Re:NEW
Frontiers in Creativity

September 30, 2004

Introductions: Alan Brinkley and the Panel

Introduction by Alan Brinkley

Alan Brinkley: I'm Alan Brinkley. I'm the provost of Columbia University, and I want to welcome all of you here for one of the final two symposia in the Columbia 250th celebration, the first night of "New Frontiers in Creativity." I also want to welcome my distinguished colleagues from the faculty who are here to open this event, and Elaine Sisman will introduce them shortly.

About two years ago Elaine and I were sitting in a meeting of department chairs—this is during my former life—and were being briefed on the symposia that were planned for the Columbia 250th. And Elaine—who is always quick to notice flaws in any plan—said, "Where are the humanities, and where are the arts?" And, of course, they were not prominently visible in the proposed list of symposia. So this perhaps fell under the category of "careful what you wish for," because the organizer of the events turned to her and said, "Why don't you organize something?"

And this is the triumphant result of Elaine's proposal. She and Brad Garton together have organized this event. Never have I seen the rotunda of Low Library look more magical. And so it's really a pleasure to welcome everybody here today for what promises to be a wonderful symposium and a wonderful evening. The first of these symposia were held last October to open the yearlong celebration of Columbia's 250th anniversary, and this symposium and another that will begin tomorrow morning on the twenty-first–century city are closing it. This is the final weekend of our celebration of this great event in the life of the University.

This symposium is designed to explore, as its title suggests, the new—new sounds, new media, new poetics, new forms of storytelling, new models of seeing and hearing. And that's what we will—or the organizers of this event will—present to you over the course of this symposium.

The chairs of the symposium are Brad Garton and Elaine Sisman, both here, although not both on stage. Elaine's to my left and Brad is somewhere. And I want to thank them for all the work they've done on this, and I also want to thank András Szántó, the director of the National Arts Journalism Program, for his assistance in planning the event.

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http://c250.columbia.edu/c250_events/symposia/renew.html

I also want to note that the evening has been produced by the Columbia Computer Music Center, which has been at the forefront of electronic music since the days of Vladimir Ussachevsky.

And now it's my great pleasure to introduce my former colleague on the Committee of Chairs, Elaine Sisman, the Anne Parsons Bender Professor of Music and the chair of the Department of Music. Elaine specializes in the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, a well as the history of rhetoric, aesthetics, and the theory of music. She has been awarded the Alfred Einstein Award of the American Musicological Society, and she is now the incoming president of the American Musicological Society, and she is one of the most honored members of the Columbia faculty within the University. She was honored in 1992 with Columbia's Great Teacher Award, a dinner for which this year's recipients were honored last night in this very room.

She was honored in 1994 with the Alexander Hamilton Medal for teaching in the Core Curriculum, and again in 2000 for Distinguished Service to the Core Curriculum. She's one of our most beloved and important faculty colleagues, and it's a real pleasure to introduce her in this event tonight. Thank you all for coming.

Introduction to the New by Elaine Sisman

Elaine Sisman: Thank you, Provost Brinkley, for those excessively generous remarks. As you've just heard, the inspiration for this evening's event was originally a good idea. We're hoping it'll turn out to be a great idea. It was the realization that many of us in the humanities at Columbia are working, are studying, are considering those nodal points in history where new forms emerged. And we had the simultaneous realization that here at Columbia, people are creating those new forms.

They are, in the words of Elliot Schwartz and Daniel Godfrey, "bridging the gap between the human and the artificial with a rare combination of creative imagination, an ear for sonorous beauty, and the cutting edge of technological innovation." It seemed like an exciting idea to bring together historians, philosophers, and analysts of the new in history, together with the new sounds, the new media, the improvisers, technologists, and creators of human-machine interactions themselves in the hope that new forms of virtuosity will emerge, both performance virtuosity and critical and scholarly virtuosity.

It's harder and harder to talk about the new all the time. Even the phrase *make it new* is pretty old by now. Every convention, tradition, advance, and achievement has been deconstructed or appropriated, or both. The edge against which the new cuts is always moving.

I was shocked to see an article in the *Times* yesterday about the Moog synthesizer where the term *space age* was used to mean *back then*, because it paired with the now quaint, antique term *analog*. Moog synthesizer, a space-age analog machine.

Yesterday's radical innovation becomes today's comfortable cliché or evergreen classic, or it may even have the taint of a naïve futurism, a kind of dated world-of-tomorrow effect.

As the nineteenth-century Russian critic Ulïbïchev wrote, some formerly new works "betray the vestiges of contemporary taste that time transforms into spots of rust." And I know that nothing would chill the heart of a technologist more than the word *rust*.

After a century of self-conscious progressivism in the arts followed by decades of doubts and even suspicions about the radically new, the very idea of creative progress has for many become problematic. We've just been through the cultural temperature-taking of the new millennium, with its exploration of fin de siècle, turning points, cycles of creative birth and decay.

