

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”.

Tomeka Reid



**American cellist
& composer
(b. 1977 -)**

Reid on the Accepting Risk

Reid: It was interesting that I was in this music, because it wants you to-- it's about the journey, people watching the journey, they like that story of you discovering yourself. People like saying, "I remember when you were nervous on stage, and now look at you!" People follow your path and they--I think they like that, but I was coming from survival mode. I've got to be good at this because I got to take care of myself, it's just coming from my family situation--a part of me feels guilty for going into music because I came from such instability. "Do you really want to go and follow a path where you don't know and you are not at that level that you need to be at and most people are at?" I kept dabbling with it. I kept practicing, and I was curious about it.

Tomeka Reid, interview by William Parker, November 13, 2018, published in *Conversations III*, edited by Ed Hazell, RogueArt, Paris, France, 2019, pp. 371-372.

Reid on Nicole Mitchell as a Role Model

Reid: I remember her [Nicole Mitchell] saying “if you come back to Chicago I will have you play in my band.” She was really, really nice and also I was admiring her because she was this young woman, I think she had to be thirty at the time. She had a daughter and she was going for it. Coming from my mom who was a single mom, I just thought, ‘wow here is this woman’—she had a kid but she is not ... I grew up with “oh my gosh, can’t wait till you get the hell out of my house so I can live my life, you were holding me back from doing everything I wanted to do.” So to see this woman who had a child, and she didn’t feel or say those things. It didn’t seem like she felt that way about her daughter, it laid an impression on me.

Tomeka Reid, interview by William Parker, November 13, 2018, published in *Conversations III*, edited by Ed Hazell, RogueArt, Paris, France, 2019, pp. 370.

Reid on her Undergraduate Experience

Reid: I didn't have the lessons, so I think I was feeling I'm not good, and then when I went to undergrad I was definitely the worst one in my studio. My orchestra teacher would tell me I was a leech bringing down the orchestra.

Tomeka Reid, interview by William Parker, November 13, 2018, published in *Conversations III*, edited by Ed Hazell, RogueArt, Paris, France, 2019, pp. 371.

Reid on her Doctoral Experience

Reid: I got this degree but I don't feel I learned really anything there, except that jazz studies or jazz education in universities is really questionable. They are not teaching—we already know they are not teaching all the information, you could graduate and not even realize that black people had a contribution to this music.

Tomeka Reid, interview by William Parker, November 13, 2018, published in *Conversations III*, edited by Ed Hazell, RogueArt, Paris, France, 2019, pp. 373.

Reid on Gravitating to the AACM

Reid: ...Renee Baker had me play with the Chicago Sinfonietta, but there were just so many vibes in Sinfonietta that it wasn't really fitting for me. I'm tired of feeling I'm not good enough, feeling I got to watch my—okay, you finally get into an orchestra and then what if your section doesn't like you? So all these vibes here and, forget that. I want to be happy and play music and feel comfortable and feel good, I care about this—I'm sorry if I'm not running up and down the finger board like some people, but it doesn't mean I don't care about it. So I phased that out of my life and the rock stuff I was doing, I liked it but the touring was really rough. I felt out of place because I'm also tired of being the only black person in these environments. So I think that's why I gravitated to this music. I started playing with the Great Black Music Ensemble and doing more AACM stuff.

Tomeka Reid, interview by William Parker, November 13, 2018, published in *Conversations III*, edited by Ed Hazell, RogueArt, Paris, France, 2019, pp. 372.