

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO**



**THE MYTH OF ABSENCE:  
REPRESENTATION, RECEPTION AND THE MUSIC OF EXPERIMENTAL  
WOMEN IMPROVISORS**

**A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy**

**in**

**Music**

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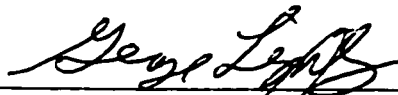
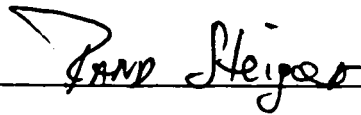
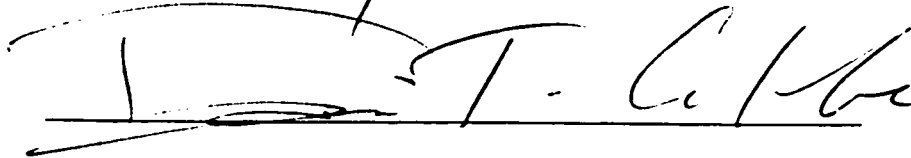
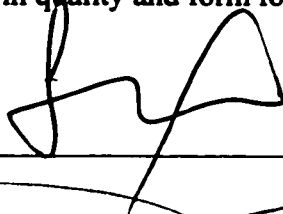
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***For David and Paris***  
***And for those beautiful souls near and far, here and departed***  
***who shared my dreams – I couldn't have done this without you.***

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- “The New Vocal Utterance: The Music of Meredith Monk.” *20th Century Music*. (March 1999), 17-20.
- “Women, Words, and Music.” *Musicworks* (Number 73, Spring 1999), 49-50.
- “Building Improvising Communities.” *The Improvisor* (September 1999), [www.theimprovisor.com](http://www.theimprovisor.com)
- “Deep Listening Salad.” *20th Century Music*. (April 1998), 14.

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- Compilation CD 1996-2000. UCSD Department of Music. Various Artists. The Regents of the University of California, 2002.
- The Space Between with Barre Philips. Perf. Pauline Oliveros, Philip Gelb, Barre Philips and Dana Reason. 482 Music, 2001.
- Red Sauce Baby. Music of Hans Fjellestad. Various Performers. Accretions, Fall 2000.
- The Space Between with Jon Raskin. Perf. Pauline Oliveros, Jon Raskin, Philip Gelb and Dana Reason. Sparkling Beatnik Records, 1999.



**Border Crossings. Music of Dana Reason. Perf. Peter Valsamis and Dana Reason. Red Toucan, 1997.**

**Children in Peril. Music of Lisle Ellis. Perf. Lisle Ellis, Joe McPhee, Marco Eneidi, Peter Apfelbaum, Dana Reason. Music and Arts, 1997.**

**Primal Identity. Music of Dana Reason. Perf. Philip Gelb and Dana Reason. Deep Listening, 1996.**

**Purple Wind. Music of Philip Gelb. Various Performers. Ryokan Records, 1996.**

#### **SELECTED ARTICLES AND REVIEWS (about my work)**

**Johnson, Allison A. "The Final Frontier." Twentieth Century Music (Dec. 2001).**

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**Given, Dan. "Beyond Genre: The Piano Artistry of Dana Reason." MusicWorks, (No. 74, Fall 1999), 20-23.**

**Ulman, Erik. "Grenzüberschreitendes Improvisieren: Das Symposium, Improvising Across Borders" in San Diego." MusikTexte, (June 1999, Issue 79), 67-68.**

**Morgan, Jon C. "Piano Music on Compact Disk." Coda Magazine, (March/April 1999), 24-26.**

**Suzuki, Yoshiyuki. and Keiichi Fukushima. "San Francisco Improvised Music Today." Jazz Critique, (No. 95, Summer, 1998), 307-310.**

**Richardson, Derk. "Dana Reason: Primal Identity." The San Francisco Bay Guardian, (Feb. 19, 1997), 47.**

**Larue, Oliver. "Lyrisme et Multiculturalism." Musicworks, (No. 69, Dec. 1997), 60-61.**

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## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **THE MYTH OF ABSENCE: REPRESENTATION, RECEPTION AND THE MUSIC OF EXPERIMENTAL WOMEN IMPROVISORS**

**By**

**Dana L. Reason Myers**

**Doctor of Philosophy in Music**

**University of California, San Diego, 2002**

**Professor George E. Lewis, Chair**

**This dissertation examines how creative women improvisors are subject to gendered representations and receptions by the media, festival and record producers. Current dispositions towards women, whether deliberate or unintentional, influence future engagements for women improvisors. In addition, the relative exclusion of feature articles on women improvisors or as leaders at festivals leads to what I call *the myth of absence*--the assumption that women are not interested in participating in the exploration and development of experimental creative improvised music. This assumption, as my research reveals, is simply false.**

**Pursuing an ethnographically oriented methodology, I conducted interviews with a diverse community of women improvisors. These women included**

**accordionist Pauline Oliveros; pianist Amina Claudine Myers; singer Maggie Nicols; pianist Irène Schweizer; kotoist Miya Masaoka; drummer Susie Ibarra; samperist Ikue Mori; pianist Marilyn Crispell, among others.**

**From the interviews, a collection of issues was selected, leading to the formation of five chapters. The first chapter presents a brief survey of the history of improvised music research, canonicity and the exclusion of women improvisors. In chapter two, I provide perhaps the first collection of biographies on seven women improvisors. Chapter three examines the gendered reception of women improvisors in current magazines on improvisation. In the fourth chapter, I analyze the data from five international festivals that feature or include improvised music. These festivals include: The Guelph Jazz Festival, Canada; Du Maurier International Jazz Festival Vancouver, Canada; Festival International Musique Actuelle Victoriaville; Total Music Meeting, Berlin; and Taktlos, Switzerland. In the fifth chapter, I explore the interactive nature of improvised music.**

**This study reveals the need for greater inclusion of women improvisors in the emergent scholarly discourse on improvisation. Without the inclusion of women improvisors in the field, there is a danger of creating dominant modes of improvisation while women's contributions to the field remain marginalized or "othered."**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **CENTERING THE EXPERIMENTAL WOMAN IMPROVISOR**

The field of experimental improvisation draws upon a potentially infinite variety of musical forms. Some of the music has grown out of established jazz models or free jazz, but the range of experimentation involves many forms and genres, including, but not necessarily limited to European classical music from various centuries, popular and world, and electronic/computer music, as well as performance, theatre and mythology. As part of a field with porous, contested borders of practice, tradition and method, as well as of race and class, Experimental improvisors are free to access, signify upon or dialog with established traditions, or to mix styles in search of their own sounds and hybrid musical forms. However, despite the availability of extensive documentation on many sound recordings, few musicologists or ethnomusicologists, at least in North America, have studied the developments within these emergent hybrid musics.

Moreover, even given this relative paucity of research, there is a problematic absence of women improvisors, not only in the research record, but in the community of improvised music culture itself. It is often a challenge even to find a recording of a women improvisor, and naming more than a few women improvisors might prove difficult even for an improvised music enthusiast, since the overall support of their work has been inadequate.

The insufficient documentation and dissemination of the work of experimental women inevitably leads to the perception that women are simply not part of the field of experimental improvisation. To begin to rebut what I have termed this *myth of absence*, and to examine its consequences for women improvisors and for the field of experimental improvisation, I have interviewed a diverse group of women improvisors active since 1950 in North America, Asia and Europe. They include: bassist Joëlle Léandre; pianist Amina Claudine Myers; vocalist Maggie Nicols; bassoonist and composer Lindsay Cooper; drummer Susie Ibarra; accordionist Pauline Oliveros; kotoist, performance artist and electronic musician Miya Masaoka; pianist Marilyn Crispell; pianist Irène Schweizer; cellist and anthropologist Georgina Born; violinist India Cooke; drummer and electronic musician Ikue Mori; actress and singer Maia Axe; percussionist Gayle Young; harpist Susie Allen; harpist and composer Anne LeBaron; composer and singer Maria DeAlvear; and flautist Jane Rigler.

Included in this group of musicians are senior artists (those working since the 1950s), mid-career artists (those working since the 1980s), and more junior improvisors (those working since the 1990s). Although I posed questions (either in person, by telephone or through email) with eighteen subjects, in order to keep this project manageable, I only discuss seven of these women's lives in the biography chapter. However, the experiences and insights offered by all the women have guided this project.

This dissertation, perhaps the first collection of responses made by a diverse group of experimental women improvisors, takes as its starting point research that has

informed contemporary gender and feminist musicology in the past two decades.

Recent collections include Ruth Solie's *Musicology and Difference* (1993); Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (1991); Ellen Koskoff's *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (1989); and Carol Neuls-Bates' *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Reading from the Middle Ages to the Present* (1996), among others.

The dispute over essentialist and gendered attitudes towards women is often dismissed as outmoded in recent humanities discourses. While a discussion of the relationship of women to a politics of gender within the larger improvised community may seem irrelevant to current scholars, such a discussion is nonetheless critical for addressing the under-representation of women improvisors in the field. Many of the personal, professional and musical experiences of my research subjects, as well as their aesthetic and methodological observations, have never been collected in a dissertation or book.

A significant aspect to my research was conducting the subject interviews. I have decided not to publish the individual interviews in this dissertation, but have instead gleaned from them what I considered to be the most pressing core issues addressed by the subjects. The interviews cover such topics as the importance of developing communities; the use of non-musical experiences to structure improvisation; expanding the context and content of a musical improvisation; the articulation of feminist politics in music; marginalization and representation of women improvisors in the media and performance community; the subject of essentialization

and descriptions of women artists, the performative body; and gender constructions of women improvisors.

My interest in women improvisors grows, first, out of my own experience as a woman improviser. Clearly, my own work has been subjected to gendered evaluations, and many of the questions I posed to the interviewees are informed by my own participation, as well as certain behaviors, attitudes and practices I have witnessed taking shape in the field.<sup>1</sup>

As an ethnographic study, the dissertation discloses stories, narratives, conversations and experiences of these experimental women. Ethnomusicologist Beverley Diamond recognizes the importance of “story telling” within the field of ethnomusicology, which serves improvisational studies as well:

The telling of lives has always been compelling. . . Many scholars have been drawn to “oral history,” or “life stories,” but feminists have found such texts particularly useful for various reasons. Such stories give “others” a voice in history, they problematize the relationship of subject to object, and they are less prone than many other representational genres to erase emotion-or value-laden intangibles. . . Feminists have, further more, been astute theorists of experiential narratives, assessing the status of such accounts, the dialogic nature of their construction, and their political positioning, among other things (Diamond 2000: 99).

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<sup>1</sup> In a review of my CD *Primal Identity* (1996), Dave McElfresh writes, “This is good stuff, the kind of inspirational, surprising music mothers should play for their young daughters when they complain after music lessons that learning how to play the piano is boring” (McElfresh, “Dana Reason,” 1997: 92-93).



The collective responses of my interview subjects on questions of access, discrimination and reception inform the chapters of this dissertation. From the series of questions presented to the interviewees, I selected what seemed to be the most significant issues among the women. The anecdotal experiences shared by the subjects are particularly significant because as the individual and collective experiences are situated within feminism, race or gender discourse, these stories reveal issues of power, sexism and discrimination.

Many of the questions that I present to the experimental women in this dissertation have also been raised in recent discourses of gender and feminist research. For this reason, some of these questions may seem quite familiar to readers of feminist theory: Do you think you would have a different career if you were a man? Do you feel that women receive the same amount of recognition as men? How do you feel gender and race are constructed by the media in improvised circles? Do you perform with groups of mostly men or women and why?

In this context, analyzing the effect these political positions have upon women improvisors in general, and the community in particular, may aid in locating strategies valuable for challenging practices that restrict the visibility of women improvisors. Even where there are differences between all the artists, or where issues that resonate with some artists do not resonate with others, it is the set of questions that emerge from the experiences of these women that provide a sense of coherence.

## **RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON IMPROVISED MUSIC**

To exclude women improvisors from a general discourse on improvised music is to radically reduce the space of representation of how different social, political, racial and class backgrounds are signified in the music. Thus, one of the main arguments in my research is that recent books, magazines and journals on experimental improvisation virtually exclude the contributions of women improvisors. This leads to a range of questions, such as: Why are women's voices silenced? How can this be changed? What does the absence of women in the emergent discourse on experimental improvised music mean for women, for men, and for the entire field?

As previously mentioned, the inclusion of experimental women in contemporary experimental improvised traditions is essentially absent in the annals of musicological, sociological and political research. The most notable recent academic studies of improvisation, such as those by Monson (1996), Corbett (1994), Gabbard (1995), Panish (1997), and Berliner (1994) contain little or no mention of experimental women improvisors. Publications about the music based more on practice than theory, such as writings by Mandel (1999), Bailey (1992), and Dean (1992), also take a very male-oriented perspective.

Musicological research that does focus on women musicians also tends to overlook the importance of experimental women improvisors. For example Leslie Gourse's book *Madame Jazz* (1995), only mentions a few experimental contemporary women improvisers, and Christine Ammer's *Unsung: A History of*

Women in American Music (2001), refrains from discussing women whose principal form of creative expression is experimental improvisation. For Ammer, discussion of improvisation is treated as a sub-category of composition, not as a separate genre. For example, her discussion of the use of improvisation in the music of Pauline Oliveros is reduced to:

... beginning about 1957, she became involved with group improvisation. . . Group improvisation, in which an ensemble of musicians simply produces music as a group, as it occurs to them, made her feel free to write whatever she pleased. . . [In discussing the piece Out of the Dark (1998)] . . . Each player is assigned a partner, and the pair are instructed to play in response to each other in what seems to be improvisation but is limited by the well-planned instruction (Ammer 1991: 244-247).

Ammer continues to reference improvisation in a trivial way, creating an impression that artists who utilize improvisation or improvised forms do so in a way that is cursory to grander forms of musical expression -- composition and performance.

Although the majority of books on improvisation have excluded women improvisors, some authors have made efforts to remedy this exclusion. Val Wilmer's books, *Mama Said There 'd Be Days Like This*, (1989), and *As Serious as your Life* (1977), do discuss the emergence of The Feminist Improvising Group (a group I discuss in chapter 2 and 3) and the particular challenges experimental women faced in the 1970s.

Ajay Heble's book *Landing on The Wrong Note* (2000) represents an important breakthrough towards an inclusive approach to issues that address women improvisors. In particular, his chapter (co-authored with Gillian Siddall), "Nice Work if You Can Get It: Women in Jazz" calls attention to the problem of the paucity of scholarship on jazz women, an issue of relevance to experimental women improvisors as well. Heble reminds us how "scant attention has thus far been paid in jazz scholarship to the complex factors that shape our understanding of jazz's gendered legacy" (Heble 2000).

Saxophonist, composer and improvisor John Zorn has edited a collection of essays which features mostly contemporary improvisors. Titled *Arcana* (2000), the thirty-one essays, written by the artists themselves, represent one of the first collections that focus on the experiences of experimental improvising musicians in the United States. Out of thirty-one musicians featured, five are women: Marilyn Crispell, Ikue Mori, Miya Masaoka, pianist Myra Melford, and cellist Frances-Marie Uitti.

Musicologist Robert Walser's collection of 62 short essays *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History* (1999) includes a few entries about women in jazz. These include "On the Road with Count Basie," by Billie Holiday; "Jazz and Gender During the War Years," from various articles on the subject from *Downbeat*; and "It Jus' Be's Dat Way Sometime: The Sexual Politics of Women's Blues," by Hazel V. Carby. Included in the collection of essays are articles about free jazz and the AACM, but none of the articles address experimental women improvisors specifically.

Similarly, John Corbett's book on *Extended Play: Sounding Off From John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein* (1994) contains chapters on Ikue Mori and vocalists Catherine Jauniaux and Sainkho Namtchylak. Corbett mentions other women experimental improvisors throughout the text including Marilyn Crispell; pianist Myra Melford; performance artist Laurie Anderson; Joëlle Léandre; Feminist Improvising Group, among others.

Since the early 1990s, many scholars have turned their attention to questions of access and gender in music. Certainly, Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991) helped spark a movement toward critical feminist debates in music scholarship, debates which continue to unveil the forgotten voices of women, people of color and non-western music practices. These debates have been continued in the collection of essays in *Music and Gender* (2000) edited by Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond, which discuss how music is gendered in a variety of musical styles throughout the world (however experimental women improvisors were not part of this study), *Western Music and its Others* (2000), edited by Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, features essays and a foreword that tackle questions of colonialization, orientalization, race and gender.

Advances made in other disciplines demonstrate the need for scholars in music to ask similar questions when constructing musical histories. In moving to address the lack of research on the new generation of women improvisors, I seek to position improvised music scholarship as a dialogue with humanities scholarship generally. Scholars working in fields outside music, such as Homi K. Bhabha and Stuart Hall,

continue to deconstruct the hierarchies of high and low art and the notion of non-representational cultural practices. Thus, the personal testimonies of the artists are examined within the larger context of humanities research such as those postulated by bell hooks, Lucy Green, Ajay Heble, Monique Wittig, Linda Alcoff, and Henry A. Giroux, among others.

Today, a growing number of musicologists write on popular, jazz, dance, and non-western music. The combined research efforts of musicologists have a direct impact on new course curriculums at institutionalized music schools. For example, unlike ten years ago, it is now quite common to see courses offered in popular, rock, jazz, and women in music (usually only about Western European women). However, courses on experimental improvisation or women improvisors are practically non-existent.<sup>2</sup> I claim that one of the primary reasons for this is that there has not been enough research conducted on women improvisors.

Primarily an oral tradition, the study of improvisation requires a comprehensive knowledge of the performative complexities inherent to the various improvised traditions. Thus, research that moves beyond biographical and descriptive reporting towards a theoretical and critical approach is needed; I have moved toward the latter approach in this dissertation.

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<sup>2</sup> Pauline Oliveros's courses at Mills College and Susie Allen's classes at Cal Arts include discussion of experimental women improvisors. Most "Women and Music" courses try to be inclusive discussing women in jazz, pop, rock however experimental improvisors are rarely mentioned in the course syllabi. For examples see "Women and Music" courses posted on the International Alliance of Women in Music (IAWM) website <http://music.acu.edu/www/iawm/syllabi/index.html> (6 Oct. 2002).

## **CANONS AND THE HORIZON OF EXPERIMENTAL IMPROVISED MUSIC**

**The canon is seen as a replication of social relations and a potent symbol on their behalf. It provides a means of instilling a sense of identity in a culture: who the constituents are, where they come from, and where they are going. It can imply ideals of unity, consensus, and order. To adherents such ideals serve moral ends as they forge a common vision for the future. To opponents, however, they paper over the realities of social diversity and political dissent. (Citron 1993: 1).**

**Musicologist Marcia J. Citron's remarks about canonicity and the Western European Canon are equally important to notions of canon formations in experimental improvised music. The formation of canons and the inclusion of some voices over others reveal certain ideological tendencies and political positions; thus, to ignore women improvisors in the rendering of a history of improvised music is to recreate similar historical pitfalls evident in western European literary and humanities histories. This is a strangely ironic predicament for improvised music research since, as a genre itself, it suffers from marginalization by the dominant areas of music scholarship and yet, within the formative scholarship on the improvisation, another group is marginalized -- women.**

**Citron asserts that it may be difficult to formulate a canon in musics that are based in oral traditions: "An oral tradition propagates works that lack a strongly defined sense of an individual creator. The absence of notated versions removes one of the most obvious ways that an author becomes identified: the name on the score. Oral transmission in some cultures seems to promote changes to the work as it gets passed on, and this complicates the question as to what exactly constitutes the piece"**

(Citron 1993: 39). For Citron, “given that the Western musical canon relies so heavily on written transmission, one might wonder whether canons can emerge in oral traditions” (Citron 1993: 38).

At the same time, Citron herself points out how the propagation of canons is compatible with other kinds of literary support systems: “. . . we can re-emphasize the material basis of canons and point out that they are most pertinent to cultures or sub-cultures in which writing and literacy are fundamental: in creating, transmitting, reproducing, and allowing reference to a work” (Citron 1993: 39). Thus, the assertion that only written traditions can form the basis for eventual canonization is, in fact, quite problematic in its lack of consideration for newer and arguably equally powerful modes of documentation and transmission. For example, the documentation of improvised music on thousands of records easily provides enough material for canons to be formed.

This dissertation does not directly discuss issues of canonicity, or of the relationship of women improvisors to the possibility of a dominant/elitist universalized canon of improvised music. At the same time, there is no doubt that there is growing evidence of the formation of canons in improvised music. The emergence of these canons is being continually co-created, not only by musicians, but also by magazines, festival organizers, record producers, distributors and scholars. In this regard, a series of crucial questions emerge that this dissertation does seek to address: Where are the women improvisors? Where is the space for women’s music and voices to be heard and shared? Is there a universal standard for which improvised



music is measured? Are there standards by which women's music may be differently judged?

Still more questions become apparent: Who is written about in the magazines? Hired by the festivals? Recorded and produced? Valued by scholars? Is there a relationship between musical expression/production and higher or lower levels of marketability? Finally, how can women be included in these canons, if no one can find their records, see them perform at major festivals, or read about them in a magazine or book on improvised music?

The existence of these questions points to the necessity for examining the gendered nature of cultural production in improvised music, and in the following pages, responses to some of these issues will be brought to the fore.

## **DISSERTATION SUMMARY**

The dissertation is grounded by a set of recurring issues, many of which are articulated by the interview subjects themselves. The second chapter, "Biographical Sketches: The Voices of Experimental Women Improvisors," presents the subjects' personal histories. The subjects include Amina Claudine Myers, piano; Pauline Oliveros, accordion; Maggie Nicols, voice; Miya Masaoka, koto; Susie Ibarra, drums; Marilyn Crispell piano and Joëlle Léandre, bass. These personal accounts introduce readers to each of the women, highlighting the variety of ways in which these performers continue to develop their personal and musical identities as improvisors.

These biographical accounts are augmented by newspaper, magazine and Internet interviews, recording liner notes, and festival programs.

The third chapter, "The Myth of Absence: Critical Reception of Contemporary Women Improvisors," locates the relative professional marginalization of women improvisors as an artifact of inequitable media coverage. Citron's assessment of the conditions leveled against western European or Pan-European women composers are equally compelling in discussing the challenges experienced by women improvisors:

In much historical work on women composers, including my own, considerable space has been devoted to the stories of women's lack of access to the professional (patriarchal) world of music. This includes educational, performing, conducting, organizational, and critical exclusions, as well as more invisible barriers. Such accounts have been absolutely necessary to reveal the heightened, unacknowledged, and often insurmountable difficulties women have faced in acquiring what was a matter of course for men. These explorations generally rest on a model of oppression and implicitly situate male culture as the norm and female culture as the Other in relation to that prevailing culture (Citron 1994: 18).

In this chapter I focus on popular magazines dedicated to improvised music, analyzing the discourses surrounding improvised music and free jazz in the United States and its subsequent development in Canada, Europe and Asia. When coverage of women does occur in magazines or on-line, the tendency to foreground physical descriptions, make overtly gendered remarks, or advance theories as to the exceptionality of the woman in question (as though the woman is not part of a larger

community of women improvisors), can distract readers from the quality of work, and the artistic achievements of experimental women.

As a case study in reception, I analyze two reviews of improvising drummers from two different generations. Back issues of two important magazines dedicated to jazz and improvised music, *Down Beat* and *Cadence*, are examined. In these and other media outlets, feature articles about women improvisors continue to be a rarity.

In chapter four, “Policy Politics: Hiring Outcomes for Women Improvisors at Five International Music Festivals,” the rosters of five internationally renowned music festivals are surveyed: Total Music Meeting, Berlin; Taktlos, Switzerland; Guelph Jazz Festival, Ontario; Du Maurier Jazz Festival, Vancouver; and Festival International du Musique Actuelle, Victoriaville. A study of these festival programs provides valuable information about hiring practices. In line with historically restrictive notions of performative practices of women musicians, most of the festivals surveyed tend to hire women singers and pianists, rather than instrumental performers on such instruments as saxophone, trumpet, guitar, bass, drums, and electronics.

The work of theorists Ajay Heble, Lucy Green, and Richard Leppert provide additional analyses, examining the domesticity and later, institutionalization of women pianists and singers. Moreover, the noticeably higher visibility of white women improvisors, in festival appearances, feature articles and recordings, positions these women as spokespersons for women’s music in general. The work of feminist and

race theorist Elsa Barkley Brown helps here in understanding the danger of privileging one group of women over others.

For audiences and improvisors alike, the journey of improvised music is not pre-determined, but responsive in real time to the immediate performance situation. In chapter five, “Interactive Technologies of Improvisation,” I cite Canadian video artist David Rokeby in examining how improvisation, by encouraging audiences to actively share in a creative process, implicitly problematizes forms of musical reception based in culturally rooted assumptions of audience passivity. I investigate how Rokeby’s concepts of “navigable structures” (real, virtual, or conceptual articulations of physical or sonic space) and “transforming mirrors” (structures that reflect the attitudes and assumptions of the viewers or listeners) can be applied to musical improvisations.

## CONCLUSION

Teresa De Lauretis argues that, “. . . few would deny that feminist theory is all about an essential difference, an irreducible difference, though not a difference between woman and man, nor a difference inherent in ‘woman’s nature’ (in woman as nature), but a difference in the feminist conception of woman, women, and the world” (De Lauretis 1993: 308). Indeed, there can be no monolithic women’s music or women’s experience; the plural and multiple nature of women’s experiences continues to

challenge notions of an essentialized female experience, a debate that has been at the heart of feminist theory since the 1970s.

These chapters examine a wide range of subjects, including feminism, representation, reception, interactivity and biography. However, there are many more topics that deserve equal attention, but were not attended to in this dissertation because of the limitations of this project. Further study on women improvisors would explore a series of questions centering on the performative body, race, appropriation, and a model of theoretical analysis based upon real-time listening.

Moreover, although my assertion that publications in improvised music research throughout the last twelve years point to the emergence of canons in improvised music, I recognize that further interrogation is required. Because of the limits of this research, however, I will not address critical issues around canon formations. Rather, I suggest topics for further exploration, including: Do the noticeably lower percentages of women and people of color writing about improvised music, reflect how historical narratives of improvised music are valorized, produced and transmitted? Does the emergence of festivals operated by women, where women's music is not marginalized or presented tokenistically, reflect similar actions to be taken regarding the discourse of improvisation? Can a discourse of improvised music counter the historical practices of colonialism, so central to the European literary community? Do the constituents of improvised musics, such as hybridity and trans-national musical articulations, point to markedly different strategies for rendering history--in

particular, a history where multiple identities, epistemologies, representations and voices are mobilized?

Discovering the many voices of women improvisors and allocating space for them is an important step to bridging the discursive gaps in this emergent scholarship. While an exhaustive study of all the women who have in the past or are currently participating in improvised communities is beyond the scope of this work, I am hoping to stimulate further research in this area. Once these voices have been introduced to the discourse, scholars can then embark upon larger theoretical, cultural and political questions relevant to the field as a whole. Finally, a research model for improvised music that, from the outset, encourages different authenticities, aesthetic practices and musical languages to co-exist without hierarchical agendas, could emphasize the importance of individual identities within collective improvised music culture.

## **WOMEN IMPROVISORS: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF SEVEN MUSICIANS**

Although their work is often insufficiently recognized, women improvisors have contributed a great deal to contemporary forms of creative improvised music. For this study, I have chosen to interview and present seven extraordinary women improvisors. These women are American accordionist and composer Pauline Oliveros (b. 1932); American pianist, composer and vocalist Amina Claudine Myers (b. 1942); American pianist Marilyn Crispell (b. 1947); British vocalist Maggie Nicols (b. 1948); French bassist, vocalist, and composer Joëlle Léandre (b. 1951); American kotoist, composer, and sound artist Miya Masaoka (b. 1958); and American drummer Susie Ibarra (b. 1970).

During the interviews, I posed similar questions to each musician [See Appendix A for list of questions] in order to compare their responses and explore significant similarities and/or differences among them. I have supplemented these interviews with biographical accounts. Collecting information about these seven women was challenging, because for most of the artists there has been little written about them in journals and magazines.

Given the inadequacy of the archives and documentary records, I have had to rely heavily on web-based sources. Often the web offers little more than CD descriptions or concert announcements about these women, but I was able to find a few feature articles and interviews as well. Since the web's information is sometimes unreliable, I must thank the artists for participating in the interviews. At the start of

this research project, I interviewed eighteen women. However, the collating and organization of this material was too enormous a task, and with regret I narrowed the scope of my research to focus on only seven artists. Nonetheless, I hope that this selection will provide readers with a valuable and cross-cultural perspective on improvisation, enlivened by and illuminating the diverse experiences, histories, sexual orientation, instrumental choice, races, and ages of the subjects. These women should not be taken as “official voices” of any given generation or category—an assumption that would be both impossible and offensive, obscuring differences beneath false uniformity. Although the responses and histories of these seven improvisors do overlap and reinforce one another, each woman’s voice is hers and hers alone; I have done my best to present their words respectfully and accurately.

