

Outside the Empire:
Improvised Music in Toronto, 1960-1985

by

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ABSTRACT

OUTSIDE THE EMPIRE:

IMPROVISED MUSIC IN TORONTO 1960-1985

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Outside the Empire is an investigation of the improvised music community in Toronto from 1960 to 1985.

Chapter One discusses how, beginning in the 1950s, the modernist sensibility of Toronto's Painters Eleven collective inspired the formation of the Artists' Jazz Band (AJB) in 1962.

Chapter Two hinges upon bassist/pianist Stuart Broomer's description of Toronto as "a mediated city," and highlights the problems of sustaining an experimental musical career in English Canada's music and media centre.

Chapter Three discusses *Coda* Magazine. By framing jazz as a music of innovation and of social resistance, *Coda* introduced a level of critical discourse that sharply distinguished the magazine and its "scene" from both the typically conservative Toronto jazz community, and the apolitically modernist scene represented by CCMC and The Music Gallery.

Chapter Four discusses how the improvising group CCMC founded the Music Gallery, and in doing so reified a specifically nationalized and racialized discourse around its origins.

Chapter Five relates the author's experience of learning to improvise to George Lipsitz's definition of community learning via an "alternative academy," to George E. Lewis' theory of "sociodidacticism," and to Tricia Rose's writings on "flow, layering, and rupture."

Chapter Six positions the critical and musical work of Bill Smith between two different models of music history: one that treats musical development as community-based, and another that attributes innovations to a few exceptional individuals.

Chapter Seven addresses women improvisers in the Toronto community's early years. The author uses Michel de Certeau's definitions of "spaces" versus "places," and "strategy" versus "tactics."

Chapter Eight, the conclusion, suggests possible future areas for research into a Canadian improvising community in which the motivations of its subjects, the extent of its influence, and the history of its rich interdisciplinary infrastructure have been subject to distortion, appropriation, and erasure.

Appendices include interviews with instrumentalists-composers Gayle Young and Diane Roblin, as well as an interview with the late saxophonist, and frequent AJB collaborator, Kenny Baldwin. There is also a discography of Toronto improvisation, and a list of Bill Smith Ensemble performances from the period under discussion.

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A full-time Ph.D program is immersive: over several years, just about everything the student/candidate experiences will come to bear on the dissertation, sometimes in unexpected ways. I will do my best to acknowledge everyone who has been part of this process at one time or another.

This work's inception was itself something of an improvisation. At a chance meeting at a John Heward opening at Toronto's MOCCA in 2010, Ajay Heble suggested I apply to the SETS Ph.D program. His support has been invaluable, not only as dissertation supervisor, but as IICSI director offering me writing, editorial, and musical work, and in person, as one of the rare scholars who is familiar with the music and the people I am writing about.

For all of Ajay's support, I didn't get accepted into the PhD program in 2010, and would have given up on it except for another chance meeting – this time, with Daniel Fischlin at a Myra Melford concert in Guelph. Daniel encouraged me to re-apply, and put special effort into coaching me through a second, successful application. In the face of many other commitments, he has been a frequent source of help and advice. Frédérique Arroyas, a constant and consistent support to IICSI and the Guelph cultural scene in general, gave a number of especially useful responses to my first draft. I have certainly benefitted from the broad knowledge and experience of this unique committee.

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In my course work, Martha Nandorfy's knowledge of critical improvisation studies, and of North American indigenous culture, helped me connect my own background to a vision of pan-North American culture as a revolution in progress. Christine Bold welcomed my introduction of music into discussions about the American west, and the Western, and allowed me to write about the symphony orchestra as a colonizing force. Judith Thompson's Devising course allowed me to conjure music, and write songs, for a collective play, and often forced me out of my comfort zone – a place that, like it or not, all scholars (and improvisors) should often visit. Smaro Kamboureli's course introduced me to *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Michel de Certeau's ideas from that book have usefully informed this dissertation.

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Outside of U. of Guelph, Toronto get-togethers with Mark Miller, Stuart Broomer, Alan Stanbridge, Rob van der Blik, Jack Chambers, Peter Danson, and Steve

Wallace have allowed me to discuss some of these ideas outside the referential box of my own program. Miller, Stanbridge, and Broomer went out of their way to read and critique parts of this manuscript. Stuart Broomer contributed a number of emails and a valuable face-to-face interview, and Mark Miller offered research materials that would have been otherwise very hard to find. The dinner meetings themselves originally included the late John Norris – who was of central importance to the music documented here, and to my own participation in it – and Bill Smith, who above and beyond our decades of friendship, has been generous in offering information, memories, and feedback.

I was able to develop some of the ideas in this dissertation, specifically about the Artists' Jazz Band, in a series of talks during 2014: a Thinking Spaces session organized by Chris Tonelli at the Guelph Public Library, a keynote speech for the Somewhere There Creative Music Festival at the Tranzac in Toronto, and a presentation for the Rhythm Changes conference, organized by a committee chaired by Walter van de Leur, at the Amsterdam Conservatory.

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In recent years, writing usually has to take priority over music, but I believe in merging theory and practice. My thanks to everyone who has enabled me to keep playing the double bass during this time, especially Eric Stach, Terry Fraser, Catherine

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For all that, this dissertation is dedicated to William E. (Bill) Smith. Bill has titled several of his projects "Imagine the Sound," and throughout his career he has helped many of us imagine our sounds into reality.

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One of the reasons I write about the kind of music I write about is that there's so much music out there that's so important that gets no attention.

– Stuart Broomer, 2016

Preface

Something Must Be Written

I hope that *Outside the Empire* will prove to be a worthwhile piece of research. My committee and I agreed on its topic – the emergence of jazz-based free improvisation in Toronto, and the early years of a formative improvising community – because of my first-hand experience in that community since 1975. The extent to which a first-hand account might prove to be appropriate material for a scholarly dissertation may generate some dissonance for the critical reader. I have tried to ameliorate as much of this dissonance as I can, by finding as many sources as possible to offset my own recollections, and by looking beyond my immediate experience for analytic frameworks that could help to contextualize the history of the music in this time and place.

An artistic community, anywhere in the world at any time, tends to evolve in relation – and in reaction – to a prevailing cultural hegemony. Marginalized by the established, orderly, and legitimized channels, artists find, create and adapt provisional “back channels” to exhibit and distribute their work. They appropriate and transform overlooked and underused spaces. They create personal alliances between different artists, often from disparate backgrounds.

In fact, a distinctive feature of Toronto’s improvised music in the period under discussion was the disparateness of musical backgrounds; none of these musicians had learned music in the same school, from the same teachers – or indeed in the same way in any respect whatsoever. All we had in common was the tuning fork (although even A440

rarely got the respect it commands elsewhere). For this reason, I have used the term “alternative academy,” borrowed from George Lipsitz, to describe the way in which many of us learned about music by doing it – playing together privately at first, and then soon beginning to perform before audiences. I hope that through these approaches, I have placed my own subject position in a larger context that helps the reader understand how and why the Toronto improvising community evolved as it did.

Roots and Relationships

Certainly I feel there are precedents for this in texts that merge the personal and the analytical – often emphasizing the anecdotal even more than I do here – that still manage to remain central works in critical studies in improvisation, such as Bailey (1980/1992), Lock (1988), or Lewis (2008). These books are central to these first decades in which musical improvisation has started to be examined as a scholarly discipline; to them I might add earlier, even more personal, and decidedly un-scholarly works such as Bechet (1960/2009), Mingus (1971/1991), and Ellington (1973), books from which much can be learned about the music from some of jazz music’s most iconic creators (despite the fact that for a variety of reasons, including potential bias on the parts of editors, publishers, and the artists themselves, carefully negotiated readings of most of these works are recommended).

In addition, there are influences here from three highly autobiographical books that I have worked on over the years. I co-authored the late Paul Bley’s *Stopping Time: Paul Bley and the Transformation of Jazz* (Bley/Lee 1999). Working on the manuscript with Bley from 1985 until the book’s publication in 1999, I was consistently impressed

with his perspective of what I've called "the workshop nature of life on the bandstand" (Lee, *Battle* 125). Bley understands that regardless of style, era, or genre, the process of making art is a process of learning more about oneself, and in the process creating oneself. Bley often disparages his own extensive conventional musical education in favour of the live performances he took part in that he considers much more revelatory, much more formative.

Newly arrived in Toronto, in 1975 I met saxophonist/composer Bill Smith, who introduced me to a world of people who not only improvise in making art but who, in Bill's words, as I recall them, "improvise their lives." This influence is embodied in *Imagine the Sound* (Smith 1985), the book of Smith's writings and photos that Maureen Cochrane and I published through Nightwood Editions in 1985, where Bill recounts how his close relationships with visiting black musicians, many of them AACM members, demystified both composition and improvisation, and inspired him to create his own substantial body of musical work in the 1970s and 1980s.

Throughout the 1980s, as a Torontonians who made frequent visits to his roots on the west coast, I had the privilege of playing bass with Al Neil on a number of occasions, and worked with him on the revised edition of his autobiographical jazz novel *Changes* (Neil 1971/1989) that Nightwood published in 1989.

In all of these cases, I have been influenced not only by their books, but by my friendships and working relationships with their authors.

After finishing a BA in English at UBC, I moved to Toronto in 1974. With some background on banjo and guitar, in 1976 I began to study the double bass. I soon became

active playing bass and cello in the city's improvised music scene, until I left Toronto in 1988.

Until recently, those years in Toronto comprised the bulk of my improvising musical work – most of it with Bill Smith, although there was work with other ensembles, with dancers, and with poets. I played onstage cello for two runs of the Eugene Stickland play *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, directed by D.D. Kugler, and at one time or another worked with playwright Nancy Bell, choreographer Robert Desrosiers, dancers Karen Kain and Dena Davida, and composer Ted Dawson. There were also countless Saturday afternoons in John Oswald's Pool gatherings in the back room of the Cameron, and many gigs with friends such as Andy Haas, Maury Coles, Paul Dutton, and Steve McCaffery.

However, the bulk of my work was with the Bill Smith Ensemble; at first as a trio with David Prentice, Bill, and myself, later adding Arthur Bull, as well as Richard Bannard, Larry Potter, Stich Wynston, and others. We toured across Canada, played in several English cities, Amsterdam, New York City, and Washington, D.C. As well as performing with Roscoe Mitchell, Peter Kowald, Paul Rutherford, Misha Mengelberg, Gunter Christmann, Robert Dick, Vinny Golia, and Maja Bannerman, we made four LPs – two each as a trio, and one each with Joe McPhee and Leo Smith. We also did many performances as The Last of the Red Hot Dadas, improvising live soundtracks to silent films.

This was only a part of an intense period of musical activity. Moreover, it was only the facet of musical activity in which I actually made music. From 1975 to 1983 I was on the staff of *Coda*, the jazz magazine run by John Norris and Bill Smith, which

also involved working for their label Sackville Records, and in their store The Jazz & Blues Centre, which served as *Coda*/Sackville headquarters. I was let go from *Coda* during a financial crunch in 1983, but for several years continued to typeset the magazine on a freelance basis. Working at various jobs on the side, until 1991 my wife Maureen and I ran Nightwood Editions, a small press which, besides literary works, published, as I have noted, Bill Smith's *Imagine the Sound*, as well as a book on tango music translated by Tim Barnard, A.S.A. Harrison and Margaret Dragu's *Revelations: Essays in Striptease and Sexuality*, and three books on jazz in Canada by Mark Miller.

In 1988, my wife and I moved to London, Ontario, where for three years I played frequently with that city's stalwart free jazz saxophonist, Eric Stach, as well as with electronic composer Chris Meloche. Occasionally, I also ventured out of town to play with David Prentice, and even did a concert of my own music in a quartet with David, and London musicians Herb Bayley (trombone) and his brother Randy Bayley (saxophone).

In 1991, we moved our growing family to Madeira Park, BC, and until 2002, as we raised our two sons on the Sunshine Coast, I did very little improvised music. Sporadically, I was in touch with Paul Bley about his autobiography, and occasionally I did some CD reviews for *Coda*. As the decade progressed, and our sons got older, I started to become active in music on the coast: occasionally improvisations, but mostly music in song forms: the local community choir, a big band and a jazz quartet, all led by the late Les Fowler, as well as a country swing quartet, occasional sessions with visionary folk guitarist Simon Paradis, and so on.

In my early years as a player, I had been pretty picky about just working in free improvisational forms, but in Toronto one could do that and still move through lots of different cultural spaces. In Pender Harbour and the Sunshine Coast's string of small towns, I found it was much better to accept the challenge of playing the styles of music that would give me an analogous mobility, and at the same time allow me to make music that was useful to the people around me.

Later in this dissertation I discuss improvising musicians in terms of Michel de Certeau's category of resistant individuals who make moveable, dynamic "spaces" within the institutional inertia of hegemonic "places." However, it seems to me that, although improvisers tend to be especially dynamic members of a community's artistic margins, this essential dynamism is not restricted to improvisers per se. To some extent, musicians in any genre are allowed to cross social boundaries in the name of entertainment and/or cultural uplift. In doing so, they are allowed to make connections and opportunities that the boundaries of class and vocation would normally prevent. In this sense, music-making itself involves the creation of a kind of "border" territory, as per Gloria Anzaldúa, that I discuss on page 210-3.¹

¹ This particular perspective was brought home to me once more while listening to percussionist Jesse Stewart talk at the 2016 Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium. Stewart spoke about creating an improvising ensemble among students at a public school in an economically depressed Ottawa neighbourhood. He notes that, "support for public music education has been steadily eroded over the past two decades—this despite the fact that we now have decades of research demonstrating that music has a myriad of positive health and social benefits. Increasingly, music education has come to be regarded as the responsibility of parents who must provide music instruction for their children through private lessons. Unfortunately, this ... means that low-income families are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to providing music lessons for their children. Regina Street Public School is a case in point: of the school's roughly 160 students, I can count on one hand the number of students who receive private music lessons." Stewart's WAAM (We Are All Musi-

Between all those musical styles, and the different ways I devised of making a living in the country, I developed a lot of new skills on the coast, but after a quarter century spent in the arts, I felt that my talents might be better applied to, say, college teaching in the humanities. For that, I understood, I would need at least a master's degree, so in 2002 my family and I moved to Hamilton, Ontario, so I could take the two-year MA in Music Criticism offered by McMaster University.

I had been an indifferent English undergraduate, but thirty years after UBC, I thrived in the McMaster MA program. For all the new information it gave me about musical techniques, aesthetics, and anthropology, I gravitated most strongly to what were, for me, new discourses about the ways in which power is exercised through art and culture, and in turn, how marginalized peoples use art and culture to negotiate their relationships with hegemonic powers. In a term paper, I discussed Ornette Coleman's 1959 debut at the Five Spot Café in New York City in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's portrayals of artistic "fields": eventually I expanded this into my MA thesis, *The Battle of the Five Spot: Ornette Coleman and the New York Jazz Field*.

After "Five Spot," which eventually became a book,² I thought I had finished with French theorists, and since then, I have discovered many other writers whose work more

cians) ensemble gave these disadvantaged students unique opportunities to experience a world beyond their immediate neighbourhood, allowing them to perform throughout their school district, to visit the University of Ottawa, and to participate in an extended project with the National Arts Centre Orchestra (Stewart, "We Are All Musicians").

² One of this dissertation's main points is the way that improvisation works not just within the music as it is played, but within the ways that musicians find to enable their community to survive and evolve. Out of necessity, improvising musicians develop skills not only in playing the

music, but in nurturing unique audiences and venues, distinctive cultural “back channels” of communication that often have little overlap with standard musical outlets; niche “spaces” within the hegemonic “places” of the music business. In a sense, such back channels operate on several levels in alternative art forms. They may lack the persuasive (some might even say coercive) force of larger, better-funded institutions, but since they are almost always motivated by a will for art-making, audience building, and community engagement rather than profit, and steered by committed individuals rather than committees, they benefit from an ability to change and adapt that makes them more open to unconventional artists and art forms. This ability even includes the capacity to dissolve, if the need arises, to make way for another back channel that may better suit changing circumstances.

Accordingly, it is among Canada’s small independent publishers that we find the most imaginative book publishing. When I revised my MA thesis into a book manuscript, I received either rejections, or no response at all, from the university presses that I would have thought most likely to be interested. Eventually, it was the kinds of relationships I had developed as player, publisher, and all-around participant in the Canadian arts and culture community that led to *The Battle of the Five Spot*’s publication. First, Beverley Daurio, a friend from my own publishing days in the 1980s, offered to issue the book through her independent publishing house, The Mercury Press. After the Mercury print run had sold out, the book appeared as an e-book/print-on-demand publication from Bev and Richard Truhlar’s Mercury/Tekst collaboration. Although I was glad to help launch yet another marginalized publishing back channel, after a year or so I did not feel that the Mercury/Tekst experiment was getting the book to its intended market. One evening, after patiently listening to me kvetch about my efforts to pry *Five Spot* out of e-book obscurity, Noelle Allen offered to publish a new edition on her Wolsak & Wynn imprint. Soon afterwards, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation contacted me from New York City, asking about the original Five Spot Café. As a result, the Wolsak and Wynn edition had a Manhattan launch at the New School for Public Engagement, where Jane Ira Bloom’s Ornette Coleman ensemble played, and I spoke on a panel with journalist Howard Mandel and saxophonist Stacy Dillard.

My point is, that although for years helpful scholars have advised me on which academic presses should be most carefully targeted by the ambitious academic, this approach doesn’t work for many writers, with the result that many worthwhile manuscripts remain unpublished, and the editorial mandates of a relatively small number of presses dominate the published discourse. However, through years of work with marginalized cultural agents, in writing and in music, I have been able to find alternatives in book publishing’s back channels, sustained by presses who are themselves, like their writers, struggling Canadian independents.

directly pertains to improvised music: many of them, such as Tricia Rose, George E. Lewis, and Gloria Anzaldúa, are referred to in the present thesis. However, in the course of my Ph.D studies at Guelph, I have encountered some of the ideas of Michel de Certeau – chiefly about the manifestation of power through the control of space, and the way space is planned, used, and appropriated. The reader will find that some of these ideas have irresistibly infiltrated here.

The kinds of relationships that interest me might be demonstrated by an anecdote from my MA studies at McMaster. Among the power relationships I discuss, is the US/Canada relationship (in fact, it has become the major theme of this dissertation, as reflected in its current working title, *Outside the Empire*): one might better call it the abject relationship that is so much a part of a number of debates on Canadian cultural production – including Canadian musical scholarship, Canadian music reviewing, Canadian music pedagogy, even Canadian music making – that we scarcely notice that it is there.

In 1977, Amsterdam's Willem Breuker Kollektief undertook its first American tour. Even today, when European improvisation has achieved considerable acceptance on this side of the Atlantic, finding work for a 10-piece Dutch jazz group would be a daunting challenge. When Breuker did it in 1977, he was breaking new ground, and as with all improvisers, he had to make do with what was available. The result was a dizzying patchwork of dates spread over vast distances: the Kollektief played in New York City, then in San Antonio, Texas, then in Buffalo, where a *Coda* contingent drove down from Toronto to hear the band at the Tralfamadore Café. Afterwards, we hung out

with the band – in fact, stayed up most of the night, and Bill Smith interviewed Breuker for *Coda*.

Breuker was exhausted, and discouraged by the New York experience that the band had eagerly anticipated. Many of the New York musicians he knew had not come to hear them.³ Moreover, none of the New York critics had come, and a review of the ensemble by, for example, the *Village Voice*'s Gary Giddins, would have been invaluable in proving to Breuker's Dutch government supporters that the tour had made some kind of impact.

The Kollektief in its early days was indeed a dynamic concert experience, and I can say that of the next year as well, when I heard them at the 1978 Moers Festival of New Jazz. After the Buffalo concert, Bill and I put Breuker on the cover of *Coda*: an issue that included the lengthy interview, and my enthusiastic review of the band.

Breuker was generous in his thanks when I saw him the following May, when I visited

³ Even if Americans refused to acknowledge the originality of the Kollektief's music, he might have expected them, at least, to attend as a matter of professional courtesy: after all, starting in the 1960s, Breuker and other European musicians of his generation had been instrumental in building an infrastructure of performance spaces and funding that enabled American musicians to organize lucrative tours of a sort that were impossible in North America. Beyond the usual expectations that when one plays in the hometown of one's colleagues, one's colleagues will come, Willem Breuker was doubtless also looking for confirmation of his peer status from American jazz artists. There were issues circulating at the time, regarding the validity of European improvisation ("can *they* really play jazz?"), that are now scarcely comprehensible, given the makeup of the current international improvising community. For example, when I attended the Moers Festival in 1978, with access to the press tent/backstage area, European musicians clearly held an abject status *vis à vis* the visiting Americans who in that period, were mostly black Americans (the festival included Art Blakey, Sun Ra, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Fred Anderson, the Anthony Braxton Creative Music Orchestra, et cetera). When American musicians performed, the European musicians would be out front watching and listening. When European musicians performed, the Americans stayed in the press tent (except when Kenny Wheeler's quartet played).

Amsterdam after Moers: although it was *Coda*, a Canadian specialist magazine, and not the *Village Voice*, this was the kind of coverage he had hoped for. In the next few years the Kollektief returned to North America, this time securing a little more attention from American critics.

Twenty-five years later, sitting down in the first seminar of my first grad course – a seminar in practical music criticism per se – I opened the courseware to find that one of the essays chosen to teach me how one writes about music was a concert review of the Willem Breuker Kollektief, written by Gary Giddins, when he had finally got around to hearing the band in the 1980s.

This dissertation resounds with some of the questions raised by the apparently innocent occurrence of that particular article in that particular courseware. My first question was, what kinds of currents of power are we seeing here? What we were being offered as authoritative was a review in a major American weekly by a major American journalist. However, in my view, based on my experience, the performance that made the review possible had been facilitated by a small group of Canadians – working, as did everyone at *Coda*, for low pay and no benefits, often seven days a week, playing all of the incoming review copies in the store for all to hear, selling books and records at a dusty downtown record shop, hauling boxes of LPs in and out of storage, and working at all this (and then, at night going out to hear music; in addition, Bill and I were already starting to rehearse our own music in the *Coda* office), through sheer enthusiasm, seven days a week. That part of the history was non-existent; it had zero cultural capital. Instead, the forces at work in the intricate tapestry of North American music, politics, and

history had instead handed the consecrating power regarding this genre-crossing music to a *Village Voice* reviewer.⁴

Considering the sheer power of the American cultural hegemony, this was simply another consequence of Canadians being, in Albert Ayler's words, "outside the empire," although Ayler used the term to compliment the more generous way that his music had been received outside the borders of the USA (Broomer, "Breakfast" 32). In the arts, consecration can only come from above, from some higher authority. Traditionally, English Canada has been hemmed in on three sides by figures of such authority: Great Britain for writing, the Continent for fine art and music, the USA for all of the above, plus jazz and cinema. The subject of this consecrating power comes up in my chapter on the Artists' Jazz Band, when I discuss the influence that New York critic Clement Greenberg had on Painters Eleven when he came to Toronto for studio visits. It resurfaces in my chapter on *Coda* Magazine, when I recount the problems that critics of all stripes and nationalities had with consecrating Anthony Braxton as a "jazz" musician. Given Braxton's referential, stylistic and discursive range, jazz was clearly too narrow a category for him – but given the critical language around jazz up to that point in history, there was no other category to which an African American composer-improviser who played the saxophone could be assigned.

What I am discussing, then, is consecration itself as a force of colonialism; a force that is felt in improvised music as much, if not more, than it is felt in other art forms. In

⁴ Furthermore, a reviewer who proved himself in the long term to be uninterested in jazz from outside the USA. Throughout the 700 pages of Giddins' 2009 book *Jazz*, written with the esteemed jazz scholar Scott DeVeaux, exactly half of one sentence is devoted to "avant-garde jazz" in Europe, a movement in which Breuker is a central figure (Giddins/DeVeaux 176-7).

this case, although consecration is important to the artist professionally, it has no bearing on them artistically or aesthetically; in fact, in improvised music (I am not sure if I should extend this to other kinds of improvised performance) it may be that consecration, although it may be essential professionally, is actually antithetical to practice.

For consecration to begin to exert its legitimizing force, *something must be written*. The core practice of the music, however, is the unwritten. The most useful synecdoche of consecration might be the award. Awards are most commonly given for specific finished works: a novel, a recording, a painting or sculpture. Awards are also one means by which artists are effectively “written” into history. Improvisers, however, specialize in process, not in finished works. As Derek Bailey writes, “there is something central to the spirit of voluntary improvisation which is opposed to the aims and contradicts the idea of documentation” (Bailey ix).

The written is not at the centre of improvising practice. At best, it serves as a point of departure. For example, our impression of Duke Ellington would be very different if we only had his printed scores as history – and as a composer for large ensembles, his legacy of scores is large, and unique: as Alan Stanbridge notes, the Ellington oeuvre is “a relatively isolated example of composition and arrangement in jazz being unequivocally valued as part of the jazz tradition” (Stanbridge 296). To continue a jazz analogy through contemporary jazz based-improvisation, John Gennari suggests that jazz criticism has shaped the music itself; that it has been “crucial to the history of jazz, to the lives and careers of jazz musicians, and to the shaping of ideas about jazz’s significance in American culture” (Gennari 3). At the same time, he admits that because of the music’s “spirit of interactive collaboration,” written accounts distort by their very

nature, because “... Jazz *speaks* ... through means that can make post-performance written accounts seem secondary or even superfluous” (Gennari 5).

Even in an age where everything is recorded, musical performances rarely become artifacts in the way that other art works do. These are among the reasons that this work attempts to tease out tensions between the written and the unwritten, not only in improvised music itself, but in its historicization.

After the McMaster MA program, for several years I concentrated on writing books and getting them published. *The Battle of the Five Spot*, along with the Paul Bley autobiography, gave me a foothold in the growing field of academic jazz scholarship that was starting to make itself known as “critical studies in improvisation.” In 2010, when I ran into Ajay Heble at a John Heward opening in Toronto, he suggested I apply to the PhD program at the University of Guelph’s School of English and Theatre Studies, where I could research a dissertation topic, in collaboration with the university’s newly-established institute, then named Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice (ICASP).

I entered the program in September 2011, and for my first year and a half, between course work and TA duties, did my best to devise a dissertation proposal. For someone with my background, ICASP (it is now the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation – IICSI) provided a sympathetic environment, with proactive postdoctoral fellows, regular “reading groups” that ranged from simple discussions to film showings and vocal workshops. Bringing my double bass, I had chances to play with

Improvisers in Residence such as Scott Thomson and Susanna Hood, Dong Won Kim and Douglas Ewart.

However, with that remarkable obtuseness we sometimes have in seeing our own experiences in terms of a bigger picture, I had not yet found a way to incorporate my own musical practices into the dissertation that loomed ever-larger at the centre of the PhD program. It took time for the clues to accumulate. For example, during these first years at IICSI, I sometimes had occasion to cite my first-hand experience playing music in Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as anecdotes from my time at *Coda*. Somehow, I assumed this was a known history: during those years, there was at least occasional press coverage, albeit usually in small alternative publications; there were the recordings, and there were hundreds – probably thousands – of people who, over the years, had heard Toronto improvised music one way or another. Gigs, tours, recordings, cross-disciplinary collaborations: no matter what I dredged up out of my years in Toronto, I found, to my surprise, that not much of it was known to the Canadian scholars of improvisation who were overseeing this new phase of my education – simply because in terms of scholarly study, it was a period in Toronto’s cultural history that had been chronically underserved. No one had yet published a scholarly overview of these busy and productive years in the city’s music.⁵

From being so active in Toronto during the 1970s and ’80s, I had a clear picture of who was doing what in the city’s improvising community. But most of that history had virtually been erased; partly because much of it took place in alternative spaces unserved

⁵ Jesse Stewart, of course, took some important initial steps with his MA thesis on the Music Gallery, referred to in these pages, and now a new generation of scholars, such as Jeremy Strachan with his work on Udo Kasemets, is starting to fill in some of these gaps.

by government funding or paid advertising, and partly because of the precedence allowed to the written over the unwritten: it was a history that consisted of performances, rather than scores.⁶ During the years examined here, the 1960s to the 1980s, the music had been pretty thoroughly documented in *Coda*. *Coda*, however, in its years under editors such as John Norris, Bill Smith, and Stuart Broomer, had been more successful in linking contemporary improvisation with the jazz tradition – a tradition itself for which consecration as a high art is very much, we might say, an ongoing process – than in the near-impossible task (given unified and consistent hegemonic resistance) of linking it with other forms that might offer legitimization through association with (in George Lewis’ term) Eurological experimental music.

The Toronto magazine *Musicworks* has made some progress in making such links, but *Musicworks* covers a different world of composed and academic musics (although it has offered more coverage of improvisers since the demise of *Coda* in 2008). At any rate, regardless of the history, specifically of Toronto improvised music in the 1970s and 1980s, as I remembered it, a new generation of Canadian researchers – not to mention a new generation of Canadian improvisers – had learned quite a different history.

The reasons for this go back to 1976, when a Toronto space opened called The Music Gallery. Funded by several levels of government, until 1990 its board of directors consisted of the Gallery’s resident improvising group, the CCMC, which included a

⁶ Actually, Toronto improvisers did quite a lot of composing. However, by “scores,” I am contrasting compositions in the improviser’s repertoire – where they are conceived as “use objects,” as defined by Gabriel Solis in the work referred to on page 178 – with compositions in the Euroclassical sense, as self-contained works of art which are traditionally commissioned, premiered, catalogued, and canonized.

prominent avant-garde Canadian visual artist, Michael Snow, and a York University professor of music, Casey Sokol – two figures in positions that wielded cultural capital far beyond that of most other Toronto improvisers. The group also included saxophonist (later vocalist) Nobuo Kubota, an original member of Toronto improvisation's founding ensemble, the Artists' Jazz Band, who was well-known both as an artist and as a teacher. The CCMC's other members, the core group in the Gallery's early years, were the Gallery's director Allan Mattes, guitarist Peter Anson, and (a central figure in the band's early years, although he passed away in 1978) percussionist Larry Dubin.

There is more about the CCMC in the pages to come. The group, under the directorship of Allan Mattes, set an important precedent in terms of cultural funding when they first established the Music Gallery, reifying improvised music as a discreet discipline of sufficient cultural value to merit government support. However in doing so, they also established another influential precedent in terms of improvised music. Improvising communities tend to be to a large extent cooperative and egalitarian. By imposing a rule that only members of the CCMC could be on the board of directors, the group managed to establish themselves as a local hegemony, to create a field of power and influence that remains unprecedented for an improvising ensemble. By looking at other communities of musical improvisers, we can get a better sense of the unique position the CCMC created for themselves in a field that, until the Music Gallery's founding, enjoyed a sort of egalitarianism, if only because all its members were equally disempowered.

As I've said, I am intrigued by the ways that power is manifested through art and culture. This has repeatedly caught my attention as I've researched this work: the ways

that improvisers fail, or succeed, to make their music heard, and to make themselves known, in a music community that often receives them with indifference or hostility, or hostility masked as indifference, demand a constant negotiation and renegotiation of power relationships. In the 1960s, the Artists' Jazz Band and their careful cultivation of what Peter Goddard calls "the Toronto swagger"; the mixed bag of fortune and misfortune that a distinctive sensibility such as Stuart Broomer's met in playing new music in what he calls "a mediated city"; the 1970s controversies around Anthony Braxton, and the quasi-nationalist stance that a small contingent of white Canadian improvisers assumed in order to assert their autonomy against their alleged cultural colonization by African American artists; the vision of jazz and improvised music as resistant musics that John Norris and Bill Smith put forth in a city known for being "really into Dixieland" (Smith and Lee 8); and the ways that improvising women find to create space for themselves in the face of marginalization by a heteropatriarchal group that is itself marginalized: these are all in a sense, contests of power that improvisers have entered in order to make themselves heard: and in order to enter history, making oneself heard is an essential first step.

Introduction

Jazz Communities – Improvised Spaces and Composed Places

In New York City around 1960, a large community of musicians was employed in a range of clubs and coffee houses, playing and sitting in at venues such as Birdland, the Village Vanguard, the Village Gate, the Five Spot Café, and so on. Some venues paid better than others, and some musicians had larger reputations than others, but although musicians such as Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Gerry Mulligan, and Dave Brubeck were obviously among the best-known – and competed with each other amid pitiless market forces that were beyond their control – there was no infrastructure in place that would guarantee primacy to one ensemble over all others, year after year.

Musicians' collectives that emerged from the 1960s onwards were always cooperative in nature. The AACM, the ground-breaking African American collective, was founded in Chicago in the 1960s upon a mandate of “openness and mobility” (Lewis, *Power* 217). The organization was cooperatively run, initially financed by a dollar-a-week contribution from each of its members – “grass-roots community activism started literally from nothing – with all the stresses that this implies,” as George Lewis writes (Lewis, *Power* 108). Roscoe Mitchell describes the AACM as “a place where we could sponsor each other in concerts of our own compositions, provide a training program for young, aspiring musicians in the community, reach out to other people and other cities and have exchange programs,” and points out that the Creative Arts Collective he formed in Ann Arbor operated the same way (Heble and Wallace 247). Neither of these groups was ever centered around a single musician or ensemble.

In 1967, Dutch improvisers founded the Instant Composers' Pool (ICP) as both a record company and a performance collective because "nobody wanted to have us" (Smith, "Breuker" 4-5). It was founded as a collective, and it was only because of musical differences that control of the organization devolved to Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg (Smith, "Breuker" 5). In London, the London Musicians Collective was formed in 1975/76; as Clive Bell writes,

The level of activity, and its breadth, were remarkable, and for the next ten years an average of 200 public performances a year were organised, almost entirely by unpaid administration. Nearly every day of the year the space was in use for rehearsal. This was a musicians' initiative, run on musicians' terms, so the chaos was often high, but there was plenty going on. (Bell 2)

When FMP (Free Music Production) was launched in Berlin in 1969, double bassist Jost Gebers gave up music in order to be its administrator (Kernfeld, "FMP" 394), the exact opposite of what happened at the Music Gallery in Toronto seven years later. The CCMC's strategy of funding their own space, establishing themselves as the board of directors, and using its resources to launch their own careers as an ensemble seems to be completely original, without precedent in the history of improvisers' collectives.

Yet, The Music Gallery and its board of directors, the CCMC, was in control of much of the funding for Canadian improvised music at that time: funding not only for performance but for documentation. Although the group insisted their music be unwritten, they had a clear awareness of the historicizing, hence legitimizing, importance of the written. The gallery produced glossy publications about itself, and LPs of its board of directors' music, which went into Canadian libraries and archives that, through lack of available material, had little else to offer on improvised music in their country.

The dynamics of the community in this period – the late 1970s and early 1980s – uniquely reflect what Michel de Certeau says about places and spaces, strategies and tactics (de Certeau 35-6, 117-8). For the latter, I’ve always felt the physical layout of a university campus is the best analogy. A campus is typically a network of concrete buildings, built with considerable foresight and investment, typically linked to each other by paved walkways along routes designed by expert and conscientious planners. These planning strategies always include green spaces – lawns and gardens – but eventually, through these green spaces, we begin to see muddy paths that indicate frequent foot traffic. These paths are the “tactics” that actual individuals are deploying to negotiate the “strategies” of the planned campus. In another de Certeauvian term, they are “spaces” that those without the power to influence the campus’ layout have created in order to allow themselves movement and agency – to make practical and creative use of the “places” that authorities have allocated to them. In the terms that I am beginning to use in this work, they are the unwritten: paths maintained only through constant use that will never appear on any map.

Similarly, as the Music Gallery – which until 1990, meant the CCMC, since only members of the performing ensemble could be on the board of directors – continually reified itself –in effect, “wrote” itself into existence – with government agencies and charitable funding bodies as the “place” which defined Canadian improvisation, non-Music Gallery improvisers were only sporadically documented in magazines, and journals, most frequently in *Coda*. Even after the gallery’s board stepped down, 1994 saw the appearance of a substantial book, *Music/Sound 1948-1993: The Michael Snow Project*, published collaboratively (and, to amplify my earlier point about consecration as

colonialization, by a Canadian branch of a US-based multinational) by Toronto's two largest modern art galleries, that legitimized Snow, and the CCMC, as the central figures in Toronto's, hence Canada's, improvised music scene.

As a result, contemporary scholars, or younger musicians, tend to regard the CCMC, specifically Michael Snow and Casey Sokol, as central figures in Toronto improvised music during that time. However, to many players active in the downtown Toronto scene during those years, the CCMC were a marginal presence, carefully sequestered as they were behind the walls of their regulated "place," while the improvised music scene per se continued vigorously and noisily, across a wide range of styles, its musicians making active "spaces" out of a wide selection of downtown bars and art galleries, melding with and transforming the era's art scene.

Therefore, it is no wonder that this work contains depiction of the early years of Toronto's improvising scene that will be new to many 21st-century scholars. Because of the consecrating power of a bureaucracy which doubled as a performing ensemble, linked to a network of legitimized and well-funded art institutions starting with the Music Gallery, that ensemble had successfully placed themselves at the forefront of a community's history; written themselves into roles if not of leaders per se, then at least as first in line. *Music/Sound* includes a group interview, with Nobuo Kubota, Al Mattes and Michael Snow; its title, "A History of the CCMC and of Improvised Music," shows how skilfully these musicians are able to conflate the two subjects in the Canadian context (Snow et al, *Music/Sound* 78-112).

In this work I discuss the early years of improvised music in Toronto. I argue for its evolution as a music scene distinctive in its origins and development, subject not only

to its own internal politics and stresses, but to musical issues from the international sphere, and I try to talk about the currents of culture and power that connected these local, national, and international artistic fields.

Many of the critical and historic texts I have used have been from the visual arts. As far as improvised music goes, outside of the Music Gallery orbit, little has been published in book form, so I have pored through newspaper articles and back issues of *Coda*. Mark Miller's writings span a much broader range of musical endeavour than is represented in this particular study, but his books have been an essential aid (Miller 1982/1988), (Miller 1987), (Miller 1997), (Miller 2001). Toronto's busy and proactive improvising community intersected with other Toronto art worlds – jazz, dance, theatre, literature and the visual arts – but except for saxophonist/composer Bill Smith's semi-fictionalized self-published autobiographical works, (Smith 2010), (Smith 2012), and an essay by Paul Dutton in *Provincial Essays*, (Dutton 1987), no one who shared this experience seems to have written about it. I hope that this dissertation will serve as a starting point for future researchers as they go about the important business of building such a body of work.

By the time that Toronto's first improvising ensemble, the Artists' Jazz Band, was founded in the early 1960s, the visual arts in Canada had attained a level of cultural legitimization that was inaccessible to improvised music. After all, the visual arts had a centuries-long tradition of European antecedents, international connections to prestigious academies, galleries, and museums, a busy network of galleries, newspapers, journals and critics and – increasingly as Canada's 1967 centennial neared – essential nationalist discourses that connected Canada's artists to its emerging identity as a nation.

Improvised music had nothing like this, its apparent connections mapping it mostly directly to a vernacular music form perpetuated by marginalized African Americans and their followers (in fact, between what I have called the “discourse of absence,” George McKay’s observations of the improviser’s plight that I quote on page 193-4, and ideas about the written and the unwritten that I am working with here, it is nearly impossible for improvised music to gain *any* cultural legitimacy under *any* circumstances). Thanks to their visual art connections, valuable work was written on the Artists’ Jazz Band (AJB), albeit little of it written by specialized music critics or music scholars. I spent a lot of time with an early 1980s version of the AJB, but thirty years later, by reading these books, gallery catalogues and magazine articles, I discovered a lot about them that I didn’t know. It started to look to me as if there were many elements, attitudes and assumptions in the visual arts – what Bourdieu calls a *habitus*, a socially-determined way of perceiving and interpreting the world – that could be seen to have nurtured the music of the AJB, culminating in the late 1950s, when these abstract expressionist painters began to get together for long musical parties in lofts and studios.

In fact, if the music I write about here has been the precursor to the city’s improvised music community today, then this musical scene also stems from some of the same antecedents, including a group of painters, Painters Eleven, who introduced a modernist *habitus* to the city’s art world in the 1950s. This was brought home to me forcefully while this work was still in its early stages, during an evening in which I gave a talk for Toronto’s Somewhere There improvisers’ collective, when I found that the major blog critiquing and documenting this community’s music was named after a 1953 painting by Painters Eleven member Harold Town, “Mechanical Forest Sound.”

Mechanical Forest Sound

Since 2009, Joe Strutt has been a familiar figure on the Toronto underground music scene. Local improvisers, such as the members of the Somewhere There and Association of Improvising Musicians Toronto (AIMToronto) musical collectives, have come to rely on him for his live recordings and videos of concerts, as well as the reviews he posts on his blog Mechanical Forest Sound. The city's mainstream media, in a seemingly unending process of attrition, co-optation or absorption, are less likely than ever to give space to grassroots art forms such as improvised music, so musicians who, for example, need quotes from informed critics to promote their work (promotional aids that are increasingly hard to come by in print media) have come to depend on the insights Strutt posts on Mechanical Forest Sound.

In February 2014 I opened AIMT's Somewhere There Creative Music Festival at the Tranzac Club by giving a talk on the roots of free improvisation in Toronto music. I outlined some of the topics I want to cover in this thesis. For example, I mentioned that I was researching, as a musical influence on the Artists' Jazz Band, the formation of Painters Eleven in 1953. After all, I said, if anything was common to this generation of pioneering postwar abstract expressionists (the major book on them is subtitled *The Wild Ones of Canadian Art*), it was an interest in jazz, and a tendency to see their work as a visual counterpart to musical improvisation.

The talk was a precursor to a night of music; during the intermission, Joe Strutt told me how he came across the name for his blog. He was kind enough to follow it up with an email:

[In 2006] I was in Ottawa ... and went for a tour of Rideau Hall ... they had a special “art tour” that was more elaborate than the usual one, and got you into a few different spaces. There was a lot of “nice” stuff, pastoral Group of Seven-ish Canada-as-nature paintings. But the one that most caught my eye was a giant orange thing off in a corner that the tour guide went right past. I sidled over to it to have a look, and it was very cool – unlike most of the other works, it looked like a city, like action, like jazz blasting away. So I wrote MECHANICAL FOREST SOUND / HAROLD TOWN on a scrap of paper. (I didn't know who Town was at the time.) ... I was thinking about art somewhat then – I was really into Les Automatistes at the time ... A couple years later, when I was starting up my blog, MFS just jumped out – I mean, it has sound in there and everything. (Strutt)

I have researched enough projects to know that when you find your thesis supported by surprising evidence that comes from unexpected sources, it's a sign that you might be on to something. In this case, it is the revelation that a piece of visual art, hanging in a neglected corner half a century after its creation, can be immediately perceived, and even “heard,” as music.⁷

From the density of detail concentrated at the painting's centre, with a “forest,” or congested field, of imprecise shapes radiating out towards the edges of the frame, it can certainly be perceived as a figuration of sound radiating outwards, and transforming the environment with its waves of change. A striped horizontal band through the centre of the painting suggests the face of a streetscape or the wall of a stadium, somewhere in an

⁷ There is a reproduction of the painting (unfortunately, a small one) on the National Gallery of Canada's website: <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=41245>.

urban forest where music is being played; played – or generated, given the machinelike postures of the larger shapes which especially given the painting's title, have no resemblance to anything human. If indeed living things, they too have been transformed by sound, made more ambiguous, more suggestive, more open to interpretation as the sound radiates outward.

The connections that Harold Town perceived between the music and art worlds was not casual or capricious; like Jackson Pollock, they were a vital part of his artistic practice:

He [Town] listened to classical music in his studio every day ... Harold said that at its finest drawing was like bel canto singing, one continual line that could be straight or slurred, plain or embellished ... He thought that Frank Sinatra's voice at its peak was pure line drawing. One night ... Harold excitedly told Harry [Canadian composer Harry Somers] about his theory of how voices and musical instruments are like drawing. That was when Harold said drawing was like an unaccompanied violin. (Nowell, *Breakfast* 130)

Indeed if we trace the history back to the 1960s, the role of the visual arts as Toronto's entry point for improvisation is inescapable. Once the music of Ornette Coleman began to be widely known, free improvisation entered jazz all over the world. Almost everywhere, it was a matter of experienced musicians extending their performance practice. In Chicago, Muhal Richard Abrams and other working musicians formed the Experimental Band in a neighbourhood club in 1961 (Lewis, *Power* 60-2), teaching each other theory and new approaches to composition and improvisation, before founding the AACM in 1965 (Lewis, *Power* 115).⁸ In Sheffield, England, the trio Joseph

⁸ Elsewhere, Lewis has referred to the AACM founders, only half in jest, as "recovering jazz musicians," adding "they were actually thinking about their futures as artists and as citizens of the

Holbrooke "... initially played conventional jazz and by 1965 was playing totally improvised pieces" (Bailey 86). In Vancouver Al Neil, an accomplished jazz pianist who had accompanied visiting jazz artists such as Carl Fontana, Sonny Red, and Art Pepper, by 1966 had deserted bebop for free improvisation and performance art (Miller, *Encyclopedia*, 671-2).⁹

"Free jazz" was burgeoning all over the world, but there is little evidence of it in Toronto jazz at the time. Even when I arrived in Toronto in the mid-1970s, the most daring of the city's jazz musicians played middle-period Coltrane or late Miles Davis. These of course are the styles which many consider to be stylistic termini – as "far out" as jazz music can go or should go – so in this city, which welcomes artistic innovation in so many other ways, the same styles are still considered daring in 21st century Toronto jazz circles.

world, as citizens of their communities ... and about relationships between aesthetics and politics ..." (Lewis, *Sound it Out* 7:00'-7:45').

⁹ The case of Al Neil—a performer and conceptualist who made an unparalleled creative arc from bebop pianist to performance and visual artist—is just one example of the problem of the abject nature of Canadian jazz scholarship, which I refer to elsewhere in this dissertation. A brief YouTube tour begins to reveal a little bit about the breadth of Neil's performance concepts: A 1957 radio transcript of Neil's quintet, playing an uptempo Horace Silver piece (*Al Neil Quintet, 1957 playing "Room 608" by Horace Silver* / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xmy4K3uKbcM>), a clip from the 1964 Léonard Forest documentary *In Search of Innocence* where Neil plays with double bassist Don Thompson and tenor saxophonist Glenn MacDonald, (*Al Neil Trio 1964 "In Search of Innocence"* / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4TWhYDGJuQ>), and an excerpt from a 1967 television program where Neil departs altogether from his jazz background. (*Part 1 – Al Neil Trio performs on "Enterprise" (1967)* / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNrqKkKQvDo>). It is hard not to accuse Canadian scholars of being remiss: if Neil had done this work in New York City or London, England, there would be at least a dissertation or two written about him by now; more likely, a shelf's worth of books.

Throughout the late 20th century, jazz itself was still struggling for legitimacy in an area where composition carried the greatest cultural capital; master jazz musicians, keenly aware of possessing less cultural status than classical players or composers, often aimed their creative endeavours at improving that status. They could do this by writing elaborate, third-stream-type jazz pieces with improvised solos carefully programmed into the composer's overriding structure, and theoretically by attracting a concert audience for such works, but they certainly couldn't do it by playing free jazz. The busy (at the time) radio and television scene, with its demands for musicians who could sight-read and double on several horns, and who could compose and arrange quickly and to order, had created a class of musicians who – regardless of whether their improvising skills could have qualified them, with a slight shift in sensibility, as individualistic jazz soloists – tended to self-identify more with another ideal: the classical composer who, by mixing a modest teaching load with a stream of commissions, would be rewarded for his knowledge and talent with respectable measures of both social status and artistic freedom.

A Montreal jazz musician of this generation, pianist/composer Vic Vogel (b. 1935) succinctly stated this generation's concerns when he looked forward to a day –

... in Canada, where they'll look at the jazz musicians and consider them as *serious* as the musicians who call themselves players of 'serious music.' The classical musician reaps everything, because he's an outstanding and *upstanding* member of the community ... it's sure easier for him to go out and get a loan at a bank than it is for a jazz musician. (Miller 286)

In retrospect, this seems like a fairly modest ambition: that a schooled and talented player/composer/arranger such as Vogel should be taken seriously enough to be able to make a living developing his own music, in the fashion of his classical

counterparts. Certainly in the 1960s, when there was still a significant international community of (mostly American) musicians touring in an active jazz performance economy, as well as domestic enclaves, in cities such as Toronto, of musicians who could make a living in commercial music, and still play jazz on the side, it was perhaps not even an unreasonable ambition. But in a city which had as much commercial musical work as Toronto, this kind of professional ambition exerted a gentrifying influence that seems to have made practicing Toronto jazz musicians immune to the modernist impulse that was galvanizing such “free” musicians as Abrams, Bailey, Neil and many others, including of course Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane and Albert Ayler, improvising communities such as the Spontaneous Music Ensemble in England, Free Musik Productions in Germany and the Instant Composers’ Pool in Holland. Therefore in Toronto circa 1960, while the jazz community argued over the relative merits of Miles Davis versus Chet Baker, or Thelonious Monk versus Dave Brubeck, elsewhere in the city it was up to an odd coterie of experimentalists, intellectual renegades, and visual artists to embrace free improvisation.

In Chapter One, “We Can Draw!,” I argue that postwar modernism made its way into Toronto’s downtown culture through the visual arts, hence into the Artists’ Jazz Band. At the dawn of the 1960s, while the city’s modern jazz community stoutly resisted the “free jazz” that was making headlines in the international jazz press, a group of visual artists began playing free improvisation in public, in a sense enacting their modern artist personae in performances that bore little relation to the motivation and aesthetics of free jazz that was being created elsewhere.

In Chapter Two, “Stuart Broomer and the Mediated City,” I discuss Broomer’s early musical work. Although in recent decades Broomer has become better known as a jazz critic and scholar, in the 1960s he was among the first Toronto performers to appreciate, for example, the musical complexity of Albert Ayler’s music, and to place it politically and aesthetically within the era’s burgeoning counterculture. I also attempt to build upon Broomer’s perception of Toronto as a “mediated city,” where “the presenters become the performers.” It is a perspective that may cast light on the politics of the improvising community that would evolve in Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s.

There is an element of humour in the title of Chapter Three, “Outside the Empire: *Coda* Magazine and the Likes of Anthony Braxton.” As recently as 2015, CCMC/Music Gallery founding director Allan Mattes referred to “the likes of Anthony Braxton” on a panel convened to pay homage to the Music Gallery’s 40th anniversary. This chapter briefly describes the unique vision that was brought to the Toronto music scene by the jazz magazine *Coda*, founded in 1958 by John Norris who, especially once he took on fellow English expatriate Bill Smith as partner, and opened the Jazz and Blues Centre, formed a unique locus for jazz and improvised music. Beginning in 1973, they collaborated in presenting the first concerts by Anthony Braxton in Toronto, and the chapter examines the extent to which the young Braxton quickly became a catalyst for controversy in jazz criticism of the time, and how this controversy raised terms of reference that caused divisive discourses in Toronto’s small improvising community.

Chapter Four, “The Revolution Starts in Rosedale: The Canadian Creative Music Collective,” links certain Canadian nationalist arguments that were raised during the reification of the CCMC as Canada’s official improvising ensemble, and the racialized

European arguments against first- and second-wave AACM members – to echo Al Mattes’ term, “the likes of Anthony Braxton” – that were raised by members of the European improvising community during the 1970s. Strong parallels can be made with the early reception of AACM musicians in Europe, as discussed in George E. Lewis’ essay “Gittin’ To Know Y’all,” in which Lewis writes, “To make the case for inclusion, the new musicians conceived a nativist politics that identified African-American music and musicians as foreign competitors” (Lewis, “Gittin’” 311).

In Chapter Five, “Flow, Layering, and Rupture; and the Alternative Academy,” I talk about my own musical development, from my first days of learning stringed instruments and being attracted to improvisation – although at first I scarcely knew what to call it. For a number of years I was active in the scene I am trying to document: starting in 1975, when I started to do subscription, typesetting, and copy-editing work at *Coda*, and increasingly as a musician once I began studying double bass in 1976. I have personalized this chapter in the hope that the reader will gain insights into the music in a broader sense from reading the example of one musician, but have also have tried to link my own experiences to broader theoretical contexts wherever possible. For example, the Tricia Rose essay “‘All Aboard the Night Train’: Flow, Layering, and Rupture in Postindustrial New York,” as well as various writings of George Lipsitz, have been essential in providing direction for some of my arguments, and for my own title: “Flow, Layering, and Rupture; and the Alternative Academy.”

