra was always the only really international big band. Throughout the years, I guess I had nine or ten different nations. So this was always interesting, it was also a meeting point for musicians and the first language was always English and the second was French and so on, so it was

always really international. And the habits changed, you know, so you could meet people from another culture and so on. Wait one moment, I will show you something… if I find it! (searches) I can't find it! But do you know this one tune I wrote for symphonic orchestra, Matthieu Michel plays over it.

ML - I don't think so.

MR - I will play it for you, for the ending. I don't know if I can find the music… I think this is a fantastic example for free improvisation… If you know it, you tell me.

(He puts on a CD, playing *Quelques Petits Moments*, from the album *Unexpected Ways: Concerto for Voice and* Silence.)

ML - Yeah, I…

MR - You know it?

ML - I have it in my i-Pod.

MR - Ah really! But now you have the surround effect!

ML - How much of this is written?

MR - For Matthieu, nothing. He did not have any music.

ML - So the whole orchestra is written down…

MR - And I conduct it, but he's completely free.

ML - And how much time did he have to rehearse that?

MR - I gave him just the CD to listen to.

(We listen to the entire piece and then it ends.)

MR - As you hear, he has exceptional ears. And if you start to analyze this, you can forget it!

ML - To analyze the solo?

MR - No, to analyze these chords. OK, Sokal did it and it took him like two months, but Matthieu just listened to it three times and then played this.

ML - Just out of curiosity, do you listen a lot to your own stuff?

MR - No.

ML - No, you don't like that?

MR - Mostly, I hear the mistakes. No, when I play it to someone, then yes, but for myself, actually, no; because I always hear something which is not perfect on the recording, or which is not perfectly played. And, of course, you know your own

music perfectly, so you're listening extremely carefully. And this is one of the tragedies: you can never really like your own music. Sometimes when I'm drunk late in the night, sometimes I think it's OK, but then I take only stuff which is quite perfect; but in general, actually, no.

ML - Well, that covers everything and more I was planning to ask you, I just cannot thank you enough for this time. I know how much time I took away from you.

APPENDIX III
Interview with Barry Guy

ML - [Mr. Guy,] you have played free improvisation alone, within small ensembles and larger ensembles. What would you say would be the biggest difference between the three? Like, what would be the percentage of written music within these three?

BG - Well, I have never gone through the mathematics of this, but I think – just to say, it really depends on the players and the circumstances of making the music. For instance, for solo playing, or playing alone as you have it here [on the question list], there is a mix of pre-composed materials and just purely improvised things. But for myself, I like to sometimes have – you know, to make the program run and make sense; a sort of musical journey. I want to make the listener understand about the different sonorities of the bass. So actually, I'm mixing about, well, I would say fifty-fifty the mix of pre-composed material and free stuff.

ML - When playing alone, it's already fifty-fifty?

BG - What I mean by that is there might actually be a… For instance, there's a series of pieces called Fizzles. These are based upon my interpretation of Samuel Beckett's text of the same name. These are really just short explosive little pieces. If you take off the top off a Schweppes' bottle, out comes a lot of bubbles and this is the idea. So something like that, very, very short pieces, each defined by a particular characteristic; either wood, pizzicato, arco, fast, slow… that's what I mean by a score, there. So I actually push myself into a discipline of presenting music of a particular type. But then again, I would also have, perhaps, some slower music that I have developed. Sometimes it has been rewritten for trios, sometimes for a duo, even expanded to go with my BGNO (*Barry Guy New Orchestra*). So, the material is there as a head, really, and then the improvisation goes on. It's classical jazz playing, in the sense that you have a tune and improvise upon the material. So if we move to the Parker/Guy/Lytton trio, or the Guy/Gustafsson/Strid trio – we're called the Tarfala trio now – we use no written music at all. It's purely improvised from the time we get onto the stage until we walk off. If we take the trio with Agusti Fernández, Ramón López and myself, we both write material for this

trio. Agusti brings together a series of what he would call short pieces often based upon ideas rather than music, but importantly he has written some beautiful and meaningful compositions that we improvise upon. In my large ensembles, there is quite a lot of written material but also big spaces for improvisation and I just prefer, when working with a big group, to have a degree of control which makes sense for me and the players. I like to present the players in the best possible light so the compositional procedures present the musicians in a challenging but comfortable environment.

ML - How important is structure for you?

BG - How important is structure for me? I would say quite a lot!

ML - Well it shows. In everything I have ever heard from you, structure seems a very important or even… essential aspect. By the way, I'm sorry. English is not my first language as you can guess by my name.

BG - It sounds pretty good to me.

ML - Thank you. The structure in your whole work, it seems like the point-de-mire, what everything revolves around.

BG - I have found structure throughout my life to be important, and you know, it doesn't only come from music. Before I went into music, I worked with a firm of Architects which to some extent informed my curiosity for structure and space. I was interested in what makes buildings stand up, or fall down for that matter. I was mainly involved with church restoration with old antiquities that have stood the test of time. It's the same with paintings. We have lots of artist friends who have donated or sold paintings which reside in our house here. I find it incredibly important every day to be refreshed by color and of course the structure of the paintings. Many of them are abstract and they often enter into my compositional thinking.

ML - You get very influenced by the paintings. A lot of your pieces are actually based upon some paintings, as much as I could understand by your CD notes.

BG - Yes.

ML - So, therefore, am I wrong saying every kind of artistic aspect around you actually gets into your music?

BG - You are not wrong. Whether it's from text, whether it's from painting, whether it's from architecture, there is a sense for me of wonderment about the ability of human beings to organize things in beautiful ways. You know, when I was a student and I first heard Claudio Monteverdi, the [*Marian*] *Vespers of 1610*, one of the things which struck me was how, in the counterpoint it was stereophonic in the sense that he would place choirs or parts of choirs in different parts of Saint-Marc in Venice where the piece was first played and there, for me, is the kind of coming together of architecture and music and I have had the great joy of playing that piece several times in big churches and it's always a great thrill and it's a kind of confirmation of how the mind works in terms of space but in a sense which is not only a musical output, it's also appreciating space in which he worked. So this structural thing is quite important. It doesn't matter if it's for playing alone, in small ensembles or in large ensembles. And after all, you know, when we are playing in small ensembles, especially without any written material, it's actually incredibly important not to only appreciate the ongoing argument, but in some ways we have the ability to analyze it as it's going along. So one is not only outputting musical notes and articulations but also keeping in mind exactly the journey of the music and how it's developing and how we are interacting with our colleagues. So all this has to do with us trying to understand what space is about, how to interact. So it's a very complex thing, but if it works, you know, it's worth it.

ML - I was kind of surprised by your answers when it comes to playing alone. Many of the other musicians I have already interviewed said that when it came to solo playing, they didn't have that much structure. I mean I do know about *Fizzles* and everything, but you are probably the first to tell me you get on the stage and actually know where you are going, how you begin and how you are going to end.

BG - Well, yeah, I mean I can always change on stage depending where the music goes. You know, I just set up myself a program of… well, I like to think of it as a journey rather than just standing up on stage and just opening my mouth. You know, the notes are not necessarily transcribed, but a certain text could be in place as a way of stepping from one stone to the other. I like to feel as if I have a direction even if it's not written down on pieces of paper. I'm happy enough to deal with it that way, but

on the other hand, I have done some concerts where none of this applies; you just pick up your instrument and start playing. But, as a general rule, I like to feel as if there is something structured. It very much depends on the players and the situation.

ML - […] How much freedom is left to the musician?

BG - I personally experience a lot of freedom. In terms of compositions, I have great respect for all of the guys I work with and the ladies I work with and as such, in the environment of the piece, whatever we are trying to do, I leave as much space that seems appropriate to keep my signature and theirs. So you know, I don't want to restrict; I don't really tell anybody how to play. This is always a bit of a conundrum when I do these things with students or something because very often they say: "Well, I can read your music, but then what do I play when it stops?" And I say: "Well, you have to play yourself." "Yes, but what notes?" But most of the people I'm working with, I just let them get on with it. There never is a discussion. Most people understand where they are going from the written music and they know exactly how to take off. They know the springboard. They can just jump into the water and swim like mad. I present my ideas and the musicians suggest theirs. You know what I am talking about. It's open to negotiation basically. If I write a big piece – I like to do extended pieces – during rehearsals sometimes someone might say: "well do you think we could negotiate this area like this". I say always: "Let's try it". Sometimes I hand out the duties of shaping some of the music to one of the players. This is always interesting since it brings in another kind of commitment from the players concerned. The main thing is that the piece doesn't lose direction, but I like to involve the players as much as possible within the process of building a piece.

ML - You are saying you are negotiating with the players. If there is something you are not agreeing with – the musician thinks of it this way and you thought of it in another way – who wins in this situation?

BG - There have been cases with the London Jazz Composers Orchestra where I sort of - I can't call it a riot – but there was a general tendency for musicians to say: "We don't think this works at all." Then I would say: "OK, if it doesn't work and you don't want to play it, we'll cut it out." And if I'm of the opinion or if I have a small doubt about it, I let everybody have their say and if a section has to be cut out,

we'll cut it out and that's fine. I like feedback. I'm not so precious to hang on to every single note I have written. I composed three violin solo pieces for Maya and they are through composed. She is a violin player and I am not, and sometimes she says: "Well, it would be better if it was this way around rather than that way around." And I say: "Well, that's fine by me." So I'm always happy to take onboard the performer's desires and necessities to make something work. I would rather have something work with a good feeling than just impose details because I'm supposed to be a composer. So I like a certain amount of flexibility in the pieces and I try to write that in anyway. So there is always room for negotiation.

ML - Does that happen often with larger ensembles?

BG - Well, there is always a… For instance, Evan pointed out on a recent piece we did that some things were just not very idiomatic for the saxophone for the speed I was hoping for. So I said: "OK, what is the solution to try to keep the same mood?" He said: "Less notes!" So, OK! Let's cut a few, then! And you know, I had to explain the effect I was trying to get from the ensemble and very often, by talking this through, we find another solution and end up with the same goal, the same idea. So that's quite important for me and I don't think we ever had a serious argument. Well, one time as I said, there was a section where most people did not understand why I had it there in the first place and there is another aspect as well, I try to refine notation as the years go by, try to refine it so it gets easier for people to interpret and to make it into music. But it's not always possible to come up with the right answer. You know, we're all capable of making mistakes in music. So I'm happy if somebody comes up and says: "Well, you know, I think this could be better if you did this." And I say: "Right, let's do it if it makes you happy." And that's it.

ML - And you take good notice for your next piece.

BG - Well, yes, I try to hardwire it into my memory so it's there when I start the next piece, it's in my brain, so if I am sitting in front of my music paper I say to myself: "Well, it didn't work last time, let's try another way." It's a lifetime of adjusting, I think, more than just getting a fixed way of doing things and pushing everybody into the same mould. I'm happy to loosen things up to the extent that we have

agreement as long as the music keeps going in the right direction. That's the main thing for me.

ML - Excellent, I…

BG - Oh, you mention Mathias Rüegg here [on your question sheet], he says that as he was growing older as a composer, what he wanted from his musicians became clearer in his head. Now I don't know whether that means there is more written material and less improvisation…

ML - Actually, that is exactly what it means for Mathias Rüegg.

BG - That's interesting – I'm trying to go the other way. But you know, it's a trust thing as well, because I had the good fortune to write for symphony and string orchestras where improvisation is not expected, but a certain freedom can be applied. In all of my big pieces, I try to give a certain amount of freedom to the players, to make decisions, but certainly, the more you have been through the spectrum towards the classical ensembles, the stricter the notation becomes and it's certainly a case in some ensembles. I wrote a piece for an ensemble here in Switzerland and before I started writing I said: "Do you want freedom or do you want everything written down, every single dynamic, every single note?" And they said: "Yes, no freedom for us, please. We want everything strictly notated so that we have to read music, that we have to interpret that part you put on paper." So that's fine by me. It's always a prior question when I'm doing something. I'm doing a big piece for a festival now for three voices and a string orchestra and, for the string orchestra, it's going to be very, very well defined, the notation is going to be exact, fully composed, for two of the singers it's going to be fully composed, but for one of them, it's going to be totally improvised. So, you know, it's kind of an interesting hybrid; it's a mixture of both things, but I know the players well, I know exactly where I can go with that. So you have asked if I use graphics when I am composing.

ML - I know you are.

BG - [You are asking:] "How did you come up with those?" Well, 1992 was the beginning of a graphic element in my work. In 1992, I was commissioned by the Scottish painter Alan Davie to write an ensemble piece in which, as well as being the artist who was featured in the gallery, he was also running a music series. He also

plays piano, cello and bass clarinet and I had worked with him about ten years before that, maybe fifteen years before that in the seventies, and he just called me out of the blue and said: "Barry, I'll give you a commission: I'll give you one of my paintings if you write me an ensemble piece and basically, what I want to do, I want to play the piano, I want to improvise, I don't want any written music, but I want a fully composed piece, or a written piece for the ensemble so they have defined music and I am completely free." Now, I had no idea exactly what he was going to come up with. I knew he was pretty interested in playing Scarlatti as well as playing free ballades and stuff. I had no idea what he would do, so I tried to make a score which was not through composed, it was all destined for one page, but ended up on two pages for one reason or another, but essentially, all of the material I needed was on two pages which can be adjusted as the soloist improvises. So, for instance, if he were to stop playing, I could manipulate the ensemble to create group music. If I had the feeling he needed more space, I could cut some of the ensemble out and give him his space. If he went off on some ballad- like section, I would have sufficient modules to offer an appropriate music to support him or even guide him back to another area. So this was the first time I had to seriously think about, first of all, a crossover – well it wasn't really a crossover but – the mixing of improvisation and written straight music… I never know how to call this stuff these days. So I had to find ways in which I could satisfy the five players in the group and Alan Davie. If you go on to the website, you will find reference to a limited edition screen-print which we sell. It seemed that there was a great deal of interest from the audience that loved the score so much. To enter into the world of screen printing was a delight and of course the multiple performances of BGG have given me great joy – not least in the fact that the piece is a three way conversation between soloist, ensemble and director. And at the end of the process I have a really wonderful painting by Alan. And again, you know, all of these graphic scores – I did one for the Hilliard Ensemble, one for the *New Orchestra Workshop*, one for the *London Jazz Composers Orchestra*, there are about twenty plus of these scores now and they all address different – I can't say problems – but different ways of music-making. So I'm really working on the presentation of the graphic score to, in a way, portray the music. And the point about this is that

the *New Orchestra Workshop* was in fact a cooperative and cooperatives are notoriously fragile because many of the members have their own ideas, some of which can become dominant and destabilize the whole unit. My score suggests graphically the fragility of the cooperative, so for instance various modules hover over a black void, barely touching but in a state of suspended animation that could implode at any moment. Subsequently, I've used this score with different ensembles and it has transferred quite well to other groups as well, so… Well, now, [you ask:] "Are your compositions final or do they evolve with time?"

ML - Well, actually I would have a small question before that. You said you sometimes use cue cards to let the players know what to do, what is written on those cue cards? What exactly are you telling them?

BG - All right. In the case of the *Bird Gong Game*/*Witch Gong Game* pieces, it's sort of under that general banner of cue cards derived from paintings of Alan Davie. Let me try to explain. Alan Davie is very interested in shamanism; he is very interested in ancient signs which would indicate ideas of sexual fantasies or spiritual journeys. He would find signs used in Indian hieroglyphics or something. But he uses these as his departure point and you would find these signs all over his paintings. And what I did was to take these signs and put them under the heading of an archetype. For instance, the sign of the moon would represent something very slow, spacious. There is a sign he uses quite frequently which is a kind of Celtic cross. I use this as a soloist card. These signs are on the flashcards. So I can present a solo to one of the players and they have options to assemble their solo music from a series of seven fragments. At the same time, under the yellow moon, for instance, I can have some other members of the ensemble play very, very slow, so in a way you can build up counterpoints. Obviously you have to be aware of what the implications are with each card and the potential effect on the music. Juggling comes to mind when describing the process. The idea is that it's flexible in the sense that you can have several balls in the air at the same time, but at other times you can bring everybody together under what I would call the *tutti* card, which looks a bit like a party hat with different colors on it – another Davie sign. So, everybody knows that when you see this colored card, it's an ensemble piece, everybody comes together. So I make all the preparations, show

the card, deliver the instructions to the players and then start the piece. It becomes quite flexible, actually, and more spontaneous than the way I am explaining it here, but that sort of details what the cards do. But it's not for all of the graphic pieces. Some of the graphic pieces do not have flash cards. 1992 was the start of one particular period of graphic scores influenced by Alan Davie. What I enjoy so much is the transfer of other creative mediums – Alan Davie in painting and Samuel Beckett in literature – to drive me forward to discover new horizons.

ML - Are your compositions final or do they evolve with time?

BG - Well I think we have gone thru some of this already. I like working with players that evolve with the freedom suggested in the scores. To give you an example, there is a piece I wrote for Maya called *Celebration*. In recent times… Actually, two of the other pieces – *Inachis* and *Aglais* as well, they are three solo pieces I have written for her – and what happens in concert is that quite often I improvise with her. So basically, she plays the written music, the through composed music, and I am completely free to make my own decisions, improvising along with her. And it is kind of interesting because when I was doing lectures at York University in England, one of my good friends up there, lecturing in music, said: "This is a fantastic example of how compositions are never really finished" because there is always a new generation of ideas that can come out of the previous ones. So when you put the final bar line on a composition, it doesn't mean to say necessarily that that is the end of it. Quite often, a composition can move in different areas. I like to keep this idea of flexible music as part of the compositional procedure. But you know, as I said earlier, if I'm writing for an orchestra, things are probably much more defined. But you know, even within that context, I can still bring in a section where players have to start making decisions. In the piece *Fallingwater* which is a concerto for orchestra, there is a section where the strings have to refer to three boxes on the paper and each desk leader indicates to his partner exactly what box they are going to enter into. So the strings have some material, then each player has to point with the bow to a box and then the two players refer to the music within the box and then the player can terminate that and move to somewhere

else. So, in that sense, there is always change, there is always a little bit of change within the whole context of the piece. So I would say they are final but they are not.

ML - Yes, but this is just improvisation. I mean you are not going to add a fourth box for the violin player to point at because during this or that show you had an amazing idea and want to add it for the next performance.

BG - Probably not in that case because it's so damned expensive anyway in the first place to generate parts and scores. To go back and add another box would probably take me a week of hard work and a lot of money as well for reprinting the parts. No, as I said, there is a sense of finality, but it depends on the piece. I think that, in the jazz pieces, I don't think the pieces are ever really finished.

ML - Of course, especially when it comes to jazz.

BG - Yes, exactly.

ML - Is it important for you for your scores to look good?

BG - Yes! Clarity helps a lot in terms of gaining players understanding and confidence. So whether it is a graphic score, whether it is a symphony score, whether it is a jazz score, I try to make it look good. I'm very interested in graphics and that comes probably from the architectural days. I like to see good graphics and I feel comfortable with that. So if it makes the playing of the music easier, that's great. In the early days, when I was playing a lot of contemporary music, I was a recipient of young composers handing me scores to play and sometimes it was impossible to work out what they were trying to express. It looked as if a spider had gone mad over a manuscript paper. They were almost impossible to read and I thought: "Well, if you really want pieces played, write them well, because players do not have so much time to spend endlessly trying to decipher funny hieroglyphics." If there is one thing I have learned over the years, it is to try to be as clear as possible. I haven't always managed it, but it's always a good goal, it's a good objective.

ML - Yes, but when it comes to the scores we can find on the internet or on your website, this is more than just being clear. One can be very clear without being this artistic. I do not know many composers who can offer their scores for sale and that I would actually buy and put in my living room because it simply looks so good.

BG - Well, we have sold quite a few of those, this is true, and people are fascinated just by the graphical representations. I have friends who cannot even read music, but they have this score up on their wall, because they think of it as a work of art – and to a certain extent, it is. There is a lot of thought going on the presentation and the aesthetics, not only from the musical point of view, but also from the layout, the fonts… So all of that sort of stuff is of interest to me. And I love good graphics and I have lots of books on it as well, so I read quite a lot about this. As I said, it also gives players confidence.

ML - Do you consider compositions of others harder to conduct than your own?

BG - Well, I mostly have to deal with my own stuff, so I can't answer that one and I don't really conduct other people's music.

ML - Well, after *Ode*, for a little while, there were other composers' compositions played by the *London Jazz Composers Orchestra*. You weren't the one conducting them? I haven't taken notice of that.

BG - It was my composition professor Buxton Orr who had to do the conducting. He was with us for ten years as the conductor of the *London Jazz Composers Orchestra*. He was the man who put his head on the block, basically – poor man – and he had to try to marshal these individuals into a cohesive ensemble, and it was not easy, I can tell you. I just kept my head down and he took all the flack, so to speak. The guys had very clear ideas about what they wanted to do and what they did not want to do. If Derek Bailey didn't want to play a piece, then he would just put his guitar down. So, you know, we had some tough times then, but after the *Ode* piece and a few other pieces – the *Statements* series for instance – the music became more complex and harder for the guys to read. I assumed that everybody could read music as easily as I could, but that was wrong. This happened even as I tried to clarify the musical objectives. *Ode* represented a huge logistical problem of trying to improvise and follow the conductor with time-space notation. This was chronological rather than metric time. After the *Statements* pieces, I said: "OK, since you guys are not so happy with everything I do, do it yourselves." So I invited everybody in the band to do it their own way and Buxton was still the fall guy for trying to interpret the scores and get everybody on board. Someone like Tony Oxley, for instance, mostly worked with

graphic scores. Howard Riley was always very exact in his notational procedures. Rutherford was a bit like me: we both used some graphics, space-time and metric notation. Phil Wachsmann did a piece with symbols which alluded to a film prepared by himself. So, everybody had a different take on the music and concluded what I term the second period. Buxton Orr was the guy that kept the ship afloat. The third period had me back at the helm of composing and conducting, as well as playing of course. There was however a quiet period for the LJCO whilst I involved myself in baroque and classical music practice. For the large ensembles I am still trying to find appropriate ways to deliver information in the easiest and most effective way – the work of a lifetime really.

ML - So, correct me if I am wrong, I am trying to put this in other words. If what happened after *Ode* had to be done over again, you would write something which would lead to the same sound, but with a different approach in the way it would be written. Is that right?

BG - Yes, I think so. But then again, the struggles concerning interpretation sometimes generate a different type of music. It's a bit like the scores of Brian Ferneyhough, which are monstrously difficult. We had a discussion once and he is of the opinion that the harder the scores are, the more the player has to struggle with the music to realize it. It's an attitude. Complex music can be complex because the end music will be different if it had been written easier. So I understand that as a principle, but I prefer not to enter into it. I like to try to simplify things – not going to minimalist music, but not to write things so complicated that people can't read the music. So to get back to your comment there about if I went back and rewrote the music after *Ode*, would I write it differently? From this perspective, I could say yes, but on the other hand, what is the point? Because we realized what we had to realize then. The music sounded as it did because of the way it was presented. If I rewrote everything it might sound completely different. So there is a sense of struggle that defines the music as well, but I don't actually enter into the "making scores as difficult as possible" because I don't want everybody to have a headache. But in those days, I was probably very much influenced by my compositional studies. I was very much enjoying the works of Berio, Xenakis and the Polish composers. So all of that had an

effect on the way I presented the music, the type of sonorities, the type of densities. But over time, things have relaxed a bit. I don't listen to those guys so much now. It's a matter of finding your own way of presenting the music in an appropriate way. So I think this answers that one, really.

ML - What you have learned after that experience with *Ode*, it never happened again, like with the BGNO?

BG - No, I don't think so. With the BGNO, in a way, I refined the presentation of the music sufficiently clearly and I have guys on board who understand what I am trying to get at pretty quickly. You know, some of it can also be quite simply presented just to get certain sonorities. If I want a really complex sonority with staccato notes or something like that, I don't necessarily have to prescribe every single pitch because the guys won't be able to read them that fast anyway. It's much better to just show a graphic representation of the thing and say: "Well, this is the general picture, this is the type of articulation, go for it!" But then, after I had thought I had found the solution to all of this by proposing what I just said a couple of guys came to me – I think it was Evan first – and said: "Actually, I'd prefer to have some notes here, so I can work at them." Then I said: "But you didn't want notes last time". He said: "Well, you know, some notes..." So, whatever you do, it's never right. I tried to refine the drum parts, because Paul and Raymond are not the fastest readers but nevertheless they like to connect visually with the parts and what is happening around them. So I tried to show cues and graphic representations of the music happening around them. Paul said: "This is confusing, can you simplify the part? You know, I've got ears. I can hear what is going on around me." I said: "Yeah, but you wanted to know more information and I have given it to you and now you tell me you don't want it." So whatever you propose, think the opposite!

ML - Well, I was about to ask you how much academic approach is too much. But I guess what you just said answers that. You are saying it depends on the musician and his mood at the moment, it varies.

BG - Yes, I think so. It's always going to be. As I say, it's a lifelong struggle to find a way of presenting your ideas. But then, you have to work with the players and their ideas change over time as well. It's not some sort of fixed entity. If I can fix

something, they can fix something. We all change. We all have different ways of resolving these experiences. All you can do is offer the most honest musical representation at any one time and then, after that, if it changes, it changes.

ML - You said you want to design the score so freely that all of your musicians can actually feel free within the structure. I think I understand what that means, but for me to write it down with your own words, can you explain very, very briefly what you meant by that and can you give an example which I can associate with some kind of score? I know this is a hard question.

BG - Well, there is no defined way of presenting the music. There is not just one way for giving this freedom, it pretty much depends on where you want the music to go. So, for instance, if I am writing a piece for the BGNO and I am setting up a free section – say with Evan Parker, myself and Paul Lytton – I have to generate music that actually gives the Parker trio a reason for being there. So I try to make preparations in the score which actually kind of lifts Evan into that space, into the free space. He may well be playing written music right up to that point where the door opens and he is out in the landscape. This happens many times, it's a technique I use a lot. It's the writing of music that defines a character or defines a moment where the freedom can be expressed. It is like walking thru a forest. There are trees standing, they are fixed and you have to negotiate your way thru them. Then you come to a clearing and there are no trees, just grass. You are out in the open. And that is your improvisation. The writing just prepares for this moment. Does this make sense?

ML - Yes, that makes perfect sense. But is there any kind of score or any kind of partition or chart …

BG - All of the charts have this methodology, like I mention. You know, if you go to… Well you wouldn't have a score of *Ode* anyway, but…

ML - No, unfortunately. I wish I did.

BG - It's about the size of a Wagner opera, you know!

ML - I can imagine.

BG - Do you have any scores of mine, then?

ML - The only scores I have are the graphic scores which can be found on the internet and for every one of these I would need a lot of information to truly understand.

BG - Sure. Well, I'll be sure to be sending you a score and pointing all of this out on the score. I can send you a few pages of a BGNO score or something like that, if it makes any sense. But you would have to give me your address, but I can go to the copy machine and show you exactly what I mean in terms of setting up the music. But I think it's quite clear, you know. Basically it's just going from defined musical pictures and articulations through to open spaces and these open spaces are opened up by the music that happens before. What I try to anticipate is how the musicians are going to play when the space is opened up. So this is the compositional part of it, rather than just giving a piece of music and say: "Now stop music! Now play improvisation." What I want to do is to have the improvisation come seamlessly out of the defined music. So that's my compositional exercise, really. You know, to sit down and work on how to do it. It depends on, you know, if I'm going to have a solo player, I would write music differently to allow that soloist to improvise. I think there are a lot of different ways of doing it, but if you send me your address, I'll send a couple of things to you.

[…]

ML - Thank you.

[…]

BG - Now, rehearsals. We have covered all the rest of the questions you have given and, as I say, I'll send you something out of one of the BGNO scores and I will indicate exactly where the moves… You'll see it anyway, you can see the score, but I'll make some notes in there, just to give you an idea of why things happen as they do, right?

ML - Yes, maybe just one last question before we get to rehearsals? When it comes to conducting techniques when you are the conductor, except for the cue cards, did you develop any other specific conduction techniques?

BG - No. I'm finding out that I don't like conduction, but I know it's a well-used, a well-known practice in improvised music now. Of course, Butch Morris pioneered that way of delivering material, but I… I don't know. It's a big question. Some people say the writing of a score is a kind of a fascistic thing anyway, in the sense that it's orders and you are corralled into the thoughts of a singular person. Funny enough, I find that with conduction, that with all these massed signs of patting your head and

wiggling your fingers, I find that much more difficult to accept when you are working with improvising musicians because, basically, you are in charge all the time of the available space and I think within the compositional side of things, with the written things, you can let people have their space a little bit more. I'm not a great fan of conduction, but everybody does it. So, there we are! This is my take on that one.