Some of the women provided extensive discussion about their personal development, while others, such as Masaoka and Nicols, emphasized the political and cultural contexts of their endeavors. For easy reference, I will discuss the women’s work beginning with the earliest birth date:

### **PAULINE OLIVEROS**

Pauline Oliveros was born in Houston, Texas on May 30, 1932. Her mother was a piano teacher and encouraged Oliveros to take up the piano. At the age of thirteen, however, she switched to the accordion, taking lessons with Willard Palmer. Oliveros continued music lessons throughout high school, and, after graduating in



1949, she enrolled as a composition student at the University of Houston, where she studied with Paul Koepke. According to Oliveros, Koepke wanted his students to use Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* as their model. This was problematic for Oliveros, as she wanted to practice not imitation but listening to her own voice. In her third year in the program, she decided to leave the department, and in 1953 she moved to San Francisco, known to be a center of experimentation and creativity.

In 1954 Oliveros decided to continue her academic studies at San Francisco State, from which she graduated in 1957. During her studies, Oliveros met composer Robert Erickson, who at that time taught at the San Francisco Conservatory. She felt that Erickson was sympathetic to the way she heard and conceptualized music and sound. From an early age, Oliveros had listened to environmental sounds, and wanted to explore them. As her principal teacher from 1954 to 1960, Erickson stressed the importance of being a practical composer, making sure that his student's compositions were playable and would indeed be performed. These concerns encouraged Oliveros to participate in the performance of her own work, diminishing the separation between performer and composer.

Following Erickson's suggestions, Oliveros created a number of pieces, including the *Three Songs for Soprano and Piano* (1957). The texts for these songs come from two poems by Robert Duncan ("An Interlude of Rare Beauty" and "Spider Song") and Charles Olson's "Song Number Six" from *The Maximus Poems*. These songs are perhaps Oliveros' first attempt at using improvisation, setting the poetry not for the literal meanings, but for what it evokes in her. While many

composers use this approach, the difference is that Oliveros imagines sounds, and rhythms as suggested by texts using improvisation and imagery to create the pieces.

An interlude                of rare beauty

The seal in the depraved wave glides in the green of it.

All his true statement

made in his mere swimming.

Thus     we reclaim

all senseless motion from its waves

of beauty.   Naming

No more than our affection

for naming

(Von Gunden 1983: 11).

Although this work is a traditional notated score, Oliveros considers it to be a slowed down improvisation, arising more from spontaneous intuition than premeditation; indeed, there is no “pre-composition” involved. She also considers this piece to be her first professional work.

During the late 1950s, Oliveros developed a strong interest in instructional and graphic scores. In 1957 she formed a group with the composers Loren Rush and Terry Riley. They would meet regularly in the studio of KPFA Radio in Berkeley for

improvised music sessions.<sup>1</sup> According to Oliveros, the group decided that rather than writing pieces down beforehand, they would “play intuitively and without planned directions, . . . listen to the tape, and then talk about what they had done” (Von Gunden 1983: 33). Such criticism of what had occurred during an improvisation was central to Oliveros’ development.

In 1961, Oliveros and Ramon Sender formed Sonics at the San Francisco Conservatory. The purpose of Sonics was to create pieces using tape and electronics. Eventually this project moved first to the San Francisco Tape Center, and, in 1965, supported by funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, the project went to Mills College, where it was renamed the Contemporary Center for Music (CCM). The intention of the CCM was to give the public access to electronic equipment, and at the same time, a Euro-American center for experimentalism took form. The CCM still exists today at Mills College, as a vital resource for contemporary tape and electronic music.

As a composer, working with tape offered Oliveros “the ability to explore and fulfill [her] interest in sounds other than traditional music sources” (Schloss 1993: 107). Oliveros remembers how her first tape piece, *Time Perspectives* (1961), is based on improvised sounds which she had been using since 1948. Making tape music

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<sup>1</sup> In 1957 Loren Rush was Associate Music Director at KPFA in Berkeley. (<http://www.o-art.org/history/70's/Composers/L.Rush.html>). In Richard Zvonar’s “A Chronology of Bay Area Multichannel Music and Related Events,” he writes that in 1958 Ramon Sender, Loren Rush, Terry Riley, and Pauline Oliveros were using KPFA as a studio to record improvised music. [http://www.zvonar.com/writing/Surround\\_the\\_Bay/sidebar\\_chronology.html](http://www.zvonar.com/writing/Surround_the_Bay/sidebar_chronology.html) (cited 4 Oct. 2002).

required a good memory, as well as the ability to derive a logical whole from disparate materials.

Later, her pieces *I of IV* (1966) and *Bye Bye Butterfly* (1965) utilize the recording studio. Martha Mockus quotes Oliveros's remarks to Barry Schrader about *I of IV*: "In my studio work, I wanted to bypass editing, if I could, and work in a way that was similar to a performance. In this way, I could be close to what I was doing. . . . As I was making *I of IV*, I was also listening to it. I was riding with it as it came out and I was enjoying it" (qtd in Mockus 1999: 39; Schrader 1982: 186).

In 1967, Robert Erickson, who at the time was teaching at the University of California, San Diego, invited Oliveros to join the faculty and teach electronic music and improvisation. Oliveros accepted the offer and remained at UCSD as a full professor for fourteen years. In 1969, Oliveros formed an all women's improvisation group. Musical ideas for the group developed from her study of psychoanalysis (including Freud's idea of deep primitive impulse), linguistics, and feminism. She was keenly interested in the direct experience of sound through oral traditions. In addition to the sound journal, she applied the principles of awareness and attention taught to her by Lester Ingber, her karate teacher, to the practice of listening, also incorporating meditational arts.

Oliveros combined many of these practices to create her highly original *Sonic Meditations*. These consist of 25 pieces: 1-12 were written in 1971, and 12-25 in 1973. Oliveros' aesthetic is free of traditional craft, and the usual parameters of pitch, rhythm, and form are irrelevant. Instead, each performance of a *Sonic Meditation* is

allowed to evolve through attention and listening. For Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations* contribute to a larger sonic awareness which “is a synthesis of the psychology of consciousness, the physiology of the martial arts, and the sociology of the feminist movement” (Von Gunden 1983: 106). The notion of *Sonic Meditations* provides an alternative compositional model of music production, where personal experience and bodily knowledge directly inform the music.

Since the *Sonic Meditations*, Oliveros has continued to make music which fosters spirituality, meditation, and co-creation, for both professional and non-professional musicians. Each year she encourages individuals from all backgrounds to participate in her Deep Listening Retreats. Oliveros describes Deep Listening as “a lifetime practice. The more I listen the more I learn to listen. Deep Listening involves going below the surface of what is heard and also expanding to the whole field of sound whatever one’s usual focus might be. This is the way to connect with the acoustic environment and all that inhabits it” (Oliveros 1998: 114).

In 1988 she formed the Deep Listening Band with trombonist Stuart Dempster. As she recounts in an interview with David Toop:

In 1988, that’s when we went into that big cistern [a two million gallon cistern with a reverberation time of 45 seconds at Fort Worden 70 miles northwest of Seattle] and recorded. Then we discovered we had enough material for a CD. When I was trying to write the liner notes, I was trying to come to some conclusion about what it was we were actually doing in there. The two words came together—deep listening—because it’s a very challenging space to create music in when you have forty-five seconds reverberations coming back at you (Toop 1995: 248).

The process of creating music in the Deep Listening Band is explained by Stuart Dempster: “When the Band performs, each of the performers is on an equal footing with the others, as he/she listens intently and improvises under instructions set up by the consensus of the group, or by one of the composer-performers” (Schloss 1993: 46).

The Deep Listening Band uses the Expanded Instrument System, which was developed by David Gamper. Stuart Dempster explains how the EIS works:

The EIS is an evolving electronic sound processing environment dedicated to providing improvising musicians control over various interesting parameters of electronic transformation of their acoustic performances. Performers each have their own setup, which includes their microphones, control devices and a computer with sound input and output. The computer provides the digital signal processing, which includes delays and ambiance, and translates and displays control information for this processing from foot pedals and switches (Dempster “Sounding the Margins” 2002: 9).

Since 1996 Oliveros has been sharing the Darius Milhaud Chair in composition at Mills College with composer Alvin Curran. Oliveros’ ongoing collaborations with her partner Ione, an author, director, psychotherapist, and director, have resulted in the creation of *Njinga The Queen King*, *The Return of a Warrior* (1993), *The Lunar Opera* (2000); *Deep Listening For Tunes* (2000); and *Io and Her and the Trouble with Him* (2001).

Her residency in the San Francisco Bay Area has brought about many new projects with younger musicians. Some of her collaborations have involved forming the Circle Trio (founded 1997), with violinist India Cooke and vocalist/percussionist

Karolyn van Putten; and The Space Between (founded 1996), a trio featuring Philip Gelb on shakuhachi and myself on piano. The Space Between uses improvisation to negotiate the space between three very different tuning and cultural origins. The accordion, played by Oliveros, is in just intonation, the piano is in equal temperament, and the shakuhachi has its own unique tuning. The trio explores the rich sonic environments among these instruments, with special emphasis on timbre and extended techniques.

In 2002 Oliveros turned seventy years old. To celebrate her life and works, a three day festival called Sounding the Margins was held at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre in San Francisco. This forty-year retrospective presented some of her most notable compositions for large and small ensembles.

## **AMINA CLAUDINE MYERS**

Born in 1942 in Blackwell, Arkansas, Amina Claudine Myers was exposed early on to music. When Myers was around four years old, her great uncle introduced her to the concept of rhythm. While he counted to four, he had her tap out beats, one foot with the heel and the other with the toe. She listened carefully to guests playing piano at her house, and at the age of six, Myers had her first lessons, with white Catholic teachers, seven miles away in the town of Morrilton. The first piece she learned to play was “Chopsticks.”

Around 1950 her family moved to Dallas, where she continued studying

classical piano. In addition, when she was around eleven years old, she would go to the local Baptist church (although she herself was Methodist) and participate as an actress in various holiday programs and Sunday services. Slightly later, the Baptist church formed a gospel group of seven singers. Initially, the group continued the a cappella tradition of slapping thighs to keep rhythm. Myers had the additional responsibility of being the main piano player for the group. Myers shares that “playing was always very natural for me - I was never aggressive about it – not that I took it for granted, but I didn’t have to *think* that much about it” (Stein 1989: 27).

Besides this, Myers started playing the piano for services at her own Methodist church, and also began playing rhythm and blues. By the end of high school, Myers had her own private students. After high school, Myers attended what would now be called a historically black college, Philander Smith College in Little Rock, where she majored in Music Education and studied European choral and classical music. She also became proficient at the pipe organ, playing it at church and the Hammond B3 in nightclubs.

After college, in 1963, Myers moved to Chicago, where she taught in public schools for six years. Myers recalls how she eventually became involved with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) in Chicago,

I taught seventh and eighth grade music. I really wasn't thinking about playing. And I went out with a young man one time, he was a photographer . . . He was really a photographer, but he liked to play the hand drums. Unfortunately, he had no rhythm, none. But he would go up on the West Side and sit in, and I went there with him one night and played the organ, and the leader of the group fired his organ player and hired me. Then I went from there, and started working with a guy



named Cozy Eggleston. While working with Cozy, Ajaramu, the drummer, heard me, and we formed a group together. He was the one that brought me into the AACM (Myers "Roscoe Mitchell and Amina Claudine Myers" 1995).

Her introduction to the AACM took place in 1966. Ajaramu (formerly Jerol Donovan) was an original member of the organization. One of the few women in the AACM, Myers feels that her participation was very important in her growth. She was encouraged to develop her own music and to collaborate with other African-American artists, poets, and musicians. Among these musicians were Anthony Braxton, Muhal Richard Abrams, Kalaparusha (Maurice McIntyre), and Henry Threadgill.

One of the important skills Myers developed at AACM was improvisation. She recalls that "Ajaramu was very instrumental in helping me as far as improvising, and giving me suggestions and things about listening to the horn players" (Myers Interview, 2000). Myers explains how, at first, the experience of playing in the AACM was quite challenging:

Well, I was very apprehensive. Because Muhal [Richard Abrams] had those charts! I thought they was . . . I said, "Oh, my goodness." There were about two or three piano players on the scene, and I was hoping I wouldn't be called! Because reading the music, it looked so, so difficult. I was more or less shy. Believe it or not, I was. I was hoping I wouldn't be called to play. I would worry all while I was up there at the piano! I was worried about playing the wrong note. Because the music looked very difficult to me, and it can be. But Muhal was very patient and very encouraging (Myers "Roscoe Mitchell and Amina Claudine Myers" 1995).

Myers remained mostly in Chicago until 1976, except for a one-year stay in New Jersey in 1969-1970 while touring with saxophonist Sonny Stitt. Myers recalls

that “With Sonny Stitt, I really learned how to use my ears. You had to be really creative with him. One night, he called four blues in a row and three of them were in the same key! He knew every standard in the world and you had to be ready with any tune, even if you hadn’t played it for months - you had to know all those songs inside out...” (Stein 1989: 28). This tour was followed by a two and a half year tour with the Gene Ammons Quartet. In 1976 Myers moved to New York City permanently.

In New York City Myers’ collaborations with many of the leading experimental musicians are documented on sound recordings. Some of these include *The Fifth Power* (Black Saint) with saxophonist Lester Bowie; *Muhai Richard Abrams Duet Featuring Amina Claudine Myers* (Black Saint) and *Life A Blinec* (Arista) with pianist Muhai Richard Abrams; and *X 75, Volume 1* (Arista) with guitarist Henry Threadgill. Her other recordings with herself as the leader include *Song For Mother E* (Leo), *The Circle of Time* (Black Saint) and *Poems for the Piano* (Sweet Earth Records) demonstrate her explorations in experimental improvised music (Stein *Downbeat* 1989: 28).

Myers’ musical projects are all quite different from one another, although she feels that blues, jazz, and gospel music are in everything she does. In New York she leads her own trio, quartet, and sextet, as well as the Amina Claudine Myers Voice Choir. Some of her most popular recordings include *Amina Claudine Myers Salutes Bessie Smith* (Leo 1980) and *Jumping in the Sugar Bowl* (Minor Music, 1984), as well as *Amina Claudine Myers Trio Live*, which was recorded at the Women in (E)motion Festival in Germany and is only available in Europe. Myers is particularly drawn to

this live recording because it was an opportunity for her to re-work previously recorded songs in a more open approach. Also featured on this CD are Jerome Harris on bass and Reggie Nicholson on drums.

Although the music of Myers has not been celebrated enough at festivals as I have documented in chapter 4, Myers was invited to perform at the *Women of the New Jazz Festival in Chicago* in 1994 with her trio Reggie Nicholson drums and Jerome Harris on bass. Reviewer Aaron Cohen tried to capture the sensibilities of Myers performance that night: “Myers’ piano tones resemble peer Muhal Richard Abrams’ delicately off-center sound. Her voice was in fine form, sounding as strong as it did on her Bessie Smith tribute disc 12 years ago. In the most stirring segment of her performance, she repeated a gospelized phrase with her voice and played microtonal flourishes beneath the words while Nicholson kept rearranging their syncopation every few measures” (Cohen “Women of the New Jazz Festival” 1994: 50).<sup>2</sup>

## MARILYN CRISPELL

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<sup>2</sup> “From 1991-1994, the HOTHOUSE [in Chicago] curated the Women of the New Jazz Festival. The featured artists did not come from bebop or standard jazz, but from a more avant garde position. Most were instrumentalists, and not the vocalists, so usually associated with women in jazz. Shortly thereafter the HotHouse closed for two years, in search of a new and better space to present the music. Now in it’s second year at the beautiful new location on Balbo Street, (downtown, and just a few blocks from the famous Lakeshore Park and Drive), Marguerite created the Women Make Half the Sound Festival 2000, in hopes to renew the case of the Women of the New Jazz Festival, and she hopes to do this project every six months, starting small scale with local talent and selected guests, and expanding as the project grows, and grants can be written” (Smith, “A New” 2002).

Marilyn Crispell was born in Philadelphia in 1947, where her family resided until she was ten. The family then moved to Baltimore. Her father, a government clerk, worked in a social security office and her mother stayed at home. The family had a little Victrola and a few classical records, including piano concerti by Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky.

Crispell was the older of two girls, and began playing music at the age of seven. At first she played by ear; then her parents decided to enroll her in piano lessons. As Crispell recalls her early training, “Basically, I was just playing by ear but I started improvising when I was in my early teens” (Crispell Telephone Interview 2000). These early efforts were imitations of whatever repertoire she was studying at the time—Bach, Mozart, Chopin.

Crispell enrolled as a composition major at the New England Conservatory of Music, but switched over to classical piano, studying principally with Lucille Monaghan. At the conservatory, Crispell was very interested in chamber music, and also played pieces by such contemporary European composers as Berio, Ligeti, and Stockhausen, but improvisation or jazz music was neither talked about nor taught.

In her last year of college she got married. During her marriage she took a complete break from music for six years and, as she was interested in medicine and psychology, worked in hospitals. In 1972 she was divorced, and, at the same time, became involved with music again. Her first musical engagement was as a vocalist for a group in Cape Cod, where she lived at the time.

When Crispell was twenty-eight years old, an encounter with a recording of

John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* changed her musical path forever. Upon hearing Coltrane's music, she understood that his was the kind of music that she wanted to perform. "One night he [referring to a musician friend of hers] was out of the house and I put on *A Love Supreme* and something, the spirit of it, just caught me" (Lock 1988: 180). For the next two years, Crispell studied jazz piano with Charlie Banacos, who had previously taught at Berklee and who taught Crispell how to play a single piece in twelve keys, among other things. Soon after her lessons with Banacos, Crispell heard about and went to Karl Berger's Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, New York. Crispell has remained in Woodstock ever since.

Although Crispell had been exploring improvisation, it was not until she heard Cecil Taylor that she realized creative improvised music was a viable art form. In fact, Crispell considers Taylor among her teachers. In the 1980s and 1990s, many people heard Crispell through her work as the pianist in the Anthony Braxton Quartet. She has stated that "Thelonious Sphere Monk and Anthony Braxton showed me a path to using space in music, while African music inspired me with its polyrhythms" (Crispell "City of Women" 1999). She was also a member of the Reggie Workman Ensemble, and has worked with a wide range of improvisors and composers, including the Barry Guy New Orchestra, Anthony Davis, Leo Smith, and Steve Lacy.

Crispell's music articulates her own voice. Her earlier recordings embody influences from both contemporary African-American improvisation and contemporary western music. These can be heard through her choice of using non-harmonic based music, percussive techniques, poly-rhythms, disjunct melodic lines

and counter-point.

While a discussion of her music can never really substitute for the listening experience itself, Crispell's pieces often move fluidly between notated musical ideas to improvised passages. One never feels that Crispell is tied to representing the notated music in a particular way; rather, the notated aspects leave room for new musical articulations in the moment of performance.

Additionally, the notation never seems to impose a specific direction for the improvised passages. In a discussion with Graham Lock, Crispell states that her involvement with composition is not a large part of what she does. Crispell, “. . . my composing is minimal. It's really spontaneous composition. . . I might write down a small segment to use as a basis for improvisation, but I won't write out a whole piece” (Lock 1988: 182).

At the time of our interview, Crispell felt that her strongest work was represented on recordings such as *Nothing Ever Was Anyway* (1997), a collaboration with Gary Peacock and Paul Motian featuring the music of Annette Peacock, her solo recording, *The Woodstock Concert* (1995), and *Santa Cruz* (1993), a recording with the Anthony Braxton Quartet.

Crispell's music has evolved significantly throughout her career. Although her voice is clearly her own, Crispell's music often emerges both from the sensibilities of energy music reminiscent of 1960s free jazz such as Cecil Taylor and from more spacious, quieter and contemplative works, such as the music of pianist Paul Bley and composer Morton Feldman. For example, her playing on the CD *Destiny* utilizes

techniques associated with energy music, such as kinetic movements, clusters, fast moving pianistic passages, dense loud passages, scalar runs (albeit not of a particular key), and arpeggios. By contrast, her quieter and reflective works can be heard on *Nothing Ever Was Anyway*, which utilizes more open space, wandering melodies, and softer timbres.

Her recent recording *Amaryllis* continues to develop a more introspective musical style similar to her work on the recording *Nothing ever Was Anyway*. In this project Crispell, together with Motion and Peacock, improvise and re-configure older pieces such as Crispell's *Rounds*. For Crispell, her work with the above trio belongs to her own musical continuum. She recognizes that "A musician grows and, just like any other person, changes and accepts new knowledge. The energetic piano is as much mine as my calmer music" (Crispell "City of Women" 1999).

## **MAGGIE NICOLS**

Maggie Nicols was born in Scotland on February 24, 1948. As a singer, Nicols never received formal training, but learned "on the job." Her first singing engagement was at a strip club in Manchester when she was sixteen years old; at the same time, she began to sing with the pianist most responsible for bringing bebop to Britain, Dennis Rose, and supported herself by singing in pubs, hotels, and dance bands. In addition, Nicols was an active dancer, once holding a position for six months at the Moulin Rouge in Paris.

In 1968 Nicols joined one of the first European improvising groups, the Spontaneous Music Ensemble (SME). Formed in 1966 by drummer John Stevens (1940-1994) and Trevor Watts (b. 1939), the ensemble participated in the first Total Music Meeting in Berlin in 1966. Nicols recorded *Oliv* (1969) with the SME.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1960s-early 1970s Nicols moved to London and formed a vocal group, Voice. This group featured vocalists Brian Ely, Phil Minton and Julie Tippetts. During the late 1970s Tippetts and Nicols released a recording on FMP titled *Sweet and S'Ours*. (Nicols "Yahoo Biography" 2002).<sup>4</sup> In 1977 she became involved with the feminist group Ova and later that same year co-founded the Feminist Improvising Group (F.I.G.) with bassoonist and composer Lindsay Cooper (1951).

For Nicols, the emergence of F.I.G. was a way to negotiate her personal and professional relationships with women. At the time Nicols was concerned that she was not creating music with other women. Nicols recalls that

I had had all these intimate musical relationships with men, but I realized that I had never really had intimate relationships with women musically, and so it coincided with getting involved with the women's liberation movement and coming out as a lesbian and then realizing about Keith and Julie Tippetts, who I have a fantastic relationship with musically, that I had never really ever worked with other women on that level (Nicols Interview 2000).

The original participants in F.I.G. were Georgina Born, a classically-trained

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<sup>3</sup> The Spontaneous Music Ensemble on *Oliv* is as follows: John Stevens (percussion, glockenspiel); Kenny Wheeler (fh); Derek Bailey (g); Trevor Watts (as); Peter Lemer (p); John Dyani (b); Maggie Nichols (vo); Carolann Nichols (vo); Pepi Lemer (vo). <http://www1.ocn.ne.jp/~lot74/sme.html> (cited 5 Oct. 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Nicols CD with Tippetts is not currently listed in FMP's CD catalogue. <http://www.free-music-production.de/eframeset.htm> (cited 4 Oct. 2002).



cellist who had toured with The Art Bears; Kathy Williams, a vocalist and pianist; Corine Liensol, a trumpet player and member of Jam Today, an all women's rock and soul group; and the self-taught Swiss pianist, Irène Schweizer. Later members of the group included the Dutch trombonist Annemarie Roelofs and the British vocalist and filmmaker Sally Potter.

Nicols recalls that she arranged their first concert at a festival titled "Music for Socialism" at the Almost Free Theatre in Rupert Street, UK (Wickes 1999: 241). Although they originally called themselves the Women's Improvising Group, the concert organizers mistakenly identified them as the Feminist Improvising Group in the program, which name they decided to keep. However, Nicols was quick to point out that using the name The Women's Improvising Group avoided drawing attention to their feminist politics. However, because the organizers referred to them as a feminist group, they felt compelled to include feminist concerns in their musical presentation.

Nicols remembers how the group lived up to their new name at their first concert: "We rose to the occasion. We were so deliriously anarchic and in-your-face that we provoked one of the most intense and heartfelt discussions of the whole festival" (Nicols "In our different" 2000: 44). Nicols describes the first concert as focusing on the individual identities, either real or mythical, of the members:

I drew on the fact that I was a mother. When people saw me without my daughter ... I had been sort of calm, and they saw one person. Then the same person would see me with my daughter and I was a bit harassed. They didn't even recognize me or realize I was the same

person. Georgie [Born] did something around her appearance [concerning weight issues], Corine was disabled and has always been treated like a child, she was a mixed race black woman, so there were issues around that. . . Corine and I played mother and daughter. . . . Lindsay [Cooper] . . . had been in the classical scene, so she was like a nice lady, dressed in appropriate classical clothes—something a lady would wear to play classical music. . . Our first gig was quite anarchic. It had elements of theatre; we had props, we were chopping onions, I was rushing around with perfume, it was completely improvised, apart from the fact that we decided to draw from our own lives according to the sense that the personal is political (Nicols Interview 2000).

As a result of their first performance, the group decided to retain the name F.I.G. and explore their experiences as women in performance. In the beginning F.I.G. appeared mostly at women's festivals. The music proved challenging for women used to rock, folk, and disco music, but F.I.G.'s theatrical and humorous approach to women's issues impressed many. Rehearsals for F.I.G. were conducted like workshops, on the feminist assumption that "the personal is political."

Further, F.I.G. challenged not only women but the existing improvised community itself, as Nicols observes:

There were these five women, challenging, I suppose, the whole way improvised music had been played. I think we were right in the forefront of that kind of irreverence; I suppose the Dutch had done it a bit, but not quite in that way. There was politics, farce, music, it was improvised, it was theatrical, and it was women, and there hadn't been up to that point an improvising group of just women, so I think it was quite radical (Nicols Interview, 2000).

As a group F.I.G. remained active until the early 1980s. Much later some members left permanently, while others regrouped with different improvisors under the name European Women's Improvising Group, which was founded in 1983. Some

of the women involved with E.W.I.G. have included Irène Schweizer, Joëlle Léandre, Lindsay Cooper, Annemarie Roelofs, and the late French singer Annick Nozati.

According to Schweizer, “The name Feminist Improvising Group was chosen because we were all so involved in the women's movement, but in the '80s people began to criticize the name and say it was too political.... So we renamed it to make it more international and open. The initials EWIG mean eternal in German” (Hale 1997: 14-15).

After F.I.G., Nicols co-founded Contradictions in 1980. Another all-women's group, Contradictions continued the stance of F.I.G., and encouraged people of disparate styles and abilities to co-create in a workshop setting. The founding members of Contradictions included Jackie Lansley and the violinist and electronic musician Sylvia Hallett. The original group at the first concert also included Corine Liensol, Irène Schweizer, and the dancer and widow of bassist Jimmy Garrison of the John Coltrane Quartet, Roberta Garrison. Ultimately, Nicols turned the group into a women's workshop in which anyone could participate. As a workshop facilitator for over thirty years, Nicols has developed communities that nourish both experienced and inexperienced musicians.

For the past nine years, Nicols has hosted a musical event called The Gathering, which is an open call for musicians of all ranks to get together and jam every Monday night. Nicols describes herself as the host of the evening: “People arrive, I say hello, welcome, please feel free to do very little, nothing at all, as much as you want, sit and listen, you can blow down a bottle” (Nicols Interview 2000). For

## Nicols

**The Gathering fulfills her vision of “people from diverse social and musical backgrounds coming together to build a creative community in spite of the alienation of an oppressive hierarchical system. Through clumsiness and grace, fragmentation and cohesion, we are developing individually and collectively and having a bloody good time. There are no standards to live up to, and the consequent lack of censorship can inspire some of the most stunning music I have ever experienced. In our different rhythms together we are, in John Stevens’ words, “practicing an alternative society” (Nicols “In our different” 2000: 45).**

**In the early 1990s, Nicols became part of the trio Les Diaboliques with Joëlle Léandre and Irène Schweizer. Each member of the trio offers a distinct musical voice to the group. For example, during a performance Nicols uses modalities ranging from presenting a jazz standard with a straight-ahead approach to singing out-of-tune with the piano or bass, creating overtones, emitting primal utterances, squeaking, squealing, reciting text, and tap dancing. Léandre’s upright bass and vocal contributions skillfully oscillate between the traditions of western European classical music and free jazz. Meanwhile, Schweizer whimsically introduces and then abandons pithy piano interludes, jazz standards, virtuosic stride piano, or jaunts inside the instrument.**

**As an improviser, Nicols agrees that her singing has changed throughout her career and that at different times she has drawn from a variety of sources, such as her personal life, political situations, literature, and her subconscious: “Sometimes I like to not think at all, I like to totally trust that everything I need is in the subliminal mind, which I believe it is” (Nicols Interview 2000). Her approach to singing is not unlike that of the great jazz women like Billie Holiday or Ella Fitzgerald, who developed their sound and techniques by mimicking instruments in the band. Indeed, Nicols**

practices exercises made specifically for instruments such as the trumpet (Nicols Interview 2000).

