

CONDUCTION[®] No. 156, NEW HAVEN

ARTIST STATEMENT

Jazz has driven the 20th century literally from one end to the other, and it has given birth to many offspring, re-inventing it/self time and again. No matter how many times it has changed, however, jazz has always been a medium for individual expression and collective interaction with its own characteristic spirit, which is swing, or rather the essence of swing. Born from the elements of spontaneity, momentum, combustion, ignition, propulsion (a sense of continuity) and invention (the creative spirit), this essence has been called the "extra dimension."

The orchestral community has often sought out this extra dimension in hopes of rejuvenating its traditions. Yet for all the orchestral works written in the past century, only a handful have brought jazz and music for orchestra closer together or attained the monumental status that each tradition holds. In an age when the term "interactive" has come to mean "human and machine," it seems reasonable to hope that an acoustic medium of collective interpersonal intelligence could achieve a greater degree of cross-cultural dialogue and trans-social communication than it has to date.

To find a common ground between orchestral and improvised music, I believe one must return to music fundamentals to identify what is necessary for the two traditions to co-exist: that is, the opportunity for improvisers to improvise and for interpreters to interpret the "same material."

As musicians we all speak a common language. We may speak in different dialects, vocabularies, categories or styles, but the language is music, and music, whatever the tradition from which it springs, has certain intrinsic properties (beyond harmony, melody and rhythm). Although these properties may ultimately resist analysis, music will always allow musicians to communicate from vastly differing perspectives.

Is this information sufficient to begin a new era of investigation and collaboration?
I believe that the answer is yes!

The most common misunderstanding concerning Conduction is that it is only for improvisers from the jazz or improvised music community. This is not true. Although Conduction was incubated within the improvised music community, it grew not only to encompass the ideas of those communities but also to expand beyond them.

In order to maximize the potential of existing and probable musical direction, I needed to be able to make real-time modifications to written scores, to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct compositions—to change the pattern or order of sound and, consequently, the larger form. The Conduction vocabulary made it possible to alter or initiate rhythm, melody, harmony, form/structure, articulation, phrasing and meter of any given notation. Once this lexicon had been established, it then became possible to eliminate notation altogether to pursue ideas based on collective interactive confrontations for the purpose of constructing composition in real time.

A process of encounter emerged to address composition from an interpretive and or improvisational point of view as two dimensions of continuous territory. The result is a music that can reflect all known and unknown facts relevant to the sonic world while raising cognition, creativity, fantasy and potential to capacity; a legitimate relationship between a defined compositional logic and collective musical needs that applies to each community I work in.

In fact, Conduction purpose and goals have been achieved (to great success) not only within the western instrumentation, styles and concepts, but also by utilizing and combining traditional instrumentations from Africa, Asia, the Far and Middle East, confirming its social logic and cultural diplomacy.

In its present stage of evolution, Conduction is a vocabulary/lexicon, a process and a product. It serves as a conduit for the transmission of symbolic information. The process motivates musicians not only to render, arrange and construct, but also to evolve their own vision, model and tradition, placing idea with idea; working toward a collective organizational goal with responsibility dispersed throughout the decision-making process. Thus spontaneity, momentum and combustion all work together to produce ignition, propulsion and convection.

To call Conduction an experiment is a grave error. Any time you synchronize the spirit and still give it liberty to express, you open many doors to the primus, where the intimate necessity of possibility reigns, where we find and realize our individual and collective freedoms.

From the perspective of the conductor, the act of Conduction is the art of *enviroming*, the organization of surrounding things, conditions or influences. My task is not only to illustrate (teach) Conduction in the workshops (rehearsals), but also to observe the cultural, social, and historical potential, both in the individual and the collective, so as to arrive at a specific momentary logic that will organize itself into the structures and many substructures that (can) exist in composition.

Jazz is my heritage, my condition, and my tradition. I have inherited it; I will carry it on.... At the same time, I am advocating an ensemble of musicians from diverse traditions who share a common ground and goal as servants to music, whose aim is an extra dimension that will represent a point where all musicians can create on equal footing.

In recent years, Lucas Foss (Improvisation Chamber Ensemble), Leonard Bernstein ("Three Improvisations for Orchestra," Columbia Records LP 6133), Sun Ra, Frank Zappa, Alan Silva, Doudou Ndiaye Rose and Charles Moffett are but a few who have broken ground in this area, with others coming to the forefront since 1985.

After more than one hundred-fifty Conductions, averaging three to five workshop/rehearsal days before a performance, I see only potential: potential for Conduction and for the future of music and musician; potential because there has never been enough time to realize every requirement, or total understanding, within workshop limitations. When I began I couldn't imagine where the music and the musician are now. But today I can imagine light years into Conduction, both as concept and process, and I can envision many more levels that can be achieved.

By no means do I suggest Conduction as an alternative to existing musical-educational methods or styles, but rather the investigation of a new social-logic that can unite and enhance existing traditions, a neo-functionalist approach to ensemble music, a process and a music that stands, more than ever, as a viable supplement for music, musician and education. I offer this as my contribution to the extra dimension.

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