ML - For me, all of your work is very interesting and every CD I have listened to have some particularities which cannot be seen anywhere else. So I wonder, how do you manage not to repeat yourself? When using free improvisation, there is always this risk of repeating over and over and over what is basically the same thing, even with new people. This is not something which seems to affect you at all.

BG - Well, I don't know about that. But you know, we all have a direction. There is no doubt that there are characteristics, there are signatures. It's probably not possible to just be completely fresh and new every day because we are human beings. We have a brain that has accumulated a lot of history. This can influence performances but there are the private times where you work to get yourself to do different things and hopefully it will come out on the stand. I know an Evan Parker solo when I hear it. And why is that? It's because it has a musical signature because of the way he articulates, the way he can set up polyphonic – like pieces and Evan Parker is, well, Evan Parker! We hear a life's work examining the minutiae of saxophone technique coupled with a free creative spirit. His playing is extraordinarily sophisticated and exciting. So while there are certain articulations which define the player, the player always tries to find different resolutions to the articulations. There are inevitably repetitions but if you are resourceful you can keep the music sounding fresh.

ML - Jumping to rehearsals, do you have any free improvisation exercises that…

BG - No!

ML - None at all?

BG - No. We have never done any. Only in the very early years in the seventies with the *Spontaneous Music Ensemble* did we do exercises and that was, you know, we were all searching and John Stevens was very good at working up some ideas, but since then, no. I never do improvisation exercises.

ML - And in those days, very briefly, what kind of exercises were those?

BG - Well, I think John Stevens wrote us a piece – I think it was called a click-piece – and I think everybody had to – and I might be wrong with this, but I think I remember – everybody had to mentally, in their head, define a repetition of a pattern in their own speed. So if it was click, it would be CLICK [pause], CLICK [pause], CLICK and then, at some point, we would all stop. And then, you had to kind of keep your repetition. So somebody might be doing this: BAP [long pause], BAP [long pause] and somebody might be doing this: [snapping fingers on a faster beat and mixing the two so to create uneven beats] and whatever. And the idea, as I recall, was that gradually you would adjust your click after a while, you adjust it until the whole thing comes together as a kind of unanimous click together and that's the end of the piece. So actually, you know, it starts off with these disparate lines, these individual lines which gradually adjust and then come together. And the idea is you are aiming for a consensus at the end. So everybody comes together [hitting the table] like that. It's kind of interesting because you never quite know when the end is coming; you never quite know when it's together. But what it does is to make you aware of the fellow members in the ensemble and the particular notes they are playing and you have to kind of analyze where they are in their pattern, you know. Are they getting closer to you? Are they getting further away, but are they getting closer to somebody over there? So, it can last quite a long time, but it's actually quite interesting. So that was an exercise – to open the ears and awareness of one's colleagues.

ML - Well, it's actually quite interesting. I never thought of that exercise before.

BG - Yes, it's a kind of a focusing; it's to focus on the whole ensemble and yourself as an individual. So, you are casting around with your eyes closed, hearing say five different strands of material and working out where they are going and how they are coming together. So yeah, it's kind of an interesting mind game.

ML - When it comes not to exercises, but to free parts of your compositions, do you spend a lot of time on these to…

BG - No! Not really. The point is that we work on the transitions and as soon as we get into a free part, since rehearsal time is normally short, we agree collectively that the improvisation will be very short, because everybody has heard fellow members of the band play before, so leave it for the gig. So it's only a matter of putting the structural

parts together. The improvisations would take care of themselves except in the case where there is an improvised trio to play or something and with some backgrounds. I would often go through the backgrounds first individually, so we understand the articulations. And then we'll do a round with the trio improvising. It might be a duet, it might be a solo. So it depends on the circumstances, but basically, there is no point in us rehearsing a trio because we know how we play, you know, we know each other well enough to be getting on with the music. So that's that one about if I spend lots of time rehearsing the free parts of composition.

ML - What are the toughest aspects about rehearsing?

BG - Well, all the usual things, trying to put everything in place, you know? Trying to get people to understand what the notation is about and to do it with a kind of generosity of spirit. That makes sense, you know? I hate rehearsals where everybody starts shouting at each other. I try to take it very easily, but very quietly. If there is one thing I have learned over these years, it's always good to have an ear to listen to people rather that to just powerhouse through. Some people do that, but I like, if someone has got a problem, to talk it out because if you don't, it will resurface somewhere down the line. So I try to be as kind as possible in rehearsals.

ML - I would like to take a step back, just so you can answer a yes or no question. You are saying you are not rehearsing the free aspects of your compositions a lot because most of the time you don't have enough time to rehearse everything. Mathias Rüegg told me he never ever rehearses free aspects because, in a Dadaistic sense, if one plays a good idea in a rehearsal, it's wasted for the show. Do you share that point of view?

BG - Well, I never really thought about it. All I know is that the guys always turn it on for the show. If we have to run through something in a rehearsal that has some improvisation, normally guys step back a bit. They don't normally overwork themselves because playing this stuff is hard on the first place; it's hard on the lips. And very often we have to do a rehearsal on the day of the concert, so I always say to the guys: "Don't push it. Let's just get the mechanics working and let it out on the show." It has more to do with stamina rather than the possibility of the guys coming up with something magical in the rehearsal. [According to] most of my experiences

with the large ensembles, the fellows always take a gentle ride and I don't expect magic to come out of a rehearsal. But sometimes, we need to replicate tensions and things like that so it can get quite fiery, but normally, everybody adjusts according to what the day is like. I think there are enough ideas coming out of these players so that, if they do want to fire up in rehearsals, there is never anything less in the performance. There's always more in the performance. I never found a situation where the ensemble goes off the boil.

ML - Just to finish with rehearsals, you have worked with many other composers and other bands doing shows together, like with Anthony Braxton. Is there any person in particular you like to work with because it opens your mind to other aspects of music?

BG - To be honest, I have not really worked with that many composers – musicians. Anthony Braxton prepared some of his music for the LJCO many years ago and that worked well. I've played in one of Cecil Taylor's big groups and I found his methodology a mix of great admiration but also quite frustrating at times; more to do with my inadequacies of trying to transfer his ideas to paper rapidly enough to have a clear idea of procedures. He would also often change his strategies the next day which cancelled out the previous day's work. All part of a learning process I guess. The playing part of it was incredible of course. Because I have mainly generated my own projects I have rarely been at the receiving end of other composers' projects – in the improvised world anyway.

ML - I mentioned Anthony Braxton, but there was also this *Double Trouble* concert and a few others. I took Anthony Braxton as an example because he was the first to come to my mind, but…

BG - Since the LJCO time I haven't worked with him. As it happens someone told me he was pissed off with the *Double Trouble* album because we didn't put his name first on the album. A storm in a teacup perhaps! The music was great however.

ML - Moving on to shows, this question applies way more to other people than you because there is always a lot of freedom given in everything I have heard from you, so I guess there are always unpredicted surprises in shows from the musicians or from your part. Am I correct in saying that?

BG - Yes.

ML - Were these surprises sometimes bigger than you would have expected, like to begin a piece and end up somewhere completely different than the way you rehearsed it?

BG - It can happen. Again, it depends on the music. I've always been surprised - and I can say with great joy sometimes – that things that we have rehearsed can take over and get a life of their own and I've had great moments when the whole band takes off in a certain way. Some things are unpredictable, other things are sort of fixed, but within the fixed areas, some of the playing which has emanated from the musicians has been so wonderful and so powerful, it's a sort of reason for living. You think: "Wow! Human beings have, as well as being self-destructive, they can also be incredibly creative." And that, for me, gives me the energy and the dedication to move on and keep on finding new ways of writing music. So these beautiful surprises are really food for the brain. Does that explain that a bit?

ML - Yes. There are some questions I ask just so I can make comparisons between the philosophies of this composer and this other one, but in that case, I pretty much knew the answer before I asked the question. Actually, the next question is what is the general reception of this from the public and the critics, but more importantly, did that evolve over the years and if it did, how so? I don't know if my question is clear. Is there anything you could have played in 1985 which would not have passed at the time but would be all right today or the other way around?

BG - I think everything that has been… Sorry, I'm just going to divert a little bit, but there is something that happens with ensembles, certainly with ensembles I've put together, the London Composers Jazz Orchestra and the BGNO. What happens over a period of time is that the music gets tighter; the written music gets tighter, which is interesting from the compositional point of view, because it's like a bit of a green oak: it's got lots of moisture in it to start with and if you build out of this, it starts to crack and the moisture comes out, but at the same time it gets harder and starts twisting and eventually, you can hardly get a nail into it. Now this is what sort of happens with an ensemble. It starts off with a lot of moisture and a lot of new ideas coming into things, but the actual structure tightens up. As that happens, the

improvisations get freer and freer because the guys know the work incredibly well, so in anticipation, they are looking for their flights of creativity. When those gates open, you're off! I guess it could be a bit like a horse race: everybody is buckled up to start with, that's the rehearsals, and then when those gates open you're off! And the thing is, if you get a chance to play pieces enough, they change over time, but the changes have always been solo activities. Freedom gets better, gets looser; ensemble gets tighter. And I think that's the same with every kind of mix between improvisation and composition. I think we have always got to the point of a piece being very representational of the time that it was written and actually, when I listen back to some of these moments as I was doing the other day – I was listening to *Ode* for one reason or another – I'm astonished that the guys managed to do it, and actually do it well. But you know, I don't think there are any skeletons in the cupboard out there. Most of the things, actually… We could have benefited from recording after loads and loads of concerts. But since there weren't loads and loads of concerts, we had to take our opportunities and our opportunities have very much to do with practicalities in terms of money. And so, if I write a new piece, very often we manage to get the money to put on a show and because I've got everybody together, it makes certain sense to go into the studio or record the show or, let's say, compact the whole thing. Under ideal circumstances, it would be best to write music, do a lot of rehearsals, go on the road, play the stuff and then, maybe a year later, go into the studio. But life isn't like that, I'm afraid, so I listen to some of the pieces and say to myself: "Well, it could have got to this stage if we had been allowed to do it or if we had been playing a lot more times." But I notice, with the BGNO for instance because of its' size, it's smaller that the LJCO, we have been on the road with two or three pieces which I have written and they are progressively getting more and more interesting because of the guys getting to know the piece. Ideally, I would like to re-record them. On the other hand, what's out there is not a disgrace. It shows, as we were talking earlier, a kind of a struggle to manipulate the music, to realize the music and there is a certain struggle going on to pull the piece off. So even after, say - *Inscape*, you know it's been out there for a while now, I can listen to it and be very proud of what we did. But it's different from the show, now. The show is a lot

looser in a way, but also a lot tighter; both things together. So, you know, you just have to take life as it comes. We don't have endless amounts of time or money to be able to do these things. So I'm afraid we're stuck with that.

ML - Did you ever see an evolution from the critics' reception to your very peculiar style? Of course, you are probably going to say like everyone that it depends if you are playing in France or in Germany or in the United States, but in general, since you have so much experience, things which would make you say: "Oh, that would never had been written 25 years ago"?

BG - Well, I don't know. I don't take a great deal of time reading critics and such. Sometimes, you get an observation from a critic who has hung in with your music over the years and it normally runs a bit like this: "Oh, god, he's been around for fifty or sixty years or whatever. He's still alive, he's still doing it, therefore there must be something to it". Some critics do however give credence to the work over many years, others think it's all rubbish anyway. So it kind of works out that if you can hang in there, not die, if you can get passed sixty, they give you some kind of respect. Again, it depends on the critic. Again it depends on the country as you rightly point out. I've been in Canada quite a lot, particularly Vancouver and Halifax, and I have very good friends there and they find places to play music and with great reception and, you know, lots of people are very informed about the music and very helpful. They do realize the value of keeping at it and keeping the bands together. So yes, it's a mixed situation.

ML - Talking about keeping bands together, a simple yes or no question: is the London Jazz Composers Orchestra still active in your mind?

BG - It's active in my mind, yes. It might not be active on paper, but very soon, there is going to be a DVD coming out of *Harmos*, which we played a few years ago in the Schaffhausen Jazz Festival in 2008. That's just about to come out, so that was our last concert with the LJCO and, as far as I'm concerned, if there is an opportunity, if someone asks us to play, I will put the band together. So in my head, it's still around.

ML - This is duly noted. If I don't ask the next question, my thesis director will be mad at me so, why "composers" in the London Jazz Composers Orchestra and especially, why "composers" with an "S"?

BG - Well, that's a simple one, really. You might recall there was a Jazz Composers Orchestra in America.

ML - Of course, yes.

BG - And I had this idea of defining my own orchestra by putting the "London" before it and as a naïve young lad of 23 or something, I had some idea that we could exchange scores with Michael Mantler and that I would play Michael Mantler's scores and he would play mine. The only thing is I was so uninformed about even getting hold of him, so in a way, I put the London Jazz Composers Orchestra together and then hoped for a realization of that ambition. So it really was an acknowledgement of the New York version of it. And so, in terms of "composers", the plural, well, I suppose I just thought that everybody in the band, or quite a few people in the band, were composers and they would be composing music, it's as simple as that.

ML - Now, moving on to the musicians. I'm pretty sure I'm pretty sure I know the answer to that, but I'd like to get it from yourself. Do you compose specifically for your musicians or do you compose for any second tenor that could be playing you pieces?

BG - In my bands, I compose specifically for the people in the band. That's the answer. Even though the pieces themselves have, let's say, taken a new lease of life by being played by younger musicians, which I have been pleasantly surprised about, but there has been very good realizations of pieces like *Harmos* by young professionals. So they are written for specific people but I've been lucky enough to meet some younger people who can also do them.

ML - Do you find it hard to find musicians open to your very peculiar style of music? In England, in Switzerland, in Europe in general, is it hard for you to find people?

BG - No, not really. I mean, there are lots of good young musicians around and I had the good fortune to play with quite a few of them. And that's all across Europe. And I think the education of young musicians has gone up considerably. Now young people are much more adaptable to either play improvised music and reading music, so I've been pleasantly surprised about how the landscape has changed over the years.

ML - Do you ever compromise to please the critics?

BG - No.

ML - Never, ever?

BG - No, I just do what comes into my head. The critics don't even feature on the landscape. I do it for the real reasons: the music and for the players, but of course I would wish that the audience recognizes the integrity behind this and enjoys the communication and energy.

ML - So the critics have no role whatsoever in your artistic – I wouldn't say evolution – but your artistic journey? I heard twice that critics are very good at letting you know how much you can sell a show.

BG - I have no connection there with the critics. It's not on my radar. I just do things, you know; if it doesn't go down, if the critics don't like it, then bad luck. I'm not one to modify to appease a critic. So, you know, sometimes you do things that are welcome to some critics. They say: "This is great!" and I say: "Good. Excellent." If they don't like it, then there is nothing I can do about it. I can't modify the music just to get shows or please critics. There's no point.

ML - Actually, I admire that a lot. It shows artistic integrity.

BG - That's the way it is.

ML - I'd actually hate to be asked my next question, which is: what do you think is the future for large ensembles in free improvisation.

BG - Well, I've got a very simple take on this. I've come across a lot of young players, good young players and some have even put together large ensembles. I've been involved in some music workshops in Germany and France where there has been interest in my music by these young players. By the time we have played for a week I hear high spirits and huge confidence. Sometimes I get a letter saying "Thank you for changing my life." That sounds dramatic, but you get the point. The music has communicated in a powerful way. I said something similar when I first heard Charles Mingus. We have to work at a high level to make the music work, and under these conditions I recognize that there is a bright future for the music… except there is no money around to give adequate support for this burgeoning generation.

ML - Exactly! That was my follow-up question on the matter.

BG - The fact is that the way the governments are going these days, the way politics are changing the artistic landscape is really quite frightening. And you know, money is being withdrawn from festivals, from artistic events all over the world and unless we actually get ourselves involved in politics, which I'm too old to do now but I have opinions, we can say as much as we like to in newspapers and magazines, but everybody I work with is of the same opinion that the situation of the landscape is much more rocky now. It's harder to get concerts and it's harder to present your ideas. So I'm hoping that the younger people, with their energy, can at least get themselves in place, just to keep the flag flying, basically.

ML - Well, that pretty much covers all of my questions. I cannot thank you enough for your time and generosity.

BG - It's a pleasure.

APPENDIX IV
Interview with Dieter Glawischnig

ML - First of all, I studied you, of course, a little bit and you have been playing solo improvisations (great by the way, love them), with small ensembles like Neighbors and you have also conducted large ensembles and everything. First of all, I just wanted to know: for you, what is the difference in the approach for each one of these…

DG - You mean small ensembles or big ensembles or playing solo?

ML - Yes. About playing solo, I'm pretty sure I know what you are going to say but… (laugh) I would like you to say it!

DG - I think the approach is pretty much the same. When we started with Neighbors, we started in the beginning of the seventies, before we played in duo. We were very impressed by Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor of course and the London guys, you know. We always liked to have some kind of "motivic" work. We called it "motivic and formal exposed free jazz" or something. It's just a headline, something like that. Or you can call it "freedom in limitation"… or something, this kind of thing… it follows me somehow. And, sometimes, concerning the people you play with – if you play with good people once or twice, if you know they are experienced in this way of playing or if we have kind of the same feeling or whatever, it's not necessary to talk about it. It goes mostly beautiful. But if you have a fixed group and you play this kind of music very often, I have the feeling it's the same pattern repetition as in mainstream. We all say: "What we do is always better than this mainstream and these scales and the approach notes and higher notes, upper, ingoing, outgoing and whatever…", so there we can make a little formal blend. If you have a trio, you have three possibilities: you can play solos, you can play duos and one trio. So you can somehow adjust to make some plan without fixing the thing. And if you know the people, you know what you can expect and what happens. And the same is with orchestra pieces, from my feeling. And it's all the same. And for playing, I know I… Like lately, I've been working on some kind of twelve intervals system. Not twelve tones, twelve intervals system.

ML - Twelve intervals?

DG - Just coming back to freedom and limitations. If you have the intervals from minor second up to major seventh and you start on C it goes C C#, C D, C D#, tadi tadi tadi. If you start the same road, you can start it half a step higher and it goes C C#, C# D#, D F, tadi tadi. A minor third higher, you start on C C#, Eb F, F# A, etc. And out of this, you have… of this is the material you have, just like II V I, or like anything, like twelve tones, automatically you get an harmonic field somehow, or whatever. And when I play solo for a long time, I limit myself to really stay for this amount of time within these twelve intervals, every other tone is wrong! You know?

ML - Yeah, yeah.

DG - And it is interesting because you have twelve scales, starting on one tone: on C. If you transpose the bass note, the ground note, you know, you have 144 fields. So there was sometimes where I'd write a big bass to let it out and sometime… maybe not, it's too much work. So this is it basically.

ML - And for you it's really fixed, you're saying this is actually a wrong note if you…

DG - For me it's wrong! And I… Of course, I don't have to play a… I can use a fourth and a fifth and a seventh and whatever, but it is THIS kind of feel. And the expression is not fixed, you know? It can be wild, it can be hectic, it can be really soft, it can be anything! It can be melodic and lyrical but it should be within this… we call it a "Raster" in this system. This is basically what I'm working on. And it's difficult. If you play with other people, I cannot force this to the others. The players feel limited. "Why shall I play this?!" and you know. Ok. Play outgoing like before, like George Russell or whatever. Ingoing melodies, outgoing! If you play tadi tadi, you can play a half tone higher, tadi tadi, why not? You know? But it's not really what I really want. And sometimes I make groups that are in this system, just for fun. And there's so much freedom, they can do everything! It's just an idea. It's like D-7, G7, CMaj. You can do with this everything, you know. (laugh)

ML - Yeah, there's so much to do with just these three chords.

DG - By the way, you know this *Beitragliteratur* "Jazzforschung" (*Darmstädter Beiträge zur Jazzforschung*)? I wrote an article about jazz and composition. There are three eh… two or three articles. Maybe you read this. It's just a… a basic outline,

basically. It's in volume two or… I think it was… One was 1989 they started and the second one was, I think, 1992. One is called "Jazz and composition" and the other one is a… an analysis of my big band poetry work with this Ernst Jandl.

ML - Oh really? That's actually quite interesting…

DG - It might be good. And there is the first time my assistant has printed for me what I did. And in an article I wrote – because it was not too much time for this period, it was only two three minutes – I couldn't expose the whole system so I had to stop somewhere, I was very sorry, but eh… Well, bla bla! (laugh)

ML - Do you plan to ever come back to it and write a book or something?

DG - Ah, maybe, sometimes, yeah… I've been working on a book about esthetics for many years. Maybe. But I… I like to play now, you know? I was teaching so much.

ML - OK. So now it's our turn. We should do that.

DG - Sure!

ML - OK. So, when it comes to being solo or being in a trio or a big band, how much percentage of what is being played is actually written? Because when it comes to big band, from what I've seen, there's…

DG - For big band it is like a mainstream arrangement, an amount of writing and there's many sections and so on, of course, you know.

ML - But, from what I've seen, unless… unless it's written so that it SOUNDS like improvisation, there are actually parts of them that…

DG - Yeah yeah… It's always in between and… and I like also swinging stuff, you know, that really GO and, you know, why not? It's not forbidden, you know? I must tell you. I had an excellent, eh… I had Neighbors, you know, and our drummer died in the late 1990s[146]. And we were in Canada, by the way, in a big tour from Montreal and Kingston and… we had eight concerts. Very good. Yeah, it was very nice. Yeah, many stories to tell with that! It was mostly in academies, music universities with a concert at night and, once – I don't know where it was – they booked us in a mainstream jazz club, you know? And the first thing was really, almost Dixieland, the people were swinging and we said: "What shall we do? Should we also play some standards to make the people happy?" It was full, the club, you know? So, no,

[146] Neighbours's drummer, John Preininger, actually died in 2002.

we do our thing. We played 45 minutes. First the people were looking a little bit, and then it was quite all right. You know, not much but a little. And I remember an old grey-haired lady came up and said – this sentence, I quote it very often – she said: "It was so entertaining, I almost forgot to drink!"

ML - (big laugh!)

DG - Isn't this something! This was in… Was it in Kingston? I don't know!

ML - You won't get many gigs hearing that, unfortunately!

DG - I know!

ML - But really, when it comes to big bands or larger ensembles, if you had – and I know you can't say: "It's 27%" or such, but… How much is written and how much is free?

DG - Well I have different pieces. I remember one piece is called *A+*. The rhythm had some notes. Starting with A, coming a D, coming an E, it sounded like a *sus* with a *b*9 or something. It got unclear and unclearer and unclearer and unclearer… And it was… I was not lucky because when it came to the [inaudible] but there were no… real… players among… Herb Geller was a big guy and then others and… and they had to improvise! I said: "You play, now, you keep the part down and you play what you want but stay in the tone and build it up." But there was almost NOTHING written. Then in other pieces, we had the form, how long and whatever, who is playing with whom and the material stays there. And they can do, with the material, they can do what they want and solo anyway. So it varies. But for orchestra, I mostly wrote poetry pieces. Six altogether. And you have to… you must bring the meaning of the… Then the important thing is the text! The text is to be transported by the strong media of jazz, or free jazz, or whatever. And then, I wrote pretty… the frame is pretty strong, then. And I… I need a soloist to do the stuff, you know?

ML - Of course… When it comes to composing or conducting musicians, how much freedom do you leave each and every one? Can you actually say at some point: "OK, no. That's not what I'd like to hear."?

DG - If I really don't like it, I will say it, you know. "Don't play loud. It's not the place. Or phrase more melodic, it's more lyric." But basically, what is WRITTEN, you know, sometime is pretty complex for the band. This should be precise like

something. And the soloists, one or two or three, can play what they like of course, in the system.

ML - As long as it fits the mood…

DG - Yeah! And sometimes if I get the feeling the written section is too short, the background is too short, the soloist, based on what I see, would like to play longer as planned, then just repeat the section! Instead of five people playing, three people play one line and this creates a little variation. But basically, the orchestra frame is pretty fixed. For me. Free or not free or whatever, you know?

ML - I'm just curious, does it happen that, during a show, you'll actually say: "OK, repeat this section" directly on the spot?

DG - Oh, I make this. (doing a kind of < > sign with his fingers)

ML - So you do have signs for it.

DG - Yeah. *Un und deux*. (showing one or two fingers) (laugh)

ML - Excellent.

DG - Like so: bar three. (showing three fingers, then the < > sign) Or whatever.

ML - And people know your language because they have been working with you for so long?

DG - Oh, yeah, yeah.

ML - All right. Now, it kind of goes in relation with my last question but, what would you say happens most often? When it comes to musicians improvising freely, do you feel like you're imposing more your ideas or do you feel like you're letting them impose their ideas to you, the musicians?

DG - In the ideal case, it's always communication. I've played along in a trio, Cercle with Tony Oxley – do you know Tony Oxley?

ML - Yeah, yeah.

DG - Great guy! Violin player, was on Cercle. This trio *splited* somehow – it's not interesting for outsiders why. Now I played in many tours, lately I played with one of the good old DDR free jazz guys. Luten Petrowsky, Ernst Luten Petrowsky[147]. With him now, we played in Berlin [at the Jazzwerkstatt] and *Jazz Werchter* in Hamburg. This is for me, eh… fantastic! I play and he's sitting on the piano and then we start

[147] Known as "Luten" Petrowsky, his real name is Ernst Ludwig Petrowsky.

some… some start. And then it's always like a real… it goes up and down. One of the problems is you stay in one area too long, you know. He'd hit on a free *oder* two: *TJANG TJANG*! It goes almost… and he's listening and it's… it's a real… This guy, a little bit older than me… This is the duo I will play as long as I can play. And also with violin. And it is communication. There's nothing fixed, nothing spoken, not once! I even include a few chords, I start, eh… I don't know what, a common chord progression for free pause and then, bang! (hits the table), pffuit!, off! and then… *Oder* whatever! So it's eh… sound! But in this interval system I was telling you about before, really… Oh, this guy's a perfect reader and a perfect player, maybe he'd like to do this kind of thing. And if not, it doesn't matter. I'll just play along! (laugh) And nobody's interested! Nobody will know the difference! Ha! (big laugh)

ML - (laugh) But when it comes to larger ensembles, my guess would be the larger the ensemble, the more specific you are about the ideas you want players to play. Am I wrong?

DG - Yes, yes. Otherwise, is really this whole?

ML - I've heard you more than I've seen you, so I was wandering if – briefly, you told me earlier that if you want people to repeat, you do this thing with your fingers (< >) and, just for myself, this thing with your fingers, I'm going to draw, because I won't see that on my tape. (drawing the < > sign)

DG - And of course, dynamics (left hand up and down) and things, you stop (closing his hand in a fist), you play (pointing someone), whatever, you know.

ML - But is there any precise technique you have developed over the years, like Butch Morris did?

DG - No, no. What fits with the band and they understand and whatever.

ML - But if you had to conduct a new band, or a student band, or whatever…

DG - Well, I would be very precise.

ML - You would be very precise…?

DG - I would be. Not conducting when time is running, but the important stuff, you know? I hate conductors who… There are some conductors, they have the feeling, they like to stand in front of the big band or orchestra and they love to conduct! And

the players, in an uptime swing tempo, and constantly they beat and the drummer gets nervous, the bass player gets nervous. They do constantly this! This is not necessary, exactly! Count it off and then two bars, pffuit! Let it be, or whatever, you know? You know this! (laugh) If you… With really young people who really want to stay in time, it might be necessary to give the one and the three, or maybe half time or whatever, you know…

ML - But what my experience is, when it comes to… when it's shows and everything, you know, you start and if the arrangement is standard, you can actually say: "OK, start and I'll come back at the end to cut you off!" But when it comes to TV or something, things like that, they LIKE to have somebody…

DG - Tempo changes, meter changes! Of course!

ML - Not just that! If you're standing there, just clapping your fingers, the comments I've had were that it's not enough movement for TV.

DG - (laugh) Not enough movement for TV! Uh huh! Typical!

ML - I don't know, maybe it's just in Montreal! But that's my experience. But eh… So there are no signs you've developed precisely.

DG - No. I think… I show what's necessary. I feel with the guys, maybe there's eighteen bars rest and I give them two, or little things. And if the pieces are in time, really in time, there is no need to conduct, it's stupid.

ML - I do agree, but go tell that to the CBC.

DG - We have many very good mainstream concerts in time, you know. I count it off, two measures, and then I really go on the side and I stand beside the band. I'm watching the band, maybe I know: "Huh! Maybe in eight bars comes a fermata." I go there, make the fermata, then I count it off again and then go out, this kind of thing. And they like it, you know!

ML - Yeah the band likes it!