Just as the concept of beauty has recently gained new currency in critical debates, however, so the idea of newness deserves another look and another hearing. That the *New York Times* critic Margot Jefferson has just started a series on the avant-garde suggests that the new may well be in the air again.

Before I introduce our distinguished panelists I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Ember Deitz Goldstein and Glenn Peterson of Columbia 250 for their help in putting together this event; András Szántó, once again, the director of the National Arts Journalism Program for assistance in planning; and Brad Garton and his indefatigable team at Computer Music Center.

Now, I'm not going to take the time to read the extraordinary biographies of our distinguished panelists. You have them in your program and I think you'd rather hear them than hear about them. But they are in order on the stage: Professor Arthur Danto, the Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy Emeritus; Lydia Goehr, Professor of Philosophy; Walter Frisch, the H. Harold Gumm / Harry and Albert von Tilzer Professor of Music; and Simon Schama, University Professor.

We'd like to begin our evening with brief statements by each of our panelists in order, and I hope everybody is wired for sound. Thank you.

Introduction to the New by Arthur Danto

Arthur Danto: We're given exactly three minutes each, so the only rational way is to work it out, and I'm going to read three minutes' worth.

The linking of the two concepts in the title of this panel, artistic creativity and artistic frontier, prompts a narrative of the history of art as the history of frontiers, as defining different modes of creativity from era to era. A valuable model—at least the model that occurred to me when I was thinking about it—is the history of freedom, as conceived by Hegel, from a condition in which one person is free, to one in which some persons are free, to that in which all persons are free. And the latter, Hegel saw as the prevailing and final mode of the narrative ushered in by Napoleon and the values of the French Revolution, especially the values of equality.

The corresponding model for the history of art is this: from one frontier to a period in which there are many frontiers to a condition in which the frontier is everywhere, where the whole of artistic production can be cutting edge. The one-frontier model is what used to be used the history of the visual arts, and that was the world of appearance. The agenda was the mimetic conquest of appearance in the sense of providing the perceptual equivalents on a surface to what strikes the sense in reality.

Modernism saw the period of many frontiers in which creativity meant creating a new frontier. Picasso's the paradigm of the modern artist, but against that paradigm every modern artist had to create or belong to a movement. Each had its own frontier.

The contemporary period which is ours began in the 1960s, though there were anticipations via Marcel Duchamp, the originality of whom was masked by the fact that he was perceived initially as part of a movement, namely dada. What Duchamp established around the time of World War I is that there are no outward differences between art and ordinary things. Through fluxes, pop, minimalism in the sixties and Joseph Beuys in the seventies, radical pluralism emerged as the prevailing and terminal condition of the unfolding of art history. Everything is now possible as art, which means that the frontier's everywhere, art history being over.

A friend sent me a passage from the gospel of Thomas which moved me profoundly. The gospel writes, "His disciples said to him, 'When will the kingdom come?' 'It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said "look here" or "look there." Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it.'" In terms of our topic, the center of the art world is everywhere.

Art may not look like art as understood under one or another of the previous stages. That's the condition in which we find ourselves. We have to imagine the possibility that whatever we're looking at or listening to is art, and proceed on the assumption that it is art. We'll soon enough find out if we were right or wrong.

The artist now realizes that he or she is on a permanent frontier. It's not a frontier that can be carried forward or overcome. Each artist at every moment has taken

on the burdens of creativity with nothing that serves as guide since the whole of the past is available as a quarry. Everything's original even if it looks like what had been done before. That puts art criticism on an entirely new basis, and that's what justifies my being here this evening: not being a music, but an art critic, for the boundary between music and the visual arts has been, or is being, absorbed.

I can name artists in whose work music plays a central role without them being musicians, save in the widest post-Cagian sense. That would be a paradigm of one way of thinking about music today. If that paradigm won't apply, I'm not sure I have a lot to contribute.

Introduction to the New by Walter Frisch

Walter Frisch: Since I'm a musicologist on the panel and I go back into the past to look for the new, and I just wanted in my remarks tonight to briefly isolate five moments in the history of music—and there could be many more—when the new specifically programmatically (ideologically, one might say) became a significant concept. And at such moments, as we know, the new tends to be set against the old as part of a binary opposition.

So, brief snapshots: The first moment. In the early fourteenth century in western Europe there was a musical treatise called *Ars Nova*, the new art, published by Philippe de Vitry, and there were other works at this time also referred to an *ars nova*, a new art, which was set against the music of the thirteenth century which was referred to as the *ars antiqua*, the old art.

The second moment: Around 1600 in Italy, the singer and composer Giulio Caccini published a collection of songs called *Nuove Musiche*, the new musics, in a sense. In his preface he claimed that the innovation lay in writing musically, allowing people to speak musically, and this was the forerunner of recitative.

The third moment: In 1780 Franz Joseph Haydn published a set of six string quartets, Opus 33, which he claimed in two separate letters were "written in a new and special way." For over 200 years that comment has kept musicologists busy trying to figure out just what Haydn meant by "new and special."