Although Nicols has recorded several CDs, she considers her most important works to be her recording *Nicols and Nu* with pianist Peter Nu on Leo Records (1985) as well as the first two recordings of Les Diaboliques: *Les Diaboliques* (Intakt 1993) and *Splitting Image* (Intakt 1994).

## JOËLLE LÉANDRE

Bassist and vocalist Joëlle Léandre was born on September 12, 1951 in Aix-en-Provence. Léandre has described her family background as follows: “It can be summarized in three phrases: the south, a blue-collar family, descendants of Gypsies. In other words, the Mediterranean, a work ethic, and, finally, a nomadic existence” (Léandre 1991).

Léandre first learned the recorder, but later studied the piano from the age of nine until fourteen, and bass from age ten until fourteen. Her introduction to the bass was pure chance. Léandre describes how “My brother Richard began to study the double bass. . . The piano tuner told us a new course would be offered at the Conservatory in Aix, a course for double bass with an extraordinary professor, a true teacher, very spirited, who really loved his instrument” (Léandre “Interview with Brian Marley” 2002).<sup>5</sup> This is how Léandre became interested in the bass.

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<sup>5</sup> Léandre never names the bass teacher in Marley’s interview.

She continued classical bass with Pierre Delescluse, who suggested that she apply to the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris. She did, and at the Conservatoire she obtained a Premier Prix in contrabass. Overall Léandre spent approximately fifteen years studying the bass at various institutions.

Léandre understands that there is a process of awakening to become a mature musician:

... One becomes conscious of things when consciousness awakens. Before that you follow the rules laid down by your parents, your teacher, you practice your lesson. That's a very long, slow process. Then you begin to be shaken up – by a phrase, a fragment, the simple pleasure of following the score. You develop your memory, you give pleasure to others – and to yourself, certainly – becoming a musician a little more each day (Léandre “Interview with Brian Morley” 2002).

In 1976 Léandre received a scholarship to attend the Center for Creative and Performing Arts in Buffalo, which at the time was thriving with interesting artists including John Cage, Morton Feldman, and Earle Brown. Léandre stayed in Buffalo for eight months. That same year she gave her first solo bass performance. While living in Buffalo she was also able to experience the thriving improvisation scene in downtown New York City.

Léandre is committed to performing both improvised music and contemporary notated music. She has commissioned many new scores for the double bass, and has recorded pieces by such personal friends as the composers John Cage and Giacinto Scelsi. Léandre has helped influence composers' attitudes towards composing for the bass. She states that “I've also turned it [the bass] into a solo instrument, commissioning pieces from various French and foreign composers during the last

twenty years. I myself have composed for the double bass, and written compositions for the theatre, for dancers, for certain performances in which I always include the double bass (Léandre “Interview with Brian Marley” 2002).

As early as 1970 Léandre performed John Cage’s music in the ensemble *Itinéraire* (Léandre Interview with Brian Marley, 2002). For ten years she worked as a freelance musician in such contemporary music ensembles as the Ensemble *Intercontemporain* and *2E2M*.

Among the important influences on her improvised work, Léandre has named such figures as Thelonious Monk, Derek Bailey, George E. Lewis, Irène Schweizer, Anthony Braxton, Eric Dolphy, Charles Mingus, and Cecil Taylor. Having worked with some of these artists including George E. Lewis, Derek Bailey, and Irène Schweizer encouraged Léandre to increase her involvement in improvised music. In addition, her close involvement with poetry and painting has helped to strengthen her music (Léandre 1991: 35).

Léandre is a member of the European Women’s Improvising Group and the trio *Les Diaboliques* (see Maggie Nicols). Another group, *The Canvas Trio*, features Rüdiger Carl on accordion and Carlos Zingaro on violin. Léandre has been an artist in residence in Berlin under the auspices of the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), and has given workshops and lectures in North American and France.

When I asked Léandre if she could recommend her most important recording, Léandre replied that, having appeared on over sixty recordings and CDs, she did not

feel that she has a most important recording. Rather, she suggests that her recordings “are all essential, since each contains an aspect of my life, the time I spend on or with specific questions, adventures, emotions, journeys.<sup>6</sup> That’s what music is all about” (Léandre Interview, 2000). In an interview with Fujishima Yutaka, Léandre further explains her understanding of improvised music: “I could say improvisation is natural music. It is one way to find out why you took up an instrument for the first time” (Léandre “Homestudio” 2000).

Léandre’s involvement with creative improvisation did not arise from jazz, but she maintains that European jazz is an extension of the forms created by African-Americans:

[What] is happening in Europe is simply a reflection of the Afro-American music that belongs to that culture. Even free jazz is subjacent to this heritage. But I don’t have a jazz background. In Europe, we have Diaghilev in our arteries, Debussy in our veins, Mallarmé in our blood, and Paul Klee in our toes! This doesn’t prevent me, however, from being extremely attached to jazz’s wind of freedom, its lack of definition, its refusal of dogma (Léandre 1991: 37).

## MIYA MASAOKA

Miya Masaoka is a San Francisco-based kotoist, performance artist, and composer. Born in Washington, D.C. in 1958, she moved to the west coast of the United States when she was still a baby. Her first instrument was the piano. Masaoka

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<sup>6</sup> Although Léandre does not mention specific recording projects, I have included some CD titles for future reference in the selected discography.



began by imitating an older sister who was studying piano and guitar; later, Masaoka studied classical piano formally. She recalls that she improvised early, but that her teacher did not approve of her creative explorations. She learned guitar from a Gypsy in San Mateo, while a neighbor who lived down the street taught her boogie-woogie piano techniques. In addition, she listened to rock and roll, blues, jazz, and Japanese music.

At a talent show, she remembers playing “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” adding improvised material. Masaoka continued her formal training in music at San Francisco State University, where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts in 1990. In 1994 she completed a Masters of Art in Music Composition from Mills College, studying composition with Alvin Curran. Additionally, Masaoka, a Japanese-American, studied traditional Japanese court music with master musician Sensei Suenobu Togi, and has subsequently directing performances with the San Francisco Gagaku Society.

Today Masaoka is comfortable moving among jazz, free improvisation, Western classical, traditional Japanese, and electronic music. She has performed in Canada, the United States, Japan and India, collaborating with such diverse musicians as Fred Frith, Dr. L. Subramaniam, Wadada Leo Smith, Steve Coleman, George F. Lewis, Pharoah Sanders, and the Rova Saxophone Quartet. She has also worked with choreographer June Watanabe and the Ellen Webb Dance Company and held a residency at STEIM in Amsterdam to build a midi interface for her koto.

Masaoka describes her first recording, *Compositions/Improvisations*, released on Asian Improv in 1993, as follows:

I was staying closer to traditional techniques, but I was really experimenting with different structures and different aesthetics. I did a piece that Mahalia Jackson recorded, Duke Ellington's spiritual, *Come Sunday*, and a piece that was based on structures like Cecil Taylor, and so I used different kinds of techniques and things. But I was working much closer to traditional aesthetics and techniques than I do now. That was almost 10 years ago. That represents that epoch" (Masaoka Interview 2000).

Masaoka's work embraces the complex issues of race, identity, and sexuality.

These issues are perhaps best exemplified by her work in progress, "What is the Sound of Ten Naked Asian Men?" in which Masaoka creates a complex musical landscape while at the same time problematizing dominant attitudes towards Asian men's bodies. In this piece, ten Asian men lay naked on tables. Each man has six microphones placed upon his body to amplify swallowing, heartbeat, stomach growls, etc. The natural sounds are then to be mixed and edited along with interviewed responses from each man.

Masaoka has stated this piece was made "to question the pre-conceived notions of such social constructions as gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. To present the body as a passive canvas, as a passive medium or instrument for which cultural meaning is inscribed, is to illustrate this point head-on" (Masaoka "What is the Sound of Ten Asian Men?" 2002).

Problematizing Asian male bodies is significant because often it is the female Asian body that is the focus of attention by both white and non-white audiences. As Masaoka notes,

[It] is always Asian women [not Asian men] who get [to] have that kind notoriety or it is always Asian women who are taking their clothes off... So many Asian guys wanted to do the piece, so I said okay, I will still do it, because the response was so great from Asian men to want to be naked to want to perform like that and I just think they don't get an opportunity because the media just shuns them out (Masaoka Interview 2000).

In "The Bee Show," one of what Masaoka calls her "interspecies pieces," 3,000 bees (behind glass) are amplified and processed using spatialization software, allowing the artist to "tweak things, so that things happen within this multi-dimensional space" (Masaoka Interview 2000). Along with the bees, Masaoka creates a wide range of techniques on the koto that work with the buzzing of the bees.

For Masaoka, the bee project looks at "gender issues and is kind of somewhat ironical or satirical look at societies in general and social organizations" (Masaoka Interview 2000). Masaoka further explains that "there is this queen bee female, all the rest of the bees are male and they have to do all the work. Then there are the 'trans-gender bees' [and] all they do is have intercourse with the female, after which a popping sound occurs and they are killed" (Masaoka Interview 2000). Masaoka uses the bee project as an opportunity to question whether or not the hive "is a utopia of [a] really highly efficient society or is it fascism" (Masaoka Interview 2000)?

Masaoka's involvement with a multitude of traditions enables her to compare the differences valued within each tradition. In comparing her experience with jazz and Japanese music, Masaoka recounts that

the jazz tradition ... is very different than the Japanese tradition where you are taught to emulate what your master does, literally imitations,

the more imitative you can get the better. That is what is valued and cherished.... But then what is American is to develop your own voice. The thing about traditional European composers, you do put your name to something, you have created it and you are attributed to it. It is very different than the folk tradition where things are just invented and created very slowly within a cultural tradition and nobody gets really credited and nobody knows really where it came from just a whole other form of things. But jazz for me was this whole thing of creating your own sound and because on your horn you create your own sound, etc (Masaoka Interview 2000).

Masaoka continually strives to develop her musical abilities. She admits that “Sometimes I lose motivation for [improvisation]. It has to be informed by other things. I have to learn other things; that is what I am doing now, I am learning Indian music. . . But I do really see the act of improvising as something that can really be developed but it is always in tandem and informed by other kinds of knowledge” (Masaoka Interview 2000).

At the time of our interview Masaoka expressed interest in composing works for herself and for small groups of people. For example, she explains that she

has been interested in Indian ways of improvising, because it has a strict rhythmic structure and it is very different from the free improvising.... I have developed a whole language on the koto that matches these Indian syllables and hand positions on the tabla . . . I am playing with a tablaist in Boston and I can show him the compositions and he can figure them out with one rehearsal. They are extremely tightly rhythmical pieces based on this score and this common language. There are these rules: I guess I am really immersing myself in these rules. For me, studying Japanese music, I immersed myself in the rules and then I broke them. So I am doing that now; I don't know if I will break them in the same way. I feel like I won't. It is a way of studying and another way of improvising with a highly defined rules over a period of thousands of rules and they are very effective. So that is my new thing in terms of scores (Masaoka Interview 2000).

## **SUSIE IBARRA**

The Filipino-American drummer Susie Ibarra is a musician of my generation, and I was especially interested to compare my views on the progress made by women and people of color in improvised music since the 1960s with hers. Clearly, we both shared the desire that more women begin to participate in improvised music, and her experience as a woman improviser is discussed in chapters three and four.

Ibarra was born in Anaheim, California, in 1970. Soon after her birth, her family moved to Houston, where she remained until moving to New York in 1988. At the age of five, Ibarra began studying music. Like her four siblings, she played piano. During high school she began studying European classical music. Later on, she played organ in church, and was in school musicals as well as punk bands. It was not until high school that Ibarra began studying percussion, which today is her main instrument. Initially, she was attracted to the drums and percussion instruments because they looked like they would be fun to learn.

Throughout high school, Ibarra listened to jazz, especially people like John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk. Although Ibarra's parents were not professional musicians, her father's great rhythm and musical ear influenced her. Her mother, a fan of the opera and classical music, would take her children to various operatic productions in Houston. Ibarra remembers, "I didn't always understand or

appreciate all the music, but the productions were very impressive” (Carillo “Listening” 2000).

For college, Ibarra attended Sarah Lawrence College, not as a music major but on scholarship as a visual artist. However, she quit college in order to pursue the drums. The first creative music band she ever saw live was the Sun Ra Arkestra at Sweet Basil’s in 1988. She was forever changed. Ibarra began taking lessons from Buster Smith, a drummer and member of the Sun Ra Arkestra, which made her really see that she wanted to be playing music. She also studied with Marvin “Smitty” Smith, Buster’s brother, now a mainstay of Jay Leno’s “Tonight Show” band.

In addition to studying trap set, she was also studying Javanese and Balinese gamelan, Philippine Kulintang, and Afro-Cuban and Latin percussion in New York City. Her teachers included Danny Kalanduyan on Kulintang and the late drummer Vernel Fournier. From 1992-1994, she studied with Milford Graves on traps and considers Graves to have influenced her traps playing the most. She began studying tabla with Samir Chatterjee in 2000. She returned to school and received a diploma of Music from Mannes College and a B.A. from Goddard College.

In 1992/93, she met bassist, William Parker and began playing in the Little Huey Orchestra and the group In Order to Survive. From there Parker introduced her to saxophonist David S. Ware ~~and~~ she became an integral part of the David S Ware Quartet (Ibarra “Drumming Cosmo” 1998). For Ibarra, 1996 was a turning point when she sat in for Joey Baron with John Zorn’s Masada (Ibarra “Interview with Susan Sakash” 1998).

That same year Ibarra met Pauline Oliveros. Ibarra recalls that, “I was invited for a residency, I think it was 1996.<sup>7</sup> I came out to do a solo and also play a trio with Chris Brown and the late Glenn Spearman. And then I did a solo workshop, and she invited me to come and sit in her class [on women composers] and answer questions” (Ibarra Interview 2000).

Since then she has recorded two CDs of her own compositions for Zorn’s Tzadik label. Her first recording titled *Flower after Flower* (Tzadik 2000), features a solo accordion piece for Pauline Oliveros titled *Fractal 2* and three larger ensemble pieces. In this collection of pieces one hears both African-American and Asian musical influences in Ibarra’s compositional style. Her second solo recording titled *Songbird Suite* (Tzadik, 2002) includes performances by Wadada Leo Smith, trumpet, Chris Speed, clarinet, Cooper-Moore, piano, John Lindberg, bass, and Assif Tsahar, saxophone, among others.

Ibarra’s “sound” undoubtedly draws from her influences and practices of traditions such as Javanese and Balinese gamelan. During performance and on recordings, it is clear that Ibarra makes use of techniques and rhythms used by both western and non-western traditions to create a palette of sounds that is culturally diverse and truly hybrid. Ibarra describes her approach to improvisation as: “. . . effortless, like writing in the moment. I just have to give myself up to it. I may not come with a specific written piece, but I’ve been working on my craft, so I come with that. How you’re going to create the best music depends on who you’re playing with

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<sup>7</sup> Ibarra performed at Mills College in Sept 1997.

and what the instruments are” (Ibarra “Interview Thurston Moore” 2001).

During our conversation I asked Ibarra if there have been any women role models for her. Ibarra shared that her mother was a very strong influence and that Pauline Oliveros “is a great mentor” (Ibarra 2000). In addition, although she has worked with and studied mostly with men, she listed a number of creative women that she has worked with and feels strongly about, including drummer and electronic musician Ikue Mori; kotoist Miya Masaoka; harpist Zeena Parkins; pianist Sylvie Courvoisier; bassist Joëlle Léandre, keyboardist Yuka Honda; pianist Irène Schweizer; cellist Anne Bourne, pianist Ting Hong; vocalist Jeanne Lee (now deceased), vocalist Helga Davis; pianist Yuko Fujiyama, bassoonist Karen Borca; and cellist Peggy Lee. As a drummer, Ibarra is aware that there are few women drum or jazz teachers, but that the field of improvised music includes more women participants.

Today, Ibarra is a musician in great demand. Some of her current projects include The Susie Ibarra trio, which features Craig Taborn on piano, and Jennifer Choi on violin; The Susie Ibarra Quartet, featuring Greg Tardy on tenor saxophone, Angie Sanchez on piano, Trevor Dunn on double-bass; The Mephista trio with Sylvie Courvoisier on piano and Ikue Mori on laptop; and a duo with bassist Mark Dresser and Derek Bailey, among others.

## **CONCLUSION**

All seven of these improvisors have, in their own way, both contributed to and



challenged the various communities of improvised music. The professional accomplishments of these performers spans over 40 years. The resolve of the more senior women improvisors such as Pauline Oliveros, Irène Schweizer, Amina Claudine Myers, Maggie Nicols and Marilyn Crispell continues to inspire younger generations of improvisors to build careers regardless of cultural biases against creative women. Additionally, the works of Miya Masaoka continue to redefine the boundaries between improvised music, technology and performance. As a relatively new voice to the international improvised music community, Susie Ibarra's highly skilled drumming acts to breakdown stereotypical portrayals about women percussionists and drummers.

It is my hope that reading these introductory biographies about the seven women improvisors will encourage further research on these and other women improvisors. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, these seven women represent only a small number of the women in the field [See Appendix G for larger list of Experimental Women Improvisors]. Many other women deserve to be included in the history of creative improvisors.

The presence of women improvisors in magazines, grassroots organizations, and on web-sites and CD labels, albeit still relatively minor, acts to remind audiences, the media, presenters, and colleagues alike, that the voices and creative range of women are wide-ranging, and that recognizing this diversity is critical to presenting an adequate representation of today's emerging improvisatory traditions.

## **THE MYTH OF ABSENCE: CRITICAL RECEPTION OF CONTEMPORARY WOMEN IMPROVISORS**

Since the publication of Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* in 1991, a great deal of re-structuring and re-evaluating of canonic practices has taken place.

Contemporary musicology now includes discussions of women and people of color in classical, jazz, and popular music. However, the field of experimental improvised music, and, in particular, women improvisors, is still relatively excluded from both commercial media coverage and contemporary music scholarship.

Musicologist Marcia Citron writes that "critical reception is the next marker on the professional path....Unfortunately women have been subjected to gender-linked evaluation, placing them in a 'separate but not equal' category that has widened the gulf between themselves and the homogeneous canon" (Citron 1990: 106). Citron's remarks are highly relevant to an evaluation of the state of improvised music criticism.

Sociologist Allan G. Johnson reminds us that women who do get included in predominantly male-operated institutions are often subject to patriarchal standards: "It's possible, then, that the primary goal has been to allow women to do what men do in the ways that men do it, whether in science, the professions, business, or government." This makes it "easier to allow women to assimilate into patriarchal society than to question society itself" (Johnson 1997: 13). The challenge for women is whether or not to accept professional or institutionalized inclusion under the abovementioned conditions.

In this chapter, I argue that the marginalization of women improvisors is perpetuated by the inadequate coverage of these women in the media. Moreover, the nature of that coverage often embodies tokenism, essentialism, and negative gender constructions, all of which undermine women's contributions. Pianist Ursel Schlicht's research on jazz musicians clearly shows that "the media perception of women gave an incomplete, if not distorted, picture."<sup>1</sup> (Schlicht 2000: 55).

These consistent oversights are very damaging to women experimentalists. The lack of coverage affects the perception of the field of music as a whole, by perpetuating a myth of absence. The myth that there are only a few women improvisors, or that women are generally not interested in the field, results in women being overlooked for jobs, festivals dates, and record deals. Ajay Heble, artistic director of the Guelph Jazz Festival in Canada recalls how, when trying to create a 1997 festival that featured women, "some male artists who seemed chagrined by our programming decisions told us that there simply weren't enough women musicians to make such a theme workable, implying, perhaps, that the quality of the festival would be compromised because we would be forced to hire minor or mediocre musicians" (Heble 2000: 160).

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<sup>1</sup> Schlicht is currently under contract for the publication of her dissertation *It's Gotta Be Music First: An Analysis of the Impact, the Perception and the Working Situations of Women Jazz Musicians* in the Music of the African Diaspora Series of the University of California Press. Schlicht is also a pianist recorded on Cadence Records.

In the first part of this chapter I will examine two magazines dedicated to jazz and improvised music: *Down Beat*, which has been published as a biweekly or monthly since 1940; and *Cadence*, published monthly since 1976. In addition, I will analyze more closely two separate reviews of improvising drummers. The first, published in *Down Beat* in 1969, features Dottie Dodgion, while the second, a 1999 *New York Times* article, presents Susie Ibarra. In the second part of this chapter I will discuss the limitations of essentializing women's music in reviews or collegial remarks.

## **PART ONE: TWO REPRESENTATIVE MAGAZINES**

To begin, I will introduce some of the challenges I encountered with *Down Beat*'s coverage of women musicians in general and my research subjects in particular. Although the magazine has been in circulation since 1940, my research covers the years 1960 to 2000. I chose this magazine because it has wide readership and plays a dominant role as gatekeeper of jazz and improvised culture, even though, by many accounts, it is not a thorough representation of jazz and improvised music history.

Those familiar with the magazine know that it does not forefront avant-garde, experimental, or free jazz, but highlights instead early, fusion, modal, bebop, and popular jazz music. I assert that many of the larger record labels see the magazine as an opportunity to market their artists in order to sell records, rather than as a platform for artists to speak about more substantial issues and experiences.

Thus one could easily imagine the argument that since the majority of improvised and experimental music is on small independent labels without large advertising budgets, the field may not generate enough advertising dollars to interest the editors of *Down Beat*. However, from time to time, *Down Beat* pays homage to creative improvised music, favoring male participants: Cecil Taylor, Julius Hemphill, Anthony Braxton, Anthony Davis, and Ornette Coleman, among others.

Most of the writers that cover creative improvised music for *Down Beat* are men (Lee Jeske, Jon Andrews, John Litweiler, Dan Ouellette). Occasionally a review by a woman appears such as Elaine Guregian's review of pianist Marilyn Crispell's *Spirit Music* CD.<sup>2</sup> In addition, some journalists, such as John Corbett, have written about both male and female improvisors. Besides his work as a journalist, Corbett is the co-founder of the Empty Bottle weekly jazz series in Chicago and a musician himself. Corbett's series presents many of the artists that he reviews and writes about as a journalist. Thus functioning as a presenter, artist and journalist, Corbett is personally invested in the development of an improvised music community in Chicago.

Despite Corbett's contributions, however, the overall coverage for such prominent American women improvisors as Alice Coltrane, India Cooke, Maia Axe, Susie Ibarra, Miya Masaoka, Pauline Oliveros, Ikue Mori, Marilyn Mazur as well as others, has been very limited.

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<sup>2</sup> Elaine Guregian is a dance and classical music critic for *The Akron Beacon Journal* (Ohio). The *Spirit Music* recording features Marilyn Crispell piano; Billy Bang violin; Wes Brown bass; John Betsch drums. Released on Cadence 1015, 1983.

Initially, I set out to locate articles and reviews in *Down Beat* about my research subjects, observing each issue in print or on microfilm from 1960 to June 2000. I noticed, however, that I could read through several issues without a single feature article on my subjects, or indeed, any women artists, especially in the earlier issues. Occasionally, I did find CD or festival reviews of women's work.

While the magazine tends to profile American musicians, on occasion European improvisors appear, including Barry Guy, Evan Parker, Han Bennink, and Alex von Schlippenbach. However, European women from the same generations and field as the abovementioned artists, such as Joëlle Léandre, Irène Schweizer, Lindsay Cooper, Georgina Born, Annemarie Roelofs, Maggie Nicols, Elvira Plenar, Marilyn Mazur, Sally Potter, Annick Nozati, and Sainkho Namtchylak, are not featured. In fact, while it was not my intention to tally the total number of articles or interviews about women throughout the sixty-year history in *Down Beat* of my original eighteen subjects, all of whom have extensive backgrounds and performance resumes, only three have been featured in articles and only five have received reviews in *Down Beat*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> My original project included correspondence and/or interviews with several prominent women improvisors. These included: Pauline Oliveros, Miya Masaoka, Susie Allen, Anne LeBaron, Ikue Mori, Susie Ibarra, Maia Axe, Irène Schweizer, Maggie Nicols, Lindsay Cooper, Amina Claudine Myers, Gayle Young, India Cooke, Joëlle Léandre, Marilyn Crispell, pianist Myra Melford; flautist Jane Rigler; pianist Sylvie Courvoisier, pianist Jessica Williams; komungoist Jin Hi Kim; violinist LaDonna Smith; composer and vocalist Maria De Alvear and percussionist Danielle P. Roger.

The small amount of coverage experimental women received in *Down Beat* led me to question the amount of coverage other magazines were providing in this area. I decided to survey *Cadence*, in particular because of its claim to present “the most complete coverage of Jazz/Improvised Music.” To provide a preliminary answer to this question, I recently consulted the *Cadence* website (Tom Lord “Back Issues Page,” 2001) which includes an index listing interview and articles by number and year; reviews were not listed in this index. Out of 26 volumes from 1976-2000, there was a total of approximately 716 articles or interviews. 686 of these featured male musicians; approximately 30 featured women musicians.<sup>4</sup> This averaged out to approximately 28.58 interviews a year for males and 1.25 interviews a year for females. If this were indeed “the most complete coverage of jazz and improvised music,” as *Cadence* claims, then the percentage of articles about men in comparison to articles about women leads us to believe that women only account for only 4% of the musicians in this field. I find this hard to imagine, since in my research alone I narrowed a list of over one hundred well-known subjects down to eighteen. My list did not even include all the participants at the local levels, or the younger generation of improvisors around the world, who are perhaps very active in their areas but not globally recognized.

I did not conduct a complete survey of experimental women featured in the magazine *Jazziz*, which recently published an issue dedicated to women in July 2000

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<sup>4</sup> While every effort was made to present an accurate number of interviews and feature articles, I apologize if any oversights or errors were made.

(Vol. 17 No. 7). While the magazine did not exclusively feature women throughout the issue, there were substantial discussions and articles about women artists.<sup>5</sup>

However, these discussions tended to focus on women in the jazz tradition.<sup>6</sup> For example Larry Blumenfeld's article featured a round table discussion with seven women in jazz. Only two of the women, Myra Melford and Carla Bley, are involved with both creative music and jazz music.<sup>7</sup> In another section of the magazine, CD's released in 2000 were reviewed. Two of the women I interviewed were featured, including Joëlle Léandre's *Joëlle Léandre Project* and Ikue Mori's *One Hundred*

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<sup>5</sup> Subsequently *Jazziz* dedicated another volume to women in Jazz (July 2001).

<sup>6</sup> *Jazziz* magazine does present artists that perform experimental improvised music. Artists featured on their CDs (one can purchase the magazine or CD or both) include The Art Ensemble of Chicago, Rosewell Rudd, Peter Brötzmann, John Butcher, Marilyn Crispell, Jane Ira Bloom, Steve Lacy, among others.

<sup>7</sup> While it is difficult and not necessarily desirable to separate which artists belong to jazz, to creative music, or to both, there are perhaps some loose distinctions between the two areas. It is my understanding that women who perform creative music come from diverse musical backgrounds and may access various traditions to inform their own personal style. Overall, experimental improvised music as a genre embraces artists who are also not necessarily trained as jazz musicians (but can also come from world, electronic, computer, folk, popular, rock or European classical music) but at the same time reveal a connection (musical, philosophical, cultural, or spiritual) to the developments of such African-American musicians as Coltrane, Mingus, Holiday, Armstrong, Monk, Davis and Ellington. Assigning these women to either jazz or experimental music is loosely to suggest that the women who perform more experimental improvised music tend to utilize more dissonant structures or play "outside" traditional harmony. Women who play jazz music, while they may also venture "outside," keep the majority of their music within tonal frameworks and are rhythmically more pulse-based.



*Aspects of the Moon*. Harpist and improviser Zeena Parkins and Carla Bley also had their music reviewed.

The dedication of this issue to women in music prompted me to conduct a further Internet search on the coverage of experimental women in *Jazziz*. My search for feature articles on women improvisors in *Jazziz* proved rather disappointing (*Jazziz* Artist Page 2001). None of my research subjects had feature articles, although there was material on pianist/composer Carla Bley and saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom.<sup>8</sup>

Once again women instrumentalists remain marginalized, and experimental women remain even more marginalized. With so few women receiving feature articles in the regular issues, publishing a single issue which concentrates on women could be viewed as patronizing. In fact, an issue dedicated to women may send the message to readers that women now receive preferential treatment over men (although a close look at a single issue is most likely to reveal that 90% of the print space is for men musicians), or that these are the only women good enough to feature (a possible reason why so few women are featured in issues throughout the year).

In addition to magazines, I surveyed some of the most notable recent academic studies of improvisation, including Robert Walser's anthology *Keeping Time* (1999), Ingrid Monson's *Saying Something* (1996), Krin Gabbard's *Jazz Among the Discourses* (1995), Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz* (1994), John Corbett's *Extended*

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on Carla Bley or Jane Ira Bloom go to "Artist Search" at [www.jazziz.com](http://www.jazziz.com) (cited 18 February 2001). Since my initial search, Marilyn Crispell has been added to the *Jazziz* Artist Search list.