DG - The band likes it!

ML - OK. I'm actually going to switch now to rehearsals. When rehearsing with your band, do you have any free improvisation exercises which you make your band practice during rehearsals, like every time?

DG - Oh… Basically not.

ML - Basically not?

DG - No, basically not. They know already what's happening. You know, I write some chords, play up and down, play quarter notes, lower, or do something with the chords, louder, take a mute, what you like. You know, not much practicing. I guess.

ML - And has it been like that since the beginning or is it now that they know you, now that they know what you want…?

DG - No. At the beginning, we did not do these kinds of pieces. Besides one or two of mine, I had a lot of trouble. But after a while, people came and Braxton came and, well, they get used to it, you know? They are aware. The brain is open. And right now, the band, our band in Hamburg, they're really fifteen people, improvisers, readers, mainstream, free, everything! Good players! So there's nothing to explain. Everybody knows! There are some exceptional players! We have a tenor player right now, Christof Lauer. He started here 40 years ago. He's now one of the best players in Europe today. And all the others, they learn from him, you know? Now they all sound quite good, like him. Yeah, quite good! Only different. We have one guy who plays Braxton *im Quadrat*. He is able to play normal changes – you know, normal changes, difficult or not, *Giant Steps*, whatever. He plays: (signing very fast licks). Mostly, it doesn't fit the piece, you know? I said: "So, hold back a little bit." But this guy is fantastic! For instance, you know, every phrase is in or out. He knows exactly what he's doing! But he's a Braxton fan, of course. And Braxton is really something special, you know. (laugh)

ML - He's one of a kind.

DG - He was great!

ML - He was?

DG - No, I mean… As long as I played with him, I had the honor… And he was great. Now he's eh… absolutely great! (laugh)

ML - I wasn't expecting that answer. That's nice!

DG - You know his solo… He did two or three solo records. One in the eighties and the nineties… I mean, if you play saxophone and you want to know what is possible on saxophone, you should play track three, track seven and track nineteen. And then,

you give up or you start to practice! (laugh) And he also can play standards and harmonies and he can read, of course.

ML - I have no doubt about that.

DG - Now he's a professor in Wesley I think, Wesley University.

ML - Yeah, actually, I will come back to him at the very end.

DG - Follow your schedule, please.

ML - That wasn't my question earlier, but you have kind of talked about that a little bit already, but… Do you spend a lot of time during rehearsals practicing the free parts of the compositions you're supposed to play?

DG - Oh, yes, yes. This we do, yeah. Until it comes… Because some people… some still don't know what to do in those and I say: "No, that should be like this." Yes, we do that now. Sure. They should play in the concept, you know? Because, I'm the only one who knows the score! It's an advantage, you know? The people just see: rest, rest, rest, euh, euh, euh, euh (notes). What is this? (laugh)

ML - So do you find it hard to explain to them, when they are not… Because, since you're rehearsing that, it means it's not perfect on the first time. So do you find it difficult to explain to them what you want? More this and less that?

DG - Oh, no. Because, I'm from Austria. I'm very polite, you know. "That's OK. Getting better and better… Maybe eh… Quite good, but maybe…?" (laugh)

ML - But, no. I'm not talking about if it hurts the feelings of the musicians, which is always something important, but…

DG - Yes. In a band, it's the most important thing, I tell you! This was a constant fight between the redaction and the orchestra. And I was always in between. The redaction was knocking the orchestra and the orchestra said: "Ah this stupid redaction!" I was almost some kind of harmonizing some of it, because I'm Austrian. (laugh)

ML - Because you're Austrian! (laugh)

DG - And when I make my announcement to the big band, I speak a little bit of Austrian dialect, you know? The people loved it! They found it so charming. I found it stupid sometimes because I was… I didn't know what to say! But they found it nice.

Whenever I opened my mouth: "Oh! Austrian! Very nice!" (laugh) Now, you know what I mean, right?

ML - That wasn't one of my questions, but since you're talking about that, have there been conflicts with what musicians wanted to play, how they wanted to play and how you felt they had to play, which would be something different at some point?

DG - Maybe in the big band sometimes, you know? If the soloist is misunderstanding the whole expression of the piece. But in small groups, no, not really. Because I know the people when I invite somebody who's playing quartet, I know we've been old friends, so basically not.

ML - But when it comes to big bands…?

DG - Sure. And maybe with an orchestra I don't know, I would say: "Please, something else" or whatever… But friendly. Austrian like. And the really good players, they understand instantly! It's just a… you know? You don't have to explain for long!

ML - And they never get mad or anything and say: "Hey! If you want me to play free, let me be free!"

DG - No, not really.

ML - Not really?

DG - Only… The old band, NDR Big Band, the old guys were only… They could only swing. Glenn Miller, Count Basie was the most swinging stuff. They felt a little bit strange with new stuff, you know? But then, they retired and so… you know? (laugh) At that time, it didn't make much sense to discuss something, you know? Because their whole history, their whole background… They didn't know this, they didn't… If you say Coltrane: "Who is Coltrane?" or this kind of thing, you know?

ML - Really? I'm actually going to come back to musicians specifically later.

DG - OK! (laugh)

ML - What do you think are the toughest aspects to rehearse or to put on together during rehearsals?

DG - What do you mean by the toughest things? You start the piece and then you play the letter A and the letter B; if it doesn't work, you repeat it, I explain this and this and OK, B, almost OK, then we go from B to C. If it works, OK. If not, we say: "Make this, or… That's *forte* you played *piano*! That's *piano* you played *forte*!" In

a three part section, I always like to have the first line a tiny bit louder so that we have the melody. Mostly the third line goes baaah, we don't hear the melody. So we repeat: "OK, play the third, bla bla bla…"

ML - But when it comes to, like… We were talking about moods earlier. When it comes to solo, when it comes to free parts, do you find it harder to put that together and to get the mood you're looking for?

DG - No because I've always been playing solo, you know? The guy who is playing solo is, eh… I know he's familiar with this kind of expression. I let him do and if it is really, really not fitting the whole concept, I would tell. But otherwise it's free, of course.

ML - Hmm… That's not my question but…

DG - What is your question?

ML - Well actually, what I'm about to ask you was not part of this question but, does it sometimes happen that you're going to say: "I have this composition, it's supposed to be a first tenor solo, but because of the mood of the piece, because of the mood of the composition, I think it would be better with the second tenor?

DG - Eh… This is possible.

(Alarm to change tapes, then changing tapes)

ML - Do you often, when you're rehearsing a composition which is not yours in large ensembles, do you often work with the composer, make him come to the rehearsals?

DG - If the score is clear and I have no question, no. But if there's something unclear: "What do you mean? Who? Or what?" I call him and we will have a conversation and say: "Yep, something,"

ML - And it's always very…

DG - Yep, yeah, yeah. And what find out in the score and I have doubts, I call him. "What do you mean? What is this?" I also find out wrong notes, by the way. "What is this, this eh… Oooh, thank you!" (laugh) Very seldom, very seldom.

ML - That happens to the best of us! (laugh) In shows, are there sometimes surprises? Are you sometimes surprised by…

DG - In the concert?

ML - In the concert. During the concert, by some aspects either from the musicians or from your part, you're having…

DG - I fuck all the buttons! The signs, I fuck all! (laugh)

ML - It's not really that, it's just – I don't know – if the mood is… You know: "We've practiced it like this, but since the audience or the mood of the place is different, maybe we should change some…"

DG - No. For me, not. If the program is rehearsed, it's fixed and what should happen, the response of the audience, soloist plays too long, stops… No. Basically not. But we rehearse this on stage.

ML - Rehearsals are on the stage.

DG - Yes. Except on free pieces, maybe this eh… I remember one concert with Lauren Newton – you know this singer?

ML - Hmmm…

DG - But here she eh… whatever. She's like Cathy Berberian. (Singing up and down) And we said: "OK, I should play this." And she played so nice so I had to say: "Wait… Wait… Much longer that in the rehearsal." It was beautiful. But normally, what is rehearsed goes on stage. At least with my band, maybe with yours it's different.

ML - No, no. I'm talking about you right now.

DG - And nothing can happen. What should happen, you know? The soloist breaks his legs? (laugh) Looses the embouchure, the mouthpiece falls down?

ML - No but the mutes always do. (laugh) No but we're talking about you right now. For me it's something else and if I was to talk to Sun Ra, he would say it's never as in rehearsal. It really depends on each one.

DG - Yeah, yeah. You're very right.

ML - So, you told me about one time and it was you saying to the orchestra: "Wait much longer." It never happens that the orchestra surprises you with something that wasn't rehearsed?

DG - Eh, basically not! (laugh)

ML - They shouldn't?

DG - Yeah they could! But they didn't.

ML - OK. You wouldn't be mad if that happened?

DG - No, no…

ML - OK. You could tell me: "Just go read the critics!" but, what is the general reception for the more intricate compositions? What is the reception for these from the public, from the… Actually let's start with just the public!

DG - It is different where we play. The NDR Big Band in Hamburg – you know NDR, big station, yeah? – we play many concerts in the area around Hamburg. There we play what we think is not too much, you know, not too… What is… Well you know, what they like or whatever. And in the last years, we were very much on the road, but… We played many festivals, various things, South Africa, Chicago, whatever, and there the reception was almost very good. We try not to… overpower the public, you know, the public's expectations. You know, if you play in a small village out of Hamburg, they have a nice jazz club we want to support, the band plays for nothing and travel expenses, even the NDR pays maybe a little bit, we play what they like. And lately we did many concerts with school bands. The first set plays a local *Gymnasium*, whatever, school band and the hall is full, all parents and aunts and mothers and fathers… big thing! And then we play and then we try not to overpower the expectations of the people. It makes no sense to say: "OK, you're stupid or don't know this or…" (laugh) In this case not. But in Hamburg we have whole series of eight or ten concerts every year. You know, every month or whatever. It is so successful lately, that we play twice. And then we play everything. What is on the table, you know? Free or not, or ethno, or I don't know what. And the audience knows, aha, they even want, they expect some of our new things. If we would play Ellington or something they would say: "Bah, 'been there!" (laugh)

ML - "'Been there, 'done that, I have the CD anyway!"

DG - So it's different, you know? It's very very different.

ML - And then what's the reception from the critics? Is it different than the reception from the public?

DG - No, basically it's the same, you know. In Hamburg anyway, because we're established. We have the jazz center in Hamburg, whatever. And there we play.

Then we play outside, mostly with some heroes, with Martial Solal, with Abdullah Ibrahim in South Africa, what can be wrong? Please. You know? (laugh)

ML - And what is the general reception from the composers you're interpreting? Does it ever happen for some of them not to be pleased with your interpretation?

DG - No. They are pleased to get a commission and get a piece played. We have never any complains. (laugh) They are lucky that their pieces get played. And as good as possible. Sometimes they come and they make: "Yeah, hum…"

ML - But they don't always come?

DG - No. Sometimes they come from London or, you know… whatever…

ML - And the NDR doesn't have the money to bring them.

DG - Yeah, you know? Just to make a bow, it's… too much. Travel expenses, hotel, you know. That's too much! (laugh)

ML - Fortunately, it doesn't cost as much as moving the big band to London! And this reception you're talking about, from the public and everything, which you're even telling me that if you go there and play Duke Ellington, they're going to say: "Come on! Do something else, we've heard that for so many years!" how do you think that actually evolved, since you've been with the NDR Big Band for over twenty years?

DG - I'll tell you something. There was a very great composer in London. His name is Steve Gray, you might know him. And many years ago, I wanted to leave the band and retire and he was the first – we all agreed he'd be my successor, you know? But then he died of a heart attack, you know. And he wrote… You know this famous piece from Ellington *Diminuendo, Crescendo and Crescendissimo in Blue*? This record back from the Ellington band in Newport Jazz Festival in 57. And he wrote a fantastic arrangement. We played this in Chicago and then New York and everywhere! And even if it was Ellington, it was a standing ovation, because of Steve Gray. Of course our band too and the solos and so on, but the arrangement… It's not always that you play… If you play Ellington or *In the Mood*, bla bla… But this was different, you know? And he also wrote eight pieces dedicated to Louis Armstrong. All famous pieces but completely different, you know? One had a rocking thing and tadada… But it's different. I think it's stupid to replay arrangements that already

exist and then present it to the audience. Maybe for some it's new, but for some it's: "Man… I know this." It is stupid! As an arranger, to rewrite the Ellington pieces or the Count Basie pieces, you must be really clever, to do something, you know? And this guy, Steve Gray, my beloved arranger from London, could do it.

ML - But has it always been this welcomed, the first times? I know at first, when you took direction of the NDR Big Band, they actually were expecting you to do one concert in which you could do music you liked and the other one had to be very standard. Or at least that's what I have read or heard.

DG - The years before I got the job with the NDR, I was guest conductor. The first time, when was it? 73. And I thought: "OK, coming to a new orchestra, I wrote a mainstream piece, what was it? (singing) Anyway, I wrote a pattern piece, my own, dedicated to Abdullah, I wrote a free piece I mentioned before, but they couldn't handle, and I wrote something else. Basically they liked it and the old conductor, he was really a swing, you know? And he was the leader of this band at the time, you know? He said: "OK, you do it, you make it." He left, he liked it. Then I came back every one, two years and had big things with Philharmonic in Berlin, you know? And then suddenly they came up, in 79, and asked me if I wanted to be the successor of the old guy. The old guy was, now, a little bit younger than me, I am 72, he was 70, OK? So I said OK, and had to be three years in *Grazer Hochschule*. One year. I was in Hamburg, this was eh… this was 1980. And I did everything. Everything! All commercial shit, nice concerts, good concerts, [inaudible], Tomasz Stanko! I did everything. I liked it. And then, at the end of 1980 they said: "We would like you to stay longer." But I couldn't get a new year from Graz. So, I was thinking… I did both. I traveled Monday, I went to Hamburg, Friday back, I taught to my students as my rector, you know? And the students said: "OK!" I said: "I can only teach Saturday and Sunday. Would you agree?" They agreed. So I went back and forth 36 times. And basically, I am no big band fan, just to confess, you know? I'm an improviser! (laugh) But I learned the craftsmanship. And then, at the Hamburg University, the president, Hermann Rauhe, the big guy, you know, who was in our first International Jazz Year, this society, he managed to get a professorship for jazz. And he offered this to me and I came to the [inaudible] people, you know? And I got

it. And Hermann Rauhe was somehow clever, you know? He wanted me, you know? He wrote in the *Ausschreibung* (advertisement, announcement): "You must have this and this and this and this…" It only was missing: "He has to be born on the 7th of March." (laugh) So I got it! (laugh) But then I said: "OK, I like teaching, I like big band, pedagogy, I like practice…" So I moved to Hamburg. But accidently! I never wanted that. All I wanted was to play trumpet! But I never had the lips for it. I swear! I wanted to play trumpet! But, you know, this is another story. (laugh) So when I didn't… When I finished *Gymnasium*, I knew I wanted to make music but, then I was *Chorrepetitor* (choir tutor) in the opera house and I was teaching piano and all… Or I studied and suddenly I had two kids, I had to work and work. I had no plan really of business, *Karriereplan*, not at all! It was really accidental, for me. I swear. But not bad! (laugh)

ML - Yeah, good accidents! But I'm coming back to… What you're playing today, depending on the mood you're trying to create whether it's poems or stories or big band, do you think what you're playing today could have been played 25 years ago and still get the same enthusiasm from the public, the critics and all the people around?

DG - I don't know. No, I don't' know. The orchestral pieces with this poet Ernst Jandl, we played in a big Berlin festival, philharmonic, and we played three, four times and it was a big success, and I wrote another piece, it was not so successful. But, eh… I think these pieces are how they are and I try to put them again on CD. Some say it's old stuff. But it's not old stuff, Ernst Jandl, it's fantastic stuff! They say: "Yes, but we cannot sell it. OK, we only produce CDs from a band who is constantly travelling and when they travel, they sell records." You know this… But I wouldn't change anything. I mean… (orders a drink) Man this is stupid, stupid comparison. Beethoven's fifth symphony is played since 200 years. Oh, maybe this can be played 30 years later, why not? And years later is not a matter of style or intention, but what is in the piece, you know? And I think this be for people who live 50 years later. It's not a matter just to be up to date, put in electronics, make the thing from the top, build things and the whole rock and pop singing, pffff! But that's the world of us! We are surrounded by these things! And I know they will play synthesizers… Quite

interesting sometimes, the sounds and all, you know? But they have no idea, if we tell them play F diminished, what is F. "F is a note, the sub-dominant of C." But, eh… *Keine Idee* (no idea) of knowledge! Of knowledge of the history, knowledge of the scene! And only thru that you build up some kind for your own, a little picture of quality, so to say. This was my idea of teaching: present the whole scale from Art Tatum up to… up to whatever!

ML - Up to you!

DG - And if the guy likes this, well OK… But you must, you know? And they all like to make it classical. All my guys played classical examinations. They played Chopin; they played the Mozart sonatas, Beethoven sonatas, Bach fugues. I forced them: "You must do this!" And finally, they liked it. They found out that on piano, you cannot only do (singing a jazz lick). They know they can do that, try it here and so… But you know that! I don't have to tell you!

ML - No, please! You have to tell the *mic*. (laugh)

DG - But the guys liked it finally.

ML - So in conclusion with that, you really don't think the public actually evolved, because it didn't have to?

DG - I think they understand.

ML - You don't think the public evolved with time saying: "OK, well, they weren't ready for that in the 80s but they're ready now?

DG - Yes, I think the audience is growing a little bit, a special segment of audience. The main audience is the mass audience. No? That's our… What to do? I don't know. We keep doing what we do and they keep doing what they could do! Five people, ten people, thirty, hundred, maybe somewhere thousands. I think it's the same problem to you, I think; as a composer. No? (laugh)

ML - Now I'm going to talk about the musicians. I have only two little questions about that. As a composer, when you are writing stuff, do you compose – of course, when you're composing for trio or something like that, you're not saying: "OK, this is for piano." This is for you and you know it. But when it comes to larger ensembles like the NDR, when you were composing, did you think: "OK, I'm writing for the third

trumpet," or "I'm writing for this guy I know and I know how he plays, so I'm writing specifically for him"?

DG - Of course, I remind the whole band. I see them sitting, there's the saxophone and so on. I think: "Who is the guy who could play this melody or this expression?" The best of course, I pick the guy. Third trumpet, second tenor, first tenor, baritone… sure. I remind for whom I play. And I'm not writing for any band when there's no chance to be performed. I'm no composer in this sense, I'm a writer. I mean, Schubert had all his symphonies in a case. No, you know? For big ensembles, I write if it will be performed. Mostly with my band and then I know the guys, what they can do or cannot do. Of course! In my situation!

ML - Completely out of the blue, it probably never happened but, if you had to compose something for the NDR and at some point they're telling you: "OK we want you to conduct the same composition with this other band and the trumpet players…

DG - I would ask: "Who can play this part? Who is the free player? Who is the mainstream player? Who is the great swinger? Who is the drummer?" Drummer, very important, you know? "Who is the piano player?" And then I would divide the soloists and whatever. The piece is the piece!

ML - And you wouldn't rearrange any part of it for them?

DG - First, I have no time. Second, I have no *Lust* (desire). You know *Lust*? Is *Lust* an American word?

ML - I know exactly what you mean.

DG - You have not the word *Lust*?

ML - Yes, there is the word "lust", but it's more… anyway. Was it hard to find musicians open to newer musical styles? Is it hard today and was it harder or easier 25 years ago?

DG - I think it was harder 25 years ago. Now, it's basically easy. I think. In every city that… I know all the players in Wien and Berlin and Hamburg and I know who plays good. 25 years ago, there was an area where the people only studied mainstream. Legitimate mainstream. You know, harmony, scales… For a G7, you have 18 scales and they must know how to play them. And is it an altered scale or it should be Lydian b7, if you play in Ab… This kind of thing. Now, I have the feeling they're

more open. Because the whole scene is developing. And they came to Berlin and they were… Whenever I'm in a city, I go to concerts and: "Oh! Ok!" So the schools also developed a little bit. Graz is pretty conservative. I left when… OK. It's STILL pretty conservative. Even if the excellent trombone player – *Wie heißt den Trombo…* - Ed! But basically they stick to the mainstream tradition. And there's no [inaudible]. In the 70s I was the only one. I applied to a free semester, I was seven months in the USA. I met the people in Chicago, Braxton and Fred Anderson, New York and the Loft Scene. Then I came back and then I went to Hamburg. But it's still about the same, you know

ML - In general, if you had to compare, do you find it harder to find open players in Austria or in Germany, or in Europe in general or in America? What is your vision on that?

DG - I think, right now, in every city, there's a nice crowd of players who are open. I don't want to mention names, now. Also in Graz, there is a small, a very small group, bigger group in Vienna. In Graz, in the 70s 80s we were the jazz main city. But now, through the Vienna Art Orchestra, Mathias Rüegg, there's a very broad spectrum of Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg, anywhere, everywhere. There are more young players who would say: "OK, I'd like to play with you." 25 years ago there was almost nothing. I swear to you. So it grows, you know? Like Marxism, you know? It grows, like socialism… (laugh) Not the pragmatic Marxism, but the idea of Marxism grows… It grows somehow… (laugh)

ML - So 25 years ago, it was harder, which is why you had to play with your neighbors! (laugh)

DG - (laugh) It was really harder. For Austria, we played in Linz and Wien, then we went to America, we made the South American tour, we went to Africa, we went to China and then we came back. Suddenly the papers were full of "Our group Neighbors". Fuck it! You know? I wanted to start it from HERE, not from Canada or from Argentina . You know? The same. It was really like that, I swear to you!

ML - There's an old saying in French that goes: "*Nul n'est prophète en son pays.*" You can never be a prophet in your own country.

DG - Ah yeah, maybe yeah… But some were! Some were acknowledged, you know? Zawinul! Hero! (laugh)

ML - Now I'm actually going to ask you a question I would hate to be asked myself.

DG - Really? Don't ask it! (laugh) I'm in a good spirit, you see? (laugh)

ML - No it's just because it's so vague and open. What do you think is the future for large ensembles free improvisation? First of all, is there a future? And if there is, where do you think it's going to evolve?

DG - If I should answer, first, I'm no prophet. Second, I have the experience; if some guy in his local area somehow gets some people together… The point is, today there's so much promotion work. Telephone, internet, to set it too is so much work! Who wants to do that? But if you have people together, then you can expose this group. It always happens. An example is the Vienna Art Orchestra, Mathias Rüegg! Nobody knew about this band! He was my student some years ago. Only one year, then he left to Vienna. And he made everything by himself. All the organization, all the promotion, all gigs, all telephones, all e-mails, and he has his band and, finally, it was in *Downbeat* in USA, it was big band number one. I don't know when it was. And he's continuing. What he's now doing, I don't know. So it's always possible to create something. And of course, you need a little bit of help from the community, state money, cultural money, a little bit for the leader, for the whole thing, for renting a room or whatever, but I think it is still in there. Especially for big ensembles. There is almost no big ensemble traveling. And the second thing, traveling is the problem. Renting a bus: expensive. Getting hotels: expensive. Everyone should get, I don't know how much, 100 Euros, I don't know! You know, it's too expensive. The most important thing is that you get some contacts. But having a band with a special expression, whatever it is, singer or mix, or electronics, or free, if this is good, the people notice and then you can transport it. And then comes the travel cost. Travel cost, you know? So I play solo or in duo. I play with Luten Petrowsky, a star in Germany! We played in a new series in Germany, a new *Jazzwerkstatt* in Berlin. We got everybody – how much? – 150 Euros. Of course we do it! Then I played in Hamburg, they paid 200 Euros. For a duo. I said: "I'm with Luten Petrowsky on tour, it's great, great music, everybody loved it!" Never everybody, 30-40 people…

And then, what I liked is, in Berlin, the great players I like were in the concert: Alex Schlippenbach and Ernst Bier and Conny Bauer! Anyway. And in Hannover, there was 200 Euros, I said: "Luten, you take it. I have my *Rente* (pension), you take it, you know." Money is always a problem. Maybe you'll get some contact on the higher cultural minister scene, I don't know… I cannot. (laugh) Maybe! If your music is interesting, why not?

ML - I don't know. Right now in Canada, they have other problems than big band travelling… (laugh) When it comes to large ensembles, with this kind of music, do you think the instrumentation is evolving? Like you have violins – violin! I've never seen more than one – in your band sometimes. I've never seen any electrical instrument in your band or anything like that. At some point in free jazz history, when playing that kind of music, you had to have weird instruments. Do you think we're getting back to the roots right now?

DG - I really don't know. The mass medias with rock and pop is overpowering everything and so I think they're also missing a lot of interesting spots everywhere, Canada or here. Some of it is supported, a little bit supported, so the guys can survive. Most of the musicians are teaching, of course and they play commercial… One of my best friends in Hamburg – an excellent free player – I heard him in Graz, there was a concert two weeks ago with Roger Cicero. You know Roger Cicero? Cicero was a swing pianist, this is his son and his shows are like – what was the name? – Bublé. And big band… And in Graz there were 3 500 people to listen to that, you know? And the guy, the good musician I think, you know, he played in the section. And he gets every night – what was it? – 300 or 400 Euros and twenty concerts. If he plays in a jazz club, *Jazzwerkstatt*, prime thing, he gets 100, 150… 200 at most. That's the business! It's the truth, you know? (orders a drink)

ML - Well, we've actually been thru every basic question I had to ask. First of all, thank you very very much…

APPENDIX V
Interview with Butch Morris

BM - I'm ready to begin, but again, I… I think I'm going to come at this from a different perspective than most people. Okay, so I, you. I want us to be clear about some things. I may say some things and you may understand it another way, but I'm, I'm going to say things a little different than most people say. Because first of all, I don't even use the term improvisation in my work.

ML - Okay.

BM - I don't even use the term. And I don't use the term free improvisation, or free jazz. I don't use these terms. You see. Let me explain to you, and then we'll be clear from the beginning of this. From the beginning of this conversation, otherwise, there's going to be a lot of big mistakes, alright?

ML - No problem, please, go on.

BM - That is so that you know how I'm going to explain these things, alright, because there's a whole lot of things that I don't agree with that a lot of people are practicing today. And one is this expression, and the use of the word improvisation and the expression of free music and free jazz. Because I believe in freedom, don't misunderstand me, but I also believe that people have to find a particular kind of individual… There have to be certain kinds of liberties, understood? Before you can have your collective and individual freedoms. These are so-

ML - Yeah.

BM - I just… I want to start like that, by making this position clear to you. So when I say something to you about freedom or liberty or improvisation and, and certain things… or our purpose and reason. I don't want them to be understood in a different way. Because I have this problem often, in interviews, and people run off and say Butch is doing some free jazz or doing some improvisation and it's not true. It's true, I mean, yes, I believe in improvisation, and I believe in freedom, but the way I approach it is different from most. Okay?

ML - That is very clear. So, first of all... Well, well, first of all if we start the interview properly, I want to thank you a great lot for accepting this and giving me some of your time, and your wisdom, and really, this is appreciated, for me and for my entire

work. I would like to know first of all if I can use some of your writing like in Intro and Principles of Conduction, and The Science of Finding it…Of Finding. Can I use parts of it in my work, yeah?

BM - Yeah, yeah. It's written, you know, I would've actually…A lot of what you send me, I would've written about them, rather than talked about them, because I know… Yeah, no, I don't mind. I don't mind, as long as you credit me for the text that I write, its fine.

ML - Of course. There is… There shouldn't be any other way. In one of downloaded the Principles of Conduction, it is written in short version. Is there any long version of that, any more detailed version?

BM - I really, I call it short version because it's what I give to people who are doing the conduction workshops. But what's going to be included in my book will be a longer version of that.

ML - Okay, so there is a book coming for…?

BM - Well eventually, yeah.

ML - Well, I look forward for… Do you know... do you have any date in mind? Or is it just a work in progress right now?

BM - Do I have an in mind?

ML - A date. A publishing date, or…

BM - No, no, no, no, no, no. No, in this, actually, you're addressing now one of your questions in here. You say something about the master of your instrument. I mean, you never become a master of your instrument and I could never foresee what this could be. I can only answer questions that I, I can answer at this point in my, in my progress. I've been doing this for about thirty-five years and even at thirty-five years, even if I have an ensemble once a month or once a week, let's say. Fifty-two times. I mean, that's a lot less than anyone else touches their instrument, you know what I mean?

ML - Of course.

BM - I think to, to come to understand music from a different perspective; you're also in a state of study. A state of study and a state of experimentation. Although, I don't find it to date experimental. I, I think I know certain things about this. I mean, as you

know, as you know, there are approximately forty other people in the world, that I know of, that say they're practising conduction. But, it, it's interesting. And it's beautiful, don't misunderstand me, but they're taking it into their own direction. I wouldn't call it conduction. That's why, that's one of the reasons why I have a trademark on, on the term. Because I wanted to be the one who defines what I coined. Do you understand what I mean?