The fourth moment: In 1802 Beethoven publishes two sets of piano variations, Opus 34 and 35, that he claims are composed in a truly new manner. That also has kept musicologists and analysts busy for many years figuring out what he meant.

And the fifth and last moment that I want to just isolate briefly is in 1919. Paul Becker, a critic, used the term *neue musik* new music, in a lecture by that title to characterize works by younger composers that in his view served as a renewal of worn-out musical materials and of musical feeling.

So these are five places, and one could multiply them across time where the concept of the new was specifically put. And in each of these cases the concept of the new is used to grab attention, to distinguish something that is being presented from what has come before. And it is also to some extent a public-relations move. Philippe, Caccini, Haydn, Beethoven, and Becker are all advocating, or seeking to clear a space for, either their own music or that of the composers they admire. But it can also be said that there is something going on here in the music in 1320, 1600, 1802, and 1915 about, there is something new going on.

And just to very briefly, since I'm probably already over my time, what the *Ars Nova* represented in the very most basic terms was a very new sophistication in musical notation that allowed a whole new range of musical expression to be put down in a precise way. The length of every sound could be precisely determined so that the different voices could fall precisely into the combination of rhythm that the composer desired.

Caccini in 1600 was introducing a style in which one could speak musically, by singing in a declamatory style without other voices and with just simple accompaniment. And this was the origin of what later came to be known as recitative and one of the foundational moves in the creation of opera. That definitely counts as new.

On the face of it, the Opus 33 quartets of Haydn seem somewhat lighter and less innovative than the larger, more imposing works he'd written before, but there are very innovative aspects to these works as well: wit, humor, new kinds of thematic works.

Beethoven also is seen to be heralding his heroic style, the expansive, rhythmically dynamic idiom of the Third Symphony is his variations.

Paul Becker, the critic I mentioned from 1919, championed the music of Mahler, Schoenberg, and Franz Schreker, each of whom was a genuine pioneer of innovation in musical language. Mahler, through his formal and timbral techniques; Schoenberg through his tonal explorations; Schreker through his focus on *klang*, or sonority, as a primary compositional dimension in music.

But it may well be that had the new not been announced programmatically by these people, we would not have perceived something radical in these historical moments, because there is also continuity, the changes to musical styles and techniques that are incremental, and that have been prefigured by what went before. So I guess if I have a point to make, it's at these five moments in music history we have a proclamation of the new, something that is indeed quite new, but also a tremendous sense of continuity with the past. So we have to view the new, we have to moderate it or nuance it whenever we use it. Thank you.

Introduction to the New by Lydia Goeher

Lydia Goehr: We're sitting in a chamber of echoes. It's very hard for us to hear. Thinking about the new is almost as difficult as thinking about the good, but luckily there's a joke about the good that will do the philosophical work for us. So three rabbis are asked to define the good. The first answers, "Good is saying your prayers each week on the Sabbath." "No," says the second. "It's saying your prayers every day, Sabbath or not." "But still no," says the third. "It's taking your lover out to dinner, drinking champagne, making love, and then smoking a cigarette." "No, no," cries the first rabbi to the third. "We're meant to be defining the good, not the very good."

One of Adorno's chief tenets in his writing on the philosophy in music is that, as a listening public, we like to demand the new but not the too new, the good but not the very good. But the demand, he shows, is full of deception. Certainly we get bored by always hearing the same thing. We want the new. But when confronted with it, we tend paradoxically to reject it as too new. We do all we can to resist its challenge to our normal habits of listening. Hence, the first rabbi's rejection of the most unexpected answer.

The idea here is the new is not simply the modern or the contemporary. It designates no specific category of music or works, it's owned by no particular composer or group of artists. Rather, it's a philosophical idea used to crack or transfigure what a public takes to be commonplace in any kind of music. I think the new concerns public taste and opinion.

Thinking about the new asks us to listen to the performances tonight so that we'll turn back on ourselves to think about how we listen as a public. Normally we're pretty confident about how we listen, especially to what we've heard before, which means most of the music of the past. We like to say that Mozart's music is easier than, say, Elliot Carter's. But how strange a judgment this is that something over 200 years old should strike our chords of familiarity in a way something contemporary doesn't.

It's a Freudian platitude to say we like better what we already find familiar. It's equally a platitude of contemporary art to believe that the only way to crack patterns of self-evidence is through the shock of the shockingly new.

But platitudes need cracking, too, so here's the cracking. When we're confronted explicitly with the shockingly new, we're often turned on merely by the shock. When we hear something that less shocks than genuinely aggravates the norm, we usually declare it too new, we put it on the shelf of CDs we listened to once, didn't like, and will never listen to again.

But suppose in listening to a recent work, maybe one we hear tonight, we come to realize that Mozart's music has also suddenly become unfamiliar to us, as

when contemporary painters make us see the painters of the past in a new way. This sort of knowledge is the hardest to set aside, it rocks the certainty of our norms from the inside out. Learning to listen to Mozart again through contemporary forms of music is how to negotiate the past and present at the same time. It's about using the challenge of the present to prevent us from making any music conform to what we already know and like. The new is the renewing of our listening to all music without the dismissal of it as too new, it's about not dismissing the good as inappropriate because it's very good.

