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Compositions in Improvisation:

The Instant Composers Pool Orchestra

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Zusammenfassung.

Der 1967 gründete und bis jetzt bestehende Instant Camposers Pool (ICP) ist eine der ältesten Gruppen der europäischen improvisierten Musik. Dieser Beitrag präsentiert einige Aspekte ihrer gegenwärtigen Aufführungspraxis und ihrer Ansichten über Improvisation. Die Performances des ICP drehen sich zu einem beträchtlichen Grade um die Kompositionen des Gründungmitglieds und klassisch ausgebildeten Komponisten Misha Mengelberg. Obwohl die Improvisationsforschung einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Bewegung weg von der auf Kompositionen zentrierten Tradition der Musikwissenschaft hin zu Fragen der Performance und musikalischen Interaktion geleistet hat, sei in diesem Beitrag betont, dass die Untersuchung dieser Aspekte nicht unbedingt mit jenen über Komposition in Opposition stehen müssen.

Abstract.

The Instant Composers Pool (ICP), founded in 1967 and still performing, is one of the oldest groups in European improvised music. This article presents some aspects of their current performance practice and their views on improvisation. The performances of the ICP revolve to a significant degree around the compositions of Misha Mengelberg, who is one of the founders of the group and a classically trained composer. Even though the study of improvisation has been an important part of a crucial move away from the composition-centred tradition of musicology towards issues of performance and musical interaction, I suggest that consideration of these topics need not be opposed to that of composition.

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Compositions in Improvisation: The Instant Composers Pool Orchestra

"The reason [that I stopped composing] was that I was curious to know if we could finally do what we wanted to do in the seventies, that is, to improvise."[1] These are the words of Misha Mengelberg, one of the leading figures of improvised music in Europe, in a documentary made in 2006 about his life and work. His statement is much richer than it may seem at first. First of all, Mengelberg is classically trained in music. He studied at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague with Kees van Baaren, one of the major proponents of serialism in the Netherlands. Mengelberg's fellow students, among whom are Louis Andriessen and Peter Schat, became leading figures in Dutch art music. Although his work as a composer would not make him as famous as Schat or Andriessen, Mengelberg is generally considered one of the founders of improvised music in the Netherlands and could be said to be its main theorist. Classically-trained composers are nothing extraordinary in improvised music, but the link between composed and improvised music seems to be particularly strong in the Netherlands, where many improvisers are also well-known composers or have made a move from one field to the other.

Second, until Mengelberg stopped composing halfway through the 1990s, the repertoire of his orchestra, the Instant Composers Pool (ICP), one of the oldest and most successful groups in improvised music, consisted almost exclusively of Mengelberg's compositions and arrangements. Although their sets and albums have always included freely improvised music, these compositions are an important part of the orchestra's history and identity. Anyone who happened to be backstage before one of their concerts would be surprised at the large folders containing sheet music that the musicians carry around.

Third, and most importantly, though Mengelberg says that the group is now finally ready to improvise, this certainly does not mean they have stopped playing his compositions. If anything, their repertoire has only expanded as other band members have begun to compose and arrange pieces more frequently. Still, Mengelberg insists:

> Our ideals are those of the Ornette Coleman Double Quartet. They still are. But the difference is that then, there were apparently no solutions, which now somehow do exist. Because we've been at it for such a long time. We worked for a long time before we could reach this stage.[2]

These statements suggest a distinctive understanding of improvisation, which is not opposed to composition, but rather includes it. In order to meet the challenges posed by Coleman in 1960, composition had to become an integral part of improvisation. This is a different perspective than is found in most (academic and non-academic) literature on jazz improvisation, which all too often places the two concepts in opposition. In this article I argue that this opposition harbours some

1 *Afijn: Misha Mengelberg*, Film-Documentary, 77 min., Dir. Jellie Dekker, Amsterdam 2005.

2 Quoted in Dekker, *Afijn* (see nt. 1).

ideological assumptions that are problematic for jazz studies in general and for the study of improvised music in particular. Throughout, I will discuss the aesthetics and musical practice of the ICP orchestra as an example, drawing largely on my own ethnographic research, which I relate to recent musicological and anthropological movements to suggest, somewhat paradoxically, that one of the most important tasks for scholars of improvised music is to reconsider the concept of composition.

Improvisation in Jazz Studies

One of the major achievements of jazz scholars in the past twenty years has been the development of an appropriate and fruitful approach to the subject matter. Early on, it was recognised that analytical approaches to jazz that used methods developed for analysing composed music failed to successfully address music that revolved around improvisation rather than around a stable text.[3] The application of such methods meant not only to misunderstand the music, but also represented a form of cultural imperialism or at least a lack of sensibility to the particularities of African-American culture. At the same time, however, sociological discussions of jazz and improvised music were believed to contribute too little to the understanding of the music, the artistic aspirations of which merited critical attention. The realisation that the methods of musical analysis could not simply be applied to any musical culture raised questions about the relationship between music and culture and between culture and analysis.

These questions were not unique to jazz studies, but were in fact topics of debate in scholarship on western art music itself, where music analysis and theory were increasingly viewed as culturally dependent rather than objective and universal, and where consequently the question of the relationship between music and culture became particularly relevant. The "new" musicologists looked for ways in which social considerations could be combined with serious musical discussion.[4] This meant first, a deconstruction of the concept of musical "autonomy," and more recently, a reorientation of parts of musicology towards performance rather than composition. With these developments classical music scholarship itself started to revolve less around the text as a stable entity. In the work of Paul Berliner and Ingrid Monson, we find approaches that can thus be relevant beyond jazz studies

3 For an overview of jazz analysis, see Thomas Owens, "Analysing Jazz," in: *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, ed. Mervyn Cooke and David Horne, Cambridge 2002, p. 286–297.

4 New musicology is often traced back to Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music,* Cambridge 1985, although his approach was already in his "How We Got Into Analysis, and How to Get Out," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), no. 2, p. 311–331. However, it was Susan McClary, in: *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality*, Oxford 1991, who was the first to connect Kerman's ideas explicitly to social issues. The idea of combining sociology with musicology is discussed at length in a debate between Gary Tomlinson and Lawrence Kramer; see Kramer, "The Musicology of the Future," *Repercussions* 1 (1992), no. 1, p. 5–18; and Tomlinson, "Musical Pasts and Postmodern Musicologies: A Response to Lawrence Kramer," *Current Musicology* 53 (1993), p. 18–24; Kramer, "Music Criticism and the Postmodern Turn: In Contrary Motion with Gary Tomlinson," ibid., p. 25–35; and Tomlinson, "Gary Tomlinson Responds," ibid., p. 35–40.

and may provide a model for musicology more broadly.[5] Both authors draw on their ethnographic research among jazz musicians to describe an ethnotheory of the music. The advantage of such ethnotheory is that it does not "reduce" the music to sociological generalisations, but actually provides tools for understanding it. In the studies of these authors jazz is conceived as a dialogic process in which musicians work together and respond to each other's actions during the performance. In this way the theoretical concepts as well as the musical practice can be conceived as simultaneously working in the sphere of both music and culture. Monson, more than Berliner, systematises the results from her fieldwork into a workable theory. She describes improvisation as a conversation in which musicians try to "say something", and in so doing, respond to or "signify on" other musicians as well as respond to the jazz tradition.[6] In this way jazz is not only music-theoretically related to (African-American) culture, but is itself a practice in which this culture is enacted and commented on.

