

The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

FYS 129

David Keffer, Professor
Dept. of Materials Science & Engineering
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-2100
dkeffer@utk.edu
<http://clausius.engr.utk.edu/>

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”.



**Marilyn
Crispell**

American pianist
(March 30, 1947–)

Crispell on Unconventional Creativity

LP: Does society today have difficulty with creativity that is not easily explained, understood or identifiable?

Crispell: ...I think our culture is very much shaped by a corporate marketing mentality and that's part of the reason this music isn't appreciated here [in the United States]. Therefore, it's important for musicians to take the music into schools to kids who are very young and still impressionable, who are still too young to know that they are not supposed to like something. I also wish there were more national touring programs combining education and concerts. More of what they do in Europe where they are really proud of their artists and try and educate young kids.

...The arts are considered frivolous here...

From Music and the Creative Spirit: Innovators in Jazz, Improvisation and the Avant-Garde by Lloyd Peterson, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2006.

Crispell on Influences

GF: It surprised me to hear that you quit playing music for a while but you mention that hearing Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structures* and then listening to John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* changed your destiny.

Crispell: Yes, it did. That's what did it. Listening to *A Love Supreme* was totally emotional and, I would have to say, a totally spiritual experience, above and beyond anything else that's ever happened to me. I was twenty-eight years old and I remember it very vividly. I was listening to this music, I was alone in the very room, and suddenly there was this presence in the room and—not to get very New Agey here or anything, but I definitely felt this presence and it was an overwhelming feeling of love, pure love. I was crying and totally, totally shaken up, and I asked this presence for help to become part of all of this. I wasn't thinking in terms of a career or making money or anything like that—it's like I just have to be connected to where I belong. It's maybe the only time in my life I ever knew anything for sure!

from Outside Music Inside Voices: Dialogues on Improvisation and the Spirit of Creative Music by Garrison Fewell, Saturn University Press, Somerville, Massachusetts, 2014.

Crispell on Buddhism in her Music

GF: You say you've been a Buddhist since the 1980s. How has the development of your 'inner self' influenced your skills as a creative artist?

Crispell: I think in a way it's influenced my concept of space, silence, a kind of relaxing into the music as opposed to feeling like I have to make something happen. The more I feel I have to make something happen, the less it happens. And the more I just relax into it, the more it really happens, including the very intense stuff. I'm more aware of when my mind is telling me, "Oh, you should do this now, or you should do that, or maybe you should change this." I'd say it's related a lot to that kind of thing, but it could also have to do with just getting older.

from Outside Music Inside Voices: Dialogues on Improvisation and the Spirit of Creative Music by Garrison Fewell, Saturn University Press, Somerville, Massachusetts, 2014.

Crispell on Gender in Music

LP: Do women and men create differently or does it have more to do with individuality?

Crispell: I think it has more to do with individuality. I have said for years that I don't believe in men's music and women's music, but I think if you are a woman, you are obviously playing women's music. If you are a man, you are playing men's music. We all have masculine and feminine elements and people like Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett play some very feminine lyrical stuff and there are women who play some very hard-ass stuff.

From Music and the Creative Spirit: Innovators in Jazz, Improvisation and the Avant-Garde by Lloyd Peterson, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2006.

Crispell on a Potential Negative of the Internet

Crispell: I also think the computer age is overwhelming us and zillions of people putting out CDs or selling their own CDs online. It's hard to keep track, and how are you supposed to find out about anything? It almost starts to feel homogeneous.

From Music and the Creative Spirit: Innovators in Jazz, Improvisation and the Avant-Garde by Lloyd Peterson, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2006.

Crispell on her Way of Looking at Life

LP: Do you have a philosophy of way of looking at life that you would be willing to share?

Crispell: I think that kindness, sensitivity, and awareness of the world around you are important. Life is like a dream in the sense that it's real, yet at the same time, it's compared to a reflection of the moon in the water. The reflection is there, you can see it; you can touch water but the reflection is really ephemeral. And the real moon is like the basic mind, which is nonconceptual. The search for truth is important; seeing beauty in all forms—an acceptance of all of life. The beautiful, the ugly, the sad and the happy. Don't be afraid to follow your spirit and your dreams— don't let anything stop you.

From Music and the Creative Spirit: Innovators in Jazz, Improvisation and the Avant-Garde by Lloyd Peterson, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2006.

Crispell on her Common Philosophy

LP: Do you have a common philosophy that you try to impart on young students or musicians?

Crispell: Just to have the courage to be true to your own voice.

From Music and the Creative Spirit: Innovators in Jazz, Improvisation and the Avant-Garde by Lloyd Peterson, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2006.