Chapter 6, “Bill Smith, *Imagine the Sound*, and the Great Man Theory of Jazz Evolution,” works with two different models of music history. Are musical movements a kind of historical process that is best discussed as cultural history, or are they more

accurately seen as the work of a handful of exceptional individuals? An overview of a folk culture, or a biography of Great Artists? These questions are applied to the work of Bill Smith, whose name surfaces at one time or another in all the other chapters: collaborator, musically and otherwise, with both the Artists' Jazz Band, and Stuart Broomer; editor/photographer/writer for *Coda Magazine*, and principal instigator in the Onari and A Space concert series; founding member of the CCMC; and leader of his own groups, playing and recording his own compositions with major international figures.

In Toronto's 21st century improvising scene, there are a substantial number of women participating. In the 1970s and 1980s, there were very few. As with all paradigm shifts, once the change has occurred, the new state of things is soon taken for granted, so it is perspicacious of my committee that they asked me to look into the status of women in the improvising scene in the early days of the Music Gallery. I contacted two women who had been active, both in quite different ways, in the Toronto scene during the 1970s and 1980s, and referenced previous work by Linda Dahl on jazz, and Julie Dawn Smith on women in European free improvisation. The next thing I knew, unexpected connections were emerging; suddenly there were areas where writers as different as Whitney Balliett, George E. Lewis, de Certeau and Gloria Anzaldúa all seemed to be talking about the same thing. Although the chapter begins by discussing gender, it soon incorporates gender into a range of discussions about how we construct identity when we improvise not only musically, but socially and politically.

As with all of these chapters, I have started to write, based on what I already knew, and found critical threads that connect elements of the Toronto scene with the larger world of music, and music criticism. In my conclusion, I will look back at these

different chapters in the life of a Canadian musical community, try to identify patterns that have emerged, comment on areas of the scene that I have been unable to cover, and suggest topics for future researchers.

Free improvisation blossomed as an art form when different elements of the music industry and the mass media converged around Ornette Coleman's 1959 Five Spot debut – about which I have written elsewhere – and after Coleman's first recordings, circa 1960, made “free jazz” a valid performing genre. Because of this, I am not working with particularly arbitrary start dates. If this study of Toronto improvisation begins, as it does, with the emergence of the Artists' Jazz Band in 1962, there is plenty of historic evidence that aligns this emergence with the beginnings of an international movement.

However, the end date of this dissertation *is* fairly arbitrary. This project was initiated when I realized how little scholarship there was on any of the musics with which I had been associated during my years in Toronto from 1974-1988, so at first, I intended to end the study circa 1988, when I left Toronto. However, since it soon became evident that I was writing about the early years of a community that was recognizably established by 1985, that year began to seem like a suitable end date. It also enables me to fit my dissertation's purview within a neat quarter-century – although even then I am conscious of imposing a “written” sense of order, and assigning a fixed historical “place,” to a music that flourished unwritten in a variety of dynamic and changing “spaces.”

By the mid-1980s, however, the context for Toronto improvisation had also changed. With the aging of the generation who emerged as artists in the 1950s came the weakening of the visual art scene's links with jazz. George E. Lewis links this with the breakthrough of pop art: “Fashions were changing, and jazz's links with Abstract

Expressionism meant that when Ab Ex gave way to Pop, the putatively white art world's romance with black culture also came to an end" (Lewis, *Power* 36). Lewis quotes Ronald Sukenick on the downtown New York scene of which Andy Warhol was the figurehead: "Down with the 'tyranny of jazz,' in Danny Fields's phrase, as the standard for pop music, and up with extramusical values like noise, volume, performance, dance, politics, sex." (Sukenick, Ronald. *Down and In: Life in the Underground*. New York: William Morrow, 1987. 221 Quoted in Lewis, *Power* 36). As a result, Lewis writes, "Attention turned to the emerging form known as rock, a music that was spearheading the massive capitalization of media corporations, in part because its black origins were quickly being pushed down a formless memory hole" (Lewis, *Power* 36).

Strategy and Tactics, Places and Spaces

For the purposes of this chapter, I will use Michel de Certeau's definitions of both "space" and "place." Essentially, de Certeau defines the latter as a fixed location both in terms of geography, and of the power implied by its relative immobility. Place "implies an indication of stability" (de Certeau 117). For example, at the micro-level, two things cannot be in the same place at the same time. A place also makes decisions about what is right, wrong, and proper; it makes laws, and sets boundaries: "the law of the 'proper' rules in the place" (de Certeau 117).

Space, on the other hand, "is a practiced place," in the way that "the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (de Certeau 117). Movement produces space; the actions of a subject can transform a static place into an active space. In my own terms, with reference to ideas I raise in my

conclusion, I might say that a space is a place where a story is in progress. In fact, de Certeau writes,

Stories ... carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into space or spaces into places. They also organize the play of changing relationships between places and spaces. The forms of this play are numberless, fanning out in a spectrum reaching from the putting in place of an immobile and stone-like order ... to the accelerated succession of actions that multiply spaces. (de Certeau 118)

Aside from their spatial relationships with women (as discussed in Chapter Seven), men also have to find – that is, create – their own space among other men. In fact, one could interpret this dissertation’s many narratives solely in terms of the creation of places (where certain things are allowed to happen, subject to the approval of those who control the place) versus the creation of space (where anything, or at least something surprising, spontaneous, and outside what de Certeau calls “the proper,” might happen). Often the spaces can be discursive spaces, where users are free to examine and discuss topics that are of little interest to those outside the space, or where a new approach to certain topics can be tried out.

A place is a locus of power and stability. I wasn’t thinking of de Certeau when I settled on the title of this work, (it is the latest of a series of titles to be tried and discarded), but in fact, even the title *Outside the Empire* refers to spatial relationships: the differing receptions that certain musics received in different places (specifically, Anthony Braxton, although the quotation is from Albert Ayler): inside the borders of their home country, where they were initially judged as transgressive (in de Certeau’s terms, as violating “the law of the ‘proper’”), and outside those borders, where these artists found

themselves more readily welcomed for the new ways they offered of moving through the discursive spaces of improvised music.

The modernism that Painters Eleven introduced to the place we call the Toronto art world created discursive spaces that empowered a group of largely self-taught musicians to publicly experiment with improvisation, and led to the transformation of physical spaces (rather than places, because they were defined less by where they were, than by what went on in them: there, considerable leeway was offered) intended for visual art (the Isaacs Gallery; the New School, Artsake) into spaces where they could perform these new identities.

Stuart Broomer's musical exploits in the "mediated city" demanded not only that he claim space for improvised music in venues that normally featured more conventional genres (such as the folk/jazz venues the Bohemian Embassy and Penny Farthing coffeehouses), but the struggle to be allowed space in the news media (even if the space was offered only in terms of "incredible hatred"), and space to perform in the visual art community, where such space was offered with relative enthusiasm.

In 1975 the CCMC founded their own performance space, the Music Gallery, modelling it after an existing gallery, A Space, where improvised music had been successfully presented (Stewart 6). The very indefiniteness of the name "A Space" suggests a sort of mandated liminality, as if the gallery exists to be defined by the actions of the artists who come through its doors. In contrast, once the Music Gallery was established, it established some very fixed mandates: chief among them when it ruled that the CCMC itself would be the board of directors. It also became the sole venue where the CCMC performed in Toronto, and the CCMC took great pains to confirm their

proprietorship (Stewart 7-8); as in Miller's reference to the community's perception of the ensemble playing their music "somewhat privately" (Miller, *Companion* 40) soon after its founding the Music Gallery was staked out as a "place" very much under their control. This sequestering of themselves, along with the famous "No Tunes Allowed" sign, with its implication of a hierarchy of authority that could control (that is, limit) the kinds of motions subjects could make inside the Music Gallery, could be interpreted as a sign that the CCMC tacitly regarded the Gallery as a *place* where their own musical strategies could become, in de Certeau's term, "the proper"; could assert a kind of propriety. As Stewart wrote in 2000, "the characteristics of the *place* known as the Music Gallery remain constant" (Stewart 21).

However, as part of their reification as the Music Gallery's board, the CCMC asked Bill Smith (as well as two other founding members) to resign; his resignation resulted in Smith's creation of a separate discursive space – one that, among other things, admitted contemporary African American creative musicians as both influences and collaborative peers. It also admitted Smith to a broader art world in which he collaborated widely and freely with a wide spectrum of artists, musicians and non-musicians alike, in different spaces throughout the city.

Similarly, *Coda* Magazine, and the Jazz & Blues Centre, created a scene, or art world, that was its own special kind of space: one in which although free improvisation was seen as being directly linked to what is thought of as the jazz tradition, that tradition was regarded as a form of practice-based research, a process of ongoing experimentation based on reasoning and theory, that balanced aesthetics and creativity with strategy and tactics, rather than a "tradition" in the sense of what Eric Hobsbawm describes as "a set

of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1).

The terminology of Michel de Certeau’s theories of *strategy* and *tactics*, associated with warlike struggles for territory, are also very much about places and spaces, and they can offer valuable insights when applied to the Toronto improvising scene. Here is de Certeau’s definition of strategy (the italics are his):

I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. As in management, every “strategic” rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its “own” place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an “environment.” (de Certeau 35-6)

If strategies are the measures deployed by those in power in order to retain power and to exclude competitors, what of those with less power, with no defended and delimited base from which to operate? They must devise tactics:

By contrast with a strategy ... a *tactic* is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. ... The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. ... It takes advantage of “opportunities” and depends on them ... It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. ... a tactic is determined by the *absence of power* just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power. (de Certeau 35-6)

In regretting the lack of a prior history for a community of which I was an active part for a certain space and time, I am regretting the lack of the written, but it is hard not to acknowledge that the nature of this community was to be unwritten. Beyond memories, and recordings in personal collections, its printed documents are ephemera designed only to exist for a matter of weeks; they were created not to document, not to make history, but to promote a concert or series. If a strategy is the device of the powerful, a device of the fixed place, then so is the written. If a tactic is a device of those without power, a device of the dynamic space, then so is the unwritten: the improvised.

Paradigm shifts, free improvisation, and the discourse of absence

The freely improvisational performance practices that musicians introduced at the end of the 1950s was widely discussed as if it was another jazz style, like hard-bop or bossa nova. This was something of a misinterpretation of what was, in fact, the latest manifestation of a desire on the part of musicians to include a broader range of cultural references in their work. As Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) wrote in 1963,

Failure to understand, for instance, that Paul Desmond and John Coltrane represent not only two very divergent ways of thinking about music, but more importantly two very different ways of viewing the world, is at the seat of most of the established misconceptions that are daily palmed off as intelligent commentary on jazz or jazz criticism. (Jones, "Jazz and" 19)

Because of misconceptions such as those that Baraka identifies, a tension grew within the jazz community for the next couple of decades, as critics and record companies struggled to reconcile the new music with what jazz was already "known" to be. Albert Ayler, who seemed to speak in tongues, Anthony Braxton writing chamber works, Cecil Taylor

collaborating with Mikhail Baryshnikov, Archie Shepp and Julius Hemphill writing plays, not to mention the new collective musics emerging from Europe and all over the USA – the jazz critic’s task of defining the music (one could argue, confining the music) was getting steadily harder. What was needed was a shift in the jazz paradigm, a re-definition of what the music was and always had been – which was, to a certain extent, an experimental music in which anything could be allowed to happen.

Discussing how theories of acting have changed over the centuries, theatre scholar Joseph Roach cites as concepts Thomas Kuhn’s *paradigm*, and Michel Foucault’s *episteme*. No matter how gradual, steady, and consistent may be the progress of individual artists, Roach writes, major changes in their discipline are often sudden and precipitous. Using terminology introduced in Kuhn’s 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Roach points out that change is just as liable to occur via the sudden, widespread revelations that have been called “paradigm shifts”:

Any paradigm has *anomalies* – facts which refuse to fit the theory. As a group of *practitioners* in any field continues its investigations, anomalies tend to proliferate. When such unsolved *puzzles* have multiplied to the point at which they subvert confidence in the paradigm, a *crisis* will develop. If, at this time, there appears a competing paradigm which will resolve the anomalies, accounting for more of the known facts, then the old paradigm will collapse and the new one will be adopted. (Roach 13; emphases in original)

Roach’s example of a major paradigm shift is Ptolemaic versus Copernican astronomy. For centuries, under Ptolemy’s model of the solar system, it was accepted that the sun and the planets revolved around the Earth. But over time, observations of the heavens revealed ever-mounting inconsistencies, or anomalies, which astronomers went

to great lengths to explain under the Ptolemaic system. However, Copernicus' theory that the Earth and the other planets revolved around the sun so effectively resolved these anomalies that it became the new astronomical paradigm. This put an end to Ptolemaic astronomy altogether, and rendered obsolete much of the accreted knowledge that astronomers had gathered over the centuries. The language of astronomy was now Copernican.

A paradigm is a model, although it is more than, say, a model of a single solid thing. It is a model of relationships and ways of thought; it is a certain discourse, or way that things are talked about. After a paradigm shift, the discourse changes, or it should change, but after the paradigm shift of free improvisation, the discourse around the music called "jazz" did not necessarily change, to the detriment of a fuller critical understanding of the music and many of its practitioners.

A certain amount of this scholarship suffered from applying the lessons learned from the music called "jazz" in order to attempt to analyze free improvisation, but not using the lessons we learn from free improvisation to illuminate jazz history, and jazz performance practice. There is an example of this in chapter six (pages 168-175), which compares the musical historicizations of Gunther Schuller and Wadada Leo Smith: analyzing essentially the same time period, Schuller portrays the innovations of Louis Armstrong as a pivotal transformation in the evolution of jazz from a collective to a soloist-based music. Although written within a few years of each other, Schuller's work seems the more dated of the two, because in 1968 he is discussing Armstrong's 1928 innovations in terms of a clearly-defined genre that, over the next few decades, will progress musically through the innovations of a few great figures. Leo Smith, on the

other hand, writing in 1973, sees the same innovations as the periodic flowering of an ongoing movement, an outgrowth of an essentially collective culture in which solo interludes such as those by Armstrong and Earl Hines have always played an essential part.

The AACM's perspective on African American musical history as a narrative of ongoing creativity and experimentation actually offers a most useful pan-cultural perspective on what improvised music is, what it can do, what it can be, and how it figures into the history of what we think of as jazz and jazz improvisation. The music we call jazz, as George E. Lewis reminds us (and reminds us repeatedly, as one is forced to do when speaking to an inattentive audience – most specifically, a jazz industry and media which prefer to characterize jazz as nostalgic popular music with a formal dress code) has always been an experimental music, its innovations forwarded by creative musicians compelled, for most of the music's history, to work within popular forms.¹⁰

In other art forms, when a genre's boundaries are extended far enough, the need for a re-categorization usually achieves some kind of consensus, and a new genre is recognized and named and given credit for what it is trying to achieve. In popular music in the 1970s, when "rock" was the ubiquitous popular style, variations such as punk, disco and rap were recognized first as radical (even if unwanted) variations on the prevailing genre. They were at first interpreted through a discourse of absence that categorized them all as sub-normal – punk was rock minus musical skill, disco was rock

¹⁰ A good basis for further reading of Lewis' arguments in favour of African American experimentalism are pages xii-xiii of his *A Power Stronger Than Itself*.

minus counterculture authenticity, rap was rock minus sung melodies and live drummers – but they were soon recognized as legitimate genres on their own.

Over the past half-century, jazz has proven remarkably resistant to this organically healthy categoric cell-division. Much of the critical discourse around the music has refused to acknowledge that a new paradigm was established by free improvisation, so the use of the “jazz” paradigm has proliferated, sowing misapprehension and confusion. Much of this misapprehension stemmed from well-meaning advocacy; the supporters of free improvisation wanted to ensure that this new music was acknowledged as a legitimate part of an ongoing “jazz” tradition. I speak here from first-hand knowledge, since for years at *Coda* our editorial position was that new improvised musics should be heard, appreciated and celebrated as legitimate contributions to the jazz tradition. Over the years, such arguments met steadily increasing resistance both from diehard jazz fans, and from most jazz industry stakeholders. Unfortunately, it was beyond our powers to do what had to be done: invent a whole new category for the music, a way of naming that would satisfy everyone. So by and large, since the genre boundaries remain, the discourse of “jazz versus improvised music” has also remained convoluted, labyrinthine, and divisive.

Free improvisation is such a malleable device that it can be used in conjunction with a wide range of compositional processes. However, as long as it remained within the jazz discourse, free improvisation was made to suffer the consequences, among them the discourse of absence: in order to be interpreted as “jazz,” free improvisation had to be interpreted as “jazz minus”: jazz minus the song form; jazz minus chord changes; jazz minus consistent tonal centres, danceable rhythms and so on.

As Julie Dawn Smith writes,

western culture has positioned improvisation as lack – lack of form, lack of intention, lack of discipline, lack of authority – an inferior and deficient practice that should be viewed with skepticism. Derek Bailey agrees that the suspicion around improvisation exists because it seems to be “something without preparation and without consideration, a completely ad hoc activity, frivolous and inconsequential, lacking in design and method.”¹¹ (Smith, *Diva* 1)

When the paradigm changed, the discourse did not. In the case of the Artists’ Jazz Band, since their 1962 debut they were often dismissed by the jazz community as posers who, since they met none of the standards of jazz professionalism, concealed their essentially amateur status under a mask of “anything goes” pretentiousness. I surmised that, on the contrary, the AJB’s status as professional “visual artists” rather than professional “musicians” allowed the group to embrace a modernist paradigm that, once it had enabled them to build art from the ground up via abstract expressionism – instead of representationalism, getting creative with the basic elements of colour, paint, and canvas – now empowered them to do the same thing in music.

A Made-in-Toronto Kind of Improvised Music

The idea that my dissertation could be a first step towards a fuller historicization of Toronto improvisation’s early years was encouraged by many of its surviving figures, including poet/guitarist Arthur Bull, who wrote from his home in Digby Neck, NS, “Lots

¹¹ (Bailey xii).

of great stories waiting to be told, but also I think a case to be made for a made-in-Toronto kind of improvised music” (Bull 2013).

Was there indeed a “made-in-Toronto kind of improvised music”? I quickly listed the most prominent of the improvisers I knew about, including players such as Bill Grove, Jerry Berg aka Malcolm Tent, Tom Walsh, and the late Nic Gotham, who in the early 1980s led electric bar bands owing more to free improvisation and rock than to “jazz” per se; Rainer Wiens, whose Silk Stockings group was an early incubator not only for his own compositions and concepts, but for young players such as Jane Bunnett, Larry Cramer, Richard Bannard and Mike Murley. There were the bands I played with in Toronto from approximately 1977 to 1988, with Bill Smith, David Prentice, Arthur Bull, Richard Bannard and Larry Potter, and there was Maury Coles, who had worked out his own area of the alto saxophone and who often played solo, with Bill’s groups, and with his own trio featuring drummer John Kamevaar. The CCMC, formed in 1974, and in 1976 opened the Music Gallery, which presented a huge range of improvised music and continues to do so, albeit with diminished frequency, to the present day. Beginning in 1976, the CCMC served as the board of directors at the Music Gallery, where they played twice-weekly concerts, until 1990, when various funding bodies questioned the propriety of a publicly-funded gallery devoting so much of its resources to arranging tours and recordings for its board of directors (Stewart 46-7). Since the late 1970s, John Oswald has covered many bases in Canadian art, from his dance and visual art projects to new frontiers in composition and sound collage, not to mention his saxophone playing, which he has taken into many contexts, including a post-Music Gallery configuration of the CCMC with Michael Snow, Paul Dutton, and John Kamevaar.

Before all of this, in the mid-1960s in Toronto, free jazz was played by such musicians as drummer Ron Sullivan and reed player Jim Falconbridge (who, proving the malleability of the jazz paradigm, went straight from playing classic New Orleans repertoire to free improvisation, skipping several intervening decades of jazz history),¹² and Stuart Broomer (a precocious teenaged guitarist and double bassist, who went on to conduct experiments in piano and electronics at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music).

Among all of these artists, playing very different sorts of music, it would be possible to trace a wide range of styles and influences, but for my own purposes it was instructive to realize that the first improvising group in Toronto was the Artists' Jazz Band (AJB), abstract expressionist painters who began playing together in private studios in the late 1950s before formally declaring themselves a band in 1962. In the AJB's heyday, the 1960s and '70s, they managed to commandeer considerable media attention working from their unofficial headquarters, the Isaacs Gallery on Yonge north of Bloor.

As a dissertation topic, the AJB interested me for two major reasons. The first is that in the early 1980s, I often played with a late-career iteration of the AJB – for the first time, on a nasty winter night in January, 1980, at Artsake, the collective art school that the core of the band – Gordon Rayner, Graham Coughtry and Robert Markle – had

¹² Perhaps proving something else than the malleability of the jazz paradigm; perhaps proving the shallowness of the jazz paradigm, and perhaps proving that, if the performances we think of as jazz are really no more than musical improvisation using different compositional materials as points of departure, then the ease with which certain improvisers cross between different compositional areas suggests that what we think of as jazz history is simply a series of differently-labeled commodified popular styles, and that we have to look beyond these styles to understand and to credit what the artists were actually doing as composers and creators.

started, along with fellow artists, in a warehouse space on King Street next to the Royal Alexandra Theatre. Later I played either cello or double bass on sessions at the studio that Markle shared with Catherine Morrissey on Niagara Street, followed by many more at Rayner's loft on Spadina, and occasional gigs in bars, the Music Gallery, or at the Isaacs Gallery.

In those days, I was always the youngest guy in the band, and I closely observed what the AJB were doing: not just in their visual art, and in the music they played, but in their dedication to being larger-than-life bohemians, using bravado, bright colours and sheer talent as icebreakers to bust a course through the brittle resistance of the Canadian art establishment. Toronto had little to offer the Artists' Jazz Band in the way of a bohemian tradition. They had to make one up themselves, aided and inspired (as I discuss in Chapter One) by the example of the generation of painters who mentored and immediately preceded them. I appreciated, as a young guy surrounded by these older role models, that they were working hard to overcome being soft-spoken, deferential Canadians; they were determined to make art that was confident and brilliant and vivid and vibrant, and they were determined to be that way themselves. Moreover, they pioneered an approach to the musical side of their art that we can perceive, to greater or lesser extent, with many of the other artists discussed in this dissertation. In negotiating "Toronto the Good's" rigorously policed cultural places of the city, they created spaces for movement, change, and new ideas. They trampled muddy pathways of improvised culture that transgressed and ignored the city's planned and tidied-up right angles and scrubbed pavements, and they created spaces where, at least for an evening at a time, it seemed as if anything might happen.

CHAPTER 1

“We Can Draw!”: Improvisation, Abstract Expressionism, and the Artists’ Jazz Band

The improvised performance practice that came to be known as “free jazz” burst into prominence around 1960, and soon proved itself a genre extremely permeable to influences from other artistic disciplines. It was, as John Szwed writes, “... played by musicians who often seemed to have completely escaped the jazz recruitment process. They were classically trained virtuosos and musical illiterates, intellectuals and street rebels, and highbrows disguised as primitives” (236). Ted Gioia calls the first free jazz musicians “...almost all outsiders ... an outgrowth of the bohemians and ‘angry young men’ of the 1950s” (311). To make the members of this new movement even harder to pigeonhole, George Lewis points out that the new music’s emergence “was a multiregional, multigenre, multiracial, and international affair” (*Power* 40).

If there was any consistency among these varied practitioners, it lay in their identification – imposed either by themselves or by their circumstances – as, in Gioia’s terminology, “outsiders,” and in their adoption of the music as what Lewis describes as “a symbolic challenge to traditional authority” (Lewis 40).

Over the previous two decades, abstract expressionist art had been evolving a similar language of resistance, positioning itself as a symbolic challenge to authority, and had polarized opinions in the visual art world just as free improvisation was to do in the jazz world. Jackson Pollock’s work, for example, was seen as “... ‘unpredictable,

undisciplined, explosive' ... The breaking of the rules offered proof that the artist was free and that his works were frank and authentic" (Guilbaut 86).

The posture of resistance that gave a social context to the work of abstract expressionists was to do the same for improvised music. In fact, Canada's first improvising ensemble, the Artists' Jazz Band (AJB), which declared itself to the world (after several years of private playing) in 1962, was composed primarily of professional abstract expressionist artists.

In examining the AJB as a Canadian phenomenon, we should bear in mind the extent to which cultural activity in this country is on the one hand inspired, and on the other hand overshadowed (often co-opted), by our enormously more populous and powerful neighbour to the south. In economies of scale alone, no Canadian cultural entity can approach the size and the influence of its U.S. counterparts, so whether they publish magazines or make music or produce movies, Canadian cultural workers have always had to fight fierce American competition to reach audiences in their own country.¹³ In writing a history of the early days of jazz in Canada, Mark Miller has written,

The country's self-image has been so profoundly shaped throughout the 20th century by the immediate and dominant influence of American popular culture, that Canadians might well conclude by default – if they have given any thought to the matter at all – that the country has had no substantive jazz history of its own. (Miller, *Racket* 9)

The power discrepancy is as keenly felt in the visual arts as anywhere else.

Avrom Isaacs, the art dealer who helped launch the AJB both as painters and as players,

¹³ For the purposes of this essay I am really talking about English Canada here. Quebec, an officially francophone province, has evolved a distinctive culture with its own unique and complex relationships to its surrounding anglophone hegemonies, both Canadian and American.

says that when he founded his first gallery in 1955, “I started off showing Canadian artists ... then I continued showing only Canadian artists ... because of the cultural monster to the south of us. I felt that unless we kept stressing our own we were going to be overwhelmed” (Wigmore 9).

As artists the members of the AJB developed their styles and built their careers within this complex power relationship, constantly looking south (specifically in both jazz and the visual arts, to New York City)¹⁴ to see how they might measure up to the American stars of the North American art world; but also critiquing their own individual practices, and each others’, to assure that their artistic premises, their critical language, the artworks they made, were discreet entities; were as original as they wanted, and needed, them to be.

The Origins of the Artists’ Jazz Band

Referring to the Akira Kurosawa film in which a crime in the forest is recalled very differently by each of four participants, painter Robert Markle (1936-1990) called the AJB “the *Rashomon* of jazz bands” (*Artists’* left foldout, col. 4). By 1957 Gordon Rayner (1935-2010) was playing drums, and Markle began taking tenor saxophone lessons in 1959 (Wainwright 76-7). Graham Coughtry (1931-1999) played trombone, Richard Gorman (1935-2010) double bass, and Dennis Burton (1933-2013) and Nobuo

¹⁴ Although he may have been getting carried away by his own rhapsodic prose, even an inveterate internationalist such as Duke Ellington apparently succumbed to the centralist discourse around his home town when he wrote, “The whole world revolves around New York, especially my world. Very little happens anywhere unless someone in New York presses a button!” (Ellington, *Mistress* 65).

Kubota (1932–) alto saxophone. Rayner claimed of the AJB, “I invented it completely”; indeed they first got together at Rayner’s studio, then on Yonge Street (ibid. 77). By 1960, the sessions had moved to Avrom Isaacs’ new Isaacs Gallery at 832 Yonge, a short walk north from the central Bloor-Yonge intersection.

In 1962 this group of close friends first played in public as the Artists’ Jazz Band. Shortly afterwards, pianist/trumpeter Michael Snow (1929–), who worked professionally in Dixieland bands, began to play with them occasionally, as did architect/violinist Harvey Cowan (1935–) and artist/guitarist Gerry McAdam (1941–), and professional musicians, saxophonist Wimp Henstridge and his brother, bassist Ian Henstridge. Electric bassist Jim Jones became a regular member, and double bassist Terry Forster and saxophonist Kenny Baldwin were also frequent contributors.

Veteran Toronto music journalist Peter Goddard describes the AJB as “... the last cohesive – well, to a degree – coterie of Art Stars, with theatricalized practices as great painters, adept multimedia manipulators and energizing teachers” (Goddard 80). In the visual arts their credentials were impeccable: conventionally trained as students, professionally tested as commercial draughtsmen and critically praised as Canadian originals. As musicians, they were largely self-taught. Free improvisation pioneers such as New Yorkers Charles Mingus or John Coltrane, Vancouver’s Al Neil, London’s Joe Harriott, or Amsterdam’s Misha Mengelberg had all mastered the complexities of bebop before turning to free improvisation. No one in the AJB had a comparable musical background, but through a set of circumstances peculiar to Toronto in the 1950s and ’60s, having established their virtuosity in the visual arts, they felt empowered to expand their artistic identities into music by *enacting* jazz virtuosity in their performances; in effect

insisting that their talent, erudition and social daring could transfer into any setting. In their hands, music was another device to bring their own brand of “sheer bravura” (Goddard also calls it “the Toronto Swagger”) to the city’s art scene (ibid.).

Art openings now doubled as concerts, and throughout the 1960s and ’70s, the AJB’s blend of music, art and sheer chutzpah helped its members to gain, for Canadian artists, unprecedented attention. Coughtry, Rayner and Markle posed for a cover of a 1965 issue of *Canadian Art* that parodied their roles as jazz-playing renegade artists (Goddard 81). Both Coughtry and Markle wrote articles for *Maclean’s*, English Canada’s national newsmagazine, and in 1965 Markle made headlines when a gallery showing his work was charged with exposing obscene pictures to public view (Wainwright 63-7).

During the sixties the AJB played at a reception for Andy Warhol in an artist’s studio, at an Art Gallery of Ontario opening “in a side room where two thousand people left the big court band and came to hear the AJB,” and in venues as diverse as the Ottawa club Le Hibou, and Sarah Lawrence College in New York state (ibid. 78). Into the 1970s they performed at universities, art galleries, and international venues such as the Kitchen in New York and the Canadian Embassy in Paris.

It is hard not to pose a question. Why, during those years, did no indignant players sally forth from the ranks of the Toronto jazz scene to challenge the AJB’s credibility as free jazz players? Certainly the band’s lack of formal musical credentials would have made them easy targets: alto saxophonist Nobuo Kubota wrote, “we couldn’t have read a note of music if our lives depended on it. Nor did we know the difference between a chromatic scale and a tetra chord” (Wigmore 76). Everywhere else in the world, experienced jazz musicians were setting aside the chord changes and essaying free

improvisation, but by and large Toronto's jazz community remained indifferent not only to experimental musical processes in general, but to the countercultural movement, with its insistence on a radical shift in sensibility, of which free jazz was an active part. In 1978 Michael Snow pointed out that Canadian jazz musicians "... are professional musicians first ... A certain conformity is essential within the many worlds of the music business and Canadian modern jazz musicians seem for the most part stuck in the 'modal' stage of the music as it was and is played in the United States" (Snow, *Collected Writings* 189).

The answer lies in an exceptional aesthetic conservatism that has permeated the Toronto jazz scene from at least the 1950s until the present day.

In examining the employment opportunities for Toronto jazz musicians circa 1959, Helen McNamara, a journalist, broadcaster and all-around jazz advocate, offered her own insight on the community's conservatism: "On the surface, the modern jazz musician in Toronto is given his greatest opportunities in the broadcasting studios. ... the jazzman has been accepted without any resistance by the broadcasting industry.... there are many, many, many competent men here...." McNamara points out that the after-hours club scene "... has created two schools of jazzmen: the wailing musicians and the composers" (McNamara 15). As she singles out for praise the accomplishments of jazz composers Phil Nimmons, Norman Symonds, and Ron Collier, McNamara reflects a major jazz discourse of the late 1950s, which foresaw a greater emphasis on composition in the music's future: larger groups, heavily scored and well-rehearsed, that would not only change the nature of the music, but give jazz musicians (at least, the

“competent men” among them) a share of the more prestigious and better-paid territories occupied by classical musicians.

This (as it happened, overly sanguine) confidence in the music’s pending gentrification had evolved in Canada in tandem with parallel developments in the USA, where composers Gunther Schuller and George Russell were at the forefront of the movement that came to be called “Third Stream” (Lee 27-8, 34). In Toronto, McNamara was writing in the spring of 1959; the following November, Ornette Coleman’s New York debut steered the jazz discourse away from the apparent need for more complex written structures and in the direction of simpler written structures and greater improvisational freedom that answered to the spirit of the times, as the storm clouds of 1950s art and politics gathered to create the tempest of 1960s counterculture.

Only the faintest rumbles of this gathering storm seem to have been felt in the Toronto jazz community, with its dependence on the conventional skills needed for broadcast and commercial work. The musicians McNamara refers to as the “wailers” may have enacted the roles of bohemian artists in a handful of downtown clubs and coffee houses, but the “freedom” they claimed for this music was a freedom executed under tight structural constraints.

Years later, Mark Miller suggested a number of reasons why the Canadian jazz scene, most blandly typified in Toronto, has been historically so conservative. High among them was the way that an American-dominated music industry tended to filter out alternative forms through disparities in broadcasting and distribution. The music’s most popular forms were the first, and sometimes

the only, forms of jazz to reach Canadians' ears, Miller writes, creating certain problems for the Canadian jazz player:

- 1) His music exists, *functionally*, in the context of the pop world, regardless of his intentions. It ... approaches an art form only according to the musician's virtuosity....
- 2) His access to the most important artistic movements and performers in jazz is limited ... [for example] ... Charlie Christian – the progenitor of modern jazz guitar – was less a direct influence on Canadian players of the 1940s and 1950s than were his “disciples” (such as Tal Farlow and Barney Kessel) or the popular Les Paul, simply because his records were not as widely available in Canada as theirs.
- 3) His audience has had its tastes shaped by the most commercial of standards. ... In Europe, where jazz was accepted as an art form almost immediately and has continued to enjoy that status, the leading musicians today are playing music of the day and have found various directions of their own, independent of the Americans' lead. In Canada, the leading jazzmen of today are playing music of the 1950s and 1960s. (Miller, *Jazz in Canada* 6)

We can bookend the debut of the Artists' Jazz Band in 1962 with two pieces of convincing evidence: on one side, McNamara's 1959 take on the Toronto jazz scene, and on the other side, director Don Owen's 1963 documentary *Toronto Jazz*.

Toronto Jazz

Strung together by the perambulations of hipster vocalist/narrator/apologist Don Francks, there is much talk of freedom in *Toronto Jazz*, and the fact that it concentrates on the city's after-hours “wailers” rather than composers might suggest we will hear some of the freedom espoused by the AJB. Instead, we hear Don Francks singing a bland

12-bar blues with Lenny Breau on guitar and Ian Henstridge on bass. The next performance is by tenor saxophonist Don Thompson's¹⁵ quartet ... who also play a 12-bar blues. After interviews and a sequence of Francks' trio rehearsing Bach (which continues the air of pious hipness which Francks brings to every scene in the film, although it is hard not to be astonished by the seeming ease with which Breau executes his complex guitar figures) we hear the Alf Jones Quartet at the House of Hambourg. Once again, they are playing a 12-bar blues, and after Francks interviews Michael Snow in his studio about connections between music and art, the film finishes with a reprise of the Jones quartet: Snow is on piano, with future CCMC drummer Larry Dubin, and future AJB bassist Terry Forster bass. There is some fierce interaction, especially with Forster's bass, but they play a 12-bar blues: the fourth we have heard in this 27-minute documentary. If the film indeed represents Toronto jazz in the early 1960s – a period where New York clubs featured the new wave of free improvisation played by Coleman, Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, Paul Bley and Carla Bley and many others – then it also seems to represent a community that was resolutely ignoring the tides that were transforming jazz music elsewhere in the world.

On the other hand, the Artists' Jazz Band employed improvised performance specifically to situate themselves within the resistant relationship that jazz, especially free jazz, had created for itself in relation to North American culture. Few Toronto jazz musicians identified themselves in this way. Because of the constraints Miller describes, the Toronto jazz community reacted to free jazz in the way any endangered trade would

¹⁵ Don ("D.T") Thompson (1932-2004), a Canadian tenor saxophonist not to be confused with Canadian bassist/pianist/composer Don Thompson (1940–).

react to an outside threat, closing ranks against not only the musical devices, but the kinds of resistant, political, and countercultural discourses that arose around the music.

A discourse that was allowed to remain was one of loss, of omission; a discourse of absence. The music was often described, both by detractors and by supporters, as jazz from which something had been subtracted. As recently as 1994, the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* writes,

The music is probably best defined by its negative features, though a performance need not be characterized by all these qualities: the absence of tonality and predetermined chord sequences; the abandonment of the jazz chorus structure and its replacement by loose designs in which collective improvisation takes place around predefined signals; an avoidance of “cool” instrumental timbres in favor of more “voice-like” sounds; and the suspension of standard timekeeping patterns for a free rubato. (Robinson 405)

It was a discourse that gave Toronto jazz musicians further reasons to shun free improvisation, since association with such a music implied shortcomings in all the areas where, professionally, they needed the greatest strengths.

Just as the name “jazz” itself had been more or less imposed on this African-American-based musical practice by the early 20th-century music industry, a similar hegemonic pressure came to bear on “free jazz,” deploying this discourse of absence to impute lack of competence and/or laziness, and a homogenized, characterless “free” style, to erect a punitive discursive barrier around an improvised music that, in reality, demanded much from its creators and which had the potential to take on many different forms.

The Wild Ones: Modernism Comes to Canada

If free improvisation, with its discourse of absence, was not feasible for Toronto jazz musicians, it was highly feasible – even inevitable – for the Artists’ Jazz Band, because of a unique set of circumstances that had been set in motion a decade before the band was formed. A preceding artistic generation in Toronto laid a visual arts groundwork that eventually equipped and empowered their immediate successors to undertake modernist art forays such as improvised music.

In the early 1950s, the first wave of Toronto abstract expressionist painters founded the collective Painters Eleven. If this motley assortment (the major book on Painters Eleven is subtitled *The Wild Ones of Canadian Art*) of ground-breaking postwar abstract expressionists had anything in common, it was an interest in jazz and a tendency to see their work as a visual counterpart to musical improvisation. As Greg Tate has written, “What jazz clearly made manifest in the postwar world of art and letters was the privileging of individual will and in the grand opportunities that lie in seizing or freezing the improvisational moment” (Tate 3). This influence was not lost on Painters Eleven. In fact, although none of its members were musicians themselves, throughout the 1950s – the decade of their greatest prominence – the collective, either directly in their mentoring of Rayner, Coughtry, Kubota, Markle, Gorman, Burton and Snow as students or apprentices, or indirectly in contributing to the creation of a downtown bohemian art world, made the AJB and its music possible.

There is no manifesto here for the times. There is no jury but time. By now there is little harmony in the noticeable disagreement. But there is a profound regard for the consequences of our complete freedom.

– Cover, exhibition catalogue: *Painters Eleven. At the Roberts Gallery. Feb. 11 to 26, 1955*. Toronto: The Roberts Gallery, 1955 (Nowell, *Painters* 131).

Painters Eleven's second major contribution to the AJB (and this may be most immediately comprehensible to Canadian readers) was *confidence*; as the Toronto studio culture they founded spread and attracted new artists, gallery-goers and audiences, it also fostered a discourse that foregrounded its own importance. For the first time, Toronto artists encouraged each other to perceive their local art world not as a marginalized subset of the US (that is, the New York) art world, but as an equal peer, even a competitor, just as capable of stylistic originality and affective power. Such confidence, which eventually swelled into the "Toronto Swagger" identified by Goddard, was instilled in Painters Eleven in the mid-1950s when vital legitimization, from the New York art world itself, was bestowed upon them by the leading New York art critic, Clement Greenberg.

Abstract Expressionism and Improvisation

Serge Guilbaut has described how, as a result of the clash of political ideologies in Depression-era New York, abstract expressionism "provided a way for avant-garde artists to preserve their sense of 'social commitment' ... while eschewing the art of propaganda and illustration. It was in a sense a political apoliticism" (Guilbaut 2). Through the 1930s, into the 1940s, a number of factors contributed to the rise of abstract expressionism, including massive subsidization by members of the wealthy Guggenheim family. In 1939, Solomon R. Guggenheim's eponymous foundation opened The Museum of Non-Objective Painting in New York, and in 1941, Solomon's niece Peggy Guggenheim returned to New York married to the visual artist Max Ernst, and began to encourage

American abstract expressionists, including Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, and Jackson Pollock (Nowell, *Painters* 59).

Throughout the 1940s, the young painters who came to be known as the Automatistes had become increasingly prominent in Quebec art circles, including 1946 shows in New York City, and at Montreal's Contemporary Arts Society. However, it was really in 1948 that the artists themselves "created a storm of controversy" with the publication of Paul-Emile Borduas' manifesto, *Refus global* (Total refusal) (Nowell, *Painters* 59-60):

Therefore, our duty is simple:

To break definitively with all conventions of society and its utilitarian spirit! We refuse to live knowingly at less than our spiritual and physical potential; refuse to close our eyes to the vices and confidence tricks perpetuated in the guise of learning, favour, or gratitude; refuse to be ghettoed in an ivory tower, well-fortified but too easy to ignore; refuse to remain silent – do with us what you will, but you shall hear us; refuse to make a deal with *la gloire* and its attendant honours: stigmata of malice, unawareness or servility; refuse to serve and to be used for such ends, refuse all *intention*, evil weapon of *reason* – down with them, to second place!

Make way for magic! Make way for objective mysteries!

Make way for love!

Make way for necessities! (Borduas 120-1)

In making clear their resistance to "aspects of the social environment they found oppressive, such as religion, authority, and the past ... the moral bankruptcy of the post-war world and the authority of the roman Catholic Church," (Murray, *Canadian* 91), the automatistes forthrightly confronted the uniquely Québécois problem of essaying modernism in a province where the government was closely tied with a patriarchal,

authoritarian Catholic church. When the *refus* appeared in print, it caused such a scandal that Borduas was fired from his teaching post at Montreal's École du Meuble. "Indeed," as Douglas Fetherling writes, "it has been called the opening salvo of the Quiet Revolution" (ibid. 113) – the revolution that twenty years later fired the formation of the Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec (Miller & Ménard 784).

The *refus* also made clear that artists were embracing abstraction for ideological as well as aesthetic reasons, insisting that essential to artistic practice was the dissolution of any mediation – technical, social, political, or religious – between the artist's hand and his or her unconscious. Through automatism's greater spontaneity, a truly authentic expression could be attained. As such the authors of the *refus*, with their insistence on the importance of improvisation in modern art practice, became important influences on the art that was to blossom in Toronto in the decade to come.

By 1944, future Painters Eleven members were student and teacher, as Alexandra Luke was coached by fellow Toronto painter Jock Macdonald in automatic drawing, "an art style derived from Automatism, an approach to writing that had its origins in the Surrealist movement" (Nowell, *Painters* 104). By 1947 the Ontario Society of Artists, a major gatekeeper in the Toronto art world, began to invite younger artists to show their work, including a few "semi-abstract" drawings and paintings. In 1952, Luke organized the first major showing of abstract expressionist work in Ontario, the *Canadian Abstract Exhibition* touring show (Murray, *Painters* 6). The following year, she invited the other artists from *Canadian Abstract* to form a collective to promote and display their work: along with Luke herself, Jack Bush, Oscar Cahén, Hortense Gordon, Tom Hodgson, Ray

Mead, Kazuo Nakamura, Jock Macdonald, William Ronald, Harold Town, and Walter Yarwood declared themselves as Painters Eleven (Nowell, *Painters* 60).

The collective's members had been "impressed" by a Toronto show of *automatiste* work (Murray, *Painters* 16), and the pure process of automatism – creation without intention – appealed to a generation who were trying to look past the boundaries of their formal art training. The biography of Painters Eleven member William Ronald links one of the young painter's early successes at spontaneous watercolour with the Quebec automatistes (Belton 20-1). The work was made during a 1952 residency in Manhattan, where, living near the Village Vanguard, Ronald heard modern jazz and "developed a taste for improvisation, contributing substantially to the pictorial techniques and professional tactics of his later development – not to mention to his increasingly countercultural self-image" (Belton 18). Ronald also "quickly discovered the work of Jackson Pollock, which he was always to admire," and befriended Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Helen Frankenthaler and Clement Greenberg. "He also met Willem de Kooning, Larry Rivers, writers like Kerouac and Ferlinghetti, jazz musicians like Miles Davis, and the Modern Jazz Quartet ... For Ronald, New York and its art atmosphere 'makes you rise up to your best'" (Murray, *Painters* 15). In later years hosting his own television show, *The Umbrella*, Ronald "brought in jazz musicians ..." although how the music was perceived within the constraints of a Toronto television studio are shown by reading the

entire sentence: "...brought in jazz musicians and generally provoked disorder" (Nowell, *Painters* 72).¹⁶

Thus Painters Eleven honed their taste for improvisation not only through automatism and abstract expressionism, but through music. Thelonious Monk, "due to Monk's abstractness," was a favourite of Harold Town (Nowell, *Breakfast* 130). Jack Bush "was a great jazz fan also" (Murray, *Rayner* 19), and in the early 1950s Oscar Cahén, Walter Yarwood, and Town would regularly end their nights-out by listening to jazz at the Colonial or the Town Tavern, "where for the price of a drink you could listen the whole night long to all-time-great jazz legends – Billie Holiday, Lester Young, Stan Getz, Miles Davis, Oscar Peterson and more" (Nowell, *Painters* 141). Improvisation was implicit not only to the modernist spirit, especially surrealism and automatism, that had birthed Abstract Expressionism itself, but within the music that the members of this tiny but fervent art world listened to on records and in clubs. Painters Eleven were the first Toronto artists to embrace what Daniel Belgrad calls the "aesthetic of spontaneity" of the mid-20th century (Belgrad 15). In the same way that an artist such as Jackson Pollock allowed that, besides his own painting, jazz music was "'the only other really creative thing happening in this country'" (Belgrad 195), the Painters Eleven adopted a jazz paradigm as central to their own artistic processes, an aural counterpart to improvised visual art practice.¹⁷

¹⁶ A clip from this program—*The Umbrella*, which was broadcast weekly in the later months of 1966—is available on YouTube. It shows Ronald reciting his poetry to a quartet of free improvisations by Toronto jazz musicians: Bernie Piltch alto saxophone, Fred Stone trumpet, Lenny Boyd double bass, and Ron Rully drums.

¹⁷ Occasionally, they would come right out and say it. In the 1980s, when I was playing in Toronto's improvised music scene, I lived in an apartment on Queen Street West next to former Painters

Clement Greenberg

Clement Greenberg had made his name in US art circles with a 1939 article in *Partisan Review*. “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” put forward Greenberg’s view of the grand purpose of artistic avant-gardes: “... to keep culture *moving* in the midst of ideological confusion and violence” (Greenberg 5). His next major essay, “Towards a Newer Laocoön,” championed abstraction in all disciplines as a way of creating an art that truly responded to its time, although abstract expressionism interested Greenberg less for its improvisation than for the way that it allowed artists to eschew representation and work directly with the basic elements of painting (Belgrad 104-5).

Throughout the 1940s Greenberg carefully honed his arguments in order to connect the visual arts to larger cultural and political issues. In 1942, as art critic at the *Nation*, he began proselytizing for art’s importance to the American people, and by 1946 he openly “entertained the idea that New York, not Paris, might be the postwar art capital” (Rubinfeld 98). In 1948 he wrote, “... with the emergence of new talents so full of energy and content as Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, David Smith – then the conclusion forces itself ... that the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and political power” (quoted in Guilbaut 172).

Eleven member Tom Hodgson (who in the 1960s had hosted the studio party for Andy Warhol where the AJB played). Tom used to say that he felt he was doing in art what we were doing in music; he came to many of our performances, and we played at an opening of his paintings at the Baux-Xi Gallery on Dundas Street in the early 1980s (the group was Larry Potter, David Prentice, Bill Smith, and myself).

Greenberg's prestige made him an important voice in an art world that, in turn, was connected to a growing mass media empire of unprecedented influence; one that in the face of the growing Cold War, was only too eager for yet another example of American triumphalism. In this particular historic moment, even if a mass audience found abstract expressionism difficult to understand, they were primed for an art that claimed to represent all-American "freedom." Within a few years the mass-market magazines *Saturday Review*, *Time*, and *Life* published feature articles echoing Greenberg's opinion that abstract expressionism was the art of the modern age, and that furthermore, its most important proponent ("Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?" asked the *Life* headline) was Jackson Pollock (Rubinfeld 110).

Many found his "action" painting outrageous, but Pollock had an important credential for mass media acceptance, which the 1949 *Life* article accentuated in its photo of "the brooding artist, dressed in jeans and cowboy boots, a cigarette dangling from the side of his mouth." He was a country boy; moreover, he was from the West.

Europe treated its artists as demigods. It had an old and respected fine-arts tradition. In the United States, resourcefulness and independence of mind, symbolized by Daniel Boone and his coonskin cap, had always been valued over a poetic soul. "Effete Eastern snobs" was the category to which most Americans assigned artists. But Pollock defied the image. He hailed from Cody, Wyoming, and looked the part of the lonesome cowboy. (ibid.)

This essential (and essentialist) authenticity – that the artist did not come from the urban, Europeanized, educated elite, but sprang organically and un-self-consciously from the rustic American working class – became a major cultural trope of the 1950s. Within a few years of the *Life* article, denim-clad "lonesome cowboys" were everywhere: in the

popular media through the rise of film stars such as Marlon Brando and James Dean, and in the rolled shirtsleeves of the singers of the American folk music revival; in the rise to prominence of Jack Kerouac (whose roots in fact were Canadian, working-class Québécois) as an important new American writer, and even in helping to legitimize free jazz through a popular depiction of Ornette Coleman as “a walking myth, the image of a small bearded man striding out of the woods of Texas and into New York’s usually closed jazz scene” (Spellman 79).¹⁸

This success may have sharpened Greenberg’s eye for further non-Manhattanite authenticity. In 1957, after praising William Ronald’s paintings at the Kootz Gallery in New York (Nowell, *Painters* 31), he was persuaded to come to Toronto specifically to critique the work of Painters Eleven. In a string of studio visits, he singled out Harold Town for praise (ibid. 32) and made criticisms of Jack Bush that eventually guided Bush towards the bold colour-field painting for which he later became famous (ibid. 33).

Before Greenberg left Toronto, he told his hosts, “You don’t need to know anything more about painting – just get rid of looking over your shoulder at yourselves and New York or London. Just paint – no tricks” (ibid.). Jock Macdonald wrote, “Greenberg gave me such a boost of confidence that I cannot remember ever knowing such a sudden development” (ibid. 212). Painters Eleven members gained American exposure and sales from this new relationship. Acutely aware of their marginal status, as

¹⁸ The AJB did not hesitate to use the cowboy trope either. We see it popping up again in the title of the 1971 Don Owen film *Cowboy and Indian* where Robert Markle, whose family was from the Mohawk First Nations, is tagged as “Indian” in contrast with Gordon Rayner who—although he was no rancher, but the son of a successful commercial artist and an urban Torontonion born and bred—is tagged as “Cowboy.”

Canadians, in the Western art world, it was enormously important to have the leading New York art critic tell them that what they were doing was original, important, and cutting-edge. In consecrating Painters Eleven, Greenberg confirmed their importance not only to the art world at large, but to themselves.

By the end of the 1950s, by establishing that Canadian abstraction could be recognized by the bigger art world beyond Canada's borders, engaging both highbrow critics and high-profile galleries, Painters Eleven had laid the foundation for other forms of experimental practice in the Toronto art world. These artists opened up a modernist discourse in which art works were allowed, even expected, to deliberately call attention to the circumstances of their creation. Painters Eleven created a Toronto art culture that made it possible for up-and-coming painters such as Coughtry, Rayner, Markle, Burton, Kubota, and Gorman to extend their studio practices, in turn, into a music that similarly called attention to the spontaneity of its creation, a music that unapologetically celebrated the fact of being improvised.

The Post-Painters Eleven Generation

In 1950, at the age of fifteen, Gordon Rayner became an apprentice in Jack Bush's graphic arts business, and was introduced to Toronto's tiny community of nascent abstract expressionists:

I would occasionally be asked to work late in order to serve drinks to a strange and gregarious group of people who congregated in Jack Bush's office. They loved to yell and scream at each other. I actually saw one of them, Harold Town, I think, rolling around on the floor with Oscar Cahén indulging in fake fisticuffs. I think they must have been having fun.

