

The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

FYS 129

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Various Quotes

These slides contain a collection of some of the quotes largely from the musicians that are studied during the course.

The idea is to present “musicians in their own words”.



Anthony Braxton

American saxophonist and composer
(June 4, 1945 -)

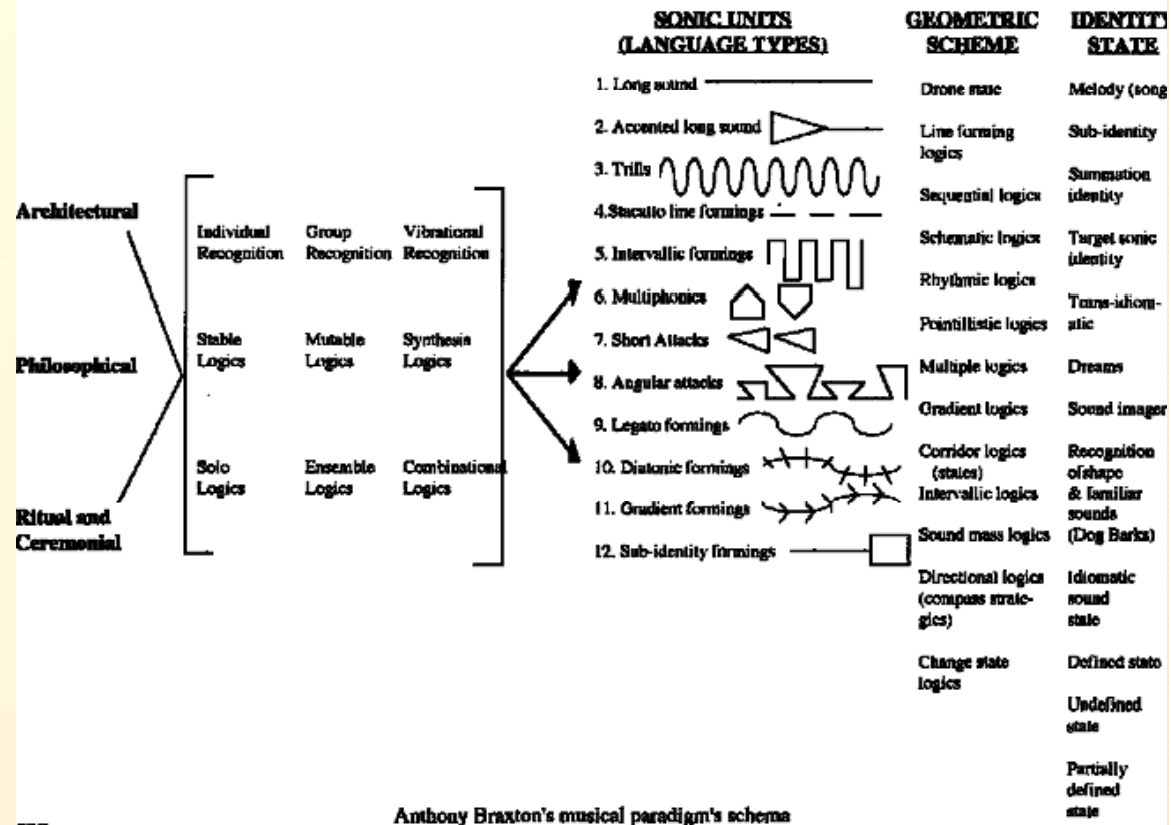
Association of the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM)

Internationally renowned for unparalleled contributions to modern music, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, Inc. (AACM) has been an inspirational leader within the cultural community since 1965. A non-profit organization chartered by the State of Illinois, the AACM is a collective of musicians and composers dedicated to nurturing, performing, and recording serious, original music. This collective of dynamic and visionary artists formed the AACM to meet their emergent needs to expose and showcase their original compositions and to create an outlet for the development and performance of their music.

The AACM currently still exists. It has a web presence at <http://aacmchicago.org/>.

Anthony Braxton was an early member of the AACM in the 1960s. He is arguably the most widely known of the musicians who emerged from the AACM.

Anthony Braxton's Musical Paradigm's Scheme



From The Third Millenial Interview by Mike Heffley, 2001.