These are all well-known and positive developments. However, the direction jazz studies has since taken is not without its problems. Although sensitivity to the cultural particularities of jazz has led to an improved understanding of the music, such sensitivity can become a form of essentialism. We can see this problem quite clearly in the writing of Amiri Baraka. As one of the first to criticise the discourse of jazz criticism in the 1960s, Baraka rightly argued that "strict musciological [*sic*] analysis of jazz, which has come into favour recently, is also as limited as a means of jazz criticism as a strict sociological approach" and that "this music cannot be completely understood (in critical terms) without some attention to the attitudes which produced it."[7] However, in Baraka's writing improvisation became inextricably linked with the struggle against white supremacy, and the avoidance of any "European" elements became a condition for authenticity and political relevance. "What [Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman] have done, basically, is to restore to jazz its valid separation from, and anarchic disregard of, Western popular forms."[8] Anything drawing on music theory or notation was a sign of decadence or impurity: "Music and musician have been brought, in a manner of speaking, face to face, without the strict and often grim hindrances of overused Western musical concepts."[9] In this way, what started out as a pluralistic sensitivity turns into a strict nationalism: "In jazz criticism, no reliance on European tradition or theory will help at all. Negro music, like the Negro itself, is strictly an American phenomenon."[10]

5 Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, Chicago 1996; Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*, Chicago 1994.

6 Monson adopts the concept of "signifying" from Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, Oxford 1989.

7 Everett LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), "Jazz and the White Critic," in: idem, *Black Music*, New York 1970, p. 11–20, p. 14.

8 Everett LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music That Developed From It* (1963) Edinburgh 1995, p. 225.

9 Jones (Baraka), *Blues People* (see nt. 8), p. 227.

10 Jones (Baraka), "Jazz and the White Critic" (see nt. 7), p. 20.

The emancipation from slavery is too easily mapped onto the emancipation from "white," that is high modernist, musical systems and practices with their emphasis on the submission of the performer to the authority of the composer. Although obviously less explicit and militant than Baraka, there is still an important political and oppositional element in the discourse of jazz studies. Monson's definition of improvisation as a form of parody and social criticism makes its primary function one of subversion, and her emphasis on social interaction and dialogue suggests that the performance of composed music is monological and submissive. It makes jazz into a site of resistance, a social (black) utopia in opposition to a decadent (white) mainstream. The Canadian journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation* states in its editorial policies:

> We are particularly interested in historically and contextually specific articles that interrogate improvisation as a social and musical practice, and that assess how innovative performance practices play a role in developing new, socially responsive forms of community building across national, cultural, and artistic boundaries.[11]

The description of jazz and improvised music as a social practice is an important and fruitful development, but I am concerned about the celebratory, quasi-utopian idea of "community building", which this description may become.

There is a growing body of criticism on this point. Although Nicholas Cook, has earlier cited Monson as an example of a musicology of performance,[12] he criticises her and other jazz scholars for describing jazz performance as democratic and interactive *as opposed to* classical music, even though the performance of a string quartet requires as much interaction as a jazz quartet.[13] Surveying the jazz literature, he argues that much of its discourse relies on an assumption of black "oral" versus white "literate" culture, an assumption that comes close to racism.[14] Tony Whyton, coming from a different angle, has argued that the reliance of jazz scholars on the concept of signifying may complement and re-inscribe racial essentialisms and reinforce African-American exceptionalism.[15] Alan Stanbridge takes on the claims of many scholars who describe jazz and improvised music as "anti-hegemonic" practice, promising positive effects on society. Many of these scholars draw on the work of Jacques Attali, which, as Stanbridge points out, is not uncontested (to say

11 "Editorial Policies," *Critical Studies in Improvisation*; see http://www.criticalimprov.com/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope (accessed 15 September 2012).

12 Nicholas Cook, "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance," *Music Theory Online* 7 (2001), no. 2, http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook_frames.html (accessed 15 September 2013).

13 Cook is drawing here on Alfred Schütz, "Making Music Together: A Study in Social Relationship," *Social Research* 18 (1951), no. 1, p. 76–97. More recently, there has been some interesting empirical research in this direction: Jane Davidson and James Good, "Social and Musical Co-ordination Between Members of a String Quartet: An Exploratory Study," *Psychology of Music* 30 (2002), no. 2, p. 186–201; Frederick Seddon and Michele Biasutti, "A Comparison of Modes of Communication Between Members of a String Quartet and a Jazz Sextet," *Psychology of Music* 37 (2009), no. 4, p. 395–415.

14 Nicholas Cook, "Making Music Together, or Improvisation and its Others" (2004), in: idem, *Music, Performance, Meaning: Selected Essays*, Aldershot 2007, p. 321–341.

15 Tony Whyton, *Jazz Icons: Heroes, Myths and the Jazz Tradition*, Cambridge 2010, p. 25–27.

the least), but mentions free jazz only in passing and with merely superficial knowledge of the music. Rather, Stanbridge suggests, the heralding of free improvisation as a morally superior practice may have to do precisely with its marginal social position and the need for a legitimising narrative in a genre that often relies on government funding.[16] Gary Peters similarly dismisses the picture of improvisation as what he calls a "glorified love-in"[17] and argues that the freedom in free improvisation is the freedom inherent in art itself, what Kant called the "free play" of the faculties of imagination and understanding, of spontaneity and receptivity. Improvisers interact not so much with each other, but primarily with art itself, and consequently the freedom they pursue has less to do with forward-looking novelty and more with a creative use of what already exists. Art, based on free play, provides the condition for interaction rather than the other way around.[18]

Too strong a reliance on African-American aesthetics makes little sense now that jazz is increasingly a global art form, and anti-European sentiments are particularly problematic in the case of free, improvised music, in which some of the major developments have taken place in Europe rather than in the United States.[19] Crucially, the refusal to engage with compositional aspects of jazz obscures a large part of its musical practice, and again, particularly of improvised music, in which the connection of improvisers to composition is close, and not just in Europe. In fact, Baraka's description of the music of Coleman and Taylor as not dependent on notational systems or European influences is evidently false. A. B. Spellman in 1966 cites Cecil Taylor as saying he wants to use "the energies of the European composers, their techniques, consciously, and blend this with the traditional music of the American Negro."[20] Howard Mandel describes a near collaboration between Taylor and Coleman; in Taylor's words:

> What happened was he gave me the music, a wonderful piece he wrote, and I worked on it for three or four days, although you know he's not going to really play it the way it as it is [*sic*].[21]

In the end, it was personal and stylistic differences that prevented the collaboration from happening, but the use of notation is an obvious and natural aspect of the two

16 Alan Stanbridge, "From the Margins to the Mainstream: Jazz, Social Relations and Discourses of Value," *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4 (2008), no. 1, http://www.criticalimprov.com/article/view/361/959 (accessed 24 May 2012).

17 Gary Peters, *The Philosophy of Improvisation*, Chicago 2009, p. 3.

18 As will become clear below, I think Peters' philosophy can be made much more practical, but that does mean a reconsideration of his reliance on a Kantian sensus communis and on a concept of "art" as a universal, stable category. Much of this kind of discussion lies outside the scope of this article, but the point I do want to make is that, in my view, the aesthetic and the social cannot be clearly separated, and so it makes little sense to say that one comes before the other.

19 The history of European improvised music has only recently begun to receive more attention. Possibly the first publication on this topic was Ekkehard Jost's *Europas Jazz 1960–1980*, Frankfurt 1987. More recently, several books have focused on jazz in specific countries: George McKay, *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain*, London 2005; John Wickes, *Innovations in British Jazz*, Vol. 1: *1960–1980*, Chelmsford 1999; Vincent Cotro, *Chants Libres: Le Free Jazz en France*, Paris 1999; Kevin Whitehead, *New Dutch Swing*, New York 1997; Wolfram Knauer, *Jazz in Deutschland*, Hofheim 1996. For a general overview, see also Todd S. Jenkins, *Free Jazz and Free Improvisation: An Encyclopedia*, 2 vol., Westport (CT) 2004.