ML - Of course.

BM - But there are a lot of other people who would say they're doing conduction. I wouldn't necessarily call it conduction, but they, they wanted to call it conduction I guess, because they started learning it all from me. And then they decided to go their own way, which is fine. But I, I wanted to do something… I wanted to do something that, that Frank Zappa didn't do, that Sun Ra didn't do, that Charles Moffett didn't do, that Leonard Bernstein didn't do, that uh… Uh… Lukas Foss didn't do, that Earle Brown didn't do. They all practice something similar, very similar to conduction, but again, I'd like to make something clear: I wanted to work outside of my community. I wanted to work with all, any and all musicians that wanted to do this. All the people I just named, they only worked within their own community. You understand what I'm saying?

ML - Yeah.

BM - The pop people only work with the pop people, the jazz people only work with the jazz people, and the classical people only work with the jazz community and so on. I wanted to work with everybody, and I wanted to work with indigenous instruments from different countries doing the same thing. Doing conduction. And they limited, simply by doing that, they limited their understanding of, of conducted improvisation by doing so, by limiting it to certain people. They could come to certain conclusions, but they weren't getting down to understanding the totality of what this art had to offer. And that's what I wanted to understand.

ML - That's very wise of you. And therefore, if you had to say. So, so, I just want to make one thing clear. The difference between conduction and other ways of directing musicians that play some... that has some liberty in what they're playing is that conduction is meant for any kind of music, and any kind of musician, as to other

forms of directing an orchestra in that way is made for… Actually, is made for just Jazzman's or is made for classical players, or this is just for World Beat musicians or, that kind of thing. This is what you would say is the main difference between conduction and the rest of it.

BM – I'm doing it for everybody who wants to participate. It's not just one style, or one community or one, one category of people, of music, you understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah.

BM - If I do this in Korea, with traditional Korean instruments or Turkey with traditional Turkish instruments, or Japan with… And I… If I do it, it's their interpretation. It's not their improvisation; it's their interpretation of what I do. If I do it here with jazz musicians and classical musicians and pop musicians, it's their interpretation of what this is, it's not an improvisation, and do you understand what I mean?

ML - This couldn't be… This couldn't be clearer, actually. These are the perfect words to describe what you're trying to, to do. If we get to, actually, the technical aspects of conduction, I found some pieces of work, some interviews where are just some of your work which explains some of your gestures associated with the musical… What they should do, musically. But I haven't found any complete work that would explain all of your gestures.

BM - No, no, there are none. That's the book.

ML - Okay, that's all.

BM - That that has to, in many ways, that has to be incomplete this time, because… I would need… I would say I'd need a minimum of let's say two or three years, really five would be ideal, to, to work with one ensemble. To find out and to realize all possibilities. I, I, there's, you see, this idea of doing it with all these different ensembles I think was something I needed to do, but it, at the same time, I'm always looking forward to working with the same ensemble for long periods of time and then you can see what, deeper, what possibility is. So you can see how long it takes for people to start, uh, repeating themselves and start playing clichés and things like that, you see what I mean? Because it, it's like, it's similar to playing an instrument, or like writing about the same thing, you have to be careful about going back over the same territory.

ML - This is very true, and actually, the question you've talked a little about that before, but then you went some other way. But, I've tried your kind of technique. Of course, it wasn't your gestures or anything, but I've tried that with my own big band a few times as I was trying many different techniques of giving a way to give some freedom, some musical freedom, and I found that this might be the most difficult technique for the conductor that I've ever went across. And I found it very difficult not to repeat myself, and to, to, to be fast enough in my head, to know what I want and everything, to make the work interesting. Did that happen to you, and if it did, how long did it take you before, without saying mastering the instrument, before you felt more at ease doing so?

BM - Oh, that took years. That took years. I mean, that takes years because, I mean, for a lot of reasons. If you, if you're working with the same ensemble, that's one thing. If you're changing ensembles all the time, which I did, if you look at my chronology

ML - I know. it's… It's amazing

BM - You, you see how many ensembles I've worked with. Which was a very great experience, but you…? In defining all of these… I'm going to get to your question, but I have to say a couple of things.

ML - Please, you're the master of the interview, please…

BM - Pardon me?

ML - You're the master of… You say whatever you want to say, don't ask me for permissions for it.

BM - Yeah, okay. In… In doing this, I really, I, I wanted to build this vocabulary on principles, not on laws. I want to add, I wanted to… There were certain things I realized, I, that had to be done. One thing was to, to incorporate all communities. Well, yeah, I can see this is going to be… To incorporate all communities, I needed to be able to say things certain ways that did not imply other ways. In other words, for instance I don't have a sign that says improvise. I have no sign that says improvise, or take a solo. Now, I did that for a number of reasons. Uh, because you have to leave space, because this fine line between improvisation and interpretation is very important to understand. Whether, wherever you place that line between improvisation and interpretation is your business now, but everybody has to

understand that there is a fine line between interpretation, because I'm giving symbolic stimulus to the ensemble. And my stimulus signifies the parameters of what we're going to do. Now, I have a sign, a, my sign for, for example. My sign for what a lot of people think means solo or improve is called pedestrian. And the pedestrian sign, the signification of the pedestrian sign is the pedestrian's primary concern is to contribute to the overall integrity of the structure in progress and to find or make situations for elaboration and development. Alright?

ML - Okay.

BM - The pedestrian influences the sonic ensemble environment by establishing relationships and building within them. He or she qualifies and quantifies existing ensemble information or introduces new information into the ensemble to enhance, to influence and to foster development. To contribute overall, that is the parameter of the, of the, of the pedestrian. So you really are opening this, this area that is, people refer to as improvised, or as solo to a broader area that has more purpose and more reason for existence. You understand what I mean? If you think about all the things I just said, it's different from a solo or to freely improvise. You give them more purpose, you give them more responsibility and you give them more reason. And these are the areas that I want to go in. I want the instrumentalist to have more responsibility. So if I signify the parameters, the musician, the instrumentalist has to bring meaning to this. You see, so it's not, it's not exactly a definition, but is a signification. In words play, I realize that after doing this for years and to sit down and write about it, I realize how important the words are that I used to explain each of these signs and gestures would be. Also, I wanted to be, I wanted conduction to be a continuation of conducting. I wanted it to be something that anybody could use, but I also wanted it to be a continuation of the whole idea of traditional conducting. Now, now to get back to your question, because I needed, I needed to say that.

ML - Of course.

BM - It, it took me many years to be, uh, comfortable because it was so new when I started doing it in the '70s, and then in the early '80s, it was, it was an untested ground. Yes, I had seen, even by then I hadn't seen Frank Zappa do it, but I had seen Charles Moffett do it. And then early on, I saw Alan Silva do it. Or, I saw their idea

concerning this idea. But, what I saw was it needed a lot of development, it needed a lot of scrutinizing, it needed a lot. And I needed to feel comfortable; I was self-conscious in the beginning. I started thinking about this idea in the ‘60s; it took me well into the ‘70s to even attempt it. And then after I started to attempt it, I saw all the baggage that came with it. Because, first of all, I only thought I knew what I wanted to do, you know what I mean?

ML - Too much, actually.

BM - It was, actually! It was. It was heavy.

ML - Yeah.

BM - But what was great about it was even though, when I started, the musicians had questions, which was great because I had to answer the questions. And you have to answer the questions, because the questions open up the answers open up into more questions, and the more questions I could answer, the more clear I could be about what I was doing. Do you understand what I mean?

ML - Completely.

BM - Yeah, and this was the great thing for me in the beginning: that the musicians weren’t afraid to answer questions. Today, I come and I come across more musicians who are afraid to ask questions. In the beginning, it was great. So really, when I started teaching in Rotterdam in the ‘70s, and then in Liège in the late ‘70s, early ‘80s, in the conservatory and the music school, in the conservatory in Liège in the music school in Rotterdam, I got to learn a lot. I got to learn a lot because there were a lot of teachers around and there were students around and I was saying, “Okay, this means this, and this means that and that means that.” And they were, just because I was giving them new information that they had never seen, they had a zillion questions. So in the evening or after class I had to run back to my room and I had to sit down with all these questions, and I had to figure out how to answer them. Which was great for me, it was really great and it was very, very, very stimulating. I had to figure out how to explain these things. It took me; I would say it took me four to five years to really. I mean, maybe more, maybe six or seven years before I really got over being self-conscious and repetitive about my, about what I was doing. It took a long

time, but too, I had to think about what it was I wanted to do. And then some other doors opened up, some other questions arrived that I had to answer.

ML - And you say about six to seven years. When you translate that into shows, and or public conductions, what… Do you have a precise point where you, where you walked up to the stage and said, "Wow, this is conduction, I really am proud of what this is."?

BM - Oh, no, I never said that. No.

ML - Okay, still today, you're still…

BM - I've never said that, everyone has been a progression in one way or another, but no. I, I've never said that. I think, well, we might as well jump to that question now.

ML - Yeah, yeah.

BM - The… People ask me what's the best conduction I have ever done. Well, the best conduction is where we had the most focus and the most concentration, and the most understanding of what was going on. That was the best conduction. And I really can't point to which one it would be. But you know, when you have great concentration, you have great music. You have great focus, you have great music. When you have great understanding of what is going on, without, with few complications, I think that's great. Because, you know, when you have something communal, I mean that's great. But, there is no conduction. I mean, yes, there is some recorded music that's on the market that I might say, this might be one of my favourites, but for the quality of the music that was produced, but I don't know. I don't, I've never said that, no that was great. Because a lot of time it's different, when you're making music on the stage, you're hearing it one way. You can come off the stage and listen to it the next day or the next week or the next month and say, "Oh shit, I didn't realize something." Something, you know that didn't realize during the heat of the performance was either good that you thought was bad, or that was bad that you thought was good. I mean, bad and good, I mean, you know, that's, that's a whole other take.

ML - Okay, and since, as you said, and it's pretty obvious, it takes a long time before mastering this whole concept. If I refer to my own experience, I felt that after a couple of times that since I was not making enough progress in front of my musicians, they were starting to get bored of, you know, this experimentation and

I couldn't do that as long as I would have wished for in every rehearsal, because I didn't want to bore my musicians because I, I was so bad myself. Did you have that kind of reaction yourself at the first couple of months you were trying these kinds of things? When you were still searching for your style?

BM - No, no, and I'll tell you why. If you know anything about conducting in the first place, you know you have to keep the attention of the ensemble as much as possible. When you lose the attention of the ensemble, you're lost.

ML - Very true.

BM - I mean, that's the first. That's the first rule of conducting. I mean, if you're going to step in front of the ensemble and you don't know what to say or how to explain it or how to… You, you are totally lost. So I mean, I knew this. But perhaps I hadn't done it well, but I knew this and this is something you have to know, you have to take charge of the ensemble. Otherwise, you find yourself again going back to… I can tell you of many, many experiences I've had with ensembles that I went to conduct and they said, "Wait a minute, you're giving us all this direction and this is free music." I said, "No, no, no, no, if you start defining what the music is going to be before it is, then we're going to have a problem, you understand?" Once you decide, if you make the mistake of deciding what the music's going to be or what you're going to call it before you do it, then there's a problem. Because people are saying, "Oh, no, this is free music or this is free jazz or free improvisation." Well no, it's not. I'm sorry, it's not. Because then it'll start going in a particular way. People say this is non-idiomatic music, well, that's, that's a category too, as far as I'm concerned. It's not a definition, it's a category. It has become a category over the years which mean you can do anything. Well, in this music, or in conduction, you can't do anything; you have to follow the directive. That is the nature of this music. You follow the directive. You try to bring meaning to the directive. So, yes, I had problems in the beginning, even though I know you have to keep the attention of the ensemble. I had problems because I didn't have the experience of keeping the attention of the ensemble. But I gained the experience the more I did it, you know, are you with me?

ML - Yeah, yeah, I'm completely with you.

BM - So if you go on the stage and you only have four or five directives to give the ensemble, you in your mind have to be very frugal and you have to be very conscious of how you're going to use those signs. And what you're going to do with those signs, and what you're going to do with those gestures. And then, in many ways, who are you going to give them to? Because in many ways, in the process of teaching the conduction vocabulary, that you have to learn the musicians and the ensemble. It cannot be a blank slate. You are giving information without learning; you have to learn who these musicians are in the ensemble. You have to learn, learn many, many things. Because some people are going to look at you dead in the eye and some people aren't going to look at you at all. Right?

ML - Yeah, completely.

BM - Yeah, so you have to figure out ways, strategically ways of getting these people's attention.

ML - And could we say that was the, one of your first… I wouldn't say findings, but realizations or adaptation when you came across your own experiences with, with conduction because there has to be some things you didn't plan which happened in the first couple of rehearsals and it had to make you think, "Oh, I didn't plan on that. How do I adapt, or how do I deal with this problem?"

BM - Well, yes, but that is the beauty of it to me, it's that you will always come across new questions and new situations and new problems to solve. That's why I can't write a book today because there are still problems to solve, there are still questions to answer and there's still, there are still many, many things to discover. I'm waiting, at this moment; I'm waiting for someone to tell me I can have an orchestra for five years. Right at this moment. Now, the beauty of just, of this, it's really a lot, you know, that I can work with the same ensemble for the next five years. That would be great for me. Then I can really understand, then I can really answer questions that I've never been able to answer until that point. So, if you're also doing something or conducting on improvisation or something like conduction or sound painting or whatever people call… I mean, there are a number of names out there. There are a lot of people that decided they'd call it something else, which is great. I think it's great, the more people that are doing this, the better, I think. But, they have to have a long

term vision of this, not a short term vision of this, that's the problem, I think. People have a… Listen, I probably sold more batons or baguettes than I have CDs. Simply because, I go to work with people and people say, "I can do that better." And they go out and buy a baton. And then they do it, and they realize you can do it once, or twice, or three times but then you start repeating yourself. It's like you don't know what to do, it's like saying, "Oh, I can play the saxophone too." And they go out and buy a saxophone and they realize that they don't have any study, if they haven't studied the instrument, or the music, it's just a big cul-de-sac. It's a dead end; I didn't want to have a dead end. I got tired of coming to dead ends. So in the vocabulary, I had to figure out what I needed to express that notation does not express. What notation does not express because my first, I mean, most important question is what is between notation and improvisation? What is between the two? That was the most important question. And it's interesting; it's very, very interesting. It's because there's a lot between what notations has to offer, and what improvisation has to offer, are two things that are very far apart. So if they're so far apart, what's in between? That, which was my question. So I'm still trying to answer a lot of the questions that that question presents.

ML - Would you say that the… Not the fear of repeating yourself, but the fact that someone can really easily repeat himself when doing conductions over conductions over conductions, do you think that this could be the greatest flaw of this tale, to someone that doesn't have the experience you obviously have, yourself.

BM - Not really. If you pay attention to the information that the musicians are giving you, you can stay away from that. I mean, really, you have to pay attention to the information that the musicians are giving to you, if you can do that then you can actually stay away from it. But that's a difficult tool, it's a very, very difficult thing to do, but it's part of the job. Yeah, it's part of the job. As you go in and start instructing the ensemble on what the vocabulary actually is, you have to listen to what, how people interpret the symbolic stimulus. And that's what a directive is, it's solely symbolic stimulus. Just like notation is symbolic of music. Just like writing is symbolic of speech. That's all this is, is symbolism, and this symbolism has significance.

ML - It's funny because it seems like you're always one question ahead of me when I'm looking at my question list, my next one was, and do you think there are limitations to this technique? Is that what you've just said? Do you think that covers the limitations of conduction?

BM - Well, there are limitations to everything, and that's why I think there's room for this. There are limitations to free improvisation, there are limitations to notation. So, if there are limitations to notation and there are limitations to free improvisation… I mean, this is something you have to understand. This idea has come and gone many times since 2400 B.C. So why has it come and gone so many times? I mean, in the history of conducting, if you look at the book of the history of orchestral conducting, it explains that this has been around for a long time. So if it's been around for such a long time, why did it come and go, come and disappear and come and disappear and come and disappear since, for that long a period?

ML - What would be your answer to that?

BM - My answer was that the depth of discover… Well, I have two answers for that. It kept coming back because there was more to discover. It kept coming back because people started finding more uses for it. I think that one of the reasons why it's evolving so swiftly these days, okay, is that it's developing alongside the internet. I think one of the reasons because, it's evolving, it's developing right alongside the internet. A lot of people who need to justify a lot of the things we do in conducting can relate it to the internet like memory, like going back and going forward. Like many things, there are metaphors in the digital age that can also be applied to what is being done in conduction. I think that's one reason. And as I said, the other reason is that we're finding other uses for what can be done with the communal idea, or the collective idea of making music together. Now, this idea… Listen, I conduct symphony orchestras, I work with symphony orchestras, I work with Jazz bands, I work with indigenous instruments, I work with pop musicians, I work with all musicians. And that, for me is one of my greatest joys that I can pull people from different communities. From all these different social backgrounds and cultures, and I can put them in one ensemble, and we can make great and unique and beautiful and

wonderful and challenging music together. That... that for me is the point, to find expression in music, a greater expression in music.

ML - Okay, so…

BM - To be able to exploit music. People don't like that term when I use it, but it's true! You're exploiting the instrument; you're exploiting the music, but all music. So I don't call, I'm a Jazz musician, I come from the Jazz tradition. People ask me what I do; I say I'm a musician. I'm a musician. Oh, do you play Jazz? Well yeah, I play Jazz when it's time to play Jazz when it's time to play Jazz, but I don't want to define what I'm going to do musically before I do it. I have no need to do that. There are no more music stores to walk into and walk into the Jazz department and you'll find my music, but that's what I do. That's where you're going to find it.

ML - Wow, and what then would you say makes… I would say, what makes a good conduction, but…

BM - No, I said, I answered that earlier. What makes good conduction is the understanding you and the musicians have together. The clarity and the focus-

ML - The focus.

BM - and concentration. That, to me, that's what makes a good conduction. If we can have all that, if we can have certain amount of clarity and focus and concentration, then you can have a great conduction. But you need to have all that.

ML - I do agree. When it comes to… You can do conductions from stuff which is already written. Start with this, or you have also done conductions completely out of the blue without any written music. What-

BM - Okay, okay, keep that question, but let me answer this first.

ML - Please, go on.

BM - Because this way of making music or the system of conduction was built for the manipulation of notation. Understand this: this is why I began this journey. I wanted to figure out how to manipulate notation. And for me to manipulate notation, I figured I had to go in this direction. This was really my second big question, not… Okay, the first question is what is between notation and improvisation was my question, and my other question was, how can I manipulate notation? So for me to manipulate notation, I figured out I needed some kind of lexicon or vocabulary with

which to do it with. How can I take this note that's on the page and make it longer or make it shorter? How can I move it up or down in pitches? How can I make it longer, how can I make it faster, how can I make it shorter, how can I make it slower? You understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah.

BM - Same music that's on the page, how can I manipulate it? That was my question. So, the idea of me coming back to… I decided, I'm going to take all these signs and gestures and I'm going to try to discover what they have to offer even before I go back to notation. I'm going to take all this then I'm going to go back to notation and I'm going to use all the things that I discovered and I'm going to apply it to notation. And that is the idea. So yes, whether I use notation or not is not a big thing, the thing is to get the most out of music. To get the broadest expression possible, and I must admit, I'm having a great time on Mondays here in New York and I've been conducting my ensemble for the last fifteen weeks every, once a week, for the past fifteen weeks. And it's been very, very exciting. Very, very exciting. After all these years, I get all these people who really understand that the parameters of what I'm talking about, they're big. They're not small. If I say sustain, which is one of the most basic directives in the vocabulary, they understand that there's hundreds of ways to sustain. Hundreds, literally hundreds of ways and how you sustain on the drums is different to the way you do it on the vibes, it's different to how you'd do it on the violins, and it's different from the way you'd do it on the saxophone or trumpet. You understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah.

BM - And you can take this same sign and I can play with the same sign, I could play with it for a long, long time interestingly, musically.

ML - Yeah and there's no limitations to the development you can…

BM - Exactly, that's the point. You have to, musicians understand that there's more than one way to satisfy the directive. There's more than one way to satisfy every directive. Sustain only means one continuous sound, now how do you make one continuous sound? And how many ways can you make one continuous sound? These become questions for the instrumentalist, and if they start limiting themselves to the way they

view the directive, then the music is smaller, their view is smaller. Are you with me? Do you understand what I mean by this?

ML - Yeah, yeah, and completely.

BM - Okay, you have to… So, sometimes in an ensemble, I turn to someone and say you've satisfied the directive in one way, but you've done it for the last 25 minutes. Can't you think of another way to do that? Now often, they get angry at me because I challenged them.

ML - Really?

BM - But you have to challenge them to start to think about this in the broadest sense of the term. Otherwise, they get lazy, you get lazy, you get bored, they get bored. You understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah.

BM - You have to challenge them at every step of the way, otherwise, you know…

ML - And when it comes to well, playing both these kinds of music's, conduction with already written stuff, which you use, or you give your interpretation. Well, let's say Beethoven's Quartet or something and when you get with a quartet that doesn't have anything written, is that one or the other that you find most interesting or that you like to do better or do you have any preference between the two or it's all the same to you? There are challenges all-

BM - No, no, it all depends on the ensemble. We're working with notated music now with my ensemble; we're working with a lot of notated music. And it's great that we have the comfort and the understanding and actually, I say a lot, but it's not a lot. We've been working on three different pieces now and we've been working with the same three pieces for the last fifteen weeks. And every week we approach it from a different angle, and every week I hear the audience say, "Oh, my goodness, that's the tune you've been playing for the last five weeks, but it sounds so different now!" Well, that's the idea. That's the very idea, that we as an ensemble, we can make something grow from what we know and that the audience can have a new experience with the same music; a totally new experience with the same music. They don't have to recognise they're hearing the same thing, but they're being affected perhaps the same way, and quite naturally a different way about how their experience… So, I like

because I write a lot of music. I write a lot of music now. I think some people have forgotten, I mean. I was writing music, they were playing my music in New York. People were playing my music in New York long before I moved to New York. And they were playing my written music. And then when I came to New York, I started writing more music for dance, for theatre, for television, for radio. I mean, I write music. My interest is in music, and my interests are broad. Now whether I was understood as a free Jazz trumpet player or a cornet player, that's true too. I did that too, but my interest is in music, and as long as my interests stay broad in music, the more I can come to understand music. You understand what I mean? I want to understand music, not improvisation. I want to understand what the possibilities are of improvisation in music. The language I speak is music.

ML - This is not in my written questions, but you… Everything I read, or talking to you right now, it seems like there's a big philosophy behind the whole conduction concept.

BM - A big what?

ML - Philosophy, it's a very philosophical aspect of music; that's what I'm starting to get from you. There's something that you… Am I wrong in assuming there's something you want to tell to the world with this? You want to make a point with conduction is

BM - Oh, yeah, sure! I think I want to, I want to make a point. I'm not always sure exactly what that point is, because I'm discovering, I'm discovering all the time, too, but the point is that I do, I think I'm coming to understand what is between notation and what is between improvisation. I think I've begun to become very clear about the uses of certain terminologies to explain certain things. I think there is something in music we have yet to discover. Even, I'm talking about acoustic music. Now, these days, a lot of electronic music is getting a lot of funding to go forward, but I just don't hear it. I think there's still a lot of room for acoustic music, for a lot of discovery to take place in acoustic music. And if there's anything that I'm excited about, it's what conduction has to offer. Whether I bring it or someone else brings it is not the point. I couldn't care less about who brings it; I am always waiting to hear somebody make a big step. And I, yeah... Is there a philosophy behind it? I couldn't explain it, what

the philosophy is, except there is more to music than what we're hearing. There's a lot more to music that what we're hearing.

ML - Okay, let me get more technical here about conduction. First of all, you've conducted like classical, symphonic orchestras with you know, seventy musicians or more sometimes, as far as I've seen. And you've also conducted way smaller bands of ten to fifteen people. Is there any difference in your approach to conduction when you get to big or smaller ensembles? Like the individuality of every music or, that kind of thing, is there a big difference in your approach?

BM - Well, there's a difference. First of all, when you're working with so many people, I mean, that alone is, can be taxing. But at the same time, you start the same way. You want everyone to have the best understanding of the lexicon, of the vocabulary as possible. That's the first thing you want to make clear. The second thing, you want to make clear is… Well, let me go back, let me start by saying, what I want with ensembles, they're generally symphonic ensembles. And my first-

ML - So classical players...?

BM - The same people, so I get their attention generally by, when they come into the rehearsal workshop, there's no music, and no music stands. Now, for classical players, that's unheard of. Now that's totally unheard of, how are you going to play without music, without notation? So then I have to explain, but at least I have their attention. They can't look away from you, there's no reason for them to look away from you if you take away the music and the music stands. But the thing is, you have to, you have to have that out of the way when they come in the room. So, they can begin to understand and you have to differentiate, you have to say this is what it is, when it's a section of people, this is what it is when there's a group of people. This is what is it is when it is, I want individuals to participate, you understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah.

BM - If you want a, if you've got a trumpet in a seventy piece orchestra and you want one trumpet and one clarinet and two violins and one cello and two basses to participate in the next directive, how do you give that directive?

ML - Well, you tell me, you're the expert.

BM - No, no, no, I mean, I can tell you but telling you would mean nothing. I need to show you.

ML - Yeah, of course.

BM - Yeah, I need to show you. But I also have to show you what the problems of sightlines are.

ML - The problems of what?

BM - Of sightlines.

ML - Oh, I'm sorry, I'm not familiar with that term.

BM - Okay, sight, S-I-G-H-T.

ML - Oh, like looking.

BM - Like to look. Sightlines, how do I communicate with one person in a seventy piece orchestra with one person way in the back? How do I communicate with that person?

ML - I would use my eyes a lot and if that doesn't work, I would point at the person.

BM - Okay, well you have to use your eyes a lot. You have to use your eyes a lot. But your set up is first. I mean there are so many details, really, with dealing with these kinds of ensembles. I mean, that is something I probably, I really need to sit down with you about, or have you in a rehearsal. So, needless to say, with a seventy piece ensemble, it's different than with a twenty piece ensemble, or a ten piece ensemble. You would treat it differently. It's a totally different animal, it's a totally different machine, you have to work with them in different ways. So, sightlines, the way you delineate the sight lines, the way you define groups, the way you define sections, the way you define individuals. It's totally different than ten people. So, yeah, there's a great difference, for your question.

ML - Okay, and when, well, I'm pretty sure I know the answer to the next one, but I have to ask for the interview, but, how important is structure for you?

BM - Well, you know, I've said.

ML - I know, you've pretty much answered that. I mean, it's the…

BM - Well, no, actually, I haven't. You know, it's… Conduction is a structure content exchange. It's a… I give structure, and the instrumentalist gives content. All I can give is structure, that's all I can give. If I give a directive, I'm telling them, I'm giving less structure. If I say repeat something, that's structure. If I say sustain something,

that's structure. If I give any sign or directive, that's structure. But what they give me from their understanding of this structure is content. So my whole job, really, is about the clarification of structure. Their job is the clarification of content. So even if you look at the, if you look at the, the definition of conduction, it's the practice. The practice is the modus operandi of conveying an interpreting of a lexicon of directives, to modify or construct sonic arrangement or composition. It's structure-content exchange between composer, conductor and instrumentalist that provides immediate possibility to alter or to initiate. This is the definition.

ML - Yeah, well, if I'm not mistaken, this is what I thought I asked you before this, because I've seen you've given pretty much the exact same answer as an Italian interview I found on the net a few days ago. So, yeah, you're very coherent with yourself. But when it comes, actually, this is something I was wondering a lot. The structure of the whole conduction, how and when do you decide it? When you come to the stage, do you already have an idea of where this is going to start, where this is going to end and…?

BM - No, totally not.

ML - So this is, from your part, this is complete improvisation?

BM - Yeah, in many ways, but…

ML - You are amazing.

BM - Yeah, no, no, but you have to understand. If you've already gone through some days of workshop rehearsal, you are coming to understand the musicians, you come to understand who are the stronger in your terms, who are the stronger players, and who are the weaker players, who are the ones who are going to give you something, and who are the ones who are going to give you nothing. And often, this happens. So, you want to know how to use the ones you have found are giving nothing, and how the ones you are going to use are going that give you something. In the workshop, you have to teach the people you are working with. It doesn't mean the people in the workshop who are giving you nothing are going to give you nothing in performance; they may be the ones who really give the ensemble something. But you have to pay attention to the people you are working with. It's not you or me just giving directives, this means this, this means that, that means that, that means that. It's not like that,

there has to be a very human connection between the information you are giving them and what you want to get from them.