Pugilistic possums. They were the Painters Eleven. Little did I know the

historical significance of these formative gatherings. During this period, Jack was changing from naturalistic art to abstract art, which of course had an enormous effect on me. (Murray, *Rayner* 19)

Still in his teens, Rayner used his artistic skills to forge a birth certificate so he could get into bars and hear jazz (Nowell, *Painters* 141fn): “I started to ... broaden my scope with music as I was broadening my scope with the experience of the world of art” (Murray, *Rayner* 19). A younger generation was being shaped by the Painters Eleven milieu, and by its attendant discourse of bohemianism and spontaneity. Rayner’s friends Graham Coughtry, Dennis Burton, and Richard Gorman, like Alexandra Morton a decade earlier, were students of Jock Macdonald (Nowell, *Painters* 213). “Jock didn’t like his classes to be too serious,” Burton wrote, “so I brought in a portable record player ... to play bebop and modern jazz ... He encouraged me to do free abstractions” (Burton 11). As they learned the basics of art making, these student painters were also imbuing themselves with a broader sense of their work’s importance, and with “the myth of the twentieth century artist as hero” (Murray, *Rayner* 9).

Some of these young artists were initially skeptical of abstract expressionism. Their youthful sense of mission drew them to social realist artists such as Mexico’s José Orozco or the USA’s Ben Shahn (Hale 8) but, alert to new developments introduced by foreign newspapers and art magazines as well as by their Painters Eleven mentors, they simultaneously broadened their horizons, and closed ranks to form a supportive community of their own. Meanwhile, their love of jazz – a music that itself resisted conventions – and their tight-knit social milieu drew them increasingly towards working in sound. Rayner wrote:

... we would talk all night long and longer. We'd have jam sessions. I was playing drum brushes on the back of beer cases, [sculptor Gerry] Gladstone was playing flute, Coughtry was singing the blues and Mike Snow was already playing brilliant piano. This music has been more of a social tie than our private art. We always had that in common, the fun, the gatherings; not when we were alone struggling in studios, but when we got together at those great parties: people pounding garbage cans (they were metal in those days), and singing the blues. (Murray, *Rayner* 22)

By 1962 these cocky, self-consciously iconoclastic young painters were announcing themselves and their work to the world of Canadian art. They became the first generation to take the ethos of modernism, the ethos of jazz, the ethos of abstract expressionist art, fully to heart, and to enact this ethos in music, they became the Artists' Jazz Band.

The AJB and Me

To an extent this chapter is deeply rooted in my own personal experience. From 1975 until 1988, as I've already noted, I was an active part of the Toronto improvised music scene: editing, publishing and writing (on the staff of the jazz magazine *Coda* 1975-1983, then with my own small publishing house), as well as playing bass and cello in various ensembles. In the early 1980s I often played with the Artists' Jazz Band, mostly in the Spadina Avenue loft of drummer/painter Gordon Rayner.

By the time I played with the band, the core group had defaulted to three of its founders: Rayner, trombonist Graham Coughtry, and less reliably, tenor saxophonist/pianist Robert Markle. For a couple of years we floated a semi-regular sextet with Rayner, Coughtry, Bill Smith on saxophone, David Prentice on violin, and myself

on double bass, or more likely cello if I knew that Jim Jones or Terry Forster were going to be there.

Every group I played with offered a slightly different approach to improvisation. With the AJB, it was about everyday life as performance, a performance they had by that time been rehearsing for a couple of decades. The private musical sessions were rife with drugs and alcohol (more the latter, as the core of the band entered their late forties and fifties), passion and argument, shouting and forgiveness. For a polite young guy from a small town in BC, it was an education to be welcomed into a circle of elders whose ethic was to welcome argument, rather than avoid it; you had to be ready to be berated and yelled at, and learn how to keep one's head up and push back without defensiveness, or counter-yelling, or taking it personally. These were lessons you had to learn, or you wouldn't be asked back: in 1973, even founding member Markle wrote of the AJB, "I've been fired myself about five times" (*Artists' left foldout*, col. 4).

Cowboy and Indian

Don Owen's 1972 film *Cowboy and Indian* focuses on two founders of the Artists' Jazz Band: Gordon Rayner, the son of a successful Toronto commercial artist, and Robert Markle, a native Mohawk from a working-class family in the nearby steel town of Hamilton. Filmed in the winter of 1970-71, the film is a deceptively casual portrait of these two men, their friends and their art. About two-thirds of the way through *Cowboy and Indian* we hear, over just a few minutes, several significant musical facets of the Artists' Jazz Band.

At 28:25 we hear a New Orleans-styled jazz group, its sound superimposed over a montage of Toronto's College and Spadina streetscape near the live-in studios of Nobuo Kubota and Gordon Rayner. Soon we see the music's source: Kid Bastien and the Camelia Jazz Band in Grossman's Tavern, just down the street from both studios. Rayner is sitting in on drums, playing a competent shuffle, complete with fills and rolls, and in the crowded bar we see Kubota in the audience, and briefly glimpse Coughtry across the table from him.¹⁹

Cut to the sound of a high Eb played by solo alto saxophone, soon joined by a trombone ruminating from B down to A. The musicians are Coughtry and Kubota, in the latter's studio across the street from Rayner's. They play a highly reactive duet, each instrument dodging and feinting, hanging onto a note, then changing as the other approaches, chasing each other's tonalities, heightening the action into a duel of riffs and counter-riffs. Their duet in F brings to mind Stuart Broomer's observation that "soundwise Markle and Coughtry could always produce these certain kinds of sounds on their horns, this vaguely Ellingtonian feel" (Broomer 2016). Finally, Kubota negotiates the octave with a recognizable blues lick and as the duet ends, we are transported to Robert and Marlene Markle's farmhouse near Durham, Ontario, to hear a living-room ensemble of Coughtry on trombone, Kubota on alto saxophone, Jim Jones on electric bass and a concealed drummer (probably Rayner, although elsewhere in this sequence the drummer is Michael Sarrazin, a Hollywood actor who was a close friend of Markle's).

¹⁹ This particular clip can be found on YouTube. Entitled *Coughtry Jones Kubota Markle Rayner c 1970*, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBxdw6VnZDc>. Accessed May 20, 2016.

Markle, on electric piano, gravitates to a Gm-Dm vamp that the band picks up and develops – sloppily, but with all of the AJB’s signature gusto.

In a few minutes of the Owen film, we hear a mix of styles that conveys an accurate sense of the Artists’ Jazz Band: completely free improvisation between two horns, fragments of blues, and a jam session that sounds more like psychedelic rock than jazz. Moreover, Owen presents all of these styles as facets of an eminently social impulse: we start in a crowded bar and end in a crowded farmhouse. Even the sequence where Rayner sits in with Kid Bastien is a revealing snapshot of its time and place – in 1970 Toronto, Grossman’s Tavern, with its cheap draft beer, live music and no cover charge, was an important meeting place for the city’s downtown art community.

On the AJB’s 1973 LP *The Artists’ Jazz Band*, the music ranges from vigorous and chaotic to sparse and highly-considered, and some of the pieces use compositional devices that counter the band’s reputation for being resolutely improvised. The most consistent element is humour, reflected in titles that play off the band members’ names – “Looks Like Snow,” “Markle-O-Slow” – and mock the artist’s lifestyle itself. “Is It Addicting? (a love song),” begins with a chant:

*Is it addicting? Is it addicting?
When you stick that needle right in your arm!
Is it addicting? Is it addicting?
Well, you’re addicting too.*

The band recites, and plays off the sung rhythms of the three words of the title, and the piece includes a unique and delicate trio passage for trombone, bowed bass and

whistling.²⁰ Side 3 of this two-LP set features “Raynershine,” described by Rayner:

“While listening to a previously recorded tape of themselves playing percussion instruments, the artists play blocks of chords according to a set of signals that in the loosest sense could be considered conducting” (*Artists’ Jazz Band* foldout 2, col. 1).

More than just a jam band, the AJB over its long history tried a little bit of everything. In fact Stuart Broomer, who occasionally played with the group in the 1960s, writes “the AJB sounded less like free jazz to me than a parody of older jazz. I was always slightly shocked that they didn’t seem to listen to free jazz or know it well” (Broomer 2015).

The band’s most famous member, Michael Snow, was not one of its founders; in 1962, with his first wife Joyce Wieland, he moved to New York to pursue a career as artist and filmmaker. He bought a piano from a neighbour (another former Dixieland player, trombonist Roswell Rudd) and, lending his loft out for rehearsals, became acquainted with Archie Shepp, Paul Bley and Carla Bley, Steve Lacy, and other members of the Jazz Composers’ Guild. On visits to Toronto, Snow would play with the Artists’ Jazz Band – at first, for purely social reasons since, musically “... the AJB seemed pretty silly ...” (Wainwright 77). However, Snow’s personal aesthetic led him to begin taking the Toronto players more seriously. In New York, Snow was listening to free jazz

²⁰ [*Is It Addicting? \(excerpt\)*](#). This audio clip, illustrated by photos and texts from the Isaac Gallery’s 1973 limited-edition LP, can be found on YouTube as *Artists’ Jazz Band – Toronto 1973 – Is It Addicting? (excerpt)*. Robert Markle, Nobuo Kubota saxophones, Graham Coughtry trombone, Harvey Cowan electric violin, Gerald McAdam guitar, Michael Snow, piano and whistling, Jim Jones electric bass, Terry Forster upright bass, Gordon Rayner drums. <https://youtu.be/a-LG7zoSgGo>. Accessed June 1, 2016.

musicians who “played fixed lines, tunes, and then they improvised ... I thought that was stupid” (Snow, *Music/Sound* 65):

I sometimes felt that these musicians weren’t necessarily developing what seemed to be the most amazing implications of their music. They often composed tunes that would, by and large, be played first, followed by solos and repeated to close ... but they only occasionally trusted in collective improvisation in which the thematic material is generated then and there by the player-composers. (Snow, *Collected* 188)

Snow’s attitude toward the AJB began to change. He realized they were not necessarily as primitive as he’d first thought: “You have to learn how to improvise in that free way” (Snow, *Music/Sound* 64-5). In fact, a milestone of Snow’s years in New York was his 1965 film *New York Eye and Ear Control*, famous for its soundtrack by Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, John Tchicai, Roswell Rudd, Gary Peacock, and Sunny Murray. “When I chose the band to make the sound track,” Snow writes, “I specifically asked them not to play compositions, just to play free” (Snow, *ibid.*, 65). Toronto saxophonist and multimedia artist John Oswald brings an intriguing perspective to the resulting session:

The musicians that were involved in the *New York Eye and Ear Control* sessions – Albert Ayler, et cetera, were all surprised when Mike [Snow] said no head, just play ... he said it just seemed kind of like a novel idea, but a doable idea, to them. So I think the seeds for that idea of, total free jazz let’s call it, were perhaps planted by a Canadian influence. (Martinez 2014)

Conclusion: The Artists’ Jazz Band and the Discourse of Absence

For reasons suggested in this chapter, it seems that practicing Toronto jazz musicians were immune to the modernist impulse that, throughout the 1960s, galvanized musicians

around the world to pursue free improvisation. Meanwhile, a group of abstract expressionist painters were only too happy to do exactly that. It can be argued that the influence of abstract expressionism itself gave these artists the license, and the confidence, and the motivation, not only to play freely improvised music, but to foreground it as an essential part of their identities as artists.

They were empowered to do so by a tradition of experimentation, introduced by influences from Europe, Quebec and New York City, that had been established in Toronto's visual art world in the years after the Second World War by the formation of Painters Eleven. Over the years, artists, curators and critics exercised their combined efforts to establish abstract expressionism as a legitimate genre; their success gave the AJB permission to pursue its analogy in music, to depart from steady rhythms and chords and the song form. They were committed to building art from the ground up when they painted; it was a logical step to do the same thing when they played music.

Like other free music of the time, it inevitably was drawn into the jazz discourse around free improvisation, which I have referred to as a "discourse of absence." A discourse of absence indeed when, as everyone knows who plays the music or discusses it critically, free improvisation is a way of conceiving music-making from the ground up, giving its composers/players licence to work with basic elements – tones, textures, melodies, beats and rhythms – however they choose. The music can incorporate all sorts of compositional elements, but it has no constraints to refer to those jazz signifiers that have been reified as tradition.

Such a discourse may have discouraged experimentation among Toronto's jazz musicians, but as abstract expressionists, the AJB and their immediate artistic forebears,

Painters Eleven, had already weathered and become inured to such criticisms. Instead of the jazz “discourse of absence,” they applied a discourse that they had tried and proved on canvas, the abstract expressionist discourse of building art from the ground up, of going back to the medium’s most basic elements and configuring them openly and spontaneously, sometimes bringing all of their education and erudition to bear, sometimes just as carefully deploying a deliberate naiveté.

For all of that, the persistent jazz “discourse of absence” hung in the background ready to point an accusing finger, a potential threat to the brashness that kept the Artists’ Jazz Band aloft, and a would-be damper of the goodwill that helped to build and expand a downtown art community – a community that loved the band even when they hated the music. But the members of the band had devised a catchphrase that, once pronounced, would dispel this curse. In the many private sessions I enjoyed with the AJB, mostly in Rayner’s studio on Spadina Avenue, there were times when the improvisations would cluster around a recognizable tonal centre, or when we would enter collectively into a blues-like groove, or start to play a rhythm with walking bass that actually sounded like conventional jazz, and at these times, a thrill would go through the band, we would end with a flourish, and the founders of the AJB would raise their fists triumphantly and proclaim, “WE CAN DRAW!”

Chapter 2

Stuart Broomer and the Mediated City

The Mediated City

Stuart Broomer was a central figure – for several years, along with the Artists’ Jazz Band, possibly *the* central figure – in Toronto improvised music during the 1960s. He entered the scene as a double bassist (who occasionally played trumpet and flugelhorn), became best-known as a pianist, and in recent years has made rare appearances on guitar.

However, since 1991 he has devoted himself almost exclusively to prose writing: mostly critical works, short and long, about jazz and other forms of improvised music for a range of international publications, from 2001 to 2005 as editor of *Coda Magazine*, and as an ongoing contributor to the online journal *Point of Departure*. Broomer is a long-time friend and collaborator of pivotal figures such as Bill Smith, Michael Snow, and Paul Haines; after the latter’s passing in 2003, he worked with Coach House Press editing *Secret Carnival Workers: The Paul Haines Reader* (2007). In 2009 The Mercury Press published his *Time and Anthony Braxton*.

The idea of Toronto as a “mediated city” was a reference that Stuart Broomer introduced into our interview at his Toronto home in March 2016; ironically, after the recorder had been turned off. The expression was his way of explaining how a long musical career such as his, in which he made as much headway as any Toronto improviser in getting his music heard, could have gathered so little forward propulsion, even after more than two decades of performances, recordings, and reviews. “In a heavily mediated city such as Toronto,” Broomer told me, “the major presenters eventually

become the major performers – Bill [Smith] had *Coda*; Mike [Snow] had the Music Gallery – but I wasn’t a presenter” (interview 2016).

As so often in conversations with Stuart Broomer, such a statement makes the listener stop and think, because Broomer has revealed not a simple truth, but a revealing window into a complex reality. Since the Music Gallery’s founding in 1976, during its early years, despite the huge number of performances, including hundreds of musicians, that the Gallery hosted, it was certainly no secret that a central function of the organization was the funding and administration of tours and recordings for its board of directors, the free improvising ensemble CCMC.

During those years, however, that I was in the thick of the *Coda* Publications / Jazz & Blues Centre / Sackville Recordings / Onari Productions gestalt, it had never occurred to me how important that particular hive of activity had been in mediating our own musical endeavours. A web of international relationships – submissions, responses, correspondence, contacts, sales and purchases, letters and phone calls – that stemmed ultimately from a common interest in a marginalized musical form, was also a web of connections that offered a degree of power and influence.

This need for some kind of legitimizing body stems partly from the lack of cultural capital associated with improvised music, indeed with improvisation of any kind. As George McKay says of improvised music, “the problematic of its cultural value is inscribed in the term itself – improvisation is ‘spontaneous,’ but it is also ‘shoddy,’ ‘half-formed’ – and perhaps the most shoddy aspect of the scene is the lack of sustained, significant economic support” (McKay 230).

In other words, partly because of the commodification of performance, of social assumptions about the importance of the composer, partly because of a lack of knowledgeable critics who can offer legitimizing perspectives on improvisation, improvising musicians have a hard time accumulating the amount of steadily increasing cultural capital that artists need in order to develop sustained professional careers, in the way that artists can if their produce can be more readily iconicized and canonized: actors, composers, poets, painters and playwrights, with their premieres, openings, receptions, launches, films, artworks, and publications.²¹

This mediated quality may be the symptom of a city which – granted that it is the media centre of English-speaking Canada – still suffers from an anxiety with regard to its artists, writers, and performers. No matter how great the acclaim or popularity a Canadian artist/performer/media personality achieves in their own country, they always face the threat of an opposite number from the USA, or the United Kingdom²² who, having already built a career in either of these imperial centres, which both have more cultural

²¹ I was going to add dancers to this list, but I believe that dance, engaging the entire body in real time just as improvised music does, has faced similar problems (and probably still does) with its position within legitimizing institutions. For example, early in her studies, US dance artist Susan Leigh Foster “was informed by a senior academic that dance is a non-cognitive activity that has no place in the university curriculum” (Caines & Heble 147). Foster silenced at least some of her critics when her dissertation *Reading Dancing: Gestures Towards a Semiotics of Dance* was accepted in 1981. During the 1990s, she constructed the first doctoral-level program in critical dance studies in the United States at UC Riverside. There are many points of comparison between Foster’s account, and the experiences George Lewis describes in his attempts to establish musical improvisation as part of contemporary arts pedagogy at the University of California, San Diego in his essay “Teaching Improvised Music: an Ethnographic Memoir” (Lewis, “Teaching”).

²² Canada, as part of the Commonwealth, retains a degree of its former colonial relationship with the UK; for example, although we have an autonomous prime minister, Canada’s nominal head of state is still the Governor General, the representative of the British crown.

capital than Canada can offer (from the UK, imparted by the weight of colonial tradition, and longstanding Commonwealth connections; from the US imparted by the sheer oligarchic power of the country's enormous media industry), will cross the border to claim Canadian hearts, minds, and media coverage with relative ease.²³

Therefore, to build a career – certainly to build a career in the mediated city – improvising musicians, like caddis flies building a house of gravel from the surrounding streambed, had to construct around themselves a shell of legitimacy from whatever source was at hand. Just as the group efforts, pooled resources, and greater public profile of a collective could by association impart substance, hence legitimization, to the music of improvisers from Chicago's AACM, the London Musicians' Collective or Amsterdam's Instant Composers' Pool (ICP), the new, streamlined CCMC who founded the Music Gallery included Michael Snow – whose reputation spanned different disciplines as a filmmaker and visual artist – that would add to the gallery's cachet (and in turn whose eventual association with the Music Gallery and the CCMC would add to his cachet as a musician), and Casey Sokol, a classical pianist from New York City and a professor at York University. Despite how distant either of these organizations were from

²³ In his 1963 satirical novel *The Incomparable Atuk*, Mordecai Richler introduces a sharp-tongued theatre critic, Seymour Bone, who also has a weekly show on national CBC TV. In the context of the situation of the Toronto artist in the mediated city, Richler's line "He talked about his column on television and wrote about his show in his column," (Richler 63) clearly intended as a putdown, might now be seen as a backhanded compliment for a Canadian writer (such as Pierre Berton, who skilfully crossed media platforms in his long career, and was undoubtedly one of the satire's targets) who has figured out the skills needed to survive in the mediated city. This in turn might reflect back on Richler himself who, leaving Canada for Paris and London at an early age, publishing books and journalism, and writing screenplays in England, returned to Canada with a mantle of hegemonic consecration that writers who had stayed home, whatever their abilities, could not readily attain.

the collective model, in the absence of formal musical collectives in the Toronto scene, they effectively benefitted their members in the same way. As Broomer observed, musicians associated with such institutions obtained, as a matter of course, performance opportunities that non-affiliated musicians would have to expend much time and effort to achieve.

Stuart Broomer

Stuart Broomer entered the early Toronto free improvising scene with no such associations, and for better or worse, has managed to maintain a certain disaffiliation throughout his career. He was born December 26, 1947 to a North Toronto family in which his mother "... had completed eight years of RCMT piano studies. We had a piano in the house but she rarely played." Broomer began piano lessons at the age of seven: "It didn't really take at the time, though I always enjoyed fooling around with the piano at home." At age eleven he began studying guitar with Geoffrey Townsend, and trumpet with Edward Smeall, and a few years later began to play double bass in his high school string class. At the same time

... I started buying jazz magazines – *Down Beat* and *Metronome* ... *Metronome* ... had pictures of Eric Dolphy with Coltrane which turned up on my Grade 9 career poster and there was an incredible essay that I could barely understand about The Avant-Garde by (then) LeRoi Jones which began shaping my need for and a love of a music that I had not yet heard but which I understood was free and revolutionary. I didn't have much money to buy records (I had saved all my paper route money to buy an entry-level Gibson electric) so it was early 1962 when I discovered the jazz section at Sam's on Yonge Street and bought *Ornette!* and *Free Jazz*.

and *Kind of Blue* and *Sketches of Spain* over a period of about three weeks. (Broomer, email March 14, 2016)

At the age of sixteen, the young bassist's first attempt to play "straight ahead, modern jazz" at a Cellar Club jam session was a failure ("I couldn't do that at all") but he began performing freer music shortly thereafter, with guitarist Clive Kingsley, trumpeter Ric Colbeck and saxophonist Barry Pilcher at the Bohemian Embassy, a pivotal performance space which was also a venue for modern jazz musicians as well as the Artists' Jazz Band. The year 1966 was a busy one, in which Broomer sat in with Andrew Hill at the Bohemian Embassy, and played with a larger group consisting of Sunny Murray, Henry Grimes, Charles Tyler, Perry Robinson, and Alan Shorter at the Cellar.

Learning How to Think About Music

Broomer began writing for *Coda* in 1965, beginning a long relationship with the magazine and its publishers, John Norris and Bill Smith. In 1966 at a *Coda* Magazine collating party in John Norris' apartment where, as volunteers went from table to table collecting printed sheets to be folded and stapled, "each person got to select a recording of their choice from John's rather large record collection" (Smith, *Imagine* 60), Broomer's selection turned out to be revelatory for at least three people in the room. As Bill Smith describes it:

There were certainly not that many people who knew who Albert Ayler was in that period, but two people who were very aware of his music were the trumpet player Ric Colbeck ... and the Toronto musician Stuart Broomer... he was always a little bit ahead of everyone, he always seemed to know what was going on in New York. He was young, just a teenager. Well on came this Albert Ayler record ... (Smith, *Imagine* 58-62)

Smith credits this exposure to Ayler as a turning point in his musical consciousness. Shortly afterwards he visited New York City, heard Ayler in person, and continued, in the decades to come, to champion the new improvised music, at the same time, through the 1970s and 1980s, building a considerable career for himself as an improvising saxophonist/composer.

This particular *Coda* collating session was also the first exposure to Ayler for two professional New Orleans-styled musicians: clarinetist/saxophonist Jim Falconbridge, and drummer Ron Sullivan. Soon afterwards, Broomer joined them to form a trio they called the Toronto New Music Ensemble (Broomer, email March 14, 2016), which eventually added to its ranks Doug Pringle on alto saxophone and Harvey Brodhecker on valve trombone. During the summer of 1966, with Michael Snow on trumpet, they performed Sunday nights at the Penny Farthing as Michael Snow and the Toronto New Music Ensemble.²⁴

Also while still in his teens, Broomer wrote for *Coda*: considering the writer's youth, remarkably erudite criticism on marginalized musicians such as Ayler and Harry Partch, two examples that illustrate the breadth of his early (and present) interests. "John Norris – then the magazine's founder, publisher and editor – let me go on at length in a process in which I was learning how to think about music" (Broomer, "Ezz-thetics" 2014). At the end of 1965, he first met artists Joyce Wieland and her husband, artist-

²⁴ Founded in 1960, the Bohemian Embassy featured a wide range of musical genres, including folk music and poetry readings (Jennings 22). The Penny Farthing, owned by John and Marilyn McHugh, featured early performances by Joni Mitchell, and Amos Garrett's group The Dirty Shames, as well as Lonnie Johnson and the traditional jazz of Jim McHarg's Metro Stompers (Jennings 70-1).

musician Michael Snow, friends of New York poet Paul Haines (whom Broomer was later to befriend when Haines moved to Ontario in the 1970s). The two Canadian artists were impressed by Broomer's enthusiastic review of "You and the Night and the Music," the booklet that Haines had written for the ESP release of Ayler's *Spiritual Unity* (Broomer email Mar 14 2016).

Late in 1965, poet Victor Coleman (early in his career as a pivotal figure in the Toronto art scene, during which he was instrumental in the founding and/or programming of such institutions as A Space, Coach House Press, and the Music Gallery), began collaborating with John Sinclair and the Detroit Artists' Workshop in artistic exchanges. As a result, Broomer met visiting musicians who were active in the US "new jazz" scene, such as Marion Brown, and he was able to sit in with Andrew Hill, and the previously-mentioned large group at the Cellar. Some of these visiting musicians had played with Albert Ayler, so the young bassist felt very much at home:

By 1966 ... I'd developed a technique, in the extreme upper register, of sliding my thumb across the fingerboard (I used to bleed a lot in performances too, which is something that was probably a problem) while using all three fingers to play shortening harmonics, while bowing. At that time I'd never heard anybody else do anything like that. So what you actually got was bass playing that sounded like Charles Tyler, Albert Ayler. I seem to remember that Perry (Robinson) and Charles (Tyler) were pretty excited about it. Glissing with your thumb, while fingering harmonics on the shortening strings, and you've got the very same thing as that sort of spray of harmonics that you get off the bass notes on a saxophone. (Broomer interview March 16 2016)

The Toronto New Music Ensemble, as a quintet with Pringle and Brodhecker, also played with Andrew Cyrille and Dave Burrell, who were visiting with Marion

Brown. Broomer played at the Cellar in a quartet with Mike Massey on piano, Fred Stone on trumpet, and Jerry Fuller on drums, and in the spring of 1966 he went to Detroit with Brodhecker, Pringle, and guitarist Steve Oda, to hear John Coltrane; during their visit, the Toronto musicians stayed, and performed, at the Detroit Artists' Workshop.

The Stuart Broomer Kinetic Ensemble

If a marginalized music (as it remains to this day), in this period free improvisation in Toronto at least had a definite position on the margins of the city's busy jazz scene. Over the next few decades, that community began to gradually exclude it. Indeed, even at the height of 1960s counterculture, free improvisation was often more warmly welcomed by the visual art community than by the "music community" per se. The genre's openness to players of a wide range of experience and ability was anathema to most professional musicians who – educated in a system where an emphasis on virtuosity made musicians either feel inadequate, or inordinately conceited (in my experience, often both at once) – closely guarded the cultural capital of the musical credentials they had worked so hard to gain.

Even if free improvisers were not welcomed by the jazz community, there was a brief period in the late 1960s when the countercultural *zeitgeist* opened itself up to them. During the 1960s, the era of "happenings," and in Canada, the expansion of national vision represented by the national centennial year, and the Montreal World's Fair (Expo 67), meant an increase in occasions where large audiences were exposed to experimentation in the visual arts. In free improvisation, the values of the players often closely matched the utopian, yes-to-everything side of the '60s counterculture. As

saxophonist Doug Pringle wrote in 1966, “New Music moves toward the ecstatic state. Things and people bathed by the music are beautiful. New Music [is] an act of force, but not of violence, of love” (Pringle, “New Music”).

In February 1967, as a result of his friendship with artist Michael Hayden, Broomer was invited to perform in the Perception '67 festival at the University of Toronto's Convocation Hall. He assembled the Stu Broomer Kinetic Ensemble, consisting of himself on bass, flugelhorn and percussion with Robert George on trumpet and drums, Harvey Brodhecker on trombone, Jim Falconbridge on tenor saxophone, Doug Pringle on alto saxophone, Harold Greer on bass and cello, and drummers Geordie MacDonald and Larry Lazare (Norris, *Coda* 32).

Playing for an audience of more than 1300, the night before the New York underground band The Fugs played on the same stage, the band's set ended with boos and catcalls. Toronto *Star* journalist Patrick Scott wrote, “This so-called jazz was spewed all over the stage,” and called the musicians “charlatans,” and “musical imposters” (Scott 26), but John Norris described the concert quite differently. The Ensemble's concert, wrote Norris, was “for the most part, extremely good,” and he took special care to take a swipe at conservative critics such as Scott, writing that the concert

...marks the opening of a new era free from the clichéd standards that have limited the expression of music ... some 1500 people were present and maybe 200 were aware enough to realise what Broomer's music was about. For most people it was a disturbing cacophony of unrelated noise. It was, too, for the non-critics that the newspapers had sent along. (Norris, “Stu Broomer's” 31)

Scott's response, on the other hand, illustrates Broomer's point that “I always seemed to get a lot of enthusiasm from the art community at the same time that I got this

incredible hatred from the journalistic community” (Broomer, March 16 interview). One could factor this into an observation that by the 1960s, the visual arts, under the right circumstances, had a long-established mainstream identification with upward mobility. In New York during the 1940s, department stores had started to sell original works of modern art, and in the USA’s wealthy postwar years “the country seemed to have developed an insatiable appetite for the arts” (Guilbaut 91). As canny a critic and artistic gatekeeper as Clement Greenberg, in facilitating coverage of such artists as Jackson Pollock in popular magazines, was also developing a new role for the art critic, in the marketing of modern art to a mass audience. As Guilbaut writes,

Art became a commodity and the gallery a supermarket. A new relationship came to exist between the buyers and sellers of art. But art still made it possible for the harried buyer to gain in status by being seen as a “cultivated man” ... the expenditure of money on art indicates a desire on the part of the buyer to identify himself with the classical image of the collector and thereby to establish his difference from other people, to establish his “social meaning” in Baudrillard’s sense. (Guilbaut 92)

Accordingly, newspaper critics could now see themselves in a new role: not necessarily just to judge and entertain in reviews to be read by the art community, but to market art to a large well-heeled readership. By 1967, this new role had been taken on not only by critics, but by many curators and presenters in the visual art world.

In Toronto, as early as 1953, just before the formation of Painters Eleven, William Ronald, collaborating with interior decorator Carry Cardell, had displayed his work (along with that of fellow soon-to-be Painters Eleven members Jack Bush, Oscar Cahén, Tom Hodgson, Alexandra Luke, Ray Mead and Kazuo Nakamura) in *Abstracts at Home*,

a show combining abstract expressionist painting with furniture and interior design at the Simpson's department store at Queen and Yonge (Murray, *Canadian Art* 101).

However, improvised music, with its genuine affinity for unpredictability, had not developed any such associations with upward mobility – except when it could ally itself with a visual art form. Except for the brief flurry of media interest in Ornette Coleman around his New York debut, there was no precedent in improvised music that would enable a perceptive and supportive critic to convince a mass audience that listening to Albert Ayler, or Cecil Taylor, or the Stu Broomer Kinetic Ensemble, would consecrate them and their tastes as “cultivated.” Therefore, such progress as Broomer made with his music was often achieved through the visual art world, where it could gain acceptance by its association with a form in which the artist was expected to be an experimenter.

In an era of nationalist sensibilities in which the media were relatively receptive to giving artistic “outsiders” exposure, so that they might contend for heroic status as national icons, the Perceptions '67 concert led to an invitation for the Kinetic Ensemble to perform in the opening ceremonies for “Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art” at the National Gallery in Ottawa. They also appeared in the Feast of Joy for Perfect Youth at the Colonnade Theatre (Broomer March 14 email), and provided music for Wieland's performance piece “Bill's Hat” in a Festival for Alternate Cinema in the Art Gallery of Ontario sculpture court (Beker, “Expanded Cinema” 13).

Late that summer, Broomer travelled with an ensemble to Montreal, to collaborate on Michael Snow's tape/live performance piece *Sense Solo* along with Harvey

Brodhecker, Jim Falconbridge, and Ron Sullivan (Snow, *Music/Sound* 22).²⁵ Arriving in Montreal, and unable to sleep, Broomer went searching for “the approximate address of a club I knew might have interesting music,” and found that, indeed, that night the club – “an after-hours coffee house, a few steps below street level” – was featuring the Albert Ayler quintet with Don Ayler trumpet, Call Cobbs on piano, bassist Bill Davis, and Rashied Ali on drums. Broomer spent all night listening to the music, even briefly sitting in on piano, and went for breakfast with the band as the sun rose: “So it was a special instant, when even the fear of insomnia seemed in some special synch with the universe, one of those rare and generous moments when the world feels like it’s been staged just for you” (Broomer, “Breakfast” 32).

Meanwhile, Broomer had received a BMI scholarship to study electronic music at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto; he and Harvey Brodhecker began studies with Ann Southam, John Mills-Cockell, and the director of the Electronic Music Studio, Samuel Dolin. Broomer had been developing a serious interest in the piano:

I was in the CJRT studios with Andrew Hill, and he was about to be interviewed by Ted O’Reilly for his show. It was February 1966 ... Andrew and I were in the studio ... I started playing the piano. I said, “Andrew, could I sit in with you tomorrow night?” He said, “Sure – you play piano.”

I said, “No, I play bass.” But I realized from that moment on that if Andrew Hill thought I played the piano, I might as well. (Broomer interview March 16)

²⁵ Besides the musicians Snow lists for the Expo event, Broomer includes Pierre Rochon on trumpet, and Robert George on trumpet and percussion (Broomer, email March 14 2016).

At the Electronic Music Studio, there was a 9-foot Steinway grand piano at the students' disposal, as well as a Hammond B3 organ, and Broomer put both of them to good use: "I figured if you couldn't improvise with it, what was the point, so all the interior piano stuff got developed in a major way then." He also experimented with re-tuning the condensers on the B3 to produce beat patterns, and improvising to prerecorded tapes of the grand piano, played through a ring modulator (Broomer interview March 16 2016).

At the same time, this period marked the end of Broomer's active participation in so-called "free jazz," for a variety of reasons. "I didn't have models to push the bass much further," he says. This phase of his career ended through a mixture of economics and personality clashes:

I stopped playing bass when I was 19. I had cracks in the bass I couldn't afford to repair. I couldn't afford amplifiers... The last thing Jim Falconbridge and I did together was a rock band for an ad agency that was going to sell candy as if it were drugs. I think I was playing electric keyboards on that. The sixties were really truly crazy. (Broomer, March 16 interview 2016)

Conversation Pieces

After attempts at alternative newspaper and magazine publishing, Broomer, keeping his jazz influences in mind while listening to such composers as Terry Riley, returned to music, now playing electric and acoustic keyboards:

Bill [Smith] would encourage me to do things. I'd been playing very little, and Bill got me, unbelievably, a gig on Canada A.M. [a morning news and talk show on the CTV network]. Bill was invited to be on Canada A.M.

because he was the editor of *Coda*, and they were celebrating something like the 72nd birthday of Louis Armstrong ... here I am at eight o'clock in the morning in a TV studio, putting on pancake makeup to play one of my Asian improvs with crap in the grand piano. (Broomer, March 16 interview 2016)

In the early 1970s, while maintaining their ties with the city's free jazz scene, both Broomer and Smith shared an interest in taking their backgrounds in free improvisation into other areas. At this time, with the music called "jazz" still clearly perceived as an African American created art form, the form's lineage clearly came directly from such practitioners as Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, and other New York-based musicians, especially the recently-departed John Coltrane, who had established himself as a jazz virtuoso before taking his music into other areas. Therefore, the English Canadian jazz infrastructure still admitted free improvisers within its precincts, enabling a generation of musicians to be heard and historicized. The CBC recorded Broomer and Smith in a Jazz Radio Canada session on May 11, 1976. Once the session was broadcast, they allowed the musicians to issue the master tapes as the LP *Conversation Pieces*.²⁶

It is a recording in which both musicians wear their influences on their sleeves. Broomer brings the sense of sound possibilities, and the prepared piano techniques, that he had been able to refine at the RCMT electronic music studio, along with the minimalist sensibility of such composers as Terry Riley. Along with Smith's pieces

²⁶ This session was part of a CBC Jazz Radio Canada series "The New Music," which besides the Smith-Broomer duet, featured Fred Stone's "Young People's Guide to the Orchestra," and cellist David Darling with the Toronto percussion group Nexus (boxed ad, "The Scene," *Coda Magazine* Issue 149, July 1976, 23).

dedicated to Roscoe Mitchell and Leo Smith, both make clear – possibly alone among Toronto musicians at that time – an awareness of African American modernist performance practice as a current of experimentation that could blend seamlessly into other streams of experimental composition and performance.

Through the seventies, Broomer continued solo projects and occasional performance works such as *The First Lesson You're Going To Have To Learn: speech therapy for inarticulate musical instruments*, which he performed at A Space with Smith, Lloyd Garber and Maury Coles. Barry Callaghan published the score in *Event Magazine*, along with other Broomer pieces in a combination of text, notation and collage (Broomer, *Event*). In November 1978, Broomer performed a solo concert entitled *Tunes Broken in Transit* at the Music Gallery (*Decade 15*), and in the early years of the Music Gallery, was featured on a number of concerts with Maury Coles and/or Bill Smith. The Broomer-Smith partnership continued for several years with, among other things, a quartet with Graham Coughtry on trombone and Brantford painter John Mars on drums, which toured to Ottawa and Montreal, and accompanied poet Victor Coleman at A Space ("The Scene," *Coda Magazine* 149, July 1976, 23).

By the 1980s, Broomer was playing almost exclusively in duet with John Mars, issuing the LP *Annihilated Surprise* in 1983. Faced, however, with the demands of marriage and a growing family, he retired from performance in 1985. In 1991 he returned in earnest to writing about music, not only for *Coda* but for *Cadence*, *Musichound Jazz*, *Toronto Life*, *Opus* and *The Globe and Mail* (Miller, *Companion* 34). When *Coda* was bought by a small Toronto magazine consortium, Bill Smith retired, and Broomer became editor from 2001 to 2005. However, *Coda*, unattached from the host of music-related

activities it had nurtured during the years of The Jazz and Blues Centre, was no longer the mediating force it had been; and in any event, what with editing, the magazine, and teaching college English, and beset by serious health problems, the time was not right for “Stu Broomer” to revive his performing career.

However, the international improvising community continues to benefit from the insight and erudition of his writings. In recent years, besides his occasional books, he has found his most sympathetic setting alongside fellow accomplished jazz writers as Gérard Rouy, Brian Morton, Art Lange, and Bill Shoemaker in the latter’s online journal *Point of Departure*. In 2013 he co-authored, with Shoemaker and Morton, *New Horizons at Jazz em Agosto Festival, Lisbon* (Lisbon: Gulbenkian Música 2013).

In recent years, Broomer occasionally ventures out for performances on electric guitar,²⁷ but the currents of interest have shifted in the mediated city:

When I was a musician, seriously a musician, not so much in the seventies but in the sixties, you could get amazing attention for doing strange things. And then the whole world sort of collapsed, where you could no longer get attention for doing strange and unusual things as easily. So one of the reasons I write about the kind of music I write about is that there’s so much music out there that’s so important that gets no attention. (Broomer, interview March 16 2016).

²⁷ A tribute to Paul Haines at the Guelph Jazz Festival on September 7, 2003, with Jesse Stewart, David Mott, Michael Snow, and Evan Parker; at the Art Gallery of Cambridge, Ontario, with Stewart and David Lee in the Eric Stach Free Music Unit on June 2, 2004; with two trios featuring Lee in 2005: one with double bassist Rob Clutton and one (December 3 at ArrayMusic) with English tenor saxophonist Mick Beck); with Lee, Stach, Arthur Bull, and Bob Vespaziani opening the Somewhere There Festival at the Tranzac Club, Toronto, February 21, 2014.

Chapter 3

Outside the Empire: *Coda* Magazine and the Likes of Anthony Braxton

The existence of a unique ensemble such as the Artists' Jazz Band foregrounds the central role that the visual arts played in creating a certain kind of downtown Toronto art community: a community consisting not only of the artists themselves, but of the busy infrastructure of schools, galleries, and bars that became, for them, an important social and professional network. Visual artists, and those they lived and worked with, created a supportive social network for modernist discourses about art and artists that, in turn, created a kind of art world that made the AJB's music possible. The AJB helped to build that network: contributing first as students, as designers and commercial artists; as professional artists, and as teachers as well as performers. In doing so, they helped create a modernist art world with the same tensions, contradictions, and disruptive displays of artistic exuberance as any art world:

Tensions: the AJB's generation, generally born in the 1930s, with the determination to forge resistant artistic identities against the tide of bourgeois upward mobility of postwar Toronto, were the forerunners (indeed, a genuine "advance guard") of the 1960s counterculture that transformed popular art, and society, in the 1960s.

Contradictions: At the same time that the members of this urban bohemia championed a border-crossing high modernism, they proclaimed themselves distinctly Canadian (even as they looked to New York and Paris for models of innovation and success). They did so partly as self-promotion (especially in the 1960s when, with the Canadian Centennial

looming large in the media, hence in the public consciousness, government support for Canadian art was growing), and partly through a genuine professional and aesthetic interest in discovering and defining whatever qualities in themselves might make anglophone Canadian artists different from their US counterparts.

Disruptive displays of artistic exuberance: The AJB helped build an art world that brought musicians of varied abilities together to play the music, and that found, gathered and devised venues where they could perform – coffee houses, bars, gallery openings – venues which made the music possible in other ways, by bringing it out of the studios and making public a formerly private phenomenon.

In a previous chapter, I have traced the creation of the AJB in the 1960s back to the efforts of Painters Eleven; visual artists who, after the Second World War, began to create this modernist art community in Toronto; building upon (and at the same time, reacting against) the brand of modernist landscapes made famous by the Group of Seven to purposefully include more urban imagery (Harold Town's "Mechanical Forest Sound" can be seen as a prime example) that not only offered a more culturally diverse view of Canada, but connected their art with modernist movements from abroad.

In doing so, Painters Eleven fostered new kinds of freedoms, and new ways to look at art-making; new kinds of discourses, in which improvised music would come to play a significant part. These included notions of the importance of the unconscious, manifested in earlier decades by spontaneous imagery of the surrealists and their interest in "automatic" writing, drawing and painting of the Quebec Automatistes. Linked with this view of the unconscious as a primal region, harbouring essential truths about the

nature of the individual that could be revealed in the art they made, was a strong, even obsessive interest in jazz.

During Painters Eleven's decade, the 1950s, they mirrored a contemporary art culture in the USA; in poet Ronald Sukenick's words, "the uniquely native American art form, jazz, became, through the fifties, more central than ever for underground artists of all kinds" (Sukenick, quoted in Lewis, *Power* 29).²⁸ Lewis points out that much as the white artistic community seemed to sincerely love jazz, the music was to be "discussed, observed – and above all, consumed," but all with little, if any actual dialogue between these visual art and musical communities (Lewis, *Power* 30). In Toronto in the 1950s, the dynamic was very different from the New York City milieu that Sukenick and Lewis both reference, since, as I describe on pages 35-7, the contemporary jazz scene was a fairly conservative scene dominated by white musicians who worked in television, radio, and recording studio sessions. Perhaps this was another factor that encouraged a small downtown coterie of the city's modern artists to eventually form the city's first improvising "free jazz" ensemble.²⁹

In any event, it takes much more than just artists to make an art world. As Howard Becker points out:

Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps

²⁸ Sukenick, Ronald. *Down and In: Life in the Underground*. New York: William Morrow, 1987.

²⁹ At some point, there were exchanges of sorts between the modern abstract expressionist community and the contemporary jazz community. AJB drummer Gordon Rayner told me of going, in the early 1950s, with Rob McConnell (later known as the arranger/leader of the Boss Brass) to the Colonial Tavern to hear Art Tatum. Another respected jazz arranger, Rick Wilkins, told me that he had once written a graphic score for the AJB, but "I couldn't get them to play it."

others as well, define as art. ... Works of art, from this point of view, are not the products of individual makers, “artists” who possess a rare and special gift. They are, rather, joint products of all the people who cooperate via an art world’s characteristic conventions to bring works like that into existence. (Becker 34-5)

Art galleries, schools, bars and coffeehouses, musicians’ collectives: counterparts to the abovementioned Toronto entities can be found in any city where an improvised music scene has emerged. In New York, Chicago, Vancouver, Montreal, London, Berlin, Amsterdam, common factors were at work: clubs or coffee houses, where even the modest audiences drawn to improvised music performances were welcome, if they brought in a few customers on a Monday night; galleries that invited and encouraged live performance; musicians’ collectives that formed legitimizing central entities that could bring together the work of different musicians to eventually give their work more exposure, publicity and, by their association with it, cultural capital.

Gradually, through the simple act of gathering together different individuals with common interests, all of these different entities create around them a kind of community that might be best described as a “scene.” Will Straw defines the term “scene” itself as

a default label for cultural unities whose precise boundaries are invisible and elastic. ‘Scene’ is usefully flexible and anti-essentializing, requiring of those who use it no more than that they observe a hazy coherence between sets of practices or affinities. (Straw 248)

As a responsible scholar who may choose to err on the side of precision, Straw may be overstressing the “haziness” of the term: “scene” is actually a fairly precise way of describing a unique urban social unit. The term’s theatrical resonances imply a film, stage or story setting – in fact, the performance of a narrative (in the context of this essay,

a narrative of jazz and related musics) in which characters who might seem disparate, brought together by shared interests, soon find that they share a wide range of tastes, habits and assumptions. The label “scene,” with its performative resonances, also implies a setting and a narrative that may be more clearly perceived from the outside by an audience, than from the inside by its members. Starting with a cast of characters, events are set in motion that create a certain pattern of cause and effect; in an art scene, such patterns are sometimes more clearly observed by someone who can act as audience; who to some extent can stand outside and look in; in the process, preferably bringing “a concept of criticism that stresses taut discipline, rationality, and judiciousness” – the qualities that John Gennari imputes to jazz criticism at its best (Gennari 16) – and who can perform an important service by imparting cultural legitimacy to a marginalized art form: hence the importance of critics in recognizing, documenting, and defining art scenes.³⁰

To expand upon points Straw raises, one can paraphrase him in saying that, although its members might feel very dissimilar from each other, a scene has “the capacity to disengage [them] from the more fixed and theoretically troubled unities of class or subculture (even when it holds out the promise of their eventual rearticulation)” (Straw 248). That is to say, by offering its members a safe haven in which to perform and

³⁰ For example, citing Ornette Coleman’s notorious 1959 debut at the Five Spot Café in New York City, the late Paul Bley referred to “those erudite critics, who by the way performed a yeoman service in quickly identifying Ornette’s validity to the skeptics, the New York musicians who were skeptical. It was the critics who did more than their job of acquainting the public with the music. They acquainted the *musicians* with the music. They acted as liaisons between the avant garde and the musical community” (Smith, “Bley interview” 4).

carry out their artistic priorities, a scene becomes the catalyst that enables its members to change and grow in ways that the immediate social milieu, as well as the greater society outside, may not afford them so readily.

It is in creating a distinctive scene around itself, and its host of jazz-positive initiatives, that the breadth of musical activities made possible by *Coda Magazine* – originally created as a newsletter for the city’s traditional jazz community – came to intersect with the modernist milieu of the Toronto downtown art world. Founded by John Norris in 1958, the magazine lasted half a century. As an internationally-distributed magazine, it was respected and influential, but its influence may have been greatest from 1970 to 1984, when Bill Smith and John Norris, now business partners, ran the Jazz and Blues Record Centre, a book and record store which, sharing its premises with the *Coda Magazine*/Sackville Recordings offices, over those fourteen years created its own distinct “scene,” a scene which was a unique and particularly fertile centre of cultural production, all the more unique because it was a musical scene that centred not around a school or a club or an particular venue, but around, of all things, a magazine.

Coda Magazine

John Norris (1934-2010) was part of a wave of British expatriates who emigrated to Canada after World War II. Originally from West Clandon, Surrey, as a teenager Norris had been “electrified” by the music in the 1947 film *New Orleans* (Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong, Woody Herman). At the Taunton School in Somerset, his knowledge was broadened by a schoolmaster who would play jazz 78s for his students (Sandy Norris 2016). Norris soon developed an affinity for all styles of black American music,

especially swing and earlier forms. “Living in London, he started a jazz society and published a newsletter in addition to organizing jazz junkets and lecture series” (Adams). After living in London, Norris emigrated to Canada. He landed in Quebec City in 1956, and after a year in Montreal, relocated to Toronto (Adams).³¹

John told me once that in his first years in Canada, he was thrilled to be able to visit the clubs on Chicago’s South Side to hear the great blues musicians he’d heard on records. He added that, as the only white person in these black neighbourhood venues, he was often greeted with suspicion, but this suspicion invariably turned into warmth and hospitality once it became known in the club that he was not an American, but a visitor from England.³²

In his first year in Canada, Norris ran the Montreal Traditional Jazz Society, and in Toronto he immediately set to work continuing what would become a lifelong mission of musical advocacy: running a jazz club, promoting concerts, and writing about music for *Downbeat*, *Canadian Composer*, *Melody Maker*, *Jazz Journal*, and *The Globe and Mail* (Adams).

³¹ John Norris and Bill Smith were both part of a wave of British immigrants who were actively encouraged by the Canadian government to move to Canada in the postwar period: “immigrants from ‘preferred countries’ (Britain, Germany, Netherlands, etc.), who generally gravitated into prestigious jobs upon arrival in this country” (Avery 862). This was part of a “restrictive ‘white Canada’ immigration policy” that had been introduced earlier in the century, a policy that “remained unchanged until 1962, when Canada’s present universal and nondiscriminatory policy was introduced” (Dirks 864).

³² Norris’ experience was not altogether unique: as McKay notes, in the case of English expatriate Leonard Feather: “As he acknowledged of his early reception by black musicians in New York in the 1930s, ‘Not being an American ... fortified my credentials’” (Leonard Feather. *The Jazz Years: Earwitness to an Era*. London: Quartet 1986, 18) (McKay 118).

In 1958 Norris launched a new enterprise, *Coda Magazine*. Originally intended as a newsletter for Toronto's "traditional" (that is, early New Orleans and Dixieland) jazz scene, *Coda* plainly filled a need that was felt by other sectors of the city's music community. Soon it began to cover more contemporary styles, and within a year of its publication, it added the subtitle "The Canadian Jazz Magazine" (Miller 204).

Regardless of genre, Norris felt that it was more important to draw attention to the talents of neglected artists than to follow popular trends. *Coda*, despite its low budget and limited resources, displayed an integrity in its coverage that was gradually noticed by an international audience of serious jazz listeners, scholars, journalists and musicians. When fellow English expatriate, and budding jazz photographer, Bill Smith (1938–) became *Coda*'s art director in 1963, he and Norris began a partnership that endured, in one form or another, for over forty years. In 1968 they founded Sackville Records (like *Coda*, an enterprise that began with traditional jazz groups, and rapidly expanded its mandate) and in 1970 the Jazz and Blues Centre, a retail store and mail order business.

One could argue that the very Englishness of Norris and Smith contributed greatly to making *Coda* the special entity that it was. Norris' attraction to the postwar New Orleans revival, and pre-Swing Era jazz might seem, from a North American perspective, to indicate conservative musical tastes, hence conservative values in the larger scheme of things. Certainly, to pursue these tastes during the aggressively modernist decade of the 1950s could be seen as a symptom of a recidivist nature, and a reflection of bourgeois political and social views.

Granted, John Norris remained throughout his life soft-spoken and self-effacing, an English gentleman whose demeanor reflected his public-school upbringing and upper

class background. He also devoted himself, more consistently than any other musical styles, to the blues and to prewar styles of jazz.³³

However it would be wrong to infer from this that Norris wanted the music to remain in the past. Through *Coda*, he championed the new directions that black composer/improvisers were taking in the 1960s. Alongside Bill Smith, he enthusiastically recorded Roscoe Mitchell, Anthony Braxton, George Lewis, Oliver Lake and Julius Hemphill in the 1970s, as well as issuing the first North American edition of Albert Mangelsdorff's solo classic *Tromboneliness*.³⁴ In the early 1980s, when he announced to Bill Smith and the *Coda* staff (including at the time, myself) that he was re-concentrating his efforts on older forms, we felt it was less a renunciation of new musics than a realization, on John's part, that there was a huge amount of historical and scholarly work to be done on his favourite black, swing-era artists that his years of study, collecting, advocacy and dedication – plus his position within an international network of like-minded scholars, including many of the era's surviving musicians – had uniquely equipped him to carry out.