Braxton's Tri-Axium Writings (Excerpt)

Braxton: If we are ever to awaken to the realness of creativity as a life giving factor, then the seriousness of this subject must be re-examined from every viewpoint and context. For the most basic understanding of creativity perpetuated in this time zone seeks to accent the entertainment or spectral value of a given projection, rather than what that same projection might mean in its cosmic vibrational sense (as pertaining to either its mystical, spiritual or positive functional value). In other words, the present reality of western information dynamics is geared to focus more on the surface of a given focus, as opposed to 'what is most true' about that focus, and this phenomenon has come to profoundly distort our perception of everything - including creativity. The end result of this cultural attitude sheds light on the times we now live in, for, to many people, the meta-reality of a given creative projection is a subject not worthy of serious thought. And, as the progressional expansion of technology continues to reshape every aspect of our lives, this gradual unconcern about composite information (and/or philosophical content) that is now taking place in our culture will pose even greater complexities for generations to come. Every day the realness of creativity becomes less and less clear - and this is true on many different levels.

Tri-Axium Writings, by Anthony Braxton, Synthesis Music, 1985, 3 spiral-bound volumes, 1704 pages.

Braxton on Finding his own Voice

Braxton: The most fundamental axiom that I grew up with was the importance of finding something of your own, and when that happens, either everyone can hear it or they can't. Fortunately for me, many of the musicians and percussionists I hoped would be open to my music were, in fact, open to it. In this time period the business complex puts forth a notion of idiomatic certainty, where everyone uses the syntax from a generic perspective, and this is called jazz. But when I was coming up, it was the opposite. Generic was not seen as a point of mastery. Generic was part of the learning process. We start from imitating our heroes, and from that point evolve a position.

Interview by Ted Panken, 2003.

Braxton on the Musics of Curiosity

Braxton: Well, I remember the phrase, "for those who are planting seeds, trees will grow." I've been working on my project for 35 years. I remember John Cage commenting that many of his colleagues were angry at him because he was having so much fun with his music. But it was only because he had been working at it for 30, 40, 50 years; and it was only because he had made all the sacrifices that he had to make to work with his music. So he did not have a life of making a lot of money, of being totally successful in the way some of the guys have been. But among the underground, the people who were interested in the future, and trying to evolve, we came to love him and recognize that his work was part of the real mystic tradition of restructural development; that his work was a part of that effort that led to men being blasted off and landing on the moon. This is what I wanted to be part of--that group, those musics, which were the musics of curiosity, the musics of motivation.

The Third Millenial Interview by Mike Heffley, 2001, 125 pages.

Braxton on the Music Industry

Braxton: Before I can deal with your question, I would have to first back up and establish this perspective: part of my problem, or part of the complexity of my creative struggle, has been that there's no category for an African American person who's interested in composite reality and in responding to it. I think in the very beginning, many of the problems that I would experience would come about because, for many sectors, I was an African American who did not know my place; who embraced the trans-European and trans-Asian musics to the same extent that I embraced the trans-African musics because I did not experience a natural opposition to those continua. Part of the complexity of the ethnic politics that has been the political gambit leading into the modern era would be that the African-American person has to function within a defined zone, or parameter. I have all this natural feeling, so-called; if I would just behave and use my natural feeling and function as a jazz musician as that concept is being defined by the marketplace, then there could be possibilities. But my problem was--or at least their perception of my problem was--that in looking at a guy like Karlheinz Stockhausen and having an affinity with him, as well as with Cecil Taylor, that in making the decision to even think about an opera, I would suddenly violate the political dimensions of what kind of experiences I would move toward, or what kind of performance dictates would be available for a guy like me.

The Third Millenial Interview by Mike Heffley, 2001, 125 pages.

Braxton on the Music Industry

Braxton: At this point in time for me, it's almost irrelevant what's happening in the jazz world.

MH: Because it seems taken over by corporate commercialism and so on?

Braxton: Yes; everything's become generic in a way that the people who are allowed to be successful are those whose experience and perceptual parameters exist within the framework of what the jazz business complex has deemed acceptable.

The Third Millenial Interview by Mike Heffley, 2001, 125 pages.