*Play* (1994), and Derek Bailey's *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (revised in 1992). While these texts are valuable contributions to improvisation scholarship, they provided little mention of the contributions of women improvisors, and even less on cross-cultural aspects of the role of women in the music.

Val Wilmer's book *As Serious as Your life* (1977) dedicates an entire chapter titled: "You sound Good --for a Woman." In this chapter Wilmer discusses attitudes towards women musicians and how creative women improvisors have helped support the male musicians they maintained person relationships with. Wilmer cites the more positive relationships between pianist and harpist Alice Coltrane and John Coltrane; singer Fontella Bass and Lester Bowie; singer Lynda Sharrock and Sonny Sharrock, among others. However, according to Wilmer "... for the majority of women musicians involved in a relationship with a male musician, it has been a very different story" (Wilmer 1977: 205).<sup>9</sup>

Wilmer cites some of the attitudes towards creative women in the seventies:

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<sup>9</sup> Alice Coltrane (1937) has released several records as a leader including *Journey In Satchidananda* (1971). For more of a complete discography see "Discography of Alice Coltrane" <http://members.aol.com/ishorst/love/discalice.html> (cited 10 Oct. 2002). Lynda Sharrock appears on Sonny Sharrock's first release, *Black Woman* (Vortex, 1969). Fontella Bass (1940) is a singer, pianist and organist. She is the daughter of vocalist Martha Bass and sister of singer David Peaston. In addition to being very successful as an R&B singer and songwriter, in the 1970s she performed with the Art Ensemble of Chicago recording *The Art Ensemble of Chicago with Fontella Bass* in (America AM6116) in 1972 and Lester Bowies's *All the Magic* (ECM) and *The Great Pretender* (ECM). For more information see "Fontella Bass" <http://www.tsimon.com/bass.htm> (cited 10 Oct. 2002.)

In the early days of the new music, for example, one of the younger saxophonists started rehearsing with a white female cellist. 'When the word got out that I was playing with a woman, the cats really came down on me,' he said. 'They said, 'What the hell are you doing playing with a woman – and a white bitch at that?'' When they heard the actual music, though, several of the musicians changed their minds and actually wanted to play with her.' . . . The creative woman's experience of being denied recognition because she is regarded as sex-object is in no way an exclusively white one. A Black woman who works with her husband – also Black – put it bluntly: 'With other musicians, all they want to do is fuck you. They figure they can't because I'm with him – plus I have the *audacity* to be up there on the stage – so they can't really deal with it and they have to put out some kind of negative comment' (Wilmer 1977: 204-207).

I was curious to find out how many of my subjects (as well as other experimental women improvisors) took account of writings or statements about their work that included similar remarks as noted by Wilmer, such as "that sounds good for a woman" or similar attitudes of disbelief or condescension towards women improvisors. Here, the women's responses to the question were varied.

Bassoonist Lindsay Cooper noticed that the media made reference to her playing as a woman and that there has not really been a change in this attitude (Cooper Interview 2000). In contrast, pianist Marilyn Crispell does not recall having experienced any kind of sexual politics or gendered reviews of her work (Crispell Interview 2000). Pianist Irène Schweizer, in an interview with Bob Rusch, recalled that, "When I started in Switzerland I was always regarded with respect as a musician. I never experienced this discrimination [because] I'm a woman" (Schweizer Interview 1991: 6). Rusch continues by asking Schweizer if she thinks of herself as a female jazz pianist? To this Schweizer replies, "I'm a woman, and of course I'm a female

jazz musician, but that doesn't mean that I play female music. . ." (Schweizer Interview 1991: 6).

The sentiment of "sounds good for a woman" is not limited to print, but can be exchanged verbally in rehearsals. In an interview with Miyoshi Smith, cellist Deidre Murray discusses how a rehearsal with Henry Threadgill: "I remember Henry [Threadgill] looking at me all crazy and saying, 'Eureka, she's got it.'" Murray interpreted this to mean that Threadgill possessed feelings of doubt about Murray's ability.<sup>10</sup> Bassist Fred Hopkins, a long-time collaborator with Murray, recalls how some men express negative attitudes towards women with statements such as "She's a woman; she can't play; she can't figure the music out—that's too bad" (Hopkins and Murray 1992: 6-7).

Murray herself admits to having been prejudiced against other women players in the past. "I had taken on a male sensibility in terms of, 'she can't play.' I hadn't even worked with female singers . . . women meant wives, girlfriends of some men, or audience--that's what girls meant to me . . . I mean I talked like them—as crazy as I was—which is prejudicial to myself" (Schlicht 2000: 64). Drummer Susie Ibarra speaks of her experience as a woman and the resistance to her work in the past:

. . . It's really tough to be a musician. And its tough as a jazz musician. There's a lot of prejudice. I could cry you the blues but someone else could tell you a different story. I wish no one would have to go through what I had to go through. I'm a fighter. I'm here. Maybe

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<sup>10</sup> Deidre Murray is an African-American composer, cellist and improviser. She has worked with a variety of leading improvisors including Muhal Richard Abrams, Fred Hopkins, Butch Morris.

starting out it happened more often. It's hard when you're working with professionals and they have these attitudes. It's not just gender or race. I've been all over the world, and prejudice is out there. I try to stay above it. It hurts people. To me it's the same thing. Even in cultures that are so close, there can be prejudice. A lot of it is being afraid of the unknown. Or old standards, what society says would be true. . . " (Ibarra "Drumming Cosmos" 1998).

Does the statement "sounds good for a woman" necessarily imply the notion of a woman who plays like a man? Or does the comparison of creative women's abilities to creative men's abilities engender notions of the women being understudies of "big brother" either directly or indirectly?

Amina Claudine Myers: "I don't recall actually hearing that statement ["sounds good for a woman"] in reference to me, but I have heard it. . . years back when I was playing organ with Gene Ammons, I heard someone say 'she plays like a man.' One time I was referred to as a female McCoy Tyner, or Cecil Taylor . . . that was years ago" (Myers Interview 2000). Myers believes that statements such as "she plays like a man mean[s] being strong and aggressive on the piano, but it's been proven that women have done heavy work and stood up under it. When I think of my grandmother, how she'd carry on, ploughing and stuff..." (Myers 1979: 5).

Although Marilyn Crispell does not recall receiving gendered reviews about her work, in an interview with Bob Rusch, she was surprised that Rusch had not asked her the question, "Is it hard to be a woman in this business?" Crispell shared that "a lot of experiences I've gone through as a woman I feel give me the same emotional credentials of dues-paying that others may have" (Crispell 1984: 12 ).

I return now to two articles published 30 years apart. The first, “A Drum Is a Woman: The Swinging Dottie Dodgion,” written by jazz vocalist Carol Sloane, appeared in the March 20, 1969 issue of *Down Beat* magazine. I chose this particular *Down Beat* article because it illustrates what Citron calls “gender-linked evaluations.”

The article begins:

Dottie Dodgion is a drummer. Dottie Dodgion is also a lady; a happily married woman and a proud mother. She is a skilled artist deserving wider recognition (plaque designers please take note) who has gained respect and enviable status among her musician associates. And, in the words of Bob Brookmeyer, she also smells better than most musicians (Sloane 1969: 17).

Sloane begins the article by qualifying Dodgion as first and foremost a woman who is happy being a wife and mother. Throughout the article, Dodgion tries to argue against stereotypes placed on women drummers, reminding readers that “women have been playing drums or their equivalent for centuries....” (Sloane 1969: 17). However, by initially identifying Dodgion as a happy wife and mother and second as a skilled artist, the author encouraged readers to compare her ability on the drums to her ability as a stereotypical housewife.

Judith Tick’s observations about female composers is also useful for understanding the struggle for women improvisors. Tick reminds us that “the polemics surrounding the female composer [of Western classical music] inevitably affect the kind of music she wrote and the ways in which it was received. The conflict between her role as a woman and her role as a composer was resolved through the

development of sexual aesthetics, which analyzed music as a combination of masculine and feminine traits; therefore, music written by women should and did express ‘femininity’” (Tick 1986: 336). On this view, by suggesting that Dodgion “smells better than most musicians,” the writer places unnecessary attention on Dodgion’s body, perpetuating gendered assumptions that a woman’s role is to be objectified by looking and smelling pretty. Additionally, using humor to talk about Dodgion’s body acts to ward off the any threats (real or imagined) her music may have on male musicians and readers.<sup>11</sup>

Although Sloane (a woman herself) sympathizes with Dodgion’s position and raises issues such as the politics of being a women performer, she continually places Dodgion in the frame of domesticity, as in the next paragraph, which attributes Dodgion’s success mainly to her husband “One of the key factors in her successful approach to the competition she faces daily in her profession can be found in her own home: ‘My husband, Jerry Dodgion, encourages me one hundred percent of the time, and without his support it would be very difficult to play or function in music’” (Sloane 1969: 17). The statement made by Dodgion leaves the reader to believe that she has relatively little autonomy in her own future and career, because if it were not for her husband’s support, her creativity would be lost. This may remind one of how Marcia Citron addresses the problem of recognition for women in the Western

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<sup>11</sup> George E. Lewis raised the point that Bob Brookmeyer’s reference to Dodgion’s smell can be seen as an attempt to use humor to make Dodgion appear less threatening.

classical music canon, as her analysis is relevant to improvised music contexts as well.

Discussing composer Ethel Smyth, Citron remarks that

[an] important component in procuring performances was regular access to the musical establishment, that heterogeneous corps of professionals consisting of other composers, and of performers, conductors, impresarios, and board members of major performing organizations. Women, in general, experienced enormous difficulty in forging those necessary contracts, largely through gender-specific conditions (Citron 1990: 106).

Sloane ends her article by exhorting readers to “Throw away [their] copy of *The Feminine Mystique* and go listen to Dottie play.” This article comes at a time, 1969, when women’s liberation was an extensive political movement. Then as now, it was quite common for participants in the movement to be ridiculed by mainstream media. Sloane’s appeal for women to ignore the interplay between politics and music is problematic because it suggests that even though women are included in *Down Beat* magazine, they should conform to anti-women’s lib political views (Sloane 1969: 18).

The second article, “Holding Her Own Among All the Guys,” by David Yaffe, appeared in the New York *Times* of May 30, 1999, and featured the contemporary Filipino-American drummer Susie Ibarra. While Yaffe’s article seems sincere about his celebration of Ibarra’s success, the ways in which he frames her work points not to the cult of domesticity, but the notion of the “exceptional” woman. Yaffe disagrees with jazz critic Whitney Balliett that “women seldom made an impact as jazz instrumentalists because they lacked the physical strength necessary to blow on a horn or beat on the drums” (Yaffe 1999: 22). While Yaffe flags Balliett’s assertion as



dated—certainly Ibarra can physically handle the drums—the discussion of physicality leads readers to assume that there is a standard by which physical qualities are to be measured and compared in order to play the drums. Furthermore, his discussion of physicality places focus on Ibarra’s body instead of the music she creates. The question arises as to who or what that standard might be? It is perhaps safe to assume that the most valued physical standard would be gendered masculine.

Yaffe argues that while there are many female bandleaders in the field, “many devoted jazz fans would have difficulty naming any female jazz drummers on the scene beyond the 28-year-old Ms. Ibarra” (Yaffe 1999: 23). Yaffe proceeds to name three female drummers and one women’s group, but comforts readers who draw blanks, suggesting that “female jazz drummers have traditionally been in short supply” (Yaffe 1999: 23). Essentially Yaffe suggests that Ibarra and the other drummers he listed are really the exceptions among women in the field of jazz because in his opinion, there are few women drummers. Certainly, there are more than just three women jazz drummers in the world. This position alienates the “exceptional” women from the larger improvisational community and other female drummers and musicians.

The argument made by critic bell hooks in addressing the plight of marginalized writers can also serve as a compelling analysis of how the media estranges women improvisors from one another:

Ironically, the power of great writing by a writer from a marginalized group to inspire and influence the work of emerging writers from that group is diminished when such an individual disassociates their work from that of peers from similar circumstances. Concurrently, this

disassociation tends to reinscribe the assumption, rooted in already existing biases, that this writing and the writer represents an exception (hooks 1999: 53).

Arguably it is not Ibarra who is alienating herself from other women, but Yaffe's discussion of her that creates distance between Ibarra and other women drummers or women improvisors. Allan G. Johnson makes an additional claim suggesting that what makes some women exceptional "... is their ability to embody values culturally defined as masculine: they've been tougher, more decisive, more aggressive, more calculating, and more emotionally controlled than most men around them" (Johnson 1997: 7).

Not all Johnson's remarks about the exceptional woman are evident in every woman who makes it in fields dominated by men. Yet it is Ibarra's power as a drummer, a trait that is typically associated with male drummers, that is the subject of reflection by reviewers. In a concert review featuring saxophonist David S. Ware and pianist Matthew Shipp, Ibarra is described as follows: "She attacked her kit with a delicate ferocity that was irresistible—whether she was poking the drums with the sticks, or playing hopscotch over the whole kit, her sound was powerful, effortless, her hands a blur. And yet she was unruffled. The sound kept coming even as she calmly smoothed a lock of hair away from her face" (Ibarra "Interview with Jeff Bagato" 1998). Jeff Bagato's remarks and further interview with Ibarra reveal how he was surprised and impressed with her powerful drumming especially because he came to the concert "planning to focus on Mathew Shipp and Ware himself—'what were they doing when they made that music'" (Ibarra "Drumming Cosmos" 1998)?

Once the reader gets past Bagato's initial fascination with a drummer such as Ibarra, Bagato does move into more substantial issues about playing. Certainly most music journalists include portraits of the musicians to draw readers in, but one must be careful not to substitute insignificant details as a substitute for a discussion of the music. Reviews of women musicians that call attention to personal traits, physical attributes, or compares their music to other male musicians can obscure why these women's voices are important to be heard and learned from. This is not to recommend that when one writes about women's musical advances that they do so in an isolated fashion without discussion of their male colleagues. But perhaps, there needs to be a real awareness of the dangers of essentializing women's works, or having their works treated patronizingly.

## **PART TWO: EXPERIMENTAL WOMEN IN COLLEGIAL SETTINGS**

Limited magazine coverage of women improvisors is not the only way in which the myth of absence is created. Trinh T. Minh-Ha, quoting Audre Lorde, reminds us that "Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance, and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns" (Lorde : 100; Minh-Ha: 266 ).

Thus, collegial relationships can be very problematic. Bassist Joëlle Léandre feels that "as a woman, it is certainly more difficult to enter the musical 'machine.'

We are the minority and it is therefore difficult to find one's language as an artist while remaining faithful to ourselves." At the same time, Léandre observes that "this is finally beginning to shift. Creative music is one of these rare moments when we, as women, are free to converse with our soul brothers on an equal level" (Léandre 1991: 38).

Nonetheless, negative memories persist, and undoubtedly have an impact upon current practices and attitudes. Anthropologist and cellist Georgina Born recounts the oppressive environment for women to work in with the group Henry Cow.

I had a very strange experience as a musician because first of all I mostly worked with Henry Cow where there was a bunch of men some years older than I in charge. Lindsay Cooper who was a lesbian and me who wasn't and a singer who came in and out who was a real prima donna. So I got by far the hardest time from these guys, one of them in particular, they were very difficult people, very authoritarian. It was a very unfriendly and unsupportive environment (Born Interview 2000).

Other women have experienced a mixed reaction to their work. Miya Masaoka remembers how there was aggression and hostility towards her piece *Ritual*, which involved twelve Madagascar cockroaches. The roaches would crawl across her naked body, triggering electronic sounds when they crossed infra-red light beams. Masaoka explains that her performance of "Ritual" at the University of California, Riverside was met with resistance: "...they brought the cops out and this whole big group protested it and tried to stop the performance . . . It was just ridiculous" (Masaoka Interview 2000). When I asked Masaoka what the basis for the protest was she said,

“Some objected to insects being used. Some objected to the nudity but they didn’t know quite how to say it. They thought the performance was going to be different then it was. And it was for an academic conference called ‘The Natural Acts’ which dealt with gender issues. . .” (Masaoka Interview 2000).

Ikue Mori talks about the feeling of being displaced in both the improvised music setting and technology settings: “They see the technology and they don’t really consider me as a musician playing an instrument. So I feel that they don’t understand. But then I go to electronic music people’s concerts. It’s all male dominated. My music [which is] made by machine is not electronic enough, like I am too female for them” (Mori Interview 2000).<sup>12</sup>

Mori had an experience, similar to Masaoka’s, of being prejudged by other people’s notion of what she does:

Actually, because of my unconventional instrument, people think that I am just playing a sequence and pushing buttons and learning the music automatically. A couple of weeks ago I was in Chicago and I played with this great drummer as an improvising duo. We had a great concert and people seemed to like it, but then the review the next day said that this great drummer, is keeping up with a machine, this live great drummer can even work with a machine and make it into music, but I was considered just a machine and they didn’t consider me as a musician who is playing an instrument (Mori Interview 2000).

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<sup>12</sup> Ikue Mori is a drummer, computer and electronic musician. Originally from Japan, Mori moved to New York City in 1977. She has performed with the No Wave band, Ensemble Modern, Susie Ibarra, Fred Frith and Zeena Parkins, among others. For more information see [www.ikuemori.com](http://www.ikuemori.com) (cited 15 March 2002).

When I asked Mori “How do you feel gender and race is constructed by the media in improvised circles?” Mori stated that, “I don't think this [racial and gendered constructions] is so with this scene in New York. At least there is less a problem with gender issues compared to the jazz or electronics scene” (Mori Interview 2000).

During the interview I asked Mori “Have you read any reviews about your work that seem to talk about your “femaleness”? Referring back to her feeling about the Chicago concert review she stated: “They see the technology and they don't really consider me a musician playing an instrument. So, I feel that they didn't understand but then I go to electronic music people's concerts and it's all male dominated. To them, my music is made by machine and is not electronic enough. It is like I am too female for them” (Mori Interview 2000).

Public criticism made by other musicians or participating colleagues can also serve to alienate women improvisors. Two women from the Feminist Improvising Group, Maggie Nicols and Irène Schweizer, recount how they were ostracized at one of their early important performances at the “Total Music Meeting” in Berlin, an important early festival run by Jost Gebers in the late 1970s. Schweizer remembers:

He [Jost Gebers] had invited us to play at the Total Music Meeting, where I had played already about ten times before, in all men groups, so he thought that if Irène is with that group [F.I.G.] that it can't be that bad. . . . We played as the only women's group in the whole festival, which was exactly five days. They couldn't take it, that we were an all women's group. They thought “how come you brought such a group, they can't play, and they are not good enough” (Schweizer Interview 2000).

Nicols reminisces that “one musician close to the organization was really charming to our faces, he kissed our hands; and then we heard from Dagmar [Gebers, Jost Gebers’ wife] that he had actually complained to Jost about us being there, saying that he could think of loads of men that could play a lot better . . . even though there were women like Irène Schweizer and Lindsay Cooper there” (Nicols Interview 2000).

The question of standards had been circulating for some time in improvised music circles. Articles on this subject can be found as early as 1967. In one article called “The New Jazz: A Matter of Doing,” (Heckman 1967) the focus is on free jazz and whether or not it is possible to determine if the people playing are competent. The article is concerned with figuring out “Where are the standards of excellence?” or “How do you know these people can really play their instruments” (Heckman 1976: 24)? This same discourse of integrity circulates in contemporary classic music. For example musicologist Rose Subotnik argues that “over the course of this century, to be sure, contemporary music has developed not as a monolithic but as a quintessentially pluralistic enterprise, with a diversity of schools and interests that allow many sorts of interpretation” (Subotnik 1991: 272). The plurality of contemporary practices is also widespread in improvised music. Thus, any form of judgement is difficult to administer because there is no one standard for improvisors to follow.

Perhaps the discontent expressed by the other musicians towards the ability of the musicians in F.I.G. indicates not only gender bias, but also latent gendered conceptions of how music ought to sound or be created. As Schweizer herself pointed out, the festival organizers had heard her perform many times before booking F.I.G..

Indeed, Schweizer came to prominence as part of the same generation as other European improvisors, including Evan Parker, Han Bennink, and Alex von Schlippenbach. In many respects Schweizer's earlier piano playing displayed recognizable signs of virtuosity such as fast technique and an impressive stylistic range, among other things. Thus, for the festival organizers her music was similar enough to what other improvisors were doing at the time. Therefore there should have been no cause for alarm.

However, the individuality of the music of F.I.G. posed significant challenges for listeners or critics who want to know what to expect from improvised music in order to have a standard for which to compare them with. Perhaps for many of the European performers (male and female), mastery over the instrument was one of the hierarchical standards by which performances were measured, as is demonstrated by the comments about F.I.G. Ajay Heble remarks that "perhaps our own inability to see past culturally produced notions of innovation" make it difficult to recognize when a woman is being innovative (Heble 2000: 165). When it became clear that the music performed by F.I.G. was different than what the majority of improvising men did disapproval ensued. In the context of the music of F.I.G. Schweizer thinks that it could have been the use of humor, which was disturbing to many men at the festival: "We were not that serious, like men, they play that thing and they think they are the greatest, they take it so seriously but for us it was more fun but I think it was still good music, but we presented it differently. It was the humor that men couldn't take. The kind of humor we presented was too much for them" (Schweizer Interview, 2000).



F.I.G. cellist Georgina Born also comments on their use of humor: “We could be very iconoclastic and very surreal, or very silly. There were no big boys there standing judging. I am sure there were good moments of music and moments of real hilarity. . . It was just the era pre-videos and I would have really liked to have had it captured on video. Only video would do justice to the character of what we did” (Born Interview 2000). Born elaborates on how this use of humor could have led other musicians to perceive F.I.G. to be “un-serious”:

I remember the styles of Joëlle [Lèandre] and Irène [Schweizer] and I think there is an interest in the visual and the performance aspect amongst women improvisors. We were very influenced by the London Musicians Collective and probably there were more in Europe and people like George Lewis as well in the States. There was a divide; those people considered to be the un-serious side of the British improvised scene as opposed to Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, they were the serious boys, who the Europeans liked to play with. We are kind of picking up that legacy and using humor in that sense and probably half of it didn't work at all and some of it did. I am sure that humor is always a weapon from the margins. We were also using parody and probably the grotesque. And it was strange because this was the late 1970s and 1980s when there was lots of lip service from all the leftist boys to feminism but you only had to be involved in it to find that pretty skin deep (Born Interview 2000).

Besides the use of humor, the hiring practices of F.I.G. were also different, thus creating a different musical outcome. Nicols' original concept for F.I.G. was that it would be an open group for all women, and even for women who had never improvised.

My idea was an open pool of women improvisors, because very shortly afterwards, another woman saxophone player from Jam Today, who

had have done funk, soul and jazz but had never done free improvisation, was interested. I was excited about bringing in women from all different levels, in a truly feminist way. Because for me if it was called Feminist Improvising Group, then I wanted it to be accessible to women at all different levels of musicianship. I am not so sure that the others so passionately shared my feelings about that (Nicols Interview 2000).

In her view this range of ability was a strength not a weakness and served as an integral part of her initial conception and philosophy for the group. The result was a music that had to be taken on its own terms, as music that decidedly and consciously included the politics of being women, musicians, improvisors, and members of a society. F.I.G.'s performances were a labyrinth of dance, theatre, movement, spoken word, social, feminist and critical and political commentary. Their interdisciplinary performances proved challenging for colleagues who considered music to be separate from social or political commentary.

Those male (or female) peers who might have been searching in vain for "purely musical" elements of a F.I.G. performance would advise Nicols, "oh you, and Irène are really really strong but the others....," thus creating a flux of negative feelings and internal conflicts, causing some members to want to eliminate other players (Nicols Interview 2000). Georgina Born remembers that:

F.I.G. was fun but was very full of fish as well. I say, personality clashes between Sally and Maggie. I think Irène played some gigs with us but also found us a bit unserious, slightly amateur particularly because Maggie insisted we carry on with this one armed trumpeter who was very sweet but a pretty chaotic woman, quite close to drug use

and was a bit too much, a bit like carrying a wounded animal. Irène didn't like that particularly, but fair enough (Born Interview 2000).

To be sure, F.I.G. did not always experience negative reactions to their music. Moreover, while F.I.G. eventually disbanded, other groups took shape from it, including the European Women's Improvising Group and the trio Les Diaboliques featuring Nicols, Léandre, and Schweizer. Nicols points out how Les Diaboliques received more positive reception than the earlier groups. She cautions that perhaps this favorable attention is because all three improvisors are internationally recognized making reviewing them much more acceptable.

The importance of F.I.G. lies not only in its musical achievements, but also in the effect of the group's example on introducing women to improvised music. They initially began playing at Music for Socialism, the London Musicians Collective, and then women's festivals.

We would go on after a rock or soul band, . . . these crazy women would improvise and for the first few seconds everyone would be absolutely shocked; and then because of the theatrical elements and the power of it we just turned people around. . . it was very exciting to introduce improvisation to a whole load of women who might not have gone otherwise because it was so male-dominated. I think F.I.G. really opened it up for women to come towards the music and get involved in it themselves and to get excited about improvised music (Nicols Interview 2000).

## **CONCLUSION**

**In this chapter I discussed how the relative invisibility of women as practitioners of improvised music is perpetuated by lack of coverage of women improvisors in reviews, articles, magazines, and scholarly discourses. I assert that the resistance to and misunderstanding of the music by F.I.G., Léandre, Masaoka, and Mori, among others, is due at least in part to the ways in which their music explores and grows out of personal and political experiences that can not be separated from their gender.**

**Musical articulations created by women improvisors are not always familiar, welcomed, or identified with by other colleagues (both male and female) and publishing communities. In reference to F.I.G.'s absence in historical accounts on improvisation, Nicols warns that "if you are not part of the father and son lineage, it does appear that you will be discounted when it comes to written history. There is this sort of lineage: it is a bit like yoga. As much as I love yoga and Buddhism, there always seems to be this lineage of the guru and the son" (Nicols Interview 2000).**

**Creating and maintaining an inclusive space whereby women can openly express their musical ideas is important for the larger improvised music community. Without adequate documentation of women's music, attitudes and contributions, the field itself remains inequitable. With many of the pioneers and emerging experimental women improvisors professionally active, it is my hope that these voices will be heard and acknowledged.**

## **POLICY POLITICS: HIRING OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN IMPROVISORS AT FIVE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVALS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Larry Blumenfeld, the former editor-in-chief of *Jazziz*, recently remarked that the presence of women musicians (and journalists) is still rather scarce. He states, “I’ve gone to a lot of conventions and a lot of panels and a lot of festivals, and I’ve had women writers come up to me and ask, ‘How come there aren’t more women writing about jazz?’ I’ve had women musicians come up to me and lament how there are no women leaders on a given festival’s program, or maybe just one” (Blumenfeld 2000: 41).

This chapter explores the issue of festival hiring outcomes: its underlying question is, “Why are so few women improvisers being programmed?” By investigating the actual number of creative women improvisors hired throughout five festivals, I hope both to suggest probable causes for the general oversights, and to help remedy in some way the inequality of attention and representation within the cultural fabric of improvised music.

Women, as a group, are subject not only to considerations of gender, but also ones of race and politics by festival committees. It would be practically impossible to locate all the reasons behind the hiring practices of individual festivals, because the selection process could entail any number of factors including personal taste, recording company pressures to have their artists represented, current stylistic trends

in the field, and quotas. Still, one may draw broad conclusions about the overall outcomes of these decisions, and how they affect both creative women improvisers and the field in general.

In this chapter, the rosters of five internationally renowned music festivals are surveyed: the Total Music Meeting in Berlin; Taktlos in Switzerland; the Guelph Jazz Festival in Ontario; the Du Maurier Jazz Festival in Vancouver; and the Festival International du Musique Actuelle Victoriaville in Quebec. I selected these festivals because of their commitment to programming improvised music, either exclusively or in addition to other genres. Moreover, they represent what may prove to be routine hiring practices of creative women improvisors throughout the world.

In this investigation, I document the number of creative women hired at each of the selected festivals by examining the yearly rosters of festival programs. A study of these programs provides valuable information about hiring practices. In particular, most of the festivals surveyed tended to hire women singers and pianists, rather than instrumental performers on such instruments as saxophone, trumpet, guitar, bass, drums, and electronics—an emphasis suggesting the influence of historically gendered notions of women as pianists or singers. In addition, there is a noticeably higher visibility of white women improvisors, in festival appearances, feature articles, and recordings, positioning these women as spokespersons for women's music in general. Throughout the study, I was also interested in whether or not hiring practices of creative women improved year by year or remained unchanged.