Jazz in England

It is also important to remember that in 1956, John Norris arrived in Canada from an England in which “traditional and revivalist jazz” had a more radical political role than

³³ When I asked his wife Sandy Norris if John had ever drafted a memoir, she answered no: John had thought it much more important, for example, to assemble a comprehensive and accurate Jay McShann discography, although the poor health that extended through the last years of his life prevented him from following through on any substantial writing projects (Sandy Norris 2016).

³⁴ Stuart Broomer tells me that, when the booing subsided in Convocation Hall after the Stu Broomer Kinetic Ensemble concert in February 1967 (see p. 88), he could hear the lone voice of John Norris calling “more, more ...” (Broomer 2016).

the reassuring “businessman’s bounce” function that New Orleans jazz fulfilled in North America in the post war years. In Britain “trad jazz” was “a leftist marching music of the streets” (McKay 51). In contrast, in North America the music at its most popular was known as “Dixieland,” a name with racial oppression virtually built into it, with its implied nostalgia for a white-ruled antebellum South. It was rarely if ever associated with social or political protest; in Dixieland’s heyday during the 1950s, the era of virulent anti-leftism perpetuated by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), that role fell to folk musicians. Accordingly, to this day in North America we identify 1950s “folk music” as a music of protest. The same was true in Britain at the time, but folk musicians and protestors in, for example, the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), marched side by side, ideologically and often literally, with British jazz bands playing traditional New Orleans repertoire (McKay 56).³⁵

Hilary Moore relates English musicians’ distinctive appropriation of traditional black musical forms to the plight of an urban working class alienated by the huge reconstruction projects after World War Two, which eradicated whole neighbourhoods already damaged in the war, completing “the work of the Nazi bombers in an act of violence and destruction against their own people ... In this context New Orleans jazz was seen to express the endurance and defiant celebration of an oppressed people” (Moore 48-9). In pointing out the links between urban renewal, the trad movement, and

³⁵ McKay quotes Georgina Boyes: “although jazz bands provided much of the music for the marches organized by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, it was folksong which became synonymous with protest ... Shared ideology also created links between performers of the two musics ...” Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology, and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, 214-5).

the “angry young men” of British literature, stage and cinema, Moore clearly identifies New Orleans jazz in postwar Britain as a music of protest (Moore 48-9).

This was the version of “traditional jazz” that gripped John Norris’ imagination while he was still in his teens: a socially aware, politically alert, and resistant music. Many of those who met both partners may have felt that the contrast between the more soft-spoken, conventional, swing-loving Norris and the more outspoken, brash, and avant-garde Bill Smith represented a division in their personal politics, but I do not at all feel that was the case. If John Norris had his own tastes as to styles of jazz, he had a profound appreciation of the way that, through all eras of the music, it was an art of liberation.

The Jazz & Blues Centre

Possibly excepting the new-music concerts they presented in the early 1970s (at the time, more traditional jazz virtuosos were still more or less supported by a busy club, concert, and special-occasions circuit), the most public manifestation of the Norris/Smith duo, and their tastes in music, was the Jazz and Blues Centre itself. It was open six days a week, visited by casual browsers, dedicated fans, and local and visiting musicians. In the summer of 1975, newly arrived in Toronto, I went there looking for a Gil Evans record, began talking to Bill Smith, and realized he was one of the saxophonists I had just heard at the Charlie Farley Art Studio on Queen Street (an early public performance by the CCMC). Soon I had a part-time job at *Coda*, and was introduced to a community where I knew I would be made welcome if I pursued my long-suppressed interest in the double

bass. To make a long story short, my life was changed by walking into the Jazz and Blues Centre, and I am not the only one.

Perhaps this is one reason that I have this qualification to Straw's definition of "scene": scenes often have places where all their elements come together, a headquarters with boundaries that are neither elastic nor invisible. At various times in Toronto improvisation, the Cellar Club and the House of Hambourg were such locations, as was the Isaacs Gallery and the Music Gallery. In its time, The Jazz and Blues Centre also functioned as such a headquarters.

The kind of milieu that was created by the Jazz & Blues Centre, and the *Coda* Magazine network, was on one hand a fiercely modernist milieu that valued the insider enthusiasm of fans, the hard-earned technical abilities of musicians, and the transactional knowledge of who was who in the Toronto music, arts and media scenes. On the other hand, as a record and book store open to the public, it was an easily-accessible venue where anyone could come in and browse, an important gateway that welcomed newcomers to those different areas of knowledge. With Norris and Smith as the ready gatekeepers, anyone who cared to step into the Jazz and Blues Centre could readily strengthen their connections to the music.

Onari Productions and A Space

In 1973 the publishers of *Coda* Magazine – John Norris and Bill Smith, collaborating with Smith's wife Clomin Onari – began to present solo concerts by improvising musicians, beginning on February 16, 1973 with pianist Dollar Brand (later known as Abdullah Ibrahim) at the St. Clair Music Library (*Coda Magazine*, March/April 1973,

Vol. 10 No. 12, 44-5). This was followed by solo alto saxophone concerts by Anthony Braxton on June 16, and Roscoe Mitchell on October 26.

After the success of these presentations, for several years the collective, Onari Productions, maintained a program of remarkable intensity. In 1974 they presented Anthony Braxton on two separate occasions (solo, and with a trio of David Holland and Barry Altschul), Don Pullen solo, and the Artists' Jazz Band.³⁶ In 1975, with the assistance of poet Victor Coleman, the series found a home at A Space on St. Nicholas Street, close to the central Bloor-Yonge intersection, and Onari presented the All Time Sound Effects Orchestra (Broomer, Smith, Snow, Mars), three different performances by the CCMC, a concert by "Greg Gallagher with members of CCMC," the Braxton/Holland duo, Eugene Chadbourne (solo, and a set with Smith, Snow and CCMC drummer Larry Dubin), Roscoe Mitchell with Muhal Richard Abrams, George Lewis and Spencer Barefield, "Stu Broomer and Friends" including Mars and Coles, along with CCMC members Snow, Smith, and Dubin, Anthony Braxton's quartet with Dave Holland, Kenny Wheeler and Philip Wilson, Don Pullen solo (whose second set featured, on both Saturday night and Sunday afternoon performances, Larry Dubin), the Michael Stuart / Keith Blackley duo, and Leo Smith's New Dalta Ahkri with Oliver Lake, Anthony Davis, Wes Brown and Paul Maddox (Pheeroan Ak Laff). The year ended with a CCMC New Year's Eve Party (all this taken from issues of *Coda* Magazine 1974-5).

³⁶ Also starting in 1974, York University began presenting concerts that mirrored the *Coda* aesthetic: March 18, Karl Berger and Ingrid Berger with bassist Tom Schmidt; October 7, Braxton with Kenny Wheeler, Dave Holland, Jerome Cooper and Richard Teitelbaum; in 1975, Cecil Taylor with Jimmy Lyons and Andrew Cyrille; in 1976, the Art Ensemble of Chicago in January, and Sun Ra and his Arkestra in October.

The opening of the Music Gallery in January 1976 cast a different light on the role of Onari and the A Space concerts. The local musicians who had been often featured in the A Space series now had a venue where, aside from the CCMC's twice-weekly concerts, virtually any local improviser could book performance, rehearsal, and even recording time.

Meanwhile, visits by major improvisers were reaching a peak. Even as the Music Gallery began presenting local musicians early in 1976, the Art Ensemble of Chicago played at York University's Burton Auditorium Jan. 21, followed by two days of performances, co-presented by Onari, (Jan. 24-5) at Toronto Workshop Productions, the downtown theatre run by George Luscombe (*Coda* 147, May 1976, 36). Onari also took this opportunity to present Joseph Jarman solo at A Space, an occasion I especially remember, as it led to my first published concert review (*Coda* 146, April 1976, 36). Other spring A Space concerts were closely tied to the Sackville recording schedule: duets by Karl Berger/David Holland, Oliver Lake/Joseph Bowie, and Roscoe Mitchell/Anthony Braxton, that all either became Sackville records (the Lake/Bowie live concert, like most of the concerts, was recorded by Dan Allen) or preceded studio sessions.³⁷

³⁷ Beginning in 1978, Gary Topp (a veteran of the 1960s *Coda* collating sessions mentioned elsewhere in this work), often collaborating with Gary Cormier as The Garys, presented a huge range of performing artists in Toronto, including improvising artists Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra Arkestra, Ornette Coleman, Anthony Braxton, Leroy Jenkins, Lightning Hopkins, the Carla Bley Band, and many others (<http://www.garytopp.com/history/>).

This flurry of activity was creating its own local backlash, described in more detail in my CCMC chapter, where Music Gallery founder Al Mattes describes the Gallery's founding. With the acclamation of the CCMC to the board of directors of the only Canadian institution devoted to musical improvisation, hence instantly reifying them as the premier Canadian improvising ensemble,³⁸ a discursive barrier was also established between the newly-professionalized Gallery, and the Onari volunteers, who despite often presenting local improvisers, were now cast as opposition: "*supposedly* presenters and promoters of Canadian music" (my italics), because they had brought in player/composers who were "mainly black, mainly American and all stars of the improvised music scene" (Mattes, quoted in Stewart 7).

Now that the CCMC had managed to turn their brand of anything-goes improvisation into a grantable commodity, musical differences started to become seriously polarizing issues. In its support of both local free improvisers, and the new musics coming from the USA and overseas, *Coda* had often been a lonely dissenting voice in the complacent, Anne Murray-loving wilderness of Canadian media. However, although its aesthetic, political, and editorial stance remained the same, *Coda* and its principals now found themselves depicted as villains – even in a nationalist sense, as traitors – in the heavily nationalized and racialized discourse that arose with the founding of the Music Gallery.

³⁸ A claim to automatic nation-wide primacy was not unusual for any Toronto cultural initiative, given the prevailing norm of "an Ontario-privileging Canada," a phrase Frank Davey uses in pointing out analogous Ontario-centric biases in the formation of Canadian literary canons (Davey 285).

Anthony Braxton, and the Need for the Next Genius

In his book on Anthony Braxton, Ronald Radano highlights the composer/saxophonist's central position in the jazz discourse of the early 1970s, when he became the focus of attention for both "the institutions of official culture" – that is, the tiny portion of the record industry that was interested in black experimental music, and the international community of critics and scholars who, in Radano's words,

... worked against the odds to reestablish a sense of coherence of genre and style. The key lay in identifying a figure of consensus, an artist who might consolidate the various streams of innovation and give new legitimacy to the popular cyclic theories of musical change and consolidation. (Radano 239-40)

It was a crucial time in Braxton's career: even as opportunities proliferated to compose and perform his original music, the institutions of official culture decided how he and his music were to enter history – how, in fact, they were to "write" his music into the larger "jazz" narrative. Radano analyzes the rarely-discussed importance of image-making in the jazz industry; through reading his examples it becomes clear – although it isn't the point that Radano is trying to make – that critical positions on Braxton were sharply divided along national border lines.

Noting that "the peculiarities of Braxton's creative complex would confound writers," Radano quotes three American critics: the *New York Times*' John S. Wilson, who found Braxton's music "obscure" (Radano 244), *Down Beat*'s Ray Townley, whose two-page profile "fashioned an image of a playful, if eccentric, intellectual clown" (Radano 246), and the same magazine's Will Smith, who attributed the artist's "flights of

aimlessness” to “his involvement with the European ‘new music’ syndrome” (Radano 248).

The quotations reveal a remarkable national/cultural divide. If these writers share anything, it is the tacit belief in the “Great Man” theory of jazz innovation: a paradigm of musical development resolutely upheld in jazz history and criticism for most of the music’s existence, but a paradigm that, in retrospect, forced undue demands on musical innovators. A talented player arriving on the critical scene via debut recordings and performances would find that, although their art may be judged by some critical listeners for its intrinsic value in terms of existing musical contexts, many others would be examining it to judge if it was introducing a new stream of musical research, pointing out new directions that other musicians might be inspired to follow, as each successive generation of Great Artists was expected to do.

The Great Artist paradigm placed a tremendous weight on the young Braxton’s cardiganed shoulders: the weight of determining (to quote the name of one of Ornette Coleman’s Atlantic records, doubtless not titled by Coleman himself) “the shape of jazz to come.” Accordingly, American reactions to Braxton’s seemingly-radical music were based not only on what critics heard, but on their definitions of what kind of a musician a black improvising saxophonist had to be (a jazz musician), and in turn, on what they felt that “jazz” was or should be, musically, culturally and politically. Braxton had already faced a degree of essentialist criticism in the AACM, where he had

found himself in conflict with other members when he insisted on emphasizing Western theory and compositional elements ... some in the AACM believed he was not sufficiently devoted to African music, suggesting the existence of not only both universalist and nationalist

orientations in the minds of AACM members but also a certain arbitrariness about just what constituted “black music” among the members of an organization who self-consciously drew upon multiple musical influences. (Porter 213)

Braxton’s imaginative world, in which pan-cultural musical influences freely cross-pollinated with devices from more familiar European and American forms, was also a poor fit with the discourse of American exceptionalism implicit in jazz criticism. Such a discourse manifests itself in many ways, from such examples as Gary Giddins’ casualness towards the enormous range of creativity represented by the European avant-garde (p. 17fn) to the American exceptionalism that Eric Porter analyzes in Wynton Marsalis’ definition of jazz as a product of “black engagement with modern life” (Porter 308).

With remarkable consistency, inside the USA Braxton was treated as a troubling and controversial figure, but outside of the USA, critics did not hesitate to allocate Braxton iconic status as the music’s up-and-coming Great Artist. In a 1972 *Jazz Journal* article, British critic Barry McRae “stress[ed] images of continuity and order” in Braxton’s music. While an American critic such as Wilson worried whether he could accept this music as jazz, and “underscored Braxton’s ties with the ‘unmusical’ practices taking place in New York lofts,” McRae “reinforced continuities with Braxton’s Chicago past” (Radano 244), acknowledging Braxton as part of a long tradition of black experimental music. Similarly, while an American critic such as Townley, working to put Braxton in context, “took the images of diversity to a comical extreme by assembling an outlandish pastiche of Braxton’s eclectic interests” (Radano 246), Steve Lake in Britain’s *Melody Maker* wrote simply, “Braxton’s an iconoclast, absolutely, but with a love for

jazz's tradition and heritage. That's what makes him the giant he is" (quoted in Radano 248).

It is only fair to point out that within a few years, most American critics moved over to Braxton's side, a critical consensus arguably hastened by his 1974 signing to Arista, a large independent record label founded by former Columbia Records president Clive Davis. This record deal gave the young composer not only the kind of corporate seal of approval that enabled lesser-committed critics to feel they were cheering for the right side – if it was okay with a major industry player such as Clive Davis, it must be good – but also gave Braxton the benefit of a staff and administration (Davis' producers Steve Backer and Michael Cuscuna) who were committed (quixotically, as it happened, as the jazz industry consolidated its remaining forces in favour of a reified "jazz tradition") to marketing black composer/improvisers as serious artists (Radano 249-51).

***Coda* Magazine and the New Black Music**

In Canada in the early 1970s, Braxton was discussed at length, but just as in Britain and continental Europe, a critical consensus soon emerged that enthusiastically supported him and his music. "In Canada" means, for the purposes of this essay, in the pages of *Coda* Magazine: not only was it a Toronto-based magazine that attempted to transcend region, publishing columns from Montreal, Vancouver, and elsewhere in Canada, but its coverage of musical activities in the United Kingdom and continental Europe made it one of the few media through which European musicians might be read about in Canada and the USA. Plus, Norris and Smith's keen musical discernment and sensibilities, their talents for working on a low budget, and the unique gestalt through which the magazine

was essentially funded through retail record sales (augmented, from the mid-1970s onwards, by Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council publishing grants) gave it a non-commercial orientation that helped to make it a significant force outside of Canada as well.³⁹

Radano, however, introduces *Coda*, somewhat dismissively, as “a modest Toronto-based magazine oriented to free jazz.” In doing so, he possibly underrates not only its international influence, but the weight of historical and musical knowledge and erudition behind its editorial position. When Radano was writing in 1993, *Coda* had been publishing for 35 years, during which time the magazine had been a significant advocate on behalf of various styles of jazz and blues. Although it is true that, as Radano points out, *Coda* had devoted a hefty eleven out of the 38 pages of its April 1974 issue to Braxton and his music, the previous issue had featured swing drummer Gene Krupa, and the next issue devoted twelve pages to obscure swing tenor saxophonist Kenneth Hollon. The year before, *Coda* had devoted an entire issue to Louis Armstrong; to categorize it as “oriented to free jazz” does scant justice to a vision that was just as concerned with the music’s history as with its future.

Coda was distinguished from magazines such as *Down Beat* not, as Radano’s description implies, by a narrower purview, but by a determination to feature musics that its editors considered significant, bending as little as possible to commercial pressures or

³⁹ I was part of the *Coda* staff from 1975 until 1983, and worked for them as a freelance typesetter, editor, and writer for the rest of the 1980s. I believe that the magazine’s circulation peaked at 3800 around 1980. Half of those copies were sold in the USA, a quarter in Canada, and a quarter elsewhere—mostly the UK and Europe, but there were *Coda* subscribers in Japan, Australia, Mexico, South America and Asia, etc.

popular trends. Although an American scholar might consider the influence of such a journal to be modest, it was not necessarily so regarded by the artists themselves. For example in 1980, when I interviewed bassist Art Davis for *Coda*, he praised the magazine for its consistent coverage of his early 1960s work with the Committee of Five, when they succeeded in persuading the local American Federation of Musicians branch to include a non-discrimination clause in their contracts. Although as a consequence of his activism, Davis had faced blacklisting and ostracization in New York, and few American periodicals covered his struggle, he was pleased that under John Norris' editorship, "*Coda* kept up a continuing saga about this" (Lee, "Art Davis" 19). Similarly, in 1967 when Stuart Broomer chanced upon Albert Ayler in a Montreal coffee house, he was immediately told how much Ayler appreciated Broomer's writings in *Coda*: "Ayler knew the articles I'd written and was pleased by them. He thought that people could hear the music better 'outside the empire'" (Broomer, "Breakfast" 32).

The reference to "empire" is especially relevant coming from Ayler, an artist who just a few years before Braxton's rise to fame, had aroused controversy about whether his work was "jazz." The dispute was not about the process of the artist, the sound of the music, or the experience of the listener, but again, about how the music was to be historicized; how it was to be written. In fact, the terms of the dispute were virtually identical – "is this artist a jazz artist?" – although the bones of contention were very different. If both artists were accused of insufficient reference to the perceived jazz tradition, Ayler's references were to rhythm & blues, gospel songs and marches, whereas Braxton's were to the wider compositional parameters (many tagged as European in origin) that he had started investigating alongside his fellow musical researchers in the

AACM. If both artists were accused of not playing “jazz,” Ayler (whose saxophone playing tended to be highly vocalized rather than conventionally scalar) was accused of technical incompetence, whereas Braxton (whose playing, despite its embrace of extended techniques, was often highly scalar) was accused of cultural incompetence; his technical facility, combined with often complex compositional ideas, was seen as too cold and cerebral to be “jazz.” Ayler, on the other hand, with his passionate playing and his compositions simple both in melody and structure, was too folklike, too hot, atonal, and visceral to be “jazz.” Again, in Europe Ayler’s music, like Braxton’s a few years later, and the new directions it implied, was appreciated much more readily than in the USA.⁴⁰

Perhaps outside of “the empire,” outside of the US power structure of systemic racism, critics – less pressured than their US counterparts to define their own positions within a system designed to control and exploit African American creativity – were more readily able to acknowledge the work of black innovators within a wider, cross-cultural

⁴⁰ Also in Canada, Ayler was written about by Al Neil, in the last chapter of his historic novel *Changes* in terms most pertinent to the terms used several years later in the discourse around Braxton:

These jazz media people (Downbeat and your local jazz writer from daily newspapers everywhere) would very likely ignore it entirely but even they realize there is nothing in the world they can do now to contain the psychic power in the music of an Albert Ayler or a Cecil Taylor ... The energy in Albert Ayler and in the Bomb (metaphor for ALL violence) comes from the same field. But the one is a breathtakingly beautiful psychic phenomenon, the other is a terrible force which destroys humans and all sentient beings ... (Neil 158-60).

Although when I reissued this novel on Nightwood Editions in 1989, I dated the completion of *Changes* as 1964, the final chapter’s references to Ayler must have been written in 1965 or later. Stuart Broomer, a Canadian listener alert to new music from the USA, remembers the arrival of Ayler’s ground-breaking *Spiritual Unity* as mid-1965 (Broomer April 28/16).

realm of artistic endeavor. As Radano points out regarding Braxton, French critics “showed greater sensitivity than their American counterparts to the traditional notion of jazz as a mutable, changing process of invention rather than as a solidification of a classic repertory” (Radano 185). He admits,

If they, in their enthusiasm, seemed at times to take too literally Braxton’s claims of having shaped an art according to the disciplines of mathematics, science, and philosophy, these critics also demonstrated a legitimate appreciation of his commitment to creative experiment [sic].
(Radano 185)

In short, the position of French critics was identical to the position taken by *Coda*, but Radano reads it very differently when it comes from Canadians; Bill Smith’s estimation of the artist as “the most complete musician in this period of American music,” is dismissed as the magazine’s more-or-less-predictable “brand of advocacy journalism” (Radano 252).⁴¹

Implicit to Braxton’s work was the assumption that the music called “jazz” is only one manifestation, among many, of African American creativity, and that the narrowness of the “jazz” category doesn’t allow for the music’s vast range of possibilities. An AACM precept, taken very much to heart in Braxton’s work, is that there is an infinite

⁴¹ Stephen Lehman nuances the French critical perspective in greater detail, pointing out that “a genuine fascination with this new music was nevertheless tempered by received notions about race and musical idiom” (Lehman 38). He points out that although a critic such as Philippe Carles may have praised what he called a “new way of proceeding” (Lehman 39) by American musicians, he initially viewed their new compositional stances as Euro-derived, being relatively slow to recognize what Lehman calls, “the articulation, by these musicians, of an Afrological understanding of improvisation in which careful preparation, formalism, and intellect co-exist with spontaneity ...” (Lehman 38).

number of compositional premises from which music can be improvised; and that black composers/improvisers, rather than having some kind of essentialized duty to remain within the constraints (real or imagined) of existing genres, are free to exercise cultural openness and movement, and a wide range of code-shifting in artistic practice; they are free to be excited and inspired equally by any and all of the world's musical cultures, and to imagine and bring into being any new musical culture they can conceive. As critics increasingly acknowledged these implications within Braxton's work, they caused division and controversy both in the greater world of the international jazz industry, and in the smaller, more self-contained world of Toronto's nascent improvising community.

When Anthony Braxton's recordings started to appear, with increasing frequency, in the early 1970s, and he made his first solo Toronto appearance (the city's first solo recital by an improvising saxophonist, followed a few months later by a concert in the same format by Roscoe Mitchell), *Coda* writers immediately recognized the importance of his innovations. Braxton's music was so wide-ranging in format, and his public performances (often with fellow improvising virtuosos such as Dave Holland and Barry Altschul) were so effective, that his Toronto appearances were always notable events. But as Braxton and his music became the talk of the day, among a nucleus of Toronto improvisers there arose an opposition to Braxton, and to the wave of African American creativity he represented, that was aroused not necessarily by the man and his music themselves, but in reaction to the intensity of the attention they attracted.

At *Coda*, both Bill Smith and John Norris acknowledged the importance of Braxton's work, but Smith, a personality who could always be counted on to declare his opinion – at times contentiously – was by far the most outspoken.

Especially with more contemporary discourses around jazz as a collective art, and broader sociologically-oriented surveys about the cultures of creativity, the Great Artist theory of jazz has receded from the forefront of jazz scholarship in recent years. However, in the early 1970s, with critical discourse dominated by iconic figures who were still living, or whose music had at least been experienced in performance by the majority of the critics who wrote about them, the Great Artist paradigm of jazz progress was very much in effect. Despite its shortcomings, it was nonetheless a powerful motivator behind critical debates over which artist had a sufficiently energizing and distinctive artistic practice, personally and musically, to become the creative engine behind the next musical surge. Impressed with the work that the AACM had initiated with African American communities, with the “first-wave” AACM musicians who emerged from that community, and with Anthony Braxton as a composer, as a saxophonist, and as an intellectual, Bill Smith had a sense of mission as he documented and critiqued Braxton’s work:

He is here, playing, just waiting for you to listen. He knows already what he is, and presents these opportunities for you to discover who you are. It does not matter if your likes are Johnny Hodges, Lester Young, Bird, Ornette or Trane, for Anthony Braxton is the present account of that lineage. He is The one ... so take it now ... don’t wait like you did with all the others, for ten years to pass, his music is pure and accessible, it’s real and if it does not reach your ears/head/heart then it is you who will be the poorer. (Bill Smith, “Anthony Braxton” 15-6)

Just as French critics were quick to applaud, in Radano’s words, “Braxton’s efforts to widen the constraints under which the improvising musician operated,” Canadian writers also “accepted as legitimate the terms Braxton had defined for his art at

a time when many American writers still maintained rather chauvinistic positions about the immutability of the mainstream style” (Radano 184). Bill Smith was not the only *Coda* writer who portrayed Braxton as an iconic figure. Barry Tepperman (who, with Vladimir Simosko, authored a 1974 bio/discography of Eric Dolphy) had also found Braxton’s first Toronto solo concert to be a paradigm-changing event:

Thus the solo altoist puts himself in an aesthetically lethal position which will accept nothing less than genius on his part if he is to survive. Anthony Braxton is such a genius. ... I don’t know of any of Braxton’s recordings that properly convey the experience of his live performances; the only remedy is for you to go out and hear him yourself. Each generation in the music produces only one genius of this magnitude. (Tepperman 44)

Michael Snow, the Music Gallery, and the New Black Music

At the same time that these concerts were taking place in Toronto, a small number of the city’s improvising musicians were congregating in a Rosedale basement to form the group that would become known, first as Canadian Creative Music Collective, then as CCMC. In a few years they went from private sessions, to public concerts, to founding their own performance space, the Music Gallery, and in doing so they formulated their own mandates of creativity and culture: mandates on behalf of Canadian improvised music that, because so many of the visiting American improvisers were black, took on a markedly racialized character, although ostensibly without any such intention on the part of the stakeholders themselves.

In a letter in the May 1976 *Coda*, Michael Snow complained about the “deifying” of American musicians – specifically, black American musicians – by the magazine’s

writers. Snow describes the work of the groups he was associated with – the Artists’ Jazz Band and the CCMC – as:

... incredible music which comes from their own, not borrowed, lives. Toronto creative musicians appear to be the niggers of Toronto jazz writers ... I predict that no serious critical analysis of our music will be written ... until everything by others (especially Black Americans) has been carefully considered and our music relegated to “imitation.” Praise from an American might hasten to break this deadlock! (Snow, “A Letter” 29)

In a remarkable conflation of coded language, in protesting what he sees as a hegemonic bias in favour of African Americans, Snow manages to get the n-word into his Letter to the Editor; using it to characterize white Canadians as an abject group, marginalized in their own country by the powerful hegemony of touring African Americans and their Canadian supporters. Interestingly, this position exhibits strong parallels with George E. Lewis’s characterization of the early reception of AACM musicians in Europe later in the same decade. Lewis writes, “To make the case for inclusion, the new musicians conceived a nativist politics that identified African-American music and musicians as foreign competitors” (Lewis, “Gittin’” 311).

This particular argument, which has been maintained over the years by Al Mattes, the Music Gallery’s founding director, has entered Canadian musical history unchallenged – certainly it seems accepted when I talk to younger musicians who have come up in Toronto where Snow, the CCMC, and the Music Gallery have been historicized as the leading figures in the city’s improvised music. It was still being forwarded in a fall 2015 panel discussion on the occasion of the Music Gallery’s fortieth anniversary. Forty years on, Music Gallery spokespeople – with surprising fidelity,

considering the actual historical facts – have maintained Snow & Mattes’ highly racialized arguments that the Gallery’s founding was a reaction to the black American bias of the A Space series. However, rather than making facile attributions of racism, it seems more useful to frame the polarizing terms of the Snow “defense” of Canadian improvisers in terms of the funding that Al Mattes and the Music Gallery were seeking, and with remarkable success obtaining, in these critical early years, and the extent to which that funding depended on what was written about the music.

They were seeking to augment the many temporary, improvised and precarious spaces that presented the music with a fixed and permanent place. Such an institutionalization of improvised music, the imbuing of it with hegemonic status, could only be endowed if the discipline could be successfully framed within a context of, in Sally Banes’ term, “Euro-American high art.” George E. Lewis quotes Banes in placing white modernists versus African American modernists within this cultural economy:

Banes notes that “in spite of their own attacks on the bourgeois values of Euro-American high art, the concerns and the practices of the white avant-garde still grew inexorably out of that high art tradition,”⁴² which was being buttressed by private foundations and donors and university residencies designed to protect its artists from commercial Darwinism.... In contrast, the “natural” home of the black musical avant-garde was presumed to be the jazz club and the commercial sector. (Lewis, *Power* 36)

Mattes and Snow mirrored these concerns in their fierce determination to align themselves with the whiteness of institutionally-subsidized high art, rather than showing

⁴² Banes, Sally. *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. 158. Quoted in Lewis, *Power*.

any association with the “black musical avant-garde” that would consign them to the fluid, ever-changing, often makeshift, and always under-funded venues that featured improvised music on the fringes of the commercial entertainment sector. At the ostensible foundation of Snow’s letter, among other things, was an objection that drummer Larry Dubin’s contributions to two recent Don Pullen performances had been treated dismissively. In his Editorial Comment, John Norris explained the circumstances of the review in question: because of scheduling, the reviewer had simply missed Dubin’s unbilled participation; a mention of his playing had been added as an editorial courtesy. In addressing Snow’s other concerns, Norris drily added, “I have been continually involved with the jazz scene in Toronto for 18 years and this may explain why I see it differently to someone who was away in the United States for a good part of that time” (Snow, “A Letter” 29-30).

These disputes introduced a discourse that is curiously maintained to this day in the Music Gallery discourse, a discourse that bears a unique coding as to the nature of what that community considers to be “new music” worthy of support. Within this discourse, the name “Anthony Braxton” seems to have become a code-word for the much larger and threatening world of African American experimental music. Indeed, over the years, despite the Music Gallery’s mandate of improvisation, black improvisers, although they have been presented at dozens of Toronto venues, have occupied a very small part of the institution’s programming.

However, concerns such as Snow’s, along with the expulsion of Bill Smith from the CCMC, combined with the monetization of the CCMC’s brand of improvisation represented by the founding of the Music Gallery, led to a noticeable division in

Toronto's tiny improvising community. With the CCMC – who possessed both Canada's official number one avant-garde artist, and a full time administrator devoted to their promotion – immediately claiming the front rank in what little institutional support there was for improvised music at the time (to give credit where it's due, institutional support for the creation of which, Al Mattes should be credited with considerable fund-getting trailblazing), the CCMC reified itself within what might be called “modernism's secularist ideal” (Lewis, *Power* 59). In Mark Miller's terms,

For its declared aversion to the niceties of form and idiom, as expressed by its early slogan “No Tunes Allowed,” the CCMC has been regarded with a mixture of suspicion and indifference by the characteristically more conservative Toronto jazz community and has thus gone about its business rather privately. (Miller, *Companion* 40)

Meanwhile Bill Smith, freed from the constraints of No Tunes Allowed, began to move among those members of the community who were *not* in the CCMC.

Now as well as bringing black American composer/improvisers to Canada, he began to play with them as well. With his work assembling and rehearsing different groups, mentoring younger players, convening at Gordon Rayner's loft to launch a new configuration of the Artists' Jazz Band, and playing in bars and galleries of the burgeoning Queen Street West artistic scene, Smith began to create his own version of a downtown art world, one in which improvised music occupied a central role.

Chapter 4:

The Revolution Starts in Rosedale: The Canadian Creative Music Collective

Improvisers' Collectives

Founded in 1965, Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) remains the best-known of improvisers' collectives, both because of its unique longevity and the influence and wide dispersion of many of its members' music: from founder Muhal Richard Abrams, through Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith, George Lewis and the members of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, to Douglas Ewart's community-engaging Crepuscule projects, and the contemporary ensembles of flautist/composer Nicole Mitchell and cellist Tomeka Reid.

What is a music collective? Muhal Richard Abrams described the formation of the AACM as the creation of "an atmosphere, in which we can survive, in spite of this environment – simply through that which we have in common" (Gebhardt, "Introduction" 3).

Each music collective is unique, responding to its immediate circumstances, and so, in a sense, creating its own atmosphere, or supportive social environment, for its own kind of music-making. In *The Cultural Politics of Jazz Collectives*, Nicholas Gebhardt and Tony Whyton examine "some of the ways in which groups of jazz musicians, in widely different social and cultural contexts, came to understand their music as a site of collective experimentation and as a medium for social and political change" (Gebhardt and Whyton, "Preface," xi). Yet, even as conscientious a study as theirs restricts its subjects to collective efforts in the USA, Britain and northern Europe. In view of the

actual global range of jazz collectives, this is a reasonable, if relatively narrow focus. As usual, Canada is excluded: there is no mention of Canadian collectives such as Vancouver's Cellar jazz club of the 1950s and 1960s, or the same city's New Orchestra Workshop, founded in the 1970s; the Atelier de musique expérimentale, or the Ensemble de musique improvisée de Montreal in Quebec; or Toronto's current Somewhere There/Association of Improvising Musicians of Toronto collective, much less the CCMC in the period 1976-1990 when, at least, they started out calling themselves a collective.

Music is, of course, a social art, and collectivity is built into its practice. There are musicians who gather privately for years without issuing a mandate or giving themselves a name. It is when the collective feels ready to make the next step, into public performance, that it must formalize itself as a named entity.

Music collectives come in different forms:

1. Collectives that are trying to both promote and present, and at the same time school themselves, in an existing musical practice.
2. Collectives that are trying to exercise control over the presentation and marketing of their existing musical practice.
3. Collectives that are introducing a new musical practice, for which there is no existing local model.
4. Collectives formed to develop new musical practices through experimentation and pedagogy.

Circa 1950, the Jazz Workshop in Montreal was the first kind of collective; as founding member Paul Bley says, it was "an educational experience, completely musician-run," not only to promote jazz performance, but to allow young jazz players to

pool their resources to import American jazz artists from whom they could learn through collaboration (Bley 29). The Cellar jazz club in Vancouver, which ran from 1956 to 1964, was also a musicians' collective, through which such musicians as Dave Quarin, Al Neil, Don Thompson and Terry Clarke learned from playing with visiting American jazz artists, taking the initiative to host music for which there was no consistent venue elsewhere in the city (Miller, *Companion* 40).

The short-lived New York City collective the Jazz Artists Guild was the second kind of collective, formed in 1960 by Charles Mingus and Max Roach. As two of the most prominent jazz musicians of the time, they already had opportunities to perform and record, but they wanted more control over their music's presentation and recording (Monson 184-5). New York's Jazz Composers Guild in 1964-5 was the third kind: its racially-mixed black and white membership collaborated on projects in the emerging musical language of "free jazz," a way of improvising which also opened up possibilities for new compositional concepts (Gebhardt 3-4). Although the Guild was also short-lived, some of its large-group projects formed the basis of Carla Bley and Mike Mantler's Jazz Composers' Orchestra, which produced ground-breaking recordings in the years to come, and led to the formation of the Carla Bley Band, as well as the founding of both JCOA Records and its ambitious distribution centre for new music recordings and literature, the Jazz Composers' Orchestra Association.

The 1960s African American collectives in such cities as Los Angeles, St. Louis, Detroit, and Chicago were of the fourth kind, community-oriented organizations in which pedagogy was a key component. They were often founded by professional musicians, so these groups focused less on teaching technical basics, or bringing in new knowledge

from outside, than on consolidating their existing resources to create new approaches to musical composition and performance, and to expand their own knowledge through teaching. In the case of the AACM, the group's mandate included introducing their community's children to the benefits of music. In 1965 the AACM began a School of Music that emphasized what Muhal Richard Abrams defined as "collaborations between so-called teachers and so-called students"; what George E. Lewis calls an "egalitarian, nonhierarchical vision of pedagogy" (Lewis, *Power* 177).

During this decade, given the struggles of African Americans for basic civil rights, and the assassinations of galvanizing leaders Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, African Americans were looking for new models of cultural assertion in the face of their relationship to hegemonic American culture. This included the entertainment industry, which had superimposed its own strict genres onto black people's music, and which rigorously patrolled and policed (ostensibly for strictly commercial reasons) the borders between those genres. In Los Angeles, the UGMA (Underground Musicians Association) was founded in 1962. The group's Pan-Afrikan People's Arkestra had a mandate of playing members' original music; "We were playing some of Duke and Monk, but mostly originals," explained member David Bryant. Steven Isoardi writes of UGMA, "The return to core values involved a turning away from commercial music and a focus on creating jazz that resonated with their sense of self and the African American experience" (Isoardi 50).

Musicians were also responding to the economic and infrastructure collapse of their local neighbourhoods. As George Lipsitz points out, the postwar process of "urban renewal" spelled disaster for many urban black communities: "Federally assisted urban

renewal during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s destroyed 20 percent of the central city housing units occupied by African Americans. ... They forced people of color to pay higher prices for inferior dwellings in cities all across the country and led to the creation of new and overcrowded slums” (Lipsitz, *Footsteps* 107-8). In writing about the founding of the Black Artists Group in St. Louis in 1968, Lipsitz writes,

For communities of color ... urban renewal has been ruinous, its freeways and luxury urban enclaves a constant reminder of reckless destruction of valuable neighborhoods and social networks. History books and corporate journalism have not done a good job recording that history, but it permeates selected pieces of music written by artists affected by urban renewal’s devastating consequences. (Lipsitz, *Footsteps* 108)

The AACM began as a more strictly music-centred organization in a neighbourhood where, even if the ravages of urban renewal were not as complete, the damage done by the prevailing culture was just as deeply felt. As Phil Cohran said of his co-founders Steve McCall, Muhal Richard Abrams and Jodie Christian: “... we were musicians who had come up under Bird and Dizzy and all of these guys, and then we looked up one day, and all that was snatched away ... There was a general feeling that we had been robbed of our culture” (quoted in Lewis, *Power* 97). There were clear analogies between the narrowness of social constraints and the narrowness of musical constraints, including the lack of venues to devise, rehearse and perform original music. As founding AACM member Gene Easton put it:

... there are far better systems.... As we tried to progress in jazz, we find that there’s expression on a much higher level than we had been led to believe. And presently, we will be locked up for the rest of our days in this system unless we can get out of it through some means such as this [the formation of a musicians’ collective]. (Lewis, *Power* 102)

If a collective means, first, a unique alternative gathering of musicians in order to make an alternative kind of music, the next step in a collective is the securing of alternative venues for presenting that music. Through the venue, the collective begins the next stage, of finding an audience. This means, in effect, creating an audience for a kind of music that, so far, has not been commercially broadcast, promoted, or widely heard.

Collectives were formed in order to facilitate the formation of alternative performance venues for musicians who, even if they were not marginalized by race, were marginalized by the nature of the music they chose to create. As an improvised art form, the new experimental composed/improvised music of the 1960s still suffered a chronic conceptual friction between its creators' intentions, and the music's identification with that other largely-improvised art form known as jazz, which, since it was known to have evolved within a background of popular and community music and song – to a large part among communities of marginalized peoples – always encountered considerable institutional resistance whenever it sought to represent itself as a modernist art music.

Nevertheless, it is through a jazz analogy that we might best understand the problems that a collective such as Toronto's CCMC, the third kind of collective on the above list, encountered when it began to bring its music into the community to be listened to by audiences.

Beginning after the Second World War, bebop had already generated considerable friction between the music's intellectual and aesthetic demands, and the needs of club venues for a music that would attract audiences to dance and drink. Between such clubs becoming inaccessible to improvisers, and the sponsored and subsidized art music venues that had always been inaccessible to them, improvisers depended on venues on the

margins of the music industry: coffee houses, art galleries, church basements, and community centres whose low operating costs and/or non-profit status enabled them – as long as someone in charge had sufficient interest – to support experimental or marginalized work. The onus for planning, presentation, and promotion in such venues generally fell upon the performers themselves.

In the 1970s, an emerging free improvisation community in Toronto faced a chronic lack of appropriate venues. Given their dedication, it would be unfair to say that in their case, the stakes were lower than they were for their African American counterparts, although the context recalls what Bill Dixon has said: “It must be remembered that white men [sic] *elect* to play jazz; their musical horizons are not bound by an enforced social tradition that relegates them to one area of musical expression” (quoted in Monson 272). But it cannot be denied, that race, and available resources, were two important differences between the ethnically and socially marginalized African American musicians who founded collectives in Los Angeles, Chicago and St. Louis in the 1960s, and the mostly white Canadian males (which is to say, all members were of European heritage except for Japanese Canadian Nobuo [Nobi] Kubota) who founded first the Artists’ Jazz Band, then the CCMC, in Toronto in the 1970s.

The Founding of the CCMC

By the early 1970s, improvised music was gaining ground as a performance practice, but still had difficulty finding any venue where it might be allowed under anything other than occasional, provisional, “outsider” status. So it is with this chapter on the CCMC, which I began by comparing the CCMC, founded in the early 1970s, with American music

collectives as discussed above. The most obvious difference is that of race and culture: the American models were formed by economically marginalized African-Americans, dealing with the specific situations of their neighbourhoods, communities, and social positions in the hegemony of US culture. Formed on the principle that the music was a unifying social force, these collectives were racially and regionally specific. Although men were at the forefront of their founding and administration, in general they forwarded strong educational and community-building mandates that allowed for participation by women and children.

The CCMC, on the other hand, was formed by educated white males, who came together for their first informal sessions in Rosedale, the affluent downtown enclave of Toronto old money.⁴³ The musicians who were to form the CCMC first convened in the basement of 210 Douglas Drive, a house rented by Casey Sokol, a York University music professor (Mattes, in Snow, *Music/Sound* 81).

Al Mattes recalls that in 1974, at the end of his music studies at York University, a birthday party at professor David Rosenboom's house –

... turned into a very long and wonderful improv session with Bill Smith playing sax, me on guitar and David on piano. This was my first exposure to totally free improvisation. I was also trying to put a small jazz ensemble together in the basement of my house in Rosedale with Peter Anson [and] Greg Gallagher (sax). ... We were writing and performing various things but it was not jelling. ... I liked Bill Smith's playing and his attitude about

⁴³ "For over one hundred years Rosedale has held the distinction of being Toronto's most fashionable address. Many of Toronto's wealthiest and most prominent citizens reside in the Rosedale neighbourhood" (*Toronto Neighbourhood Guide*).

free playing and so I invited him to Rosedale. Greg Gallagher and Peter Anson loved the music and were committed to it. ... Casey came down (he lived in the same house) and heard it and started to play with us
(Stewart 4)

Drummers John Mars (Mars 2012) and Claude Ranger (Bill Smith 2013) played with the group at different times, but eventually Bill Smith suggested that drummer Larry Dubin be invited into the band; Dubin in turn invited Michael Snow, with whom he had played on many jazz engagements, and Snow invited his bandmate from the Artists Jazz Band, Nobuo Kubota (Stewart 4-5).

Unencumbered by the need for repertoire or rehearsals, soon the band was undertaking public performances. Larry Dubin was a veteran organizer of “Trust Fund gigs” in which, provided that all band members had joined the Toronto branch of the musicians’ union (the American Federation of Musicians, or AFM), they could be paid union scale for performances in approved venues. Dubin had been doing this for years with his Dixieland group, The Big Muddys; now he began showing up at Trust Fund gigs with the band which soon became known as the Canadian Creative Music Collective (Smith, *Rant* 442).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Smith’s memoir describes a quartet version of the CCMC (Smith alto and/or soprano saxophone and Dubin drums, with Peter Anson guitar and Peter Marcus double bass) playing an outdoor concert on the lawn of Queen’s Park, the provincial capital buildings in downtown Toronto: “it only took the emcee ten minutes to halt the proceedings ...” (Smith, *Rant* 442). Actually I was at that gig: I recall that it was later in the summer than Canada Day (July 1), and I plainly recall (a) that I enjoyed the clarity and economy of this quartet’s music. I was an eager new listener to improvised music, and the performance made it clear to me how much more readily a common musical logic can be sustained with a smaller group. I also recall that (b) contrary to Smith’s claim, the proceedings were not halted at all. The music proceeded for an entire set, and the audience, largely families with young children and picnic blankets, accorded the musicians the same

By early 1975, Al Mattes was “nearing the end of my time at York University and needed a career in music. I hit upon the idea of starting a musician controlled contemporary music concert hall modelled after A Space” (Stewart 6). Mattes realized that the personnel of the group represented considerable cultural capital, including as it did jazz veteran Dubin, writer/photographer/publisher Smith, broadcaster Gallagher, academic Sokol, prominent abstract expressionist painters and teachers Coughtry and Kubota, and most of all Michael Snow, born and raised in Rosedale, who had made his name with the ground-breaking experimental films he had created during his 1960s residency in New York City. Mattes called a meeting to suggest that the group apply for arts grants to found a performing space of their own. Since they had come together, the ensemble had flirted with such names as Raw Flesh, and the Toronto Sympathy Orchestra; now, they were confronted with the challenge of creating a name better-suited to institutional legitimacy. As Mattes relates:

Bill Smith suggested the never-to-be-repeated-under-pain-of-death-and-instant-chastisement-by-Michael-Snow name of the Canadian Creative Music Collective and the grant went in under the name of ‘Canadian Creative Music Collective Music Gallery’ ... Basically we needed a name that we thought (in our naiveté) would appeal to the funders so a pretentious name was chosen. (Stewart 7)

Although when the CCMC officially incorporated itself as a non-profit arts organization, they opened a space which facilitated a huge amount of innovative musical

polite, distracted applause they gave to Bobby Gimby when he performed *C-a-n-a-d-a* with a children’s choir.

activity, the group itself soon became a fixed entity in which membership was no casual affair. As Jesse Stewart writes,

Casey Sokol remembers that the name “Canadian Creative Music Collective” was originally intended to be an umbrella term for a pool of improvising musicians who would have a musical home at the Music Gallery ... Before long, however, the name came to be associated with the eight members of the group exclusively. (Stewart 7-8)

With the opening of the Music Gallery early in 1976, a number of factors fell into place that came to define the CCMC in relation both to its host community and to its own musical practice. This led to schisms within the band. As Al Mattes relates it,

AM [Al Mattes]: ...the night we opened, Gregg [sic] Gallagher ... wanted us to play tunes. And Larry [Dubin] put up a sign saying “NO TUNES ALLOWED.”

NK [Nobi Kubota]: No tunes. That’s right.

AM: And Gregg quit the band. So, we were down to, at that point we were down to seven.

NK: And Graham [Coughtry] used to come and play with us –

AM: And Graham used to come and play, until I told him not to come anymore.

(Snow, *Music/Sound* 89-90)

As I recall it, however, the CCMC’s insistence on free improvisation seemed less like a principle to build upon, than the manifestation of a conception of culture as, in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms, “a kind of superior reality, irreducible to the vulgar demands of economics, and the ideology of free, disinterested ‘creation’ founded on the spontaneity of innate inspiration” (Bourdieu, *Field* 114). The free improvisation espoused by the CCMC was not the ferocious energy of a Peter Brötzmann in Germany, or the use of extended techniques to build new musical vocabularies, as English musicians such as

Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford and Paul Lytton had done. It was not the postmodern collage of the Dutch, where genre itself became a musical device, or the dynamic strobing between instrumental virtuosity and dramatic silence that musicians from the AACM were forwarding. Its ethic was simply that anything could be played, provided that it was improvised.

Tenor saxophonist Greg Gallagher also butted heads with the group's now-institutionalized doctrine of freedom, when one night he invited two friends, a pianist and drummer, to play with him after a CCMC session:

It was as if we had committed a mortal sin inside the Vatican. All at once, Michael Snow, Al Mattes and Peter Anson shouted at us, insisting we stop playing at once. My friends and I looked at each other and then at them and asked what the problem was. We were told, "You cannot play tunes in this building." Of course we were only using some standard jazz "heads" to use as jump off points from which to improvise, but these gents wanted to hear nothing resembling a tune in their church. (Gallagher 2016)

The NO TUNES ALLOWED sign was doubtless weighted with feeling for the CCMC, since its creator, Larry Dubin, a modest and warm-hearted man, and the member of the CCMC who was most often invited to play with other ensembles, was already ill with leukemia when he wrote it, and he died two years after the Music Gallery opened. But contradictory as it may have been – a sign written to forbid all writing – it became the pivot for a kind of dogmatic modernist discourse that apotheosized innate inspiration, and defended it against a world of threats, starting with tunes, compositions, charts, or ultimately, any musical challenges that might prove problematic.

As Bill Smith describes his Music Gallery sessions with the group: "The music had become the same. A gong, an electric bass thundering, Larry Dubin rackety rack

busy playing and off we would go. The same bloody noise over and over” (Smith Nov. 25, 2012). Elsewhere Smith has described his sessions at the Music Gallery (giving Graham Coughtry the pseudonym Slide St. Lambert):

Slide and me, bored by the repetition passing itself off as improvisation, had taken to disappearing after the first set, slipping across the road to the draft room of the Rex Hotel, where we could hang out, drink cheap draft beer and play pool with the mostly down-on-their-luck locals. Voted out for not taking the whole thing seriously enough, by committee apparently. (Smith, *Rant* 442-3)

With the departure of Smith, Coughtry and Gallagher, the CCMC’s reification of itself as Canada’s premier improvising ensemble went into effect, and for the next fourteen years it operated successfully, if suffering from a community perception of it, as Jesse Stewart writes,

... as a ‘closed shop’ or ‘club’ – an organization operated by and for a certain group of individuals ... the CCMC formed the Music Gallery Board of Directors from 1976 to 1990. Indeed, it was written in the Gallery’s papers of incorporation that in order to be on the Board of Director’s, [sic] an individual *had* to be a CCMC member. (Stewart 46)

The bylaw was instituted, as the founders explain, in order to prevent the board from being hijacked by special interest groups, as had happened, evidently, at other artist-run galleries. Although no specific examples are recorded, Casey Sokol describes these administrative coups as instances in which “a group of members ... took over control of the space and programming and made it serve their own tastes and needs.” Of course, this is, as it happens, a precise description of the process involved in what Sokol calls “the strategy of making membership on the Board contingent on being a playing member of the CCMC.” In other words, what might seem to some outsiders to be a “self-serving

Board takeover” was actually a measure taken to *prevent* a self-serving Board takeover (Stewart 46).

Moreover, the Music Gallery has historicized its founding as a reaction to the CCMC’s marginalization from Toronto’s main improvised music venue of the mid-1970s, the Onari Productions concert series at A Space. Mattes has described the Music Gallery’s initial programming agenda as modelled after the A Space series, and adds,

Victor Coleman was the director of A Space, and Bill Smith programmed the music, but they programmed music, oh, once every six weeks or something, and they had a concert series, and it was always American jazz, new jazz musicians, the likes of Anthony Braxton, etc, etc, etc. We could never get a gig. So one night we sat around and said okay, let’s start our own place. (quoted in “Artistic Direction at the Music Gallery”)

However, a look at the actual programming of the A Space series presents a marked contrast to this story of neglect. For example, over the course of the year 1975, when the Onari Productions series moved to A Space on St. Nicholas Street, they presented four different performances by the CCMC per se, including a CCMC New Year’s Eve Party. In addition to these concerts by the full ensemble, CCMC members Smith and Snow appeared with the All Time Sound Effects Orchestra, and saxophonist Greg Gallagher presented a concert that featured “members of CCMC.” Eugene Chadbourne’s first Toronto solo concert ended with a set where the guitarist played with Smith, Snow and Dubin. “Stu Broomer and Friends” also included Snow, Smith, and Dubin, and on the second set of both his Saturday night and Sunday afternoon performances, New York pianist Don Pullen played in duet with Larry Dubin.