20 A. B. Spellman, *Black Music: Four Lives* (1966), New York 1970, p. 28.

21 Howard Mandel, *Miles, Ornette, Cecil: Jazz Beyond Jazz*, New York 2008, p. 225.

musicians' musical practice. It was even a way for Taylor to learn to understand and appreciate Coleman's style: "We'd worked on the music enough so that when he started playing I heard exactly what he was doing."[22] The notation here clearly facilitates the social interaction between Taylor and Coleman. Spellman writes: "[Coleman's] writing is directed toward setting up areas of improvisational possibilities, and not toward strict interpretation."[23] This example foreshadows what I will argue below, namely that in practice, there is always a degree of both improvisation and composition involved in a performance and that the relation between them mediates the interaction among musicians. The argument that "music" is not just one thing has been successful – perhaps we can now explore the idea that "improvisation", "composition" and perhaps most significantly, the "social" are not just one thing either. The definition of improvisation as critical and liberating is not only utopian, but also closes off some of the most interesting questions about improvisatory musical practice. As a case in point, let's return to the ICP.

Compositions in the Musical Practice of the ICP, Part I

The ICP was founded in 1967 by Misha Mengelberg, Han Bennink and Willem Breuker. Mengelberg and Bennink had been playing together since 1960 and throughout the 1960s had a successful quartet with saxophonist Piet Noordijk, playing mostly in a bebop idiom.[24] The addition of Breuker to this group led to a split between the more conservative-minded Noordijk and bassist Rob Langereis versus the more avant-gardist Breuker, Bennink and Mengelberg.[25] Originally, the purpose of the ICP was to be an independent record label as well as an "interest group" for musicians, who would play under the ICP umbrella in different configurations.[26]

In 1973 Breuker, disillusioned about the musical and political effectiveness of the ICP's egalitarian practices, left the group because of aesthetic and personal differences with Mengelberg.[27] He would found and lead the Willem Breuker Kollektief, which increasingly performed his own compositions as he developed into a prolific composer. In the 1970s Mengelberg and Bennink played primarily as a duo until

22 Mandel, *Miles, Ornette, Cecil* (see nt. 21), p. 226.

23 Spellman, *Black Music* (see nt. 20), p. 135. Note the similarity to what white American composers were doing at the same time. As George Lewis has argued, the historiography of American experimental music has suffered from a racially motivated one-sidedness in this regard; see George E. Lewis, "Improvised Music After 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," in: *The Other Side of Nowhere*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble, Middletown, CT 2004, p. 131–162; and George E. Lewis, *A Power Stronger than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*, Chicago 2008. Though I sympathise with his goal of a more inclusive historiography, I wonder whether his "logical" categories do not establish another distinction that is too easily mapped onto race and ethnicity.

24 Ben Zwanink, "Fantastische Ontsporingen," *Jazz Bulletin* 64 (2007), p. 24–34; Zwanink, "Donderbus en Kermisfluitjes," *Jazz Bulletin* 65 (2007), p. 24–30.

25 Kevin Whitehead, *New Dutch Swing: An In-depth Examination of Amsterdam's Vital and Distinctive Jazz Scene*, New York 1998, p. 36–39.

26 Françoise Buzelin, Jean Buzelin, *Willem Breuker. Maker van mensenmuziek*, trans. from French by Marco Nakken and Sjaak Hubregtse, Zutphen, Netherlands 1994, p. 29–30 and p. 57–58.

27 Breuker's account of his "break" with the ICP is described in Buzelin and Buzelin, *Breuker* (see nt. 26), p. 76–80.

Mengelberg formed a ten-member group, the precursor of what would become the ICP, which still performs today.

Although this is not the place to discuss the history of the ICP in detail, there are two things I would like to highlight briefly, as they are relevant to the way composition and notation function in the ICP's musical practice. One is Mengelberg's involvement with the Fluxus movement in the early 1960s. Through Bennink, Mengelberg met Wim T. Schippers, Bennink's fellow student at art school, who would become one of the Netherlands' major artists and whose works range from conceptual and performance art to theatre and television.[28] Around the same time, Mengelberg also met Willem de Ridder, who had many contacts on the national and international art scene and who would become the designated president of Fluxus in Northern Europe. The three of them participated in Fluxus concerts and festivals in the early 1960s. Fluxus was a heterogeneous group of artists led by George Maciunas.[29] Although Fluxus has received more attention as a form of art than as music, many Fluxus artists, including Maciunas, were composers or musicians. Moreover, they drew explicitly on musical concepts, for instance, calling their performances "concerts," and even basing these concerts on what they called a "score" – usually a minimal, deadpan instruction, such as "Draw a straight line and follow it" (La Monte Young) or "Two Vehicle Events: start. stop" (George Brecht).[30] The point of having such a score was to make room for creativity in interpretation. Inspired by Cage and Duchamp, Fluxus artists endeavoured to incorporate daily life into the concept of art and make daily life more artistic and playful. The scores of Fluxus composers were incentives to engage in playful, social behaviour.[31] As Mengelberg explained later to Derek Bailey:

> One of the things that inspires me in making any gesture, musically and theoretically, is its relation with daily life, in which there is no such thing as an exclusion. […] Of course I don't mean daily life transformed into music, but in certain respects there are parallels between music and daily life.[32]

The term "instant composition" in fact is not (just) meant to stress the "structural" musical aspects of improvisation, but refers to a Fluxus piece by Tomas Schmit

28 Whitehead, *New Dutch Swing* (see nt. 25), p. 18; Erik van den Berg, *Han Bennink: De wereld als trommel*, Amsterdam 2009, p. 90.

29 A general history of Fluxus can be found in Owen F. Smith, "Fluxus: A Brief History and Other Fictions," in: *In The Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Janet Jenkins, Minneapolis, MN 1993, p. 24–37. For a history of Fluxus in the Netherlands, see Albert Kuiper and Talitha Schoon, "Fluxus," in: *Actie, werkelijkheid en fictie in de kunst van de jaren '60 in Nederland*, ed. W. A. L. Beeren, The Hague 1979, p. 159–165.

30 Philip Auslander, "Fluxus Art-Amusement: The Music of the Future?" in: *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde: Performance and Textuality*, ed. James M. Harding, Ann Arbor (MI) 2002, p. 110–129; Liz Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the 'Event' Score," *October* Magazine 95 (2001), p. 55–89; Douglas Kahn, "The Latest: Fluxus and Music," in: *In the Spirit of Fluxus* (see nt. 29), p. 102–121.

31 Dorothée Brill, *Shock and the Senseless in Dada and Fluxus*, Hanover (NH) 2010; Martin Patrick, "Unfinished Filiou: On the Fluxus Ethos and the Origins of Relational Aesthetics," *Art Journal* 69 (2010), no. 1–2, p. 44–61.

32 Cited in Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*, London 1992, p. 131.

called “instant poetry”, for which scraps of paper were drawn from a jar to create a poem (Fig. 1).[33]

The second major development in which Mengelberg was involved during the 1960s and early 1970s was political activism with his fellow students at the Royal Conservatory. At a time when African-American musicians were fighting for acceptance of their improvised music, these composer activists did the same for composed music. When they finished their degrees halfway through the 1960s, they found that the musical infrastructure in the Netherlands was unfit for new music.[34] They organised debates and demonstrations against the musical establishment, especially the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. Soon their criticism targeted not just the opportunities for contemporary composers, but had developed into a Marxist critique of the orchestral division of labour itself.[35] Although their efforts had little effect on the Concertgebouw policies, translating their political ideals into their own performance practices would have a lasting impact on Dutch musical life.