The new is about listening again, having thrown our comfortable crutches of familiarity aside. The point extends to political debates. The new is about our capacity as a public not to fit what we hear into what we already think we know. As Oscar Wilde almost once said, "Public opinion exists only so long as we dismiss from our thinking anything other than what we've already comfortably thought before."

Introduction to the New by Simon Schama

Simon Schama: That scares the hell out of me, actually. New frontiers, pioneers, so American! I come from an old island, you know, maybe it's because I'm getting old, that I'm allergic to anything that proclaims itself as new. You hear two English accents on this panel. I'm going to be in some sense more mischievously truculent even than Lydia Goehr, really about an axiom which I hold deeply, is that the originality of anything you might actually experience is usually in an inverse relationship to the proclamation of its novelty. How about that? Schama's party-pooping rule for the evening's proceedings.

But *new history*? Give me a break. Oxymoron of the year, like jumbo shrimp. Why should anyone be interested in anything that calls itself new history, and be taken in?

I remember in the sixties, we were taken in. A new history was new because you actually could use computer quantification. Well it was rather like when the eighteenth-century newspapers did indeed invent the word in Paris *nouvelle*, meaning that what you heard today would undoubtedly be gone tomorrow and forgotten the following week. Would that that were the case at six o'clock and eleven o'clock today. Probably not the case. So I'm very skeptical, actually, about self-proclamations of novelty.

Things do happen to be genuinely new. I agree, both with two of my colleagues here as well, that obviously things differentiate themselves in a plausible, authentic and substantial way. But, if you like, the new happens, rather than is declared to happen, I think. The only time I could possibly think of, really, where the word *new* was daringly used to actually make a case for something to which people should pay attention in historical writing was Giambattista Vico, also in the eighteenth century—in which period I do seem to be seriously but quite happily

stuck—when he labeled his book *The New Science*. But guess what? The new science was about anthropology, it was about the rediscovery of the archaic. It was indeed a new methodology, it was in some sense different, it was almost pugilistically taking on the notion of a progress-driven teleology and, indeed, history thought of as a kind of providential revelation. But it couldn't have been a new science unless it was an immersion in the incredibly old, the incredibly archaic. It was an attempt to marry together the symbolism of mythology and archaic anthropology with an understanding about how social behavior happens.

And very often, actually, when things do self-consciously label themselves as novel, they're always imbricated with—this is rather what Lydia was saying at the end, I take it to be, [I would] not dare put words in her mouth, God, no—but actually it is always an negotiation between past and present. How about "the new look"? How many of you remember that? No undergraduates, that's for sure. Chanel and Dior, 1945. It was essentially about the immediate past, shoulder pads, just come out of the wall, we women or sort-of women, but then again we're as good as men. Absolutely right.

On the other hand, after six o'clock it was all about the return of the ballooning line around the hip. So it was new, but it wasn't really new, it wasn't old, it was in fact actually much older and much more reactionary in a couturier way. Did you ever think you'd hear "the new look" talked about in Columbia Low Library rotunda? Probably not. Just the first of the surprises in store this evening.

And almost any of these things. Let me finish, you'll be glad to hear, because I was actually thinking about Caravaggio today, as were all of you, especially Professor Danto. And there is a moment in the life of Caravaggio chronicled by most of his seventeenth-century biographers when he's asked about, since he was famous for his contempt of classical models and of past masters. Well those past masters were the Greek sculptors mentioned in Pliny's natural history, or whether the past masters were his namesake Michelangelo and Raphael. And he dismissed all of that and simply, when someone said to him, "Who are your masters. Who are your models?" he simply pointed at us all, meaning nature and everybody else. It's true he wasn't particularly keen on going on record other than police records, Caravaggio, but he was at pains really to think that the way he wanted to differentiate himself between what had immediately gone before, between unthought-out dependence on tradition and habit, was not really about what might be self-consciously new. It was always essentially and causally hooked into something bigger than either new or old. In his case, it was nature.

In, let's say, the case of Rothko or Mondrian, it was a kind of an attempt to make art do the work of metaphysics, to have a kind of cosmological ambition in those two cases—not even a self-conscious sense, even though they were doing something new—of putting all their cards on the table of novelty.

Now, as I say, and everybody has said, that's not to say we shouldn't really welcome the new when it happens, but I think the kind of ooh-ahh aspect of it ought to be tempered by one final reflection, that we think of Columbus—since, again, I'm an Old Worlder who's lived in the New World for a long time—as somehow purposefully sailing his way toward the New World. But guess what? He thought he was going to China en route to Jerusalem.