The purpose of this study is not to undermine the efforts, sacrifices, and

dedication of the individuals operating these festivals. My criticisms are meant as constructive ones, that may, by illuminating their probable oversights, help bring about a more adequate representation of the full diversity of improvisation and bring balance to the field. I would urge studies of other festivals of improvisation and jazz as well, in order to examine this issue and be able to suggest improvements.

## **TOTAL MUSIC MEETING**

The Total Music Meeting Festival was founded by Jost Gebers in 1968 in Berlin. Since then, the festival has taken place each November. Historically, this festival has presented mostly European or pan-European artists, in addition to a small number of international artists.

The TMM has been organized by Free Music Production (FMP), which was started by Jost Gebers, Peter Brötzmann, and Peter Kowald (Heffley “The Five Horsemen” 2000). The mission of Free Music Production establishes it as “a cooperative of musicians who have taken on the task of representing European, free, acoustical music by producing records and arranging concerts” (Forst 1982: 1). The goal of Free Music Production began and continues to be

to present musicians who have been developing this music since the sixties: the circle around Peter Brötzmann, Peter Kowald, Alexander von Schlippenbach, Irène Schweizer, later Rüdiger Carl, Hans Reichel and others. . . Secondly, helping young musicians is a long standing concern for FMP. . . The third and final element is composed of musicians and groups from the international scene—Steve Lacy,

Marilyn Crispell and Cecil Taylor to name but three (Noglik 1989: 6).<sup>1</sup>

Journalist Patrik Landolt points out “FMP is an institution that presents contemporary jazz music live and simultaneously documents it, something practically no other promoter or producer in Europe has succeeded in doing” (Landolt 1994: 1).<sup>2</sup>

TMM’s commitment to presenting artists like Brötzmann, Kowald, and Schlippenbach should be applauded. However, the commitment to presenting a diverse roster of women is somewhat less impressive. The festival’s programming commitment has extended only to a small number of women, such as Maggie Nicols, Irène Schweizer, and Marilyn Crispell. For example, Schweizer has performed eight times; Nicols and Crispell, three times; and Lindsay Cooper, Shelley Hirsch, and Annemarie Roelofs, two times. These choices seem to reflect a male notion of the improvising community; so few women are included that one must suppose that the men are not familiar with the larger community of professional women improvisors.

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<sup>1</sup> The artists that Total Music Meeting initially sponsored include: German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann (1941); German bassist Peter Kowald (1944); German pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach (1938), Swiss pianist, Irène Schweizer (1941); East Prussian accordionist, saxophonist, clarinetist Rüdiger Carl (1944), German guitarist, saxophonist Hans Reichel (1949); American-born saxophonist Steve Lacy (1934); American pianists Cecil Taylor (1929) and Marilyn Crispell (1947). For more information about the European Artists visit Peter Stubley’s “European Free Improvisation Pages.” <http://www.shef.ac.uk/misc/rec/px/efi/> (cited 19 May 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Today other music festivals also produce CDs. For example, the Swiss label Intakt Records grew out of the milieu of the Tatklos Festival’s initiators, who wanted to complement the established jazz festivals. The first record (1984) featured Irène Schweizer at Taktlos. (“Intakt Records” 2002). Similarly the Festival International du Musique Actuelle Victoriaville also produces select concerts from their yearly festival for the Victo label (“Victo” 2002).



Further, if one compares the representation of even these women to their male counterparts, it seems even more limited: Peter Brötzmann, for example, has appeared fifteen times, Evan Parker thirteen times, and Alex Schlippenbach twelve. In this regard, it is important to recognize that Irène Schweizer, despite her central role in founding the European Free Jazz movement, is nonetheless not as supported as her colleagues.

I researched 26 years of the festival between 1968 to 2000. In these, approximately twenty-eight different women performed at Total Music Meeting.<sup>3</sup> No African-American women were presented, and only three Asians have performed (Aki Takase [2000], Jin Hi Kim [1999], and Sainkho Namychylak [1994]). The most women ever presented during a single festival was in 1979 with the Feminist Improvising Group, which had seven members .

Overall, from the inception of the festival until 2000, there has been little or no evidence pointing towards a growing commitment to presenting women improvisors. For example, in 1999 and 2000 only one woman was hired during each year. [See Appendix B for list of Women Improvisors hired by Total Music Meeting]. Although never presented at this festival, kotoist Miya Masaoka makes an accurate statement explaining how “the inequality of women at festivals is part of the industry. It is the same thing for women getting a gig, it is the same thing for getting a record contract . .

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<sup>3</sup> Dieter Hahne kindly sent programs for the various years of Total Music Meeting. There were no programs for 1969, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1980 and 1981. Six years are missing for this study.

. or getting a faculty position” (Masaoka Interview 2000).

While it is true that the directors of Free Music Production have championed a small handful of women, many of the programming decisions of this festival reveal patriarchal characteristics, as articulated by sociologist Allan Johnson: “When men get together with other men, they typically are male-centered in the general sense of focusing attention on men and what men do” (Johnson 1997: 10).

As an example of Johnson’s description of men focusing on what men do, Jost Gebers’ discussion of the role of the big band in free music is appropriate. Gebers quotes saxophonist and co-founder of FMP Peter Brötzmann to the effect that “1968 was the “year of the big band,” a time when “we met our friends [fellow free players] to play like crazy people” (Heffley “German Free Jazz,” 2000). As I mentioned earlier, Brötzman has performed fifteen times at TMM, as a soloist (1999); in duos (with, for example, drummer Han Bennink drums in 1976, 1977, and 1997); in quartets such as the Die Like A Dog Quartet (with Toshinori Kondo, trumpet; William Parker, bass; and Hamid Drake, drums [1999, 1994]); and in larger groups such as the Peter Brötzman Group (1968) and the Globe Unity Orchestra (1968, 1976, 1977).<sup>4</sup> With no women in the abovementioned groups, we could conclude that women

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Brötzman’s Group featured Peter Brötzman, Willem Breuker, and Evan Parker, saxophones; Paul Rutherford, trombone; Fred Van Hove, piano; Peter Kowald and Buschi Niebergall, bass; and Han Bennink, drums. Globe Unity Orchestra included Manfred Schoof and Kenny Wheeler, trumpet; Peter Brötzmann, Rüdiger Carl, Gerd Dudek, and Evan Parker, saxophones; Michel Pilz, bass clarinet; Günter Christmann, Albert Mangelsdorff, and Paul Rutherford, trombone; Alex von Schlippenbach, piano; Peter Kowald and Buschi Niebergall, bass; and Paul Lovens, drums.

musicians were not considered part of the circle of friends that Brötzman speaks about.

## **VANCOUVER JAZZ FESTIVAL**

The Vancouver Jazz Festival was founded in 1986 by the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to presenting a variety of styles as represented by local, national, and international artists. The festival is held each June in Vancouver, Canada. As of 2002, the executive director is Robert Kerr, and the artistic director is Ken Pickering.

The festival's web site explains that the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society was established

to nurture a public appreciation for jazz, blues, world, and improvised music; to inform, educate and entertain audiences with the diverse cultural history, traditions, and contemporary expressions of creative music; to stimulate the artistic and economic development of local and international communities of creative artists. Looking beyond arbitrary and narrow stylistic definitions, CJBS presents the expansiveness of creative music to reinforce and expand existing definitions of jazz, blues and improvised music ("Coastal Jazz and Blues Society" 2002).

The wide range of the festival includes rhythm and blues, funk, gospel, jazz, and creative improvised music, among others. The homepage advertising their 2002 program lists fifty-one categories of musical styles and instruments to be presented at

the festival. Some of these headings include Asian Avant Garde, Adventurous, Free Jazz, Free Improv, and Improvised (“Jazz Vancouver” 2002).<sup>5</sup>

The Vancouver Jazz Festival clearly has a larger budget than the other festivals I surveyed. It is supported by major corporations, government agencies, and cultural foundations. At times the festival has featured as many as 1600 musicians, though the amount of funds allotted for contemporary improvised music is quite small (based solely on the number of improvisers hired yearly). This is similar to budgetary and programming constraints experienced by smaller festivals dedicated to improvised music.

The number of women performing at this festival is notably low, compared to the number of male participants. For example, in 2000, there were 259 headlined artists out of 1600 musicians. 37 women were featured artists (both creative improvisors and non-improvisors combined). The number of creative improvisors, both male and female, totaled 45 equaling 2.8% (45/1600) of the musicians hired. There were six creative women improvisors, which equaled 13.3% of the total improvisors hired. However, creative women improvisors made up only .37% (6/1600). [See Appendix C for list of women presented at Vancouver Festival from

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<sup>5</sup> Under the “Asian” heading only one act is mentioned, *Distant Wind* (multi-instrumentalist Randy-Raine Reusch and Mei Han, Chinese cheng) with special guest German reed player Frank Gratkowski) Under the “Avant-Garde” heading is Frank Gratkowski’s Quartet. Many artists appear under the “Adventurous” heading including drummer Han Bennink; violinist Mary Oliver; the Peggy Lee Band, and Now Orchestra’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. For a complete listing please see their website at (<http://www.jazzvancouver.com/jazzfest2002/>) (cited 19 May 2002).

1995-2000].

The 2000 program for the Vancouver festival touts that “this Festival has a proud history of showcasing the most interesting and innovative European jazz based improvisers” (Gilmour 2000: 10). It is clear, however, that very few European women have ever been presented at their festival with only Joëlle Léandre 1995, 1996 making an appearance. Thus, the ostensive assumption is that all the interesting European improvisors are men.

The Vancouver Jazz Festival has presented approximately 6200 musicians from 1995-2000. During those five years (1995-2000), 165 performances featured women (both creative improvisors and non-creative improvisors) making up 2.6% of festival participants. Of the 165 appearances by women, 37 or 22.4% involved creative improvisors.<sup>6</sup> The 37 appearances of women improvisors equaled about .59% of total festival participants.

Although this study mainly focus’ upon the hiring outcomes for creative women improvisors, for the Vancouver Festival I also included non-creative women improvisors, in order to check if there was a trend of hiring women pianists and singers in both improvised and non-improvised categories. My examination of women featured in both improvisor and non-improvisor categories revealed that during years 1996, 1999 and 2000, most of the women hired were either pianists or singers. [See Appendix C years 1996, 1999, 2000 for lists of women and the

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<sup>6</sup> Although 37 performances were made by women improvisors, only 19 different women improvisors have performed.

instruments they play]. In particular, during the 2000 festival, twenty-five out of thirty-seven women were programmed as vocalists (only) or as vocalists that played other instruments, and nine were pianists; in 1999, twenty-four out of twenty-nine women were either singers and/or pianists; and in 1996, eighteen out of twenty-two of the women were singers or pianists. I will further discuss the dominance of this trend later in the chapter.

## TAKTLOS

The Taktlos festival has been in existence since 1984 and takes place in Zürich each April. It was begun by a small group of organizers, including pianist and improviser Irène Schweizer and Patrik Landolt, a free-lance journalist who is currently editor of the weekly *Wochenzeitung* in Zürich.<sup>7</sup> Landolt's spouse, Rosmarie Landolt, also takes part in the hiring process for the festival. Most of the musicians presented at this festival are European, but a handful of musicians from Canada, the United States, and Australia are presented.

As a pianist, improviser, and festival organizer, Schweizer occupies a unique position. She can increase awareness of women improvisors by hiring more women, remedying some of the endemic problems she herself experiences as a woman improviser:

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<sup>7</sup> For more information about the weekly visit their website *Die Wochenzeitung* at <http://woz.ch/wozhomepage/start.html>

Organizers are still not aware of how many women there are. For example, I played Nickelsdorf in Austria, where there is a small festival that has been going on for I think twenty or twenty-five years. I was just playing this past summer [2000] a duo with Hamid Drake, and I think there were only two women on the whole festival of four days, and there were three or four groups every night (Schweizer Interview 2000).

Compared with the other festivals I surveyed, the roster of the Taktlos Festival includes a larger number of women who are not pianists and singers. This reflects an important step in programming women artists, because it more accurately represents the diversity of creative women improvisors. [See Appendix D for list of women hired and the instruments they play]. The number of women presented at this festival ranges from a minimum of three out of thirty-three (9%) in 2000, to a maximum of ten out of thirty-four (29%) in 1996.

The festival has featured six Asian performers: Jin Hi Kim, komungo (1991, 1994); Susie Ibarra, drums (1998); Ikue Mori sampler (1989, 1997); Margaret Leng Tan, piano (1996); Tenko, voice (1989); Kazuko Hohki, voice (1986); and two African-American women: violinist India Cooke (1998); and cellist Deidre Murray (1989, 1994) in its history. The programming at Taktlos demonstrates that there are many more women who are not just pianists and singers which should be hired. At the same time improvements could be made in hiring more African-American women improvisors for more diversified programming.

## **GUELPH JAZZ FESTIVAL**

The Guelph Jazz Festival began in 1994 and takes place in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. The web site for the Festival states that it “is dedicated to promoting an interest in and appreciation of jazz, creative improvised music, and their related arts” (“Guelph Jazz Festival” 2002). Since its inception, Dr. Ajay Heble, a professor of comparative literature at the University of Guelph specializing in post-colonial studies, has been the festival’s founder and artistic director. Dr. Heble has created an interdisciplinary festival including musical performances, workshops, and a colloquium, in which papers focusing on political and social issues in jazz and improvised music are presented. The inclusion of the conference at the festival is an unusual, even groundbreaking addition that is meant to advance the understanding of the relationships between improvised music and contemporary culture.

Heble is one of the few people to write about the experience, challenges, and politics of running a music festival, in his book *Landing On The Wrong Note* (Heble 2000). He writes:

From its very beginnings, the festival has insisted that its activities be affordable in ways that the activities, say, of other jazz and music festival have not always been. To this end, we have remained committed to presenting world-class artists at remarkably low ticket prices . . . and to staging several free concerts throughout the festival, including a series of outdoor concerts in a centrally located open-air public space. (Heble 2000: 191).

He has also been committed to “introducing innovative musicians—musicians who, in



other contexts, might be seen not as popular artists but as proponents of an elitist high culture—to wider audiences, and, as per its mandate, of enlarging the constituency traditionally defined as a jazz audience” (Heble 2000: 189). To this end, the Guelph Festival has been committed to breaking down the barriers between popular and high art, unlike such venues as the Toronto Downtown Jazz festival, which, as Heble notes, “tends to segregate the music by confining it to late-night spots in small venues; consequently, only audiences ‘in the know’ generally venture to attend” (Heble 2000: 189). Heble’s critique of the current politics of festival programming are part of his own self-conscious and culturally aware practices, which create a performance space for the marginalized voices of women, non-white performers, and emerging artists.

Heble argues that, ultimately, “The Guelph Jazz Festival remains committed to an involvement in constructing a popular market for an avant-garde aesthetic” (Heble 2000: 197). Of course, one risk is that with increasing budgets its “grassroots ideology may be in jeopardy when the festival ceases to be a volunteer-run organization—when it is forced, in short, to enter explicitly into an economy of labor” (Heble 2000: 197).

This awareness of the political and social responsibility involved in programming a festival extends to encouraging the presence of music made by women. From its modest beginnings, the number of creative women included in the yearly program has grown considerably. For instance, not a single creative woman was hired in 1994, yet in 1999 five women creative performed (6.4%) and in 2000, nine creative women were hired, averaging 7% of the overall festival participation.

[See Appendix E for list of experimental women hired].

Up until 2000, the festival has concentrated on bringing women improvisors from Canada or the United States. However, in 2000 singer Maggie Nicols performed. In addition, the Guelph festival has presented a handful of women improvisers that were not presented at the Vancouver festival, including pianist Amina Claudine Myers (1997); accordionist Pauline Oliveros (1997); and percussionist Gayle Young (1997, 1998, 1999).

### **FESTIVAL DE MUSIQUE ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE**

The Festival de Musique Actuelle Victoriaville has been in operation since 1984 and usually occurs in the month of May. The current artistic director is Michel Levasseur. The festival presents a variety of styles including contemporary western classical, improvised, electronic, non-western, computer, and rock music. The festival presents artists from the U.S. and Europe, but emphasizes Canadian and Quebecois musicians.

The Victoriaville festival has programmed a variety of Asian women improvisors, including Tenko, Lee Pui Ming, Susie Ibarra, Ikue Mori, Jin Hi Kim, Miya Masaoka, and Sainkho Namtchylak. In addition, Victoriaville has presented such European women improvisors as Dagmar Krause, Annemarie Roelofs, Maggie Nicols, Joëlle Léandre, Lauren Newton, and Sally Potter. The percentage of creative women improvisors at the festival varies from six women (15.7%) out of thirty-eight

participants in 1985, to seven (7.8%) out of eighty-nine performers in 1990, to six (5.5%) out of one-hundred and eight participants in 2000.

A close examination of the number of women hired to perform at TMM, Vancouver, Taktlos, Guelph, and Victoriaville festivals reveals that women are hired substantially less than their male colleagues. Certainly one realizes that there are many factors that presenters consider when determining which artists will perform at the festival, such as the current improviser market, budget, travel, and audience demands.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, many of these factors operate in conjunction with existing power-structures and hierarchies. Pierre Bourdieu's insights into the literary field are equally relevant to improvised music:

Because of the hierarchy established in the relations among the different kinds of capital and among their holders, the fields of cultural production occupy a dominated position, temporally, within the field of power. As liberated as they may be from external constraints and demands, they are traversed by the necessity of the fields which encompass them: the need for profit, whether economic or political (Bourdieu 1995: 216).

Presenters of improvised music rarely see the kinds of profits generated by popular artists or even European classical artists. Bringing in the biggest names in improvised music may be even more essential for avoiding bankruptcy and for justifying the support of less famous, and even less lucrative, artists.

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<sup>8</sup> I want to thank Georgina Born for suggesting that market considerations are very relevant in hiring decisions and that presenters may not consider gender and race as much as they think about supply and demand of particular artists and the generation of capital.

It is not difficult to imagine that both improvisors and audiences of improvised music are at a loss to name more than a couple famous women improvisors, but usually can mention several more or less famous male artists. If the low number of women improvisors presented at the festivals I surveyed indicates that presenters are just merely programming what audiences want to pay to see, then perhaps Ajay Heble's philosophy of cultivating an audience for the more challenging improvised music could be used for increasing the presence of women improvisors at the festivals. In other words, presenters need to educate audiences as to who these women are in order to generate larger audience interest. This is not to say that each of the festivals has not been promoting a select number of women improvisors with some commitment; but creating a larger audience of people interested in and knowledgeable of the contributions of women improvisors would enable presenters to take more risks in hiring lesser known women as well.

## **WOMEN IN MUSIC—AS PIANISTS AND SINGERS**

The attention placed on singers and pianists in festivals and the media over other instruments, such as saxophone, trumpet, drums, guitar, bass, and electronics, among others, may be examined in terms of historical notions of women in music. As I pointed out earlier, the Vancouver Jazz Festival, the largest of the five festivals I examined, was particularly invested in women pianists and singers. An assessment of the Total Music Meeting roster also reveals that the women who are pianists and

singers as a group outnumber the women who play strings, harp, or flute. In her study of girls' musical education in British schools, Lucy Green points out that teachers tended to identify particular instruments with girls: "Not only do more girls play instruments, but overwhelmingly teachers said that girls play a certain *type* of instrument, often described as traditional or orchestral, most notably the flute and violin" (Green, 1997: 153). Green's observations about women playing the flute and violin is evident in European classic music but women flautists and violins do appear at the festivals I surveyed as well.

Recent musicological studies address the history of women pianists and singers in Western classical music, a tradition that still has enormous influence on music industries and social practices. Richard Leppert remarks that "during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the piano was associated with the bourgeoisie and was almost exclusively an instrument for females of amateur rank" (Leppert 1993: 134). Thus, one of the most commonplace roles women pianists and singers assumed at this time was as subjects to be observed (as children and adults) and sexualized (adults only).

Many artists used women pianists as subjects for their paintings and drawings, capturing many of the dominant cultural attitudes towards women pianists and singers. Leppert observes that "the piano served as an object to be looked at besides being heard or played...the looking was insistently gendered, driven by the instrument's extra-musical function within the home as the visual-sonoric simulacrum of family, wife, and mother" (Leppert 1993: 119). In his study, Leppert selected paintings that illustrated the historicized notion of the disciplined female pianist's body and its

effects on arousing the audience (Leppert 1993: 156-166). Indeed, if the piano is an object of beauty to be looked at, then it seems fitting that a woman sitting at the piano also is subject to our gaze.

Linda Whitesitt observes, “With the soaring popularity of the piano at turn of the nineteenth century and its importance as a woman’s instrument, composers made their livings by teaching and composing for women as well as by performing in women’s salons” (Whitesitt 1991: 305). Today, many middle-class parents from all ethnicities enroll their daughters in piano lessons with the sense that they are doing right by their child. Even working-class families, according to Heble, “were limited like the white bourgeois to play piano or sing” (Heble 2000: 150).

Musicologist Arthur Loesser writes that during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, “music was, indeed, considered one of the most important of the young ladylike accomplishments” (Loesser 1954: 268). Thus, what these well-intentioned parents may not be aware of is that by automatically assuming that piano or voice lessons are “naturally” suited to their female offspring, they are conditioning their daughters to fulfill these outdated and restrictive models of women in music.

The notion of women as pianists (and singers) is widespread even in contemporary jazz music. As Leslie Gourse remarks, the most famous women in jazz before the 1960s were pianists, including Lil Hardin, Mary Lou Williams, Dorothy Donegan, Marian McPartland, and Hazel Scott (Gourse 1995: 8). In my study of my research subjects in *Down Beat* magazine (addressed in Chapter 3) most of the feature articles were on women pianists or singers. The prominence of women pianists still

dominates women's contributions in jazz today.

Why do the majority of women enrolled in music lessons continue to study either piano or voice after they grow up? More importantly, who is responsible for perpetuating these stereotypical roles for women in music? Ultimately, music like other activities such as sports, math, and literature, are highly gendered by the mores of a society and early childhood rearing practices. It is the parents who provide the lessons and choose whether or not to purchase a drum kit for their daughters or a piano. As Lucy Green (1997) shows, studies conducted in the late 1970s of students in the United States, depicted how girls' and boys' choice of instruments were associated with conditioned gendered biases.

For example, "girls in the top end of the junior school tended to opt for those instruments which were associated with femininity, the same instruments that we have seen are also associated with femininity [flute, piano, voice] in English schools today. Boys, on the other hand, opted for masculine-associated instruments [trombone, drums, guitar]" (Green 1997: 243). If a girl is conditioned and trained on one instrument from elementary school, it may be difficult to switch instruments once a certain proficiency is achieved by one instrument. Thus, if a girl wants to pursue a professional career in music, she may apply to college. To get into a college music school, one must audition. Thus a girl will most likely be accepted to college to continue her performance on the instrument that she has the most proficiency on; which is more than likely the instrument she learned as a child or adolescent.

Certainly, a visit to any Western music conservatory will clearly reveal that the

majority of women tend to major in piano or voice. Perhaps this trend is a continuation of 18<sup>th</sup> century trends in school enrollment in Europe. “. . . Although conservatories did not bar women . . . their education was separate and not equal to that of the male students. . . nominally, in most schools, women could study any subject, but in fact for a good part of the century they were limited to voice, piano, and harp.” (Reich 1993: 134-135).

Questioning the identity politics of playing a certain instrument may not even enter a student’s mind, because many traditional music programs foster the continuation of this kind of gendered construction in their students and curricula. This, in turn, produces an abundance of professional women pianists, singers, or flutists, who perhaps, presented with an alternative instrumental choice, might have opted for something completely atypical for their gender, thereby breaking down stereotypical categorizations of women in music.

Green’s observations remind us of the interconnectedness between instrumental choice and gendered meanings: “Girls taking part in musical activities in schools are overwhelmingly engaged in activities which symbolically affirm their femininity, an affirmation which is reiterated not merely in the reproduction of historically gendered musical practices but in gendered musical meanings and, beyond these, in gendered musical experiences themselves” (Green 1997: 167).

The historical conditioning of women as pianists and singers continues to affect the choices women make as musicians and, by extension, hiring outcomes. For example, for the years 1997, 1999 and 2000, I provided the instrumental breakdown of



women (both creative improvisors and non-improvisors) for the Vancouver Jazz Festival. The majority of women improvisors hired during those years were either singers/song writers and/or pianists. [See Appendix C]. Moreover, Vancouver is not the only festival to experience challenges when attempting to hire women instrumentalists besides piano and voice. For instance, in 1997, Guelph festival director Ajay Heble found himself asking the question: “How difficult would it be to program a lineup of women that wasn’t dominated by pianists or singers” (Heble 2000: 162).

Budding male musicians have also been socialized to see themselves in particular roles. Through conditioning, role models, and sexist politics, men are encouraged to “naturally” act out these roles when they become individual grown men. In her seminal article “One is Not Born a Woman,” Monique Wittig argues against the case of naturalization for both men and women. She asserts that “in the case of women, ideology goes far since our bodies as well as our minds are the product of this manipulation (referring to the notion of women as a ‘natural group’). We have been compelled in our bodies and in our minds to correspond, feature by feature, with the idea of nature that has been established for us” (Wittig 1997: 264). The notion of a “natural” woman (or man) continues to be disputed by feminists such as Linda Alcoff (“Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism, 1997), Diana Fuss (*Essentially Speaking*, 1989), and Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble*, 1990; *Bodies that Matter*, 1995).

Thus, conditioned “naturalization” can translate into the types of instruments

men gravitate towards as well. Although I did not document all the men in the festivals and their instruments, I did document the male improvisors at the Du Maurier International Jazz Festival in Vancouver for the years 1995, 1997, and 2000. During these years, men who played the saxophone, bass, trombone, and drums are in the majority, and certainly outnumber the pianists (there are no singers) [See Appendix C].

To a certain degree the type of instruments someone plays reflects societal pressures and cultural conditioning. To break from historically conditioned roles becoming consciously and unconsciously transmitted to gender, musicians can adopt a more salient attitude when choosing an instrument or playing in a particular style. For example, if men grow up with a sister playing piano, or are accustomed to seeing women in bands singing or playing the flute, then chances are that if they attain positions of influence or become part of a musical community, they may restrict other women to these roles either symbolically or literally. Of course, the above example is simply too reductive because many factors would determine how someone is going to react or make decisions. The point really is to examine the ways in which gender is constructed throughout early childhood experiences and how these encounters influence our world view.

Linda Alcoff's summary of Teresa de Lauretis's 'conception of experience' is helpful in understanding politics, identity and gender.

Gender is not a point to start from in the sense of being a given thing but is, instead, a posit or construct, formalizable in a nonarbitrary way

through a matrix of habits, practices, and discourses. Further, it is an interpretation of our history within a particular discursive constellation, a history in which we are both subjects of and subjected to social construction. The advantage of such an analysis is its ability to articulate a concept of gendered subjectivity without pinning it down one way or another for all time (Alcoff 1997: 347; de Lauretis 1984).

Certainly the issue of identity politics is complex and many other factors influence how one reads gender. Still, I want to emphasize the influence of gender identities on behavior and social structures, an influence strongly enforced in childhood and all too likely to replicate and perpetuate themselves in the adult world, unless actively contested and exposed.

## **HOW THIS LEGACY IMPACTS FESTIVAL HIRING**

Of course, it is not likely that festival organizers select musicians simply by adhering to gendered stereotypes. However, the continual presentation of rosters of women as mostly pianists and singers can influence audiences and other booking agents to believe that few or no professional women musicians are involved with instruments other than piano or voice. If presenters are only responding to what they believe is a supply and demand question, then they seem to believe that hiring women pianists and singers is the honorable way to include women in their festivals.

Since a presenter looking to fill a spot/quota with women will usually have many pianists and singers to choose from, this creates a situation where women end up competing against themselves for the “pianist/vocal” spots at a festival. But what

about the women who do not traditionally play piano or sing: who is their competition? Since women saxophonists are clearly in the minority (or so it seems to be thus far), a woman playing saxophone could be seen as competing for a traditionally “male” space. That is, if she gets the job, a male is out of work. On the other hand, it could also be said that if a male singer or pianist gets the job, he occupies the limited spaces where a woman could have been hired.

This situation becomes further complicated when one considers women improvisers who did not receive Western music training (including European classical and jazz), or who came to music through the visual arts, literature, popular or world music, or computers. In order to discover these artists, presenters would need to challenge their assumptions about women instrumentalists moving beyond their perceptual comfort zones regarding how women musicians come to be or what instruments they play.

## **GENDER AND AUTHENTICITY**

Programming outcomes often reveal aesthetic choices which resemble stereotypical gender binaries. For example, under the auspices of diverse and interesting programming, women may be hired because their music embodies characteristics historically identified as feminine, such as emotionality or sensuality. In contrast, on the other side of the binary, their male colleagues might be hired precisely because their music embodies aggressive and forceful attributes.