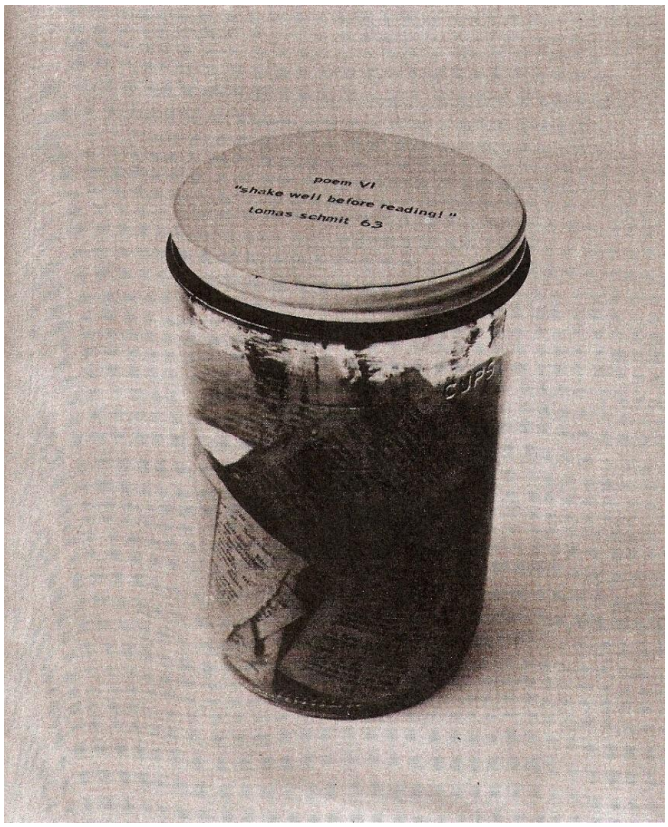

Figure 1. Instant Poetry by Tomas Schmit: “Shake Well Before Reading!”

33 Whitehead, *New Dutch Swing* (see nt. 25), p. 36. Figure taken from Hans Sohm, *Happenings & Fluxus*, Cologne 1970, n.p.

34 Robert Adlington, “Organizing Labor: Composers, Performers, and ‘the Renewal of Musical Practice’ in the Netherlands, 1969–1972,” *The Musical Quarterly* 90 (2007), no. 3–4, p. 539–577; Leo Samama, “Muziek en het Onbehagen in de Cultuur in de Jaren Zestig,” in: *Een Muziekgeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, ed. Louis Grijp, Amsterdam 2001, p. 743–749.

35 Adlinton, “Organizing Labor” (see nt. 34), p. 545.

The students, together with many other musicians and composers, organised concerts outside the standard venues; these often included a range of different genres, establishing a connection with contemporary youth culture. Moreover, they founded their own ensembles, which would be the start of Dutch "ensemble-culture."[36] These ensembles provided them with relative independence from existing orchestras and institutions, and the small size of the ensembles meant a more direct relationship of every musician to the sounding result, as well as more opportunity for discussion among the musicians. These ensembles would perform at their own alternative concert series, as well as at political rallies. Although Mengelberg participated in many of these developments, he distanced himself from others' political claims, especially from Marxism. What probably interested him was the emphasis on musical performance as a form of (everyday) social behaviour, but this topic was not necessarily political. At a concert in 1968 during which pieces by Mengelberg, Schat and Andriessen alternated with political speeches, Mengelberg wanted nothing to do with the texts from Trotsky, Che Guevara, Mao and Adorno, which filled the programme book.[37] In a television interview he said:

> I do not agree with the approach taken here. The pieces have little to do with the political views that are attached to it. It is very topical, and those French students are all fabulous, but the music should fit the ideas.[38]

If this is the criterion, then Mengelberg succeeded: his contribution to the concert was a game piece called *Hello Windyboys*, in which two groups of wind instruments played a musical game following rules set out in the score. His text as given in the programme invites the audience to figure out the rules (which is "difficult, but not impossible"), and to join in the "hopping" whenever it occurs in the music. Should the audience become bored, Mengelberg also provided a little maze puzzle to kill the time.[39]

Such playfulness still characterises the approach to the repertoire of the ICP today. Reed player Michael Moore described Mengelberg's pieces as games:

> I think Misha thinks in games a lot… [Me: Like John Zorn?] Well, no, not like John Zorn… Zorn studied these board games with all these rules and he thought of rules with which people can communicate with each other. Whereas I see Misha's games as more like… okay, this is the material, what are we going to do with it? It's that whole "found object" thing. And a lot of his pieces are like that, they're just little… "flarden" [Dutch for "snippets"].[40]

36 *Ssst! Nieuwe ensembles voor nieuwe muziek*, ed. Elmer Schönberger, Amsterdam 1996.

37 Robert Adlington, "Forms of Opposition at the 'Politiek-Demonstratief Experimenteel' Concert," in: *Sound Commitments: Avant-garde Music and the Sixties*, ed. Robert Adlington, Oxford 2009, p. 56–77.

38 *Open Oog*, NTS Hilversum, 7 June 1968.

39 *Werkgroep Concerten van Nieuwe Nederlandse Muziek in 1968, Muzikale en politieke commentaren en analyses bij een programma van een politiek-demonstratief experimenteel concert met nieuwe Nederlandse muziek in negentienhonderachtenzestig*, ed. Konrad Boehmer, Amsterdam 1968.

40 Michael Moore, Interview with the author, 23 December 2011.

By describing pieces as "found objects", Moore connects this way of working to Fluxus and to its emphasis on the score as creating room for interpretation. Gary Peters criticises much of the thinking about improvisation in terms of play, because it is often related to utopian ideals,[41] but the games of the ICP are about competition and disagreement as much or even more than about cooperation and community.[42] Wolter Wierbos, trombone player in the ICP since the early 1980s, put it this way:

> The way of working in the ICP is derived from Han and Misha. They've been working together for so long… or rather against each other, like in a boxing match. […] It's about egos, competing and showing off. The louder Han would play, the softer Misha would become. And Han wouldn't hear him, and he would turn more and more purple and when he would stop, you would hear Misha, playing very softly. That was fantastic.[43]

The performances of the ICP are a site where different personalities and different aesthetics are played out against each other. Trumpeter Thomas Heberer elaborates:

> I think from early on, Misha, more than Han, was and still is looking for something like an alternative concept of beauty. And there are a lot of things to explore in situations that look like weaknesses or things that don't go right, and instead of being afraid of those situations, you should seek them out and try to deal with a situation that is not entirely smooth. And come up with solutions in a state of disaster, in a state of being fragile. And that is implemented not only in [Misha's] compositions, but also in the way that he plays. Sometimes he is playing against you, and then you have to figure out how to deal with it. And you have to deal with it, because it is not his goal to make it comfortable. Not for the listener, but also the musician. […] It's like a perverted game, but it is play; it is definitely a game.[44]

Although Heberer focuses on social and psychological aspects, he indicates that this is first of all an aesthetic concept, a "concept of beauty". It is interesting to see that for the musicians, there is no clear separation between the two. Reed player Ab Baars explained:

> Misha was looking for a new direction, in which we, as a band, could guide the material. Not as an individual, but that everyone would have a compositional mindset. Everyone could introduce new things, but with conviction, and also taking responsibility for the material that you introduce.[45]

Baars makes it clear that "instant composition" is not just a way to valorise improvisation, but rather implies a specific approach to improvisation in which compositions are an active part of the interactive improvisatory process. The responsibility of

41 Peters, *The Philosophy of Improvisation* (see nt. 17), p. 2 and p. 24–25.

42 Robert Adlington has argued that this can be connected with contemporary strands in Dutch anarchism; see Robert Adlington, "Anarchie: Chaos, Freedom and Instant Composing," in: *Composing Dissent: Avant-garde Music in 1960s Amsterdam*, Oxford 2013, p. 97–136.