Elaine Sisman: This is what makes a horse race. We have devotees, opponents, we have historians, critics, and now we're going to hear some quite extraordinary things. Whether we will call them the new, whether you will be able to say Columbia University presented the new tonight, or whether we will be able to find a paradigm or way to understand what we're about to see and hear, I leave that to my colleagues and to you here tonight.

Our first performance is "Pikapika" by Tomie Hahn and Curtis Bahn.

Panel Response: Pikapika

Elaine Sisman: If the performers would like to talk to us, we'd love to talk to them. I would love to hear about how *nihon buyo* dancing in the Japanese tradition is transformed in this extraordinary way. But that's . . . I'm going to start moving like that myself.

Arthur Danto: I'd like to know what the connection really is between the movement, the sounds, and what comes up on the screen. Is that predictable, I mean is that something that's actually controlled or is there a randomizing element that is in there so that, for example, at one point we're getting what looks like a constructivist film. But then at a certain point it almost looks like an animation of the Sistine ceiling, and is that something you anticipated was going to happen, or are you surprised by what comes on the screen when you begin to move your arms? And then do you really control what the sounds themselves are going to be? Would you be able to repeat that, for example, so that it comes out exactly the same way twice?

Curtis Bahn: No performance would ever be exactly like another performance. She has a number of different palettes of sounds and a number of different techniques for initiating them and for processing them. And the range of the sounds and the palette of techniques that she has at her control make the gamut of the composition. But her role, she has complete power, sort of agency within the performance to determine what sounds she will enact, what sorts of textures will be surrounding her. And then she's activating those textures. It might be a bit like a mobile or something like that, you know the components that are in the mobile but you're not exactly sure the way that the wind will activate them. You know, a strong wind is going to really shake them up, a slight wind is going to tinkle them in a different way. But there's a vast range of resources at her control and she's improvising within those resources.

Simon Schama: Do you start with any kind of narrative? I mean, you know, none whatsoever? Because I mean there was the, you know, balls in the air and that was the moment of grief. But that's just me projecting, so I don't mean really a narrative where, you know, Jack and Jill go up the hill and, you know, eventually they tumble after. None whatsoever? So that's just the sort of difference between what one might imagine to be exuberance, that's entirely projection, is it? No it isn't, is it? So it's all value-neutral, all the gestures are value-neutral.

Curtis Bahn: Well, we thought about this piece in terms of constructing a character, but not in terms of constructing a narrative.

Simon Schama: Okay.

Curtis Bahn: And all of the characteristics of what he does are programmed into the computer.

Simon Schama: Right.

Curtis Bahn: Her background is in Japanese traditional dance and many of the movements in this piece are drawn from *bunraku* puppet theater, a form that she learned when she was about four years old. The Japanese dance is drawn from that sort of tradition. And so she shows some of those articulations. So those sorts of things are puppetlike, and we programmed the computer to respond to that particular vocabulary. So it's drawing from that tradition, sort of coloring it a different way. And the ways in which it's colored may make people draw certain assumptions or . . .

Simon Schama: I'm terribly happy with the word *tradition* because as you stand underneath the word *new*.

Curtis Bahn: Excuse me?

Simon Schama: I'm very happy that the word *tradition* is, you know, as you stand under the word *new*. That makes complete sense to me.

Curtis Bahn: Tomie doesn't often talk as Pikapika, but Tomie is a professor of ethnomusicology and is very concerned with ways in which traditions can be brought into new forms. And she's written quite a bit about that.

Lydia Goehr: I'm certainly not a critic, so that I think . . . is it on? Does this piece have a title?

Curtis Bahn: The title is the name of the character Pikapika, but each appearance—we think about this as sort of an appearance of Pikapika. Pikapika has appeared on the street, in clubs, raves, the concert hall, in museums,

different places, and it is an improvisation to some extent, but it's an improvisation within pre-composed, flexible structures. And so we don't know what a performance is going to be, it's whatever she determines that night. But an appearance of Pikapika we just call Pikapika.

Lydia Goehr: I wanted to say that since we're given no background as to any of the work we're going to hear tonight, that I read it in terms of what I know about Italian futurism, and something like a fight between the human being or the human character, as you describe her, and the machines, and a work about domination. And it seemed to me that what I was looking for, and it fits in with Simon's question, whether all the gestures of the character, whether they have any meaning, whether there are any gestures of regret that the woman has become dictated by a machine, or whether she's proud of her domination of the sounds. And I mean I only read it in this way because I have no other terms.

Tomie Hahn: I don't normally speak. Usually I . . .

Lydia Goehr: No, I'm not asking you . . .

Tomie Hahn: . . . have time to take off the blue wig, but this necessitates a little bit of talking. The idea was to create very strong female Anime character, because when I was growing up in the 1960s in Japan there were very few—the girls, women were sidekicks to Atom Boy, or those types of characters. So we thought that would be really interesting to have her appropriate space, and her space is allocated by just her speakers, which are very loud. But then also I can drive the speakers that are in the room. So I reach out with sound and circulate in the room in that way. But there's no regret, she's just absolutely strong. And there's no incorrect narrative. What we really wanted to do was to create a character that appeared and then it's up to you in the audience to decide what the narrative, if there is one for you, would be. So it's asking a lot of the audience, but I think that they can take care of it.