While it would be difficult to discover the point at which these hiring choices

are made, significant binarisms are discernible in reviews about women improvisors, pointing to gendered assumptions about the music, as we noted in the previous chapter. In other words, programmers may not be partial towards women per se, only the way in which many women articulate improvised music. Women may be hired because their playing is perceived as masculine or because it fits into a programmer's notion of "what authentic improvisation" sounds like.

Due to time constraints, my study did not involve asking the individual presenters the question "Why have so few women been hired?" However, Ajay Heble's book does address significant problems with hiring women in his book *Landing On The Wrong Note* (2000). Still, I did ask my interview subjects several questions about their experiences with gender, representation, hiring practices, and music. Some of the women openly discussed their experience of receiving minimal support at performance venues.

To be fair, not all the women interviewed felt comfortable addressing specifically "women's" issues. Indeed, the choice to proclaim experiences of inequality, sexism, or racism is never easy. Many women have experienced this challenge in other fields besides music. As black attorney Lani Guinier explains, "I was never certain when to situate myself outside a white male perspective or with whom to disengage from value-neutral problem solving" (Guinier 1997: 75). Composer and bassoonist Lindsay Cooper stated (though she did not provide a specific example) that she has been treated differently as a woman activist, although subtly.

Some of the reasons women may not have spoken about feminist issues in improvised music included personal privacy and fear of offending colleagues thus becoming an outsider. Sharing feelings of being an outsider in the male dominated world of improvised music could not only be uncomfortable, but could lead to more unemployment, since most of the hiring decisions are made by white males.

In fact, one interview subject asked to be removed from this project altogether because in the past she had experienced violent threats from fans who learned about her trans-gender identity. In one of the most interesting interviews I conducted, she shared her joy and pain of being born a man but living as a woman in the music industry. Since producers book her as a woman, she was concerned that she may get dropped by some festivals if fans were to read about her life story and her sexual identity.

In addition, some women report having seldom felt differential treatment based on gender, and question the significance of the topic. For instance, pianist Marilyn Crispell recalled that

very early on, when I'd be practicing Bartok or whatever and I'd say, "I don't like this, it is weird," and my father would walk through the room and say, "Well, you have to stay open minded." So he encouraged open-mindedness in me and never pressured me. He was always very supportive of everything I tried to do and consequently I grew up feeling like I could do whatever I wanted to. The whole issue of being a woman in a man's music world never really came up for me. It was nothing that ever concerned me in any way (Crispell Interview 2000).

On the other hand, Maggie Nicols was very candid about her concerns about the insufficient programming of women. Recalling her early experience with the lack

of women participants at the London Musicians Collective, Nicols recounts that “there was a time when somebody at the LMC (London Musicians Collective) said there just aren’t the women, and a couple of us sat down and wrote this huge list of women that we knew improvised, it was massive. . . There’s lots of women, there is enough to program festivals” (Nicols Interview 2000).

In an interview with Bob Rusch from *Cadence*, pianist Irène Schweizer answers Rusch’s question about the benefit of belonging to an all-woman group, specifically referring to EWIG (European Women’s Improvising Group). Schweizer maintained

I thought it was very important that women also get a chance to play, they were coming out, and could play on the bandstand like men do, and there were lots of very talented players, I thought. Finally, because in the sixties when I started, I always thought why is it I’m the only one who plays this music (Schweizer Interview 1991:7).

Improvisor and kotoist Miya Masaoka also remarked on the limited visibility of women and the challenge women face even playing together: “Women are already marginalized; even the ones who are considered successful are barely paying their rent. When you do form quartets and groups, they are going to be groups that you can record with and tour with” (Masaoka Interview 2000).

Sometimes individual attempts to increase the numbers of women musicians at festivals are met with disapproval by other colleagues, board members, or sponsors. Ajay Heble remembers how an effort to present mostly women musicians at the 1997 Festival “made sponsors and audiences nervous because they thought that this programming decision might position them as ‘a feminist’ and thus, in their minds, a

highly political and exclusionary event” (Heble: 2000: 159-160). The resistance put up by the Guelph programming committee to distance themselves from anything bordering on “feminist” is, according to sociologist Allan G. Johnson, quite common: “Trashing feminism is now so routine that most women [among others] won’t openly identify with feminism even when they support feminist goals and ideas” (Johnson 1997: 99).

## **WOMEN AS BANDLEADERS**

In her book *Swing Shift*, Sherrie Tucker introduces readers to the vibrant culture of all-women bands throughout the 1940s, where women were not only leaders but drummers, bassists, and trombonists, among other things. Today, creative women improvisors continue to form their own bands; yet in my survey of the five festivals, women bandleaders were rare. For example, Lindsay Cooper’s large ensemble project for her piece *Oh Moscow* was programmed in 1989 at Victoriaville, and the Feminist Improvising Group, a collective, co-led ensemble with seven women artists, was also once programmed in 1979 at the Total Music Meeting. Other than those two performances, women were mainly presented as members of other large groups, or as part of duos, trios, and quartets, with their names only occasionally being assigned the leadership role. Larger groups are almost always directed by men: among the most recognized are the *NOW* orchestra of Vancouver, co-directed by guitarist Ron Samworth and clarinetist Coat Cooke; William Parker’s *Little Huey Creative Music*



*Orchestra* in New York; the *AACM* (which is less a band than a collective); and *The London Jazz Composers Orchestra*, with bassist Barry Guy as founder and artistic director.

During my examination of the five festivals, locating a women directed group was rare indeed. This disparity between leadership by men and by women is consistent with traditional gendered social attitudes. For the most part, “a woman must first get around the fact that leadership itself has been gendered through its identification with maleness and masculinity as part of patriarchal culture” (Johnson 1997: 7).

Consequently, when I asked Pauline Oliveros if she considered herself to be a bandleader in the traditional sense, she replied, “No” (Oliveros On-line Interview 2000). Although Oliveros did not expand on her view of a bandleader, her answers to different questions provide insight into why she and other women might not be as interested in assuming traditional leadership roles. Oliveros suggests that a better improvised community would result from doing “lots of improvisation. Build community rather than career” (Oliveros On-line Interview 2000). This reflects an interest in developing and co-creating music rather than establishing a soloistic approach. One could argue that running a large big band provides work opportunities for other musicians and thus contributes to the larger community. This is true; but it is the leader’s name that is often associated with the group, even if it is not in the formal title.

I asked Oliveros if she felt that improvisational groups that include women perform differently. She replied that “I believe that they might be more cooperative and less competitive” (Oliveros On-line Interview 2000). Certainly groups that have a leader may also be co-operative and lack competition, but the fact that most women do not lead large groups suggests that the opportunity has not be presented to them or that they may be more comfortable working in smaller situations where individuals more or less share leadership roles rather than form hierarchies.

For the most part, the women that I surveyed in the five festivals were often hired as part of someone else’s group and were less frequently the leaders (of large groups). Despite the lack of women led large ensembles at the festivals, some such groups currently exist. For example, the European Women’s Improvising Group, founded by Irène Schweizer in the early 1980s is collectively led, but is not a steady working group (Schweizer Interview 2000). The United Women's Orchestra founded in 1992 and co-directed by Christina Fox (Cologne) and Hazel Leach (Arnhem, Holland) is a collection of women musicians from various European cities.<sup>9</sup> This group plays more regularly and performs a wide range of repertoire, including original music, free improvisation, swing, and folk. The group was “founded by eighteen musicians from four different countries (Germany, Holland, the USA and England). Since then the UWO has established itself as one of the few European big bands playing new music, and is one of the few all-women big bands in Europe with an

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<sup>9</sup> More information about The United Women’s Orchestra can be found at <http://www.xs4all.nl/~hleach/english/UWOeng.html>

original repertoire” (“The United Women’s Orchestra” 2002). In addition, there is the Miya Masaoka Orchestra, which, to my knowledge is not a regular performing ensemble.

The lack of women leaders points towards a need for encouraging women to develop their ideas within the context of a large ensemble. One could imagine that the history of women in positions of leadership is small, yet the documentation of the pioneers in these position can only encourage other women to form larger ensembles. The work of such musicologists as Susan McClary, Judith Tick, Ruth Solie, Ellen Koskoff, and Suzanne G. Cusick promotes a much-needed balance by revealing some of the lost or marginalized voices of Western music history (for example, Ruth Crawford Seeger). However, few studies have uncovered the lost or overlooked voices of women leaders in jazz and contemporary improvised music.

## **THE INFLUENCE OF FESTIVAL VISIONS**

Henry A. Giroux’s seminal work on education and cultural work, *Border Crossings* (1992), examines debates on hiring practices of women and people of color that can usefully inform the present discussion. While Giroux is clearly addressing the plight of students of color, the political histories of certain prescribed narratives recall the cultural concerns of improvised music. Similarly, his discussion of the roles of students and educators speaks to similar debates among performers, audiences, and

festival programmers.

Quoting Roger I. Simon, of the Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Giroux observes that,

It serves us well to remember that the visions presupposed in the structure and discourse of the liberal arts are neither ideologically neutral nor politically innocent. Visions always belong to someone, and to the degree that they translate into curricula and pedagogical practices, they not only denote a struggle over forms of political authority and orders of representation, but also weigh heavily in regulating the moral identities, collective voices, and the futures of others (Giroux 1992: 92; Simon 1987: 372).

Additionally, Giroux cautions that “As institutional practices, visions draw upon specific values, uphold particular relations of power, class, gender, ethnicity, and race, and often authorizes official forms of knowledge. For this reason, visions always have a moral and political dimension” (Giroux 1992: 92).

How does Giroux’s notion of “vision” apply to improvised music? Recall for a moment that the number of women (non-whites and whites) hired by the festivals I surveyed was significantly low. In addition to the small number of women hired, the pool of women from which the festivals selected performers remained fairly consistent year after year, reinforcing the stylistic practices of certain performers over others.

For example, Marilyn Crispell has appeared at four out of the five festivals, including approximately five appearances at Victoriaville (2000, 1998, 1992, 1990, 1987), three appearances at Total Music Meeting (1984, 1983, 1982), three appearances at Taktlos (1996, 1993, 1989), and two appearances at Vancouver (2000,

1995). Maggie Nicols has also performed at four of the five festivals: two times at Total Music Meeting (1979, 1982), three times at Taktlos (1993, 1988, 1984), one time each at Guelph (2000) and Victoriaville (1989). Irène Schweizer has appeared at three of the five festivals: seven times at Total Music Meeting (1997, 1993, 1984, 1983, 1978, 1976, 1972), four times at Taktlos (1998, 1993, 1988, 1984), twice at Victoriaville (1997, 1989). Ikue Mori has also performed at three of the five festivals: Taktlos (1997, 1989), Vancouver (1997), Victoriaville (1998, 1992, 1991). On the other hand, there are many established women improvisors who have only appeared once at a single festival, such as Amina Claudine Myers, pianist Julie Tippetts, kotoist Kazue Sawai, singer Iva Bittová, vocalist Lauren Newton, or cellist Frances-Marie Uitti.

That festival organizers only hire certain women leads one to question whether there are additional issues involved in the hiring process. Budgets for improvised music have never been lavish, so it is plausible that presenters hire professional talent that is the most affordable. Paying a performance fee to artists plus large travel costs may be impossible for smaller festivals. This may explain why only a few North American women performers play the European festivals and vice versa. However, even if artists were selected for their relative proximity to the venues, there are certainly more artists for programmers to choose from. For example, Vancouver, Guelph, and Victoriaville share only a few of the same artists, and Taktlos has many artists that are not invited to TMM. In Appendix G is a list of all the creative women hired at all five of the festivals. This list demonstrates that there is a larger pool of

professional women improvisors for festival organizers to draw from.

Giroux's notion of institutionalized visions is reflected in the hiring practices of festivals, where there seems to be a lack of vision for how women contribute to the improvised music. This lack of commitment by the festivals towards women gives the impression that as a group, it is women improvisors, not the festival organizers, that are inconsistent in their ability to propose interesting musical programs. At the same time, hiring the same men repeatedly, such as Peter Brötzmann at TMM or Han Bennink at Vancouver, suggests to other festival organizers, record producers, and magazine editors, that their work is to be taken seriously or that there is a demand by audiences for their music. Hiring these men again and again develops an audience for these performers.

Furthermore, the low numbers of women hired clearly points to a dynamic of tokenism. The findings of my studies demonstrate that between the five festivals women averaged about 9.69% of the hired improvisors. What is noticeable about the percentages of women hired by the festivals is that Taktlos both holds the record for the highest number of women hired *and* has women making the hiring decisions. Guelph comes in second: perhaps significantly, it is run by a non-white male.

For example the table below lists the average number of women brought to each festival throughout their history.

**FIGURE 1****Yearly Average of Experimental Improvisors**

<b>Festival Name</b>	<b>Number of Years analyzed for this study<sup>10</sup></b>	<b>Average Yearly Percentage of Creative Women Improvisors Hired in Festival History</b>
Total Music Meeting	26 years	6.32%
Taktlos	16 years	18.48%
Festival International Musique Actuelle Victoriaville	14 years	9.29%
Guelph Jazz Festival	7 years	14.57%
Du Maurier International Jazz Festival Vancouver	6 years	2.8%

Certainly, the women the festivals have hired repeatedly are brilliant at what they do. At the same time, when organizers hire the same few women improvisors repeatedly, they produce the impression that new generations of women are not

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<sup>10</sup> In some instances there was missing data for some years. See complete Festival Breakdown in Appendix B-F for details.

person only once reveals a lack of commitment to the given individual. More importantly, the relative lack of interest these festivals show to women who are in early or mid-career makes it difficult for them to attain the visibility and status necessary for a senior position.

The international profile artists achieve by making festival appearances can lead to other types of engagements, such as interviews and panel discussions, in which they may have the opportunity to speak about socio-musical issues. Repeatedly hiring the same women (especially white women), by contrast, positions them and them alone to act as representatives for all women's groups. This in turn "reifies the notion that all women have the same gender and requires that most women's voices be silenced and some privileged voice be given center stage" (Elsa Barkley Brown 1997: 277). Additionally positioning mostly white-women as leaders in improvised music "reflects the fact that we have still to recognize that being a woman is, in fact, not extractable from the context in which one is a woman—that is, race, class, time and place" (Elsa Barkley Brown, 1997: 276). In other words, the lack of a consistent investment by festival organizers both fails to provide audiences with a diversified roster of women improvisors and reflects a fundamental inattention to the importance and interconnectedness between music, race, and class.

## **POLITICAL MUSIC AND PROGRAMMING DECISIONS**

For improvising musicians, much of the attraction to the genre lies in its



idealistic democratic social politics. The transmission of gendered meanings and attitudes are difficult to assess in a music such as improvisation, in which lyrics or story telling are rarely employed. However, other markers may reveal the interconnections of gender, racial identity and political attitudes. In fact, it can be argued that all music is representational, and that the act of improvising is a form of political and social expression.

A number of women artists work through musical, theatrical, political, textual, and performative models that are designed to challenge and comment upon dominant forms of cultural expression and political investments. An examination of women artists presented at the festivals, however, reveals that women whose music embodies controversial political and social issues are not usually festival regulars. Programmers appear to favor apparently non-representational music—music that does not incorporate political, or social issues openly, and that does not call attention to the musicians' racial, sexual or gender identity.

For instance, the highly political and feminist music of the now-disbanded Feminist Improvising Group (F.I.G.) and of such individuals as Lindsay Cooper and Miya Masaoka provide, various commentaries on many issues, such as madness, sexuality, mythology, spirituality, pathology, feminism, and race. In my festival survey, I noticed that these and other such groups of women artists tended to be hired as one-time acts. Both Cooper's politically charged rock-jazz-theatrical-musical *Oh Moscow* (about the cold war), presented at the Victoriaville Festival in 1989, and F.I.G.'s appearance at Total Music Meeting in 1979, were one-shots. Masaoka, a

musician whose work explores both performance art and more purely “musical” works for koto and computer, has only been invited to present the latter at the festivals I surveyed.

Also rarely engaged are the highly theatrical and often satirical trio *Les Diaboliques*, featuring Maggie Nicols, Irène Schweizer, and Joëlle Léandre (Nicols and Schweizer were original members of F.I.G.), as well as the singer and actor Maia Axe, who draws from historically empowering archetypes, histories, and cultural forms of black women. Appearing once in 1997 at the Guelph Jazz Festival was pianist Amina Claudine Myers, whose music strongly references spirituals and gospel in addition to Western classical and jazz music. The meditational music of Pauline Oliveros, the most senior of all the improvisors I spoke with in this study has performed once at Victoriaville in 1987 and once at the Guelph Jazz Festival in 1997.

Improvised music festivals are in a unique position to embrace the many voices that reflect improvising communities. The choice of festival organizers to avoid many of the abovementioned artists silences the expressive and political aspects of various women’s communities.

## **A FESTIVAL TO CALL THEIR OWN**

How can we counter some of the dominant hiring practices at festivals so that a more diverse presentation of artists can be established? One way is for women to produce their own festivals. Festivals such as the Canaille Festival (started in Frankfurt 1986) in Germany, co-founded by trombonist Annemarie Roelofs and Irène

Schweizer has created a space for many women improvisors. This festival principally features European women improvisers, including Joëlle Léandre, Elvira Plenar, Maggie Nicols, Maartje Ten Hoorn, and Marilyn Mazur<sup>11</sup> ("Various Artists" 1986). Canaille also documents the festival on commercially available CDs.<sup>12</sup>

City of Women, a festival held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, was started in 1995 with the specific goal of providing a space for women artists, musicians, and theorists. The current program director is Koen van Daele. The statement of the seventh City of Women Festival in 2001 emphasizes that "City of Women is an international festival of contemporary arts, focusing on art and culture by women as expressed in the performing arts, the visual arts, literature, film and video. With this project we want to shake the stereotypical role of women and improve the status of women in the field of the arts" ("City of Women Homepage" 2001). The 2001 call for artists posted by the organizers of City of Women is especially telling:

City of Women's main theme for the first edition of the new millennium is inspired by an in 1989 written, unpublished poem by Audre Lorde: "Most people in the world are Yellow, Black, Brown, Poor, Female, Non-Christian and do not speak English. By the year 2000 the 20 largest cities in the world will have one thing in common: none of them will be in Europe none in the United States." In addition to this we also want to stress that a large percentage of the European and North-American population is not "white." "Western society" is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. In this new global context it is not

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<sup>11</sup> Performances from the 1986 Festival is available on the CD Intakt 002 Canaille: International Women's Festival of Improvised Music.  
<http://www.shef.ac.uk/misc/rec/ps/efi/labels/intakt/int002.html>

<sup>12</sup> Irène Schweizer also helped organize the 1986 Canaille festival.

surprising that the main creative centers, the contemporary art talent is less and less to be found in the "white" cultural fortresses. With this in mind we decided to call the 7th edition: YEAR ONE, and select only artists and theoreticians "of color" ("City of Women Call for Entries" 2001).

The decision to program only women of color is an important step in re-balancing the current cultural landscape. As an all-women festival, they have featured thirty-three women in their seven years of programming, including Marilyn Crispell, Ikue Mori, Lindsay Cooper, Tenko, Meredith Monk, and Zeena Parkins. ("City of Women Artist List" 2001). However, the women programmed by the festival still legitimizes the more famous women and is not committed to the younger generation of improvisors.

Another festival/series, Kosmos Frauenraum, is held in Vienna, Austria. In 1997 a group of women artists formed LINK. Part of the mission of LINK was to raise the awareness for the need of a women-centered performance space in Austria. LINK struggled to get the Austrian government to dedicate a space for women artists. Finally the government "presented the 'Rondell,' a former cinema right in the centre of Vienna, as the future homebase to the LINK" ("Kosmos Frauen.raum" 2002).

However, the government retracted their promise and "so LINK, supported by sympathetic artists, squatted the 'Rondell' for the next months. Performances, readings, concerts as well as actions of protest took place, not only at the 'Rondell' but soon all over Vienna (including even the airport). Finally LINK found the former cinema 'Kosmos' suitable to substitute the 'Rondell.' The space was named frauen.raum and opened May 15th 2000" ("Kosmos Frauenraum" 2002). In the late 1990s LINK Evelyn Steinthaler described the philosophy behind Kosmos Frauenraum:

The program at the kosmos frauen.raum is framed in cycles, meaning the exhibitions, discussions, readings as well as the plays are circling one theme, e.g. "body, soul, mythos" (autumn 2000). The "brainstorming", an monthly open forum welcomes everyone to bring new ideas to the kosmos frauen.raum. Ideas and visions on future projects get an audience and soon they may become part of the kosmos programme. The kosmos frauen.raum is no "women only"-place, it follows the idea that men should "open their eyes," learn about feminism and the female links in the arts and politics on the brink of the new millennium ("Kosmos Frauenraum" 2002).

In 2002 Kosmos presented an international music festival entitled "Hear I Am."

Artists invited to perform included Annemarie Roelofs, The United Women's Orchestra, Joëlle Léandre, sound artist Gabriele Proy, Susie Ibarra, trombonist Abbie Conant and pianist Sylvie Courvoisier.

Another option is to start a festival with a diverse group of programmers, who can include more of the diversity of improvising communities. City of Women is certainly one example; one should also mention The Vision Festival, based in New York City and co-founded by bassist William Parker and dancer Patricia Nicholson. Both of these festivals make their commitment to diversity very clear in their mission statements and festival rosters, and in their scheduling practices. Their mission statement from 1998, describes the festival's mandate:

Devoted to the arts as a borderless, multi-disciplinary terrain where all things are possible, Arts for Art is a non-profit organization that seeks to provide a platform where all kinds of artists can not only present their work but experience fruitful contact with fellow artists and their audiences in a mutually sympathetic environment. Operating outside the realm of corporate-stamped New York art and music festivals, Arts for Art has focused its efforts on a kind of annual summit meeting

called the Vision Festival. . . The festival is programmed to showcase the gifts of the unheralded, the emerging and the "on-the-verge" artist alongside those of the established master or star attraction. Arts for Art wants to emphasize the important place in our culture for the individual whose creative notions often are obscured by the hype and status of the commercial status quo, for the individual who fails to fit the appropriately trendy niche. It's necessary to give voice to the silence, and equally so to provide silence for that voice to be heard. At the same time, Arts for Art heeds the democratic model implicit in jazz improvisation, in which a group of individuals rises together as a collective voice. Through these actions, we build a bridge to the future ("Vision Festival" 2002).

Certainly the 2002 Vision Festival reveals a much stronger commitment to African-American improvisors than any of the other festivals I surveyed. Their 2002 roster includes pianist David Burrell; violinist Billy Bang; saxophonists Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre, Dewey Redman, Oluyemi Thomas, Joseph Jarman, Oliver Lake, and David S. Ware; reeds player Douglas Ewart; bassist William Parker; and pianist Mathew Shipp, among others. Featured women include bassist Joëlle Léandre, bassoonist Karen Borca, vocalist Ellen Christi, and vocalist Jayne Cortez ("Vision Festival" 2002).

There are other hopeful signs. In March 2002, the San Francisco Jazz Festival presented "Women and Jazz: A Panel Discussion." The panel featured a diverse group of women including writer Angela Davis; musicologist Sherri Tucker; composer and arranger Maria Schneider; pianist Mary Watkins; and drummer Susie Ibarra ("San Francisco Jazz" 2002). More such public discussions are needed to increase the awareness of women's involvement in these genres and to generate more interest in womens' accomplishments in the fields. The presence of women

improvisors at festivals should reflect the diversity and differences among women from various communities and cultural heritages.

## **CONCLUSION**

An initial glance at the small number of women at the festivals reveals a limited commitment to women and even less understanding of the struggles of representation and equality. The consistent oversights of emerging women musicians obscures a more accurate picture of the musicians who are active in improvised music. Thus, presenters strongly affect how audiences perceive women in the field and can perpetuate myths about the insufficiency of creative women. For example in a recent interview with Brian Marley, Joëlle Léandre is asked “Why are there so few women working in improvised music? Léandre is quick to correct Marley’s assumption, “That’s false, it’s a misconception. What’s true, it’s a question of statistics, is that there are fewer women in any given profession. It’s unquestionably the men who decide to let us integrate or not. That’s changed a little over the last 30 years. It’s a subject that, in itself, is worth a book, isn’t it (Léandre Interview with Brian Marley 2002)?

The decision to create or even participate in an alternative model for which women’s work is celebrated is a much contested topic among women performers and organizers. Some might argue that the creation of an all-women’s music festival is nothing more than a reactionary move. Nonetheless, the question remains: how can

**we re-structure programming agendas so that more women and/or minority performers are included?**

**Perhaps committees can be selected based on diverse backgrounds, histories, and musical preferences. This way, a larger body of performers will be discussed and knowledge about their work shared and evaluated by the group. From my research of the five festivals, only one festival (Taktlos) is co-founded by a woman. Perhaps festival organizers will realize some of the limits of their own tastes and be open to hiring programming consultants in order to keep the festivals interesting, diverse, and inclusive. Festivals could also establish spaces for internationally recognized artists, mid-career artists, and newcomers, making necessary budgetary decisions to enable an interesting cross-section of artists (similar to what the Vision Festival states in their statement of purpose). For smaller festivals or concert series that operate with limited funding, perhaps it is necessary to program fewer concerts throughout the season to secure enough funding to bring musical and cultural diversity into communities that suffer from homogeneous populations.**

**Festival organizers should be challenged in their tendency to limit the space earmarked for improvised music. The Guelph Jazz Festival shows that a commitment to exposing and building audiences to improvisation can indeed be compatible with increased attendance and interest. Hiring outcomes that rely heavily on risk-free programming defeat not only audiences and performers but, ultimately, themselves.**



## **“NAVIGABLE STRUCTURES AND TRANSFORMING MIRRORS”: IMPROVISATION AND INTERACTIVITY**

By encouraging audiences to share actively in a creative process, improvisation explicitly problematizes forms of musical reception based in culturally-rooted assumptions about audience passivity. For audiences and improvisors alike, the journey of improvised music is not pre-determined, but rather responsive in real time to the immediate performance situation. While all music engages listeners with some degree of interactivity, in improvisation such an interactivity is an essential structural component, one not merely relegated to the more passive recognition of affect or pattern. The dialogic and interactive aspect of this kind of musical encounter challenges traditional roles, including those adapted from European classical music performance practices, where performers are often framed as transmitters and audiences as receivers. Thus, the interactive nature of musical improvisation encourages both musicians and audiences to rethink traditional expectations about the expression and the reception of musical meaning.

The Canadian artist David Rokeby, producer of interactive intermedia installations since the early 1980s, has also written on the subject of interactivity from his own experience as an art-maker. Rokeby's work explores notions of subjectivity, control, and intuition. His signature

interactive work, the Very Nervous System, has been continuously updated since the completion of the original version in 1982. The piece uses a video camera to follow the audience's movements in a large space. A computer then interprets this information, controlling synthesizers and samplers to create in real time electronic music that accompanies or responds to audience gestures. The end result is a collaboration between the viewers and Rokeby's system. Here, the "viewer" is also the co-creator, emphasizing the blurring of traditional roles between listener and performer that is part of the nature of improvisation itself. Moreover, Rokeby's work privileges the intuitive body as the prime site of the improvisatory gesture:

Computers are supposed to be logical, so I wanted my piece to be intuitive. The computer tends to remove you from your body, so I wanted my piece to engage the body, strongly. My piece takes place in physical space, on a human scale: this is in direct contrast to the computer's activity, which takes place on the tiny playing field of the integrated circuit (Rokeby "Very Nervous System" 1995).

Rokeby's notions of "navigable structures" and "transforming mirrors" (Rokeby "Transforming" 1995: 133) suggest useful models not only for articulating the nature of the interactive relationship among artists, spectators, and computer media installations, but also for understanding the creative and interactive processes of musical improvisation. In particular, I draw upon these models in exploring a multicultural tradition of improvisation that has been articulated in the United States, Europe,

Canada, and Asia from the 1960s to the present. Often called improvised music, creative music, free improvisation or free jazz, this complex of traditions is articulated by a diverse group of musicians, including Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, John Coltrane, John Tchicai, Muhal Richard Abrams and the Association of the Advancement of Creative Musicians, Irène Schweizer, Ikue Mori, Joëlle Léandre, Marilyn Crispell, Jin Hi Kim, Alvin Curran, AMM, Pauline Oliveros, Derek Bailey, and Evan Parker, among others.

## **NAVIGABLE STRUCTURES**

Rokeby's metaphor of "navigation" constructs the musical experience as a mutable, inclusive environment where individual input can be accommodated and welcomed in the most literal sense. Aiming to underline the interactive potential of technology in art-making – that is, the ability of technology to "reflect the consequences of our actions or decisions back to us" (Rokeby "Transforming" 1995: 133) – Rokeby ascribes to the artist the role of structuring "the space with a sort of architecture that provides a method of navigation" (138). The "navigable structure," therefore, is a "real, virtual, or conceptual articulation of a space" in which the interactor/viewer is situated so as to be able to adopt "a variety of roles . . . and experience a variety of conflicting perspectives on the

event” (139).