ML - And so it's a game of influence that starts with the influence from your part to the musicians and from the musicians to you. And that starts on the very first rehearsal until the end of the actual presentation, public presentation of the conduction.

BM - Exactly, but it's not so much… What you want to relate to the ensemble is what you want from them is qualitative content. And the more qualitative content they can give you, the more you will have to work with. Now, qualitative content, what does that mean? Again, let's go back. It means you want them to have the most, the broadest understanding of every directive possible. You want them to broaden the parameters of what a sustained sound is. You want them to broaden the parameters of what a repeat is. You want them to fully understand what their responsibility is. So, by the time you get to the performance, you feel very secure about what you can get from the ensemble and how you can put things together, even though you don't know how you're going to do it. But you have to feel secure that you can get something from them. And that they will be clear about what you are doing, because there's so many, there's so many things that you can do with very little. But if they're not, if they misunderstand what you're giving them or what their responsibility is, things could fall apart. Otherwise, if it's going to be free Jazz, if it's going to be free music, you don't need me or need a conductor. If you come there to demonstrate one thing to the ensemble, but in their mind they want to do something else, it doesn't make sense to do it. In the beginning, I had to do it anyway, because I was asked to do it.

ML - What do you mean?

BM - Well, a lot of times, I'm invited to go and work with an ensemble to show them the ways and means of conduction, but are already in their mind, they already have some idea that it's something else. You understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah.

BM - Just like I'm explaining to you, I'm sure; today I've said a few things that you didn't quite understand. In terms of how you've been using it, but how you use it and how I use it can be two different things. But maybe you're starting to understand what your responsibilities are now, and how you might approach it from now on. And let

me say, this plays into this whole idea of what is theory, what is practice, and what is performance. Now, with my ensemble here in New York, they know in theory what these things mean. They also know, in practice, we approach it from many, many points of view. But when we get to performance, because their understanding is broad, they can almost do anything. They can almost do anything, they don't have to do it like they did it in practice, and they don't have to do it the way they understand it in theory because performance is a totally different animal. I just need them to understand it in theory, understand the way we do it in practice, but when we get to performance it's an open door. It's really an open door. Now, which addresses one of your other questions, couldn't I do conduction with other people who don't know what the conduction vocabulary is? Well yeah, I could, but that would be very limited. It would be limited in the sense that maybe we can give one, a good performance and then maybe two, maybe three, but it would come to an end very soon. I'm not interested in seeing the end.

ML - Yeah, because you would be repeating yourself because of lack of…

BM - No, no, they would be repeating themselves, I could go on. Now, understand the question. I mean, I'm not looking at the question, but I remember it someplace, couldn't I do… Okay, do you think anyone could understand the gist of your musical indications without their explanations?

ML - Yeah.

BM - Well, they could understand them the way they wanted to understand them. Whether the way they understand them clearly or not is another thing. Without my explanations, no, I don't think so, I don't think so. I don't think they could understand. I think they could have some understanding, and yes we could give one performance, maybe two, just guessing. Because, they'd be guessing, maybe I'd want one thing, they'd give another. Well, yeah.

ML - After a while, the band would be confronted to a lack of vocabulary and…

BM - Well, let's put it like this. Let me try to be as frank as possible. Let me try to be as clear and as frank as possible. I am interested in the long-term development of what this is that I am doing, conduction. I'm not interested in the short term development. And there are a lot of people and I try to collect all the records on the market that

people say they're doing conduction. And I've got a lot of them and for the most part, I don't hear progress. I don't hear progress because they don't have, they don't seem to have a long term, the long term clarity you need for understanding. And you need to understand, you need to understand certain things, you know. Like… Youth needs to be fed, listen, a baby needs milk. The baby needs to be fed at this time, at this time, this time and this time, and the medicine needs to be taken at this time, this time and this time if you want to get well, if you want to go on. Do you understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah, yeah.

BM - I'm interested in the long term. Listen, it has taken more than five hundred years for the classical canon to develop, it took maybe, it took more than four hundred years for there to be a standard book to be written about what classical music is. Four hundred years!

ML - Yeah.

BM - Jazz is only one hundred and twenty-five years old, approximately. A hundred and twenty years, a hundred and eighteen years, whatever it is, you understand?

ML - Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BM - I'm interested in the long term development of this, not the short term. Now, let me go… There are, there are approximately eighteen ensembles that have been developed since 1997 called improvisers orchestras. There's the London Improvisers Orchestra, there's the FOCO in Spain, there's the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra, the Buffalo Improvisers Orchestra, New Haven, Royal Improvisers, Bologna , Hocus Pocus, Berlin Improvisers, Oxford Improvisers Orchestra, Toronto, Birmingham, the Great Lakes Improvisers Orchestra, there's Sheffield Improvisers Orchestra, the Vienna Improvisers Orchestra, the Bogota Improvisers Orchestra, La Bamba, there's Halifax Improvisers Orchestra, there's Laboratoria Novamusica. All of these ensembles, apart from Laboratoria Novamusica have just been in existence since 1997. Now, do you know why all these ensembles have just been developed since 1997?

ML - Well, you tell me.

BM - I said, well, I asked a question. Do you know why these ensembles have been developed just since 1997?

ML - My guess would be that's just when they decided to meet you and try to.

BM - No, no, they started meeting me, they started meeting me long before that. But you know what? It was in 1997 that they realized that after me doing it already for more than ten years, that they realized there's something to this. It took them that long to realize that there is something to this. Now even though they have chosen to go in a different direction than the direction I'm going in, they realized, "Oh, we can put together a collective too that sounds better than what he's doing." Now one of the great things that they have that I don't have is the existence of a long term relationship with their ensemble, I've never had this long term relationship with this ensemble. The London Improvisers Orchestra only exists because I went there and I formed the London Skyscraper.

ML - Okay, I didn't know that.

BM - When I left, they changed their names to the London Improvisers Orchestra. And all these people, a lot of these people from these other orchestras start going to play with the London Improvisers Orchestra, and the people at the London Improvisers Orchestra started instructing these other people in how to do conduction. All these other people went home and started their own orchestras. And this is a historical fact.

ML - So this is how conduction spreads in the world?

BM - Well, yeah.

ML - You told me that you buy every CD that comes from a band that tries to do conduction or tries to do something similar to it. Do you enjoy the results of what they're doing, of their experiments at all?

BM - I enjoy hearing that there is progress being made around the world and that there is a community of musicians that's growing and growing and growing. Now whether I appreciate or understand their growth or the direction they're going is another thing, but I like the idea that they're attempting to carry something on that's going to be ultimately very important to the growth of music that is based in some kind of improvisational thing. Now unfortunately, a lot of these ensembles, they think it's important to be an improviser, I honestly don't. I think improvisation is a skill that is

a plus. I think it's great to understand what it means to improvise and how to improvise, but I don't think that it's a necessity.

ML - To do what you're asking of the musicians?

BM - Yeah. Exactly.

ML - Now let me get back to the influence between the musicians and yourself. Who would you say has the most influence over the other; you over the musicians or the musicians over you? You know, there's a part where you're rehearsing, and there's a part where you're actually doing a concert. In both these separate occasions, who would you say influences the most over time?

BM - Well, that's a very interesting question and just in the last two words, over time. Well that's the most important part of that question. Over time, the influence should be equal. In the beginning, it cannot be equal. Especially if you are instructing or teaching something that they don't know. Now I'm saying this is sustained and this means one continuous sound, I've just basically explained one directive. Now, that's all. Now how many ways can you understand that? Ultimately, it comes down to that, understanding that each directive has, in the broadest sense that you can as an individual. Not like your neighbour. You can't ask your neighbour how to respond or interpret that directive. Everybody gets the information, one continuous sound. So I'm instructing. In the beginning, I'm instructing, and the more they understand their parameters, the more we come on an equal basis. So, I'm giving structure, they're giving content, I'm giving structure, they're giving content.

ML - And in the end the influence is quite equal and mutual.

BM - Definitely, in the end. But in the beginning, it can't be. You know that. If you are also interested in conduction, you know that. Especially if you go in front of musicians that have never, never worked in this way before. Listen, I have many, many stories of going to work with classical orchestras and these people refused to believe that because there's no written music, that you can make music. Now, if I, if you had to start there, where would that leave you? How do you get out of that? How do you explain to them that music is made in the mind and in the heart? That's where music is made. That's where music it's conceived and that's how it's made. Long before it's written down. And that's exactly what the history of cheironomy and any

kind of conductive improvisation is. They realize that music, even long before they were writing down music they were doing this idea. They realized that music is in the mind and music is in the heart. That's where it is conceived, and if you skip that then there's a problem.

ML - Okay, I'm not following the order of my questions right now, but you seem to have come a few times over this subject, so let's go into it in a very profound way. What are…? You told me the difference between conducting classical musicians and jazz musicians, but what would you say is the easiest for you first approaching a new band, working with classical or jazz or from the oral transmitted music, like the world music?

BM - Yeah, well there's really no difference. I mean, people ask me all the time, what's the ideal musician to do conduction? The ideal musician to do conduction is the person who understands music in the broadest sense. Who understand that they don't have to limit their understanding of music to category or style? A person who is very perceptive and a person who is willing to understand music from a far greater expanse of understanding, that's who is in the ensemble. It doesn't matter if they are improvisers or not, it only matters whether they want to do it or not.

ML - Yeah, so like I, I guess my question would then come down to who are the most open minded musicians? Or who sees music in the larger sense; usually would that be jazz or classical musicians? Or musicians that haven't learned some-

BM - No, no, I get this question all the time. Good luck with your answer. No, no, I'm serious, listen. People say, all the time, people so, oh, it must be easier working with classical musicians because they're used to looking at the conductor. Musicians in the orchestra don't look at the conductor. They look at the conductor in rehearsal; they don't look at the conductor in performance.

ML - During the performance, yeah.

BM - I mean, you know, unless there's really, really, really new music they're doing and they really need cues to come in and so on and so forth. They don't need to look at the conductor. Please, I just conducted a piece up in Vancouver and I had these two people from the classical from the orchestra who wouldn't even dare look at me and they didn't even have music in front of them.

ML - Okay.

BM - They're afraid of this contact, a lot of them. Okay, now, I won't go deep into that but this has been my history. Especially with string players, right? I mean, that's a whole other ball game. Jazz players assume that because they know how to improvise in jazz that they know the direction of things, and that's not necessarily true either. Because they feel like they're being harnessed. They feel like they're being put in a cage, but it depends, you know, it really all depends. I have not found… I mean, I can sit down, and if you give me a day, I can sit down and define from my experience what the ideal musician is, but it wouldn't come from any stylistic category, it would be a new musician, it would be a new virtuoso. It would be a new, it would be a different person where you couldn't figure out whether it came from jazz or it came from classical, or a jazz person who understood how to play classical, or a classical person who understood how to play jazz or a jazz person that understands… I mean, there's many, many degrees of what jazz is. You know-

ML - You, you're- Oh, no, please go on, I'm sorry.

BM - No, no, go ahead.

ML - You're always talking when we get to that subject about classical versus jazz but you've also worked with traditional Turkish bands or more Far East bands and everything. Do you have any opinion or any comments on how these people react to, well, to what you're trying to share with them musically? Is there a difference between them compared to classical and jazz musicians?

BM - Well, yeah, there's a difference between everybody, no matter where they come from. Surely in Vienna, there's a difference between one person and another person who's been in the same orchestra. But there's a difference of opinion, sure there's a difference of opinion. There's a cultural difference of opinion, there's a musical difference of opinion, there's a social difference of opinion. I mean, there are all kinds of opinions, but their opinions work if they're trying to contribute to this kind of idea. That's the idea. The way someone in Japan on a traditional instrument satisfies one directive, and someone in Vienna or somebody in New York or somebody in Nova Scotia or somebody… It doesn't matter, it really doesn't matter, and everybody has an opinion. I mean, no, everybody should have an opinion; let me

put it like that. I mean, culturally, there are some differences, there are musical differences. Okay, but that's why in one ensemble I had nine different countries represented and seven different instruments from those nine different countries, and it was great. Because everybody could interpret it the way I wanted to interpret it.

ML - Well, it seems like you really don't want to categorize these kinds of musicians and everything. But when it comes to-

BM - It's like I use one piano player, I use one piano player one day and the next day, I use a different piano player. The next piano player is going to have a totally different take or understanding of what this thing is and that's good enough for me. I just want them to have an idea within the parameters of what we're doing. That's all.

ML - And you also do not have any preference between working with professionals and amateurs.

BM - Oh, no, well, come on, yes, I do.

ML - Yeah.

BM - The better the musicians, the better the instrumentalist understanding what their instrument and the more they consent to being a part of this… Yeah, that… I like to work with the best musicians within these parameters. I mean a good… Listen, I have had people, a bunch of other people say we want you to come and work with our orchestra and we want you to give a concert but you only have two days or three days to do this, and I refuse to do that anymore. I did that in the past, but I refuse to do that again because it gives the wrong impression. It leaves the impression that you can do the maximum with the least, and I don't do that anymore. So, they say, "Oh, you can do it in two days because we have the greatest musicians in the world." But the greatest musicians in the world have the biggest hang ups. Do you understand what I mean?

ML - No, I'm not sure I do.

BM - Well…

ML - The biggest hang ups…

BM - The biggest hang ups, yeah! Well, listen, if you have a great person who plays western, classical music; let's say they're a violin player. And they're the greatest at playing classical music. It doesn't mean they'll be the greatest with conduction.

ML - Yeah, exactly, that's… Actually, that's what I wanted to hear you say.

BM - Yeah! Yeah, or he could be the greatest jazz improviser in the world, it doesn't mean they're going to be great at conduction.

ML - That's…

BM - So, so for me to say or to categorize or to… I, I can't do that. Because sometimes an intermediate player or someone who doesn't have that much… Let's say they're not finished with their studies of their instrument could be the best player in the orchestra, because they know how to contribute more. Do you understand where I'm going with this?

ML - Yeah, yeah, yeah

BM - Yeah, so, yeah, I mean, having the best violin player in the world doesn't mean he can do this, it just doesn't mean that. Or having the best violin player in the orchestra doesn't mean he can join a jazz band. Or somebody in the jazz band doesn't mean they can join the orchestra. I think you have to just understand music from a broader sense. Really broad, much broad

ML - And if you-

BM - And because you can improvise, if you're the best improviser in the world I'd… Listen, I have had some of the best quote, unquote improvisers in the world who didn't know how to handle this. They just didn't know how to handle this, it takes, and I'm going to use a term that most improvisers hate. They hate this term; it takes a certain kind of discipline that they don't want to get into.

ML - You're so not the first one I interviewed to tell me this, practically word for word.

BM - No, yeah, it's a discipline. Please, I mean, art is a discipline. Art, art is a discipline, but it's also a discipline of understanding your mind and the mind of art. It's, you know, people want to run away from this. Okay, you want to run away from this? Okay, you're going to limit your scope if you want to run away from it. And I have good relationships with these, but listen. I'm defining something. I'm defining something, you want to come into this, and you have to understand the definition of this. When I go to work with another band, I try to understand in the broadest sense what they want from me to give to that music; do you understand what I mean? But if I go to play in a symphony orchestra, you have to have a certain kind of sensibility

from that. People have to have; you have to develop the sensibility. Now some people have a really natural sensibility to understand all of the scope of music, and I have met some of these people and some of these people are really fine, fine players and fine human beings and fine… They understand immediately, and I have had some players like this who understand immediately what this is all about and how to manoeuvre it inside and outside of this thing and try to get away with things. I often use a metaphor in my ensembles that you know, the law in the United States is that, if you are walking on the street, and you come to a stop light. On the red light, you don't walk, on the green light, you walk. 'You with me?

ML - Yeah.

BM - That is the law. But, in New York, you run the red light. If you, the law, the principle of this law is, if you can make it across the street on a red light, go ahead. But in Los Angeles you never do that. You understand what I mean? There's a law, and there's a principle. And so, do you want to understand. Okay, I think I made my point. You can get away with a lot of things, but how do you get away with it? So, once these things are understood in theory, and in practice, I think in performance you can get away with a lot of things if that's your idea to do, it's to get away with things. Yeah, sure

ML - Okay.

BM - But it takes discipline. It takes a certain kind of discipline.

ML - To get there, yeah. Many composers I interviewed said that over time they want musically, what they musically want becomes clearer and clearer in their head. First of all, has this been the same for you over the years, and, if so, could this musical result be reached by traditional composition, writing every note. So I'm giving you an opportunity to…

BM - Okay, I've read that question, yeah. Okay, listen, when I started to think about this idea, just the scope of the idea frightened me so much that I didn't begin to act on it for another ten years.

ML - Okay.

BM - So I, I lost time by just thinking about the expanse and the monstrosity that I was about to embark on. I didn't hear the music, I only heard possibility. I couldn't hear

the music; I couldn't possibly hear the music. So what I was trying to clarify, what I was ultimately trying to clarify was an idea, not a music. The more I worked on the idea, and the more I started hearing these ideas come to fruition. I started to understand how big the parameters. So this monster got bigger and bigger and bigger, it got more frightening to me. Because, I could never see the end, I could never understand what it was going to sound like. Never. And to this day, I don't know what it's going to sound like. So no, I couldn't sit down and write it all out, because I'm still discovering it. I'm still discovering it, I'm a student of music, and everybody is a student of conduction. Everybody. You have to be a student of conduction. Now I'm getting to your question now. Stylistically, you can think about music, and think about a sound and put it together and maybe put it all down on paper, in terms of notation. I'm not thinking stylistically. I'm not thinking stylistically. I'm not saying I'm going to make a jazz record, or a classical record or this kind of record, or a pop record or a blues record or an R&B record. I'm not saying that, I'm saying that I want to make music and I want to make music with whoever wants to participate in this idea. So I think that's a little different. So no, I can't hear the music. Even when I step away from the band stand, I don't hear the music, I hear something else but I can't explain what that something else is because it's always changing, it's always changing. So, I mean hopefully I came close to answering your question.

ML - Actually, that's a very good answer to my question.

BM - You know, because sometimes I do it with a choir. And it's always different, even if we use the same text, it's always different. And every moment that we're doing it, it has this possibility to start moving in a different direction, and I'd like to get to a word you used a little while ago: Reaction. It's not always a reaction; it has to be a response. It starts as a reaction but it should always end up a response. Using both is good, but using only reaction is, from my experience, it's bad. Because, it's limiting. Reactions are always limiting to me. Because I've seen so many musicians react, if they could calm down just a little bit then they could respond and they could be themselves. Reactions always take you out of your habitat. But responses come from the true self. I may not have explained that very well, but still, this is my take on this whole idea.

ML - Well, I think the… You've made your point, well, pretty clear to me.

BM - I mean, I write down the music I want to hear. But I don't, I can't write down what I can do with this music I want to hear. Do you understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah.

BM - When I write music, and I'm writing every day, I wrote last night until 5am this morning and I'm writing music. But, I can't always say what it's going to sound like once we do it. I know how I hear it in this moment. Just like you're writing a text, doing this dissertation, I mean, you're putting this dissertation together in a very interesting way. Obviously, if you're trying to interview all these people and a lot of these people you'd never get.

ML - Eh… Yeah. That's another matter.

BM - Yeah, but it is another matter and that's exactly the point I'm trying to make. I don't try to anticipate what I hear before I hear it. And I'll tell you another thing, another thing especially if you're doing anything like conduction or if you're doing conduction or if you're doing something else.

ML - I'm doing… I… Actually, I'm trying many styles. I'm trying to open up the minds of my musicians. And from that point, we're still in a very… and we've been for over a year, and we're still in a very research like function right now when it comes to well, improvisation or conduction. There is also another part for my band where I just write music and they play that and…

BM - Do you play the same over and over and over again?

ML - The same written music?

BM - Yeah.

ML - Well yeah, from shows to shows the solos are different and well, sometimes, yeah.-

BM - I'm talking about the written music. Do you play the written music the same every night?

ML - It's the same notes and everything, it's always, as you know, it's always a different feeling every night depending on the crowd, depending on the atmosphere, but yeah, we're playing.

BM - No, no, no, I'm not talking about the crowd; I mean does it change every night depending on how you conduct it?

ML - I don't know how to answer that… I mean, there will never be, even if you had the Berlin Symphonic Orchestra playing the same Mozart symphony, twice in a row, there will be some slight changes and everything, but…

BM - No, no, no, no, no, that's not what I'm talking about. That's the Berlin Symphony; I'm talking about you doing conduction.

ML - Okay, about me doing conduction, no, it's-

BM - When you are conducting your work, do you conduct it the same every night?

ML - Usually, yes. It's an exception when it's not, unfortunately.

BM - Well I have some bad news for you; you will never understand the strength of conduction until you figure out how to conduct the same music differently.

ML - I will meditate on that.

BM - I think you should, if you really want to understand how far conduction can go, you need to start hearing your music, the same music you've written without changing a note, without changing a rhythm, without changing anything, you need to start to hear your music differently. But, and listen, all of the questions that I present to you, you should answer, because that has been my journey. Because every time I answer one question, I get five new questions. And every time I answer those five new questions, I get new questions and if you don't answer your own questions, you're really going to be in trouble. I mean, because you're going to get to a point where you're going to have all these unanswered questions, and if you can't answer them for yourself then you certainly can't answer them for anybody else.

ML - Yeah.

BM - So, and this is exactly why I have not finished my book. I've started it, I've got plenty. I mean, I let people see what I've got; they say you've got to put this out now. And I say no, I don't; there is no need to put it out now. What's important is to watch what happens and to pay attention to what happens and to answer my questions. Now whether I finish my book in my lifetime or not isn't the point. The point is that the experience of working with people teaches you many, many, many, many things. More things than I could ever have thought of. But it's an amazing journey; it's an amazing, amazing journey. I mean, some of the music we've been making lately is so powerful; it's just so powerful, so powerful. But, you know, I'm trying to get it, and

you know what I'm talking about. You know when you're conducting and you have these thirty seconds or fifteen seconds or one minute or two minutes of just total fascinating music, right?

ML - Yeah.

BM - You know exactly what I'm talking about, right?

ML - Yeah, yeah, yeah, these magical moments.

BM - But how do you turn those ten seconds or fifteen seconds into hours?

ML - For me, it's been working a lot with the musicians to expand their vocabulary and my use of their vocabulary. That is, for me, what I've worked on and things that started to, where you start with an idea and after two minutes, it's just repeating itself. Well it's after, you know, after two or three weeks, it's not two minutes, it's six minutes, and after another couple of weeks, we can do up to fifteen minutes without having the feeling of repeating yourself and how the idea moves and everything. But for me, it gets over rehearsal. This is the way we found to expand those magical ten second or one minute to a magical five or ten.

BM - Yeah, okay, well I'm going to tell, I'm going to give you another clue.

ML - Please.

BM - The clue understands. The clue is clarity. Once you understand something, you can do anything with it. Once you have clarity, once you are clear about the parameters of something, you can do anything with it. Anything, anything. And that's it, that's it. I could spend one day on one directive, but I never had the luxury of spending one day on one directive because I've never had enough time with one ensemble.

ML - Well, that's what I was about to ask you.

BM - Yeah, yeah, if I had one ensemble for one year, two years or three or five years, my God… The things that could become clear! The things that people could realize that you can't realize in a day, or two days or five days. It's amazing. And it's all about clarity and understanding. And I've had musicians ask, you mean I can do that? Well, you can do that. But I, I can do that? Yeah, I can do that. You could do that, you could do that, you could do that, and you could do that but how do you do that? It becomes how do you do that, how can you do that. You know, and it's… Yeah,

anyway. It's a big journey, it's a big journey, and you have to figure out how to deal with it.

ML - It is.

BM - Yeah. It's a very beautiful journey.

ML - If I get to… If I have to get back, really, down to Earth. I don't know, really, how much time you have for me, and I see it's been already almost two hours and I still have a few questions. I mean, there must be a time limit that you can give me.

BM - You just keep answering or asking questions, and I'll tell you when I have to get off.

ML - Okay, so getting back to very critical aspects of conductions. Have you ever found a musical idea impossible to translate in the gestures, in a gesture?

BM - Well, of course. That's why this exists between notation and improvisation.

ML - So when you have an idea that cannot be described as a gesture, you use notations in that sense like the groove you sometimes write for a bass or something like that.

BM - Well, now, is this for you or is this for your dissertation?

ML - This is for my dissertation.

BM - So it's also for you?

ML - Oh, of course. I'll be… I'm learning with this, this is the whole point of…

BM - Okay, listen, so what do you mean when I have an idea? Is there something in an idea as I'm sitting solitarily at home or is this in the heat of performance?

ML - Both of them. Is there anything that you have, that you got some point saying, "Oh, I would like them to do this, but this is so subtle that I cannot find a gesture that would…" I don't… Actually, I've never faced that problem, but with your twenty-five years of experience…

BM - Okay, okay, let me explain. If I'm sitting here at home and I'm trying to figure out how to get a certain idea or texture, then I turn to the piano or I do something notational to get this idea. But, if I'm… If it's in the heat of performance, and it's really very specific, I don't try to get anyone to do anything specific, but I try to move them into a… I try to get them to go there. I try to get them to go within a certain area and to deal with in that area. I mean, how, how specific… I can be specific only in certain places with conduction. I can be very, there is precision and there is

specificity in certain areas, but, I mean, in my mind and performance, if I start to hear a melody developing, I might start dealing with how to continue that melody but it's not going to be the way I hear it. I mean, it's not going to be the way I, I mean you have to understand this. I mean, there are certain things that you can't do with notation and there are certain things you can do with conduction that don't exist in free improvisation. So, you have to figure out how you want to move between the three. Now, whether you're doing this solitarily or in performance, those two, those are two different things. It's like football, I mean, you can work with the band and in theory and in practice and in front of the drawing board, the flag board and say the play goes like this, but when you get out on the field, it's a different animal.

ML - Yeah.

BM - Do you understand what I mean?

ML - This is a very good understanding-

BM - Analogy.

ML - Analogy, yeah. This is… Wow.

BM - Well, it's true.

ML - Very good image.

BM - Well, it's true. It's true. It's not that it's very good; it's that it's true. You can work out certain things, but when you go out into a performance and you've got somebody running at you, or you've got somebody in the wrong place, or you've got somebody who's not taking responsibility for their job. That's a whole other ball game, a whole other can of worms. So, it's not… I try to work all the ideas out that I have, that is the point. You work out all the ideas. If I'm sitting here at my desk, and I have an idea, I sit down and I try to work out those ideas. If it's a melodic idea, I turn to my piano and I try to work out my melodic idea. With a rhythmic idea, I try to work out that rhythmic idea. If I want to incorporate that into the ensemble, then I do that. Where it's going to go, I don't necessarily know. But I don't try to think things out from beginning to end, because that is not the nature of what I'm trying to do.

ML - Is that very hard for you to do that, to think too much ahead?

BM - I don't know because it's not something I've tried to do. I've written long form compositions, so yes, I can do that. But that's not what I'm trying to do with my ensemble, that's not what I'm trying to do with conduction.

ML - No, but that's exactly my question. Is that hard to do for you not to think too much ahead?

BM - No, it's not hard for me to do, but…

ML - When you're writing a group or anything, it's… There has to be some idea of where you want, or somewhere you cannot stop your imagination or something, there must ways that say, "Okay, I think with this groove or with this effect or whatever, I see the possibility of this, this…" and it must be hard, when you get in front of the band, not to impose the first ideas that came to your mind, you know?