Lydia Goehr: Do you equate strength with domination, and do you have no worry about the domination of sound, or domination of machine?

Tomie Hahn: I think I do in terms of control. I have an extraordinary amount of control with this on, and I can really, you know, it can be very loud or come in. If it was a different crowd maybe it'll be a little more subtle or something. But more control than maybe domination, for me. But if that was what was going on in your mind.

Lydia Goehr: We're meant to say something. What could I say?

Curtis Bahn: I'd like to thank Jonathan Markus also for joining us on video this evening.

Panel Response: Violin / Media Performance

Elaine Sisman: I had the heretical thought that I wanted to hear the Bach chaconne just to see what it looked like.

Walter Frisch: Well, actually that was something that I was going to ask about. Not specifically, but the performance initially in some of what was happening reminded me of one of my favorite moments in twentieth century film, the Disney animation of the Bach toccata and fugue from the opening part of *Fantasia* as played by Stokowski, and the sort of abstract shapes. I was wondering if that at all was an inspiration, when we talk about new.

I actually had another question, you could maybe answer them at the same time. In both these performances in some ways the audience's attention is divided between the person generating the image and the image, and in the case of Professor Hahn's, when she was in a different part of the room one would almost have to choose or go back and forth. In your case you were closer to it, but I guess I was curious to know how you—I noticed that occasionally you looked at the image as well to see. I wasn't sure whether you wanted to make sure you were wired or whether you were in fact sort of interacting with the image yourself. So those were my [questions].

Liubo Borrisov: Thank you. I'll let you answer the second question. I just wanted to say we started thinking we should do a Disney piece but it just kind of went. We wanted to do a Disney piece, but it went wrong, and this is what happened.

The second question: we really wanted to create a dichotomy between the screen and the person who is creating the images, and actually originally the piece is intended for the screen to be the same size and serve as a mirror to the performer, but I'll let Maja answer it.

Maja Cerar: In different settings the interaction with the screen is actually different. And the idea behind that is that there is an appearance, sort of our immediate understanding of things on the screen, usually takes a little bit of time until people actually discover that there is a real person moving around at the same time. And then . . . what am I doing wrong? And actually Liubo and I have been talking a great deal about big ideas like the beginning of the universe and string theories, and being at the same time in two different locations and how to deal with that, and how to become something from the state of nothingness. You have these layers of appearance. One is just the line on the screen, it's kind of the virtual presence. And then there is sort of these anthropomorphic people pulling strings, determining the motion of the wire. It's a good feeling.I don't know if that answers your question, but the interaction was meant to be between the live wire and what's being projected.

Arthur Danto: Because one was conscious of you simultaneously with what was on the screen, one felt one had to fit them together in some way. And I thought of *The Tempest*, I thought of Prospero, who gets these spirits to enact something for the entertainment of his daughter, Miranda, and her lover. And I felt very much as though what was on the screen was a narrative of some kind. I didn't obviously get that, but I got the sense that you were responsible for it in some shamanistic way, summoning this up. And it was a narrative in the sense that it went from fairly indefinite kinds of beginnings and began to take on some kind of form and an agitation almost, an enthusiasm, rapture practically. And then has that melancholy quality at the end, as the forms begin to spread out. Whatever the case, that's the way one saw that, and I thought it was an extremely successful performance.

Liubo Borrisov: Thank you. Maybe I should mention a bit about the narrative. One of the things we wanted to address with this piece was we wanted to experiment with an alternative way for delivering narrative. And it does end up being a linear narrative as we experience it, but the process of creation was somewhat different. And Maja mentioned our ideas about the beginning of the universe. There's this whole thing that the universe starts from nothing and just creates itself by a fluctuation of something and just starts growing and growing. And so we wanted to create conditions for these things to happen, so we wanted to make a construction which would enable a performer to do that.

And as we went along the narrative came in, so it started the way it did and developed the way it did. But the actual score or the actual story line is a macrostructure imposed onto the performance. So within a few keystones of the piece we developed certain rules to enable them.

Maja Cerar: With regard to the structure of the piece, it kind of goes through two cycles of life, in a way. The first one is kind of starting from the animal that gradually kind of comes to explore space, and then that kind of has its peak in the kind of finding relationship between the equals. And then that leads to destruction, and that whole cycle starts a wholly new path after that second sort of collapse into one point. And in that second cycle there is in fact that shamanistic dance, we actually imagine just that.

So the path of that cycle is a different one than the first one. And that is something that we sometimes play with a little bit in terms of what the narrative is of this piece, and it's quite versatile. The setup is to adapt it to various circumstances or ideas that are current.