Ten concerts featuring CCMC members, including four by the entire ensemble, hardly seems to qualify Mattes’ claims of deliberate neglect. In contrast, Anthony

Braxton, who returned to Toronto more frequently than any of his American musical peers, came to A Space twice in 1975, once in duo with Dave Holland, and once with his full quartet including Holland, Kenny Wheeler and Philip Wilson. In the official histories recounted by members of the Music Gallery, this is described as a full-scale African American invasion against which the CCMC positioned themselves as a patriotic resistance. “There was a lot of Canadian nationalism in my working as hard as I did for the Music Gallery. I wanted to provide a facility where Canadian musicians could be presented in a context that showcased their talents” (Mattes, quoted in Stewart 7).

Despite their shaky factual basis, however, such statements have stood unopposed. Since the job of historicizing the Music Gallery’s position in regard to its time and cultural context has essentially been left to the Music Gallery itself, this kind of historicization has set the tenor for a specific kind of racialized discourse that persists in the communities around the Music Gallery to this day.

Elsewhere in the 2015 “Artistic Direction” panel, Jim Montgomery – the Gallery’s artistic director 1987-2005 – says, that in visiting the Music Gallery in its early years on St. Patrick Street, he found that, “... it was the mix that was really exciting. One week it would be a bunch of York students, the next week it would be somebody like Anthony Braxton ...” (quoted in “Artistic Direction at the Music Gallery”).

We see the return of “Anthony Braxton” as a code word for African American players in general, since Braxton never played at the Gallery during those years – in fact, despite a number of visits to Toronto since the Gallery’s founding, evidently he has never played there. Nevertheless, in the Music Gallery community, “Anthony Braxton” remains, seemingly, a kind of code word, for black composer/improvisers.

Conclusion

By the mid-1970s, a kind of community was growing in Toronto's downtown art world that was ready for the advent of free improvisers who could continue the efforts of musicians such as Stuart Broomer and the Artists' Jazz Band to build a local body of work in improvised music. When the CCMC began public performances in 1975, it had the potential to provide a pool of players who could build such a community. However, once the CCMC obtained funding to establish their own performance and recording space, they literally – and as CCMC members freely admit, intentionally – erected strict parameters around both their membership, and their range of musical endeavour ("NO TUNES ALLOWED"). Along with the formalizing of the band and its relationships to the Music Gallery came the reification of certain values. One value was an absolute insistence on free improvisation limiting the group to only certain kinds of musical relationships.

Another value was characteristic of its time and place: many new African American composer/improvisers were coming to Toronto to perform in the 1970s, and making a considerable impact on the local music community, especially through the Onari Productions concerts at A Space. Although we have seen that CCMC members, together and in different configurations, had played at A Space more than any other musicians, Music Gallery spokespeople continue to this day to attribute the institution's founding to the neglect of these same musicians by local presenters. Implicit within this position is a continued resistance to admitting any sort of influences from the work of such musicians as Leo Smith, Oliver Lake, Julius Hemphill, George E. Lewis, and especially, Anthony Braxton. In fact, to this day the Music Gallery maintains – curiously,

for a site that is a sort of apotheosis of institutionalized modernity – a discourse that features its own brand of antebellum-styled resistance to any kind of African American creativity. Within this discourse, the name “Anthony Braxton” has become a sort of code word to describe a wide range of African American creative music.

Elsewhere in the world – even elsewhere in Toronto – improvised music eschews exclusivity. Characteristically, the improvising musician is a liminal artist, a “borderland figure” in the Anzaldúan sense, crossing generic and physical boundaries, making dynamic “spaces” out of static “places,” and constantly bringing his or her music into new settings and ensembles. In order to successfully position themselves among other Canadian art institutions, however, the CCMC embraced exclusivity. Although physically they were situated in the midst of a burgeoning, inclusive community of grassroots artistic activity, they restricted their music only to a site they controlled, relieving them of the need to devise tactics – the kinds of tactics, not only for music-making but for everyday survival, that virtually define the improvising artist in improvising communities the world over.

Chapter 5

Flow, Layering, and Rupture; and the Alternative Academy

The Alternative Academy

If, however, we assume that the act of playing the sitar, like that of playing any other instrument, is one of exploration, then from the moment we take the instrument in hand we are beginning that exploration, not only of the instrument and the culture that gave it birth but also of ourselves ... To begin playing an instrument is to set out on a voyage of exploration that has no end, and thus no goal; we need not think of future virtuosity but only of present experience.

– Christopher Small (Small, *Music, Society* 200)

While looking for parallels between the Toronto musicians' collective CCMC, formed in 1975, and African American musicians' collectives of the previous decade, I first encountered the term "alternative academy." It appeared in George Lipsitz's writings on the St. Louis Black Artists Group (BAG), where he describes it as "the concept Robert Farris Thompson uses to describe sites where people with no recognized status in society as artists or performers hone their craft" (Lipsitz, *Footsteps* 109). After searching Thompson's writings and finding no alternative academies per se, I emailed Dr. Lipsitz, asking about the term's origins. He replied that, although he had originally attributed the term to Thompson, he was forced to conclude on second thought, he had devised the term himself, albeit heavily indebted to Thompson's writings on the informal groupings that are so central to the teaching of music in African cultures (Lipsitz 2013).

At first, I only made a passing reference to the term, but as I continued my research it refused to go away, batting gently but persistently against the closed window of my intentions as an author. Soon I realized that the term had a special appeal for me because, as a concept, it cast a new light on my own education in arts and culture, which has largely taken place outside of formal educational settings.

Certainly, my own early days of learning double bass, mostly in freely improvisational contexts along with other improvising musicians practicing and polishing their craft in late-1970s Toronto, constituted a kind of alternative academy. Before I elaborate on this, I would like to describe to some extent my own subject position in regard to this nascent improvising community, in order to contextualize my relationship to it as an “alternative academy.” I also hope it will further the reader’s understanding of the process, to get a closer look at the person who is writing this.

I resisted music throughout my early years, giving up on boyhood piano lessons, and only spending a year playing trombone in high school band before opting for another subject. Finally, in my first year of university I began to play 5-string banjo (four fretted strings seemed easier than six), and then guitar.

Neither in my early days of playing, or in the intervening decades, have I ever had much patience with formal music lessons, or with devoting hours of my time to standard musical exercises. I admit this as a character flaw that has kept me from becoming a better bassist and all-round musician. Periodically over the years I have tried to overcome this flaw by returning to formal study, but the results are always frustrating unless they bear directly upon music I’m playing at the time. For example, I quickly give up on formal bass exercises, but when I have bass parts in arrangements for ensembles made up

of real people, who are depending on me to keep up my end of the music, I will spend a lot of time practicing them.

At first, I took a few banjo lessons from Lyle Treleaven, a jobbing country musician in my home town. Then, mostly by reading articles in *Guitar Player* magazine that I borrowed from the Vancouver Public Library, I began to learn about scales. However, I soon tired of simply practicing scales over and over, so, without a teacher to inspire me into finding scales interesting, or to nag me into playing them anyway, I hit upon what I thought was a better approach to teaching myself scales.

On the banjo, Lyle had taught me the basics of fingerpicking chords with my thumb and fingers. Harmonies in themselves always caught my ear, so I put fingerpicking to use in practicing scales. If I played an E major scale on the first string of the guitar (the highest string), it just sounded like an E major scale. If, however, every time I plucked one of those notes with my index finger, I also plucked the open E sixth string (the lowest string) with my thumb, the scale sounded completely different to me, since each of those notes had a different intervallic relationship with that open E. In fact, because of those changing intervals, the open E itself seemed to change, taking on a different character when paired with each different note.

Reasoning that all the notes in the same scale harmonize with each other (this is, well, more or less true) I developed a way of practicing scales that was more fun. As I went up and down that E scale on the first string, I plucked, either at once or in sequence, notes of the E scale on one or more of the other strings – whatever notes would fit under my fingers. The tone of this procedure could radically shift if I changed mode or key. It was soon apparent that rather than fast, clean scales, my forte was to work my way up

and down the neck, dramatizing each note with whatever intervals and harmonies I could come up with from the other strings.

After a while, to me these exercises started to sound like real music – meditative improvisations over a shifting soundscape of scales, intervals, and chords. As I learned more about theory, I found how to do this on several different instruments – piano, guitar, banjo, mandolin –it was a technique that lent itself to long sessions of loosely-structured playing.

Although this was an improvisational practice, it never occurred to me that it might have anything to do with jazz. To start with, I didn't know that improvising was even a part of jazz. Jazz? The word elicited vague TV memories of guitarists, buttoned-down in hopeless three-piece suits (to a teenaged member of the rock generation, the suits themselves nullified any credibility they might offer as genuine artists), or Louis Armstrong singing *Hello Dolly* with Carol Channing on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Jazz seemed to be just an older and cornier version of pop music, where horn players took the spotlight instead of electric guitarists. I had read about John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, and Miles Davis, in *Time Magazine*, and *Rolling Stone*, but this music was inaccessible. I didn't know anyone who listened to it, although when CKLG-FM in Vancouver started playing “the new music” in 1968, you could sometimes hear music from *A Love Supreme* or *Bitches Brew* on the radio.

So, as far as I was concerned, my notions of improvising were completely original; their originality was eventually confirmed by the fact that they were of interest to no one except myself. Until I encountered the Toronto free improvising milieu, the musicians I met always wanted to work out of songbooks, or play the blues. My shy

suggestions – “Why don’t we just start in A minor and just, you know, *play?*” – struck them as puzzling and unattractive: it was hard enough work emulating the pop/rock/folk/blues sounds we all loved, so they couldn’t see the point in making it even harder by trying to make new, unpredictable sounds.

Improvising on the Double Bass

As soon as I bought a double bass in June 1976, I began lessons with John Gowen, a bassist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, who had been recommended to me by bassist/photographer Ton von Wageningen. John gave me a solid grounding in the basics of fingerings and bowing, and I learned to play basic classical exercises. John was an affable teacher who, hearing my interest in jazz, said that he had heard the Charles Mingus ensemble at Mackenzie’s Corner House.

“Can you give me any idea,” he asked me, “what was going on there?” Of course, I was hoping that, as a professional musician, this was what he would be able to tell me. What I could tell him was that the music was related to my own interest, which was in improvising freely, without predetermined chord changes. Before I got carried away, John cautioned me that as far as he knew, such a thing was not possible.

In terms of musical sensibility, neither of us were particularly well-equipped to enter the other’s musical world. John’s expertise, after all, was in the written, and his own professional success was based on his ability to translate the music – which existed in its purest form in the score – into sound. If I had thought of this at the time, and asked him to teach me what he knew, that was unwritten, we might have both gotten much more out of these lessons.

However, as I gained even a minimal facility on the double bass, I was given many informal opportunities to play. There were not really any acoustic bassists in Toronto's tiny improvising community. Stuart Broomer was now playing piano. Terry Forster, the Artists' Jazz Band's bassist, had temporarily moved to the east coast, so the AJB was relying on electric bassist Jim Jones. Al Mattes, when he wasn't busy organizing the new Music Gallery, only played with the CCMC. Doug Willson, like Terry, was a busy professional; not until the 1980s did he begin to find time for improvised gigs. In the summer of 1975 I had heard bassist Peter Marcus play in a stripped-down, and very convincing, version of the CCMC (one of drummer Larry Dubin's trust fund gigs, a quartet with Marcus, Bill Smith, and guitarist Peter Anson) at an outdoor Queen's Park concert, but he lived out of town and after that gig, I never heard of him again (145 fn).

There was a gap here, waiting to be filled. The double bass, which by the nature of its timbre generates a kind of sonic atmosphere that can lift and buoy the sound of smaller, busier instruments, was welcome everywhere, even if, the player, like me, had just picked up the instrument. I was invited to playing sessions that were invariably positive occasions, social and sociable, and a welcome contrast to the formality of my private lessons, overshadowed as they were by the written authority of those stern black notes on the printed page. Combined with the inevitable ritual of listening to the cassette recording afterwards, these sessions were liable to go on for hours, but both the playing and the post-playing listening and commentary were essential to learning. I took the bass around as much as I could; at the *Coda* office, I tried playing with Bill Smith for the first time, initially playing patterns behind his saxophone playing. "Play time," he said, and I

took my first foray into that mainstay of what we know as the jazz tradition, the walking bass line. Discharged from the CCMC, Bill was concentrating on composing music for improvising ensembles, and soon I was showing up at his house for rehearsals.⁴⁵

There was little if any social hierarchy, and almost anything was acceptable in the music as long as it didn't sound too boring or, god forbid, conventional. Any lack of critical thinking in the playing of the music (where, nominally, anything was acceptable and no one could make a mistake) could be compensated for while listening to the cassette afterwards. Here, musical shortcomings could be addressed: "Hmm, maybe next time I should do less of this, and more of that." This indeed was an alternative academy, a lengthy musical education in playing a kind of music for which (thank goodness) no formal academy existed.⁴⁶

However, the many hours of private sessions I put in during those years in Toronto also offered endless challenges. Haphazard as my studies may have been, they had taught me the basics of chords, major and minor scales, and triadic harmony.

⁴⁵ In the first week that I had the bass, Maury Coles came over so we could play together. I had not yet taken a single lesson on this huge, and unamplified, new instrument, and it was hard work keeping up with this experienced alto saxophonist. I remember getting serious blisters from that session.

Several years later, I was in Vancouver visiting Ken Pickering, who had just presented Maury in concert with Paul Plimley and Lyle Ellis at the Western Front. Ken told me, "Maury's been talking about your bass playing. He says that you've really come a long way since he first heard you!"

⁴⁶ In fact, there were classes in improvisation at York University. The impact of the York programs on the downtown Toronto music community did not necessarily come from those classes per se, but from the breadth and inclusivity of the York program as a whole, opening up new music worlds for students, as Diane Roblin testifies in her interview (pp. 259-60). Nonetheless, a few of the York students, such as saxophonist John Oswald and cellist Anne Bourne, continued to build their own improvising language and make sustained contributions to the improvising community, collaborating with both Canadian and international players.

Between the techniques I had learned there, mostly self-taught, and my year of classical bass lessons and practice, I began to devise my own personal way of getting around the double bass. However, repeatedly in these improvising sessions, I found that in a few minutes I could quickly exhaust the dozens of things I had learned to do on the instrument.

I had heard great improvising bassists, on record and in person, and I knew that they could sustain gripping improvisations for long concert and club sets. Did this mean that compared to the dozens of things I had learned in my ragtag musical education, they had learned thousands of things? If this was an equation, the math did not add up: even if Charles Mingus, Dave Holland, Barry Guy, Fred Hopkins, Johnny Dyani etc. were ten times as good as me, that did not add up to thousands of things that they could do, and I couldn't. In any event, the double bass just has the four strings. No matter what a skilled and imaginative player could do, there were going to be technical limitations. So what made a good improviser?

Around this time, I went to a tribute concert at the University of Toronto for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's retiring principal bassist, Thomas Monahan. The entire TSO bass section played, and (doubtless under-rehearsed) badly flubbed, several all-bass pieces; only one of the players seemed to have consistent command of the material. Later in the week, I looked up this bassist's number and phoned him, explaining that I was interested in fingering, extended techniques, bowing finesse – unusual ways of playing the bass that I could use in improvising.

As with my former bass teacher, it was the last word that ended the conversation. “Improvising?” he said. “I don’t know anything about that. You should go to Dave Young.”

Dave Young of course, I knew of as a virtuoso jazz bassist. Heavily influenced by Denmark’s Niels Henning Orsted-Pedersen, he was, and is, is Canada’s Oscar Peterson of jazz bass playing, capable of seeking out and playing every implication of any jazz chord or progression, never shrinking from the challenge of filling every bar with as many notes as possible. At the same time, since he had never to my knowledge shown any interest in free jazz or free improvisation (I was probably wrong), he didn’t strike me as someone who would creatively inform what I wanted to do.

“Besides,” the TSO bassist added, “I live in Mississauga.” This is the western suburb of Toronto, home to Pearson International Airport, shopping malls and Fortune 500 head offices (“Mississauga”), and the master contrabassist’s disclaimer seemed to acknowledge, as with my former teacher’s detachment from any concepts of improvisation, less a transit problem than a suburban/downtown cultural divide between the corporate headquarters, precise grids, and committee-designed places of the suburb, versus the anarchic, constantly-evolving downtown network of studios, lofts, galleries, and bars. It spoke to a different kind of distance, the distance between academies – the hegemonic, and the alternative – and between imaginative worlds, the distance between

the cultures we felt we could best learn from and grow within, and the types of education that each of us was looking for.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, one lesson learned from those playing, and listening, sessions was that there is no need for a musician to play everything they know in every session. Certainly if everyone in a group does that at once (inexperienced improvisers often do so), the effect can be a narrative that is simultaneously ever-changing, and completely static; like an endless cinema dissolve, which while suggesting several provocative images at once, never coalesces to form an affecting, or effective, statement, or tell a compelling story.

As an improviser, I had to exercise the kind of control that in another context, might be seen as the work of a composer. I had to impose limits in order to direct my improvisations, lest I careen ahead and collide with the limits with which all players will collide – to greater or lesser extents – in their playing ability. Anthony Braxton has described his own process of undertaking improvisation with a composer’s sensibility – or one might say, improvising with a composer’s sense of responsibility to convey a sense of a dynamic process: “I wanted to find a way of presenting materials and separating things so I wouldn’t repeat myself through the whole evening. So I began to create musical ideas beforehand so that I would have different problems to deal with in each composition” (in Radano 133).

⁴⁷ This was the end of me seeking further bass instruction during my years in Toronto. I began tentative sessions with Jack McFadden and Don Thompson, but in both cases we ended up playing records and talking about music – for a younger bassist, to do so, and find common discourse with bass virtuosos such as these, was a valuable education in itself.

In short, whether playing solo or in an ensemble, less can be more. There can be a greater aesthetic challenge in focusing on a single area – for example trying to make an extended bowed note more interesting; in an ensemble context making constant micro-decisions as to whether to stay in that area of sound, or move on.

Virtuosity, in one sense, might seem to be an ability to zoom into the stratosphere, but in real improvising terms it is a highly disciplined ability to concentrate fiercely on a pertinent area, and see what kind of meaning might be teased or tortured out of that area. Such intense focus generates a specific musical logic – a vocabulary of the moment that, before it can ever be written down, gives way to the vocabulary of the next.

This was a progression in my musical and critical thinking, and a part of the important process of building a critical language that could help guide me through areas that I was currently navigating on sheer intuition.

The Alternative Academy in Canadian Jazz

At the time, I felt that the kind of improvised musical practices we were developing were very distant from conventional jazz practice. I no longer feel that way for two reasons. First, as time goes by, a lot of well-played jazz sounds to me more and more like free improvisation. In each case, the music is being improvised according to the parameters at hand, which in the case of jazz happens to be song forms, and variations on the elements of song forms, such as bar structures and harmonic sequences. In the case of free improvisation, one is simply playing within different parameters, be they anything, or

nothing – to be “far out against air,” as Bobby Bradford says (Weber, “Bobby Bradford” 5).⁴⁸

Second, in the course of my researches, I have come across a number of examples of informal learning by Canadian-based jazz musicians who, even though their chosen *métier* may appear more formal or conventional than that of the free improviser, seemed to have learned and devised their techniques and styles in similar ways.

Kenny Baldwin for example, a jobbing professional who played with the Artists’ Jazz Band in the 1960s and ’70s, began playing saxophone in London, England just after World War Two. A working class Londoner, Baldwin couldn’t afford music lessons, but at the age of sixteen, ten weeks after getting his first alto saxophone, Baldwin

... went out and got my first gig. Of course it was just hideous. I couldn’t read, so I hid behind the three other saxophone players. As they were playing the tunes I’d look at the music and try to play along, but I’d always be a step or two behind them Of course, nobody in their right mind would hire me more than once, but there was so much music in London in the forties that I just kept going from one band to the next. (Lee 2002)

Similarly, no academy could be more informal than the tiny but fervently enthusiastic musical milieu that Don Thompson (1940–) entered when he moved from Powell River, B.C. to Vancouver in 1960. Admittedly Thompson, who outside of high school band only had “three to four years” of classical piano instruction (Louth 42), was

⁴⁸ To give a broader context to this quotation: Bradford says, “You know there’s such a thing as saying, ‘This is really far out,’ but it’s far out with B \flat as a point of reference. And if B \flat is the chord, how far out can you get?—with something like B \flat . Now what about something that is far out against air! You know what I mean?”

something of a prodigy, always ready to immerse himself in a new musical theory or instrument. In Vancouver

... we never *stopped* practicing ... When I would get tired of playing the bass, I'd go and play the piano. When I got tired of that, I would go and play the vibes. Or I would put on a record and then I would play along with that record. That's all we ever did. We didn't do anything else!
(Louth 58)

Similarly, trombonist/arranger Dave McMurdo vividly remembers, in the early 1960s, that in addition to his daytime musical studies at UBC and playing commercial engagements at night, he took part in a third, highly informal educational forum: "The education wasn't just on the bandstand. It was after work as well," where in a nearby all-night diner his employer Bobby Hales "started educating me. He also talked about things indirectly, other than music ... He was really interested in humanity and treating people right" (Louth 99-100).

Musicians from Outside

Jazz is a kind of improvised performance practice in which the players must bring their utmost attention and energy to every moment of performance, to be present not just mentally, but with their whole bodies, in the creation of music. Even if we were developing a style of improvisation outside the structural constraints of what is known as jazz, we were looking to engage with that whole-body performance practice. This "jazz" quality of engagement can be lost in recordings, but can be the most potent feature of a live performance. Many narratives by Canadian musicians emphasize their first experience with American improvisers as turning points in their own music-making. For

example, Paul Bley says, of his first experiences in Montreal, where he was a member of a Jazz Workshop that brought in visiting American soloists:

The Sonny Rollins' with the super volume. These people were giants. And for us practising our standards and sitting in and playing *well* and whatever, it just wasn't the same breed of animal. You couldn't tell from records. You thought you were playing jazz by comparing your playing to records, but when you heard the amount of wind that came off these stands you realised you would have to totally lose your reticent Canadian personality before you could even expect to keep up. That was the shock. That incredible power and confidence. (Smith, "Paul Bley" 3)

Dave McMurdo describes his first exposure to a live club performance by a Charles Mingus ensemble in the early 1960s as frightening:

"It *scared* me! It was so *powerful*! ... they played so *strong*! ... A lot of the jazz music that I had heard at the Cellar was great ... but it had *never* sounded like what I had heard that night ... it was just *so visceral*!" (Louth 93; emphases in original)

Drummer Terry Clarke uses the same word – *visceral* – to describe his first live exposure to Mingus (possibly the same engagement):

I just sat there with my mouth open for three hours. I couldn't even move! It was the most thought-provoking experience, and it was just overwhelming to me. What happened was that I *understood* what they were doing ... on a really visceral level, I knew *instinctively* what they were doing. (Louth 130)

Certainly in 1970s Toronto, the influence of outside players was strong in firing and focusing the enthusiasms of various players. In the 1960s, Stuart Broomer had formed his Kinetic Ensemble, and also had the chance to play with visiting musicians such as Andrew Hill, Charles Tyler, and Patty Waters (Broomer 2013). In the early

1970s, Bill and Clomin Smith's enthusiasm for the music of such players as Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, Leo Smith, and Dollar Brand led them not only to bring these artists to Toronto and put them up in their house, but to Bill Smith taking part in informal playing and learning sessions, with Mitchell and Braxton in particular. Smith credited Mitchell with being a musician who "was willing to sit with me and talk. Not all musicians are willing to do that, but Roscoe was one ... [His] music really was some of the first music to introduce me to a possible way to play, a system of playing" (Miller, *Boogie* 237). Braxton's encouragement was also central to Smith's first recording, *Conversation Pieces* (1976) with Stuart Broomer. According to Smith, Braxton "helped me realise a new kind of stance toward music," and Smith credits these AACM players with giving him –

... the courage to start thinking about my own identity as a musician, to play with and develop my own environment. This was a massive step forward. Although in that period in Toronto there were not that many artists interested there were enough to start generating a small scene. I think because of these influences a new series of possibilities were presented to me as a player." (Smith, *Imagine* 112-4)

In all these examples, just as important as the alternative academy – which might also be called learning by community – is the influence of the community members themselves in schooling each other to play a music where, even if the technical demands were by no means as clearly marked as in other musics, they were by no means nonexistent.

After his departure from the CCMC, Bill Smith had entered a period where he was trying out different ensembles and different approaches to performance. One of my first gigs was with his quartet with Graham Coughtry, Stuart Broomer and John Mars at

the Edge, a club on Jarvis run by the Garys. Bill also gave me a cello that he had around the house, so I began to teach myself cello. I played it in a band called Air Raid, which consisted mostly of horns improvising over head arrangements which, although very simple, still had to be rehearsed and played in some kind of unison. The group consisted of Bill, Maury, John Oswald and Bill Jamieson on saxophones, John Karpenko on trombone, and Larry Cramer on trumpet, rehearsing at Bill's house and playing a concert at the Music Gallery. Another configuration of Air Raid also played in Ottawa, with Bill, Maury, Andy Haas, John Oswald, myself on bass and cello, and Geoff Stewart on drums.

In May 1978 I took my first trip to Europe – starting at the Moers Festival in Germany, stopping in Brussels to hear the Anthony Braxton Creative Music Orchestra, then visiting Amsterdam before arriving in London, where I stayed with Ken and Doreen Wheeler. When I met Kenny Wheeler at Moers, he mentioned that he was coming to Toronto later that summer to do a recording for the CBC.

“I wouldn't mind playing a gig as well,” he added, “but I don't really know any of the free players in Toronto.”

For me this was a decisive moment in the alternative academy of my musical education. Here was an acknowledged virtuoso who had made his living as a musician for decades. If a musician, and an improviser, of his ability came to Toronto to play jazz, a player such as Dave Young or Don Thompson would really have to be the bassist. I would have been stupid to think that, with two years of the double bass under my belt, I had anything like the chops to share the stage with this virtuoso; for example, the two live circumstances in which I had heard Wheeler had included, respectively, the great bassists

Dave Holland (in Braxton's quartet with Philip Wilson) and Barry Guy (in Wheeler's own quartet with Evan Parker and Paul Lytton).

However, young and uncertain as I was, I also knew it would be stupid of me to not seize this moment, so I deployed the tactic the moment called for.

"Well ..." I said to Ken, "Bill and I have a band ... we could put something together."

We played at a St. Nicholas Street drum studio in August; there was a good turnout, and we all seemed to agree that the music worked. This was a personal turning point for me, since after only two years of playing bass I had successfully performed in public with a world-class figure: a tribute not to any special ability of my own, but to the latitude allowed within improvised music, where novices are allowed to prove (or disprove) themselves in public; and also a tribute to a tradition of mentorship which I feel is very much derived from the African American sensibility at the root of jazz, where mentoring is an essential part of the virtuoso's practice. The mentoring often seems to come in stages: first the novice, instead of just hearing the virtuoso on record, is able to hear them and meet them and play with them in person. In such a situation, one either gives up playing, or feels pushed forward to improve.

The Challenge of Rupture: Gunter Christmann and the Bill Smith Ensemble

Through the Onari concert promotions, and Bill and John's efforts at the Jazz and Blues Centre – which of course included *Coda* Magazine – Bill Smith and I gained international connections that other local musicians did not have; perhaps this is one reason that we came to consider collaborations with international players a normal part of our

improvising practice. The relationships that Bill, especially, had forged with these players over the years also meant – despite the vast musical experience that an artist such as Julius Hemphill or Leo Smith brought to a collaboration – that we met first on a social level, and from that point our transactions were those of peers, and friends. Rehearsing simple written pieces with these mentoring personalities, and improvising freely, was the best kind of non-hierarchical pedagogy. As in the case of Kenny Wheeler, implicit to their musicianship was an inclusivity, and a welcoming of such relationships, that made them good mentors.

At the Moers Festival in 1977, Bill had heard the German trombonist Gunter Christmann. They stayed in touch, and in October 1979 Gunter came to Canada, and with the help of the Goethe Institute, the Music Gallery's Ear It Live festival (providing gigs in Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto), and CBC recording sessions in Winnipeg and Vancouver, we played in the above cities, as well as Calgary and Victoria. After Gunter returned to Germany, Bill, David Prentice, and I went into the studio to make our first record, the music newly informed by the experience with Christmann.

When the three of us had come together at the beginning of 1979, we advanced quickly in our skills with establishing improvisational flow (a music of different voices that moved together and responded in tune), and in layering (in which the different voices follow different tangents, but still move together). However the entry of Gunter Christmann into our musical world, sudden and sustained as he got off the plane from Germany and entered into prolonged contact with us over several weeks, brought a new element into our vocabulary. It was the element of rupture, that has been described by the U.S. scholar Tricia Rose, writing not about jazz, but about improvisational elements in

aspects of African American hip hop culture. Common to breakdancing, music, and graffiti, she writes, are *flow*, *layering*, and *rupture*:

Interpreting these concepts theoretically, one can argue that they create and sustain rhythmic motion, continuity, and circularity via flow: accumulate, reinforce, and embellish this continuity through layering; and manage threats to these narratives by building in ruptures that highlight the continuity as it momentarily challenges it. (Rose 184)

Gunter Christmann, as it happened, was a master of rupture. In a review of 1977 Christmann's long-standing duo with percussionist Detlef Schöenberg, Werner Panke practically defines the music in terms of its startling use of dynamics: "A movement swells up in abrupt waves out of silence, rears up like a breaker, and then collapses. Eruptive effects might frighten sensitive listeners, who are then immediately appeased with artful humour" (Panke 11).

If we had thought of successful improvisation in terms of building and sustaining a feeling and a mood, here was an improvisational device that challenged the very idea of feelings and moods – that "swelled and collapsed," rebuilt and disrupted, and in doing so, could make an improvised performance all the more dynamic. I believe that our trio's tour with Christmann taught us about rupture: the introduction into an improvisation of musical elements that can suddenly and deliberately resist, or even disrupt, the prevailing discourse. With two bowed strings, and Bill playing sopranino and soprano saxophones, and alto clarinet, our trio often had an attractively airy, delicate timbre. Christmann's broad brass tone could enhance this, but he would also bust up our more pastoral moments with eruptions of volume, and punctuate our hard-won ability to improvise in tune with dissonant farts, blats and slides that would take the music to another, more precarious, place. Such ruptures, we discovered, as Rose says, "highlight the continuity

as it momentarily challenges it.” As we toured across Canada with Christmann, learning that even an unamplified acoustic quartet can startle sensitive listeners with eruptive effects, we became creatively engaged with the improvisational concept of rupture, and rupture’s challenges, using Rose’s concept, to “be prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it ... When these ruptures occur, use them in creative ways ...” (Rose 184).

Rose expands the concept of rupture in a broad social sense, and identifies it as a specifically “Afrodiasporic” practice that has been essential to African American survival (Rose 184). That we would learn such a practice, that might be thought of as a “jazz” practice, from a German, perhaps testifies to the way such practices can be partly appropriated from jazz, partly generated by different cultures in response to their own improvisational needs.

Conclusion: a Surprise Encounter in the Alternative Academy

We were all white males in the Bill Smith Ensemble, and the original founding trio had no drum kit. Bill Smith played alto clarinet as well as saxophones, David Prentice played violin and viola, and sometimes I doubled on cello. All of these factors helped us to identify, when it seemed to be to our advantage, with what George E. Lewis calls, “white-coded experimentalism,” even though we in fact felt ourselves to be much more a part of that brand of experimentalism’s “great and arguably equally influential competitor, the jazz tradition, which is also widely viewed (and views itself) as explicitly experimental” (Lewis, *Power* 379).

The more that we developed our original sound, the more that we gained capital as original Canadian artists, the more we experimented with bringing our improvisational

practices into collaborations with other artists, the clearer it became that, although we may have enjoyed greater artistic license than most jazz musicians – or more precisely, musicians confined to jazz venues, jazz audiences, and jazz expectations – the way that we played and were taught, learned from each other and progressed, was very much part of a jazz tradition that is not so readily written down, and that in its persistence as the unwritten, constitutes a genuine alternative academy.

This connection was brought home to me in a serendipitous way one evening as I made my way to my first-ever club gig in June 1978. We had arranged regular Monday night sessions upstairs at the Beverley Tavern on Queen Street West. The regulars were Bill, Maury, Andy Haas, John Oswald saxophones, Larry Cramer trumpet, myself on bass, Geoff Stewart drums, and various musicians, such as visiting Edmonton saxophonist Bill Jamieson, who came by and sat in. The Beverley was one of the first outlets for the burgeoning Queen Street art/music scene; on weekends Andy would play there with his new band, the soon-to-be-famous Martha and the Muffins (S. Davey).

I had acquired a heavy tube Ampeg B15 bass amplifier. To get to the gig I would carry the amplifier and my gear from my apartment at Bay and Davenport several blocks to the subway, then along Queen Street to the Beverley, where I would haul it to the upstairs bar. Then I would get on the subway to go home, get the bass, and repeat the trip. It was a lot of work, and none of us got paid, but it was a chance to play the music we'd been working on, and play it in front of people; an exciting and transformative time.

On the way with my bass to the first night at the Beverley, I got off the subway on the north side of Queen and made immediate eye contact with a handsome, middle-

aged black man who was crossing the street towards me, wearing an immaculate three-piece pinstripe suit and carrying a tenor saxophone case.

We shook hands and introduced ourselves. I already knew who he was: the former Count Basie tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, then 63 (Feather), who knew John Norris and Bill Smith, and had recorded for their Sackville label. On his way to the first night of a week's gig at Bourbon Street, Tate assumed I was his bass player. I quickly set him straight and told him I was playing a block or two down the street with Bill Smith.

"Please say hello to Bill for me," he said. We chatted as we walked towards Bourbon Street together.

"I've only been playing a couple of years," I admitted. "This is my first gig."

"Ah." Tate thought for a moment. Then he said, "I played on Charles Mingus's first gig. It was a big band, 1938. Gene Norman's Concerts By The Sea. Mingus was so nervous. We played a couple of numbers and then I looked back at him. I said, 'Hey son, you sound good' – and he just *beamed*." Tate chuckled. "Mingus still tells that story!"

Chapter 6:

Bill Smith, *Imagine the Sound*, and the Great Man Theory of Jazz Evolution

Cultural History versus the Histories of Great Men

How is musical history best written? Working on this study circa 2016, writing about music that was played thirty to fifty-five years ago, I encounter a discursive contrast similar to one that Carl Dahlhaus refers to when he was writing in 1974 about European neo-romanticism, music that was then a century old or less:

The history of music in the nineteenth century, unlike that of the fifteenth or sixteenth, is still seen primarily as the history of its heroes – the “great masters,” the composers of the works which constitute the “canon” ... music historians are apt to write the *history of great men* when faced with the nineteenth century, and to write *cultural history* when they tackle the Trecento [the fourteenth century, specifically in Italian fine art] ... the music of the Trecento is listened to primarily as a specimen of medieval culture, while books on the music history of the nineteenth century are read for the biographical keys they can supply to the “canonical” works. (Dahlhaus 2) [my italics]

Dahlhaus could be describing a shift in epistemology brought on by technology: because of the advances in literacy, printing, and publishing, and the rise of print media, we have more documentation, in greater detail, of the nineteenth century than we do of the fourteenth. He is also describing, however, an essential difference in perspectives on how music is made.

By the time that Dalhaus wrote this passage, in the late twentieth century, fourteenth-century European music had become “cultural history,” in which the era’s music is discussed as a folk movement in which prevailing musical styles are arrived at

through community, collaboration and consensus. The names of individual composers and performers are seen as relatively unimportant, because the music is perceived as having emerged from a local culture, the culture of its time and place, from a community in which composers and performers shared a common intention because they lived and worked together.

Nineteenth-century European music was examined through quite a different lens. With its emphasis on emotion and subjectivity, the music of the Romantics and neo-Romantics was thought to be best understood through the biographies, the personalities, and the preoccupations of a relatively small number of Great Composers. According to this narrative, a few exceptional individuals wrote works that were so great in their affective power, and/or so revolutionary in their formal innovations, that their influence pushed other compositional styles, and the majority of other, allegedly lesser composers, into the background of musical history. As Barry Haynes writes, “Composer-intention derives a lot of its force from the role of the composer in the Romantic period and the rise of the cult of genius” (113). Within this “history of great men,” exceptional individuals do not arise from cultural movements, but the other way around: working on his own, the “genius” composer is a style setter, creating a body of work that inspires the rest of the musical community to emulate him.

In contemporary terms, such composers (in jazz, the focus tends to be on virtuoso improvisers, rather than composers) are historicized as what we might call, to borrow a term from the film industry, “tentpole artists.” Such artists are always few in number, but their work dominates the prevailing discourse of their generation. They “stand so tall” and their influence is so broad, that most of the work that is made in their time and

afterwards is perceived as being written within the “tent” of their influence. Through our understanding and interpretation of their music, we set the standards by which we will judge musicians of their own and succeeding generations.

Applying these kinds of ideas to improvised music in late twentieth-century Toronto, we find a perspective – perhaps a uniquely local one – in which these different ways of looking at musical history coexist, overlapping and complementing each other rather than clashing.

How do they fit into this dissertation? Perhaps I am writing the history of a movement within Toronto culture, in which the individuals I quote, or discuss, stand simply as examples – as Justin Smith says of the historicizing of political leaders, “vessels of a historical process that would be unfolding even if they had never existed” (Smith, “Hitler”). Or, if this is a history that is best described through biographies of its central figures, then I should be encouraging the reader to see this history through the lens of a “cult of genius” in which, by historicizing a handful of “tentpole” figures, historians tell themselves they are doing justice to the era’s music, since it was these three or four geniuses who determined the nature of the prevailing musical discourse anyway. In searching for parallels in improvised music, one rarely finds these two approaches satisfactorily reconciled.

So far, in looking at Toronto improvised music, we have seen the Artists’ Jazz Band, who extended the “great man” personae they had constructed as visual artists into an enactment of jazz tropes in the form of free improvisation. For a number of reasons – including the music’s genesis in private art studio sessions where everyone played for the pleasure of playing, regardless of audience – as musicians they mostly engaged in

collective free improvisation, in musical performances sidelining the egos that were so central to their public and professional “performances” in which they were expected to enact the roles of Great Artists. Surprisingly, considering the exclusivity that we associate with “Great Artist” status, the AJB’s founding members also welcomed into the band musicians who were not visual artists; if a certain level of musicianship was a criterion, so was the willingness and the ability to spend long hours of drinking, socializing, and arguing: even if the guest players themselves were not consecrated as bohemian Great Artists, as were the AJB’s core members, they at least had to be bohemians.

We have looked at the 1960s music of Stuart Broomer, who sat in on double bass with a number of major American figures whom he admired, such as Charles Tyler and Andrew Hill (on a Montreal visit, he even played piano with Albert Ayler), who came through Toronto in the 1960s. With such artists, Broomer seemingly felt no need to be in the spotlight: just to share the same stage, a temporary contributor to what he felt was, historically, the music of the moment was ample reward. At the same time, Broomer led his own groups, including the Kinetic Ensemble, where he played bass and sometimes other instruments alongside technically more experienced professionals such as Fred Stone and Michael Snow.

If under these circumstances, Great Artist status continued to elude even the most notable of local players, it was perhaps because there was no one available in Toronto to supply such consecration in improvised music; reviewers such as Patrick Scott, as we have seen (p. 96), despised the new music, no matter who was playing it and how well. Moreover, even these reviewers could not supply the essential consecration-from-above (i.e. from New York City) in the way that Toronto abstract expressionists had received it.

Because of the particular way that improvised music evolved in Toronto, any kind of hegemonic consecration could only come from the visual art community, as revealed in Broomer's observation that "I always seemed to get a lot of enthusiasm from the art community at the same time that I got this incredible hatred from the journalistic community" (Broomer, March 16 interview).

Therefore, by the time that Bill Smith became active as a player and composer in the 1970s, there were still no acknowledged Great Artists in Toronto improvisation, because there was no way for a free improviser to gain such acknowledgement. The tiny community of free improvisers were perceived as a cultural movement (as we have already seen, Patrick Scott didn't single out the bandleader, but called the entire ensemble "charlatans" and "imposters"), rather than an art form dominated by a few single talents; in a journalistic discourse that depended on spotlighting present and future stars, this doubtless further contributed to the genre's marginalization.

The Great Man Theory of Jazz Evolution

If Toronto improvised music seemed to particularly vacillate between these two approaches, one must admit that they caused problems for everyone. Even as authoritative a figure as Gunther Schuller, who contributed to jazz for more than half a century as player, composer, arranger, teacher, critic, and writer, alternated between these approaches in a way that seems surprisingly personal and unsystematic. Schuller treats these two approaches as succeeding historical eras of jazz, clearly demarcating the moment when one era/system ended, and another began. He forthrightly declares the emergence of jazz early in the twentieth century as a collective effort: a folk idiom unrelated to the concept of "genius":

The developments in Europe, following a centuries-old pattern in “art music,” were generated by the visions of single individuals – what the romantic century liked to call the inspirations of “creative genius.” Jazz, on the other hand, was at this point not the product of a handful of stylistic innovators, but a relatively unsophisticated quasi-folk music – more sociological manifestation than music – which had just recently coalesced from half a dozen tributary sources into a still largely anonymous, but nevertheless distinct, idiom. (Schuller, *Early Jazz* 3)

In historicizing jazz, Schuller, rather than acknowledging, as Dalhaus does, the possibly misleading perspectives caused by the cultural history / individual genius divide, includes them somewhat uncritically as stages in his vision of jazz history (although they could also be stages of audio technology: jazz history, or at least jazz apocrypha, include “genius” figures such as Buddy Bolden, but because they were active before the advent of a recording industry, their work can’t be easily positioned within a canon that is essentially defined through recordings). There is also an Atlantic divide in Schuller’s thinking: in Europe, “music” came from a few geniuses, but in North America, it was a folk movement (although since it was a flourishing folk movement, it evidently didn’t languish and stagnate – as one would expect, given this epistemology – through lack of geniuses).

In fact, in even so knowledgeable and conscientious a figure as Schuller, we see the extent to which fairly arbitrary factors, including personal taste, can become accepted as fact within jazz history when he dates, with remarkable precision, the moment in which the music’s early, folk-culture history stage ended, and the next, autobiographical-genius stage began: a recording session on June 28, 1928, when “Louis Armstrong

unleashed the spectacular cascading phrases of the introduction to *West End Blues*.”

According to Schuller, after this date, and this performance,

jazz could never again revert to being solely an entertainment or folk music. The clarion call of *West End Blues* served notice that jazz had the potential capacity to compete with the highest order of previously known musical expression. (Schuller, *Early Jazz* 89) ⁴⁹

Effectively, Schuller is announcing that what began as a folk history, is now going to become a history of genius – a series of studies of Great Persons (I am tempted to write Great Men, but even within jazz historiography, women surface as major influences if not frequently, then – considering how determinedly the heteropatriarchal tendencies of the genre tend to background them – with remarkable persistence). Sure enough, although *Early Jazz* starts with chapter names such as “Rhythm,” “Harmony,” and “Improvisation,” as well as a short chapter on very early jazz (“Beginnings”), after *West End Blues* the chapters become portraits of major figures: Armstrong (“The First Great Soloist”), Jelly Roll Morton (“The First Great Composer”), Bix Beiderbecke, Bessie Smith (both “Virtuoso Performers of the Twenties”), etc. Schuller admits that “such moments in history [as *West End Blues*] by their very brilliance also tend to push into the background the many preparatory steps that lead [sic] up to the masterpiece,” but it is clear that – now that the discourse will heretofore focus on Great Persons – those steps to be taken seriously are those which relate solely to the development of Armstrong as an improvising soloist.

⁴⁹ *West End Blues*. Joe “King” Oliver, composer. Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five: Louis Armstrong (trumpet, scat vocals); Fred Robinson (trombone); Jimmy Strong (clarinet); Mancy Cara, banjo; Earl Hines (piano); Zutty Singleton (drums). Recorded in Chicago, June 28, 1928.

Once he has discussed Armstrong, Schuller's interest in *West End Blues* drops off rapidly: except for drummer Zutty Singleton and especially pianist Earl Hines (the latter, one would think, might compete with Armstrong for the mantle of "the first great soloist")⁵⁰ the rest of the personnel (Fred Robinson trombone, Mancy Cara banjo) are mentioned only in passing; although one would think that, considering the internal dynamics of improvising ensembles, they too must have had qualities that contributed to this singular performance. However, since Schuller is now discussing the work as art music (a form driven by a few exceptionally talented individuals who produce style-setting works through unpredictable bursts of genius) rather than folk music (a form created by a community, who gradually over time devise musical styles consensually, gradually, and artisanally using the materials at hand), he dispenses with the broader, "cultural history" perspective that he had applied to jazz in the years leading up to *West End Blues*.

Schuller's interpretation seems to have become part of the order of things in jazz history, so that by 2009 Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux write:

Before Armstrong, jazz was generally perceived as an urban folk music that had more in common with ragtime and military bands than with the driving rhythms we now associate with jazz or swing. It was ensemble music Without Armstrong, it would surely have developed great soloists (it had already produced at least one in Sidney Bechet), but its progress as a distinctive art – a way of playing music grounded in improvisation – would have been slower and less decisive.
(Giddins/DeVeaux 146)

⁵⁰ For some reason, Schuller overlooks Sidney Bechet, whose playing drew serious critical attention to a jazz soloist almost a decade before *West End Blues*.

Despite the weight of scholarship represented by writers such as Schuller, Giddins, and DeVeaux, we might do well to question their unanimous acceptance of the same paradigm, in which jazz “progress” hinges on the decisions of a generation’s tentpole Great Artist. As Sherrie Tucker (citing Amiri Baraka) points out, such “origin stories” tend to “mark white production and consumption of black musical forms; periodization reflects episodes of successful commodification of jazz products to white consumers” (14).

However, the Great Artist paradigm of jazz progress is so firmly in place that none of these writers suggest that the actual innovation came in the way that the music was documented, rather than how it was created; that the real paradigm shift may have been the spotlighting of individual soloists by the record industry, and new ways of using mass marketing, and new technologies such as radio, to build the reputations of selected artists. Perhaps, in reality, the music itself underwent no such seismic change, although through the growth of mass media, the influence of exceptional players/composers could now spread far beyond regional boundaries, so that a regional style could now become an international movement.

The Cultural Movement Theory of Jazz Evolution

Perhaps a more satisfactory reconciliation of the two perspectives comes from the critical writings of the American trumpeter-composer Wadada Leo Smith. In his 1973 monograph *notes (8 pieces) source a new world music: creative music*, Smith characterizes African American improvised forms as an ongoing cultural movement, regardless of era. The unique way that he does this, which strongly reflects the way that

African American music was historicized and defined within the AACM, is best encapsulated in this excerpt from Smith's definition of the blues:

Inherent in the vocal blues form is the history of a people, "the seventh son," the newest of earth-beings. truly, there is the making of a new being, spiritually. this explains why we are the only ones who have created a new and different culture as a contemporary people. our music is the only one to come into existence as a whole new-art-music, without going the route of the "universal orchestra" or european-way (composition). The blues form was the first music to assert this. (Leo Smith, *notes (8 pieces)* pp. 4 and 5 of the section entitled "(sources) a new world music: creative music the improvisors & improvisation")

In Smith's version of musical culture, the Great Artist is not so much a romantic outsider, but a "seventh son," an organic innovator who shapes their art according to the needs of the people they sprang from. The seventh son is a phenomenon that the parent culture itself produces at intervals, an outstanding figure (but not, as in the Romantic model, an alienated figure) whose work within the culture is ultimately to the benefit of all his people.

Different as Schuller's approach is from Smith's, their two critiques converge on the same year and on the same artist (or to be fair, pair of artists, since Smith's example is a duo collaboration with Earl Hines, himself an innovative pianist who plays on both recordings). For Schuller the pivotal work is Armstrong and the Hot Five's *West End Blues*, recorded June 28, 1928; for Smith, it is Armstrong's and Hines' *Weather Bird* duet, recorded December 5 of the same year.⁵¹ Yet while Schuller uses a pivotal work to

⁵¹ *Weather Bird*. Joe "King" Oliver, composer. Louis Armstrong (trumpet), Earl Hines (piano). Recorded in Chicago, December 5, 1928.

cast a jazz soloist as a Great Man in the European classical music Romantic Genius mode (and it would be unfair to forget that among scholars of Schuller's generation, this application of the Genius trope to jazz, within what was considered in academic circles to be a folk art, beneath scholarly consideration, was in fact a courageous and groundbreaking stance), Smith speaks in terms of "african classical art music," in which master musicians are, in effect, a manifestation of their culture: they express in music the values of spontaneity and imagination that their culture needs to survive. Smith also refutes the assumption that drums are at the centre of music from African cultures:

the percussion, brasses, strings and any other beaten, plucked or wind blown instruments in improvisational music are equal – they are all equal in the creation of music, although the improvisors seem not to understand this and continue to roll along with the critics-ideal of himself and creative music. so the "front-line" dictates and controls what's happening or feels that they are the only creative ones along with the drummer (or "solo" and "rhythm section"): and the drummer propels the "solo" in their creations, or so says the critics. (one has to only take note of the unfairness in the documented evidence of creative music. here one can find that only saxophones, trumpets, pianos, and occasionally other instruments have been endowed with the honor of being "leaders"; and thus most of the contributions to different periods of development in creative music have always been attributed to one individual, and never more than one at a time – highly-unbalanced procedure.) (Leo Smith, *notes (8 pieces)* "other notes part 3," 2)

In Smith's terminology, the drumlessness of the piano-trumpet duet *Weather Bird* supports his argument that the piece embodies a musical tradition that connects a broad

range of African American cultural forms – for example in Smith’s case, his own early blues work – with the new musical horizons that, once revealed to him by the AACM, indelibly shaped his subsequent creative work (building on his ideas, we might also point out that the Hot Five who recorded *West End Blues* were also drumless). Smith says of *Weather Bird*:

now this duo music, as you will have noticed if you’ve ever heard it, does not have drums, but the spirit-essence of the drums is there. the point that I’m trying to make is that when listening, if you listen to an orchestra, ensemble, or a solo, listen seriously to that only. do not listen with some strange outer third ear for something that’s not there. (Leo Smith, *notes (8 pieces)* “other notes part 3,” 4)

Wadada Leo Smith differs radically from Schuller’s interpretation (which has become widely accepted, as the Giddins/DeVeaux quotation shows) in that, while these other scholars are writing about jazz as a more or less discrete and classifiable entity, Smith describes it as a way of improvising that is part of a broad spectrum of African American creativity. Unlike the other writers, he continues to see the music after 1928 as a communal effort, and disagrees with the “highly unbalanced procedure” of attributing innovations in the music “to one individual, and never more than one at a time” (Leo Smith, *notes (8 pieces)* “other notes part 3,” 2).⁵²

⁵² To further contextualize the viewpoints of Schuller and Leo Smith, we might point out that Anthony Braxton similarly acknowledges both the power of the individual soloist and the power of the soloist’s host community, when he points out that “even Louis Armstrong had to go to Chicago to invent the solo” (quoted in Broomer, *Time* 13).

Bill Smith and the AACM

These two perspectives on musical creation, and the way of reconciling them that Wadada Leo Smith discusses, might help us to understand Bill Smith's place in fostering a Toronto improvising community, from his arrival in the city in 1963 until he left for BC in 1989. Although Smith was a founding member of the CCMC in 1974, it is perhaps not surprising that in 1976 the group, newly reified as directors of the Music Gallery, asked Smith (along with Graham Coughtry and Greg Gallagher) to resign, given the inevitable conflicts between Smith's immersion in a wider world of improvised music, and the rigidly nationalist, modernist, and (as we have seen, specifically in response to the championing of the AACM's music by Smith, *Coda* Magazine and the Onari concert series) highly racialized stance taken by the founders of the Music Gallery.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Bill Smith followed closely the music of African American musicians such as Anthony Braxton and Andrew Cyrille, European musicians (at that time virtually unknown in Canada) Han Bennink and Paul Rutherford, and South Africans such as Chris McGregor and Abdullah Ibrahim. He also often befriended these musicians, and informally studied with them. Even as he played with the CCMC, he was rehearsing compositions with Stuart Broomer and Maury Coles. Thus, Smith could be said to have had little sympathy either with the CCMC's "no tunes allowed" rule, or with the group's sustained attempt to erase from its narrative any suggestion of influence from African American collectives, or jazz, or any other potential connections to black culture.