Thus, for an improviser, a navigable structure is a method of interpretation that helps to promote connections between ideas, a concept that in turn suggests a collective, communitarian dynamic in musical decision-making. Indeed, many accounts of improvised music suggest that the power of change is collectively articulated, incorporating either a fluctuating or shared leadership and featuring continuous reconstruction of multiple perspectives. For instance, George E. Lewis remarks upon the notion of shared responsibility in his description of one method used by members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians to structure their performances in the mid-1970s: “Organizing the entire concert in advance in broad outline, but leaving the details to the improvisors to structure and glue together as they wished, demanded that improvisors assume personal and collective responsibility for the real-time articulation of form” (Lewis “Singing” 1998: 73).

The group dynamic may push the improviser to relinquish control over the shape of the piece, adding pieces to a puzzle in which no one “owns” a finalized version. Rokeby, however, not only underlines the interactor’s responsibility for the course of the artistic event – “through a series of decisions, the interactor moves into a specific position for which he or she is, in sense, accountable” (Rokeby “Transforming” 1995: 139) – but, more

importantly, he stretches the category of the interactor to include all corporeal presences in the space of the performance.

## **LIVE PERFORMANCE**

Jon Panish notes that “jazz is part of a cultural tradition in which live performance is central to the creation of music” (Panish 1997: 79). His discussion of jazz also highlights the cultural conditions of improvised music, generally, in that the musical significations and meanings of improvisation are best understood during a live setting. Unlike musics invested in providing the listener with a completed version of a musical text or score in performance, improvisation provides an opportunity to engage with an expansive musical environment during the performance, wherein the nature of the text is open and subject to the energy or “vibe” of the audience. In many cases, this vibe is powerful enough to affect and direct many of the parameters of an improvisation, such as how long to play a particular phrase or motif and whether to play loud or soft, fast or slow. In such an environment, sources of meaning cannot be limited exclusively to sonic morphologies such as the order of notes, orchestration, timbre, and the like; meaning is also located in the ways in which improvisors situate their bodies, change their facial expressions, and use their voices to accompany notes, gestures, silences or phrases.

For Panish, the live performance also assists listeners by providing additional information through which they can decode musical, social and political meanings embedded in the sounds themselves. Even the space in which the sounds are presented can suggest a political or cultural context for the music. For instance, at a festival of contemporary classical and improvised music I attended in Europe, the presenters tended to direct music that included improvisation to more informal spaces such as loud cafés, while contemporary classical performances were presented in traditional concert hall spaces, thereby sending the message that only some works are worthy of the consideration appropriate to “high” art.

Panish’s observation that “jazz musicians learned to play first by listening to other players and imitating their sounds, and second by interacting with and responding to the audience” can be applied to a more generalized conception of improvised music as well, insofar as it implies that the interface between performer and audience itself creates a grammar that crucially influences the navigation of the music (80). For example, bassist Joëlle Léandre declares that “when you play spontaneous music, the audience participates with you and is in the same boat with you.” This dual participation occurs because “there is a tension with what the musicians and audience speak about. We are all in the moment and we are talking about us, the audience is a mirror and they are

deeply with us. We talk about life, death, drama, passion, joy and who and what we are” (Léandre Interview 2000).

Part of the influence exercised by audience members can involve the degree of familiarity they have with the navigable terrain. For example, it may be possible to recognize that the pianist Cecil Taylor tends to use clusters, to play melodies in octaves, or to play rather rapidly using the entire keyboard. As a listener, however, I do not know beforehand if he will use those gestures in a particular performance, and if he does, I cannot be sure of how he will choose to display the materials. An audience member who is familiar with the many possible timbral, harmonic, gestural, structural, and technical strategies available to any improviser at any time may notice various sonic identities, tendencies, and styles. At the same time, these tendencies need not be adopted as the only method of structuring or navigating an improvisation.

## **DIVERSITY (AND ITS DISCONTENTS)**

For Lewis, improvised music is:

a social location inhabited by a considerable number of present-day musicians, coming from diverse cultural backgrounds and musical practices, who have chosen to make improvisation a central part of their musical discourse. Individual improvisors are now able to reference an intercultural establishment of techniques, styles, aesthetic

**attitudes, antecedents, and networks of cultural and social practice” (Lewis “Improvised” 1996: 110).**

**At the same time, as my earlier thumbnail sketch of the field indicates, there is no overarching training structure or school that prepares people to become improvisors; rather, improvisation depends on a diversity of training and cultural practices thriving amongst multiple, diverse musical backgrounds and communities not least because its very substance exemplifies multiplicity.**

**Henry A. Giroux’s observation concerning the field of cultural studies seems apt as a description of improvised music as well:**

**in both fields one has the opportunity to rethink the relationship between the issue of difference as it is constituted within subjectivities and between social groups. This rethinking suggests understanding more clearly how questions of subjectivity can be taken up so as not to erase the possibility for individual and social agency. As such, subjectivities are seen as contradictory and multiple, produced rather than given, and are both taken up and received within particular social and historical circumstances (Giroux 1992:165).**

**Similarly, the structure of improvisation itself –as a field and as a product – necessarily reflects the infinite variability of attitudes, experiences, personal styles, and histories among both improvisors and audience members. In this regard, the flexible, multiply-mediated nature of navigable structures makes it possible for individuals to perform with many kinds of musicians, encouraging exchanges, dialogues, and collaborations between different groups of musicians from various parts of the world with relatively**



little group preparation. The concept of navigation, by problematizing any centrally codified project of improvisation, encourages multiple readings of improvised potentialities, locating and decoding such structures in order to understand and appreciate the kinds of exchanges that take place as new community formations occur.

Of course, an individual may choose to stay with familiar people, materials and patterns, but this in turn can limit the degree to which improvisation allows for an opportunity to take chances and move into new territories. If a navigable structure is viewed as an environment where both the audience and improvisors can discover active spaces, in theory, the greater the diversity that can be brought to these spaces, the more challenging and potentially rewarding the creation of the music can be. At the same time, just as meeting people for the first time can be awkward and unsatisfying, new collaborations pose enormous risks as well. John Corbett discusses the nature of risk-taking as part of the improvising work experience: “the performer does not know for certain what will be played going into the performance, since the music is by definition undefined; the risk of failure, or complete collapse, is everywhere present” (Corbett 1995: 222). Part of the risk, for both the critic Christopher Small and the pianist Misha Mengelberg, lies in the constantly changing and unpredictable nature of group improvisation. For Mengelberg, improvising with as little as only one other player

dramatically affects the musical environment: “You have, of course, all your expectations and plans destroyed the moment you play with other people” (qtd. in Corbett 1995: 236). Thus, as longtime AMM associate Eddie Prévost notes, “improvisation is fragile. Its transience leads to a vast number of evolutionary prospects. The meta-musician has to be undaunted by traditional practices and the seductive power of peer-approval. If the musician fails to accept these challenges and remains trapped in a perception of himself, then he no longer improvises” (Prévost 1995: 81).

What, then, drives an improviser to accept the challenge? Small uses the motif of the journey to make a point about both unpredictability and musical value:

We may not know how long the trip is going to be, or even necessarily where we are going. It may be that we shall not enter any new territory at all, or even if we do, that it will prove just a dismal swamp that no one will wish to revisit, but every now and then we obtain glimpses of glittering new lands, are dazzled by the sight of beauty and meaning which is all the more astonishing for being unexpected (Small 1977: 176).

Ultimately, individual musicians are challenged to recreate themselves for each improvisational occasion, allowing for the pleasure of surprise, re-awakening, and evolution.

## **PROBLEMATIZING THE “WORK”**

The status of the musical work as a reproducible document, including those musics that do not come from the West, that incorporate oral traditions, or that otherwise make little reference to notation, hovers in the background of Western audiences' expectations of music. Philosopher Lydia Goehr points to the historical validation of the concept of musical work as “not just any group of sounds, but [as] a complex structure of sounds related in some important way to a composer, a score, and a given class of performances” (Goehr 1992: 20). For Goehr, this notion prepares musical creations for permanent display in what she calls an “imaginary museum.” What Goehr calls the “work-concept” implies that a closed score somehow guarantees its listeners a desirable predictability. Improvisation challenges this concept of a musical work, and more importantly, it questions the very notion of a complete, predictable musical product. While there are many improvised pieces that refer to scores, unlike a classical context or conventional song form, improvisors have plenty of room to add their own understanding of the score and what it may signify to them. The significance of the score in improvised music often serves more as a point of departure than

as a set of fixed ideas to which one addresses rigidly. Hence, it is possible for two different improvisors to work with a specific “score” and produce significantly different outcomes.

This important difference between improvised music and music created in deference to the “work concept” affects those audiences who may be accustomed to receiving a musical product created prior to performance. As a result, adherence to a written score as the locus of musical authenticity and value may well impede appreciation or comprehension of an improvised music that, as Panish observes of jazz, “emphasizes improvisation – invention during the act of performance – over either composition or reproducing a written score” (Panish 1997: 79). For Goehr, the notion of the separation of the artist from the work is central to the concept of the autonomous work itself. E.T.A. Hoffmann’s account, as quoted by Goehr, is paradigmatic:

The genuine artist lives only for the work, which he understands as the composer understood it and which he now performs. He does not make his personality count in any way. All his thoughts and actions are directed towards bringing into being all the wonderful, enchanting pictures and impressions the composer sealed in his work with magical power (qtd in Hoffman 1919: 69; Goehr 1992: 1).

Bassist and composer Gavin Bryars has advanced a similar notion:

Distancing yourself from what you are doing. Now that becomes impossible in improvisation. If I write a piece I don’t even have to be

there when it is played. They are conceptions. I'm more interested in conception than reality. Because I can conceive of things that don't have any tangible reality. But if I'm playing them, if I'm there at the same time, then that's real. It's not a conception (qtd. in Bailey 1992: 115).

In contrast, the paradigm that many improvisors embrace does not advocate for a rupture between the art and the artist but rather an inescapable integration between them. With improvisation, it is not possible to claim that the music was not yours to begin with: you are held responsible for a perceived failure or triumph – by you and by the audience. In this regard, Goehr challenges both Hoffmann and Bryars in asserting that “works cannot, in any straightforward sense, be physical, mental or ideal objects. They do not exist as concrete, physical objects; they do not exist as private ideas existing in the mind of a composer, a performer, or a listener; neither do they exist in the eternally existing world of ideal, uncreated forms” (Goehr 1992: 2-3). Rather, works are contingent structures, acting in concert with the richness of human experience and the dynamics of history and culture.

Bassist Joëlle Léandre's concept of work in improvised music is particularly helpful in understanding Goehr's position:

No matter the degree of experience, we're all like a 2 1/2 year-old kid, full of anxiety in the face of the nothingness before us, in front of this emotionally stimulated intellectual desire to present a finished object. But we must remain in the process of doing, not in the goal of being done. I am against the concept of a “work,” it is not part of my

vocabulary. I have the impression that when I write, I am not writing a finished work, but a “work in progress” (Léandre 1991: 37).

Thus, I align myself with Goehr in maintaining that the personality and life experience of the individual performing, composing or improvising is revealed by the particular repertoire that individual chooses to perform, the music he or she composes or the way he or she improvises. Individual creative choices in an improvising context constantly reassert the interconnectedness of life and artistic expression. Finally, the notion of improvisatory “work” itself – as product, process, and value – plays an important role in musical reception dynamics. While the act of improvising explicitly involves “work,” the nature of work in improvisation, as I understand it, is not to create a finished product but rather to treat work itself as a process through which improvisations are worked out, worked over, or worked on, but never finished in the traditional sense in Western culture of “achieving closure.” Rather, improvisation problematizes the notion of reproducing a work “only for the standard” that is to be mastered and reproduced (Attali 1985: 101). For example, a recording of a live improvised music concert can only serve as a documentation of that event: it cannot be repeated by other improvising groups much less by the original performance group itself.

Even if, as Attali suggests, the concert itself becomes a reproducible

object via the process of recording and distribution (Attali 1985:101), a recorded improvisation is evidence, not a prescription to be followed. If the documented music proves interesting or extraordinary to some, it can serve as a guide or model for what happened to the “work” during that particular performance, with those particular individuals, at that specific time and place. Here, the nature of improvisation includes an engagement with work as a process of community by which identities are revealed, displaced, and questioned.

## **IMPROVISATION, PERSONALITY, AND AUTHORITY**

Unlike those forms of music in which formal devices make it possible to use technical facility to camouflage a musician's emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual subjectivities, improvisation allows performers to reveal themselves, to share their embodied experiences. If the relationship between life and music is, as I and others in this book posit, an intimate one, then the improviser exposes the flux of relational creation within the materiality of his or her own existential context, located specifically in space and time. How improvisors play inevitably interacts with how they live, even for those improvisors who approach music as a self-referential musical practice that has no relationship to musicians or to the world in which they

live.

Besides providing a portrait of the individual personality, improvisation can also reveal the social and political tendencies of the musician or, as Ingrid Monson points out, “the aesthetic centrality of linking sound to an ethos, cultural identity, and communities of participation” (Monson 1996: 186). For example, violinist Malcolm Goldstein conceives of “the natural sounding of the world (including people) . . . discovering and focusing in the moment of the sound coming forth,” as working in conjunction with “the root of my spirituality/politics” (Goldstein 1988: 36-37). For Goldstein, as for many others, the improvised performance presents an opportunity to disrupt structures that for the most part function to discourage people from speaking about important political, social, and personal issues.

What listeners of an improvisation can be assured of is that both they and the musicians are most likely hearing the specific inflections of the improvisation for the first time. In particular, first-time listeners to improvised music are often moved to re-evaluate their conception of musical practice. To the extent that improvised music seems perplexing, perhaps because of the newness of the sounds, extended techniques, or the different approaches to musical organization, novitiates even find themselves asking whether or not the sounds they are hearing are really music at all. Soon, however, curious listeners



might find themselves challenging, via a few simple queries, the corporate-conditioned distribution arrangements that affect the production and reception of music: where do I find this music on radio or television? Why is this music not advertised in local record stores, newspapers, and billboards? In an age where most media are controlled by a few multinational corporations, listeners often struggle to find a music that redefines or even abandons the typical surfeit of love, hate, revenge songs active on commercial radio. Musics that explore other methods of self-identification, that are in dialogue with philosophical, metaphorical, psychological, ontological and abstract states of being, may provide alternative listening experiences that speak to new ways by which people can assert agency for organizing and redefining their lives within the larger contexts of local and global communities.

In this sense, can the creation and performance of real-time music pose a threat to the investment by certain worlds of music production and performance in particular notions of interpretation, reproduction, and authority? If one important effect of improvised music is to problematize conditioned listener assumptions and responses, must we not ask ourselves if new forms of cultural expression threaten us and, if so, why? Do we immediately become judgmental and dismissive of a music that seems initially to challenge our orthodox musical beliefs and values?

Particularly when the audience member is trained in another field, he or she may feel an unwelcome challenge via improvised music, especially since almost everyone feels crucially and personally connected to music generally, a connection in which notions of cultural competence are often at stake. Most listeners are exposed to many styles of music, but when they come across unfamiliar music the tendency is to compare it to more familiar forms. At times, listeners may dismiss unfamiliar musical languages rather than accept an alternative definition of what music can sound like.

It may even seem at times as though the listener is being attacked on some level because of the unfamiliarity s/he has with this type of improvised cultural production. Saxophonist and composer Roscoe Mitchell deals with this very issue during the live recording of his piece “Nonaah,” recorded at the Willisau Festival in Switzerland in 1977. Mitchell had been asked at the last minute to replace a scheduled concert by Anthony Braxton, who was unable to make the performance. The recording documents a three-way conversation among Mitchell, those who supported his music on that occasion, and those who disliked his performance. Mitchell begins by extracting a single fragment from “Nonaah,” playing it over and over again with subtle variations. As heard on the recording, the very vocal restlessness and even hostility among some in the audience is palpable, yet Mitchell retains a

commitment to the repeated phrase. Within the first four minutes of the 22-minute piece, the audience starts responding with a complex combination of applause, talking, whistles, and catcalls.

Mitchell remarks in the liner notes to the recording that this concert posed a real challenge for him, given his decision to keep playing what he had set out to perform that day regardless of the audience response. Rather than pleading for quiet, Mitchell directly addresses the issue of maintaining a respectful dialogue between performer and audience through his insistence on playing the same phrase over and over again. In his words, “I went out there and got this tension thing. It was a battle. I had to make the noise and whatever was going on with the audience was part of the piece. The music couldn't move till they respected me, until they realized that I wasn't going anywhere, and if someone was going it would have had to be them” (Mitchell 1977: 1). Here, Mitchell clearly recognizes that some people in the audience were not ready to hear his material, and that although this was a festival of new improvised music, certain forms of music were nonetheless to be received less approvingly.

Although Mitchell mentions that he wanted the audience to respect him, what he was really displaying was his seriousness and commitment to the integrity of the improvised music he practices, creates, and believes in. Given the fact that much of the music played at this time in European festivals of “new jazz” or “free improvisation” could be

characterized as intense, dense “energy music,” Mitchell’s music represented another way of thinking that grew out of Chicago’s AACM, where other improvisational methodologies, such as the use of space, a large dynamic range, extended techniques, and the use of poetry or performance art elements, were perhaps less consonant with audience expectations. But for Mitchell, this music – more spacious, less frenetic – also needed to be heard. Eventually, the audience calmed down (approximately seven minutes into the piece) and a newfound respect for what he was playing seemed to emerge. The music could at last move to other musical ideas.

## **TRANSFORMING MIRRORS**

Creative improvisors see each performance as an opportunity for breaking through previous technical or musical limitations, perhaps gaining new insights into themselves through interactions with others. One of the ways improvisors learn about themselves is through a dynamic that Rokeby calls the “transforming mirror.” For Rokeby, though “all interactive works reflect interactors back to themselves, in many works the idea of the mirror is explicitly invoked” (Rokeby “Transforming” 1995: 145). As an example, Rokeby mentions video artist Ed Tannenbaum’s “Recollections,” in which the viewer’s body image is represented as a video projection. By the

author's own description,

**Recollections**” is an interactive video installation that invites the participant to move in front of a large video projection screen. As the person moves, his or her image is recorded by a video camera and passed on to a computer with special image processing capabilities. The person's silhouette or outline is extracted, assigned a color based on the instant that it was recorded, and projected onto the screen. Over time the images build up, creating a painting based on the movement. Since people are always doing new things with the exhibit, the images never repeat (Tannenbaum 2001).

According to Rokeby, the representation of the viewer on the screen by Tannenbaum “follows the movements of the interactor like a mirror image or shadow, transformed by the potentials with which the artist has endowed the space” (Rokeby “Transforming” 1995: 145). Similarly, the potential of multiple dialogues among improvisors acts as a type of transforming mirror where an idea advanced by one player may not lead to the projected musical results but may in its reception be transformed beyond recognition. This interactive community dynamic of mirroring and transformation reflects a social discourse put into practice through musical interaction, calling into question how both improvisors and listeners perceive themselves and the world around them.

A recent recording of the trio Les Diaboliques, featuring Maggie Nicols, Irène Schweizer and Joëlle Léandre – *Canaille 91* – displays a variety of means and paths through which the music is transformed as materials are magnified, alluded to, varied upon, or discarded. The musicians respond to each other with bodily gestures, tap dancing, or the use of the voice

without textual reference. An analysis of the music itself reveals some of the transformations, but ultimately it is the attitude or intention behind each transformation that gives a fuller understanding of the change. The relationship that each of the improvisors has to the musical materials is also transformed, as the players stand ready to respond with contrasts or complementary material depending upon what specific musical statements signify to each musician.

A transforming mirror emerges whenever a reaction, be it negative or positive, happens in relation to any musical experience, not just an improvised one. The cultural implications of transforming mirrors pose new questions concerning both familiar and unfamiliar territories, experiences, situations, and stimuli that challenge the collective sense of what music is and how musical culture is constituted. How do we react as listeners to new organizations of sounds? What is our response when we hear a traditional instrument like the piano being played differently, as for instance, by plucking its strings? Is our reaction culturally produced or innate? Does being intelligent and knowledgeable in other disciplines prepare listeners with insights for improvised musical contexts?

The following example would be one way in which enacting interdisciplinary connections reproduces as well as produces patterns of response at both the musical and the personal level of the improvisors

and audience. I recently had the experience of bringing improvised music and dance to a group of individuals who had rarely been exposed to the possibilities improvisation offers. A presentation/lecture at a leadership conference for health professionals in Los Angeles provided an occasion for me, dancer Paula Josa Jones, and her dance work company to introduce some of the strategies she uses with both dancers and musicians. One strategy that Jones deploys is what she calls mirroring. In mirroring two dancers are to do exactly as the other one does. Jones then had the audience try this out. There was a lot of nervous laughter as people moved their bodies, with the one directive on their mind – to mirror their partner. The moves themselves were to be improvised. Using movement as a way of demonstrating how varied improvisation can be, and how people can creatively interact with one another, enabled the audience members to re-examine how they themselves are empowered as agents in the development of new strategies in their own lives and work.

## **CONCLUSION**

Navigable structures and transforming mirrors illuminate, for both audiences and improvisors, some of the elements that may inform, direct, or structure an improvisation. Improvisation encourages both improvisors and audiences to discover alternative ways of hearing,

receiving, responding, and thinking. Acting in concert, improvisors and audiences deploy the interactive technologies of improvisation to establish the potential of alternative creative identities, new relational structures that reconfigure community. No doubt, there is an important role that the tools of cultural studies can play in developing discourses that explain what improvisors and audiences do. To that end, I trust that this essay has prepared the ground for a further understanding of how improvisational interactivity addresses the social practices through which community is given shape and form.



## **CONCLUSION**

### **EMERGENT IMPROVISORS, NEW COMMUNITIES**

As my study reveals, women improvisors often receive tangential consideration next to a more dominant project of improvisation. Clearly treated as a sub-community, women improvisors receive less attention in the emergent discourse on improvisation, less work opportunities at festivals, and far less media presence.

Nonetheless, this presentation of the work of seven women improvisors represents only a small percentage of the voices of experimental women throughout the world. I have only touched on a small number of experimental women in this project but there are many more! For example, in Appendix G I have provided a list of all the women who have been presented at the five festivals I surveyed: This list features 125 women, whose presence in turn represents a small subset of a larger community of women.

Joëlle Léandre's attitude towards certain festival organizers may reveal power struggles operating within the field: "Nowadays, the festival organizers are the divas - I was sitting opposite one who said: "If you play at all it's thanks to us." (Silence) It pulled the rug from under my feet. I said: "If you EXIST at all it's thanks to us!" (Léandre "Who Says This is Difficult" 2002) This statement highlights the fact that decisions by festival organizers to hire or not hire a woman impact her ability to gain future work opportunities, such as other festivals, concerts, and recording contracts, as well as media attention.

I do not wish to present an overly reductive analysis of the complex ways in which knowledge, meaning and representation in improvised music communities are juxtaposed, collapsed, created, transmitted and disseminated. At the same time, the failure to include women's voices necessitates a closer investigation as to how the constituencies within and around improvised musics view their role in the cultural production of that music. Understandably, there could be tremendous benefits for the general community of improvisors if more women (and people of color) were directly involved with festival programming.

Indeed, women's involvement with the grassroots production within both established festival organizations and new, emerging festivals, should enable both men and women to execute alternative modalities of improvisation, as bell hooks' insights into feminist discourse suggest:

Given the politics of patriarchy, feminist agendas that include a focus on men must be formed with full understanding that most people have been socialized to assume that the experiences and concerns of women are not as important as those of men. This reality makes it necessary for us to vigilantly centralize women's experience in ways that critically intervene and disrupt conventional ways of thinking about gender. When considering questions about the place of men in feminist movement, or to what extent feminist agendas should include a focus on males, feminist activist must creatively develop strategies that do not re-inscribe a focus on women as secondary . . . While woman-only spaces make it easier to generate a sense of solidarity among women, if in such settings all focus on men is deemed reactionary and anti-feminist, then they become sites where feminist revolution that acts to eradicate sexism and sexist oppression, that empower women to challenge and confront patriarchy and men, that offers a transformative vision, is undermined (hooks Interview Part 1, 1991: 96).

What would these alternative spaces and challenges embody? Essentially, these models would reassert the inextricable connectedness between music and other disciplines, mapping music, theater, technology, sexual identity, race, gendered dispositions, the body and the re-invention of identity into a new project of improvisation. This is not to suggest that improvisation does not already embody extra-musical elements in its sonic representations. What I am proposing is that these extra-musical representations be encouraged to operate at the artists discretion—either transparently (as evident in the performances of Masaoka or F.I.G.) or concealed—without the danger (perceived or actual) of being accountable to some definitive model of improvised music.

Ultimately, the inclusion of women in a discourse of improvisation is essential to creating coherent theoretical models around improvisation. A rendering of improvisational strategies, histories and methodologies that silences or minimizes women's voices reflects not only a disparity, but also a profound misunderstanding of the interconnectedness of musical production, gender and feminism. Examining the organic interplay between the artist and the object created by the artist facilitates a deeper understanding of how musical meaning is represented, reflected and transmitted by both individual and collective agency. It is my hope that future research on experimental improvisation will include the diversified approaches, attitudes and identities that are the voices of experimental women improvisors.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **QUESTIONS FOR RESPONDENTS**

#### **Early History<sup>1</sup>**

1. How did you get started in music?
2. When did you begin to improvise?
3. Who were your early influences? Are they different today?
4. Did you have formal training?
5. Did your family encourage your creativity?
6. Did you have access to an instrument regularly?
7. Did you pay for your own lessons? Education?
8. Did you have access to recording equipment? Records? Technology?
9. Where did you grow up?
10. What do your parents do?

#### **Feminism and Gender**

1. Do you think you would have a different career if you were a man?
2. Do you feel that women receive the same amount of recognition as men?
3. How long did it take for your music to be recognized in larger circles? Was it overnight or has it been a slow process?
4. How do you feel gender and race is constructed by the media in improvised circles?
5. Have you noticed any gender/racial discrepancies in your reviews?
6. Before you were a well known artist, did men call you to rehearse, jam?
7. Do you perform in groups of mostly men or women? If so, why?
8. Do you play around with constructions of gender when you perform on different occasions? In other words, do you interrupt essentialist notions of women's bodies?
9. Do you down play that you are a women, in order to be included as one of the boys?
10. Do you speak up when you notice misunderstandings in musical meanings and group organizations?
11. Have you ever been asked to represent yourself in ways that are unacceptable to you?
12. Do you feel that improvisational groups that include women perform differently?

#### **Musical Meanings**

1. What are you saying with your music? How would you describe your music?

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<sup>1</sup> I used the above questions in an improvisatory manner. I did not pose all these questions to every subject but used these sets of questions as a springboard for additional discussions.

2. What motivates you to continue improvising?
3. If you had to provide instructions with your music, how would you suggest people listen to your pieces?
4. How do you feel about recorded improvised music?
5. What informs your work?
6. Does your work allow you to speak to a higher being or allow for spiritual movement?
7. Do you practice any other disciplines such as yoga, Judaism, Buddhism, tai chi?
8. Why do you think it is important for people to utilize improvisation as a method of expression?
9. What is your improvisational process? How much of your pieces are notated? Are they sets of instructions? Graphs?

### **Most important works**

1. What recording or piece do you feel signifies your voice to you? Why? At what point in your development did you discover your voice?
2. What recording, piece or concert do you feel most mis-represents you?
3. What ensembles, trios, duos etc., are you currently part of?
4. Do you consider yourself a band leader in the traditional sense?
5. Do you consider yourself to be a rhythmic, melodic or harmonic player?
6. Do you have a fixed schedule in which you practice? How do you practice your music?
7. How do you see the role of the individual in group improvisations?
8. In popular music the success of a project is measured in terms of record sales, how do you measure success in improvised music contexts?

### **Audience**

1. How does the presence of the audience influence your music? How important is an audience to you?
2. How is your playing different from solo to group contexts?
3. Who would you say have been the biggest supporters of your development?
4. Have you ever experienced a negative or less inviting reception to your music while performing and if so, can you tell us about the experience, and how you knew the audience was restless or disapproving?

### **Pedagogy**

1. How would you go about teaching improvised music?
2. How do you think we can better build an improvised community?
3. How do you feel about the literature that is currently available on improvised music?

**Personal Philosophy**

1. Has your decision to become an improviser affected the way people perceive you?
2. Do you call yourself an improviser or do you avoid labels?
3. Would you say that your work has been presented mostly by jazz, classical, or popular venues?
4. How do you currently make a living?
5. How do you feel about current funding for improvised music?
6. Do you have a significant other? How do they feel about your work?
7. Do you have children? Has being a musician affected why or why not you would have a family?
8. Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?
9. How do you feel about the lack of women represented in even the small amount of literature on improvised music?
10. Do you have a philosophy that you use with large groups of free improvising musicians? How do you structure your freedom in those contexts?
11. Do you consider your role as an improvisors to embody political, social and cultural attitudes?