Simon Schama: I just wanted to say I thought it was very beautiful and stirring and tremendous really. I wanted to ask you particularly about sort of any tension you might have between producing the sound. That is to say you want the fiddle, you want the violin to do certain things. But you're also wanting it to do certain things in the animation as well. Are there times in the piece really when you're

much more concerned with really the character of the sound, the sound really is doing the talking to the narrative you've described, and you think, oh well, let that—are you always, always really trying to get the perfect match between image and sound?

Maja Cerar: They always go hand in hand, they are always linked to each other, and there are sometimes restrictions as to what I can do in that particular position. But it started out with the ideas. I mean I'm a classically trained violinist, and we're usually not supposed to erupt from the square meter we have on stage. And I've been always told that I move too much and tried to make a virtue out of a shortcoming.

Simon Schama: It's really the way you'd like to do Mendelssohn in fact.

Maja Cerar: And also the idea with the sound was we are trained for years and years and years to produce beautiful strong sounds that project well, and we really wanted to kind of strip it to the bare, almost primal or primitive kind of sounds that you can get out of a violin, not really going for beauty per se but for like a genuine kind of expressivity that can be painful in a more sort of, I don't know, physically kind of felt way, linked with emotion at the given moment, as opposed to going by these sort of stylized abstraction of the way that school teaches you to express pain.

Interactive Reading

Bradford Garton: Hi, we've got to get the video set. I just want to make a real quick comment and then tell you about what you're about to see. Professor Schama said that that sort of scared him. Well, you kinda scare the hell out of me, so I hope this is okay.

I'm going to put this up and then I'll tell you a little bit about what exactly this is.

There's two things I really like to do. Well, there's more than two things. But there's two things I do like to do: read books and listen to music. And a couple of years ago I was on sabbatical and I was thinking, "What are professors supposed to do on sabbatical?" So I thought I'd write a book. I'm not an author, I'm a composer, so it's a pretty sad book. But I decided that I would make this kind of a different sort of book, and it's a different kind of interactivity you're going to hear, or see, tonight. It's a book with a soundtrack, so that basically I tried to integrate—you know, I've got a computer and I can do things with it—integrate the text with sounds that you're going to hear. And I thought I'd just read you a little bit from the first chapter. It talks about Columbia at one point a little. I thought that might be appropriate. So I'll just go ahead and start it up and see where we go.

It's computer stuff. So what happens is it's entirely driven by—it kind of detects where I'm reading and what I'm doing, so I'll go ahead and get up to chapter one here.

It is summer, late June, I think. It is hot, humid, a typical hazy, late-June New Jersey day. The insects that we've named *hot bugs* are trilling in full voice. My daughter Lian and I have decided to take 2-month-old Daniel over to our little community swimming pool to spend the day relaxing by the water.

But the day isn't completely typical; you need a bit of context. Yesterday Lian went rolling down the gentle slope near her school on her new 20-inch two-wheeler with no training wheels, her first unaided ride on her bike. Surely a red-letter day of freedom in most every American childhood.

Today is also the day she plans to take the deep-end test at the pool. Six weeks of practice and a winter's worth of Saturday swimming lessons at the local YMCA have set her squarely on the road to unlimited pool access. In just a few short months she'll be entering the first grade.

She just entered Brown University this fall. Now all these markers have changed; they're swirling in the air.

There's also a broader context for the Garton-Lipoti nuclear family. Just several days ago I was offered a position on the faculty of the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, a known and respected music school. My professional life at Columbia University hadn't been all that terrific lately. I think the collegial advice recently given me was something like, "You have no future here. You should find another job."

So I need to consider the CCM offer seriously, as academic positions in music composition aren't all that plentiful in the recession-strapped early 1990s.

I ask myself, "Can we really do this? Can we uproot our lives and transplant ourselves a thousand miles away? Can I cheerfully expect Jill to give up her career for the sake of mine? Will my daughter be able to replace her just-developing friendships, or will the move psychologically scar her forever, leading to a loss of confidence, a loss of faith in life and love, culminating in a sordid drug-abusing adulthood failure?"

Alternatively, can I apparently give up my own career? Can I easily shelve several decades of work and sigh, "Oh, well?" Is staying here too self-sacrificing? Is a move too selfish? Who's being selfish? What's the correct choice? What's best? I surely don't know.

Of course, everyone has to face questions like these, and on the grand scale of big questions to face, they probably barely light the yellow warning signal. The

knowledge doesn't ease the acute awareness of life changing that I'm experiencing right now.

Lian is passing the deep-end test. Daniel is happily flapping his hands. My children are growing older as I watch.

I'm overwhelmed. I need relief from these thoughts. Basically I'm a coward, and mental escape is among the more convenient forms my cowardice takes.

I lie back in the sun, position the headphones of my portable CD player, and slowly become engulfed by the gentle rhythms and shimmering beauty of Beethoven's Opus 132 string quartet.

So you've got the picture: big family decisions looming. Bicycle-riding, deep-end-test–passing daughter expressing her growing independence, infant son developing new capabilities before my very eyes, time flowing, time passing, time marching on.