The founding of the Music Gallery, along with the enormous amount of different musics that it came to service, also caused a fundamental schism in this tiny improvising

community. Such a schism was not unique: there are parallels to be found in the examples of improvising musicians who have founded collectives elsewhere. Willem Breuker, who founded the Instant Composers' Pool (ICP) with Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg in 1967, has spoken about how a clash in the handling both of music, and of money, prompted his resignation from the ICP in 1973 (Smith, "Breuker" 5, 7). The early AACM is held up as a model of collective action, and rightfully so, unless one expects "collective action" to proceed smoothly and seamlessly towards consensus. In reality, as Lewis writes, "Within six months of the October 1965 meeting, a number of members departed, including some who had been present at the organization's inception. As the AACM became better known, these private disagreements became public" (Lewis, *Power* 124).

Similarly, soon after the founding of the "CCMC Music Gallery," the Toronto improvising scene was separated into what was happening at the Music Gallery, and what was happening everywhere else, in a variety of other bars, galleries and lofts throughout the Toronto core.

In this case, the AACM in particular bears on the subject at hand, in its effective blending of individual empowerment and cultural community-building. Even in so personal a work as George E. Lewis' *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, where the author knows virtually all of the agents he depicts, (many of whom have achieved acclaimed individual composer/improviser status – Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, Lester Bowie, Muhal Richard Abrams, among others – as well as Lewis himself), Lewis chooses to approach the subject as a cultural history, as a movement that was steered by consensus about a community's needs, rather than by the artistic visions of a few

exceptional individuals. Indeed, Lewis writes of the AACM, “If this was to be a revolution, it would be a revolution without stars, individual heroes, or Great Men” (Lewis, *Power* 155).

The same might be said of Toronto in the 1970s, although if there was not a leading figure on the Toronto scene who galvanized dozens of others into action, there was a small number of individuals, each of whose personal creative vision had enough in common with the others to overlap, at least occasionally. If these musicians had been classical composers, according to the romantic model, they would have laboured long and agonizingly over opuses that, if they were lucky and made the right connections, would then be played by orchestras in a relatively alienated relationship: the orchestra’s job would be to carry out the piece as closely as possible to the way the composer imagined it.

However, the nature of improvised music being what it is, for each of these musicians, carrying out their creative vision involved assembling groups of like-minded improvisers who, in the early and mid-1970s, did not necessarily already know each other. In effect, each of these ensembles became part of the process of creating a community where one did not previously exist. A community of disparate techniques: it is no exaggeration to say that whereas in a symphony orchestra it is very likely that different players have studied at the same schools or with the same teachers, and it is almost certain that most or all of the players have learned music according to the same methods (which, in turn, is to say that they share a concept of what music is), improvisers’ communities almost always bring together musicians from very different backgrounds, with a wide variety of abilities and perspectives, including sometimes very

different concepts of what music is – differences that in performance can interact to form a new and intriguing dynamic (they can also not work well at all).

Gabriel Solis theorizes that given the particular nature of improvised music communities and their provenance – in this particular context, in African American music – the compositions even of such exceptional individuals as Thelonious Monk (who was, in his personal and musical singularities, a jazz contender for Romantic “genius” status if there ever was one) are valued less as a product of individual genius, than as “use objects,” for their usefulness to a community of players. Solis suggests “a historiography that is true to a basic ethnographic lesson about jazz: that the scene is one of the most important social and musical units, more than the individual: that part of Monk’s greatness is the direct result of the many approaches people have taken to his music over the years” (99-100). He concludes:

I am convinced that the day-to-day performances of his music (and lots of other music) are as important as the canonical performances. And here is where these pieces differ most from the “great works of genius” of the Western classical tradition: their greatness lies in their value as “use objects” in performance settings where the principal concern is forging a sense of communalism in an exchange of sound and sentiment, in jazz’s life as a participatory music. (100)

Solis recasts a piece composed as a vehicle for improvisation (his particular example in this case is “Blue Monk”) as a “use object” – a tool for a community to engage with on an everyday basis – rather than an iconic “great work” that, in comparison, stands at a distance as proof of a single person’s genius.⁵³ In doing so, Solis

⁵³ “Use object” is also an appropriate term to describe the function of the composition in pre-classical European composed music. Bruce Haynes writes of the baroque era, “Baroque composers

uses the term “scene,” as a vitally important social and musical unit – returning us to the definition of an art world as a scene, in particular the art world that John Norris and Bill Smith helped create in Toronto’s art community.

Given Bill Smith’s place in the Braxton controversy that has been previously discussed, we might introduce Smith, and understand the place he came to occupy in the Toronto music scene, by using a sample of some of his writings on the AACM.

If *Coda*’s April 1974 issue, discussed earlier, was overtly an “Anthony Braxton” issue, it was because Smith’s experiences of hearing and meeting Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell had made him a committed stakeholder in the controversy over the new musics, and musicians, coming out of the AACM. The following year, in the August 1975 issue, he describes May performances by Mitchell’s Michigan State University ensemble, the Creative Arts Collective (CAC), with AACM guests Joseph Jarman, Henry Threadgill, Malachi Favors, Wallace McMillan, George Lewis, Don Moye, and Muhal Richard Abrams.

Although the relatively wide acceptance of improvised music that we see today can be traced back to the early days when the AACM was first making itself heard outside of Chicago, it is easy to forget that in fact, the model of collectivity forwarded by the Chicago players was more disciplined, and more dynamic, than many of the ensembles who came after them. The AACM model was collective, yes, but its brand of collectivity, especially demonstrated in the artists who emerged from the AACM in the

weren’t artists, after all. They were clever craftsmen ... more interested in competence than greatness. Nor did the scores in which their compositions were written (or more commonly, the unscored parts) have any importance beyond facilitating their real work, which was performing concerts” (Haynes 6).

1960s and 1970s, produced players who were not only effective ensemble players, but striking soloists.

In his review of the CAC, Bill Smith describes medium-sized ensemble performances of Mitchell compositions in a range of styles and configurations, including a piece for four alto saxophones. The concert was Smith's introduction to the playing of both Abrams and Lewis, and he concluded,

Come, let's be overwhelmed by the magic of music, of Jazz music, a giant bubble is sitting here in America, just about ready to burst. Its sphere envelopes hundreds of new improvisational players, ready to accept their public acclaim, ready to step out and let you hear their music. (Bill Smith, "CAC/AACM" 6)

In effect Smith had combined both George E. Lewis' and Carl Dahlhaus' takes on music history, accomplishing a seamless blend of the two perspectives Dahlhaus presented as binaries. Dahlhaus felt that music scholars could only look at the past either as cultural history, or as the biographies of Great Men; according to Bill Smith, you can do both: as a jazz fan from a working-class background, part of a generation of English people who recognized black American music as a music of class empowerment, Smith celebrated African American culture (in the sense of providing strategies and tactics for cultural survival) as more empowering than his own white English parent culture. To a jazz fan, it was obviously a culture that had evolved in conditions where it was oppressed from above by a racialized hegemony that sought to judge, stifle and control black culture – even more than the British working class were judged, stifled and controlled by the mechanisms of the class system.

Although Lewis saw the AACM saga as a story "without stars, individual heroes, or Great Men," Bill Smith, in his admiration for the new African American movement,

saw a surfeit of Great Men: “hundreds of new improvisational players, ready to accept their public acclaim.”

In fact, Bill Smith’s view, rife with enthusiasm as it may have been, included a valuable critical insight: in this new improvised music, every member of a band was encouraged to be, not only an ensemble improviser, but both a composer and a soloist. Indeed, if the AACM was a movement that a scholar could step back and read as a collective historical process, it was also a process that, considering the collective’s size, indeed launched a disproportionately large number of significant individual careers.

From this point of view, the AACM’s definition of collectivity bears closer examination. It is certainly true, as Lewis writes, that the AACM fostered “performances in which the predominance of personal virtuosity as the measure of musicality is removed, and where individual style is radically devalued in favor of a collective conception that foregrounds form, space, and sonic multiplicity” (Lewis, *Power* 155). Granted that collectivity may be an aspect of the jazz tradition that has been historically underplayed in favour of foregrounding the Great Soloist, it is only fair to admit that in its emphasis on collectivity, the AACM brought to the fore an overlooked aspect of jazz performance practice: solo performance. A passage from *A Power Stronger Than Itself* might serve to remind us that, in turn, this vital aspect of the Association’s teaching and performance practice has also tended to be overlooked by historians.

Immediately after Lewis quotes writer Lawrence Kart on the AACM – “the entire range of jazz, and other musics, too, is seen as a musical language, an historical present, which these musicians draw upon with unparalleled freedom” – he points out that the early Art Ensemble of Chicago LP *Congluptious* included three unaccompanied solos, by

Roscoe Mitchell, Malachi Favors, and Lester Bowie (Lewis, *Power* 194). Moreover, Wadada Leo Smith, one of the first wave of AACM composer/improvisers, along with Roscoe Mitchell, Anthony Braxton, and Joseph Jarman, extensively investigated solo forms. Leo Smith writes,

the solo refers to the improviser who performs a complete improvisation as a soloist. The instruments that have thus far been liberated exclusively by creative music in this area have been: reeds (tenor, alto, clarinet, bass clarinet); brass (trumpet and flugelhorn); drums (trap set). (the voice, piano, balophone, and keyboard types of instruments, zither, guitar, and string instruments using a bow have been omitted here because the solo elements of these instruments have been exploited in composition as well as in ancient art music.) (Smith, *notes (8 pieces)*, “sources) a new world music:” 7)

Solo performance frames improvisation quite differently than it is framed within accustomed jazz usage: even a great “jazz solo” can conceivably be used as a rhetorical device in which the improviser tries to convince the listener how well he or she can play. This may not be a totally fair analogy, but it may prove useful here in order to contrast the jazz solo – one of the great signifiers of the jazz tradition – with the AACM concept of solo performance. Within this concept, the unaccompanied solo tests, and reveals, the player’s overall understanding of music, and his or her ability to deploy and balance different aspects of music simultaneously. I think of this as conceiving music in an orchestral sense: how can tones and silence, pulses and pauses, overtones and undertones, *forte* and *piano*, be layered into a meaningful whole in an unaccompanied solo? The solo context forces players into a new level of critical thinking about their own work; to examine their own concepts of music, to find new resources within their current abilities, and in doing so, to extend those abilities. It is not necessarily “virtuoso” playing per se –

in fact, although it is always initially impressive, virtuoso technique in itself can quickly become boring in a solo context – as virtuoso *thinking*: the solo player needs to think orchestrally in order to use timing, dynamics, and timbre to maximum effect.

Through his studies, his listening, and his first-hand contact with AACM artists, this is an aspect of performance practice that Bill Smith came to understand. Smith's first recording, the 1976 *Conversation Pieces* duet with Stuart Broomer on piano, begins with a 60-second solo saxophone (curved soprano) opening to Smith's composition "A Configuration." Smith's notes for the piece begin, "Thinking of my music in terms of sound and space, instead of the normal structure system, has led me into an understanding of improvised performance," and in the context of the above discussion of solo playing, it is not surprising that the piece is dedicated to Wadada Leo Smith: "who in many ways is involved in a similar music process, and who I consider to be the premier brass player of this period" (Smith, liner notes, *Conversation Pieces*).

On the same record, Smith's "First Jump" consists largely of each member of the duo playing separately. It is particularly noticeable that Smith resists the temptation to ask for the support of Broomer's responsive piano-playing in this arrangement. Instead, he takes an extended unaccompanied saxophone solo. No one in the era's Canadian improvisers had stronger influences (in Smith's case, influences from first-hand contact and discussion) from African American music, and no one was more forthright about acknowledging them.

At the same time, the duo sound of *Conversation Pieces* stands certainly with the best works of Al Neil, the Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Quebec, and the AJB in its pioneering creation of a unique sound in Canadian improvisation. While jazz pianists,

with their power to create dense harmonies, tend to concentrate on the middle register of the keyboard, Broomer illustrates what I have said above about thinking orchestrally: reverberating bass sections played against the percussive sounds of the highest registers (even more percussive when he plays prepared piano) are a normal part of his vocabulary, and the movement in his playing is enhanced by his facility at, for example, having once stated an idea, harmonizing it with another idea a few octaves up, or down. In contrast, Smith plays his curved soprano with unabashed delicacy: as Mark Miller wrote of Smith's contribution to *Conversation Pieces*,

the emphasis on group improvisation in a responsively co-operative rather than rigorously competitive spirit seems to have moderated his usual volubility ... His tunes have the quality of small fanfares and his improvisations seem deliberate, defined almost visually by their use of space and silence in much the same way as the blacks of a photograph often define the whites. (Miller, *Boogie* 234)

Conversation Pieces is something of an anomaly in the discography of Canadian improvisation. It was produced in an era when, given that releasing a recording represented a considerable financial investment, a Canadian jazz record was itself a relative rarity. In fact, simply by playing a CBC session for union scale, Broomer and Smith had already reached the peak of what most Canadian musicians of the era could consider success. However, the record retains a kind of ambience, unique unto itself, and the integrity of its blend of composing and performing styles remains uncompromised by the years. Certainly, it has remained without imitators.

The way in which both musicians take the influences of the previous couple of decades of improvised music and form them into an original sound make *Conversation Pieces* an appropriate starting point to discuss Bill Smith's role in actual music-making

on the Toronto improvising scene, as well as the other formative elements that worked towards the creation of that scene in the early 1970s: the Artists' Jazz Band's first LP, the Onari concerts at the St. Clair Music Library and A Space, the formation of the CCMC, the controversy around Anthony Braxton and other African American musicians, and the founding of the Music Gallery.

Music as Information: Bill Smith and Jazz in England

Bill Smith came from a working-class Bristol background quite different from that of John Norris, but the partners shared a fascination with African American culture, a love of blues and jazz, and the identification with African American musicians that so powerfully affected so many British young people in the postwar years. In a virtual mirroring of Hilary Moore's ideas that young postwar Britishers saw in jazz an inspiration to "the endurance and defiant celebration of an oppressed people," Smith describes the alienation of moving to a new suburban postwar housing estate.

Interestingly enough, he describes this in terms of information deprivation:

The [urban] centre was the location of the great cathedral, the cobbled streets still gaslit, the quaintness. So they removed the working class, there was no need for them to be associated with the wonderfulness of the old culture ... The isolation from the downtown created its own social order and I would say from my own point of view it was a simplified one, simplified to the point of boredom. (Smith, *Imagine* 24)

Smith attributes to this state of affairs the rise of the generation of British artists known as "the angry young men" ("of course there were angry young women as well")

⁵⁴and his reasons for this anger include *information* as a key word that was to be significant in the work he was to do in Toronto in the years to come.

Perhaps one of the reasons for our anger was the idea that we, the working class, were stupid, that for those in control the embarrassment of our existence could be minimized by putting us aside, locked in cages of ineffectual information so that the wonderfulness could not be discovered. (Smith, *Imagine* 26)

Brought up in a working-class socialist household, Smith credited his father with knowing “that he must push his children ... into the intelligent search for information.” Seeing his own plight reflected in the culture of a people who made such powerful music, he came to see African American culture as a source of such information, information that could be essential to his own survival:

I wonder if there is not some parallel between us and the black Americans involved in the same economic disability. Working class poor. Could this have been a subconscious force pulling me to kindred spirits, allowing me to enter the knowledge of another people. Their music giving me the energy that was needed to escape from this mindless society. (Smith, *Imagine* 26-8)

There were even more specific parallels between that culture and the displacement of Smith’s generation. George Lipsitz links the formation of 1960s Blacks Arts collectives directly to US “federal and city urban renewal projects” of the 1950s and

⁵⁴ “Angry Young Men” was a category devised to describe a number of controversial British novelists and playwrights in the late 1950s. They included playwrights John Osborne and Edward Bond, novelists Kingsley Amis, John Braine, and John Wain, and filmmakers Tony Richardson and Lindsay Anderson (although given the permeability of such categories, the latter two also belonged to the British New Wave). There were indeed also Angry Young Women, notably playwright Shelagh Delaney and novelist Doris Lessing (Sierz).

1960s, that destroyed black neighbourhoods (Lipsitz 111) and inspired artists such as Julius Hemphill in St. Louis with “the intention to contribute to his community by transforming the aggravations and indignities they confronted into a critical consciousness capable of imagining and enacting their emancipation” (Lipsitz 109).

As a teenager, an immersion in jazz was central to Smith’s own process of personal emancipation. Smith befriended local jazz fans and players who “gave me all this amazing information about the music” (Smith, *Imagine* 44). One night at a dance, he met a young midwifery student, Clomin Onari from Barbados: “I had never met a woman before who really knew so much about modern jazz” (Smith, *Imagine* 54). They married, and shortly thereafter joined the postwar wave of Commonwealth citizens who emigrated to Canada.

Arriving in Toronto in 1963, Bill Smith immediately became active in jazz circles: literally, since he soon joined that volunteer circle who collated and stapled every issue of *Coda*. He started training himself as a photographer, specifically to photograph performing musicians. He also began writing for *Coda*, and having already studied and played trumpet and drums in England, he began studying saxophone.

As described in the chapter on Stuart Broomer, for a very few Toronto listeners at that time, the music of Albert Ayler was a pivotal force, as were those *Coda* collating sessions where Broomer exposed new listeners to Ayler’s music. Once again, Smith describes the music not in terms of taste or affect – that is, not in terms of whether or not he personally liked it, or disliked it, on first listening – but in terms of information. He saw the music itself as an important new source of information. In turn, knowing *about* the music was important information, all the more rare and valuable because it was

difficult to access: “There were certainly not that many people who knew who Albert Ayler was in that period,” he writes, and describes the young Stuart Broomer as someone who was “always a little bit ahead of everyone, he always seemed to know what was going on in New York” (Smith, *Imagine* 58). In turn, once the information was made available, it formed a local community of people who each considered it useful for their own reasons. Later, in 1973, when Onari Productions began presenting concerts, Smith writes, “Certainly a large part of the information regarding the AACM had appeared in *Coda Magazine*, quite possibly the earliest source, so there was much curiosity about this much talked about force that was coming out of Chicago” (Smith, *Imagine* 102).

Bill and Clo Smith, working with John Norris, presented Toronto’s first solo saxophone concert by Anthony Braxton. The event drew 130 people, including prominent Canadian composer John Weinzwieg (“he told Braxton that he had never heard a classical musician with this kind of ability, to present his art on such an elevated plane”) (Smith, *Imagine* 108). The relationship with Braxton, who stayed with the Smith family during his Toronto visits, was Smith’s introduction to the emerging AACM sensibility, and the Chicago collective’s unique relationship to the music known as jazz, including “...the ‘traneclone’ which was so popular at that time. Although they were influenced by this immediate music and did not abandon its high principles, they did set about presenting their own possibilities” (Smith, *Imagine* 110-2). Once again Smith invokes the “i” word:

You can’t ignore history – but the important position is to find yourself, and because of Muhal Richard Abrams’ formation of the AACM it was possible for the artists to group together and share each other’s information, information that was not always directly connected with the

accepted history of jazz. This became a major influx at this particular stage of my life because as a beginning player I was finding myself in a situation with an identity crisis ... my association with these men gave me the courage to start thinking about my own identity as a musician, to play with and develop my own environment. (Smith, *Imagine* 112)

In the early 1970s, Smith had a low profile as a musician, occasionally sitting in at sessions with the Artists' Jazz Band, or in bars with bands such as his friend Donny Walsh's Downchild Blues Band. A low profile, at least in a public sense: privately, Smith was taking his saxophone lessons very seriously. When engineering work took him back to England in 1967, he began studying with South African expatriate Ronnie Beer, and when he returned to Canada he continued with Brian Barley and Paul Brodie (Miller, *Boogie* 237). Opening his home to the musicians such as Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), Anthony Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell whom Onari Productions presented in the early 1970s, Smith was able to interview these artists for *Coda*, absorb their concepts, and even have informal study sessions.

In the first years of the CCMC, the concepts that Bill Smith brought to the group – as a jazz fan, as a self-taught musician, as a casual student of some of the AACM's founding members, and as the editor of a jazz magazine who was apprised, as few Canadians were, of music that was happening not only in the USA, but in Europe and elsewhere in Canada – gave him a very different perspective about the kind of music it was important to make in this particular time and place. Although this perspective, to say the least, was to prove unwelcome within the CCMC once, under Al Mattes' directorship, it became a smaller group with a fixed mandate and membership, it was a perspective which served Smith well, once he left the group and pursued his own music, becoming for several years a major figure in the Toronto music scene.

Bill Smith's Communities

As we have seen, Bill Smith was drawn to the example of the AACM as a model of music-making through community enterprise. In fact, his own musical activities often resulted in a kind of impromptu community-building; locally through events such as the Onari Productions concerts, which began to build an audience for improvised music in Toronto, and internationally through the influence that he and John Norris exercised through *Coda Magazine*. In the early days of Toronto improvisation, from the 1960s to the 1980s, to form a band of improvising musicians, as I've pointed out, was literally an act of building a community: improvisers were inevitably from very different musical backgrounds, socially and musically, and had to learn and devise unique and personal forms of negotiation and compromise in order to play together. Rarely were Smith's many enterprises described in this way at the time, but the Toronto weekly arts and culture news magazine *NOW Magazine*'s editor/publisher Michael Hollett seems to have taken notice of this aspect of Smith's work when he chose to title *NOW*'s April 1982 cover story on Smith "Bill Smith's Communities."

Later in the 1980s, Smith was to become less focussed on maintaining a working ensemble than on building a solo career, but at this time in 1982, having produced two records with the Bill Smith Ensemble, and having co-produced an award-winning documentary, *Imagine the Sound*, he was still very much concerned with collaboration and community. In Hollett's article, even the founding of the Jazz & Blues Centre is framed as anything but a commercial undertaking. For Smith and Norris, he explains, it was

... a way to make a living and a way to be in touch with and develop a community.

“The record store seemed like a good idea because it put us in touch with people on a one-to-one basis. It’s a wonderful opportunity,” says Smith.

“The store becomes a central point, a public place where people can actually come and we can all be in touch.” (Hollett 7)

Smith’s rise to prominence in this period is especially noteworthy considering that at the time he was editing and publishing a bimonthly magazine, running a record company and store and, with Clomin Onari, raising a family. The previous year, the Bill Smith Ensemble had performed at Soundscape in New York City and d.c. space in Washington; later in 1982 they were to perform several concerts in England, as well as crossing the English Channel to play at Amsterdam’s Bim Huis. In 1983, Smith (usually with the Bill Smith Ensemble of David Lee and David Prentice, which by this time often included such musicians as Richard Bannard, Larry Potter, and Arthur Bull), toured western Canada, did several performances each, plus a studio recording session, with Wadada Leo Smith and with Joe McPhee, with the members of the Ensemble. With Marc Glassman of Pages Bookstore, the Ensemble launched “The Last of the Red Hot Dadas” silent film performance project, and played frequently at the Rivoli, the Cameron, the Spadina, and various other clubs and galleries. Some of these gigs involved rehearsal time as well, and there were numerous private sessions with various configurations of the Artists’ Jazz Band at Gordon Rayner’s studio.

In comparison, during those same years the band that Smith had co-founded, the CCMC, attained a degree of institutionalized isolation unique for any improvising group in the world. Although it can be said that the group played frequently in Toronto, after 1976 those sessions were confined exclusively to their headquarters in the Music Gallery.

In Michel de Certeau's terms, the CCMC had secured a literal "place" of power in the Toronto community: a physical location where they controlled the terms of engagement – where they could plan and put into effect strategies for producing and promoting their music.

In contrast, without such a place under their control, Toronto's other improvising musicians had to devise tactics through which they could move, survive, and negotiate to keep playing their music, creating and appropriating "spaces" in a variety of places, including the Music Gallery, that were under the control of others.

In further contrast with the field of control exercised by the CCMC in their sequestered place, Smith – and to give them credit, the Toronto improvised music community in general – felt that the music implied a spirit of both community feeling, and political resistance. In the early 1980s a number of these performances were carried out with Maja Bannerman, a performance artist, actress, and songwriter, often sharing the bill with poets and folk singers from various national backgrounds.

In 1984 alone for example, the Ensemble played two separate benefits for Marc Glassman's "Forbidden Films" festival of banned and suppressed cinema; a benefit for Nicaraguan artists, featuring Nicaraguan poet and journalist Claribel Alegría, in memory of Argentine writer Julio Cortázar; and with Maja Bannerman, the Toronto Peace Festival (presented by the Toronto Disarmament Network and the Performers and Artists for Nuclear Disarmament), and an "Art in Canada Against Apartheid" benefit at the University of Toronto.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ I had kept several file folders of posters, flyers, news clippings and artworks from the years under discussion, which have given me the information used in this paragraph, and the one preceding.

Again here we see parallels with African American musicians whose social and musical paradigms had so strongly informed Smith's sense of himself as a musician. In writing about the subsequent careers of artists who had emerged from the collectives of the Black Arts movement (in this case, members of the World Saxophone Quartet), George Lipsitz writes of improvising musicians who "shunned the label of the avant garde, thinking of themselves as products of a musical and social environment that refused to recognize limits rather than one that honored limits all the more by self-consciously 'transgressing' them" (Lipsitz, "Weeds" 122).

The Career of the Improviser

Writing in 2005, cultural studies scholar George McKay asks,

Apart from free improvisation, is there a single other modern cultural realm that offers absolutely no possibility of significant reward for its most accomplished practitioners – ever? Experimental classical music, contemporary dance, the postmodern novel, conceptual visual art – all have their (relatively) powerful cultural champions, some or many financial resources or patronage, recognition and validation, some sort of career structure or opportunity. Only in improvised music (in Britain) do you start at the bottom, as it were, and stay there – even when you have reached the pinnacle. (McKay, *Circular* 230)

Regardless of the situation that McKay describes with such clarity, the fact is that improvising musicians *do* manage to sustain lifelong careers, although the music supports very few of them professionally. There are ways to gain some kind of cultural capital from playing improvised music, although ironically, the surest method seems to be the ability to make a name in some other area of artistic endeavour.

The very idea of cultural capital – that the reputation an artist builds within their immediate circle can penetrate to larger spheres in the art world and media, and eventually be transformed into financial capital in the form of sales, commissions, grants, residences, etc. – is very much part of an artistic economy that has evolved in the last century or so. Within this system, in his essay “The Production of Belief,” Pierre Bourdieu explains that building an artistic career depends on building a reputation, in a process he calls “the cycle of belief”:

For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation. (Bourdieu 75)

Improvised music has an ambiguous role in this cycle, since it exists by definition only as performed, not composed. The performative aspect of music itself, the fact that it is played in front of people, sometimes solo but often with other musicians, mitigates the aura of interiority that is so essential to the modernist artist’s iconic status. As Gablik writes, “Those who defend modernism claim that art need not serve any purpose but should create its own reality ... For the committed modernist, the self-sufficiency of art is its salvation” (Gablik 30). Reputation is everything, and artists gain reputation according to their singularity: for example, Ornette Coleman’s supporters helped him to reach listeners and build a public, but it was his detractors who made his reputation as a jazz iconoclast, by publicizing the fact that for better or worse, Coleman had created in his music a separate reality that was quite different from anyone else’s, hence legitimizing him as a serious artist.

Therefore, to achieve any degree of success, many creators of improvised music have built careers that include improvised music, but in which, to be honest, their music gains legitimacy primarily from their other artistic achievements. Regardless of the extent to which improvisers' reputations are built upon their musical talent, training and practice, and the need to have a distinct musical vision that is manifested when they are playing in the moment, their chances of becoming consecrated as Great Artists are directly proportional to the extent to which they have produced artifacts that can "write" their names into the canon. In Canada, the improvisers with the largest reputations are those who have not only produced "written" artifacts or commodities, but who have done it in some other field than music.

In Vancouver, pianist Al Neil has gained Great Artist status that attracts people to his music in this way. He has done it by writing a novel, and a book of short stories, and by producing visual art works, especially collage, and multi-media performances, often together with his partner, sculptor Carole Itter. These works confirm him as a genuine modernist artist, confirming that his music is part of a larger, self-sufficient interior artistic world.⁵⁶ For example, Michael Turner, writing about Neil, essentially states that there are limits to the degree of aesthetic expression that can be achieved in playing music: he reacts to a Neil interview excerpt as the statement of "someone who has been

⁵⁶ Art scholar, writer, and curator Scott Watson calls Neil "a voyant-shaman, the heroic actor in a drama of avant-garde dissolution, a deviant whose deviance puts him in touch with spirit worlds and the well-spring of myth" (Watson). Vancouver poet Michael Turner calls Neil "one of our greatest artists at large, someone who, like Duchamp, arrived in one medium, only to impress in another" (Turner). Neil was the subject of David Rimmer's 1979 documentary *Al Neil / A Portrait*, and in 2008 received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (Vancouver Art in the Sixties).

thinking, reading, researching, questioning the things *jazz music could only tap a cane at*” (Turner – my emphases). It is Neil’s writing, artworks, and performance that have convinced Turner that Neil is an artist “exploring convergence where others seek fences,” who produces “important and prescient work” (Turner).

Again, because the serious audience for improvised music is so small, one’s reputation as a player, regardless of ability, is bound to be narrow and specialized. Perhaps because more than other art forms, its appreciation depends on a sort of specialized listening, the broad consensus that enables canonization can only be achieved if the artist has produced work in other mediums. Michael Snow’s reputation as an artist is essential to his status as an improvising player. It is worthwhile quoting the entire paragraph from the home page of Laurie Kwasnik’s documentary project *Fields of Snow*:

National treasure, Michael Snow is recognized as one of Canada's greatest artists, a leading experimental filmmaker and a pioneer in his "structural" approach to various disciplines of image and sound. His influence, inspiration and contribution to Canada's cultural landscape on an international level is unparalleled. Much of Snow's contemporary art investigates the specific materiality of a medium as he masterfully shifts from one discipline to another. As a modern day Renaissance man he may approach film with the mind of a painter or music with the mind of a sculptor always inviting viewers to experience his unique investigations into the very nature of perception. (“Fields of Snow”)

Although the documentary promises to focus on Snow’s improvised music, the site includes no reviews of Snow’s music. Instead, it lists some of the awards that Snow has received for his film and visual art works:

He has received numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1972) the Order of Canada (Officer, 1982; Companion, 2007), and the

first Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts (2000) for cinema. Snow was made a Chevalier de l'ordre des arts et des lettres, France (1995) and in 2004 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Université de Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne. (The only other artist to receive this award was Picasso). ("Fields of Snow")

Clearly, these awards, since they prove that Snow is an artist of substance, are thought sufficient to prove to the skeptical listener – or it may be more fair to say, given the aforementioned minority audience who are able to “hear” improvised music, most listeners – that therefore, Snow’s improvisations will be of substance.

To be on the cover of *NOW* Magazine, as Bill Smith was in 1982, was to achieve a certain peak of fame in the Toronto art world. It was a coveted addition to any Torontonians’ c.v., so it was a genuine coup for an improvising musician to secure that position. The piece’s author, *NOW*’s publisher Michael Hollett, declares his reasons in the first paragraph: “On paper, Bill Smith sounds like some kind of renaissance capitalist – he’s a concert promoter, a film producer, part owner of a record company, an operator of a successful retail outlet and a member of a band” (Hollett 7).

In other words, Smith could be recognized as an improvising musician, which was the focus of his work in that period, only because he had secured a reputation in other spheres. It’s perhaps significant that despite his extensive work over many years as photographer, publisher, editor, writer and record producer, this recognition came only after he could add “film producer” to the list, film being the medium which most compellingly immerses the viewer in its own separate reality, a discreet imaginative world.

Conversely, one could argue that it was Smith’s concentration on music that led to the dimming of his career by the end of the decade. After the *NOW* cover story, he

produced some of the strongest music of his career: the Bill Smith Ensemble, as I've already noted, made LPs with Wadada Leo Smith and Joe McPhee. Beside concerts in Toronto with Roscoe Mitchell and John Tchicai, Smith made solo tours with European musicians including Evan Parker, and toured and recorded with the European saxophonist ensemble The Six Winds.

In the same period, he and John Norris had redefined their partnership, selling the Jazz and Blues Centre to local jazz fan and broadcaster Hal Hill, and Smith taking sole control of *Coda* while Norris did the same with Sackville Recordings. However, Smith was in the midst of separating from Clomin Onari, and increasingly unhappy with the Toronto scene overall. After his duo Duck Soup with Arthur Bull performed before a small audience at the Rivoli in 1989 – a venue which had often featured improvised music successfully – Smith felt, “we were no longer of consequence to the fickle Queen Street scene” (Smith, *Rant* 157). He left soon afterwards to move himself, and *Coda*, to Hornby Island in the Georgia Strait (Salish Sea) off the coast of B.C.

Smith continued to edit *Coda* from Hornby for some years, but his community-building energy was sorely missed in Toronto. One way or another, all of the key members of the Bill Smith Ensemble moved at around the same time: David Lee to London, Ontario; David Prentice to Flesherton; Arthur Bull to Digby Neck, Nova Scotia; and Richard Bannard to Kingston. This may have contributed to the historic lacunae they left in their wake: improvisation is perpetuated by one-on-one social interactions, and because of this exodus of some of the city's most active improvisers, a succeeding generation came up in Toronto aware of only a small part of the music, and the musicians, that had come immediately before them.

Chapter Seven:

The Creation of Space: Women in the Early Years of Toronto Improvisation

The final chapter of this work is devoted to female improvisers, linked to the interviews that appear in Appendix 1 with Diane Roblin and Gayle Young. Their experiences led me to the subject of gendered spatial relationships, and to the ideas about creating and appropriating space, hence to the comparisons and contrasts of spaces and places that appear elsewhere in this work.

Initially it was a quotation from Germaine Liu, cited in a thesis by her fellow Toronto percussionist, Joe Sorbara, that prompted me to think about space itself as a topic, and to connect it with Michel de Certeau's definitions of *place* and *space*. Soon, in discussing women improvisers, I found myself linking de Certeau's depictions of space, place, strategy, and tactics, with Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands Theory, in which Anzaldúa also defines the artist in terms of space, as a borderland agent.

The artists I reference in this work certainly crossed in and out of different places and spaces. The more I wrote and researched, the more I was impressed by how directly, and without serious clashes of definition, two such different theorists as de Certeau and Anzaldúa seemed to be speaking to musical improvisers: especially, in this case, to women improvisers.

Sociologist Janet Wolff writes of a change in "the language of gendered spaces": rather than reacting to a "basic dichotomous model" in which men command public space, but women are restricted to private spaces, she writes,

We are less and less preoccupied with identifying bounded areas and their exclusions, and much more interested in the blurring of boundaries, the

negotiation of spaces and the contradictory and open-ended nature of urban social practices. It seems clear that the most productive work in this area is that which has begun to explore the liminal space, the ambiguous situation, the unexpected moments of access. (Wolff 15)

It is in those liminal spaces that artists of every gender can begin to experiment with different modes of creation. Among other things, this chapter discusses how improvised music – it is nothing if not a liminal form – allowed women to negotiate space for themselves in the burgeoning downtown Toronto art scene of the late 1970s and 1980s.

Space and Place; Strategy and Tactics

“Men ... they certainly take up a lot of space,” said a woman I shared a house with during our undergraduate years. At the time, I reminded myself not to take this too personally, since the specific reference was not to me, but to a problematic boyfriend (all of us just entering our twenties, we were learning a lot about this new business of cohabiting with peers in varying degrees of intimacy).⁵⁷ However, at that time I made a mental note about this thing called space; I hadn’t before thought about human relationships in terms of space.

It is not, however, a simple matter of men appropriating space from women, but of the broader social implications of space. Sherrie Tucker, in discussing women in jazz, writes, “I suggest that we look more closely at gender as the feminist historian Joan Scott

⁵⁷ To frame this in terms of Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands Theory, which will be further discussed in this chapter, we were in the early stages of “understanding experientially the contingent nature of social arrangements” (Cantú & Hurtado 7).

defines it: ‘a field in which power is articulated’” (Tucker 7). In turn, I would suggest that one of the ways in which power is articulated in the field of gender is through space: how space is used, who is allowed to use it, and how much control they have over the space that is made available to them.

Male-dominated environments, such as music scenes, are spaces where male subjects exert “will and power,” in de Certeau’s words, to claim and define the space as their own. Looking at Toronto improvised music, specifically in the scene beginning around the Music Gallery in the late 1970s, we see women moving through this male-dominated environment using a range of tactics in order to make spaces for their artistic survival.

The first years of improvised music in Toronto featured a small number of women participants. Most prominent in the scene around the Music Gallery were Tina Pearson (a flautist) and Gayle Young (composer, and performer on instruments of her own design and construction), who both became editor/publishers of *Musicworks* magazine; Anne Bourne, a classically-trained pianist and cellist who began improvising while a student at York University, was also prominent in a number of ensembles. The WAM Band, an ensemble of York students who played weekly at the Music Gallery in its early years, featured violinist Anne Lindsay, who later became prominent in a number of roles in Canadian music, and the Monday Night Orchestra included saxophonist (later, more active as a painter and visual artist) Ruth Bull.

Although in the improvising ensembles, women were numerically a small minority of active participants, this in fact represented an enormous advance in their musical participation. Prior to the founding of the Music Gallery – in the bands, for

example, that Stuart Broomer played with in the 1960s, or the early days of the CCMC – women were altogether absent, with the exception of Diane Roblin’s on-again/off-again relationship with the Artists’ Jazz Band, and vocalist Honey Novick, who would sit in with the CCMC. Although each of these young women offered vividly distinguishing tastes and talents, each one nonetheless had to confront the tendency of the milieu to consign them to the stereotyped, generally marginalized roles that had been determined for women in other musical genres.

On the other hand, the newly-formed Music Gallery, opening its facilities to young improvisers, became a very active space, full of the movement of different artistic subjects. It offered opportunities for new types of improvising ensembles to form and perform, ensembles that, without the Gallery, would have found it more difficult to enter the city’s music scene. For one thing, the Gallery had strong links to York University: CCMC’s Nobi Kubota and Casey Sokol both taught there, as well as the baritone saxophonist David Mott, and they encouraged their students to come downtown and experiment with new musical configurations. Mott was part of the New Music Coop that in the early 1980s performed conceptual pieces such as “Breath Guided Music” with Anne Bourne (cello), Chris Devonshire (gongs and electronics), Steve Donald (trombone), Vid Ingelevics (photography), Gordon Monahan (piano), David Mott (baritone saxophone), Tina Pearson (flute), and Kim Ratcliffe (electric guitar) (Monahan et al. 72-3).

As a participant, playing bass and sometimes cello, in that community during those years, around 1981 I organized a string quartet, *Risquet*, with David Prentice, Allan Teeple on viola and Anne Lindsay on violin, which performed once at York University

(Anne was a student there), and once downtown, but that ensemble didn't continue only because of the pressures of other projects. More casual groupings sometimes included vocalist Michele George, who was teaching at York.

The Bill Smith Ensemble collaborated on performances that featured dancers such as Karen Duplessis and Grace Miyagawa – who improvised movement to the music – and poets, and performers. Through Michele George, in 1986 I was invited to rehearse a quartet with Ron Allen shakuhachi, Ahmed Hassan berimbau, Michele George vocals, and myself on cello, improvising a real-time score for the Robert Desrosiers piece *Où sont passée les gazelles?*, to accompany the dancers Karen Kain, Sylvie Plamondon and Claudia Moore. We rehearsed twice, for a benefit performance for The Desrosiers Dance Theatre and the National Ballet at the St. Lawrence Centre, but unfortunately our lead dancer sustained a knee injury and the performance never took place.

The Bill Smith Ensemble did many performances with performance artist/rock singer Maja Bannerman – who enacted rehearsed poems and vocal pieces to our accompaniment. Although Bannerman did not improvise per se in terms of inventing new material on the spot, since she recited memorized texts, she needed to be consistently resourceful in adapting her performances to our improvised accompaniments.

As a rule in Toronto improvised music in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the instrumentalists were men, but this was a rule to which there were frequent exceptions. For example, the freely improvising artists' group Niagara, a highly inclusive noise band made up of visual artists included, at one time or another, Catherine Carmichael, Tim Howe, Harold Klunder, Kate Wilson, Peter Templeman, Lorne Wagman, Rae Johnson

and others, among its constantly shifting personnel.⁵⁸ Otherwise, Toronto improvised music's working bands indeed tended to be so overwhelmingly male (whereas now, most Toronto improvising ensembles include at least one woman player) that thirty years after the period under discussion, as I proceeded with this dissertation, my committee felt they had to ask me, where were the women?

The Gendered Jazz Model

Indeed, "... *where* are the women improvisers?" Julie Dawn Smith asks (Smith, *Diva* 11; emphasis in original), suggesting

Perhaps because improvisationally-based music struggled from the beginning for recognition, its practices and documents have not always been liberatory, often reduplicating the marginalization and exclusion women face(d) in more mainstream musical structures and in patriarchal society at large. (*Diva* 116)

Although the newly-formed ensembles of the 1960s and 1970s might have used traditional musical models only as points of departure, and formed ensembles that they hoped would embody larger paradigms of social practice, in terms of actual gender diversity, or lack thereof, they tended to uphold the traditional models.

Chief among the latter, one could point to the jazz model: the Artists' Jazz Band, and other groups, despite how far they tried to go in terms of artistic experimentation and musical freedom, still mirrored the structures of jazz sound production in their

⁵⁸ Information about Niagara comes from an entry titled "Art/Music Series 1982" (mercerunion.org); an album called *Experiments For Giant TVs – The Ed Video Audio Art Album Volume I* (1989; www.discogs.com), and a cassette entitled 02/23 – 24/89 (1989) on rateyour-music.com. Web. Accessed July 31, 2016.

instrumental makeup: drums and bass, keyboards, brass and reeds, sometimes guitar. They also tended to mirror the gendered power structures of jazz ensembles, where women, as John Gennari writes, “have been resented as intruders on the homosocial boisterousness and easy profanity of jazzmen in the dressing room and on the road. Women in the jazz world very often are pigeonholed either as maternal figures or as sexual objects” (Gennari 17).

At the time of the founding of the Music Gallery in the late 1970s, much as Music Gallery players might insist that improvisation was a modernist activity more akin to contemporary composed music in the classical tradition – even other avant garde works that in being transgressive, were being transgressive in relation to a Europeanized classical model – the ties to jazz were undeniable. Leading improvisers, be they Derek Bailey, Misha Mengelberg, Peter Brötzmann, Anthony Braxton, Paul Bley, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, etc., were still, with varying degrees and modes of critical thinking and resistance, working from a model of jazz performance practice in which women have long been marginalized. Linda Dahl points out the stereotypes that helped to accomplish this:

Clearly, the qualities needed to get ahead in the jazz world were held to be “masculine” prerogatives: aggressive self-confidence on the bandstand, displaying one’s “chops,” or sheer blowing power; a single minded attention to career moves, including frequent absences from home and family. (Dahl x)

Dahl presents further evidence that women jazz players were, “to put it bluntly ... outside the fraternity” (Dahl 16), but she also points out that classical music has been just as male-centered: citing a 1978 study that showed that some instruments (flute, violin, clarinet) were widely perceived as being more “feminine” than others (drums, trombone,

trumpet) (Dahl 35). A male-dominated music world has often interpreted successful performance in terms of sheer physical power so that, as women are usually physically smaller than men, their relative musical inferiority can be pointed out as a kind of scientific fact, regardless of any contravening musical evidence (hence the irony in the title of Julie Dawn Smith's essay "Playing Like a Girl," which deals with the proactive politics and innovative music-making of Europe's Feminist Improvising Group). One can only read Dahl's 1960s quotations from both Harold C. Schonberg, *New York Times* music critic, and Whitney Balliett, *New Yorker* jazz critic, about the physical limitations that stop female performers from equalling their male counterparts, with a sigh of regret, considering that Schonberg and Balliett are otherwise both such insightful critics and masterful prose stylists (Dahl 38-9).

Given their iconoclastic stance, one might expect such an ensemble as the Artists' Jazz Band to tackle gender barriers as well, but such was not the case. Although Diane Roblin began playing regularly in private sessions at Gordon Rayner's loft in the early 1970s, when the opportunity came to perform in public, she ran into a gender barrier in saxophonist Robert Markle's insistence that a woman should not play with the band in public (Appendix 1-1, 262).

Even during a sojourn in New York City, part of a summer at the newly-launched Creative Music Studio (CMS) in Woodstock, the young pianist felt adrift amid all-male ensembles:

There were no other women musicians, even in the CMS workshops.... I think not having a woman around made a big difference.... there are now women saxophone players, trumpet players, but I can't think of anybody when I was playing in the seventies, not one female musician. Except for

Carla Bley, and Marian McPartland in New York. I was looking for someone I could identify with, but there were no ... young hipsters among the women. They were all men. I'm sure that had an impact on why I didn't stay in New York. (Roblin)

However, women in the world of white, composed "new music" have similarly been marginalized: Gayle Young refers to "the stubbornly resistant culture of exclusion, which is still pretty much in place today, if you look at percentages of women in exploratory music whose pieces are being played in Canada" (Young, Appendix 1 286).

In 1990, the fact that there were no female members in the CCMC, hence no women on the board of directors, was one of the criticisms that led to the overturning of the Music Gallery's board (Stewart 46-7). But the board, in turn, had evolved from the casual friendships that had led to musical relationships in the early 1970s. As Casey Sokol has said of the CCMC's early days in the house he shared with Al Mattes:

The all-male board had nothing to do with gender or anything else extrinsic to the historical fact of the band's relatively accidental accretion of members. Unfortunately, at that time there were exceedingly few female improvisers in North America, and almost none in Toronto. I can't think of any – maybe Diane Roblin – but, in any case, if there were any, they didn't happen to be a friend of one of the people who happened to be invited down into the Rosedale basement to play. (quoted in Stewart 47)

The smallness of the Toronto improvising community might have made it harder for women improvisers – a minority in an already-tiny community – to gather a mass of musical voices large enough to develop its own inertia. Even in London at the same time (the 1970s), with a much greater pool of improvisers, female musicians felt marginalized – not only by men's attitudes towards them, but to a certain extent by assumptions they themselves shared, that had to be recognized and defined. Although vocalist Maggie

Nicols and bassoonist / saxophonist /composer Lindsay Cooper “performed extensively with men, their experience playing with other women was very limited” (Smith, “Playing” 267). In 1982, Cooper admitted, “... it’s only now that I realise there were *years* when I felt intimidated by men and the assumptions concerning their abilities.... This is not to say that one’s internal oppression is the only thing to be faced because men can be difficult to work with ... (Cooper, quoted in Smith, “Playing” 267).⁵⁹

We might take “difficult to work with” as a refusal to allow musical space to female collaborators, but in Toronto, in the early days of the Music Gallery, by all accounts women were able to gain experience in improvising in a variety of fairly non-judgmental improvising environments at the Gallery; environments where they were able to develop their skills in creating and moving through musical space. Anne Bourne was able to play with the New Music Coop, and the freely-improvising WAM Band, and Gayle Young played “loose duo improv sessions” with Larry Dubin and others (Young, Appendix 1, 281).

Space – Finding It, Creating It, Claiming It

Improvised music may be a practice that will welcome and accept individuals from a host of different musical and social backgrounds within a single ensemble, but this openness can be accompanied by a degree of uncertainty as to entry protocols. Although its better-established male members might consider a music scene to be a dynamic space subject to chance and new influences – a space where anything might happen – to a

⁵⁹ This Lindsay Cooper quotation is from Val Wilmer, “Half the Bandstand.” *City Limits* (30 April – 6 May 1982), 4. Quoted in Smith, “Playing” 267).

young woman entering it for the first time, the same scene can appear to be a more or less stable “place,” with an already well-defined personnel operating with its own inner discourse and rules of behaviour, a place that offers little access to her own aesthetic agency or musical decisions.

Percussionist Germaine Liu, who entered the Toronto improvisation community in the early 2000s, described herself as “overwhelmed”:

... because there was so much happening. And then when I was playing music, I felt like there was a lot of streams of sounds occurring all at once. And it was like a lot of information for me to handle and I didn’t know how to contribute ... I talked to David Mott about it ... I told him I didn’t know how to make music because I feel like I don’t have space to make music. And then he told me that ... you can’t wait for other people to make space for you. You have to create your own space. Because there’s always space. You’re taking up space... like, if you exist. ... So you just have to, I guess, trust and believe that there will be space when you enter into this relationship. (quoted in Sorbara 101-2)

Repeatedly space – finding it, claiming it, creating it – surfaces as an underlying theme in the narratives of these Canadian women improvisers. In freeing its performers to create their own discourse and at the same time to cope and converse with each others’ notions of what that discourse might be, in compelling them to improvise their own tactics, in doing so discovering personal and musical resources they may not have known they possessed, improvisation can create a space that is immersive, even transformative: it can alter a player’s sense of who they are.

In writing about women improvisers, Julie Dawn Smith refers to laughter in performance as creating “an eccentric space of difference, a liminal space beyond intelligibility that engages both conscious and unconscious processes” (Smith, *Diva* 31),

that is another way of describing immersion and transformation. “Space” in this sense, is certainly a musical space in an ensemble, where a musician beginning to play – perhaps playing improvised music for the first time, or at least for the first time with this particular ensemble, with other musicians they may never have previously met – has to make instant decisions about tempo, timbre, tonality and volume. These decisions are also tactics that must inevitably be devised in real time, and implemented on the musician’s own terms. In Germaine Liu’s case (as with any improviser), in improvising with other musicians, she also creates a space that stretches de Certeau’s definitions, because it must be, at the same time, a space that is at once all hers, and all theirs. I prefer to call this a liminal space, or use Gloria Anzaldúa’s term *la frontera* – the borderland:

a third space between cultures and social systems. The word “borderlands” denotes that space in which antithetical elements mix, neither to obliterate each other nor to be subsumed by a larger whole, but rather to combine in unique and unexpected ways. (Cantú & Hurtado 6)

The borderland is a space that in one sense might be seen as a place, because borderland artists spend their whole lives there, lending it a kind of consistency; but it is also a space that is also highly subjective, highly tactical, ready to absorb and adapt, a space that enables its subjects to act according to the changing terms presented by the world around them.

New Yorker jazz writer Whitney Balliett may have had recidivist attitudes towards female jazz virtuosity; it is surprising that he didn’t offer more insight into the situations of performing artists marginalized by gender. Nonetheless, his description of the groundbreaking Ornette Coleman LP *Free Jazz* offers a particularly sensitive account of

improvised music as an entryway into a borderland, a liminal space where one finds oneself listening as one has never listened before:

“Free Jazz” causes earache the first time through, especially for those new to Coleman’s music. The second time, its cacophony lessens and its complex balances and counter-balances begin to take effect. The third time, layer upon layer of pleasing configurations – rhythmic, melodic, contrapuntal, tonal – become visible. The fourth or fifth listening, one swims readily along, about ten feet down, breathing the music like air. (Balliett 152)

Balliett is describing the unique musical experience that I would suggest players are able to experience more often than listeners (the attraction of repeating this experience, different every time as it may be, is one of the appeals of playing music), of creating a liminal space, a borderland, in Anzaldúa’s words,

wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy ... Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an “alien” element. (Anzaldúa 19)

Both writers use the analogy of swimming, revealing the liminal space (in Balliett’s passage, a space created by improvised music) as an immersion, a space where we are enabled to learn new abilities to negotiate “these confluent streams” (Anzaldúa 19). The borderland is even a space where a simple land-dweller may discover a hitherto concealed, amphibious side of themselves.

The kind of breakthrough that Balliett, as a listener, was making can also be explained in de Certeau’s terms. Balliett was already an aficionado of the many

improvisational tactics jazz players use to confront the strategies of western musical structures, especially the song form. However, like many jazz listeners, at first he found Ornette Coleman's music jarring and discordant. Unlike many listeners, however, as he heard it again and again, Balliett began to hear improvisational tactics for musical survival that linked this challenging new music with a resistant musical tradition that, as a seasoned jazz listener, he had long admired. His swimming analogy describes a fish, once out of water, who now finds itself safely back within its welcoming depths.