43 Wolter Wierbos, Interview with the author, 21 December 2011.

44 Thomas Heberer, Interview with the author, 20 February 2012.

45 Ab Baars, Interview with the author, 22 February 2012.

each musician is aesthetic, an awareness that all are collectively composing music, as well as that all have a responsibility to each other and to the audience. Moore: "It's really not an encounter group, or a self-help group, so you're really kind of on your own."[46] This is close to Peters' argument that improvisers relate primarily to art itself, which is the condition of both artist and artwork, only translated into a practical context. Whereas Peters, in a Kantian manner, tries to elevate the aesthetic over the social, in practice the two things cannot be clearly separated. The aesthetic and the social, and composition and improvisation, so carefully distinguished in the modernist "work-concept," in practice do not exclude each other at all. The primacy of practice is stressed once more by Heberer:

> The strategies that the ICP incorporates have not been invented by a composer. They have not been invented by Misha, they have developed. And the development started forty years ago. So the way the ICP operates now is the result of thinking about certain musical problems for decades. And both Misha and Han… I don't think they had a vision beforehand; I think Misha had certain ideas about blending different aesthetics from early on, but he didn't know how to get there, and he didn't have the musicians to do this.[47]

Rethinking Composition

With the term "work-concept" I am referring to the work of Lydia Goehr.[48] In *Imaginary Museum* she describes the central ideas about musical ontology and aesthetics in Western culture and their emergence in nineteenth-century modernism. The "Work-concept", as she employs it, is the idea that the identity of a piece of music is determined by notation; the related idea is that what matters aesthetically are the most salient aspects of modern musical notation, namely the "structure" of pitch and rhythm. Thus, composition is primary, improvisation secondary; similarly, notation is primary and performance secondary. In addition music is aesthetically "autonomous" and thus unrelated to sociological considerations. My suggestion in reconsidering composition in improvised music is not to return to or go beyond modernism, but rather that "we have never been modern," to borrow Bruno Latour's famous title.[49] Latour's study concerns philosophical and scientific modernism rather than musical or artistic modernism, but there are significant similarities. For Latour, modernism is about establishing a strict distinction between humans and non-humans, between culture and nature and thus between mind and matter, theory and practice. In his book he describes how some of the major scientific developments in the rise of "modernism" in fact depended on an intense intermingling of all these categories. There is a similarity here to Goehr's book, in which she writes: "the distinction between theory and practice is formed as a convenient,

46 Interview with Moore (see nt. 40).

47 Interview with Heberer (see nt. 44).

48 Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford 2007.

49 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), trans. Catherine Porter, Hempstead 1993.

intellectual abstraction"[50]; she goes on to argue that the work-concept is not separate from performance or society, but is in fact intimately connected to specific changes in performance practice and broader historical developments. The current musicological interest in improvisation and performance has been very much influenced by Goehr's study, but I suggest that this new direction in musicology needs a positive thesis as well as her negative one in order to overcome the distinction between work and performance instead of merely reversing it. How can we rethink the concept of composition as inherently related to musical practice? This question is not only relevant for musical performance studies, but also for performance studies in general, where the emphasis on performance over text risks accepting the modernist distinction too easily as well.[51]

Cook, in one of the first articles on this topic, suggests thinking of scores as "scripts" that choreograph social interaction. Although this is a more suitable concept than a self-sufficient "text", it still does not help us to overcome the distinction between theory and practice if we continue to see this "script" as a stable entity and the performance as adding to or changing what was "determined" in it. We need to realise how scores are dependent on performance traditions, and vice versa, how "[p]rocess and product [...] are not so much alternative options as complementary strands of the twisted braid we call performance."[52] Mine Dack, focusing on expression in performance, writes: "the phenomenological reality of performing presents the score as *always already* constituted with performance expression."[53] This is as true for classical music as for jazz, as well as for many other factors other than just expression. The performance practice of a string quartet is implied in its notation, just as that of a jazz quartet is implied in a leadsheet, and the two performance practices equally imply their notation. The little bit of information contained in a leadsheet in a sense only affirms the amount of standardisation and tacit rules in mainstream jazz.

Latour's solution and that of other actor-network theorists to the problem of modernism is to analyse material objects as agents. The point is *not* that objects are consciously thinking, autonomous beings. The point is that neither are human beings: humans and non-humans are only agents insofar as they make each other act. John Law speaks of "relational materiality" and describes actor-network theory

50 Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum* (see nt. 48), p. 107.

51 See the discussion between Auslander and Cook in Philip Auslander, "Musical Personae," *The Drama Review* 50 (2006), no. 1, p. 100–119, and Nicholas Cook, "Bridging the Unbridgeable? Empirical Musicology and Interdisciplinary Performance Studies," in: *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, Ann Arbor (MI) 2013, p. 70–85. The point has also been discussed with regard to performance studies in general; see Stephen Bottoms, "The Efficacy/Effeminacy Braid," *Theatre Topics* 13 (2003), no. 2, p. 173–187, and his "In Defence of the String Quartet: An Open Letter to Richard Schechner," in: *The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum*, ed. James. M. Harding and Cindy Rosenthal, Basingstoke 2011, p. 23–38. Bottoms's main inspiration here is Jon McKenzie, "The Liminal-Norm," in: *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial, London 2004, p. 26–31.

52 Cook, "Between Process and Product" (see nt. 12), § 12.

53 Mine Dogantan-Dack, "In the Beginning there was Gesture: Piano Touch and the Phenomenology of the Performing Body," in: *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture*, ed. Anthony Gritten and Elaine King, Aldershot 2011, p. 243–265, p. 246.

(ANT) as taking "the semiotic insight, that of the relationality of entities, […] and appl[ying] this ruthlessly to all materials – and not simply those that are linguistic."[54] Consider Charlie Parker's famous phrase, "if you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn."[55] George Lewis connects this with an "Afrological" emphasis on personality in improvisation.[56] But this personality, his "voice" in Monson's conversation, is dependent on the construction of the alto saxophone and his years of practice and experimentation – it is a hybrid or cyborg.[57] Parker's voice was partly constructed by Adolphe Sax in Paris in the 1840s.[58] Law argues that agents, but also institutions, organisations, knowledge and other aspects of "the social" are "a product or an effect of heterogeneous materials."[59] As Latour argues in *Reassembling the Social*, "the social" is not something you can use to explain anything – the social is what needs to be explained.[60] Its meaning changes constantly, emerging out of different mediations between human and non-human actors. Because agency, interaction, intention and knowledge are spread out over a mediating network, Latour speaks of the "redistribution" of humanism, a concept that also echoes in Georgina Born's ideas of distributed creativity and the relational nature of music.[61]

There are, of course, important points of criticism of ANT, some of which are mentioned by Born, but I think ANT provides a good starting point with its emphasis on the relational, material nature of agency. It shows that dependence on objects by no means implies a decrease in social interaction or creativity. Rather, influenced as it is by pragmatism, ANT shows that engagement with the material environment is *necessary* for the development of knowledge, creativity and social consciousness. This is the subject of Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman*.[62] Using examples from different periods, cultures and disciplines (including music), Sennett describes in detail how the use of tools and materials is related to how one works with colleagues, superiors and clients, and how new functions for tools always have a social impact. "Craftsmen" discover new aspects of their tools and working material, changing their own physical behaviour in the process, but also the behaviour of the people who use

54 John Law, "After ANT: Complexity, Naming and Topology," in: *Actor Network Theory and After*, ed. John Law and John Hassard, Malden 1999, p. 1–14, p. 4.

55 Cited in Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950" (see nt. 23), p. 243.

56 Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950" (see nt. 23), p. 241–243.

57 "Donna Haraway: A Cyborg Manifesto," http://www.egs.edu/faculty/donna-haraway/articles/donna-haraway-a-cyborg-manifesto/ (accessed 15 September 2012).

58 This is not to make any claims of Belgian or European ownership, as happens too easily in Luca Cerchiari, "Introduction," in: *Eurojazzland: Jazz and European Sources, Dynamics, and Contexts*, ed. Luca Cerchiari, Laurent Cugny and Franz Kerschbaumer, Boston 2012, p. vii–xviii, p. viii. However, it does make clear that a division of the world into "Afrological" or "Eurological" ways of thinking is too simplistic.