BM - No, no, no, well I set up possibilities. If I want to incorporate that into the music, and let's say we have rehearsed some of that music and we know kind of how it goes, I introduce it as possibility, but only possibility because my I want to introduce that possibility and maybe I don't. Maybe I want to change that possibility. Maybe we've been rehearsing at one tempo and I want it at another tempo. I, you know, it's… I think, I think a lot of people, that's why there are so many improvising orchestras and why so many people are practising conduction today is that they see… They see prospect, they see possibility. They see possibilities for progression, but they don't always know how to get there. And getting somewhere takes, it's a process. I mean, it takes patience. I mean, to have growth. I mean, to have potential. I mean, a lot of these things require a lot of patience. You know, all these answers can't be gotten somewhere and then you just, you get the answer and you go out on the stage and you just do it. I mean, this is process oriented music. And to me, this is what makes it so close to jazz for me. Because jazz is process oriented music. I mean, it's something you work out. You don't work out classical music. You go out on the stage and you play classical music. And that's the difference between what we do, what I do as a conductor of conduction, and what a traditional conductor does. A traditional conductor goes on the stage to perform what they have rehearsed. I don't perform what I have rehearsed. So, I don't try to see things through from the beginning to the end. I set a possibility. Now I have a lot of people who practice conduction or say

they practice conduction. They come in to New York just to hear one of these Monday nights and they go "oh my God. I didn't know that you could do this". Why not? I didn't know that you can do this you can do that. Yes, you can do all these things, why not? Everybody put limitations on the things they do. Everybody. Everybody puts limitation. I am not trying to put limitations on what I do. I try to work between the parameters of what this idea of conduction has goods in it to me. I open doors. I open doors, I get ten new questions. I open another door, I get 20 questions. But I have to answer them. But then these people they didn't practice conduction for five years or ten years and say "why did you do this or why did you that?" Well, I did this because it was my choice and I wanted to do it and that's why I did it. So, they are looking for answers – I mean as everybody does – they are looking for answers to forward their ideas but they are not having ideas. You have to have ideas and you have to have questions. And this is something I impose, I mean I'm sorry not impose, these are things I tell my students all the time: if you don't have a question, you have a problem. And if you are not trying to answer that question your problem is bigger.

ML - So, by asking questions and trying to answer these questions and then trying to answer the question that was raised by the answers this is how you avoid repeating yourself after over 200 conductions which you've made and I've never heard anything that I could say "Oh yeah this sounds like this other one I've heard before" Then again I haven't heard the 200 of them. Is that how, is that the magic of Butch Morris of not repeating himself is all those questions- it's always a question process. Am I wrong in analyzing it like this?

BM - Well, let's put it like this. I try to go forward. I try as much as I can to go forward. There was a record that came out last month in Italy. It's called Verona and it's from two performances I did in Verona in 1994-1995. Two different ensembles, very similar in terms of instrumentation, one was with woodwinds, one was with strings and I introduced some thematic information. And is interesting the way, the- there was a critique in the Italian paper. You speak Italian?

ML - No, unfortunately.

BM - Yeah. And you are from Montreal, right?

ML - Yeah, I speak French, English and German but no Italian. Sorry.

BM - I see. I always find it fascinating how the Italians understand my work. I haven't worked in Austria in my God years and I was in [UNUNDERSTANDBLE] and maybe five before, four-five years before but I haven't worked in Vienne for many years, or in Austria for many years. Linz I think was the last place I worked. But the Italians always listen to my music from a melodic point of view.

ML - I think that's very interesting.

BM - Yeah, I think it is too. And also I think that's why I feel compelled to use melody whenever I play in Italy; to bring them more into the process because with some melody I can take them to a journey. Often. Or I can take them on a journey or I can take them to some place. Merely in Germany have I used melody in this way. Anyway it's interesting. It's something I'm still thinking about and I do everything to arrive to an answer. Why I chose to use melody when I am in Italy and in Germany or Austria or Holland for instance that I rarely do. But anyway! That's another thing. I'm sorry I went off base.

ML - No, no. That's actually a question I haven't written to you but I've asked many others and there is very important for them to say - well to most of them I haven't interviewed everyone yet, but to say: no, I'm not doing anything to please the critiques or I'm doing this you know for art for art and- you know, that thing I don't care about what the listener will feel or anything, but this is not the main- there is no decision based on that whether this is true or not. I mean- But this is what they have told me. You are telling me that whether it's conscious or unconscious since you know this public likes that, there is a bigger chance you'll give them what they- or you put the odds on your side let's say that-

BM - Well, let's put it like this. When I'm in Italy I generally have a bigger chance to- first, for one reason or another I always had the opportunity to choose the instrumentation of my ensembles. Often I go someplace and I don't have the freedom to choose the instrumentation. Are you with me?

ML - Yeah.

BM - So, when I get a chance to choose my instrumentation and sometimes I think about what I have to do, just in terms of teaching me conduction vocabulary, I also think

"Oh this melodic, this information would work very well there" So it's not necessarily- you may see it that way, but it's not necessarily a means to please certain people. It's a way for me to incorporate certain music that I've written, that I like into the idea of conduction. And I want you to remember and this should be on the top of your information: I always started doing this to figure it out how to manipulate notation.

ML - It could be… how to say that... bold?

BM - I mean because for me this is one of the most important things: is that my compositional mind can work with my improvisational mind. And that they are really not that separate. Even though I can make these two distinctions, yes I have a compositional mind and I have an improvisational mind. I want them to work in time together. I want them to work together.

ML - To grow from one another instead of-

BM - Back and forth. Wherever I care to use them.

ML - Nice. And-

BM - Now I'm writing, improvising. Now I am interpreting. Now I'm doing a lot of things. But more than all that, I'm listening. More than all of that, I'm listening. I'm listening to what the players give me. I have to listen to what players give me.

ML - Yeah. Ok. Getting once again very theoretical, there is one thing I haven't understood in the conduction, in the text you sent me, the conduction workbook: it's harmodulations.

BM - Well, harmodulation. Do you know the music of Ornette Coleman?

ML - Yeah, yeah. You are talking about the harmolodics?

BM - Yeah.

ML - Ok. That was actually the sub-question in my mind: does it have anything to do with- ?

BM - Sure it does. I mean- Listen. In- You are outside?

ML - If I am outside?

BM - Yeah. You are inside the house or in a park?

ML - Yeah, yeah I am inside.

BM - Listen. Do you know what harmolodics means?

ML - As much as I have tried to understand this and the more definitions I read about harmolodics-

BM - -the more confused you get?

ML - Exactly.

BM - Yeah. Well. Well, let me put it like this, without trying to define harmolodics. I'm not going to try to define harmolodics. I'm going to tell you what it means to me, ok?

ML - Ok.

BM - Out of all the 200 conductions I have done I never discussed tonality, I never discussed a key, I never discussed a tonal centre with the musicians. Never. Yet, very, very few of them would anybody say the music is dissonant.

ML - Yeah exactly. That is-

BM - Yeah. I understand this. I understand this. Music, in many ways it's only going to be consonant or dissonant. And it depends on your progression whether it becomes one or the other. It depends on progression, nothing else. That's why there are sounds like they are no long notes. Because of the progression. So conduction is in a constant state of harmodulation which means harmony and melody. And rhythm. If you balance, if you have a balance of harmony, melody and rhythm, you can make all kinds of progressions. Any kind of progression. You can move from the one key to the next key to the next key to the next key and nobody will ever know. Really. And not by here. So, with a constant state of harmodulation, to harmodulate, to move stuff, to move the weight of sound from one place to another. To modulate. But not modulate in the classical sense. That's why I call it harmodulation.

ML - Not in a tonal sense, but-

BM - Yeah. We are constantly harmodulating. We are constantly moving around. And sometimes I stop the assembly and say: "ok, what key are you in?" and they say "I'm in G, I'm in G minor"; and "You, in what key are you?"; "I'm in C sharp"; and "You, in what key are you?" "I'm in E flat"; "And what key are you in?" "I'm in C". But nobody would know that, because it's a different kind of beauty, that we are able to do this. So, why did it take so long for this music to evolve in such a way? Now, free music in many ways is like that too. But free music does not have the precision of conduction. The precision to change. The precision to move quarterly from one place

to another. The precision to move tonally from one place to another. This does not exist in free improve. Collective. It's just as not. And I am talking about the precision of sections or groups or individuals. When I get great soloist like Evan Parker or David Murray or Don Pullen or Derek Bailey or John Zorn or Henry Threadgill or any of these people and get them to move. You know a Christian Marclay who plays turntables. And to get them to move tonally from one place to another, I mean this is a great fit. Not because I'm doing it but because the process, the practice of conduction allows that to happen. It allows that to happen. And I think this is another thing that these other people and these other improvisers or improviser orchestras understand this. But let's go back to those records you mentioned earlier. You said, ok I collected a lot of these records. I mean, to me, like I said, I don't hear progress and nobody hear progress. For lot of these ensembles doing these things, I mean, it's great is wonderful textures, wonderful stuff but from record to record I don't hear progress. And I would love to hear progress.

ML - I do agree. When people say that, you know, conduction is just another technique like so many others but you have heard that before I'm sure. But Butch Morris wanted to make like a trademark out of it and there is no difference between that and what this guy had done in the last 30 years or so- what-

BM - Tell me this. What guy has done it for the last 30 years?

ML - Ok, not for the last 30 years but I have personally met people which would tell me, you know- I am doing this; I'm conducting, I just don't call it conduction cause- I don't know. There seems to- there are a lot of people I met which seems to have an idea that conduction might be a snob term to call what has been going on like you said for the last 4.000 years or so. What is your answer to that?

BM - What's the question?

ML - Yeah. Sorry. Ok. I actually am going to read that. Techniques which are similar to conductions have appeared and disappeared throughout the years. How and why is conduction unique? You told me that and answered to that question before. And the follow up question for that is: what do you answer to people saying otherwise, that conduction is way not unique it has been there since forever and you just put a trademark on it?

BM - Well, well, like I said. I trademark the name, this name because I wanted to define this name. Now, people have done other things and they called it something else or they called it nothing. What a lot of people would say especially in the 80s and 90s was that they were conducting improvisation. I don't say I am conducting improvisation. And the reason why I started doing this and I told you several times, it was to manipulate notation. Now, yes, it's true that people were doing something. I mean, for thousands of years seems like. Something different. But- or something similar, but it's not the same. It is the difference between Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola. Pepsi Cola is a name that has a trademark. Coca Cola is a name that has a trademark. Do you understand what I mean?

ML - Hmmm. Well I-

BM - And I think time will tell the difference between what the other people say they do and I say I do.

ML - This is very-

BM - It wasn't until I started using the name conduction that everybody else started using the name conduction. But because I had a long period of time of using that name I decided I wanted to define what I do. This was the only reason. And actually I didn't think of this. Somebody else thought of this. You said: if what you are doing is different, well then you can have a trademark. So I got a trademark. Now, this idea is something I'm writing about now, because I think this is going to be ultimately very important. I'm not going to go into explaining why at this moment. But this is going to be very important historically and I have to look at this in the long term sense like I said. Classical music it has been evolving for 5.000 years and jazz it's been evolving for a hundred years and there are a lot of things that took a hundred years to evolve too. And this is going to evolve a long time to see too. People want immediate responses, they want immediate- all this new immediacy, but it's not going to work. Some things just have to take a long time to evolve and I think the conduction will be evolving long after I'm dead. But at least people will understand my vision on conduction and my interpretation of what conduction is, which is different from other people. Now, you can go online, or you can listen to that long list of orchestras that I've just read about all the people doing conduction. Now, they

have a different idea. They have a totally different idea about what this is. And listen, I was in, I was in the Hague last year and I worked with the student orchestra and I also worked with another ensemble called Rio - the royal improviser's orchestra. And they take on something that inadvertently came from me and it's totally different and that's cool. But they are not doing conduction, they are doing something else. Now everybody is free to have their own terminologies but they don't choose to use their own terminologies. They turned to use my terminology. Now that's my question to them: if what you are doing is something else why don't you call it something else?

ML - Well, can't that be because you are such a- I mean you are such a shining star that it eclipses-

BM - But why am I, why am I a shining star? I don't call myself a shining star. I call myself a musician.

ML - Yeah. What I'm saying is that there could be two ways of seeing that, in my point of view, there's the aspect where, well, you've been so influential that people started using a term you came up with, without fully understanding it, which happens a lot in the history of men. And then- You know, there are two ways you can react to that which could be: I am frustrated for them to use this term when I do not agree with what they are doing is this is, you know, is conduction or you could be flattered that you've had such a great influence that people started using your terminology even though, you know they don't fully understand what this terminology means.

BM - You heard the expression "Flattery will get you nowhere"?

ML - Yeah.

BM - All right. Also there is a lot of insecurity everywhere. Insecurity is everywhere. I think if I came up with an idea- Actually I first started calling this way of working "comprovisation": composed improvisation. That was the first term I used for this: *comprovisation*. People started picking up on that term. Ok. So, but then I stopped using the term and I switched to conduction. And people started picking up on conduction. They stopped using *comprovisation*. And if you look up the term, it still exists in some places but I chose the word conduction because it had a lot to do with the physics term, with the transmission of heat between bodies. And that's what

I chose to use. Actually our discussion it's gone into conversation and I prefer to go back to discussion. But I can no longer discuss these things about that. I think the long term, my long term view of what this is that I'm going to do will come into fruition one day and people will begin to understand. But ok. Let's put it like this too. I had hoped one day that in defining what I do and people can understand the vision of conduction, they will understand that it's so broad, that it's so big. It's not about conducting improvisation, it's not about improvisation. It's bigger than that. People want to limit things to one thing or to one idea and that's not my view. They can go on doing whatever they want to do. But ultimately I'm going to see my idea through. That's all I can say. Let's just move on to the next question.

ML - Yeah, and that's actually part of my next question: in a hundred years from now, if we are not seeing you doing the conduction how can one just by hearing say "oh this is Butch Morris' music". I mean now. And how can people say that in 100 years? Is that, first of all, it's that important to you at all? Or-

BM - Let's put it like this. It's not- What's important to me is that this idea goes on. With or without me, that this idea goes on, that somebody is interested in keeping large ensembles together and to continue these ideas. Some way, somehow.

ML - So it's-

BM - Huh?

ML - No, please go on.

BM - But I am documenting everything. I have close to 500 hours of film; I have more than enough for a book now but I hope to- before things are too far gone I hope to have a book. I have documented everything from conduction number 1 to conduction number 199. I have made many, many, many books of notes. I hope one day people will be able to look back and see and understand my vision of what this idea is. That's all. Now, if they decide to take it in another direction that's their business. I'm going to take it in my direction. That's the only thing I have to say about this. It is important to me, it is important for me that my vision of cond... that I realize my vision of conduction. Other people can do whatever they want. There are some people with me; there are some people against me. But in the end it doesn't matter because that's the way it's going to be throughout history. I mean if you look at the people, if

you look at the Apple company, if you look at the Microsoft company, if you look at the Bell and Howell company and look at all these companies doing, they are- I mean they are surely fighting for business but who was the innovators? And that's what it comes down to: and then who carried it on. Because some people, some companies – big companies - make innovations but they don't carry it on. Do you understand what I mean?

ML - Yes.

BM - So, one day maybe, what I'm calling conduction somebody comes up and starts calling it- I don't know would call it-

ML - Whatever.

BM - Music- I don't know. They call it therapy, music therapy. Yeah, and they call it music therapy and they give a trademark for it and they carry it on as music therapy. Maybe they will change names just as it has in history. You know what I mean? Just as like it has in history. There are many, many names throughout this canon or these improvisations. That- You know. Maybe they'll change names again. Maybe they'll change names again. Is just that I want to document what I am doing. That's all. Some people want to do it some people don't want to do it but I don't want people in my ensemble who don't want to do it. You understand what I mean? I need people who want to understand music in a big vision, in a huge vision.

ML - In a wider range.

BM - Yeah. Sure.

ML - Ok. I'm going to move to a few questions about the rehearsals cause there is a few questions of that you've already answered. But, first of all, a very short question: how long do you need with a group to feel comfortable enough to go public? How long do you usually- If let's say you have 3 rehearsals and you say "no, I would not accept that"_

BM - Oh no, no, no, no, no. Listen. I'm not doing any more performances for less than 10 days rehearsal.

ML - Ok.

BM - Ten

ML - So this is a minimum for you to feel comfortable.

BM - Yeah. For a formal performance, ten. Now, I have other alternatives which are called the conduction atelier where people can come in and see the progress of the ensemble on a daily basis and then on the last day we give a conduction performance in the same atelier under the same conditions. But that performance may stop in the middle to clarify some certain things. That's called the conduction atelier and that's set up differently. And actually I could- there is some information I am sending out in a month or so, about how to present that. But that's different than a formal concert.

ML - Yeah. That doesn't count as an official conduction.

BM - No, no, no.

ML - You are saying it takes about ten rehearsals. Can you tell me a little bit about how, you know, very briefly, how these rehearsals, how they go on? Well and I guess that the first rehearsal is a very special one compared with the other ones. Can you tell me how the first rehearsal goes, and then the other ones with the- how do you say that? You know, there is a schedule usually on those rehearsals you do.

BM - Well, I mean- First is mainly talk. I mean we do a lot of working. But certain things have to be understood about the- about receiving directive in designations of what the internal specifications are: who, what and when? Who I want to take this directive, what the directive is and when to commence the directive? Who is the individual, as a group and as a system? What I give and what I give as a directive. You know, there are certain things like entrances and exits and before I go in entrances and exits, I mean still, who, what and when will depend again on the site lines, where you are in the ensemble, where the person is? So there is no misunderstanding about when I point at somebody I might remember not. You understand what I mean? Because I have to build up the speed. I have to build up to performance. And the first day and the second even the fifth day of rehearsal I'm going relatively flow, just to keep clarifications. But I'm trying to build up the speed so I can point to somebody in a given direction and move on and they still know what's going on. And they are not saying "Oh why you are pointing at me?" I mean surely in done conduction you seen that before, right?

ML - Yeah.

BM - Yeah. “Oh did he mean me?” “Oh yeah I meant you” And you have a responsibility, especially if there is a smaller group. Ok, let’s deal with 25 people. Now 25 people are spread on the stage so there is clear... It’s got to be clear. And that’s very, very important because when you get in the heat of performance, you give somebody some instruction, you expect them to do it. But you are moving on to something else, because in your mind you are building something. Allowing that, these entrances and exits; how do you entrance? How do you entrance in this information? I mean that becomes true too. Everything is not done in the same dynamic. Everything is not done the same. Musicians have to understand this. When you can bring in your information in a lot of different ways, a lot of different ways. Everything- Anyway, is built up over ten says. And believe me, the difference between 10 days rehearsal and a 3 days rehearsal before a performance are two greatly different things. However, it doesn’t mean the music it’s going to be better. It just means the ensemble is going to have a clearer idea and that’s what I want at this point. I want everybody to leave this with a very distinctive clear idea of possibility and what is happened in the course of the last 10 days. Because, what a person learns in 10 days it’s going to be significantly more than what they going to learn in 3 days. Do you understand what I mean?

ML - Yeah.

BM - So yeah. There are a number of things to go over in ten days that you could never go over in three.

ML - Is there any specific exercise that you make them practice? Not being real exercise, like if it would be compared if played an instrument as you know just practicing skills or things like that, so you know things like that to-

BM - Not in ten days. If I’d had an ensemble for a year or more, then yes, there are certain things I would love to give them.

ML - Ok. But right now since you only have ten days there’s no way you can-

BM - Oh no, no, no. If I’d had a long term ensemble, I was working with the same people for a year or more, yes, then maybe certain exercises I would give them. And most are listening exercises. Listening exercises and conducting exercises.

ML - We have a philosophy that works together. I like that. What, actually- Listening exercises which you would like to make, is that because- actually, what are the toughest aspects to rehearse with people you are working with? Is it for one another, well for everybody to listen to one another or is there… what could be the toughest aspect in your experience?

BM - The toughest aspects are always clarity and understanding. These are always the toughest aspects. And that is something you hope to clarify in ten days that you can't clarify in 3. I mean I give 3 day workshops without performance. I give 4 or 5 days workshops but I'm not giving performances. I'll give workshops, but no performances. Performances only come with the atelier that can be 3 to 8 days. But then... It's always clarity and understanding. Do you, as an instrumentalist understand what this sign means in this place? It has to be. Things have to be understood in context. I have a sign that says repeat, but repeat has five different meanings. Five different meanings. And it all depends on the context. So, there has to be clarity, there has to be an understanding of these directives. How you get, how you understand this directive, what the context is.

ML - Ok

BM - So, you know.

ML - I'm going to read the next question because it would be way longer if I would try to put in my words. So, I found there are two main philosophies about rehearsing free improvisations. Some think a good idea launched in a rehearsal is a wasted idea, like mathias rüegg who told me that practically word for word. Others think it builds a vocabulary which could be used during the actual performance. Where do you stand on that question?

BM - First of all, I don't have any philosophy about free improvisation.

ML - Yeah, well, ok, yeah. Actually you are very right. It doesn't apply to you.

BM - No, it doesn't.

ML - Sorry. Next question. Well, conduction is very often based on written music. Sometimes-

BM - No, conductions are never based on written music. There are sometimes use of written music but not often. I would say, I would say in 199 conductions there were maybe about 15 that were based on written music.

ML - Really? Only that? Ok.

BM - Only 15. Only approximately 15. And I could be mistaken, I could be use 20, but I doubt it.

ML - Ok. In my head I had like a quarter of them. Ok, so-

BM -Ok. Do me a favour. Name two.

ML - Oh I can absolutely not name anything except the numbers and I...

BM - Numbers, give me the numbers.

ML - It's just the way I read that. It seems to be since you have started with written music, you started - if I'm not mistaken - with Beethoven and everything. I assume that still a good part of your work even though everything I found-

BM - No, no, no. I'm sorry. You assumed wrong.

ML - Ok. Well, I stand corrected.

BM - The first conduction that used any notation was the conduction number seventy- no, no, the conduction number 26.

ML - Oh. Ok. Well I'm very sorry then.

BM - Ok. That was the first when they used any notation at all. Then, after that, conduction number 55. And then after that- I'm sorry. Before that. Conduction number 43 and 46.

ML - Ok. But still. These are very- Ok. Well, I understood completely wrong and I-

BM - Yeah, yeah. And this is what a lot of people misunderstand. None of these started with any notations except for the ones I have just mentioned. And there are few more, only a few more.

ML - Ok.

BM - So. So, I mean, those things should be clarified. They sound, a lot of them sound notated. And I have a lot of PhDs and music gurus and big music theorist say "how did you write this?" and I'm telling the "I didn't write it" "Then how did you do it?" "Well, I conducted it" "What do you mean you conducted it but you didn't write it?" "Well, I conducted it. I used the conduction" "No, but you have clear melody here,

you have clear rhythms here, you have clear tonal harmodulation". Yes, you can do that with conduction. Only with conduction. Not notated music. This is something that a lot of people misunderstand. They think a lot of this is written. It's not written, it was not pre-planned.

BM - So how did I get the idea that everything started with Beethoven quartet, string quartet?

ML - No, no, no. That was just an experiment. And in 1984 that was an experiment to see if I could use notation to base my improvisations on it at the time to start my conduction, to start my conduction idea. It was 1984 that I used Beethoven's great string quartet to use my conduction with vocabulary intended with the written music. And it was not until 1985 that I physically began the conduction chronology with conduction number 1 which used no notation whatsoever.

ML - Well, then I am very glad that I asked that because I-

BM - I'm glad you did too, because a lot of people misunderstand this.

ML - Ok. Well, I will make that very, very clear.

BM - And that is exactly why I asked you the other day how many of my recordings have you heard?

ML - How many I would say? Maybe 20-25.

BM - No, no, no. It's not a question, but I wanted to put that forth because then I can make references to certain things if you had listen to some of the recordings.

ML - Well, I did. But over so many times- I've seen everything of you that I could-

BM - Ok. Let's skip it. Because a lot of people and, you know, they listen to some of these things and they think there is some notation involved in them. There is no notation involved in them except from the ones that I mentioned and some of it could only be eight bars. As a matter of fact, in conduction number 26 or 27 that I did in Istanbul, I only wrote approximately 8 bars of music. And I did that whole performance based on an idea that's 8 bars.

ML - Ok. Good. Ok. Well then let's get to another point. When it gets to shows, first of all, did it ever happen for a musician not to follow your indication on purpose in a show, that-

BM - Well yeah but he is dead.

ML - Yeah ok. So, this is something I assume you really don't like when or if people do that since I mean this is not an improvisation as you told me so many times. This is your playing a tune with me and therefore if they have free will over the instructions that you are giving, everything falls apart, is it? When I'm saying, if they have free will to do or not to do what you are giving them, everything falls apart doesn't it?

BM - I made the analogy of the red light.

ML - Yeah exactly. Right.

BM - The red light in New York and the red light in Los Angeles. Once you understand the theory and once you put the theory into practice, once you get to performance, you can do what you want as long as you understand what's going on. You have to be, you have to understand what's going on or you'll get hit by a car. Are you with me?

ML - Yeah, yeah I'm just thinking.

BM - You understand what I mean? Ok, now I see a question here I want to go back to answer. You say sometimes conductions are based on written music when doing so. Have you ever worked with the composer?

ML - Yes. Most of the time you are the composer

BM - Ok. Listen. Yes, Misha Mengelberg let me conduct his music. Do you know Misha Mengelberg?

ML - No.

BM - ICP. ICP, the Instant Composers Pool in Amsterdam. I conducted Misha Mengelberg's music, I conducted Billy Bang's music, I conducted David Murray's music, I conducted Akbar's music, I conducted a lot of people's music. They give me the responsibility to conduct their music. And if there are any things they don't want me to do or things they really want me to do, they tell me. Alright?

ML - Alright.

BM - But Misha Mengelberg, with his music, it was very clear what he wanted me to do. But he wanted to bring out the improvisational aspects of the written music. That's all he wanted me to do. With David Murray, David Murray said, "I want my band to swing. I don't care what you do as long as the band swings. Okay?" These are the,

their pointers to me. Billy Bang said, “Here’s the written music, you got it.” So, I took the music and I did it. Um… Akbar is the same way. He said, “Here, Butch here is the music. I want this tempo here, I want this tempo there, and otherwise, you do what you want.” So, this is a way, this is exactly the way I expected conduction to be. It became a possibility to work with another improviser’s music or another improviser’s notation, and to form it in a way that they would want it and I could perceive it. Are you with me?

ML - Yeah.

BM - No, seriously, are you with me? Because this is, this is exactly what I started out, what I wanted from conduction. I wanted a way to manipulate notation. Now, here are these composers giving me their music, entrusting their music to me and I am free to manipulate it.

ML - So you-

BM - So they want me to inject my personality into their music.

ML - So you’ve achieved your goal?

BM - Well, to some degree. I achieved it at that stage in the game. This was 1986, or ’88 or ’89 for some of this music, so I achieved it to certain... But since 1988 or ’89, I’ve come to learn a lot more about conduction than I knew back then.

ML - Of course.

BM - Yeah, so if someone gives you- So you say you practice conduction and, and they give you their music, I mean, do you, would you want to take the responsibility for conducting their music? I mean, it’s just a great new challenge, for me. And that’s something I’ve wanted to do, so I just wanted to clarify that. Because I see that it’s part of that question.

ML - Well, actually, I’m very glad you came back to it, because I kind of skipped it. Since I…

BM - Yeah, okay, but none of that, none of that belongs to the conduction.

ML - To the conduction, yeah. Getting back to, well, getting back to conduction, the general reception… What was, at first, the general reception of the public, the critics, the composer and the other, the other musicians the other people working in the

musical industry. What was the original reception to your art, and did that evolve over the years? And how, if it did?

BM - Listen, I mean, it was good and bad, you know. When I said badly, I don't mean bad, I mean you know, people had their opinions and some were good, some were favourable, some were not so favourable. But that was something I knew I was going to have to live with anyway. Has it changed? Yes. A lot of people have changed, and a lot of opinions have changed. I didn't let that bother me, it didn't bother me one bit, as a matter of fact. Because I, then I understood something they didn't know. And when you understand something that someone else doesn't know, it makes them very defensive.

ML - Okay.

BM - So their defensiveness didn't bother me, it was just something I had to come to grips with. I mean, I was working on something they had no concept of. And for a lot of musicians, that was true too, but for others, they understood perfectly. And some others went on with me and have been with me for many, many years. Twenty-five, thirty years they've been with me, and if some of them were still alive, I think they would really have pushed us to another plateau of understanding. No, it's been great, what can I say? Whether the critics understood or liked what I was doing, now after close, going on twenty-eight years, hey, I think a lot of people have… I've got a discography; I've got my own canon going on so I could care less what they think.

ML - That's always nice to hear.

BM - Well, it's nice to hear. I wish it didn't have to be so rough in the past, or so, so aggressive by a lot of people. And it's still aggressive by a lot of people, very, very aggressive about what I'm doing. But that ultimately becomes their problem, not my problem.

ML - So you don't think it's that big of a deal.

BM - A lot of people get involved in this and they see how deep it is and how vast it is and it frightens them, you know. The same way it frightened me in the early '70s or early '60s when I started thinking about this, it's frightening, really. Because you're going into a place that you don't know and there's no real history of. Because I can't know the history of what all these other people are doing. They never took notes,

there's no visible information beyond have a page of information about what this is about in the history of conducting. There is no true information about this. You say, "Oh, all these people have done about this, where is their information?" I have more information opened to the public than most people. No one is writing about conduction. All these people who say, "Oh, I've been doing it for thirty years." Well where is their information from thirty years ago?

ML - Yeah, exactly.