Code Switching

Hybridity (*la mezcla*) is the defining quality of Anzaldúa's borderland artist, an artist who lives and works in "that space in which antithetical elements mix, neither to obliterate each other nor to be subsumed by a larger whole, but rather to combine in unique and unexpected ways" (Cantú & Hurtado 6). George E. Lewis himself associates code-switching with "hybridity," linking it to changing styles of improvised music that "called for a new kind of musician, one whose mobility of reference encompassed many histories and perspectives" (Lewis, *Power* 340). At this level of discourse, the worlds of Anzaldúa and de Certeau start to merge: code-switching is very much a tactic that can be depicted in de Certeau's terms, in "the absence of a proper locus," as allowing musicians a stylistic durability that can enable them to survive, that "takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them ..." (de Certeau 35-6). Code-switching is also a tactic that Anzaldúa identifies as essential to the borderland artist: in her case the elements are not musical styles, techniques or genres, but language:

The switching of "codes" in this book from English to Castilian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all of these, reflects my language, a new language – the

language of the Borderlands. There, at the juncture of cultures, languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized; they die and are born. (Anzaldúa 20)

Conclusion: Improvising Tactics

A breadth of stylistic expression – in other words, code-switching – and a hybridized mix of enterprises and interests might be seen as essential survival tactics for women in the improvising milieu of the time. It allowed them to create a discrete, personal musical space that they could bring to a variety of situations.

Starting in the early 1970s, Diane Roblin came to AJB sessions from a background in classical piano, followed by an eclectic musical education at York University, through professional links with her own jazz fusion band, pop bands such as Rough Trade, and different groups on the arduous Ontario blues circuit. “When you played with people,” she says, “it didn’t matter if you were a woman, because once you started playing, you were hip and they didn’t see who you were. You can’t be a closed person if you’re playing open music” (Roblin, Appendix 1 271).

Despite her resentment at being blocked from public performances by Robert Markle, Roblin credits a large part of her growth in professional confidence to her many private sessions with the AJB: “Without them, I don’t know what would have happened either. I was a modal musician in those days ... I was already playing genre music, but I was young, and I wasn’t as expressive as I could be when I played with them. With the AJB, you could do no wrong” (Roblin, Appendix 1, 273).

Gayle Young also came to the Music Gallery community from York University studies, and describes her finding a space in that active milieu less in terms of musical eclecticism than another kind of liminality:

I still can't quickly describe what I do. It is not just soundscape, not just tuning. It includes improvisation, and descriptive texts interpreted as sound. I allow myself be led by curiosity rather than goal-directed planning. I've taken many side-roads into outdoor sculpture projects and sound installation. And I make small toy-like instruments. I take a playful attitude, even though new music is usually pretty serious. (Young, Appendix 1, 282)

The women discussed here did pioneering work in a Toronto improvising scene that still organized itself according to a larger jazz-based template which was itself male-dominated. Within this milieu, they all developed a range of personal tactics for artistic survival. Even if the Artists' Jazz Band barred her from performing in public with them, Diane Roblin found herself much in demand playing music of different genres in the professional music circuit, as well as composing music for dancers. Now in her sixties, she has once again become active on the Toronto jazz and improvised music scene, composing, organizing bands and collaborating with a wide range of players. Gayle Young points out that she always occupied a distinct niche of her own in Toronto music, conceiving and building her own instruments, living outside of the city since 1981, and (most of all) diversifying her activities across a broad range of music, publishing, writing and the visual arts.

The ensembles and individual musicians in this study share the practice of playing improvised music in a culture dominated by western music; in Derek Bailey's terms, "Occidental music, the most inhospitable area for improvisation" (Bailey ix). As we have seen throughout this study, improvisers often discover each other by chance, form ensembles through personal and musical affinity, and then through necessity present their music in spaces outside the norm, even going to considerable work to create such spaces.

The Artists' Jazz Band brought a bacchanalian element to Toronto art openings by transforming them into concerts. Stuart Broomer brought free jazz, not only to coffee houses that normally presented folk music and jazz, but to large-scale "happenings" at the peak of the sixties counterculture. The Onari Productions concerts of the early 1970s took place in a music library, a church, and in art galleries; their success in creating a Toronto culture for improvisation led to the founding of the Music Gallery, a space dedicated to improvised music.

Yet, even this marginalized culture tended to be unquestioningly heteropatriarchal, and women had to find their own ways of joining it. In the same way that improvising ensembles had to create space for themselves wherever the opportunity arose, women had to find ways of creating and appropriating space in those same ensembles. In this milieu, the Music Gallery was an important gateway into the fledgling Queen Street West art scene, and was instrumental in allowing women such as Diane Roblin, Gayle Young, Anne Bourne, Tina Pearson, Ruth Bull, and Anne Lindsay to enter first the improvising community, and then other aspects, of the rapidly growing Toronto art world.

Conclusion: Discovering the Unwritten

Vast Empty Cultural Spaces

Were there vast empty cultural spaces in Canada for one to fill? That was my impression ... although not a huge amount of big-time cultural information could reach one in Oliver or Nelson or Abbotsford or even Vancouver in 1956. (Davey 61)

Frank Davey, a dozen years older than myself, and intellectually much more precocious, was asking this question in Abbotsford, BC, a farming community in the Fraser Valley east of Vancouver. Davey (1940–) was to eventually become a major figure in English Canadian literature: teaching, writing poetry, prose, and criticism, and founding the journals *Swift Current* and *Open Letter*. Interested primarily in literature, the young Frank Davey despaired that the BC writers he had heard of “had had individual careers that they carried on mostly elsewhere ... As far as I could tell they had done little work to build literate networks, or literary descendants, in their own province” (62).

A decade or so later, I was asking similar questions in my hometown of Mission, just across the river from Abbotsford, and searching about somewhat haphazardly for answers. Coming of age at the crest of the rock era, I was as interested in music as I was in writing, but if you were from a BC sawmill town and seriously interested in the arts, where to begin? Most of my sources of information were heavily susceptible to corporate influence, but sometimes I gleaned useful news items from magazines, the Vancouver newspapers, CBC, and TV stations across the border in Seattle, Bellingham, and Tacoma.

“We were like a weed in a vacant lot,” said Julius Hemphill about the Black Artist Group’s burst of cultural activism in 1960s St. Louis (Lipsitz, *Footsteps* 110). That is not

a bad simile for the state of interested young persons such as Davey and myself, although as Canadian white guys, our challenges weren't the social and economic obstacles faced by Hemphill and his fellow black artists in St. Louis. If they faced brutal constraints, we faced frightening immensity, and if they "sought to create an art that emanated *from* and intervened *in* the everyday life activities" of their community (Lipsitz, *Footsteps* 110), we felt the need to go farther afield to find, in Davey's words, "Where are the admirable models – who might one learn from?" (58).⁶⁰ Just about everywhere in Canada, if one was attracted to the contemporary arts, it could be difficult to know where to begin, in a place where even the nearest big city was – in terms of the international art world – a distant outpost.

Eventually, one did the legwork (as in de Certeau's "Walking in the City," appropriating spaces, and building new relationships amid the immensities), and began to find colleagues. In our own way, *pace* Hemphill, young people interested in experimental art forms were more like seeds than weeds, blown across Canada's vast cultural vacant lot to eventually come to earth in Toronto. Even once lodged in that city, it took just the right conjunction of luck and circumstance to make our long-germinating interests take root and grow.

⁶⁰ As the formation of artistic sub-cultures is a theme of this work, it is pertinent to point out that Davey began during graduate studies at UBC in the early 1960s to build his own "literate networks," with the founding of the influential newsletter *TISH*: "the *TISH* authors embraced an aesthetic that encouraged them to consider and engage with their own locality and their regional ex-centricity on the West Coast. As such, the *TISH* community has been described as the first post-colonial literary movement in English Canada because they wrote *after* and neither about nor because of colonialism. Other writers involved in the first editorial phase of the magazine include George Bowering, Lionel Kearns, Fred Wah, Roy Miki and Daphne Marlatt" (Betts).

Until then, everything I knew about music came from listening and reading. Much of what was written about music concerned different idioms, concerned the different people who created and played this or that idiom. But I had seen nothing about how music might be non-idiomatic, or trans-idiomatic, or about the relationships between, say, race and music; or politics and music; or the visual arts and music; or about the ways that music does not necessarily “express” joy, or hope, or fortitude and resistance, but can generate those things just when they are most needed: all that was unwritten. You could only find out by taking part.

Information, Improvisation, and the Mediated City

What, however, needed to be discovered? Bill Smith repeatedly refers to “information” as a pivotal element in his identity creation as photographer/ publisher/ writer/ saxophonist/ composer (188-192): the information that the curious young person needs in order to find new directions, the information artists need in order to form their styles, the information that listeners need in order to find new music. In Toronto in the 1970s and early 1980s, the best source of information about improvised music was the musicians themselves, and the locus of that information was the Jazz and Blues Centre, which was not only a source for books, magazines, and records, but an important meeting-place.

Stuart Broomer’s definition of Toronto as a “mediated city” could be interpreted in the sense that presenters, such as Bill Smith at Coda/Onari, and Al Mattes at the CCMC Music Gallery, formed networks of influence that they eventually infiltrated with

their own music, so that nepotism and gig-trading benefitted those most willing to market in favours.⁶¹

In order to contrast, or complement, this interpretation of the mediated city, however, it could be that the fact that the most successful of the city's improvisers were also active as presenters also testifies to the importance of the communities they created⁶² – communities that formed as a necessary response to the almost-nonexistent infrastructure for marginalized art forms in the 1960s-'70s period to which Broomer refers. Artistic people who were geographically marginalized could come to Toronto, but once arrived, it was contingent upon them to build their own alternative community within a power structure that was virtually dedicated to erasing alternative cultures, in favour of promoting a hegemonic mono-culture modelled on colonialized notions of European high art. John Norris and Bill Smith's Jazz and Blues Centre was the locus of one such community; certainly, it was the site where many of the players (not only

⁶¹ Such relationships were not unheard-of. Gayle Young writes about being careful to avoid them in terms of her tenure as *Musicworks* editor: "I was openly promoting an art form of which I was a practitioner. So I kept the coverage broad and never (to my knowledge) collected on any tacit agreements – like *Musicworks* publishes an article about a festival and then the editor is invited to play at the festival. This broad mandate led *Musicworks* into marginalized territory because it did not gain the loyalty of any of the sub-groups in the music scene" (268). In contrast, at the 40-year anniversary panel celebrating the Music Gallery, Al Mattes reminisces, with his characteristic pragmatism: "I became the Director of ANARC, Association of National Artist Run Centres and the whole thing just grew into a rather large network. And we exploited that network, the CCMC exploited that network by setting up tours across Canada, bringing other artists like the Western Front Shadow Puppet Theatre, Hank Bull, and Eric Metcalfe came in and did a Dr. Brute show. Other performing artists from different places, we would exchange, so they would come and visit us, and we would go and play concerts there" (Mattes, "Artistic Direction at the Music Gallery").

⁶² For the sake of accuracy, it should be emphasized that, as much as Michael Snow's performing horizons were broadened by the Music Gallery, its original founder, organizer, and networker was Al Mattes.

players as musicians, but also “players” as active subjects in the arts and jazz scenes) mentioned in this dissertation met each other for the first time.

What I began to find out, then, when I became active in the Toronto improvised music scene in 1975 (when I began to work for *Coda*, and then began to play double bass), is that we were taking part in a process-in-progress of Canadian culture-making. In a city with no infrastructure for improvised music (remember that improvised music began to be played in the city by visual artists, whereas in other cities jazz musicians introduced it, for better or for worse, to jazz venues), the community itself, just like the music, had to be built from the ground up. Broomer himself was such a mediator, with his musical knowledge and facility, his writing skills and insight, and a creative artistic vision that could readily link other art forms to musical improvisation. His musical collaborators, by and large, were not such mediators, so when Broomer retired as an improvising bassist (any double bassist can sympathize with his problem: he simply couldn’t afford to get his instrument fixed), he left a gap in the Toronto improvisation scene (except for the Artists Jazz Band) that was not filled until the CCMC was formed in the early seventies, and Broomer himself, along with Maury Coles, Larry Dubin, Bill Smith, and others, returned to public performance.

Canadian Improvisation Studies

Since beginning the research for this dissertation, I have been glad to come across other new work in the nascent field of Canadian improvisation studies. In recent years, Sophie Stévanec’s *Musique Actuelle* (2011) has acknowledged some of the distinctive musicians from the Montreal scene, and Eric Fillion is writing about that city’s Quatuor de Jazz Libre du Québec of the 1960s and ’70s (Fillion “Jazz libre”). PhD research has been done

by Jeremy Strachan (on Toronto composer Udo Kasemets, who sometimes worked with improvisation and improvisers) at York, and I have been working with the Western Front in Vancouver, and Toronto filmmaker Laurie Kwasnik, to make available rare archival video footage of Canadian improvisers from the 1970s. These initiatives and, the ongoing work at IICSI's affiliated campuses across the country, are beginning to help fill in the many gaps in the historical discourse on Canadian improvisation.

To research this dissertation, I have often gone back to primary sources: magazines from the sixties and seventies, dog-eared exhibition catalogues from the seventies and eighties; even file folders of posters and press releases that I have been lugging around the country for decades. Secondary sources are harder to find, because there is so little published research on Canadian improvised music and its many lively communities, even though those communities have touched virtually every aspect of the arts in this country.⁶³ I started with the intention of writing an overview of the rise of

⁶³ This work is full of references to the many ways that improvising musicians have found to intersect with other art forms (including creation in other art forms). Such intersections were virtually built into the structure of Toronto's first free-improvising group, the Artists' Jazz Band, and are common throughout the histories of Stuart Broomer, Bill Smith, John Oswald, and most if not all of Canada's improvising artists. One might even say that in the intervening decades, some progress has been made in bringing improvisation to a broader audience. On the Pacific coast, decades of work preceded Vancouver's New Orchestra Workshop collaborations with George E. Lewis on tours and recordings, and NOW's part in staging Anthony Braxton's massive *Sonic Genome* project, which brought high school students together with veteran improvisers, at the 2010 Olympics (Considine). At the other end of the country on the Atlantic coast, the Upstream Music Association has brought improvisation into a host of venues in Halifax, including collaborations with a long list of fellow Canadians, visiting composer/improvisers such as Barry Guy and Maya Homburger, and Symphony Nova Scotia (Upstream). The success of an improviser's career, however, is not necessarily marked by such occasional emergences into the (relative) mainstream, but by their ongoing practice of playing marginalized music in a range of venues. Tracing such histories can be a painstaking process: the career of any improvising artist is like a reference book where all the most useful material is in the footnotes.

improvised music in Canada since the 1960s. I should have known better; it is a subject much too big to be fit, with any degree of detailed discussion, into a few hundred dissertation pages. My focus quickly began to narrow to the quarter-century 1960 to 1985 in Toronto. Even at that, this work's purview is still awfully broad by academic standards. At the same time, the more I worked on it, the more wary I became of narrowing its focus too much, because I felt the need to produce a document that would put into print topics, and subjects, the existence of which future researchers might be otherwise totally unaware. This is why, in every few pages of *Outside the Empire*, one encounters an artist, or a collective, or some other topic that merits a thesis all on their own, towards which I would certainly point other researchers.

Some of these topics warranting further research would include the rise of a modernist bohemian scene in Toronto in the 1950s: its manifestation not only in music and the visual arts, but in literature, dance, and theatre; the importance of the Isaacs Gallery as a hub of artistic activity, in several disciplines, over multiple decades; and the many musical facets of the Artists' Jazz Band: more than an intellectual party band, over the course of their existence they indeed took time to compose, and all of its core members were noteworthy individuals and influential artists in their own right. Graham Coughtry, a fan of Bill Harris and Roswell Rudd, and a sensitive trombonist who even led a large group of his own during a lengthy stay on Ibiza in the late sixties (Hale 16). The relationship between his painting and his music are surely worth a thesis in itself. The same can be said for Gordon Rayner. He was an exuberant percussionist, born in 1935, who brought even to his free playing an implicit sense of swing that younger

drummers, raised in the era of the backbeat, do not always have.⁶⁴ Although Robert Markle has been the subject of a valuable biography by J.A. Wainwright, the many facets of his art, manifested through writing and music, as well as painting, deserve further study.

Further research on the music of Stuart Broomer is wholly merited; his work deserves serious compilation and study, and (as with so many Canadian improvisers) there are many recordings that should be digitized and made publicly available. Saxophonist Jane Bunnett, with her husband Larry Cramer, has made a number of distinctive niches for herself and Cramer in Canadian music. Before she became an important catalyst between Canadian jazz and Cuban musicians, she and Cramer forged significant partnerships, including tours and recordings, with American improvisers such as Don Pullen, Jeanne Lee, Sheila Jordan, and Dewey Redman. Although John Oswald's name only appears in passing in the current study, he was an important part of the Toronto scene during these years; his Saturday afternoon "Pool" events at the Cameron Tavern were themselves an important locus for meetings and music. Spanning a range of projects, Oswald has been recognized as a major Canadian artist for decades now (in fact, James Reaney's description of Bill Bissett comes to mind: a "one-man civilization"), with a body of work that has touched art communities and audiences throughout the West.

Speaking of poets, there were extensive collaborations between poetry and music during the 1980s. Particularly in the back room of the Cameron, with the Bill Smith Ensemble and the Four Horseman (I remember Arthur Bull, bpNichol, and myself

⁶⁴ However, despite his larger-than-life "Toronto swagger," Rayner suffered a crisis of confidence about his drumming, and declined to go into the recording studio with the Bill Smith Ensemble and Joe McPhee. As a result, Richard Bannard played drums on *Visitation* instead of Rayner.

playing a version of *St. James Infirmary* that quickly cleared the room). I also played in the trio “Whispers” with Bill Smith and Steve McCaffery, and in Paul Dutton’s blues trio Mean Cigarette, with violinist/guitarist Curtis Driedger. These were all true border-artist enterprises (“border blur,” Nichol called it)⁶⁵ taking place virtually in the heart of the CanLit establishment (a sealed and certified “place” if there ever was one), an establishment which managed to completely overlook them. The primacy of the printed work is still firmly in place; as I wrote in the Bill Smith chapter about the tenuous cultural capital of performance, in mainstream CanLit readings are thought of as something that writers do only grudgingly: the hegemony of the printed word is so strong that the liminality and ephemerality of performance is regarded with suspicion. As Katherine McLeod writes, despite a rich Canadian tradition of poetry as performance, very little scholarly work on Canadian poets attempts to situate their work “within a broader performative framework of textual and acoustic experimentation” (7). A recent biography of bpNichol (written, in fact, by the aforementioned Frank Davey) even manages to ignore the performance aspect of his art completely, focusing solely on writing and publishing. This may seem to be a difficult feat for anyone who knew Nichol, certainly for anyone who shared a stage with him, but understandable given, as discussed elsewhere in this work, the primacy of the written, the historical slipperiness of the unwritten.

⁶⁵ In Canada, the term “border blur” is so closely identified with bpNichol that in 2014, the St. Catharines Grey Borders Reading Series renamed itself the Border Blur Reading Series in his honour (“Border Blur Reading Series”). Nichol himself, however, attributed the term to pioneering concrete poet Sylvester Houédard (“Primary Days” 19).

Guitarist, guitar teacher, composer and writer Lloyd Garber has also created a special niche for himself in Toronto's music, devising his own unique systems for composing and improvising. Pianists such as Jim Dorsey (who left Toronto for the USA) and Lubomyr Melnyk (who is still active) were also on the Music Gallery scene in its early days. In the 1970s and 1980s there was a community of expatriate African American musicians who put on concerts in Toronto: a unique hub of alternate activity. South African expatriate Harold Head, with his Great Black Music Productions, also put on major concerts and made significant efforts, specifically with promoting the works of black artists, in Toronto.

London, Ontario has produced two unique and long-lasting nodes of improvisational activity. Since the 1960s, the Nihilist Spasm Band has been carving out its own unique musical space, continuing to build an international reputation even after the untimely death of their most famous member, painter and drummer Greg Curnoe, in 1992. Over the same time period, saxophonist Eric Stach has also been playing exclusively free jazz. Over the years, his Free Music Unit has seen dozens, perhaps even hundreds of musicians, from veteran improvisers to first-timers, pass through its ranks. In a conservative small city such as London, he has been a major force.

And so on: I haven't even mentioned the major improvising artists in Vancouver and Montreal, or those in smaller centres such as Calgary, Edmonton, and Halifax. These artists should be studied not simply because some of them played exceptionally "well," but because they have created a body of work that, like the body of work of a great fiction writer, playwright, painter or filmmaker, creates a self-contained imaginative

world, so that at some point in their music, we are not only listening, but immersed: drawn into a frame of reference which, when the music is over, we find has enriched and expanded our own imaginative worlds, the worlds each of us lives in every day. Moreover, to create that body of work, each of them needed to create, or take part in creating, a community in order to enable the music to be played; a local culture within cultures, that make what we might call “rebel musics [that], in spite of forces that seek to either commodify or marginalize them, continue to activate diverse energies of critique and inspiration” (Fischlin and Heble 8).

Improvising Beside the Loudest Neighbour in the World

It is not uncommon for a musician to play or compose something that sounds exceptionally brilliant and original, only to realize, sooner or later, that Duke Ellington did it fifty or eighty years ago. Most musicians are used to this, but as the following quotations indicate, the same might be, to an extent, true in critical studies in improvisation.

Toronto was a unique place in those days. Artistic perspectives were adjusted to a strong natural state of individuality. Everybody in Canada seemed to listen to what they individually enjoyed, and nobody could tell them what to like, or what was popular, or what was the In thing. ... I am well aware that a problem of communication exists between Canada ... and us, the big neighbor to the south.... Canada has a character and a spirit of its own, which we should recognize and never take for granted.
(Ellington 137-8)

Ellington had just been collaborating as a pianist with a Toronto orchestra, recording works by Ron Collier, Norman Symonds, and Gordon Delamont. What is unique about this quotation is not his praise of Canadian originality – which can be taken

with a grain of salt given the “love you madly” tone that pervades Ellington’s narrative voice – it is the complete lack of the colonializing mentality that is so quick to frame any Canadian enterprise as a marginal subset of its larger neighbour to the south. As Mark Miller writes about researching the history of jazz in Canada,

While Canada’s proximity to the United States meant that American jazz musicians made their way here before they made their way anywhere else, their Canadian sojourns have generally passed unremarked in jazz historiography, as if “Canada,” far from being another country, was simply the next stop after Bellingham, Bismarck, or Buffalo. (Miller, *Such* 9)

In fact, if any scholarship has helped to ameliorate this chronic oversight, it is that of Miller himself. He has been instrumental in bringing Canadian improvisers to the attention not only of their fellow Canadians, as he did during his decades of journalism for *The Globe and Mail*, but to international readers via his contributions to seminal Canadian reference works, and of course via his many books. Since Miller left the *Globe*, that newspaper’s coverage of jazz has become as haphazard and industry-driven as jazz coverage elsewhere in the mass media; media to which, furthermore, the current generation of improvisers (and the Canadian improvising community, despite this neglect, is larger than ever) is seemingly invisible.

One problem could simply be Canada’s particular historic and geographic situation: equally separated from, and at the same time closely tied both to the USA, and to the British Commonwealth and history. We pride ourselves on maintaining cordial relationships with these, and other, world superpowers, but the fact is that by and large, these entities have eyes only for each other. There are mixed benefits to being “outside

the empire.” Recently, *The Globe and Mail* printed excerpts from the correspondence of British diplomats during the 1980s:

Several files [of correspondence from the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office dating back to 1984] commented on Britain’s relations with Canada. One noted that Canada has a hard time fitting in internationally as Britain grows closer to Europe and Europe deals mainly with the United States. As a result, Canada has “difficulty in finding any team that will recognize them as full playing members,” it said. (Waldie 2016)

These findings are all too true: as I work on this conclusion, the Canadian band The Tragically Hip has just finished its last concert tour, the end drawing near because of their lead singer/songwriter Gord Downie’s terminal illness. The media are filled with tributes to the band. Some of these tributes, when they address the issues of identity creation for the Canadian artist, overlap with some of the concerns that I’ve been writing about:

“We’re a country that hasn’t really embraced its history just yet,” said the musician Kevin Drew, of Broken Social Scene. “We’re still trying to figure out what makes us Canadian, and we have one of the loudest neighbors in the world, so this band helped a country, and Gord helped people lyrically, slowly start to try to define themselves.” (Ryzik)

I am writing about improvised music that derives from the musical practice that is generally known as “jazz”; elsewhere I have discussed the problematics of that term. If there is any common thread that might extend through this work, it is the identification of jazz improvisation as a resistant musical device that allows individual musicians, or marginalized musical groups, to turn static, hegemonic musical “places” into dynamic musical “spaces” of movement and change.

This model resonates through all the stories here. The Artists' Jazz Band attracting the crowd of a major art opening away from "the big court band" to hear a bunch of scrappy painters experiment with real-time composition; the Stu Broomer Kinetic Ensemble, even at the height of 1960s counterculture, managing to offend a crowded hall, and outrage the *Toronto Star* reviewer, with their "so-called jazz"; Bill Smith and his pool of collaborators, including David Prentice, Arthur Bull, Richard Bannard, Larry Potter, and myself, making spaces for improvised music within a range of new and different venues spanning poetry, theatre, dance and performance; a host of creative women making different "spaces" for the movement and creativity – their own and others' – in the hetero-patriarchal "places" of improvised music's first decades in Toronto.

Finally, the story of the CCMC, a reverse image of that of Canada's other improvisers: by prioritizing strategies of power and control over the shape-changing, border-crossing, code-switching tactics of their fellow improvisers, the ensemble made "improvisation" into an exclusive, hermetic practice, uniquely different from the inclusive, experimental ways the music was pursued elsewhere in the world (even elsewhere in Toronto), with a degree of success that perhaps could only be achieved in what Stuart Broomer calls the "mediated city."

Improvising a New Culture

Enrique Dussel writes, of coming in age in postwar Argentina, "...there was no doubt that we were a part of 'western culture.' For that reason, some of our subsequent categorical judgments are a natural expression of someone who opposes himself" (29).

Since the 1960s, Dussel's work has advocated for the recognition of an original Latin American culture, despite its basis in colonizing languages, civil structures and religions, as something distinct to its place:

It is commonplace now to say that our cultural past is heterogeneous and at times incoherent, hybrid, and even in a certain way marginal in comparison to European culture. But what is most tragic is when the very existence of such a culture is ignored ... although some may deny it, its originality is evident, in art, in the style of life. (Dussel 31)

Dussel extends this vision globally; in his terms, the Americas themselves are a patchwork of "peripheral cultures" that "a western, metropolitan, and Eurocentric culture" seeks to dominate or annihilate (33). He refers to this domination as "Modernity": the planet-wide spread of the culture of the West – of European culture, through campaigns of colonization and empire-building. Through the assertion of so-called peripheral cultures, however, modernity can be resisted – the colonized cultures of the Americas, African, and Europe can push back against the hegemony of the west.

Certainly, improvisers creating a marginalized artistic culture in Toronto from the 1960s to the 1980s could perceive themselves, at first, as peripheral artists working towards the centre. Over the years, however, as they were exposed to wider audiences, they learned in no uncertain terms that their city, and country's, official cultural bodies wanted little part of them, as its musical organizations gradually did their best to divest themselves of any associations with improvised music.⁶⁶ Rather, in turns out, improvising

⁶⁶ The CBC is a good example. Today, it would be utterly unheard-of for a television host to recite poetry with improvising musicians on CBC TV, as William Ronald did in 1967. In 1979, we were able to finance the Bill Smith Ensemble's first cross-Canada tour with CBC recording sessions in Winnipeg and Vancouver; opportunities such as these have not been available to Canadian improvisers for many years. The nightly CBC-2 radio show *Tonic* manages to play some real

musicians came to constitute a separate culture of their own, with links to the city's other marginalized artistic, social, and political groups (as in the Bill Smith Ensemble's concerts for social causes described earlier).

The idea that improvised music could form the nucleus of a culture quite different and separate from the prevailing culture, is not new. In 1963, when LeRoi Jones wrote "... Paul Desmond and John Coltrane represent not only two very divergent ways of thinking about music, but more importantly two very different ways of viewing the world ..." (Jones, "Jazz and" 19), he was describing the free jazz revolution not just in terms of social reform, but in terms of African American cultural assertion – the need for a cultural group to assert a repressed, non-Western culture.⁶⁷

Music makes an image. What image? What environment (in that word's most extended meaning, i.e., total, external and internal environment)? I mean there is a world powered by that image. The world James Brown's images power is the lowest placement (the most alien) in the white American social order. Therefore, it is the Blackest and potentially the strongest. (Jones, "Changing Same" 185-6)

Jones writes that African Americans (and their music) are oppressed in North America not only because of the threat of their race to racial supremacists, but because of the threat of their culture to cultural supremacists. He was writing in the 1960s, a time of

jazz, mostly of bebop vintage, but sandwiches it within dumbed-down programming of singers doing Justin Bieber covers, and an inane host who insists, like a schoolyard drug-dealer, that jazz will "take you to your happy place."

⁶⁷ "Western" in Jones, as throughout most of these discourses, means European, or white Europeanized American culture, as opposed to the unified, non-Western culture Jones saw in 1960s "free jazz": "Indian-African anti-Western-Western (as geography) Nigger-sharp Black and strong" (Jones, "Changing Same" 210-11).

cultural upheaval in North America's white hegemony as well. A major spokesperson for that flowering of alternative cultures was Detroit's John Sinclair (instrumental in facilitating the 1966 Detroit-Toronto musical exchanges Stuart Broomer mentions), who saw the counter-culture of white young people at the time (in which the music began in clubs, and at dances, played by musicians working directly from African American musical models) as not only essentially non-Western, but intensely regional: the *local* (Sinclair's emphasis). In 1970, for example, Sinclair wrote of the Detroit band MC-5:

... the MC-5 made what best can be described as "post-Western" music, in the same sense that Archie Shepp's or John Coltrane's or Cecil Taylor's or Sun Ra's music can only be called post-Western. That is, these musics destroy separation on every level, and separation is the basis of all Western musics up to and including most of rock-and-roll expression. (Sinclair 19)

Identifying the co-optation of countercultural rock music by the music industry in the latter half of the 1960s, Sinclair compared the Detroit scene with that in San Francisco, calling Detroit music of the time,

... the only fully developed *local* culture in America outside of San Francisco. You see, the local is the only stick we have to beat universalism back with and reclaim our culture from the creeps who have ripped it off from us. ... This *local* emerged as a force for change in this place ... with the maturation of the San Francisco scene in 1966-67, but as soon as it stuck its beautiful head out, it was snatched off and adulterated by the imperialist robber barons of the mother-country music industry, who took it to their manufacturing plants and packaged it and sent it out as a

separable thing, divorced from its roots in the local scene it grew out of ...
(Sinclair 24) ⁶⁸

In Montreal, aligned with the power of Quebec nationalism, there was no doubt that the culture of the *local* was there, as the Jazz Libre group “appropriated Free Jazz – a music attached to black nationalism – in order to insert their project of a socialist and independent Quebec in a historical process marked by decolonization” (Fillion “Jazz libre” abstract). It was there in Toronto too – its own culture, the *local*, as Arthur Bull suggests in his assertion of “a case to be made for a made-in-Toronto kind of improvised music,” a unique and independent energy that began in artists’ studios in the 1950s, swirled through downtown coffee houses and galleries in the 1960s, found new inspiration in the international improvising community that formed throughout the 1970s, but faltered somewhat in the 1980s; although the Music Gallery succeeded in diverting impressive funding resources towards its programming, its immediate community, and its board of directors, it also may have undercut that original downtown improvising community, by creating an alternate local improvising culture, a culture in which hegemonic legitimization was everything (especially when signs of such acceptance dwindled as the 1980s advanced, rents and real estate went up, and opportunities shrank for getting paid to play any kind of music).

⁶⁸ While touching on the subject of the influence of sixties rock music, it is worth remembering this statement from pianist Wayne Horvitz: “It’s important to remember that, like a lot of us, I came to improvised music more from The Grateful Dead and The Jefferson Airplane only to find Albert Ayler and Sun Ra later” (Horvitz).

Improvising Survival

Along with the beginnings of a history of Toronto's improvised music in this time period – as I have said, in many ways this is a pilot project which I hope will spur further research – I hope that I have also made useful steps in depicting Toronto musical improvisation, and the communities it created and inspired. Rather than the music, as manifested in Toronto, being provincial or derivative, it was a powerful force that transformed the art community across disciplines in the model it provided for resourceful, mobile, quickly-adapting relationships – procedures of relating to creativity and one's fellow creators that became important parts of the imaginative worlds of many musicians, poets, dancers, listeners, and performers.

When it is historicized, the improvised music community often becomes a model that throws into dynamic relief many of our society's subtle but insistent power relationships: it shows us the hegemonic, self-historicizing and static "places" – the institutions that become established, even in so fluid a discipline as the improvising arts, in order to dominate the available resources – and the many resistant, subversive and fast moving "spaces" that artists create, within and between and away from these places, in order to make their art, to engage with their audiences, and to subsist, to survive, and occasionally, to thrive.

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Appendix 1-1: Two Toronto Women Improvisers

1) Diane Roblin

Interviewed in Toronto, January 20, 2016

In the 1970s, Diane Roblin was active as a pianist on the Toronto bar scene, and also played in a number of sessions, mostly privately, with the Artists' Jazz Band. In recent years, she has reappeared leading her own group, Reconnect, as well as playing with a younger generation of improvisers such as Nicole Rampersaud, Heather Saumer, Kyle Brenders, Nick Fraser, Rob Clutton and Raphael Weinroth-Browne. This interview took place January 20, 2016 at Diane's home in Toronto.

David Lee: In my dissertation, I've been referring to the music I did with Bill Smith, and the Artists' Jazz Band, and one question asked by my committee members is, "Why were these groups all male?" How might this relate to your experience playing piano with the AJB?

Diane Roblin: I played with the Artists' Jazz Band when I was at the Toronto Dance Theatre, and playing a little bit with Rough Trade, before I went on the road with all these different bands from about 1975 to 1979. I must have met them at Grossman's when I was playing with my band Synergy. I'm sure that's what happened, and they said, Come on up and play with us.

I was 22 or so, they were in their forties. I didn't even know they were well-known. I knew very little about them. We played at Gord's studio, just up the street from

Grossman's, when he was living there with Judy Hendeles, who went on to become Ydessa. I must have played with them for over a year.

David Lee: What brought you to Canada?

Diane Roblin: Growing up in Buffalo, New York, I had piano lessons from ages seven to sixteen--classical music. No pop, no jazz – and then I didn't feel like playing any more. I went to Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, to study sociology. I was into R&B and all that: I wasn't listening to any jazz really, just funky black soul music. Then a bunch of guys turned me on to *A Love Supreme*. That's where it started for me. That was my first exposure to really far out music; I just loved *A Love Supreme* and I just couldn't get enough of all that music. Up to then it was all about James Brown and soul music.

We were at the university – it was 1968 and 69, so it was the era of hippiedom, and SDS and radical power and Kent State. Pharoah Sanders was the musician-in-residence at Case, and gave concerts, so of course I connected with Pharoah Sanders because I loved that music. For years I had his copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* that he gave to me. But I wasn't really playing.

Then, after the Kent State shootings [May 4, 1970], the university completely shut down. We didn't have any classes. There was this school shutdown because of Kent State. At Case Western, all that was left was Pharoah Sanders, and meditation classes. The school closed down, all my friends moved, and I had to transfer out of Case.

My mother suggested Toronto. She thought it was a great place to transfer to, because it was only two hours away from Buffalo. That's where I'm from, and we used to come to Toronto; my parents used to bring me up here and we'd eat out at Mr. Tony's

and we'd go to theatre. We used to come in the '60s, because I remember the long-haired people up on Yorkville Avenue when I was a teenager.

So my mother suggested U of T, or York University. U of T was not going to give me all my credits for the Case Western courses, but York would, so I could graduate as planned. I transferred to York University in 1970, and I had enough credits in sociology that I hardly had to take any courses. But I got up there, with all my sociology courses, and I needed some electives. So I took Alan Lessem's 20th century music course.

I loved it! He opened up my eyes. You didn't have to audition to take these courses. I took electronic music, I took Indian singing, I was singing with John Higgins, and learning the mridangam with Trichy Sankaran. I took ethnomusicology. I got a whole year's credit for singing *Stimmung* by Stockhausen! In Alan Lessem's class, we went to hear a Penderecki and Shostakovich concert at York, and we were assigned to write an essay describing the music. This was the time and the era, and I blush a little bit to remember it – I did it all in pastels, and I got an A plus! So by taking this contemporary music thing, it revitalized my interest in music.

While I was going to York I lived in downtown Toronto, on McPherson Avenue. My neighbour across the street was Jane Vasey, who was a brilliant classical musician. She used to give little house concerts, and I'd go over, and we became very tight friends; when I got married she was my maid of honour. I gave her an Otis Spann record, and that's what turned her on to blues piano. She had played nothing other than classical music, but she had these monster ears, so she heard Otis Spann and she just loved it.

So here's this relationship of two good friends, she's turning me onto piano because I'm so inspired, by Alan Lessem and all the music I was taking at York, and we

had a big impact on each other, Jane Vasey and I. I'm sure if I didn't hear her play I wouldn't have been as inspired either. Because it inspired me to go back to the piano.

I did all these great courses from 1970 to '72. I studied with David Rosenboom and Richard Teitelbaum. Biofeedback and the arts: David Rosenboom would hook us up to electrodes, and his ex-wife, Jacquie Humbert, a visual artist, she did this thing where two people sit on the grass and there were sprinklers, and when our alpha waves were in sync, the sprinklers would go off, and the music would do this and that. The whole world of contemporary music and imagination was at my doorstep. So I got back into piano. I started taking classical lessons with David Lidov's wife – he's a composer at York.

I graduated with my sociology degree, but I wanted to be in the jazz program. I had to audition, and I had to audition in front of Peggie Sampson, the viola da gamba player, who *hated* me, because I was this excited musician who had very little training: not her cup of tea. But the jury was her and Alan Lessem. So I got my piano stuff up, and I passed the audition because of Alan, and then I took John Gittins' jazz course. And I studied jazz with John Gittins and Bob Witmer – they were the jazz teachers up there.

Around the same time I did this thing with a friend of mine, Jack McFadden, who's a bass player. He and I, in 1971 or '2, went to the Creative Music Studio in Woodstock. We went there for four days, and then to Ornette Coleman's studio for five days, in New York. It was so fantastic. When we got to New York, the workshops were held by Lee Konitz, Jack DeJohnette played my Fender Rhodes that I brought with me, and of course there was Dave Holland and Karl Berger, and Leroy Jenkins.

Lee Konitz wanted us to sing our solos. The hot young alto player – the guy who we all thought was the hottest player in the group – couldn't sing his solo. And when Lee

asked me, I simply sang mine with no problem. Later I called my piano teacher in Buffalo, Mrs. Winsex [?]... and thanked her, for the background she gave me in music, to be able to pick up the way I did; to have enough chops and to know enough music to be able to do this. I thought she'd get a kick out of knowing what happened.

But when I went to New York, I had two choices. I could have stayed and tried to become a jazz artist. Or I could go back to Toronto, where it was safe. But there were no other women musicians, even in the CMS workshops. While I was there I spent a lot of time with Jerome Cooper; he had a lot of friends, and I would play with them. But there wasn't that inspiration; I think not having a woman around made a big difference. So I went home.

David Lee: It's interesting, the importance of having a role model.

Diane Roblin: Yes, which they do now: in the younger generation nobody thinks twice about it. If you want to be a trumpet player, just talking about mainstream jazz here in Toronto – people who play at the Rex – there's Rebecca Hennessey, and there's Carrie Chestnutt, an R&B tenor player. There's not a million, but there are now women saxophone players, trumpet players, but I can't think of anybody when I was playing in the seventies, not one female musician. Except for Carla Bley, and Marian McPartland in New York. In Toronto there was Carol Britto, who was playing in the seventies, but she was older. I was looking for someone I could identify with, but there were no hipsters. There were no young hipsters among the women. They were all men. I'm sure that had an impact on why I didn't stay in New York. Although when you played with people, it didn't matter if you were a woman, because once you started playing, you were hip and they didn't see who you were. You can't be a closed person if you're playing open music.

You know, if you're not thinking genre, you have to be open-minded to men and women and to ideas and exploration.

David Lee: Interesting, because in Toronto improvised music there are really good women horn players around now, like Nicole Rampersaud, Heather Segger, Karen Ng, Lina Allemano.

Diane Roblin: They're respected by everybody. The generation who are now in their thirties. Alison Oh, and Allison Cameron. In the 1970s, if a woman saxophone player got up, everyone would be shocked. But it's no longer a novelty to young people, to see women in a band.

I went back to Toronto still thinking I would be a social worker, but in the meantime, I worked at my first music jobs. Jane was giving me work, like Limelight Dinner Theatre that she'd written the music for, because she was now in Downchild [Downchild Blues Band]. I started playing for the Toronto Dance Theatre school, playing for their classes. And I was taking a jazz course, I guess from John Gittins, because I remember I was playing some of the themes of my compositions from the jazz course, in these Toronto Dance Theatre exercise classes, with Trish Beatty and David Earle and Peter Randazzo. And I played for the Pavlychenko Dance Theatre, which was run by Nadia Pavlychenko, Graham Coughtry's sister-in-law.

After McPherson Avenue, in the early seventies I lived on McMurrich, and then at Ulster and Euclid, and Bill and Clo Smith lived on Howland Avenue, and I met Don Pullen and all of the Mingus crowd. In retrospect it seems as if Mingus used to play here every other month! In 1974 he came to this weird place on Jarvis Street, Mackenzie's

Corner House. It was a bar in the basement of an apartment building. And he came with Don Pullen and George Adams. I was just out of York. I was at home woodshedding Herbie Hancock, and Don Pullen came over and gave me a McCoy Tyner lesson. I was playing free, and I tried to imitate what Don was doing, but I was just sort of hitting the piano. He said, “What are you doing? You’re beating up the piano. That’s not what I’m doing.” And he explained it to me.

Then I moved to an apartment on Spadina across from the Paramount. I lived there for several years alone, and then Fraser [Finlayson] moved in with me. And somewhere in there I started my own jazz band called Synergy, which was Michael Stuart, Bobby Brough, Rick Homme [drummer – Clayton Johnston?]. And we were able to play quite a lot. It was the years when Trudeau [Pierre] was in, the years of the LIP grants [Local Initiatives Program], and the AFM had Trust Fund grants – I mean, just grants to play! So I had Synergy, and I was in Gary Kendall’s blues band called Dollars, and I played with Rough Trade, I was their piano player when John Capek couldn’t make it.

All this was during the 1972 to ’75 period, where I was starting to become a musician. It was through Grossman’s that I met the Artists’ Jazz Band and started playing with them at Gord’s studio. So without them, I don’t know what would have happened either. I was a modal musician in those days; I’d also studied with Ted Moses, and I was already playing genre music, but I was young, and I wasn’t as expressive as I could be when I played with them. With the AJB, you could do no wrong. It’s really important for musicians, because then you put your music down, you have no changes, no charts in front of you, and you just play music. And you’re doing it because you’re listening and

you're connecting with the other musicians. Some of those players had musical talent, and some of them just wanted to blow and have fun. Michael Snow is a schooled musician, he's an amazing trumpet player and an amazing pianist, and he used to make a living in music, sort of as a bar musician, like I was. And the other guys, Graham had a wonderful sound on trombone. And Jonesie [Jim Jones] was a professional bass player, and Gord was so fervent about everything, as was his drumming, his playing, and he was a good player. I don't know, there wasn't anyone who wasn't a good player. Some people have just more talent ... I don't even want to use the word talent ... just made more music out of their music (laughs).

I loved playing with them, and except for Bob Markle, they were all very supportive. I'm sure he cared about me, but I'd been playing with them for quite a while, showing up every week, but when they got a gig at the Isaacs Gallery, he said, no no no, it's just me, Gord, Graham, Jonesie and Michael. No no no no no. So I was pissed off, Graham used to say, it's just Markle, don't worry about it ... but I'm still mad at Markle. He didn't want a woman in the band in public.

But on their behalf, they were of the same generation more or less, and they were all art teachers, and they were all a wave of painters who'd come up together. They had this camaraderie that made for a kind of inner circle of theirs before anybody else played with them, of any sex, so they were their own little unit: Graham, Gord and Markle. Those three guys. Even Michael said he felt like an outsider.

Otherwise, playing with them was great, because you could do no wrong, if you could play, and if you were open and if you were listening to someone, I mean the whole

thing about free improvisation is listening to people. Some people don't want you to connect or have any genre, I guess: more like John Cage, it's all a random situation. As far as I'm concerned, a good free improvisational musician is someone who's really listening to everybody else's playing, and it all becomes relevant. There's lots of relevance, and that's the direction the music takes. I was always at home playing with the Artists' Jazz Band, I never felt nervous about it: you couldn't do wrong, so you could really develop your music. The Artists' Jazz Band was really important in my life because it allowed me to express myself without any insecurities.

David Lee: At one point you said to me that they really gave you the confidence to do the other stuff.

Diane Roblin: Well they did. When you played you had no insecurities, so you felt confident when you played with these guys. And when you had ideas – I mean, it just made you a stronger musician. Because you could just develop your music and your ideas and not worry about whether it's right or wrong or fitting in, or genre-oriented. And my music always sounded somewhat genre-oriented, because that's who I was. Who I am, even today when I play free.

I never really thought I'd become a musician. I was not a musician ... until I became a musician. And that's why I think the Artists' Jazz Band made me feel I was a part of music. They made you feel like you were a part of something.

Through these kinds of experiences, and just going to York University, I got back into music. I did a little bit of temp typing and this and that, but I was pretty much a working musician. And I went on the road with all these various bands. Mary Margaret

O'Hara and I were in our first band together. She was the blues singer, and I was the piano player, in Dollars on the road, doing blues and R&B. The drummer Paul DeLong and I were off with Charlotte Martin, playing up in Kapuskasing; I had Synergy, but soon I was so busy, what with being on the road, playing six nights a week and a matinee. That's what everyone did: there were lots of gigs; you were in bands. It's not like today where everyone just does one-nighters.

David Lee: You could actually make a living of some kind. Working your butt off, but ...

Diane Roblin: When you're young, it's the right time, you don't mind.

David Lee: So when the Toronto improvised music scene started to grow around the Music Gallery, which opened in 1976, you were doing totally different things. What kind of stuff were you doing then?

Diane Roblin: There wasn't an opportunity for me to play free, because look at the free players: they weren't making a living in music. Casey Sokol was a teacher. Bill Smith had *Coda*. No one in that band was making a living playing music. It was an artist's scene, and that's cool, but I had the opportunity to make a living in music, once I was invited to play in all these bands, and once I started playing the business, there really wasn't time to do this other stuff. And I was getting more and more focused on genre music at that time. My own perception of genre music.

Somehow I ended up at the Bloor Street Diner and became a cocktail musician. The Bloor Street Diner was a great place to play, because you could play your heart out. But I ended up doing all kinds of private parties for \$150 an hour, and really started to

lose interest in music. I started working in the film business, doing back end financing and dealing with Telefilm Canada and Heritage Canada, and I was on some TV shows as a coordinator. Meanwhile I was playing private parties, and weddings, and one night at one of these weddings, even at \$150 an hour, I did not want to play for one more hour. I knew it was time to leave.

All this took me further and further away from playing with bands. That was in the eighties, and then in the nineties I added front-line crisis counselling. At 16 I was going to be a teenage social worker – which I ended up doing at 46. That was my calling, and actually, when I did it, that *was* my calling. Though I got burnt out pretty fast, because it's pretty intense working in a shelter. So I went into social work, and then I sort of retired, and then travelled. When my husband Fraser died in 2011, there was a big event at Hugh's Room, with Hank Bull as the emcee. And I came out of retirement. I wasn't playing at all, not even at home, but I felt I needed to perform at Fraser's concert. I couldn't imagine all these musicians playing and me not playing. So I played solo piano, McCoy Tyner's *Search for Peace*, and I played with my friends Fathead, an R&B group.

So after Fraser's death, I came back into music, I had no idea what I'd be doing. I ran into Arthur Bull, at Dave's Pizza [now called Dave's on St. Clair]; you guys were playing. And I said to Arthur, I'm sort of dabbling in music again and he said, "You should check out Somewhere There." So I did; Mary Margaret O'Hara was playing, and no one was there; not one person. So I said to Arnd Jurgensen, can I come up and play? And he said sure. And I played with him every week after that and it was like hey, play music. Play music. That was a big influence, again, on getting me to feel strong about my

piano playing. I was on the outskirts working my way back into music, and where did I feel most at home? Not playing jazz, where did I feel relaxed? Was playing free with everybody. And that was the door back into feeling like I could play with people. If it wasn't for the Somewhere There thing, and playing free improv again, I'm not sure I would have connected with musicians again. I don't know what would have happened.

In 2012 I ran into Howard Spring, in 2013 I had a band, in 2014 I had a record and here we are. So music has been something that comes and goes in my life. Before, I was making a living at it, and I had my own little band and I made sure we had gigs and I was doing things, but when I came back it was different, because I wasn't looking to make money at it, so I could put all of my energy into writing music and all my energy into having a band. But music's held a really unusual place in my life.

Appendix 1-3: Three Toronto Women Improvisers

3) Gayle Young

Email interviews 2016

As a composer and performer, Gayle Young developed notational systems and designed microtonal musical instruments such as the Amaranth and Columbine. Young studied contemporary music at Toronto's York University, 1974-77, with Bob Becker, David Rosenboom, Casey Sokol, Richard Teitelbaum, and James Tenney, among others. One way or another she has been associated with the Music Gallery since its founding in 1976, and amid this mixed and ostensibly collective milieu, she made her own distinctive niche, playing the first concert using her new instruments there in January 1978.

She has been active in interdisciplinary arts practices, including sound sculptures and installations with Reinhard Reitzenstein. Her compositions for chamber ensembles and for her own instruments have been broadcast and performed internationally. In her music Young links elements within texts, within tunings, and within soundscapes.

Through her experiences in composing, performing, and instrument-building, she became convinced of the importance of articulating the intentions of innovative practices in new music and sound arts, and the social and cultural contexts in which such art forms flourish. She was one of the first contributors to Musicworks when it began publishing in 1978. A decade later she became the magazine's editor, and she remains its publisher.

The Sackbut Blues, Young's biography of Canadian electronic music pioneer and inventor Hugh Le Caine, was published in 1989; in 1999 she released a CD of compositions and demonstrations found among Le Caine's papers.

Gayle Young was prominent in all these activities in the early years of Music Gallery, but never became a consistent performer in the many ensembles of varied lifespans that came out of that milieu. As so many of the Music Gallery groups were noticeably all-male, I asked her if she thought that there were definable borders of gender at the time. We corresponded through a series of emails that I have edited into the following document. At one point, Gayle admitted that my questions were eliciting a certain nostalgia.

Maybe the nostalgia I feel is related to that (1976) summer when I was sharing a very nice High Park house with three other music students, and heading back and forth to the Music Gallery pretty often, on a more or less deserted Queen West. Nostalgia for the freedom provided by not having to pay a lot of rent. That first summer Music Gallery provided an open house for (often random) improv combos. I talked a lot with [CCMC member] Larry Dubin, and played loose duo improv sessions with him during afternoons there.

There used to be nice places to live – like houses near High Park – for low rent so you had time to show up at the Music Gallery and hang out – more or less all day. And in the years following there were programs in place where you could get paid to do concerts. For instance, at the Art Gallery of Ontario they had a large space available and paid a fee for concerts done there. The New Music Co-Op played there a lot. Those opportunities gradually disappeared and at the same time our living expenses increased. We didn't know it then, but it was a very short flash of time, when all this was possible. Through

CAPAC [which is now SOCAN] the payment of royalties in those days was pretty high on a per-concert basis. I was paid around \$4,000 in royalties – far higher than ever before or since – after doing an East Coast concert tour. This is the basis of what I sometimes tell ‘young’ people about that brief period: low rent, high royalties – the Two R’s – now in reverse. If I’d been facing today’s conditions I would have had to quit music. Simple as that.