59 John Law, "Notes on the Theory of the Actor Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity" (2003), Lancaster, Centre for Science Studies, http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/papers/law-notes-on-ant.pdf (accessed 15 September 2012), see also *Systemic Practice and Action Research* 5 (1992), pp 379–393.

60 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford 2005.

61 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (see nt. 49), p. 136–138; Georgina Born, "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity," *Twentieth-century Music* 2 (2005), no. 1, p. 7–36; idem, "For A Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 135 (2010), no. 2, p. 205–243.

62 Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, New York, 2009.

their products. Two central concepts are *resistance* and *ambiguity*.[63] We often encounter problems or difficulties when we are involved in creative work, and the way we deal with them forces us to reconsider the relationship to our work and its wider ramifications. Conversely, the ambiguity of spaces and objects, the fact that everything can be put to multiple uses, demands us to determine our own boundaries and be responsible for them. Improvisation, in this context, is described by Sennett as the discovery of new uses for given material – a practical, material application of Peters' philosophical argument.[64]

I mentioned the importance of the saxophone for Charlie Parker's identity. However, the role of the score in performance is in a sense continuous with the role of the instrument. Instruments will be tuned in a certain way; they can play only a limited number of notes and scales; some are able to play multiple notes at once, while others can play glissandi. In a sense, an instrument is the most indeterminate score possible. Scores work in a similar way: they (usually) take into account the possibilities of the instrument and explore some of its musical potential. Crucially, because they often provide instructions for multiple musicians, they have an important mediating function for interaction among musicians. A composition can be seen, not as a representation of a musical structure, but as a tool (rather than a text or a script) used by musicians in the creative process, and even as an active participant because of the practical significance of the score in this process. Rather than impose uniformity on the music, a score contributes to the heterogeneity of creative and interactive possibilities.

Obviously, in the concept I am proposing, compositions would not be the centre of attention. There are many other important objects that influence jazz performance, including things outside the direct scope of the performative event. Moreover, even if we see the score as a node in the performance network rather than as its foundation, probably not *everything* in this network can be traced back to the score. But I suggest that the score has an important mediating and performative function in this network.[65] Seeing the objects in performance as active participants extends the ethnographic scope of jazz studies and brings the practical aspects of performance into focus. Although the work of Monson and Berliner is valuable, their scope is limited to interviews with musicians. For their musical examples, they turn to recordings. Recordings (even live ones) only present the sounding traces of the event and leave out important visual aspects, information about the audience and the architecture of the venue, as well as details about rehearsals and other preparations. They present the event as a unique and closed-off whole, even though for the performer it

63 Sennett, *The Craftsman* (see nt. 62), p. 214–238.

64 Sennett, *The Craftsman* (see nt. 62), p. 235–237

65 On ANT and performance, see Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (see nt. 60), p. 46 and John Law, "After ANT" (see nt. 54).

is one performance of many.[66] Monson's reliance on the linguistic concept of signifying only amplifies this neglect of the practical side of performance. Focusing on the readily meaningful, she disregards practical aspects that are constitutional for the music and meaningful in a way that does not depend on signification.

Compositions in the Musical Practice of the ICP, Part II

Although it is impossible here to give an adequate account of the performance practices of the ICP, I want to indicate briefly how some of its aspects translate into how the repertoire is composed and vice versa. The ICP orchestra currently consists of ten members and can be divided into three sections: a rhythm section with drums, a double bass and a piano (and sometimes a cello), a horn section with three clarinets or saxophones, a trumpet and a trombone, and a string section with violin/viola, cello and double bass. Four musicians play two instruments, while the bass and cello are able to function both in the rhythm and the string sections, so that the instrumentation of the ensemble is versatile. As I mentioned in the introduction, every musician has a large folder filled with the orchestra's repertoire. Mengelberg composed and arranged the largest part of the repertoire in the long 1980s, when the group got together every week to practice. Mengelberg would bring new material and then discard it or work on it during the following weeks until it was good enough. The importance of trying out the pieces in practice once again affirms Heberer's comment that the ICP's way of working is a practical one rather than an "invention". It shows that Mengelberg did not think in terms of a "work" that had to be played as precisely as possible, but instead was interested in what the musicians could do with the ideas he gave them: "The most important thing was that the pieces I brought to those rehearsals were not *finished*."[67] Both Heberer and bass player Ernst Glerum told me that they had difficulties composing for the ICP because their ideal could never be realised in practice.[68] Baars told me a story of Count Basie who taught his musicians that an arrangement should fit on the back of an envelope: "I found that such a nice story, because you have ten wonderful improvisers. So if you give them something small and an idea of where you want to go, then they are able to take it in any direction."[69] Similarly, Moore described his compositions for improvisers: "I try to find really simple material that can create really effective music, so that you don't have to tell people much, if anything."[70]

This fragmentary quality of the compositions is crucial for the ICP's performances, in which pieces are often left unfinished, are interrupted either by other pieces or

66 Scott DeVeaux, "This Is What I Do," in: *Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, Writing, and Other Improvisations*, ed. Howard S. Becker, Robert R. Faulkner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Chicago 2006, p. 118–125; Robert R. Faulkner, "Shedding Culture," in: ibid., p. 91–117.

67 Thomas Heberer, Interview with the author, 15 February 2012.

68 Thomas Heberer and Ernst Glorum, Interviews with the author, 20 and 25 February 2012.

69 Interview with Baars (see nt. 45).

70 Interview with Moore (see nt. 40).

free improvisations, or are transformed into the next piece. It is not just that the pieces are indeterminate, because in order to make their use possible, they have to be very clear and precise. Musicians need to be able to recognise a piece if someone introduces it, and they need to be able instantly to play along. In order to function as a common point of reference then, the pieces have to present a very clear musical idea.[71] Set lists are made minutes before a performance, so musicians have little time to adapt to pieces which sometimes they have not played in years. Although the minimum of preparation creates a larger chance of failure, this is partly the point – part of the responsibility Baars spoke of is that everyone is able to deal with unexpected situations, something also mentioned by Heberer. This is also true for the pieces themselves: they have to be able to create possibilities of entering and exiting and of creating unexpected situations.

I will give a few examples of this, although I am aware that I can only present a small part of the variety of the ICP's repertoire and practices here. The examples I have chosen demonstrate different ways in which compositions can influence improvisational possibilities as well as the interactions among musicians. These examples are by no means intended to exhaust the strategies of the ICP for dealing with notation, let alone suggest a general systematisation of compositional strategies for improvisation. Moreover, they are specifically focused on orchestration and the grouping of the musicians, which function as a limited case study of the practice of the ICP as well as the approach I am advocating.

The first example is Mengelberg's arrangement for Thelonious Monk's *Criss Cross*. I have inserted the second page, which contains a coda at the top and background music on the rest of the page (Fig. 2).[72]

71 Nicholas Cook, "In Praise of Symbolic Poverty," in: *Managing as Designing*, ed. R. J. Boland and Fred Collopy, Stanford 2004, p. 85–89.