BM - There isn't documentation from thirty years ago.

ML - Exactly, in fifty years we might not remember them but we'll still have the documentation of your concept.

BM - No, what I'm saying is, all I'm saying is I have proof. I have a history and that's cool. I don't care what people say, show me some proof. Show me what you've done; show me something because ultimately, that's what it comes down to. Oh, I know people that say, "Oh, I was doing that back in the '60s." And I said, "Great, tell me about this, tell me about that, how this go, how this did that." "Oh, we didn't do anything like that. Oh, we didn't find any necessity to do that. Oh, it was all about improvisation." Well, I'm sorry, if it's all about improvisation, it's a lost cause. Because I don't love improvisation, I love improvisation, but if you start treating it like it's some golden chalice of some god… Improvisation is not a god. People go around saying "I'm an improviser", but you put some music in front of them and they freak out. And if I say put some music in front of them and say, "Play it any way you want." They still freak out. Duh, d-duh, d-duh, d-duh. You know what I mean? Nobody is really taking responsibility for the future of this music. I'm not saying I am, I'm just following my own mind. They saying, oh, blah, blah, blah, blah, improvisation, blah, blah, blah, blah, improvisation. Well I say bullshit. Really! Bullshit! It's not about improvisation, it's about music. It's about how to find a broader expression in music.

ML - It's… You're making that very, very, very clear.

BM - And if they want it to be about improvisation, they can go on and do what they want to do, but don't say it's about conduction, because it's not about conduction to them, it's about improvisation, it's about free improvisation. I am not about free

improvisation. Again, let me be clear, I think improvisation is important. It is very, very, very important. But it's not everything. It's not the ideal.

ML - And it's not what you're trying to do.

BM - It's not what I'm trying to do.

ML - Last questions about the shows. Has it ever happened, or does it happen frequently or anything for you to be unsatisfied of your own performance in a show, in a public presentation, or has it happened where you were unsatisfied with your own musicians? Which are two very different aspects? Has it ever happened?

BM - Well, sure it's happened. Sure it's happened. You have to have set backs in music. Sure, I've been unsatisfied with my own performance on many occasions, many occasions. And I've been unsatisfied on what the quality of content that my musicians have given me on many occasions. But that's why I refuse to give concerts after two days rehearsals or a three days rehearsal or a four days rehearsal. I don't want to do that anymore, because that's what creates that misunderstanding.

ML - Okay, that's…

BM - Misunderstanding.

ML - When it comes to musicians, first of all, do you find it hard to find. You can kind of tell me, I've asked you about the jazz and classical musicians and everything. Now, if we're talking about the geography of the world, have you found that it is easier to find open minded musicians in America or in Europe or in Asia? Is there a place where it's easier for you to communicate or they're more open?

BM - No, easier, no. There's, you find gold and diamonds every place in the world, really. And oil. And all kinds of things. Last year, the last twelve months, I spent most of my time in Korea, it was amazing.

ML - Okay.

BM - It was different from being any places and there were some great players, wonderful players. So, no, yes I'd rather work in the United States or in Italy or some other countries where there is certain sensibilities or where I can speak to people in my mother tongue. However, that's not the case, so I have to go places where they speak French or German or Austrian or Italian, or Polish or Portuguese or Spanish, or, you know I go where the word is. And people came to understand, even though I can only

express in English. They came to understand very clearly, many of them very, very clearly. Even people, who don't, even people who needed a translator or two translators in between what I say and what they understand, understand this music very, very well. And they don't all come from jazz, and they don't all come from classical. Some of them are self taught. Some of them are self taught horn players or string players and they'd never studied. Their education is all self-taught.

ML - They never went to school or anything.

BM - Great players, great contributors. Wonderful contributors and some of this, sometimes I think this music was really made for unschooled people.

ML - Well, sometimes I think too. It seems to me like the less influence you've had in your life, the more you're able to follow the lead of what the conductor is asking of you because you don't have pre-conceived concepts of what music should be, am I wrong in saying that?

BM - No, you're not.

ML - If I asked, if I had to ask the same question as before between Europe, Asia and America, of putting that in a geographical sense, if I put that in a historical sense, did you find it harder to find musicians twenty-five years ago, or is it harder to find people today or haven't you seen any change?

BM - I think there are more minds open in the last twenty-five years, it's more, I think it's more open. Actually, two of the people in my, three of the people in my ensemble, I found in a music school about three months ago. Great, great, great players, I knew it immediately. I went some place to a music conservatory to give a music workshop and I knew these three people immediately, immediately. Within fifteen minute I knew these people were just great contributors to this idea. And I asked them to join my ensemble and they've been in my ensemble and they're working alongside people I've known for twenty-five years. People that came to me and said, "My God, these kids are great." And they understood it just the way I understood it and were moving on, they're pushing, they're just pushing. I love this new energy; I love what they're thinking about it. They're not caught up in some bullshit already. Yeah, they're going to have their own vision and they're sooner or later going to leave the band to do

other things. But right now, they're contributing on the highest, highest level from anybody who's ever come into one of my ensembles. So yeah.

ML - That is nice, and it gives hope to them, for the future of conduction.

BM - Well, to the future of music.

ML - Well, yeah.

BM - I think conduction is just one thing they're going to pass through to get to where they want to go. I know other people are… I'm not saying this is the line for anybody. But I, everybody wants to go some place, everybody wants to do things. They want to make a living, you know. Some of these people are going to have children, and some of these people are going to have families, and they're going to want to have to try figuring out how to raise these families and buy these houses and whatever they have to do, and I want to help them do that, do you know what I mean? I really want to help them to do that. No matter what they go on to do, I want to help them do that. I want to give them an outlet to express, to play in this situation and after that gig, to go play Broadway, or maybe they want to go and play in some beer hall or play in some bar or play in some theatre or some orchestra. That's fine with me, I love that idea. This has to be clear; I'm not trying to chain anybody to one idea. I am not. I'm saying here you can learn something you won't learn anywhere else. If you want to learn something about music and something about yourself, you can learn it here.

ML - This is the place to be.

BM - Well…

ML - You're telling me you found musicians that after five or ten minutes you could tell that this is the guy for my kind of line; this is a guy for conduction.

BM - Listen, that didn't happen often, though.

ML - No, but it did happen a couple- Did it ever happen that you met musicians which you could say, not after five minutes, but after a while, okay, this musician, it's impossible for him to be conducted?

BM - No, I never said that because people's minds change. Listen, people's minds change and people come to a different conclusion. I'm having several major arguments with several musicians right now. Right now, but they'll come around and they'll change.

ML - Yeah, well, actually, that was the end of my questions. I had another which I do realize after speaking to you which just doesn't apply to you which- But I ask to everyone and that is what do you think is the future for large ensembles and improvisation, and that is right now, I realize that this does not apply to you.

BM - Oh, it applies to a certain degree. You have to understand, I am all for the free improvised music community, I am all for them. I am truly all for them, however, if… Certain free improvisation communities live by a manifesto or some kind of doctrine that means free improvisation means this, that free improvisation means that and, okay, but can you apply free improvisation to what this is? If you can, then that's fine, we can work together. But if you're going to tell me I can't do this and I can't impose some kinds of disciplines, then I suppose we can't work together. You know, yes, I've had a lot of people walk out of my rehearsals, not only free improvisers, but classical musicians and jazz musicians too. And you know what? If they come-

ML - Which, what, out of your... they just walked out of your rehearsals?

BM - Sure!

ML - Oh, okay, wow.

BM - Sure, sure, because they didn't like the direction things were going, or they had to stop when I told them to stop and they had to start when I told them to start. Or that they had to repeat or that they had to sustain or they had to do this. No, they didn't like taking direction in real time. They had to read it, you know. They don't want to-

ML - They didn't know-

BM - They don't want the confrontation. They didn't want this engagement of having to do things in real time, even though they say they're about free improvisation. Yes, there are a lot of people. Or in classical, you know, a lot of people walk out of the rehearsals saying you can't make music without notation. I hear this all the time, all the time. You know what? But musicians generally come back and they do, they come back to hear the final performance and then they run up to me and say, "Why didn't you tell me it was going to be like this? This was great, this was wonderful, this was this, and this was that." I say, "You didn't want to go through the process of understanding it, and how am I going to tell you what the music is going to sound like before it sounds?" So, you know, I'm going to tell you one more thing, especially if

you're doing it yourself. The conductor builds a new skill. I, everything I have learned about conduction, I have learned by doing it. And by doing it, you learn new skills, you learn new skills of hearing, you learn new skills of doing, you learn new skills of participating. There are so many new skills you can learn as a conductor by doing this: how to manipulate sound, how to manipulate information. How, you know, there is the interaction between you and musicians. You learn things about music, not just conduction, about music that you could never learn otherwise. And it has only been these musicians who I have worked alongside for many years who really put me on the trail of trying to document this aspect of learning. People hear some aspects of the music and they say, "How did you do that right there, where you had this going on and then that going on and then a third thing going on at the same time and it all seemed to happen at one point?" I say, "Well, I gave instructions to these five people here, then I gave different instructions to these five people here, then I gave instructions to these five or ten people over here and then I gave one downbeat for all of that to change at once." And they say, "My God…" because they've never heard anything like that, especially with conduction and no written music.

ML - Yeah, but it's not something, it's not a skill you get overnight. It's something you've got to work on.

BM - No, it's not a skill you get overnight because it's a skill that doesn't exist until you build the skill. The skills I build and the skills you build and the skills other conductors will build are different ideas based on the same thing. How I arrived at what I arrived at, how you will arrive at what you arrive at. We will all come from different directions.

ML - Well, I think that's a perfect conclusion to this interview. I cannot thank you enough for this huge, amazing time that you've given me and you've given my work. So thank you very, very much and that's it. All the best, and I've really met someone who is a wise man, I think, today. And I also think I can, since it's Christmas time, I can wish you something, I wish you to get that five years for your own enjoyment, and at least mine.

BM - Yeah, well you're welcome.

APPENDIX VI
Interview with Marshall Allen

[…]

ML - First of all, how important is the musical structure in the orchestra's repertoire over the years?

MA - Well, most of the lines were written by Sun Ra. He had lots of interesting parts and moving parts, and harmony, and he was dealing with time, you know the time of the music. And then he put in there syncopation. Because he worked with an old band… And now, he has a variety of written music and a variety of signs and melody from the old days. And then we play popular tunes and we have a unique language every one of them. You see. We've got a broad, a very large repertoire, because he would write quite a few, every day he was like writing. It's ranged from sound routine and we played some of the big band, we play some [Inaudible] some Count Basie and [Inaudible] and play some old song all the popular tunes you know and we got a range of them, whatever we liked.

ML - But when it comes to more experimental repertoire you did…

MA - Well, you know when it stands he talks about the Universe and getting people to get used to all kind of sounds and rhythms in this and rhythms in that and most of sounds is like the Planet is, you know; it's all kind of sounds. So you put that into the music and then everybody get out of the box and go out into the square play and they wonder what they have to do when they hear all these sounds [Inaudible] playing together. You see.

ML - Yeah. And the- Yeah please.

MA - And then we were playing everything together and everything not together. You see?

ML - Yeah.

MA - So he wrote things that we had to play together. You see. And then he wrote things that we wanted no guys to play the same thing playing the other person is playing. It was all this difference in [Inaudible] and playing together and then it sound like a big "blah" like as somebody is in different band, everybody blowing. You know how the

bands do when they warm up. Everybody is playing something different. These all are built on some foundation. You see. They always make the foundation first. And give it the how it feels what it feels and what a day feel and how you want it done. And then he shows you that you didn't know how to do it and you don't know about the [Inaudible]. In other way, he would stand and say you can read music, you can think music but you ought to have to play spirits. Play the spirit and when you play the spirits, that is in a different way. You see. So let's see how he would do the arrangement. He always leaves something in the [Inaudible] to put in. In the arrangement. You know, you put the vibration and the spirit of the day. And then it's called space music or something like that. Where everybody is playing. And it's based on a foundation and then he calls the foundation of what he is doing. You understand?

ML - Yeah I do. So when it comes to you saying that you were all playing together and everything, in most of the questions I'm asking is – like I told you, my doctorate is about free improvisation for medium and larger ensembles. So it relates more to- well, some people might call it the New York years or something like that. So when it comes to Sun Ra himself… Then there is you, yourself as a composer and everything. But related to this freedom you can give, you were giving to musicians all over this time, how much, actually how much freedom was left to the musicians over the years?

MA - Well. [Inaudible] I'll give you an example. If I write a song and I might write 2 or 3 choruses, right?

ML - Yeah.

MA - And I leave space and when you hear a sound or you hear someone's solo in it. You understand? So those solos is what you see it or how you feel about the song that we're making. So you can use it with one person or you can do it with the whole band. You see, on a space in the time. Because if you got the foundation you know what the sound is like and you play that with spirit which is not written play. So it's about the spirit in a person which we don't know. Because not even they had a chance because it can't put the music in a square. You see? You know and he will tell you that if you don't know you have to play by the spirit. You understand?

ML - Yeah.

MA - The spirit will guide you for what you feel and the vibrations that you make. So that's where he lose the space in that when you play solo. So you can solo about what you feel, how you feel. And even if you don't want anything to act to play the rhythm music, well you can solo in it, with your interpretation, your idea about it. You see?

ML - Yeah. So did it ever…

MA - Well, you don't know what am I suppose to play there is this spirit guide that you don't know you have this guide and you can use it to do it the right way. So you can open the spirit and study your knowledge or you can guide through different places and space and stuff and they will guide you in different ways, you see?

ML - So it's all about a state of mind, more than a…

MA - You got to know…you already know but you got the balance of what you know and understood of them; that you understood. Everybody was playing the musical they don't know how to read, don't know how to do this and sure don't know how to interpret it and then they are open the part in the song where there is space in that for you what you want to hear, what you want to put in there. Your ideas. You understand?

ML - Yes I understand.

MA - And that's why the solo. You don't say someone what to play in the solo. They play by the spirit of the sound and what they feel. You see. Do you understand?

ML - So it's a real share of not- Well, I don't think we can say about imposing some ideas or not, but it's- because actually that was my next question: Do you or did Sun Ra imposed his ideas to the musicians or did you let the musicians to impose their ideas to you I guess, which is…

MA - So it's both ways [Inaudible] it's play a song, you have to know to play on each note it's the interpretation of how you play like if you play a quarter note like God, I can be your risen with one note. So he has a particular phrase of how one plays it. It's all about you phrase the music. And still the music is still in its square but it is just like write the music 16-30 second notes and it's all I get. But he would like the note and to think of the phrase on that note. If there is a quarter note it could be played like that, imagine that you cut it shorter or play it longer or play it off to beat.

It's the way they play it. That's why a band got its own personality. Do you understand? There are different bands plays and sounds the same songs but in different way. Do you understand?

ML - Yeah of course.

MA -That's what it has to do with teach lessons on how to phrase the music. In other way is just like [Inaudible] how to speak this language. And then, you go for that and then you have a chance. [The phone line cuts.] […] Anyway that's the way it is the play as it is. Do you know how is the band, do you know how each of the band's sound and they have a way of playing… playing the same tune; but maybe you know that they have a different way of playing. You understand?

ML - Yeah, sure.

MA - So I show you the misinterpretation of the music that you are listening. And you can read, that's good; and you can read it on your way and it wouldn't sound right. You understand? You can read the music like you see it and it don't sound right, it's not what you want. So, in other ways, the way he likes it have to have to put anything on certain notes and certain phrases. And that's why for each band have a different style and a different sound.

ML - And different sound yeah.

MA - All bands have their own way of playing. You play music and you can listen and you can recognize the style they are playing. Like [Inaudible] A lot of people hear the big band that is their way they are playing. You see? They display the melodies, displays the notes.

ML - And when it comes to solos or to freer parts of the compositions and everything did he ever happen to say "oh that's not the kind of solo that would fit right here that's not what I have in mind"?

MA -Yeah, you would do that too. So you would pick a personality of which style which sound on your hand would give you in solo in there. So some sounds better with the tenor and some sounds better with the trumpet and some sound better with a [Inaudible]. And then it's all on how you play it. You see. In other ways you tail out the music for the musicians what they have [Inaudible]. In that way you know what the solo it is and sometimes you have to double up and play another part. He knows

the musicians and he play it in the way he wanted to play it, your interpretation that way. So, when you play a solo you didn't have to use the [Inaudible] to lift it. Otherwise you can play the solo up and down, but in another way. But there is a certain way you have to play it and if you say no it's good then that's not it. You see?

ML - Good.

MA -I mean like most bands it would be like that too. They like the music, and they got a particular way they play it, raise the music. It's like a language [Inaudible] you see?

ML -Yeah. Of course. Moving to another question. When composing, do you use other symbols than just well the classical symbols of music like notes, or pianos or…?

MA -That's something individual. So if you are dealing with structural music like classical and stuff you use the symbols like that because they use to read it, to read those symbols. You understand? Like that. But if I'm writing a scene I've got my own way of putting what I want there. And I don't have to use all the symbols. Because sometimes you put all these symbols over the music and then you have a look at them and you see so many little symbols. You know what I mean? So Sun Ra would do that too. But he wouldn't write symbols in all the music. He would show you and tell you how to do it. Show you how he wanted certain played phrases. You understand?

ML -Yes. So…

MA -In that way you can put some of them that you want. But otherwise he would give you a plain sheet of music with notes on it. And you had to play it in a certain way. You understand? Now, if you want to write to an ensemble so you can remember how to play it – I used to do that too, I would write the foundation symbols. You know.

ML -But it was mostly by telling the musicians…

MA -By memory. You remember how it goes. Cause if you just stop playing notes on that, no symbol marks on it you can remember how it goes when you look at the music. So that's the way we were doing it, because didn't play with a bunch of symbols like in classical music. Classical music has all symbols and even [Inaudible]. So, I mean if you play in different bands, some people don't put no symbols at all. You know? So sometimes you do and then you not put too many of them as you got

phrases and you go soft and loud and you put [Inaudible] down at the bottom. You know like [Inaudible] then I will try to put the symbols in it. You understand?

ML - Yeah.

MA -I put some of the symbols in it because there are few bands who don't have to have all those symbols. And when you get to the music you know how to play the phrase, because it will start with it. You see? How you play the phrase. You understand what I'm saying?

ML - Yeah completely.

MA - Good.

ML - Well, there was, like I told you, the- what people called the New York phase or period for the Arkestra. And there were lots of… I know Sun Ra didn't like the word *free jazz* or something like that. But there was a lot of improvisation-

MA - But we call it [Inaudible] and Sun Ra calls it *state music* or something. You know, different names for the same type of playing. You know. We called it [Inaudible] because it was, it he had what we would call the freedom in it and you played what you thought. You see?

ML - Yeah. And in that case did it evolve with time? The way the Arkestra saw that freedom that was given to them, did it evolve over the years. Like saying: "We would have done that before we've learned that, you know, that's in the past and we are moving to something else because that's not the philosophy we have, the musical philosophy we have right now." Did it ever evolve from-

MA - Yeah, because the music now based on foundation, you can build a lot without a foundation. So, if you know the foundation and if you know the code and if you know these things, these things you know and then you can produce [Inaudible] the same music. You see? And that's it. So when one does and the other doesn't do [Inaudible] you. Do you understand me? When Sun Ra was- if a sound has codes on it, then it's all relative. You know. At the sound. And once that you wanted to play, you can play it on the chord but that's straight up and down. Or you can play by the spirit which it might not play as many notes and may not play exact the same notes. You see.

ML - And. So was that-

MA - But Sun Ra's music was based on foundation first and the code. Cause [sound cuts] walk and you walk into the [Inaudible] then you [sounds cut] song cause the vibrations of one more person would make the sound change. So you have to pay attention and follow the leader who uses the spirit because you are getting to move fast. You say all this is in the paper, but somebody else come in and it doesn't work anymore. You see. And that's the way you do it. That's why you have [Inaudible] the music. But all this music is based on the foundation and the code and the spirit of the song. You see?

ML - Yeah. Of course. So that was just a natural evolution from- It is conscious but it just felt natural to evolve like that with the musicians and-

MA - You have to hear the sound. The sound it got all the [Inaudible], and all the things and everything else in it. You start to play in the tone you can play the other steps of the tune. You know? And is the vibration from the sound, on note cause they got different tone colors in all of those things. You seem to have that map of producing, these are the tones in the same tone. You see?

ML - Yeah. Moving on to another question. I've interviewed many people over the last year and some of them have- they started with lots of freedom to the musicians and free improvisation and as they moved on, they restricted the freedom more and more. Some others actually went the complete other way. Everything was written down and as they moved on within their carrier they evolved to give the- I don't know, probably they had more confidence in their musicians or something like that. Would you say the Arkestra- did it- From my point of view you started when you moved to New York after the Montreal thing and all. There was loads and loads and loads of freedom or at least that's how it sounds. I don't know maybe everything was written down.

MA - Well [Inaudible] has changed the world. And so Sun Ra [Inaudible] in the wind and blowing free all sounds, blend them in together. You see? So, Sun Ra's music was difficult because the way [Inaudible] that he would write the song in it and the way he would want you to play it. Not that you couldn't play the music but you couldn't play the music because you could play the music aloud unless you were playing it in a certain way. You see? And that's what he was teaching us, what he tried to teach us.

Not that I couldn't play. I was playing in big bands and before I met Sun Ra. And I was reading the music and doing everything proper; and when I got with Sun Ra, he said he didn't want that. He would wanted me to do something else. And that something else I didn't know, it was the spirit of time, the spirit of things. And that's what he was telling me: balance. I come in with my hearing that I know. But he didn't want you to know. He wanted to do something that you didn't know what to do, so when you don't know what to do, the spirit will take over and guide you and you would probably be better with that, with not knowing anything. So he would tell everybody who is it. Allowing and nobody use it and all would do the same thing. Because then when you started teaching and listen to what do you want, it wouldn't sound right to us. Because you aren't used to that. You are used with reading notes, turning up and down and playing them correct. But when he found other sounds and other ways to go and other syncopations he wanted you to use and where everybody was playing a given rhythm so you have to keep your rhythm and notes against somebody else's rhythm and you don't keep your note and sound, it doesn't come out right. You see what I'm saying?

ML - Well, I think I do.

MA - So if you sing barabarabab (fast syncopated rhythm) and I play bibabebubabababababa (long slow regular notes, followed by short fast regular notes) against you. You know, your rhythm in my head sounds as if not coordinated. You see? So he in midnight he had all these things so you can hear that. You can hear [Inaudible] or whatever. You know, that's not what he wants. And that is difficult because those who know it was more difficult for them. For those who lined and studied music and played classics and played everything, it was hard for them. You see. Because he was doing every time concerts with that. And then once you understood to let the spirit of it in, doing he then began to jam together. It was not as if that planned and planned. It wasn't that. You see? Cause that's what we do when we play first time and play everything what are you doing with that? That wasn't it. Because when you start to play from knowledge, of what we know and what we learn and all of that then maybe you say I didn't want to know anything just like little

children. You know. They don't know nothing and they just play by the spirit of things. So that was he was trying to do in order for us to try to interpret his music.

ML - So, then I'll get to-

MA - So he had a vast repertoire of anything where you had to play correct and incorrect if you have to call it that. You have this native work and native rhythmically and you understood and you still take over and you do the things he intent you to do. And [Inaudible] right here, non stop. [Inaudible] Now you understand?

ML - I'm sorry.

MA - Did you hear that?

ML - Yes. Of course.

MA - So that was the problem. They all were thinking that we are off the plan but it wasn't. Every time we were doing foundation. And you had to study what to do and what not to do. And then you have to let the spirit flowing for you. If he's not going to know, then who's going to know what he wanted? You see? Until he show you he would deal with it himself to show you how it works. You see? So after years of being frustrated cause he note on that, he would finally give up and be humble and listen and feel and waiting the spirit and play the music correctly. You see? Then you understood and then you knew you couldn't do it just because you know music. Because we were all like that in one time. Oh I know my music and I've been that and I've been that and I play quartet and I don't play that as well and then you don't until you play the note properly. You play the note, it's [Inaudible] it's nice and correct but that's not what I want. You see. [Inaudible] You know.

ML - Yeah. Was it always…? Has there been ever some compositions, because – like you are saying – the- well, first of all the compositions, the Arkestra are doing sometimes are very difficult and it's hard to get that very pinpoint feeling that you are looking for. Has it ever had happened that you found that some pieces were just impossible to interpret the way you wanted them to be?

MA - Well, in most of the time it depends on what you're thinking and you know and you interpret in a certain way. Do you understand? And when you do that everything you think- you correct. Not that is wrong but you correct and you'll not going to play the interpretation like that until you let the spirit play it. You see? That way that was he

was doing with the musicians: awakening their spirit. And then you, that means that you don't know nothing because then you just know what the spirit guide you, just like in the daily life. The spirit [Inaudible]. And that's what he tried to do when you began to understand what he's doing or what he is trying to do, then you allow your spirit inside your knowledge. You see? And that's what [Inaudible] because we had great musicians with carrier, they could write and to make many wonderful things. But when they got into band they couldn't keep up because everything was in all kinds of ways until they got the spirit of it then they had the [Inaudible]. So it wasn't like just blowing a horn and not knowing what would happen. It was the spirit doing it. You see?

ML - Yeah. Now if I could move to more technical questions, I've seen a few videos of Sun Ra conducting and I've seen, well, I've seen you once in Montreal but if you could- could you describe just a little bit, very briefly your conducting techniques and Sun Ra's.

MA - Well, there is [Inaudible] you got a way of telling the music to just work when you do this that means this and you don't have a way of you doing a- or conducting after your own plan. You understand? So, I conduct when then and they understand my conducting, they got it and [Inaudible] or what. What am I going do with the symbol plan? You understand? If I want them to go whoa whoa (sound sliding up), I got a symbol that I'll pull it in like that. You see? And then there are these symbols like you do as when you do with another conductor, any conductor could do it. So when you give a conductor, you follow conduction. For all the nuances, and the ups and downs, and the loudness and softness and all of that. You see? So I've got my way of conducting each time and they understand it because they are used to name my symbols and they knew me of what that means. You see?

ML - Yeah. Because, you've played together for so long.

MA - Yeah, we've played together, and they see me and they take my hand and "Baadidup" (rhythm example). What does that means? It might mean something that somebody doesn't know but it mean within whooooa (sound sliding up). You see? Like that. It means to make a loud present sound. I slide up, like this whoooop

whoooap (sounds sliding up) as what I said. You see? All of those signs, there's nothing out of the ordinary about it. You see?

ML - Well, these techniques and well, all of the conduction you have done- do you feel there has been a difference between the direction- between, you know, Sun Ra's time and John Gilmore's time and yours are- or have you kept- ?

MA - Well all three is different in one in conducting and in time, you see, they all think different. So, it's like I would try to interpret Sun Ra my way but it's not Sun Ra, is me interpreting his ideas. They are still his ideas.

ML - Yes, of course.

MA - So, it all comes down to whoever is leading the band the spirit of the band goes towards them. And also you still have Sun Ra in it but also have you in it. You know, like a conductor as the conductor in it whoever would play the same song. You see?

ML - So, it's not really doing something different, it's adding your personality.

MA - Adding my- me. Adding my thing in it. You know. Because when Sun Ra conducted it will lead, will give it the way he conduct it. And then John did it the way John would do it. When I do it then I do it as I want it to pull and swing and [Inaudible] you understand?

ML - Yeah.

MA - So that's the way it is in any conduction. And if somebody else is giving the conducting you have to find out how he conducts. And then you can follow him.

ML - Of course. Now, if I move to the rehearsals, when you rehearse with the orchestra is there any free improvisation exercises which is not for this particular tune it's just exercises for the ear or- do you do these kinds of things with the band during rehearsal?

MA - It is like when I think this is a nice thing, nice melody, beautiful, then I put it in and make arrangement and give it to the musicians I've got. For the sound I know for whom to give the first part to, the second part, I know who will lead. You know, for the music to hold and all of that. And that's the way you do. When you give a rehearsal and then you rehearse and rehearse all kinds of things that not necessarily you want to play them, everything that you rehearse.

ML - So there is no real, exact free improvisational exercises that you do with the orchestra or that you did with the orchestra.

MA - Yeah. Because if I raise my hand and come down, they come and raise their head and come down with a note. Now, nobody knows what note it is because is not written down at the bottom. They don't know what notes they are going to play and they might be playing seconds and half tones and quarter tones. And everything else [Inaudible] of sound. You see? And that's when I say, when I raise my hand and they raise their hands and I come down, for seeing sound. It's like a wave.

ML - So there has to be exercises just for- just to be sure that when it comes to shows everybody understands-

MA - When you do it on rehearsals you do one thing, one interpretation, when you do it on the job there is another one.