## APPENDIX B

### A SURVEY OF EXPERIMENTAL WOMEN PRESENTED BY TOTAL MUSIC MEETING

Total Music Meeting Year	Total Participants	Number of Women Performers
2000	24	1 (4.1%) Aki Takase (piano)
1999	26	1 (3.8%) Jin Hi Kim (komungo)
1998	30	0
1997	23	2 (8.6%) Christine Wodrascka (piano) Irène Schweizer
1996	18	2 (11%) Irene Aebi (voice/violin) Judith Malina (poet)
1995	18	4 (22%) Elisabeth Böhm-Christl (bassoon) Johanne Braun (oboe) Kirsten Reese (flute) Tatjana Schütz (harp)
1994	24	2 (8%) Sainkho Namychylak (voice) Shelley Hirsch (voice)
1993	28	4 (14%) Dorothea Schürch (voice) Irène Schweizer

		Julie Tippetts (voice) Vanessa Mackness (voice)
<b>1992</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1 (3.2%)</b> Maartje ten Hoor (violin)
<b>1991</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2 (7.1%)</b> Lindsay Cooper Shelley Hirsch
<b>1989</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1988</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1 (9%)</b> Joëlle Léandre
<b>1987</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2 (6%)</b> Carin Levine (flute) Maartje ten Hoor (violin)
<b>1986</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1 (4.7%)</b> Annemarie Roelofs
<b>1985</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1984</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2 (13%)</b> Irène Schweizer Marilyn Crispell
<b>1983</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2 (10%)</b> Irène Schweizer Marilyn Crispell
<b>1982</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>2 (5.2%)</b> Maggie Nicols Marilyn Crispell



<b>Data Unavailable for 1980 and 1981</b>		
<b>1979</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7 (23%)</b>  Feminist Improvising Group:  Annermarie Roelofs  Corine Liensol (trumpet)  Georgina Born  Irène Schweizer  Lindsay Cooper  Maggie Nicols,  Sally Potter
<b>1978</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1 (4%)</b>  Irène Schweizer
<b>1977</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1 (2.7%)</b>  Elsbeth Moser (accordion)
<b>1976</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1 (2%)</b>  Irène Schweizer
<b>Data unavailable for 1975</b>		
<b>1974</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Data unavailable for 1973</b>		
<b>1972</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Data unavailable for 1969, 1970 and 1971</b>		
<b>1968</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3 (12%)</b>  Carolann Donata Hoffer (violin)  Laurie Allen (drums)  Maggie Nicols (voice)

# APPENDIX C

## A SURVEY OF FESTIVAL PARTICIPANTS AT DU MAURIER INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL (1995-2000)

<b>Du Maurier International Jazz Festival Vancouver</b>		
<b>June 23-July 2, 2000</b>	<b>All Women invited (all stylistic categories)</b>	<b>Experimental Men Improvisors Only</b>
	Alberta Adams (voice) Anna Lumiere (piano/composer) Betty Loo Taylor (piano) Brandi Disterheft (bass) Cesaria Evora (voice) Chanthi Besso (voice) Christine Duncan (voice) Dee Daniels (voice) Ellen Mcilwane (guitar/voice) Holly Cole (voice) Ivana Santilli (piano/trumpet/voice) Jane Bunnett (saxophone) Jennifer Gasol (voice) Jennifer Scott (voice/piano) Jill Russell (flute) Jillian Leback (piano) June Katz (voice) Karin Plato (voice/songwriter) Kate Hammett-Vaugh (voice) Kathy Kidd (voice) Lee Aron (voice) Lori Freedman (clarinet)	Anders Jormin (bass) Bard Muirhead (trombone, tuba) Barre Philips (bass) Bruce Freedman (saxophone) Chris Tarry (electric bass) Clyde Reed (bass) Coat Cooke (clarinet, flute,saxophone) Dylan van der Schyff (piano) François Houle (clarinet) Fred Lonberg-Holm (cellist) George Graewe (piano) Graham Ord (saxophone, flute) Hamid Drake (drums) Han Bennink (drums) Jean Derome (saxophone) Jeremy Berkman (trombone) Joe McPhee (saxophone) Johannes Bauer (trombone) John Butcher (saxophonist) John Korsrud (trumpet) John Oswald (saxophone)

	<p>Lori Paul (voice)</p> <p>Lorraine Foster (voice)</p> <p>Marilyn Crispell (piano)</p> <p>Marilyn Lerner (piano)</p> <p>Patricia Barber (piano/voice)</p> <p>Peggy Lee (cello)</p> <p>Renee Doruyter (voice)</p> <p>Rickie Lee Jones (voice)</p> <p>Sahara MacDonald ( voice)</p> <p>Sharon Minemoto (piano/composer)</p> <p>Sharon Riley (voice)</p> <p>Sible Thrasher ( voice)</p> <p>Sue Foley (guitar)</p> <p>Susan Baca (voice)</p> <p>Tammy Weis (voice)</p> <p><b>Featured Women 37 (14.2%)</b>  <b>Experimental Women: 6 or (15%) of</b>  <b>Total Women performers or</b>  <b>2.3% of Total Featured Artists</b></p> <p><b>Instrumental Breakdown of All</b>  <b>Women Performers</b></p> <p>Bass:1  Cello:1  Clarinette:1  Composer:2  Guitar:1  Piano:9 (24.3%)  Saxophone:1  Songwriter:1  Trumpet:1  Voice and other instruments: 4  Voice: 25 (67.5%)</p>	<p>Leo Smith (trumpet)</p> <p>Paul Blaney (bass)</p> <p>Paul Plimley (piano)</p> <p>Peter Brötzmann (saxophone)</p> <p>Phil Durrant (violin)</p> <p>Ralph Eppel ( trombone)</p> <p>Raymond Stird (drums)</p> <p>Rob Blakeslee (trumpet,  flugelhorn)</p> <p>Rom Samworth (guitar)</p> <p>Saul Berson (saxophone, flute)</p> <p>Tony Wilson (guitarist)</p> <p>Toshinori Kondo (trumpet)</p> <p>Tristan Honsinger (cellist)</p> <p>William Parker (bass)</p> <p><b>Total Featured Artists 259</b>  <b>Men's Groups 222</b>  <b>Experimental Men: 35 (13.5%</b>  <b>of Total Festival)</b></p>
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June 24 to July 4, 1999	All Women Presented and Instruments They Play  (Experimental Women are in bold)	251 Featured Performances (Both Men and Women)
	<p>Alita Dupray (voice)</p> <p>Betty Loo Taylor (piano)</p> <p>Candus Churchill (voice)</p> <p>Catherine McLellan (voice)</p> <p>Christine Duncan (voice)</p> <p><b>Diane Labrosse</b> (voice/sampler/accordion)</p> <p>Esthero (voice)</p> <p>Eve Smith (voice/piano)</p> <p>Jennifer Gasoi ( voice)</p> <p>Jennifer Scott (voice)</p> <p>Jill Townsend (trombone)</p> <p><b>Joanne Hetu</b> (voice/saxophone)</p> <p>Karin Plato (voice/songwriter)</p> <p><b>Kate Hammett-Vaughan</b> (voice)</p> <p>Kathy Kidd (piano/composer)</p> <p>Laura Crema (voice)</p> <p><b>Lori Freedman</b> (clarinet)</p> <p>Lori Paul (voice)</p> <p>Lovie Eli (voice)</p> <p>Mei Han (zheng)</p> <p>Patricia Barber (piano/voice/songwriter)</p> <p><b>Peggy Lee</b> (cello)</p> <p>Renée Doruyter (voice)</p> <p>Renee Rosnes (piano)</p>	

	Sharon Minemoto (piano) Susan Tedeschi (voice) Susie Ibarra (drums) Tamara Nile ( voice) Tammy Weis (voice)  <b>29 Featured Women</b> <b>Experimental Women: 6 (20%) of</b> <b>Total Women performers or</b> <b>(2.3%) of Total Featured Artists</b>  <b>Instrumental Breakdown</b>  Voice: 19 Piano:5 Voice and Other instrument:5 Sampler/Accordion:1 Trombone:1 Saxophone:1 Clarinett:1 Zheng:1 Cello:1 Drums:1	
<b>June 19-28, 1998</b>	<b>The Following Table Lists</b> <b>Experimental Women Only</b>	
	<b>Experimental Improvising Women</b>  Jane Bunnett  Kate Hammett-Vaughan  Marilyn Lerner  Miya Masaoka (koto)  Peggy Lee	
	<b>Total Featured Women 29</b> <b>Experimental Women: 5 (17%) or 2%</b> <b>of Total Festival</b>	<b>Total Featured Performances</b> <b>209</b>
<b>June 20-29, 1997</b>	<b>The Following Table Lists Both</b> <b>Experimental Men and Women</b>	
	<b>Experimental Women</b>	<b>Experimental Men</b>

	<p><b>D.B. Boyko (voice)</b></p> <p><b>Diane Labrosse</b></p> <p><b>Ikue Mori (drums/sampler)</b></p> <p><b>Ingrid Oberkanins (percussion)</b></p> <p><b>Karen Graves (saxophones, flute and voice),</b></p> <p><b>Kate Hammett-Vaughan</b></p> <p><b>Lauri Lyster, (drums)</b></p> <p><b>Lori Freedman</b></p> <p><b>Marilyn Lerner</b></p> <p><b>Peggy Lee, (cello)</b></p> <p><b>Urszula Dudziak (voice)</b></p>	<p><b>Andy Scherrer (saxophone)</b></p> <p><b>Barry Guy</b></p> <p><b>Bill Frisell (guitar)</b></p> <p><b>Bumi Fian (trumpet)</b></p> <p><b>Charles Papasoff (saxophone)</b></p> <p><b>Christian Muthspiel (trombone)</b></p> <p><b>Christy Doran (guitar)</b></p> <p><b>Claudio Pnotiggia (horn)</b></p> <p><b>Coat Cook</b></p> <p><b>Dave Douglas (trumpet)</b></p> <p><b>Dylan van der Shyff</b></p> <p><b>Florian Brambock (saxophone)</b></p> <p><b>Frabcj Tirtukker (vibes)</b></p> <p><b>François Houle</b></p> <p><b>Fred Van Hove (piano)</b></p> <p><b>Freddy Studer (drums)</b></p> <p><b>Georg Graewe</b></p> <p><b>Gert Jan Prins (electronics)</b></p> <p><b>Grago Hilbe ( drums)</b></p> <p><b>Gregorio Guillermo (clarinet)</b></p> <p><b>Han Bennink</b></p> <p><b>Hans Koch (clarinet)</b></p> <p><b>Herb Robertson (trumpet)</b></p> <p><b>Herbert joos ( trumpet)</b></p> <p><b>Jackie McLean (saxophone)</b></p> <p><b>Jason Hwang (violin)</b></p> <p><b>Jean Beaudet (piano)</b></p> <p><b>John Butcher</b></p>
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		Klaus Dickbauer (saxophone) Konrad Bauer (trombone) Luc Houtkamp (saxophone) Martin Schütz (cello) Martin Tétrault (turntables) Mat Maneri (violin) Mathias Rüegg (composer) Mathieu Michel (trumpet) Mats Gustafsson (saxophone) Ned Rothenberg (reeds) Pandelis Karayorgis (piano) Paul Blaney Paul Plimley Randy Raine-Reusch (zheng) Ray Anderson (trombone) Raymond Strid (drums) Robert Dick (flute) Robert Riegler (bass) Ron Samworth Tim Postgate (guitar) Uli Scherer (piano) Yukio Tsuji (shakuhachi)
	<b>Total Women: 25</b> <b>Total Experimental Women: 11</b> <b>(44%) or 5.2% of Entire Festival</b>	<b>Total Experimental Men: 50</b> <b>(24% of Festival)</b> <b>Total Featured Artists: 208</b>
<b>June 21-30, 1996</b>	<b>The Following Table Lists the instrumental breakdown for the various Women presented</b>	
	<b>Featured Women Artists</b>	

	<p>Abbey Lincoln ( voice)</p> <p>Christine Duncan (voice)</p> <p>Deborah Harry (voice)</p> <p>Dee Daniels (voice/piano)</p> <p>Diana Krall (voice/piano)</p> <p>Eve Smith ( voice)</p> <p>Heather Ward (voice)</p> <p>Ingrid Jensen (trumpet)</p> <p>Jennifer Scott (voice)</p> <p>Joëlle Léandre (bass)</p> <p>June Katz (voice)</p> <p>Kate Hammett-Vaughan (voice)</p> <p>Linda Hornbuckle (voice)</p> <p>Lori Paul Group (voice)</p> <p>Lorraine Desmarais (piano)</p> <p>Miya Masaoka (koto)</p> <p>Peggy Lee (cello)</p> <p>Renée Doruyter (voice)</p> <p>Renee Rosnes (piano)</p> <p>Shannon Gunn (voice)</p> <p>Shelly Livingstone (voice)</p> <p>Sibel Thrasher (voice)</p>	
	<p><b>Total Women 22</b>  <b>Experimental Women 4 (18%) or 2.2%</b>  <b>of Festival</b></p> <p><b>Instrumental Breakdown</b></p> <p>1 ( bass)</p> <p>1 (cello)</p> <p>1 (koto)</p> <p>2 (piano)</p> <p>1 (trumpet)</p>	<p><b>Total Featured Performances:</b>  <b>179</b></p>



	16 (voice) 2 ( voice/piano)	
<b>June 23-July 2, 1995</b>	<b>The Following Table Lists both Experimental Women and Men</b>	
	<b>Experimental Improvising Women</b>  Jane Bunnett  Jeanne Lee (voice)  Joëlle Léandre (bass)  Kate Hammett-Vaughan  Marilyn Crispell	<b>Experimental Improvising Men</b>  Andrew Cyrille (drums)  Coat Cooke  Dave Douglas  Donald Robinson (drums)  Evan Parker (saxophone)  Francois Houle  Fred Anderson (saxophone)  George Graewe  George Lewis (trombone)  Glenn Spearman (saxophone)  Guss Janssen (information unavailable)  Hamid Drake (drums)  Han Bennink  Joey Baron (drums)  Larry Ochs (saxophone)  Lisle Ellis (bass)  Mathieu Belanger (information unavailable)  Paul Plimley  Pierre Tanguay (drums)  René Lussier (guitar)  Tim Berne (saxophone)

	<b>Total Featured Women 23</b> <b>Total Experimental Women: 5 (23.8%)</b> <b>Or 2.8% of the Festival</b>	<b>Total Experimental Men: 21</b> <b>Total Featured Performances:</b> <b>175</b>
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## APPENDIX D

### A SURVEY OF EXPERIMENTAL WOMEN HIRED BY TAKTLOS FESTIVAL (1984-2000)

<b>Taktlos Festival Year</b>	<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>Women</b>
2000	33	3 Women (9% of Festival)  Catherine Jaunaix (voice)  Kaffe Mathews (violin/electronics)  Robyn Schulkowsky (percussion)
Data unavailable for 1999		
1998	47	7 Women (14.9%)  Annemarie Roelofs  (trombone/viola)  Annick Nozati (voice)  Elvira Plenar (piano)  Gabriela Friedi (piano)  India Cooke (violin)  Irène Schweizer  Susie Ibarra (drums)
1997	33	3 Women (9%)  Carrie Skull ( oboe)  Ikue Mori  Leslie Ross (bassoon)
1996	34	10 Women (29%)  Alison Isadora (violin)  Beat Schneider (cello)  Jannie Pranger (voice)  Karel Boeschoten (violin)  Karri Koivukoski (viola)  Margaret Leng Tan (piano)

		<b>Marilyn Crispell</b> <b>Susanna Andres (violin)</b>
1995	40	<b>8 Women (20%)</b> <b>Amanda Stewart (text/voice)</b> <b>Annie Gosfield (keyboard)</b> <b>Christine Bard (drums)</b> <b>Margaret Parkins (cello)</b> <b>Sara Parkins (violin)</b> <b>Stevie Wishart</b> <b>(violin/electronics/hurdy-gurdy)</b> <b>Zeena Parkins (harp/piano)</b>
1994	27	<b>7 Women (25%)</b> <b>Annick Nozati</b> <b>Daniele diAgaro (clarinet)</b> <b>Deidre Murray (cello)</b> <b>Jeanne Lee</b> <b>Jin Hi Kim (komungo)</b> <b>Pauline Oliveros (accordion)</b> <b>Shelley Hirsch (voice)</b>
1993	48	<b>10 Women (20.8%)</b> <b>Christine Wodrascka (piano)</b> <b>Dorothea Schürch (voice)</b> <b>Irène Schweizer</b> <b>Joëlle Léandre</b> <b>Linda Hirst (voice)</b> <b>Maartje ten Hoorn (violin)</b> <b>Maggie Nicols (voice)</b> <b>Marilyn Crispell (piano)</b>

		<b>Sylvia Hallet (voice)</b> <b>Vanessa Machness (voice)</b>
<b>1992</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>6 Women (10%)</b> <b>Catherine Jauniaux</b> <b>Catherine Milliken (oboe)</b> <b>Dorothea Schürch</b> <b>Eva Böker (cello)</b> <b>Fatima Miranda (voice)</b> <b>Marianne Schuppe (voice)</b>
<b>1991</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6 Women (24%)</b> <b>Elvira Plenar</b> <b>Jin Hi Kim</b> <b>Joëlle Léandre</b> <b>Lindsay Cooper</b> <b>Robyn Schulkowsky</b> <b>Zeena Parkins</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>3 Women (8.6%)</b> <b>Dorothea Schürch (voice)</b> <b>Shelley Hirsch</b> <b>Vanessa Mackness</b>
<b>1989</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12 Women (44%)</b> <b>Anna Homler (voice)</b> <b>Deidre Murray</b> <b>Ikue Mori</b> <b>Iva Bittová (voice/violin)</b> <b>Jeanne Lee</b> <b>Karen Borca (bassoon)</b> <b>Katharina Weber (piano)</b>

		Marilyn Crispell Maud Sauer (oboe) Shelley Hirsch Tenko (voice) Zeena Parkins
1988	40	4 Women (10%) Irène Schweizer Joëlle Léandre Maggie Nicols Marilyn Mazur
1987	8	1 Woman (12.5%) LaDonna Smith (violin)
1986	24	4 Women (16%) Annemarie Roelofs Kate O'Looney (percussion) Kazuko Hohki (voice) Sianed Jones (violin/saxophone)
1985	27	6 Women (22%) Dagmar Krause(voice) Diamanda Galás (voice) Georgie Born (cello) Lindsay Cooper (saxophone/bassoon) Sally Potter (voice) Vicky Aspinall (violin)
1984	23	5 Women (21%) Annemarie Roelofs Joëlle Léandre

		<b>Irène Schweizer</b> <b>Lindsay Cooper</b> <b>Maggie Nicols</b>
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## APPENDIX E

### A SURVEY OF EXPERIMENTAL WOMEN AT THE GUELPH JAZZ FESTIVAL (1994-2000)

<b>Guelph Jazz Festival Year</b>	<b>Total Featured Artists (approximately)</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>14 (11%)</b> <b>Experimental Women 9 (7.3%)</b>  Anne Bourne Jane Bunnett Kate Hammett-Vaughan Lee Pui Ming Lori Freedman Maggie Nicols Marilyn Lerner Myra Melford (piano) Peggy Lee
<b>1999</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>8 (10%)</b> <b>Experimental Women 5 (6.4%)</b>  Anne Bourne (cello) Gayle Young LaDonna Smith Peggy Lee Susie Ibarra
<b>1998</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>6 (6%)</b> <b>Experimental Women 5 (5%)</b>  Anne Bourne Dana Reason Erin Donovan Gayle Young (percussion) Kali Fasteau (saxophone/flute)
<b>1997</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>20 (37%)</b> <b>Experimental Women 6 (11%)</b>



		<b>Amina Claudine Myers (piano)</b> <b>Gayle Young</b> <b>Jane Bunnett</b> <b>Marilyn Lerner</b> <b>Myra Melford</b> <b>Pauline Oliveros</b>
<b>1996</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>9 (18%)</b> <b>Experimental Women 1 (2%)</b> <b>Jane Bunnett</b>
<b>1995</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>4 (11%)</b> <b>Experimental Women 1 (2.8%)</b> <b>Jane Bunnett</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>6 (9%)</b> <b>(0 Experimental Women)</b>

## APPENDIX F

### A SURVEY OF EXPERIMENTAL WOMEN AT FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL MUSIQUE ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE (1984-2000)

<b>Festival International Musique Actuelle Victoriaville</b>		
<b>2000</b>	<b>Experimental Women 6 (5.5%)</b>  Diane Labrosse  Joane Hétu  Linda Thompson  Mari Kimura (feature)  Marilyn Crispell (feature)  Shelley Hirsch  <i>(The use of the word feature in these tables refers to women who were headliners)</i>	<b>Total Participants 108</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>Experimental Women 8 (9.1%)</b>  Annie Gosfield (feature)  Fatima Miranda (feature)  Gabi Kenderesi  Iva Bittová (feature)  Kathleen Yearwood (feature)  Peggy Lee (feature)  Sook -Yin Lee (feature)  Sophie Trudeau	<b>Total Participants 87</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>Experimental Women 12 (10.3%)</b>  Ikue Mori (feature)  Joëlle Léandre (feature)	<b>Total Participants 116</b>

	<b>Katrin (artist goes by first name)</b> <b>Lori Freedman (feature)</b> <b>Lyne Goulet</b> <b>Maria Kalaniemi</b> <b>Marilyn Crispell (feature)</b> <b>Marilyn Lerner (feature)</b> <b>Miya Masaoka (feature)</b> <b>Peggy Lee</b> <b>Stevie Wishart</b> <b>Susie Ibarra</b>	
<b>1997</b>	<b>Experimental Women 9 (7.1%)</b> <b>Dagmar Krause (feature)</b> <b>Irène Schweizer (feature)</b> <b>Kazuo Sawai (feature)</b> <b>Lindsey Horner</b> <b>Marianne Denoia (feature)</b> <b>Marie Goyett (feature)</b> <b>Miriam Palma</b> <b>Peggy Lee</b> <b>Susie Ibarra</b>	<b>Total Participants 126</b>
<b>1996</b>	<b>Experimental Women 11 (10.4%)</b> <b>Anna Homler-Pavel (feature)</b> <b>Annemarie Roelofs (feature)</b> <b>Annie Tremblay</b>	<b>Total Participants 105</b>

	Diane Labrosse France-Marie Uitti Joane Hétu (feature) Lee Pui Ming (feature) Louise-Andrée Baril Marie-Josée Simard Sainkho Namtchylak Zeena Parkins (feature)	
<b>1995</b>	<b>Experimental Women 6 (5.8%)</b>  Ann Bourne Christine Bard Diane Labrosse (feature) Joan Jeanrenaud (feature) Sainkho Namtchylak (feature) Tenko (feature)	<b>Total Participants 102</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>Experimental Women 13 (11%)</b>  Amy Denio (feature) Carole Gamache Diamanda Galás (feature) Jessica Runge Joëlle Léandre (feature) Kathleen Cunneen Lauren Newton Lee Pui Ming ( feature)	<b>Total Participants 117</b>

	Maggie Nicols Mari Kimura (feature) Myra Melford (feature) Ursula Oppens	
<b>1993</b>	<b>Data Unavailable</b>	
<b>1992</b>	<b>Experimental Woman 17 (12.1%)</b>  Alison Isadora Angèle Trudeau Anne Thompson (feature) Barbara Mellan Diedre Murray (feature) Ikue Mori Jannie Pranger Lesli Dablaba Libby Van Cleve Lindsay Horner Margaret Parkins Marilyn Crispell Michelle Kinney Myra Melford Noëlla Huet Noëlle Langley Zeena Parkins	<b>Total Participants 140</b>
<b>1991</b>	<b>Experimental Women 9 (9.8%)</b>  Danielle Roger (feature)	<b>Total Participants (91)</b>

	Diane Labrosse (feature) Ikue Mori Joan La Barbara ( feature) Joane Héту (feature) Margaret Parkins Marie Trudeau (feature) Sara Parkins Zeena Parkins (feature)	
1990	<b>Experimental Women 7 (7.8%)</b> Ann Rupel Geneviève Letarte ( feature) Jin Hi Kim ( feature) JoJo Marilyn Crispell ( feature) Nana Appiah Shelley Hirsch (feature)	<b>Total Participants 89</b>
1989	<b>Experimental Women 10 (7.4%)</b> Elvira Plenar Irène Schweizer (feature) Iva Bittova (feature) Jody Christian Joëlle Léandre (feature) LaDonna Smith (feature) Lindsay Cooper (feature) Maggie Nicols (feature) Sally Potter	<b>Total Participants 74</b>

	<b>Zeena Parkins</b>	
<b>1988</b>	<b>Experimental Women 6 (7.7%)</b>  Aki Takase (feature)  Anne LeBaron (feature)  Joëlle Léandre (feature)  Maria Joao (feature)  Pauline Vaillancourt  Vivienne Spiteri (feature)	<b>Total Participants 77</b>
<b>1987</b>	<b>Experimental Women 6 (8.2%)</b>  Danièle Roger  Diane Labrosse  Francine Simonin (feature)  Joanne Héту  Marilyn Crispell  Pauline Oliveros (feature)	<b>Total Participants 73</b>
<b>1986</b>  The program only lists the featured artists names—not members of the groups	<b>Experimental Women 1 (2.2%)</b>  Marie Chouindard (feature)	<b>Total Participants 45</b>
<b>1985</b>  This program only lists the featured artists names	<b>Experimental Women 6 (15.7%)</b>  Wondeur Brass (6 women)	<b>Total Participants 38</b>
<b>1984</b>  This program offers little information about the musicians in the larger groups	<b>Experimental Women 0</b>	<b>Total Participants 30</b>

## **APPENDIX G**

### **ALL EXPERIMENTAL WOMEN IMPROVISORS IN SURVEY OF FIVE FESTIVALS**

#### **125 WOMEN IN TOTAL**

Aki Takase	India Cooke
Alison Isadora	Irene Aebi
Amina Claudine Myers	Irène Schweizer
Amy Denio	Iva Bittová
Angèle Trudeau	Jane Bunnett
Anne Bourne	Jannie Pranger
Anne Lebaron	Jeanne Lee
Anne Thompson	Jessica Runge
Annemarie Roelofs	Jin Hi Kim
Annick Nozati	Jo Jo
Annie Gosfield	Joan Jeanrenaud
Barbara Mellan	Joan La Barbara
Carin Levine	Joanne Héту
Carolann Donata Hoffer	Joëlle Léandre
Catherine Jauniaux	Johanne Braun
Catherine Milliken	Julie Tippetts
Christine Bard	Kaffe Mathews
Christine Wodrascka	Kali Fasteau
Corine Liensol	Karel Boeschoten
Cynthia Aaronson	Karen Borca
D.B. Boyko	Karen Graves
Dagmar Krause	Karri Koivukoski
Dana Reason	Kate Hammett-Vaugh
Danièle Roger	Kate O'Looney
Deidre Murray	Kathleen Cunneen
Diamanda Galás	Kathleen Yearwood
Diane Labrosse	Katrin
Dorothea Schürch	Kazue Sawai
Elisabeth Bohm-Shristil	Kazuko Hohki
Elsbeth Moser	Kirsten Reese
Elvira Plenar	LaDonna Smith
Erin Donovan	Lauren Newton
Eva Böker	Lauri Lyster
Fatima Miranda	Lee Pui Ming
France-Marie Uitti	Lesli Dablaba
Francine Simonin	Leslie Ross
Gabriela Friedi	Leslie Stuck
Gayle Young	Libby Van Cleve
Geneviève Letarte	Linda Hirst
Georgina Born	Linda Thompson
Ikue Mori	Lindsay Cooper
	Lindsay Horner



Lori Freedman  
Lorraine Desmarais  
Lorraine Foster  
Louise-Andrée Baril  
Lyne Goulet  
Maartje Ten Hoorn  
Maggie Nicols  
Margaret Parkins  
Mari Kimura  
Maria Joao  
Maria Kalaniemi  
Marianne Denoia  
Marianne Schuppe  
Marie Chouindard  
Marie Goyett  
Marie Trudeau  
Marie-Josée Simard  
Marilyn Crispell  
Marilyn Lerner  
Marilyn Mazur  
Maud Sauer  
Michelle Kinney  
Miya Masaoka  
Myra Melford  
Nana Appiah  
Noëlla Huet  
Noëlle Langley  
Pauline Oliveros  
Peggy Lee  
Robyn Schulkowsky  
Sainkho Namtchylak  
Sally Potter  
Sara Parkins  
Shelley Hirsch  
Sianed Jones  
Sook-Yin Lee  
Sophie Trudeau  
Stevie Wishart  
Susanna Andres  
Susie Ibarra  
Sylvia Hallet  
Tatjana Schüta  
Tenko  
Ursula Oppens

Vanessa Machness  
Vicky Aspinall  
Vivienne Spiteri  
Zeena Parkins

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