72 This figure and those below have been used by kind permission of Misha Mengelberg.

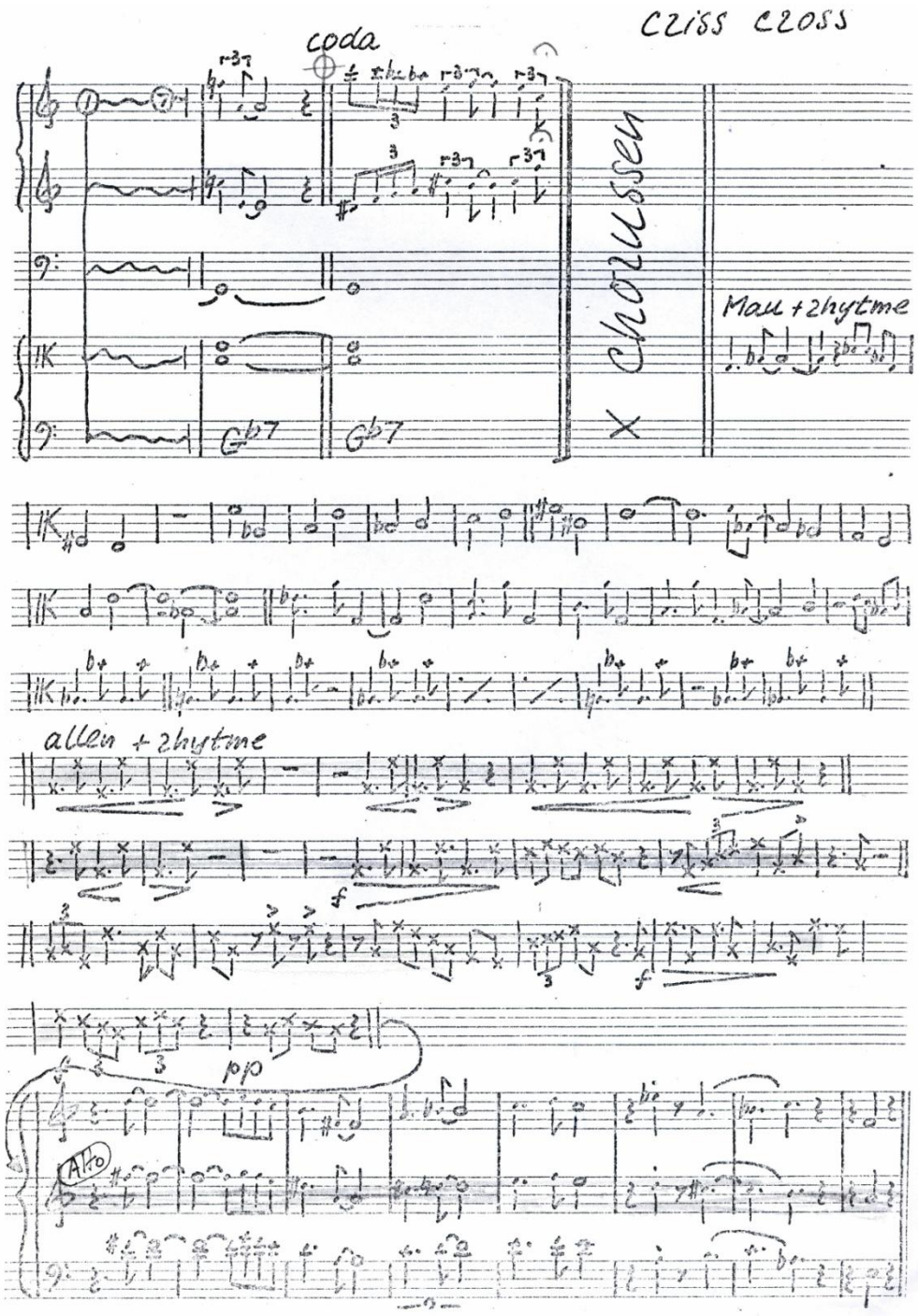

Figure 2. Mengelberg's arrangement for *Criss Cross*, page 2

The use of a Monk tune could be seen as establishing a relation to the jazz tradition, signifying on the complex meaning of Monk in contemporary jazz, as well as creating a continuity of current improvising collectives with big band music by using composed backgrounds, but such referential relationships are precisely what I do not want to pursue here. Rather, I want to focus on the practical significance of these scores. The familiarity of a Monk piece can give a sense of security, for instance,

after playing one or more new pieces in a set. Also, it makes the pieces useful to perform with people who are not normally part of the ICP. The page shown here is used and understood as a set of possibilities rather than a rigid instruction. After 'x choruses' the viola can start playing the melody shown here ("Mau" refers to Maurice Horsthuis, who was the orchestra's violist in the 1980s; the current violist/violinist is Mary Oliver). This melody can interrupt the soloist or function as background. The soloist has to decide whether or not to stop playing and let the viola and rhythm section continue. This way, the score sets up possible social relations for the musicians to negotiate, but the solo-accompaniment relationship is quite resistant to any subversive attempts. After this melody is finished, all the musicians (*allen*) come in with a melody that mimics the movement and rhythm of the final bars played by the viola. Because of the size of the group and the x-shaped notes, which give only a relative indication of height rather than a specific pitch, the texture becomes more ambiguous, and there is an opportunity to break out of the form of the piece and start a collective free improvisation, thus changing the music and simultaneously changing the relations among the musicians. The system at the bottom with its melody for soprano and alto saxophone together with the trombone can be used to restore some order; since Steve Lacy left the group, the soprano line is played by trumpet or clarinet.

The score clearly has an *active* function here and creates a different situation than if the musicians had used a leadsheet. Its function in the musical process is akin to that of human actors – it suggests certain phrases, relations and ways of playing, and these suggestions are negotiated just as if one of the musicians had done them. In this case, rather than impose unity, the score is actually one of the sources for initiating subversive strategies. Interestingly, the pieces in the ICP repertoire that exemplify this working method are referred to by the musicians as a "virus" – an organic metaphor with its etymology involving "organism" and "organisation". A virus can be initiated by any musician at any point and, like a real virus, either spreads to other musicians, possibly "killing" the piece being played at that moment or, if the "resistance" is high enough, diminishes and "dies". *Paardenbloem* (Fig. 3) is largely graphic, but conveys a very clear sense of what is expected from the musicians. The asterisks suggest (rather than determine) the number of musicians. The first part establishes a rhythm, again with indications of high and low rather than with specific notes; the rhythm is clearly recognisable, making it easy for the others to participate in the performance. The second section suggests upward glissandi, growing from one musician to *tutti* and then diminishing back to one. The third section is similar to the first and can be used to go back to the previous piece being played, go on to the next piece or, with some cueing, stop playing altogether. The fact that no instruments are specified in *Paardenbloem* makes it more suitable for its function, but obviously instrumentation still has a big influence: if a high, loud clarinet starts the virus, then there is a greater likelihood of the virus spreading than if the cello begins.