ML - Ok. Cool.

MA - Because it's not like the same as when you rehearse. You understand? Cause [Inaudible] I am paying you to rehearse not for the job to play. If you make the rehearsal you get paid. Now not the job. When you go to play because it's going to be entirely different on the job. That's the spirit of the day doing that. Because what I feel today and what I do today might not work tomorrow. Or might not work in that time when I'm playing and it might not work in there. So it happens. I have plenty of rehearsals and you have a variety of days to get what you are playing. You see? And that's why somehow rehearsals are seven days a week.

ML - Yeah. That's actually, that was my next question. Could you describe – and this is probably the most important question of all I'm going to ask you – could you describe a typical day or a typical rehearsal during Sun Ra's time?

MA - Well, when Sun Ra was here and we were here, we'd wake up in the morning and then rehearse all day. Take a break, while we eat something or in the afternoon and then we play until midnight. Now, if you had to go somewhere or had to do something and you are late and then you come back, then you don't know what the band's is playing. Because you don't know the whole new things, the whole new idea to go and see at the rehearsal. You see? Now some rehearsals last 24 hours a day. Because if you think of something at two o'clock in the morning while you sleep you

call your band now. You try this, play this, do this. And then you tell the guy: "I thought we would sleep!" He wouldn't sleep, he'd be singing and chatting [Inaudible] and then we'd sleep and say: "Ah, man, were done!" And then you wake up and start playing and oh, oh play this. So it was like you had to be woken up like a fireman in a firehouse. Just like the bell and ready to get up. And sometimes I used to sleep with my clothes on it.

ML - So one could call that a full time gig. 24/7 was it?

MA - As I say I pay it to rehearse then you would go to sleep on your hand on the gig and get the money but you come in for the rehearse because it takes you to all kinds of stuff. And you say "We going to play it out of here?" "Yeah we're going to go to play it out of here." Then you get to the job and don't play any of it, you play something else. Oh wait a minute you want to say that I work hard 7 days a week and then you get that and none of the stuff you learned.

ML - Well, that is amazing. Really

MA - Yeah. And once you get good at it, it starts going the other way and you couldn't do nothing. [inaudible]

ML - But during those full band rehearsals what I've read and heard is Sun Ra would sometimes like talk for hours.

MA - Yeah he would talk for hours and all of that is part of the rehearsal. You understand what you have to do and the way things clear up, in a way. He always had this conversation thing.

ML - How much playing was there during those rehearsals? Would you say it was- No. It was mostly playing?

MA - We'd play so much, I'd get tired of playing, you know, biting on that saxophone. It was really tiresome because we rehearsed and we took a little break and we go right back at it. And that's all we did every day 7 days a week.

ML - And it was always rehearsing pieces or sometimes it was just rehearsing concepts or-

MA - Well, every day he would grab a new song or more than a new song. He may had have two or three new songs every day. And then, as you did your part, it changed. Somebody else come in, they come in late, then you give him your part and you had

to get a new part. So that means that you have to do all over again and if another part come in you have to struggle all day to get that part. And he'd keep you on edge, you didn't know. You couldn't say: "I got it" and lay back all cool. No. Once, I was in, I was playing one day and I played for 2-3 hours in order to get that song and to interpret it right. And then another horn player come in late and he got my part then I had to learn another part all over a new part. Count your emotions on that. You know, I cried all day cause that part was beautiful and I had it down boy but then during the rehearsal, then somebody came in and we had to change the song. And they took my part and gave it to somebody and gave me some new one. And I had to start all over, writing it down, time [Inaudible].

ML - So that means there was a lot of rehearsing that, I would not say was going to waste, but you would never actually use in a public-

MA - Hundreds of takes of songs that you never heard and we never recorded. A lot of stuff. And the combination is something else. That we do during rehearsal. You see.

ML - Ok. So you never knew if it would be useful or not, but-

MA - No. Because that's what I had so much music if you ever see the band. And we got big red books for music. And he would sit there and start playing in the document and he had the music before the introduction's away. Cause then if we don't know your part and you are not ready and looking for the music you might go into another song. You see?

ML - Yeah. And you wouldn't-

MA - So in other words, if you didn't pay attention you are lost. Because at once you play in full and song and then one song and you look over there and don't know how to find the music and you are going into another song. You see?

ML - Ok. Yeah.

MA - An then, he'd keep you scrambling.

ML - Yeah. I would have love to see you guys rehearse together and just live 24 hours, you know, one day with you guys just to know-

MA - I don't do that.

ML - I hope so.

MA - You could do it. But I don't do that. That's why I'm saying he used to have his thing, you know. [Inaudible] If you have time then you will use it with him. I might not be allowed to get a job either. We have all rehearsals for couple of hours, for 3 hours and stuff and then we stop. Because this could just go on and on and on and on. And when the band had to leave you got the other head and you go make something else. Like a marathon, you know, with these rehearsals.

ML - When I've- I told you I have done many interviews with many people and some of them think that you should never rehearse the freer parts of the compositions because if you do so and there is a good idea played in the rehearsal that's a good idea wasted because you cannot reuse that-

MA - No no no. We recorded that. It's been recorded and I've got everything on tape. Every tape, every song, good or bad I got on tape. Seven days a week. Do you know how many tape we did? So now I got about six to eight big garbage bags, industrial bags full of tape. Some of them was small things, some of them, one person, some of them with six, eight [Inaudible]. He recorded everything.

ML - Cool.

MA - You see? So eliminate that. So if you had an idea and you might listen to the tape and be able to get back to it and remember; if there is something nice, you know. So that's the way it's done. So I have done all that too. Everything I do, if I just practice I would tape it. So that means I have a room full of tape, everything and then I have to mark it, because if I don't know what [Inaudible]. So that was eliminated and then some new ideas came out somewhere on a tape.

ML - Cool. Now if I might move on to the actual shows. It's pretty obvious that during Sun Ra's time there was complete unpredicted surprises during shows where, you know, you rehearsed this and this and this but during the show he asks you or he brings you to another part.

MA - Yeah. Because in the place where you play you have to deal with people, with the sound of the hall and the spirit of where you are. And that changes the music. Because the music inside we did in this house and everything is wonderful. But when you got there, with the people, something changes. Everything changes.

ML - Of course. And do you still have that same philosophy today?

MA - Yeah, because I can give [Inaudible]. I do that, I say playing this thing is what we're going to do. But when I get to the audience and hit the band there's no way. I mean it could work but it don't work with me. You see. Cause I feel there's something else that I have to do. I might call it tingling in the back of the book and we didn't rehearse it for a long time. Because the vibration of where we are is always different. It's one thing when in rehearsal but once you got to the job all you get is different. Because his idea was to have a show band. A show band is when you dance, when you sing where you clown and have to be silly and to do all these things in one. In one band. That's the show band. If you need [Inaudible] and then they use color and light and costumes all this with the music. And you use dancers and singers and clowns and everything else. Yeah, we used to have that with the band in one time. But it was a real show band.

ML - And how much of what you were doing in shows, because sometimes there were things that I know Sun Ra would do that were completely, well how could I say that - musically or artistically- I wouldn't say unnecessary but provocative. Like I don't know if he was, if you were playing inside and he was looking through a telescope saying he was looking at the stars. I mean how much of that do you think was just pure provocation for the public to react or for the critiques to react?

MA - Yeah. He didn't think of the people. I see in some people have this natural ability and even you can see this in different bands and personalities and singers. They seem to get, seem to know what the people need and want. And they give them a little of what they want what they need what they don't want. You see? […] That what he does and it's a natural thing. Because if we go out there all prepared to do one thing and everybody know what they are doing it doesn't work. I mean it works but it doesn't work with Sun Ra and it doesn't work too much with me. But I stick to a little a little bit of everything and if I give you something you, like then I don't give you too much; and if I give you something you don't like, that's good because I don't give you too much either. You see? And like that. And I keep my [Inaudible] and I used to play a sound he would play 2 choruses or one and a half. And that's the end of the song. And he did a lot of those things. Because it's something in between something else. If you say get up and solo and I play a one chorus and a bridge and

I'm finished. You know? And the sound and the people will like it because it was enough for them to listen and it wasn't too much for them to close their ears. You see? And I said: "Oh, that's a good technique." Sometimes you play a little longer and you got people jumping and smiling and feeling good, and other times you don't play that long. Play shorter. But nice, you know?

ML - Yeah, it is. It's got to be nice.

MA - Yeah yeah. You play like ballads and stuff like that you don't play them long. You see. And then he was writing dancing. So he was writing the dances and then we played in the nightfall and that we got to get a dance music for that. And then you'll go and then you'll play dance music. And then we would go to another club, at the Village Vanguard or a Space Music Club. And then we'd play some of that for them. And then we'd go to the Latin thing and then we would play little Latin stuff. And it was always a vast repertoire for different places and different mood and different people and different places.

ML - And all the musicians liked to play all of these different styles of music?

MA - Yeah, Right.

ML - Nice.

MA - Yeah. And he was doing rap and all those kind of stuff way back then. I used to sing and do a little rap thing and doing all this stuff before rap was real popular. And he was doing that stuff. And he did also what the show bands were doing and more. Then we had the talent and people for doing it. And he always had nice side dancers and he always had dancing lessons and he loved dancing, to dance to the music. But, see, right now I could not afford all of that. I only have like three trumpets, three trombones and five reeds and five rhythms and that's it. When I'm in town here I use more. You know I use two or three conga drummers, and stuff like that. When I'm-most of the time I'm on the road so the band is kind of cut down some. So we have to play our horn, play these drums and get up and we have to dance and [Inaudible] and sing. And it is easy enough to do, because there is not enough of us to have a singer or some dancers while you play.

ML - And you could do that.

MA - Yeah. Well yeah everybody was thought to do that. And doing it is good for you because it's good for the musicians because they try all kinds of different music on different occasions.

ML - Yeah, but that means that you had to find very open minded musicians.

MA - Right. That's right.

ML - Do you find it hard or did you find it harder to find open minded musicians in America or in Europe or-

MA - In America it was just… it's like when you [Inaudible]. You find some musicians who like to play jazz in certain way and that's it; some like to play rock and that's it; some like to do a concert music or pop music and that's it. But what this band, it was taught to do all those things. You had to deal with all these kind of things. And that's what is good for musicians because you can appreciate all music whatever it is.

ML - But did you find-

MA - We have played some Chinese. Right in America we had a Chinese gig. So Sun Ra always wanted to play some Chinese, so we had to buy all those Chinese band instruments. So we take them on the gig and everybody was playing Chinese [Inaudible] and drums and we played some stuff. And it was beautiful! We played all night on Chinese instruments. But we have put taste of that in there and played like the Chinese would do it. You see? That's the reason why, when you play all kinds of music you can blend in with all the concerts. You see. Which makes the musician a better musician and a more rounded and a more understanding.

ML - So you could find open minded musicians all over the world wherever you want.

MA - Yeah.

ML - Did you- I mean you have an amazing amount of experience. It's not every day I can talk to somebody who knows how the musicians were 50 years ago. And you know at first hand not reading about it but really felt it and played with them and everything. Musicians today, do you think that the musicians are more or less open-minded nowadays than-

MA - Right now, what we are doing is what we call stage music or avant-garde. Now all through Europe, there is plenty of that. It's a lot more and we don't spread it all over. So all the young people now they got this lot of avant-garde mix, you see. They got

all that mix now. I played with a rock band while I was in England. And they just play, play, play, play, play and it just kind of [Inaudible] and eventually go wild. Like I said. But fifty or sixty-some years ago we had these people who loved jazz and did jazz all the way. And if they loved the blues, it was the blues and then there was a lot of concert music. You know these people are like- you have these sections like that. And then when you are gone and play some avant-garde, oh they would put their fingers in their ears and all that stuff. Now when they are playing avant-garde with the crazy wild sound and the kids are eating it up. It's like I'm saying. [Inaudible]

ML - So if you had to say at some- what would be the golden age of musicians saying, you know I've never played, I'm not a bluesman, I'm a musician, I play whatever. And if I've never had played that before well that's even better, let's try it. Was there a special decade or something where people were-

MA - To be a musician, like I said, if you play all types of music you are a good musician, because you understand all the types of music. So, Sun Ra wrote like that and it set all the types of music, because he's likely doing what we were doing in the sixties and stuff. Doing kind of that stuff now and multi-rhythms and stuff like that, all those things. But sometimes you'll stick with the right band and still like getting some places. But all of a sudden the kids go out if I go out to play avant-garde I just blow my horn and they just go crazy. And you have a good time, you know. And then I come from the school of playing music in a band, so let them play the music. And playing, and then when I'm not playing I put on my lap and sit up and look nice. But with Sun Ra it was different. I couldn't sit there like that I had to get up and dance, had to play on drum or do something. And then I had to get up and sing, because we had this group singing, so we had the singers and they knew how to sing and look and then the band had to sing. You got a lot of things for the band to sing. So that's what I call a show band. A show band plays everything. And then we went to [Inaudible] and what we were going to do, we were rehearsing there and then Sun Ra hit the piano and play some classical music for him. You see? He'd play that piano board. And that was the opening tune. I'd say: "Oh my, I wouldn't mind being on the schedule." You know. But that's what he did. He'd get there and say: "Oh, people wearing black ties, I'm going to repeat that people were really cliché classical and

stuff." You see? And he went into this classical book and started playing. Yeah it was beautiful. Understand, somebody got the vibrations and come to the audience that was like mostly classical people played out in this place. You know? So he wanted to show them and then we'd play [Inaudible] and we play the- what's the name of the song? We play some classical stuff, you know. A little bit of that and then [Inaudible] and we played some blues and we played some avant-garde and we would play some hard swing and then we would play a little bebop and all of that and we would play the Dixieland. So we had broad themes you know.

ML - Yeah, it is a very wide repertoire.

MA - Yeah, so everybody gets something, you know- what they like.

ML - But actually did you, did the band during Sun Ra's time or still today, did the band ever compromise to please like the critiques or to please- you know, so you could-

MA - Now Sun Ra's is a creative band. It's not [Inaudible] band, it's a creative band. So what do you want to do? People created music. So you play everything so you don't have to compromise. Cause you are playing everything. You see?

ML - Ok. Yeah. As long as you've got gigs, you don't-

MA - Yes, so if you want to play some nice sweet tune, you got that in there, then you got solos and you got bass and we got piano and you get that and you play some of that. And if you want to play concert music you moving up [Inaudible]. You see. So you don't have to worry about compromising, anytime and wherever you play it's certain type of music that people are used to and you give them most of that. You know, what they like really. You can give them the song that they don't like but you don't want to give them too much of it. You understand?

ML - Yeah. That's- And I wish I had the luxury to do that with my own bands.

MA - These bands are always come to see what we were going to play. Rather than tell them what they have to play. So they tell us what to play, you can do that and is not compromises cause it's in the book. You know so if they like [Inaudible] so we will pop out and we will play those with [Inaudible] You know. Like that. If they like some Dixieland, then we'd jump in there and we'd play some Dixieland. We'd go out there and play the music and play all that stuff and play some more stuff too. So that

was an happy compromise only when you know what to plan and what the people ask for most of. You see?

ML - Yeah. I've never heard you playing Mozart before.

MA - We play everything. There are lot of gigs that are playing now avant-garde and this kind of music and stuff like that because they like it. And we create music of that sort. We create new songs and the musicians have to pay attention and listen to each other. And it's like an arrangement. Not overdoing nothing and not giving out his way. You know it's like you would do an arrangement that means you have to pay attention and listen to each other. So that's in style because it gives musicians something different because they listen to each other. You see?

ML - Ok. Now if I- I'd like to come more about- I mean we've talked about that the whole time somehow, but if I move precisely to the link between music and spirituality, there has been loads and loads and loads of articles and books about Sun Ra's point of view when it comes to spirituality in music and the link between them. But is there a big difference between his point of view and your point of view today about that or is it the same?

MA - Well, is like I said. Sun Ra was [Inaudible] and I listen. And whatever I learn I put it to use. And that's all is it. And is like in the other thing; you might go to the university where everything you learn, you go out and you put what you need to do in what you do from what you learn.

ML - Or at least we try.

MA - You see? And the same with music. And so he was talking about all these different spirits of songs, of music and sound. I was interested because nobody was ever teaching us like that. In that way. You know what I'm saying? And he was talking about music and the tones and the [Inaudible] and was teaching me a unique way of playing something that I played it wrong, right. And make it work. Make it sounds right. Otherwise unfamiliar you see, your ear is like a harp, you can play on a harp on a low string, the middle strings and medium and high. And then there are strings you can never reach. And when you reach those other strings and other sounds, it's unfamiliar sound, you know. And I say your ear is like a harp so you play the whole harp, from the top to the bottom. And you get a taste of that and some of these times

people would go: “Oh what’s that?” And they [Inaudible] sounds and stuff. But you don’t give them too much to drive them crazy. You know. You want the [Inaudible]. So that’s why you play a broader music. I like that. That’s why I stayed in the band so long. The other bands are playing a particular type of music. And you play it, play it, play it every day. If you are playing blues then you just play blues, blues, blues, blues. Well then you don’t play nothing else, but a blues band is a blues band, you know.

ML - Exactly.

MA - Yeah. Now a rock band is a rock band. I like to play all of that. I like to play some of the blues band, some of the rock band, some of the Dixieland band, some of the dance band [Inaudible], everything, I had all of that stuff.

ML - I have read so many times and so many articles all over the years you know, starting in the 60s up to Sun Ra’s unfortunate death. People have compared that band loads of times to a sect. How did that make you feel as a band when people were comparing you to, you know not a band but a religion or a sect or something like that?

MA - That’s what they were saying. Is only because our band went to extremes, what they call extremes, by playing a bunch of everything and dancing and so, you know, it didn’t come around often in a generation for people to come and be able to accept that. And then when we played something and then they saw us have a tune and play some classic, and all the years and getting there and walk out and there are all kinds of things they can say, so no. Because it’s like some I said, the ear is like a harp. So if you don’t know how to play the hot key, now how do you know how it’s going to sound like? You know what I’m saying? And then, when you do, [Inaudible] so you pick sides [Inaudible] You know. And that’s why people they love jazz, or love a certain type of jazz and a certain type of blues and a certain type of rock and a certain type of country. They love it. And then they stay with it all they like, that kind of music. So we played a variety of it, so there was a broad variety people out there that liked different kinds of music, you give them a taste everything. You know.

ML - So it doesn’t really shock you, actually.

MA - And somebody would appreciate sometime that we played some concert music. You see. And everybody is there and then when you look at it, we are playing

simplicity. All of it is. And then, I write a tune, I don't write a single note [Inaudible] You see? And then I compose most of the stuff around it, but the tune is there. You know, the basic example: tune. And we can't go beyond that. You know what I'm saying?

ML - Yeah.

MA - And everything is there but you have to listen. You see. And then the vibrations, some vibrations and everybody got a tone and note, everybody got a different tone and stuff and when you play more variety then you get to more people. You know, and clean them up.

ML - Yeah. Do you think today, in 2012- Do you think that after all these years Sun Ra's message to the world is still actual or-

MA - Well of course. You can see that they're doing it. And they will hide and they will talk about it and about this and that and doing that for years. Now they see, they hear and they are doing the things that they would want rebelling against. You see?

ML - Yeah. And since- I mean if Sun Ra was Jesus you would be like Saint Peter or something like that.

MA - I'll be a follower.

ML - Exactly, but you'd be like the head; you'd be the follower who took the lead when Sun Ra left us. Is it hard to live with such a huge heritage?

MA - Well that's what you do. Since I didn't have the skill and when you inherit a business or product or whatever, you keep a tradition of that up and then you explain your ideas in it and it all comes together. But Sun Ra was a master in these things. And he would say that was kinder garden music. He always said that "this is a kinder garden music; you're not ready for my senior music or anything like that, so I will guide you in what we do best." But the kinder garden was hard enough. You know. And it took us a long time to open our minds and absorb all the rest. You know. And see what he was trying to say. Because we were jazz oriented and if it wasn't swinging at the bottom line, we didn't want to hear, you know. It took time and it took years and it took practice and it took this dealing with sounds and everything putting together. You see?

ML - Yeah.

MA - And that's the way it always go. So I used to listen to the music of the 21st century, 21st century music. So that's why for the kids, when you play it for the kids that's why they go wild. You know. You know, people just go wild. But we were already doing all that in one or the other way. So he was ahead his time, but it drew right into the things that we are doing, they are doing too. They'd say: "Oh, that isn't real [Inaudible]." No, it's not that! You have to keep moving in progress. You got to get a lot of people in this time with all kinds of music, all kind of sounds. You see.

ML - Well, there is one other question which I ask everyone that I've interviewed and this is the question I would hate to be asked myself, but I ask it to everyone. What you think is the future for large ensembles, well, creative music?

MA - It's like it's always been. You keep on [Inaudible] and you keep on producing and you'll always have an audience. You know, in music you always has an audience no matter what kind it is.

ML - Yeah. And there is always going to be an audience for that?

MA - Well of course. Everybody likes parades and big bands and like big parades and people marching and bands playing, they have a Mummers playing here in Philadelphia. You know. Every year and the public allow it. They play all these marches and all kinds of songs and they put costumes and they have- every year, every New Year. And people love it. People are dancing [Inaudible] and the marching and the costumes and the colors and the bands and all the bands having the parade and playing the music. And 50-60 people in the band and stuff. Big bands. So there is always a place for large groups or small groups and everything. There is place for them. You know? And this is like in the future and the future is where we are. They change everything out so we change something in the music and we do some of the noise or what they call noise. And then you have to play that too. Cause certainly that is happening to you [Inaudible] All of it. You got to play all of that. You see. And then you know, the world music, they play all kind of stuff and you and the band, you have to understand. And each band [Inaudible] that's why they separate. You have to contribute to the dancing [singing dance music] and they all love that because they [Inaudible], then you play some blues and play some [Inaudible] get up and dance. Everybody likes to dance.

ML - They always did and always will.

MA - We got to book of dance music because we used to play ballrooms you know, where you come in with your girlfriend if you have a girlfriend and you all get tuxedos and stuff and you know. And you're jumping up and down and you get all sweaty and you had to play the dance music where you're just lying on the floor and dance. And have a good time and a good band. We played that music for years in the ballroom. When the ballroom was allowed in the old days; there were a lot of ballrooms in that.

ML - There was a lot?

MA - Yeah.

ML - Well, not in here-

MA - There is other stuff now. They replaced it with other stuff.

ML - Exactly.

MA - That was a place to dance, you know. Now they have closed them all and there is still dancing jumping to whatever music is in there.

ML - Exactly, yeah. Well, actually that brings me to the end of my interview. Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have already said? Is there any question you wished I asked you and I didn't? Or?

MA - Well, no. That's about music and about a band and about keeping a nice house band so it can give all these different songs, the harmonies and things. I don't want it too small because you know, I like 12, 13, 14, 15 pieces, something around there, that's a nice blending sound, there is nice harmonies in sound. You see? And that vibrates the bottom of your soul and stuff. And all that harmony that is vibrating when you hear a beautiful harmony. This is as when you see a bunch of sign and church people and all of that, you see that there is a lot of music. You know the church choir inside, it all sounds so beautiful. They have a little harmonies in there and they have all the voices and it sounds so beautiful. You see. That's when music requires 15-20 people, you know. So why not to have bands? You know. With a band you can play all kinds of things and beautiful harmonies and things. You know, if you like.

ML - Yes, as long as there will be life there's-

MA - For Sun Ra the music is like the energy. Because he played rather syncopations. And is not only beat is up, up, up. Lot of upbeat stuff. You know, you say: "one, two,

three, four, dub, dub, dub, dub [regular downbeat pulsation]" see how it sounds. But if you say: "one, two, three, four, up, up, up, up, up [regular upbeat pulsation]." You see? It's like lift, lift, lift, lift. And you feel that. And you can play along downbeat pup, pup, pup, pup, pup [regular downbeat pulsation] it's like jamming whole, jamming like nailing wood. But if you play it up, it bounces up: up, up, up, up, up. You see? So there is a difference in the way you play. To always be happy, play the music and dance and sing and that's what people like and I like it too.

ML - And then there is the next generation to keep up that work.

MA - Yeah. Everybody likes to dance and feel good and hear music bouncing up their soul.

ML - And enjoy life.

MA - And enjoy life in rhythm and good exercise and makes you happy, make you forget about the rent man and all that. Well, a little anyway.

[…]

MA - You got all the questions you had?

ML - Yeah, that's all the questions I had. I cannot thank you enough for this interview.

[…]

ML - Well, thank you so very, very much it's been an honor.

MA - It's been a pleasure. All right.

ML - Ok. Good bye.

MA - Bye bye.

APPENDIX VII
A few words about CD #2

Ideally, one having read this thesis and wishing to completely understand every subtlety it refers to would have to listen to the entire discography. Unfortunately, we realize how unrealistic this would be. Therefore, the author took it upon himself to make a selection of some of the essential works one would have to be exposed to in order to minimally understand the essence of this work. This selection can be found on CD #2.

Firstly, it seemed only appropriate to expose the reader to the very first free improvisation recording session ever and the album which was so influent on the free jazz aesthetics, it gave its nave to the movement: Lennie Tristano's *Intuition* and *Digression* and Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*.

Then, we tried to find essential and/or very representative work of the musicians/composers we have analyzed in the order of appearance in the thesis.

Concerning mathias rüegg, we decided to include *Quelques Petits Moments* since it is very representative of his technique of writing everything for a musical formation and then, let a talented improviser play freely over the result. We also included *Klaviertrio No.1*, since it is representative of his technique consisting of offering a few musical options to musicians and letting them decide within this range of choices.

As for Barry Guy, we simply decided to restrict our choice to two of his most important works in his larger musical formation repertoire: *Ode* (part one) and *Inscape* (also part one).

Unfortunately, we could not find any of Dieter Glawischnig's official recording which we considered was representative of his use of the free aspects of large formation writing (although we have heard a number of them, whether in live performances or by the use of pirate recordings). Therefore, no musical example of Mr. Glawischnig's music found its way to CD #2.

It was hard and heartbreaking to choose, within Butch Morris's *Conductions,* which ones to include and even harder to decide which ones to leave behind. We decided to include *Conduction #26 E*, since it was the first one to include written notation (only 8 bars, as we have seen). We also included *Conduction #38 E* and *Conduction #50 E I and II* simply because we thought it gave a somehow adequate representation of Mr. Morris's techniques – and also because we like them particularly.

We could have chosen hundreds of recordings from Sun Ra and his Arkestra, but we limited our choices to two particularly influential recordings of Sun Ra: *Heliocentric* and *The Cosmos,* both originating from the album *The Heliocentric Worlds of Sun Ra, Vol. 1* which many jazz musicologists consider as Sun Ra's first album truly dealing with avant-garde music.

We also included Alexander von Schlippenbach's original *Globe Unity* (the original 1966 version) because it most probably was Schlippenbach's most important composition in his career, from which everything else followed; and Michael Mantler's *Communications #8* (we had to choose a track, but it could have been almost any other one on the album) from the legendary album *The Jazz Composer's Orchestra* since it most certainly was his most famous album dealing with free improvisation.

LIST OF JOINED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are also part of this thesis:

- One CD-ROM (CD #1) containing the following files:
    - A2 Edited recording of the interview with mathias rüegg.mp3
    - A3 Edited recording of the interview with Barry Guy.mp3
    - A4 Edited recording of the interview with Dieter Glawischnig.mp3
    - A5 Edited recording of the interview with Butch Morris.mp3
    - A6 Edited recording of the interview with Marshall Allen.mp3
- One CD-ROM (CD #2) containing the following files:
    - 01 - Tristano Lennie - Intuition.mp3
    - 02 - Tristano Lennie - Digression.mp3
    - 03 - Coleman Ornette - Free Jazz.mp3
    - 04 - rüegg mathias - Quelques Petits Moments.mp3
    - 05 - rüegg mathias – klaviertrio no1.mp3
    - 06 - Guy Barry - Ode - Part I.mp3
    - 07 - Guy Barry - Inscape - part I.mp3
    - 08 - Morris Lawrence D Butch - Conduction #26 E - Akbank II.mp3
    - 09 - Morris Lawrence D Butch - Conduction #38 E - In Freud's Garden.mp3
    - 10 - Morris Lawrence D Butch - Conduction #50 E I.mp3
    - 11 - Morris Lawrence D Butch - Conduction #50 E II.mp3
    - 12 - Sun Ra - Heliocentric.mp3
    - 13 - Sun Ra - The Cosmos.mp3
    - 14 - Von Schlippenbach Alexander - Globe Unity.mp3
    - 15 - Mantler Michael - Communications #8.mp3