You were asking about gender barriers and general inclusiveness, though. I’ll attempt to respond, but should let you know from the start: I do not understand a thing about how gender barriers work, or why. Or what to do about them. Looking back, I notice that I made several decisions that made it harder for me to participate fully in the Toronto improv scene, and these had little to do with gender. The first, chronologically speaking, was designing and building my own instruments. They are large and hard to move from the studio to concert venues, so bringing them in for an informal improv session was not that practical. They are also unfamiliar and nobody knows what to expect from them. At first I booked concerts, mostly in visual art venues, for a small ensemble that played pieces I wrote, then I increasingly did solo concerts, mostly for practical reasons such as not being able to pay the players very much, and problems scheduling rehearsals. I did all this without applying for arts council grants – though the places we played had funding so I had arts council support indirectly.

Another factor that affected my activity level was leaving Toronto in 1981. I have lived in the Niagara region – pretty much a new music free zone – ever since. I needed quite a

bit of floor space for the two instruments and the piano, and by this time I shared a loft at King and Bathurst with visual artist Reinhard Reitzenstein. The impetus for the move was a steep rent increase, though I soon realized that the rural location provided a quiet environment, and a work space where my music would not disturb others.

A third factor was, and remains, the diversity of my interests. I have combined many kinds of activity, when most people stick to one or two and become more or less established as, say, reed players or percussionists – known for doing something recognizable. In a recent conversation with a friend I admitted that I still can't quickly describe what I do. It is not just soundscape, not just tuning. It includes improvisation, and descriptive texts interpreted as sound. I allow myself be led by curiosity rather than goal-directed planning. I've taken many side-roads into outdoor sculpture projects and sound installation. And I make small toy-like instruments. I take a playful attitude, even though new music is usually pretty serious.

This is bad for the so-called career, but it's good for my thinking. This past month I was working in a visual arts collective, doing an outdoor piece at Fieldwork (near Perth, Ontario), and the project got me started on a very interesting way of thinking about my recent composition for ten violas – where the emphasis is on tuning, text, and timbre. It brought me back to the academic research I did before I went to music school, trying to understand the changes that took place in European culture parallel with the scientific (and industrial) revolutions. One of the changes was from an emphasis on quality to one on quantity: what can be measured is real. The piece at Fieldwork relates to surveying,

understanding land and landforms through a grid laid down by map makers. This simplifies the world into a two-dimensional grid, and it reminded me of music notation that renders quality of sound secondary to a two-dimensional mapping of time and frequency. I have a lot of thinking and reading to do before I can even talk about what quality means in this age of digital quantification. A visual art project got me started, and this demonstrates that for me there are benefits of a broad untethered approach, where anything interesting is worth following up.

Getting back to the early years of the Music Gallery, though, one of the attractive things about it was the value of the collective, socially and musically. For me music is a way of overcoming isolation, of sharing an experience of sound with others, just as we can share other natural processes. Maybe it's like gathering on a beach to watch a sunset. Or a thunder storm. Playing in Northern Ontario, back in the days when there was funding to do that, I noticed the open curiosity of audiences who hadn't yet learned to keep their distance from new experiences in music. That's why I got involved in writing about music. I intended to provide context for adventurous listeners, first with the Le Caine biography, then by taking over *Musicworks* when Tina Pearson (the editor before me) left for BC. I was consciously trying to build listener interest for the art form, and also to strengthen the internal cohesion of the music community. In doing this I neglected my own music, a habit that I am gradually correcting now that I am no longer the editor. Getting involved with writing was risky because it will take decades before anyone can assess whether the Le Caine book or the magazine had any influence on the adventurousness of listeners. It's all a gamble.

Even though editing *Musicworks* was a helping role – helping writers and composers to articulate their intentions in writing – I didn't think of it in gender terms. I didn't think of anything in gender terms, actually. When I was in music school I avoided gender as a matter of principle. I wore baggy clothes and work boots. I'd already been dis-intimidated in car mechanics and carpentry (house construction), and I was not nervous about synthesizers, mostly because I knew how things work. But the ever-present option of sexual activity was a nuisance. It put me in a defensive position. Most of the time I unconsciously side-stepped the possibilities by simply not noticing, and at times the results were darkly humorous. It's dark because these incidents often closed off the option of simple friendship. There were times when a male would assume that I would not have gone to a particular party if I wanted to go home alone afterwards, so he would kind of come home with me, and I'd quickly say good-bye just before leaving a subway car to escape that pressure. And I seldom saw that person again. It becomes particularly challenging when it's connected with playing music. Confusion often arises when you really like playing music with someone, you've made a great connection in sound, and one of you thinks it's a good idea to stay with that in private after the concert. There are quite a few times when my non-recognition of the invitation – or my non-compliance – resulted in the other person being embarrassed, probably humiliated, and never communicating again. That constant possibility, even when kept in the background, probably makes it less likely for the males to invite women to join them in jam sessions. And it leads to isolation.

Here's another dynamic where these confusions cause isolation. It happens to a lot of women. A female music student going out for a drink after a concert is often perceived as a possibility beyond the social, so an element of threat enters the picture. A professor's wife can easily, and sometimes justifiably, feel envious of female students who talk to her husband about music. Especially if the wife cannot share the enthusiasm and the musical knowledge. It's Ok if male students engage with their professors like this but for women it's against the rules. The wife might give public cold stares, in the lobbies during the intermissions of concerts for instance. Female students learn to stay away from social engagements like this, which means that they don't talk about music with their professors, sometimes for years. This story gives me a glimpse of how bizarrely irrational we are. Why is a wife so sure her hubby is straight, anyway? He could take up with one of his male students just as easily. But that possibility never impedes males in social bonding. For me this situation got better when people noticed that I was showing up with the same guy for a few years, but again it seems irrational because they clearly don't trust either the student or the professor to remain monogamous, so why is it safer when the student gets a partner? These stories indicate that sex was pretty serious back then – in contrast to the mythology of the era where everything was supposed to have been free and easy.

The founders of the Music Gallery accomplished a lot. By getting funding for a music space as a parallel gallery they brought music into the same financial infrastructure as the visual arts. There were habits and situations that developed around gender, I'd almost say "of course." Very few of us have control of these things – or can think through the

implications in real time. What I think about it now, as I write almost forty years later, is not what I was thinking then. To me it's not related to individuals, it's more of a cultural current, where the fish can't always compensate for the direction the water is flowing. I didn't even notice what direction it was flowing most of the time. The Music Gallery was an all-male outfit. I don't think I even paid attention. My first formal connection with the Music Gallery was as ticket taker at the entrance, and this provided a great incentive for me to attend every concert that took place there until I left Toronto. My next connection with Music Gallery was almost ten years later through *Musicworks* Magazine.

Musicworks was funded by the publications sections of the arts councils, and was legally 'an activity of' the Music Gallery, independent financially and editorially and paying its share of the rent. Things were pretty loose then. You could just ride through a year without watching the income/expense lines on a monthly basis. And not worry too much about the year-end tally. When we ran out of money we worked for free. Another sign of the times. A kind of freedom, made possible by the low rent. I was able to maintain that freedom longer than people who lived in Toronto, because rural living expenses are lower.

Musicworks was treated no differently than two other cultural organizations that shared the building at 179 Richmond West. We had shared fundraisers with all four organizations, mostly organized by Lauren Pratt, who ran the magazine with me at that time. *Musicworks* set up its own board in 2003 to provide financial and practical support for the magazine. This was already a new era, and the Music Gallery board was

seemingly always busy resolving a crisis and had no time for *Musicworks*, which was seldom in crisis.

Like Music Gallery, *Musicworks* was an artist-run organization. We were nowhere near being able to pay professional magazine staff, for one thing, and there was nobody we knew in the magazine world who was intrigued enough by new music to join the team. I realized later that as both a practicing artist and the editor of *Musicworks* I had an inherent conflict of interest because there was a temptation to promote my friends, who were of course the best bands/composers in the world. And I was openly promoting an art form of which I was a practitioner. So I kept the coverage broad and never (to my knowledge) collected on any tacit agreements – like *Musicworks* publishes an article about a festival and then the editor is invited to play at the festival. This broad mandate led *Musicworks* into marginalized territory because it did not gain the loyalty of any of the sub-groups in the music scene. I might describe them as factions, and sometimes it seems that the entire art world was divided into mutually dismissive factions. In retrospect I think this is mainly a defense against the overwhelming variety of arts practices. Knowing what faction you are in provides a way for people to simplify their worlds, to decide which events to attend, and keep a self-definition intact. It's all astoundingly personal, and for an editor, impossible. I was able to feature a maximum of maybe 5% of the arts activity I knew about while I was editing *Musicworks*, and the other 95% probably believed that I didn't like their music. Here's an anecdote that pinpoints this dynamic. I only realized later that it could be true for *Musicworks*. *Ear Magazine* in NYC was in financial trouble and had a big fundraiser. John Cage volunteered a

performance. Very few people showed up. The mag folded. Asked why they stayed home, later, people said “*Ear* did not review my CD.”

I was not aligned with any of the separate sub-groups. I participated in all of them as a listener and often as a friend – with the Murray Schafer music theatre people, the Canadian Electronic Ensemble, New Music Concerts, Array Music, Music Gallery and CCMC. Even York and U of T music schools had their own scenes. I remember people actively dismissing other groups in conversation. My not belonging to – and not developing loyalty to – one of the factions was a strategic error, related to my ongoing lack of self-definition.

So, here I am, like I said, with no answer to your question about the exclusion of women in new music. If you look at percentages of women in exploratory music, whose pieces are being played in Canada, who are in improv groups, or who have university teaching positions, you can see something is not working. There has been little progress in forty years. If more women were in senior teaching positions the social pressures I experienced would probably be reduced, and female students would be less isolated. And would be heard in conversations with professors, for a start. The obvious result of the current situation is continued neglect of women’s music. There are so few women teaching anything in music today that our voices will not be carried into the next generation. We are unable to influence students. Because we remain outside the university system, even if we have PhDs, we will not be the subjects of future PhD theses. Our voices as artists are in danger of being lost.

Appendix 2: An Interview with Kenny Baldwin

In the early 2000s, I played with tenor saxophonist Kenny Baldwin (c.1930-2013) a number of times, usually in bands with Mark Hundevad on vibraphone or piano and Steven White on drums. While I was doing my MA in Music Criticism at McMaster University, I interviewed Ken, but when the interview was turned down by Coda Magazine, I shelved it in favour of other projects.

Prior to this, I had heard Kenny Baldwin's name many times during my years in Toronto. However, by that time he had moved to the country, so I had never heard or met him. His interview makes a suitable appendix to this dissertation, as it offers another perspective on the alternative academy (I've never heard of anyone learning to read music quite the way that Baldwin did), on the Toronto jazz scene after Baldwin's arrival there in 1954, and on the position of the jobbing professional playing with the Artists' Jazz Band. I interviewed Kenny Baldwin at his home in Flesherton, Ontario, October 18, 2002

Q: Where are you from originally?

London, England.

Q: You were saying you didn't have too much formal musical background?

I started to play alto saxophone at age 16. I did my first gig after ten weeks. I thought that I was really good too. I realize now of course that it was hideous, just hideous. I couldn't read, but there were three other saxophone players to hide me, so as they were playing the

tunes I'd be looking at the music and trying to play along, but I'd always be almost half a step behind them, it was really just terrible.

There were a gazillion bands then, in the '40s, in London. Of course, nobody in their right mind would hire me more than once, so I just played with a lot of bands and gradually got the hang of reading – it isn't really that tough. Reading requires no talent, it just requires you doing it all the time, like using a typewriter. You don't have to be a genius, and if you do it all the time, you become proficient.

So I finally got lots of experience reading, then at the ripe old age of 19, I got dragged into the air force for two years, where I was with one of the air force bands – not the central band, the heavy one for long-term players, I was with a regional band. There were four or five of them, but it was still a full-time music gig. So that's all my formal musical training, right there. I was self-taught up to that point.

Q: Were you working professionally as a musician?

Before I went in the air force, the only money I was making was from playing music, so I was professional in that respect. Basically I was what we called a layabout in England, I was hanging around doing little of anything really, and considering myself a professional musician. I had a giant ego, which probably most teenagers do, and it took a little experience to realize just how awful I was. Which is a good thing, or I never would have improved.

You gotta be hard on yourself. I know anything I hear of myself playing, generally speaking I find it to be quite hideous. Oh my god, why did I do that. Because nobody else knows what you mean to do. You've just got to be quick on your feet, and go

for a certain thing, and if you miss you better come up with something else immediately. Otherwise it does sound brutal.

Q: Were you playing around London into the 1950s?

Yes, I came here in 1954 and couldn't get in the union right away. At that time you had to be in the country a year before you could get a union card. I came to Toronto and worked at the stock exchange for a stockbroker for a year until I got my card. There were all those bars up Yonge Street, booming with bands at that time. I worked with a rhythm and blues band that had Sonny Greenwich in it. A very young Sonny Greenwich, but he was playing wonderfully then, and a really good tenor player, Dougie Richardson. I often played with a sort of rock and roll band with Tommy Ambrose, the singer, and Alex Lazeroth, the drummer. Both those bands kept me in business for several years, then I met with the one and only Terry Forster [double bassist] and things changed for me.

Terry Forster: his picture's up there, with Ray Sikora. Davidson, Saskatchewan – we were on our way through with The Greatest British Variety Tour – comedians, singers who all had been big in England. One of the singers gave us a signed photograph of herself – Anne Shelton. It was a nightmare, but we had fun – at least us three had fun. That might have been one of the last gigs I did with Terry. And Ray was a brilliant trombonist and an awesome arranger – though a brutal druggie and drinker. There were a lot of those talents around Toronto in the early sixties, who were quite brilliant and extremely self-destructive, and he fit the bill. Terry on the other hand took quite a bit longer to destroy himself. He was a good influence on me as far as opening my mind up to all kinds of music. He introduced me to Cecil and to Ornette, and to people like Charles Ives and Stravinsky and Aaron Copland. Up until that time I was into the “Gene

Ammons rules!” kind of thing. Charlie Parker, that was it. I just didn’t know about anything outside of that. Terry was a great teacher in that way. In other ways he was kind of destructive, self-destructive, and he got me into some trouble for sure. But he had a wonderful sound as a bass player.

Q: All working musicians in Toronto in the early sixties obviously weren’t interested in Ornette and free music....

No, most musicians thought you were totally weird, but then most musicians weren’t listening to Charles Ives or any of those people in the classical field, they thought you were weird for listening to that. They thought you were weird for listening to anything really. An awful lot of the working musicians in that era, it always appeared to me they weren’t particularly interested in music. It was a gig, man.

They also weren’t much interested in fun, which is a big part of music. The getting-high thing, that’s another story. Terry used to get pretty wrecked, but he could always play. If any bandleaders knew that he was smoking they could do nothing but overlook it, because he played so well.

I think most of the leaders would have freaked if they thought you were having a taste. It was all right if you were down there swilling triple scotches all night and getting totally messed. One bandleader who I was working with in the early seventies, playing shows every week, would stand at the bar, his face glowing red, telling everybody, “Nobody in my band smokes grass, and if anybody did, they’d be out of here immediately!” I mean come on. There weren’t many people in his band that did do it, but the few that did, he wouldn’t have known anyway, because he was always so drunk.

Q: It does seem pretty exceptional that you came from England to the backwoods of Canada here and managed to make a living as a professional musician. How long did you manage to do that?

From the mid fifties to the late seventies. And then it kind of crumbled, not just for me. In my opinion, it was because the Mafia got out of the union business, and somehow things got away from the union. As far as controlling clubs. Let's face it, there are guys in Toronto now working for thirty bucks a night, whatever. That just didn't happen. If a club couldn't pay, they weren't hiring. There had to be some kind of muscle behind the whole thing to keep it the way it was. I knew I could make a living, I knew that if a gig got cancelled at the last minute, everybody got paid for it, and that enabled musicians to make a living more readily than now.

Q: I imagine electronics has knocked people out of studio work.

What I think happened is that the guys who used to do all those jingles and all that studio work, whether not being there or being drastically reduced, that moved them down to playing the O'Keefe and playing in the pit band for *Showboat* or whatever. So everybody moved down. Even in those lower levels, weddings and what have you were always a pretty good source of income. There's not too many bands at weddings anymore. When my daughter got married I was horrified that she didn't have a band. They had a deejay.

Electronics definitely didn't do anybody any favours. A fight went on for a long time to keep deejays out of hotels and so on. Terry Forster and I started a motion at one of the meetings against having deejays – it didn't do any good.

Q: Did you take time to do any of your own creative work during those years? Did you get a handle on something that you felt was really you?

I was kind of struggling with the whole avant-garde thing at that time. It was most difficult to go from playing a very structured music, with chord changes and keys and melodies, into a thing where your starting point might be, like, nothing. No key, no tune, just keep going there boy. For a long time I found that very difficult.

However, I played with the AJB for quite a while. They had a series of cutouts, sort of caricature cutouts of the band up at the National Gallery in Ottawa. I was one of the cutouts. Then we got into artistic differences. They were going to do that double album that they did [*The Artists' Jazz Band*, 1973], and I was trying to write music for a band that couldn't read music. There are various ways of doing it.

Gordon [Rayner] seemed to be the controlling influence at that time and he said I could have one side of the double album to do my thing. I worked hard on this piece of music, with arrows and squiggly lines drawn up and down. And they looked at it once and said, "No, we don't wanna do that." Then we got into arguing and name-calling and that kind of verbal brilliance, and after that I didn't play with them anymore.

But we were all carrying giant egos – me just as much as those guys. At that time the band was Terry Forster, Gerry McAdam, Gordon, Markle on piano, Graham Coughtry, Nobu Kubota – they were the people who were pretty much there all the time. That would have been the core when I was there. For a couple of years I was at Rayner's every week.

I used to put them down when they got a little snotty about their painting. "How dare you – you come on playing this music, you don't know what you're doing, how

about if I got a canvas or two and splattered it with paint?” I just used to say it to piss them off, there wasn’t any serious intent. It is a good point, it is and it isn’t, though they were certainly more touchy about someone doing that than I would be about those guys playing music. It certainly didn’t matter to me – good luck to them. They were finding out about other things.

Q: Though you were active in the fifties, you never went through a period of, say, wanting to write bebop tunes.

I played with some bebop bands. At that time Rob McConnell, before he formed the Boss Brass, used to have a quintet with valve trombone, baritone, tenor, bass and drums, based on the Gerry Mulligan quintet. I worked with him for a couple of years, which was quite something. He was a very demanding man. He never wrote any charts, but you’d go to a rehearsal and he’d say, “Okay, we’re going to play such and such, now this is your part for this tune”, and he’d play this harmony part so fast and what have you, and he’d say, “You got that?”

“Oh yeah Rob, I got it.”

“Well lemme hear it,” and I’d fumble and screw it up something brutal. *But* it really sharpened your ear, because he made you do these things that you normally wouldn’t have done. Normally somebody would have written it out and you’d sit there and read the chart. But to have to not only remember it, but pick up the notes – I don’t think he really expected you to do it in one shot, which he could do even as a very young man.

Ray Sikora had a big band around that time, with Freddie Stone on trumpet and a lot of players of that calibre – but I’m 72 years old and the names escape me.

Ed Bickert? I did some work with Ed, though I was always pretty terrified to play with him – and he’s just a loveliest guy. You could get on the stand with him and screw up and I don’t think he’d be nasty – though he wouldn’t work with you again, whereas Rob McConnell would probably freak on you. But Ed is a very mellow guy. The other jazz band I worked with was Dave McMurdo before he had the big band. His quintet with trombone, saxophone, piano, bass and drums. I worked with him for a couple of years and was in a big band with him in the early ’70s playing shows – hideous stuff, though with that band we got the great news once that Duke Ellington was coming, which meant that not only did we not have to play at all, and get paid, but we could go and see Duke for free: I was there every night – and getting paid for it. He was amazing, I only ever saw him the one week. Harry Carney was there, Paul Gonsalves. That was the Hook and Ladder Room of the Beverley Hills Hotel, which was at Jane and Finch; it’s long since been torn down. A weird location, but they had mostly Las Vegas shows: Brenda Lee, Mel Torme, Natalie Cole.

That other photo is a rock and roll band. It wasn’t bad – Bill King, The King of Rock and Roll, a good singer. Our theme was “Seven Steps to Heaven,” the Victor Feldman tune. We played the Toronto clubs and then we got into the university and college circuit. Financially it was great. If we played two hours it was a lot, and I got paid \$150 a gig, and we did three or four of those a week. And we did background music for a couple of cheesy Canadian movies. It was a different experience playing with that band, I had a good time, which was how I measured my success. But now it’s good in a way, I’m basically playing for myself, though I do get this yearning sometime to play for an

audience. I'd like to play at Guelph or Victoriaville, but I don't see that ever happening.⁶⁹ It's not necessarily what you play, it's how you present yourself, like applying for CC grants.

There were a lot of opportunities to hear great music during the sixties and into the seventies. Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Rollins. The Friars Tavern down on Yonge Street: I heard Coleman Hawkins there, and I saw Roland Kirk there, which was dynamite. The place was packed, and my eldest son and I were arguing with the doorman to let us in. Kirk may have been blind, but obviously he had some reasonable ears, because this voice came over the sound system, "LET MY BROTHERS IN!"

It was a good town for jazz in those days. I heard Cannonball, Monk at the Colonial, and I heard Miles three times, twice with Coltrane and once at the Town Tavern with John Gilmore – I don't think Gilmore could have been with him for more than a cup of coffee.

But jazz was different then too. I remember sitting at the Town and it was a pretty rowdy place, people were drinking and talking, and Miles wasn't exactly the most understanding of men, but he just played, he played through all that shit, and they were yelling, and whooping it up if somebody was really hot. It was part of the scene then. Now every old gig is like a concert, and I'm not sure if I really like that. The gig that we did the other week was pretty good compared with the previous one. The first time I played there was with David Prentice and Mark Hundevad and some young kid on bass,

⁶⁹ A year or two after this interview, the author recalls that Baldwin did indeed play at the Guelph festival, upstairs at the Albion Hotel, in an ensemble with Mark Hundevad vibraphone, David Lee bass, and Steven White drums, on a bill that featured Jeremy Strachan and others.

it came out really great. We sent it off to Bob Rusch at Cadence, but on further listening he realized that the crowd level was just too much.

I also saw Andrew Hill in a trio at the Bohemian Embassy back in the sixties, and I saw another band there, a Detroit avant garde band that was just awesome, but there wasn't a lot of that music came to town.

So I was involved in regular jazz to an extent, but most of the stuff was a sideline for those musicians. Rob played a lot of studio work, Dave did shows, and now and then they'd get a gig for a quintet which would be delightful, but it would be three months until they got another gig. It was almost like being in the avant garde!

The last festival gig I had was in the Toronto Jazz Festival's Next Wave series. I played with Raphe Malik, and Mark Hundevad, and the bass player that was there the other week, the four of us. We were the warmup band for the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble out of Chicago. It was packed, it was overpacked. The whole Next Wave series did extremely well for two years, and then Jim Galloway decided he didn't want that. That seems to happen a lot. I think to be the artistic director for one of these festivals, you've got to have a broad outlook on the music. For example, I find a lot of similarities between dixieland and the avant garde. The collective aspect, in dixieland you've got the three horns, all playing at once, interlocking themes, and it's the same thing with the avant garde.

I got involved with Raphe Malik through Mark Hundevad. Mark arranged for him to come up and do a concert at the Music Gallery, and asked me to do it. We did six or seven gigs together after that, always in Toronto. The first concert we did at the Music Gallery was pretty busy, four or five years ago. Then through him we got hooked up with

Glen Spearman, who was really awesome, then with Sabir Mateen, who's a beautiful guy. He plays all the saxophones, clarinet, flute: when he sets up onstage it looks like he's opening up a music store. He's with Cecil's big band now. I hooked up with these people through Mark Hundevad, who took a beating on every concert. Raphe's an amazing player. All I knew was that he played with Cecil, then at the warmup he played one note and you knew this guy was a serious trumpet player. He had a huge sound. I would think him and Bill Dixon might be the two guys right now. I played a concert at a loft on Spadina with both Raphe and Sabir, and I had to bow out of the last tune while they kept going. My chops were just in tatters, just gone, I couldn't play. They played so hard. But it's always fun, that's the key, the music has to be fun.

I had a giant car accident last year. My wife broke her back, and when they ran me through the CAT scan they found a little dot on my bladder – it turned out to be cancer, but it's non-invasive and under control. And I had an aneurism on my aorta, which was much more serious, but you go through these things. Twenty years ago it would have been bye bye, but now it's extremely controllable.

I've been here, just outside of Flesherton, for four years. We moved from Alliston to here. We moved up to the Alliston area in the early seventies. We didn't feel our neighbourhood, College and Dovercourt, was the best area for the kids – it was great for us, but we felt it was crappy for children, so we moved up to the country. But moving to here (Flesherton) was just amazing – how many villages of this size can you play free music in a restaurant and get forty people in there. They make a lot of noise, but they all stay. I've got this painter, drummer guy who lives up the road, Steven White, who is

doing these albums for me. And after a while being here I hooked up with David Prentice, who's an awesome dude and has a lovely, lovely sound.

When we were in the Alliston area, which is close to Barrie, which is really a city, it was a cultural wasteland. Maybe because there's no university there. Kingston, which is about the same size as Barrie, has an abundance of culture. It has Queens University, the Royal Military College. But Flesherton here is a very unusual twilight zone of painters and musicians.

When I first moved up to Alliston, I was still in the music business. It gradually faded and I had to get day gigs for the first time in my life. I became a bricklayer's labourer for a couple of summers, which was tough. Everything from that to truck driver – unskilled jobs of course, but all I'd ever done was play music, and I had little or no formal education, even musical education. So you do what you gotta do. I was working over at the Beaver Valley ski club for one winter before the accident – eight bucks an hour. But it was cool – a five-minute drive down the road here to sit in a heated hut all day watching idiots fall off ... but I can't do that anymore. My fingers are fine, but my wrist got pretty crushed in the accident, so as far as lifting anything or doing anything, it's not fine.

But there was not much happening in Toronto anyway. At first, I thought it was just me from having moved up here, but then I saw everybody else who still stayed in Toronto scuffling and things getting harder for them. It was worth moving up. I never thought I'd enjoy living out in the country, having been a city boy all my life, but I like it, and I certainly like it a whole lot more since I moved here and was able to discover all these people.

Q: It sounds as if you've been working toward free music all your life.

Maybe not consciously. I've always been very open to music. I listen to everything. I figure if you don't hear it, you can't put it down. I've always been open and accepting if I could find any value in it for myself. I imagine my subconscious has always been pulling me into the new thing, not just because it's new but because I like it. I don't have any technical explanation for playing the way I do, but it suits me. I just wish I could play it better. Instead I listen to how good the other guys are in the band and I'm kind of cursing myself. For that's the way it should be anyway. Once you figure you got it nailed, you're not going to go anywhere. The way I feel you gotta try, whether you're good at it or not. Otherwise it all stops at "Take the A Train."

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Discography: "Outside the Empire" – Toronto Improvisation 1966-1986

This discography includes commercially-released LPs and cassettes of music and musicians covered in this dissertation. It documents the recorded work of the Artists' Jazz Band, Stuart Broomer, the CCMC, Bill Smith, and other related musicians. There are many hours of valuable material stored on tapes in private collections, as well as the Music Gallery's tape archive, that one hopes will be made available in years to come, so that listeners can enjoy, and scholars can appreciate, the scope of improvised music made in Toronto during these years. The recordings here are ordered alphabetically, each entry an ensemble name or leader's last name, and then chronologically within each entry category.

Artists' Jazz Band

The Artists' Jazz Band

Artists' Jazz Band

Gallery Editions [Isaacs Gallery] (2-LP set)

Graham Coughtry, trombone, pocket trumpet, flugelhorn; Nobuo Kubota, soprano, alto, baritone saxophones; Gordon Rayner, drums, percussion; Harvey Cowan, electric violin; Terry Forster, double bass; Jim Jones, electric bass; Gerry McAdam, electric and steel guitars; Robert Markle, electric piano, tenor saxophone; Michael Snow, piano, celeste, flugelhorn, trumpet, whistling. Recorded 1973.

Looks Like Snow / Is It Addicting? (a love song) / Raynershine / Markle-O-Slow

The Artists' Jazz Band

Live at the Edge

Music Gallery Editions MGE-3 (LP)

Robert Markle, tenor saxophone, piano, door knocks; Gordon Rayner, drums, percussion; Gerry McAdam, guitar; Michael Snow, trumpet, piano, whistling; Graham Coughtry, trombone; Nobuo Kubota, soprano & baritone saxophone; Jim Jones, bass; Denyse MacCormack, vocals. Recorded 1975 and 1976.

Who Is It? / That's Art Gerry / Smoke / Tapioca / A Space Number Too / Che Whiz.

Stuart Broomer

Stuart Broomer / Bill Smith

Conversation Pieces

Onari 002 (LP)

Stuart Broomer piano & prepared piano; Bill Smith soprano saxophone, marimba.

Recorded May 11, 1976.

A Configuration (Bill Smith) / An Outline of Miniature Potted Trees (Stuart Broomer) / First Jump (Bill Smith) / Imagine a short Monument, briefly enquire after its whereabouts (Stuart Broomer).

Stuart Broomer / John Mars

Annihilated Surprise

Ugly Dog Records (LP)

Stuart Broomer, piano; John Mars, drums. Recorded 1983.

Wind (John Mars) / Discreet (Stuart Broomer) / Dedication (John Mars) / China (Stuart Broomer).

CCMC

Canadian Creative Music Collective

CCMC Volume 1

CCMC 1002 (LP)

Peter Anson, guitar; Graham Coughtry, trombone; Larry Dubin, drums; Nobuo Kubota, soprano & baritone saxophones; Allan Mattes, bass; Bill Smith, soprano saxophone; Michael Snow, piano, trumpet; Casey Sokol, piano, electric piano. Recorded 1976.

Your first bicycles / Fool moon.

Canadian Creative Music Collective

CCMC Volume 2

CCMC 1004 (LP)

Peter Anson, guitar; Graham Coughtry, trombone; Larry Dubin, drums; Nobuo Kubota, soprano & baritone saxophones; Allan Mattes, bass; Bill Smith, soprano saxophone; Michael Snow, piano, trumpet; Casey Sokol, piano, electric piano. Recorded 1976.

23APR76 / 16JUL76A / 16JUL76B / 22JUN76 / 4JUN76

Canadian Creative Music Collective

CCMC Volume 3

Music Gallery Editions (LP)

Peter Anson, guitar; Larry Dubin, drums; Nobuo Kubota, soprano & baritone saxophones; Allan Mattes, bass; Michael Snow, piano, trumpet; Casey Sokol, piano, electric piano. Recorded 1977.

October Fourth / September Twentieth / June Seventh

CCMC

CCMC Volume 4 – Free Soap

Music Gallery Editions MGE 22

Al Mattes, marimba, bass, synthesizer [Buchla], drums, bells; Peter Anson, synthesizer [Buchla]; Michael Snow, trumpet, electric piano; Nobuo Kubota, whistle, horn, saxophone, drums, marimba, featuring [siren, crackle box, duck], percussion; Casey Sokol, piano, organ, drums. Released 1979.

A.K.A. February 13th / Noal / Free Soap.

CCMC

CCMC Volume 5 – Without A Song

Music Gallery Editions MGE 31

Al Mattes, bass, synthesizer [Buchla], marimba, horns, performer [shell casing] ; Casey Sokol, electric piano, synthesizer [Cat], harmonica, performer [beer bottle] ; Nobuo Kubota, glockenspiel, saxophone [alto], electronics [CB receiver], saxophone, bells, cowbell [comic contrapuntal], whistle, horns, maracas, performer [shell casing, flexitone] ; Michael Snow, trumpet, piano, Electric Piano, Synthesizer [Cat]. Recorded 1979, 1980.

Downtown Toronto / Without a Song / Low Blow / Umlaut Semicolon Diphthong.

Larry Dubin & CCMC

The Great Toronto Drummer's Greatest Recordings

Music Gallery Editions MGE 15 (3-LP set)

Larry Dubin, drums, percussion, marimba, pipe drums; with Peter Anson, Nobuo Kubota, Al Mattes, Michael Snow, Casey Sokol. 1970s recordings with CCMC.

Larry's Listening / Upon Arriving / A Postponement / Circuitry / Down the Street / Yourself Elsewhere / Radio in a Stolen Car / Uncalledforness / Silky Times / Back to Timmons / Leaves Shed Their Trees / One of Your Lips / Qui Ne Sert Qu'a Nous Faire Trembler. Titles of pieces extracted from writings by Paul Haines.

Victor Coleman

Vic D'or

33/3

Music Gallery Editions MGE 11 / Coach House Press (LP)

Victor Coleman, voice & texts; Larry Dubin, drums; Al Mattes, bass; Michael Snow, piano and trumpet; Casey Sokol, piano; Bill Smith, wooden flute, soprano saxophone, gong, bird whistle. Released 1978.

Moving Van / Asymptote / Masturbation Ramble / No Flies / Memory / Bulge Event for the Batty Persons Gallery / From the Realms of the Unseen Father / Birds / Rand McNally Ramble / Reply to an Adamant Lover at a Distance / Things to Do in Northampton with my 'Pectus Excavatum.'

Maury Coles

Maury Coles

Maury Coles' Solo Saxophone Record

Onari 003 (LP)

Maury Coles, alto saxophone. Recorded 1977.

Yonge Street Traveller / Hats Off / Goats Hill Road / Tip Top Pop / Prepared Plastic Number One. All compositions by Maury Coles except for Goats Hill Road by Bill Smith.

Lloyd Garber

Lloyd Garber

Energy Patterns

Onari 001 (LP)

Lloyd Garber, prepared guitar, electric guitar. Recorded 1976.

Bumble Bee / Fortune Teller / Trip / I Am / Prepared / Energy Patterns / Desert Weirdo / Hatful of Wertmuller. All compositions by Lloyd Garber.

John Oswald

John Oswald & Henry Kaiser

Improvised

Music Gallery Editions MGE 12 (LP); reissued as Incus 026 (CD – 1996)

Henry Kaiser, electric guitar; John Oswald, alto saxophone. Recorded 1978.

Vancouver / Vancouverification Part 1 / Vancouverification Part 2

Toshinori Kondo – John Oswald – Henry Kaiser

Moose and Salmon

Music Gallery Editions MGE 30

Toshinori Kondo, trumpet; John Oswald, alto saxophone; Henry Kaiser, electric guitar. Recorded 1978.

Bill Smith Ensemble

Bill Smith

Pick a Number

Onari 004 (LP)

Bill Smith, soprano & sopranino saxophones, alto clarinet; David Prentice, violin; David Lee, double bass, cello. Recorded December 11, 1979. All compositions by Bill Smith.
Up (A Love Song) For Captain Robot / Little Boo / Bones & Giggles / Interludes.

The Bill Smith Ensemble

The Subtle Deceit of the Quick Gloved Hand

Sackville 4008 (LP)

Bill Smith, soprano & sopranino saxophone, alto clarinet; David Prentice, violin; David Lee, double bass, cello. Recorded July 19, 1981.

Oops / (Bill Smith) / People In Sorrow (Roscoe Mitchell)/Lonely Woman (Ornette Coleman) / Three Simple Songs (Bill Smith) / Naima (John Coltrane) / Sofort (Bill Smith) / Pick A Number (Bill Smith).

Joe McPhee with the Bill Smith Ensemble

Visitation

Sackville 3036 (LP); reissued as Boxholder Records BXH 034 (CD – 2003)

Joe McPhee, flugelhorn, pocket trumpet, tenor & soprano saxophone; Bill Smith, soprano & sopranino saxophone, alto clarinet; David Prentice, violin; David Lee, double bass; Richard Bannard, drums. Recorded 1983.

Exuma (Joe McPhee) / Eleuthera (Joe McPhee) / Home at Last (Bill Smith) / If I Don't Fall (David Prentice) / A Configuration (Bill Smith).

Leo Smith with the Bill Smith Ensemble

Rastafari

Sackville 3030 (LP); reissued as Boxholder Records BXH 035 (CD – 2003)

Leo Smith, trumpet, flugelhorn, percussion, harmonica; Bill Smith, soprano & sopranino saxophone, alto clarinet; David Prentice, violin; David Lee, double bass & cello; Larry Potter, vibraphone. Recorded 1983.

Rastafari (Wadada Leo Smith) / Rituals (Bill Smith) / Madder Lake (David Prentice) / Little Bits (Bill Smith).

Maja Bannerman with the Bill Smith Ensemble

Future Perfect.

Blewointment 001 (cassette)

Maja Bannerman, voice; Bill Smith, Eb alto clarinet, sopranino saxophone, David Prentice, violin, viola, percussion; David Lee, cello. Recorded May 25, 1984.
The new wilderness / Close-up on cancer and camera / Black ice / Future perfect/Rituals.

Bill Smith Ensemble

Live in Toronto

Onari 007 (cassette)

Bill Smith, sopranino saxophone; David Prentice, violin; Arthur Bull, electric guitar; David Lee, double bass; Stich Wynston, drums. Recorded 1986.

Do You Want to Get Down? (Stich Wynston) / J'Accuse (David Lee) / Three Simple Songs (Bill Smith) / Madder Lake (David Prentice) / Home at Last (Bill Smith) / Rituals (Bill Smith) / The Subtle Deceit of the Quick Gloved Hand (Bill Smith) / Beauty is a Rare Thing (Ornette Coleman) / Paradise (David Lee) / Interludes (Bill Smith) / Are You From Out of Town? (David Prentice).

Bill Smith / David Prentice

High Times

Onari 008 (cassette)

Bill Smith, sopranino saxophone; David Prentice, violin. Recorded June 1986 @ CJSR Radio, Edmonton.

Enlarge (Bill Smith) / Madder Lake (David Prentice) / Are You From Out Of Town? (David Prentice) / N'Ark (Bill Smith) / Radio Belly (David Prentice & Bill Smith) / Emerging From Pallor (David Prentice).

Casey Sokol

Casey Sokol And Eugene Chadbourne

Imvised Music from Acoustic Piano And Guitar

Music Gallery Editions MGE 9 (LP)

Eugene Chadbourne, guitar; Casey Sokol, piano. Recorded 1977.

Duo Music From Calgary / Duo Music From Calgary / Duo Music From Calgary / In And Out (Piano Solo)/ ffff (Guitar Solo) / Duo Music From Toronto

Toronto New Music Ensemble

Toronto New Music Ensemble

Volume 1 (LP)

QC446

James Falconbridge, saxophone; Ron Sullivan, percussion. Recorded 1966.

Appendix 4

A Bill Smith Ensemble chronology

This is a by-no-means-complete chronology of performances dating from the founding of the original Bill Smith Ensemble – a trio with David Lee and David Prentice – as the New Art Music Ensemble early in 1979. This information has been transcribed from posters, flyers, clippings, and artworks I have kept on file from that time: there were many more performances for which I have not yet found documentation. For example, the Ensemble kept up a busy schedule from its founding in 1979 until 1982, but this is scarcely hinted at below.

1979:

May 6: Anglo-French Connection with Bernard Stepien, Raymond Houle, Bill Smith, David Lee
 Sept. 23: New Art Music Ensemble with Julius Hemphill
 Oct. 7: Gunter Christmann with New Art Music Ensemble

1980:

Friday Sept. 26: Artsake: Smith, Lee, Prentice
 Oct. 10: Artsake: Smith, Lee, Prentice with Rayner, Markle, Mendes
 October 30: Trio at SFU
 Nov. 1 & 2: Off Centre, Calgary
 November 7: Bill Smith Ensemble at Western Front, with McPhee solo & Golia solo
 November 14: Malaspina College, Nanaimo
 Nov 15: Bill Smith, guest soloist, Vancouver Creative Music Orchestra
 Nov 22: trio, Art Gallery of Brantford

1981:

Friday, April 10: BSE at Soundscape, NYC
 April 11: d.c. space, Washington
 Thursday Dec. 3: Bill Smith and Risquet, Calumet Common Room, York U

1982:

Bill Smith – cover of *NOW* Magazine, April 8-14, 1982.

Bill Smith Ensemble (Smith, Lee, Prentice) – Tour of Newcastle, Leeds, Bristol, London (UK); Amsterdam (BIM-Huis). May 1982.

Sunday Sept. 19: Bill Smith Ensemble (Trio plus Bannard) with Don Thompson solo – Scuffers, 76 St. Clair West.

1983:

Feb. 26: Joe McPhee with Smith, Lee, Rayner, Spadina Hotel (DP? – not on poster)

Mar. 22: Bill Smith Ensemble (Smith-Lee-Prentice) western Canadian tour begins at Algoma U. College, S.S. Marie:

Mar. 24: U of Winnipeg

March 25: U. of Regina Student Union

Mar. 26: Centennial Library Theatre, Edmonton

Mar. 27: Off Centre Centre, Calgary

Mar. 29: Fraser Valley College, Abbotsford

Mar. 31: Allison Piano Studio, Victoria Jazz Society

Apr. 1: Western Front, Vancouver.

April 2: Alouette Arts, Maple Ridge, BC.

April 16: Leriche, Cram, Lee, Bannard at Spadina Hotel, Cabana Rm

April 21: Mercer Union: Ted Dawson: Dena Davida & David Lee, Lee with Prentice & Potter

Saturday May 14 – ARC with Reyseger, Smith, Prentice, Potter, Lee, Bannard

June 4: opening, Katja Jacobs, Gallery One: The Bill Smith Jazz Ensemble

Friday June 10: BSE with Leo Smith, ARC

Saturday, June 18: Spadina Hotel: Bannerman, Boyle, Cram, Lee, Prentice, Smith

Saturday June 25: Maury Coles with Smith, Lee, Bannard.

Saturday June 11: BSE with Leo Smith, Spadina Hotel

Mon. Aug. 8: Air Raid: Coles, Smith, Pett, Lee, Lennard. Cameron

Sat. Aug. 13: David Lee with Smith, Bannard, Potter. “The Jazz Room,” Spadina Hotel

Sat. Sept. 17: Walter Zuber Armstrong with Bill Smith Ensemble (Smith Prentice Lee Bannard)

Saturday, Oct. 1: Spadina Hotel, The Jazz Room Lee, Prentice, Smith, Bannard, Maury Coles

Fri. Oct. 7: The Spadina Hotel: Robert Leriche w. Lee & Bannard. Plus BSE Smith, Lee, Prentice.

Wed, November 16: Rivoli, Son of Dada with films, Smith, Lee, Prentice, Bull.

Mon. Dec. 19: BSE, Maury Coles Trio, Gotham City, Cameron, beginning "Three Nights of Improvisation." With Bannard, Stephen Donald, Al Gertler, Nic, Kamevaar, Lee, Myhr, DP

Tue. Dec. 20: Kings of Sming, Maja, Dadas, Fish & Chips, McCaffery, with Bull, Cram, Dutton, Lee, Lennard, Oswald, DP, Friedhelm Schonfeld, Smith, James Young.

Wed. Dec. 21: Air Raid plus The Saxophone Quartet, w. Bakan, Coles, Cram, Gotham, Kamevaar, Lee, Oswald, Schonfeld, Smith

1984:

January 25: David Lee solo at ARC

Feb. 15: Benefit for Forbidden Films: Proper Tales poets plus Last of the Red Hot Dadas. The Rivoli

March 8, SAW Ottawa: Last of the Red Hot Dadas

March 10: Oswald, McCaffery, Greg Kozak, Maury Coles, plus Smith, Lee, Prentice, Barre Phillips. Cameron

March 17: Oswald, McCaffery, Greg Kozak, Maury Coles plus Lee & Bull. Cameron

March 17: Eye Revue, 2057 Dundas St. W, the Bill Smith Ensemble. *Perceptions of Youth: Drawings by Brian Lambert*. March 13-24.

March 24: Bill Smith presents Air Raid, with Pool (Oswald, McCaffery, Greg Kozak, Maury Coles & special guests. Cameron Tavern.

March 31: Oswald, McCaffery, Greg Kozak, Maury Coles, Arthur Bull, David Lee. Cameron Tavern.

Mar. 31: *Metropolis* with Last of the Red Hot Dadas, UC, U of Guelph

David Lee – *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, April 18-22, 1984, Adelaide Court

Monday May 14 – Rivoli – Julio Cortázar Memorial – presented by Arnica to benefit the arts of Nicaragua – presentation by Claribel Alegria, music by BSE

Wed. May 30: McCaffery, Smith, Lee, with Charles Bernstein, Chris Dewdney. Music Gallery.

Wed. June 6: A Benefit for Forbidden Films. Dadas plus Maja plus

Wagman/Carmichael/Klunder/Glicksman, plus the Prophet Motive, Bruce Bell, Edie Steiner, Donna Lypchuk & Dexter. Rivoli.

June 8: Art Gallery of Algoma, Dadas with Maja & McCaffery

June 9: Algoma University College, Sault Ste Marie

June 15: Toronto Disarmament Network / PAND Toronto: Maja Bannerman with David Lee and David Prentice – Toronto Peace Festival with Ken Whiteley, Hummer Sisters, Nancy White ...

Saturday August 18 – Steve McCaffery with Lee, Smith, & Susan Ferrar, Studio 620, 620 Richmond St. E. (Charlie Katz)

Sep. 11: BSE with Maja, NAC, St. Catharines

Sep. 26: McCaffery, Smith, Lee, Whispers, Pages.

Tue. Oct. 9: An Artists' Jazz Band. Rayner, Coughtry, Jones, Smith. Music Gallery, 1087 Queen W.

Oct. 10: BSE: Smith, Lee, Prentice, Bannerman, McCaffery. The Rivoli (MGE Fest of some kind?)

Sat. Nov 24 – A Benefit: Art in Canada Against Apartheid: Maja Bannerman and the Bill Smith Ensemble. Sponsored by the African and Caribbean Students' Association. International Student Centre, 33 St. George St.

Dec. 1: Ed Video, Guelph, BSE Smith Lee Prentice Bull. Dadas with *Phantom of the Opera*

Fri., Dec. 21: Dadas w. Maja & Bull, Four Horsemen, Jazz Films

1985:

Tue. Feb. 12: Brotzmann/Kowald/Cyrille at Rivoli

Sat. March 2: Cabaret Style Evening: Maja with BS & DP; Maury Coles/David Lee duo; Eugene McNamara; Reg Schwager Duo. ARC, 658 Queen St. W.

Sunday, March 31: Sunday in the Studio a Pavlychenko: Maja with Bill, DL, DP, AB April at the Music Gallery – Joe McPhee w. BSE – Coda 202, June/July 1985, p. 33 (also Lee with Neil, Broomfield, Bartlett, Varty, WF March 22).

Sun. April 14: Joe McPhee with Smith, Lee, Prentice, Bull, Bannard, The Rivoli.

Sun April 28: Bill Smith solo & with films. The Rivoli.

Sun March 10: *Dreams That Money Can Buy* with the Last of the Red Hot Dadas. ROM.

Sat. May 4: Smith Lee Bull, New Art Gallery of Toronto (NAGT), 1254 Dundas St. W.

Tue. May 7: Jim Smith booklaunch, Studio 620, 620 Richmond W., w. Chris Dewdney, McCaffery, Lee, Smith.

Sat. May 11: Smith, Lee, Michelle George, Steve McCaffery, NAGT.

Sun. May 12: Bill Smith's birthday, Rivoli, BSE plus Maja perform Corso's *Clowns*, plus Last of the Red Hot Dadas with films

Tue May 14: Northwoods Improvisors, Smith/Lee Bannard trio, Cameron.

Fri May 17: Cinovskis/Hutchinson duo, Northwinds Improvisors, Smith-Lee duo, Music Gallery.

Sat. May 18: Northwinds Improvisors, Smith-Lee duo, NAGT

Sat. May 25: DP String Trio with Lee & Bull "and guests", NAGT.

Sunday May 26: Vinny Golia Quartet at Rivoli with Bannard, California bassist & pianist.

June 5-16: Eugene Stickland play *Quartet* with David Prentice

June 9: Peter Kowald, Paul Rutherford, with Lee, Prentice, Bannard, Rivoli

June 23, 1985 – Roscoe Mitchell with the Bill Smith Ensemble. Review by Marc Glassman, p. 32, issue 203, Aug/Sept 1985.

Aug. 21: Mike Hames with the Bill Smith Ensemble

Aug. 24: Hames/Oswald/Smith saxophone trio, the Cameron

Bill Smith Ensemble – Cabana Room Wed. Sept 25 with Arthur & Stich

Friday, Sept 27, NAC, St. Catharines – McCaffery, Lee, Smith

Oct. 2: l'attacq, 4297 boul. St. Laurent, Montreal

Oct. 3, 1985: Victoriaville: Smith, Prentice, Lee, Bull, Heward

Oct. 9, 1985, Wed. An AJB (Rayner, Coughtry, Jones, Smith) plus Schwager/Lambert, plus DP String Trio with Lee & Bull

Oct. 23, Wed., Four Horsemen plus BSE w. AB

Oct. 27 Monday: Cabana Room: BSE (Smith, Prentice, Lee) with guests Maury Coles, Paul Plimley, Lyle Ellis, Misha Mengelberg

November 6, 1985 – Shuffle Demons & Bill Smith Quartet, Rivoli (NOW Archives)

Wed. Nov. 6: DP, Potter, DL, Smith, Rivoli, with films & Shuffle Demons

Nov 20, Rivoli, Whispers (McCaffery, Lee, Smith) with Kristjana Gunnars, bill bissett

Nov. 22: Bauhaus Cabaret Jazz Orchestra: Smith, Prentice, Underhill, Coughtry, Murley, Potter, Dave Parker, Bull, Stych Winston, John Heward. D. Lee called in sick that night – maybe Jim Vivian subbed?

December 6, 1985 – Bill Smith Ensemble, launch of *Imagine the Sound* (book), Music Gallery Coda 205, p. 24

December 13, 14, 15, Fri, Sat, Sun, “Collaborative Dance Celebrations at Pavlychenko Studio, Karen DuPlessis with Smith, Lee, Prentice (compositions)

1986:

Fri. Feb 7: Smith-Lee duo, Ed Video, Guelph.

Sat. Feb. 15: Smith & Lee with Paul Dutton. The Fallout Shelter, 139 Robert St.

Sat., April 19, 1986: Mouthpieces (National Book Festival): The Bill Smith Ensemble (Smith, Lee, Prentice, Bull) – separately & with Maja Bannerman

David Lee – Blue Snake Benefit, May 4, 1986

Every Saturday evening downstairs at the Spadina. RIM (Room for Improvised Music)

Maury Coles & Paul Snyders – Sat. May 24 special guest David Lee cello.

Monday Sept 22: Eye Level Presents: Last of the Red Hot Dadas at Ginger's, 1286 Hollis St. (Halifax?)

Nov. 21, Fri: Last of the Red Hot Dadas, AGO, with *Un Chien Andalou*, *L'Age d'Or*, *Dadascope*

1987:

Mon. May 11: Smith-Lee-Prentice, Rick Potruff opening, YYZ.

June 29 & 30: John Tchicai with Smith, Bull, Doug Willson, Bannard, Clinton's

Sat. Aug. 8: Ruth Bull opening, Idée Gallery, 883 Queen W. Arthur Bull & Friends

Saturday Oct. 31: UWO – Bill Smith Ensemble with David Lee

Nov. 5, 1987: Last of the Red Hot Dadas, Smith Lee Prentice Bull, Broadway Cinema, Hamilton, review in the Hamilton *Spectator* by Hugh Fraser

Thursday, Nov. 12: Club Rhythm, Bill Smith Trio with Lee & Bannard, Lussier/Derome duo

1988:

Feb. 20: Prentice-Bull Duo: Music Gallery String Festival. David Lee: "Obsessive: A Tribute to Bernard Herrmann" with Maureen Cochrane, Arthur Bull, David Prentice, others.

Feb. 25: Innis College, Bill Smith Ensemble with readings by Dutton & Curry, Snow films, hosted by Stuart Ross.