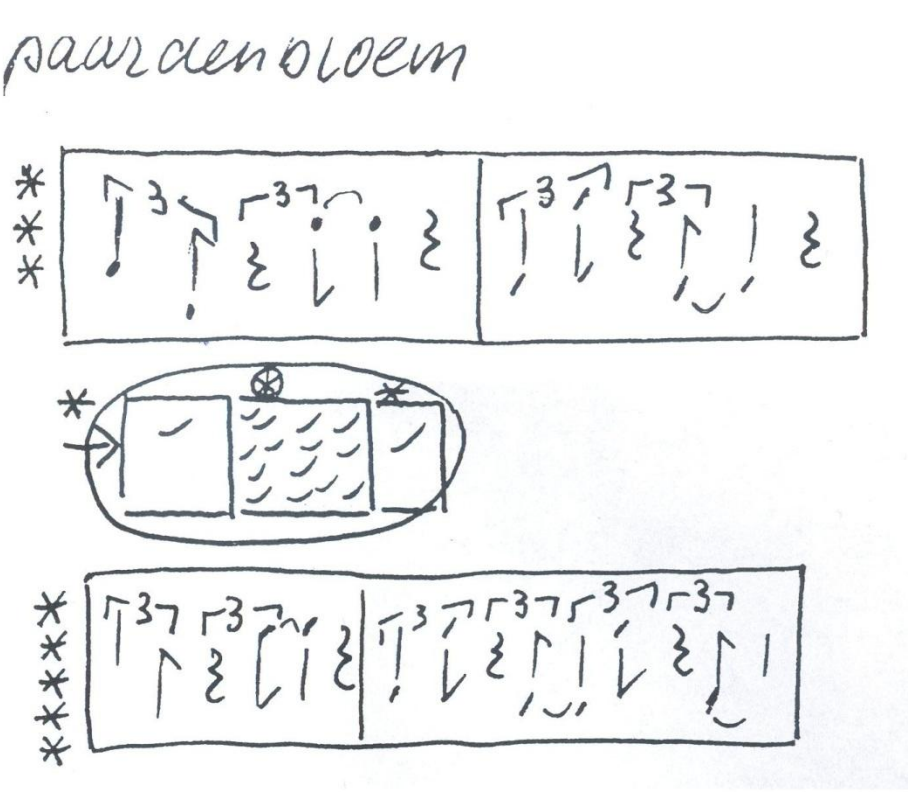

Figure 3. *Paardenbloem*

Not everything the ICP does is based on scores in the way I have described thus far. The horn section has other ways of playing backgrounds: the musicians can play notes softly to each other to organise a chord to be played on cue, or they can tell each other, for instance, to play a loud burst or a long, low, soft tone. Agreements such as this are necessary as a common reference point for interaction. The horn players also have more original methods, such as using symbols from the scores other than notes to serve as graphic scores: letters, words, clefs, repetition symbols can all be used. This is one advantage of seeing a score as an *object* – its different qualities other than just that of a sign system become apparent. At a performance in Brussels, the group played *Tijd voor de Quadrille*, a small, up-tempo piece. On the same page was the slow, sad ballad *Niet zus, maar zo* (Fig. 4). While part of the band played *Tijd*, others started playing *Niet zus* from the beginning and played it right through. Although a small event, this incident involves many of the things I have discussed above. This act needs a negotiation of instrumentation: *Tijd* was already expanded with strings for this occasion, and *Niet zus* had also been orchestrated differently from its original scoring. As the instrumentations overlap, however, the musicians have to negotiate this during performance, and although this negotiation

is obviously a social act, it is only possible because of more strictly musical decisions: the musicians have to be able to choose quickly the most suitable part for their instrument and possibly transpose it while playing, and they have to be able to keep time, even though there is another tempo and another metre being played simultaneously. The clash of two pieces as well as groups of musicians is another example of how the ICP's performance practice is about competition and disagreement, both of which are in an important sense musical and social.

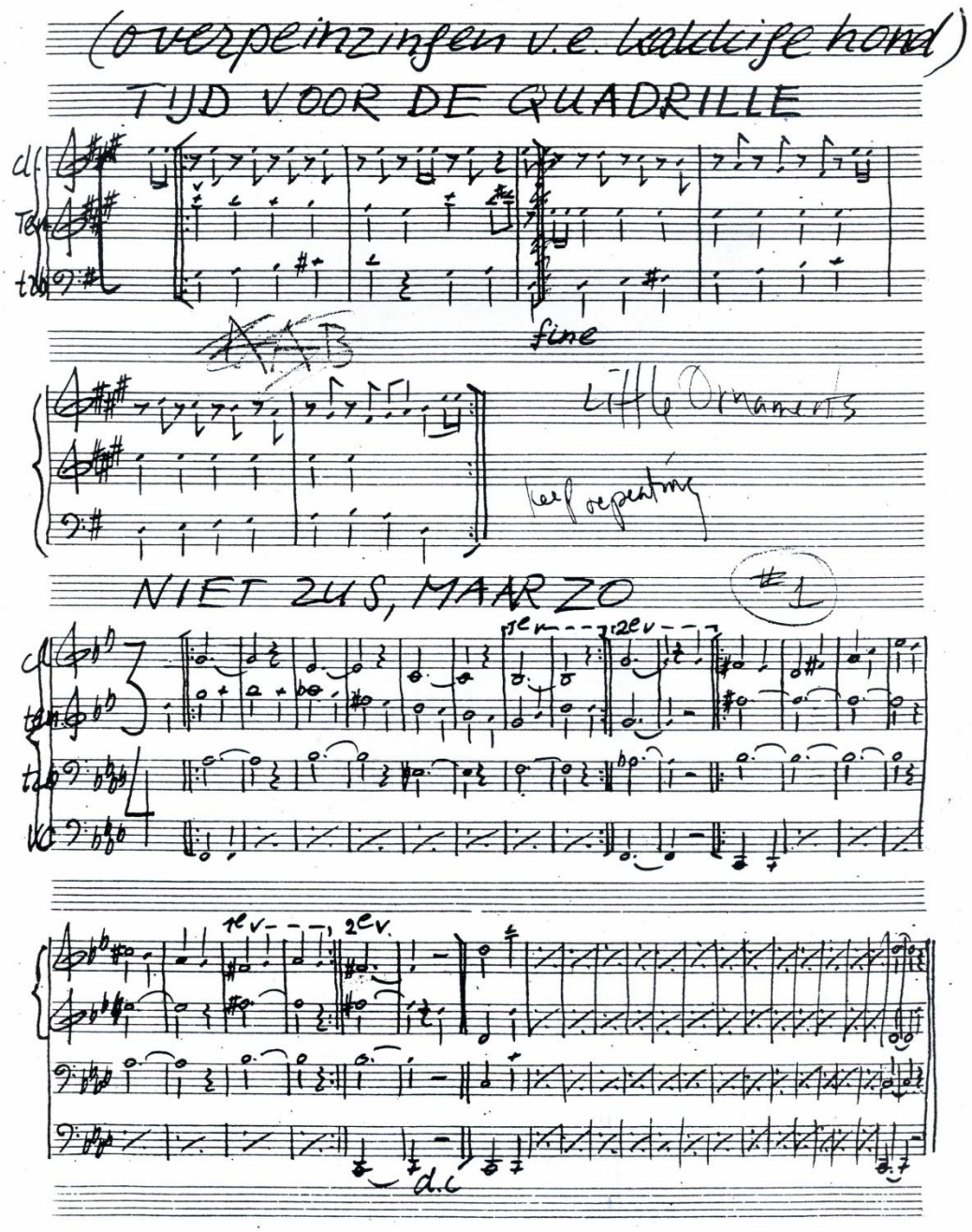

Figure 4. *Tijd voor de Quadrille* and *Niet Zus, Maar Zo*

Finally, although I have focused mostly on instrumentation because it most directly relates to musical practice from the perspective of the musicians, the examples above show that form is a central category of improvised musical practice. Form organises collective action, and collective action organises form. Form is closely related to instrumentation, as instrumentation often determines musical relationships and groupings, but it also has its own particular relation to musical interaction. Sections establish focus points that mark transformations to be negotiated collectively. These indicate changes that are at once musical and social – instrumental grouping, hierarchies, tempo and so on. In the examples above, we have seen that the ICP often uses written ideas to influence the formal organisation of their improvised performances, but form also plays an equally important role in free improvisation, where improvisers often find common ground for coordinating their actions, and this common ground often has formal implications.[73] Berliner writes about scores specifying musical roles, but does not relate this to sociological role theory or performance studies.[74] Monson writes that musical structure has "as one of its central functions the *construction* of social context,"[75] but, as I have argued, she takes this in a linguistic rather than a pragmatic direction. I hope such statements can be given new life, in order to engage in new and fruitful ways with the musical text and end the suspicion of textuality in jazz and performance studies. Although music is fundamentally social, it never stops being musical.[76]

73 Maya Gratier, "Grounding in Musical Interaction: Evidence from Jazz Performances," *Musica Scientiae* 12 (2008), no. 1, suppl., p. 71–110.

74 Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz* (see nt. 5), p. 314–347.

75 Monson, *Saying Something* (see nt. 5), p. 186.

76 I would like to thank Nicholas Cook for his comments and Susanna von Canon, the manager of the ICP, for her help and kindness.