And then the third movement of the Beethoven strikes.

Now some people talk about music reaching in and grabbing their soul, but in this case the slowly unfolding chords of the Heiliger Dankesang *became* my soul. Past, present, future simply cease to exist as experiential things, paradoxically replaced by a global total feeling of being completely immersed in the precious flux of life.

I watch my daughter playing with her friends as I live in the music. I can reach out and touch my son, luminous in the sunlight. The quantum granularity of the universe seemingly resolved itself into individual frames. Each intimate moment and object I could pick up and savor. I could see the arc of life, grasp its trajectory, understand what it means to be truly alive at this particular moment, at this definite place.

Now I know a little bit about Beethoven and about his life and times, and that information surely bent my perceptions toward this moment of imminent awareness. Beethoven wrote Opus 132 near the end of his life. He'd been struggling with physical illness and the supreme social isolation arising from his profound deafness. The late string quartets were written by a man who knew he was dying. The music embodies that knowledge in sound. But this was also a man who wrote astounding celebrations of life. I hear the flowing, virtually timeless chords of Opus 132 and in the back of my mind the ecstatic "Ode to Joy" is reverberating. It's as if Beethoven is saying directly to me, "Yeah, life is good, death is OK. I've been there, and you can hear it."

Indeed, life, death. My daughter playing with her friend, my son growing, change, flux and flow, and then I'm flattened with a force that only people reaching a

certain middle-agedness can fully appreciate, by the stunning realization of my own finitude, a comprehensive awareness of my death. I can only describe it by saying somehow I knew I was going to die, and it was OK.

How can music do this? How can vibrations in the air serve up these psychically intense moments with such crystalline clarity? How can a Beethoven mark his existence in such a fashion that his music resonates with a contemporary energy, his experience seemingly becoming my own? How does this all work?

What follows is my attempt to answer, or maybe not answer, more like dance around, these questions. I'm a composer. Seeking meaning in these questions is part of the fabric of my day-to-day reality, just as I apparently live in order to encounter these life-stopping moments of frozen, flowing musical time.

Attempting to describe how music can clobber me, I'm fairly certain that I'm driving deeply into the purple meadows of Maudlinville, but I don't know a better way to get my thoughts down into language, and somehow it seems important to do it.

For one thing, these moments of musical intensity ostensibly isolated and disconnected from the normal flow of daily existence actually function like a set of structural markers erected to help me make sense of life. They act like road signs in reverse. I can use them to hold time, to re-create experiences, and remind me where I've been.

At a superficial level what I'm describing might be misunderstood as the "Honey, they're playing our song" phenomenon, where the playing of our song jiggles loose those nostalgic, gauzy memories of the summer of '83. But the life-marking musical moments I'm chasing transcend a location in autobiographical history. They engage a host of deeply rooted meanings that form the core of who I am. Instead of simple nostalgia, these profound musical experiences take specific local circumstances and transform them into vibrant, all-encompassing awareness of big life issues.

Probably the best way I can communicate what I mean is to describe a few more times when music has done this for me.

Every year I teach a section of Columbia's Core Curriculum covering the history of Western classical music, Music Hum, so I'm freed from the responsibility of having to take the course too seriously because I'm not a music historian. Oops! Missed that line.

Instead the class gives me a chance to play a lot of music I truly love and talk about it with bright and interesting students, and they pay me to do this.

Several years ago, about a month into the spring term, I'd bundled up my CDs [and] lecture notes, and loaded it all into my car and then drove up the New Jersey Turnpike. It was a cold and nondescript February morning. I was looking forward to the material. Five weeks into my semester-linked scaling of Western classical music was J. S. Bach.

I don't mind my commute into the city. With portable CD player and decent set of headphones I can listen. And on my CD player I'd queued up a recording of Bach piano preludes set for my class. I had one stop to make prior to entering the turnpike. In our small town we have no direct door-to-door mail delivery, so I drove into the post-office parking area to pick up our mail. As I came out of the post-office lobby door I was surprised to see my neighbor Bob struggling to get out of the passenger side of his car. I was surprised because Bob is one of those people described using words like *hale* and *hearty*, and he was having difficulty just standing.

I'd seen Bob about a month and a half ago at a party and he was hale and hearty as ever. So I offered him assistance and I asked the obvious questions. He said, "I just got out of the hospital last week. I have an inoperable brain tumor. My doctor told me I have one or two years left."

I was utterly floored. I didn't know what to say. I told Bob, "I don't know what to say." He went on into the post office and I drove away in a numb haze, trying to assimilate what Bob had just told me.

About halfway up the turnpike I remembered my CD player preloaded with Bach, one of his really famous pieces. No surprises for me in this piece.

Now, forget psychedelic drugs, forget trances. What I heard pealing off the CD that morning was the voice of God in my brain, a direct connection to the infinite, or at least that's how I thought it would be if I believed in God.

The pianist in the recording had taken the piece at a very slow tempo, deliberately spacing the music. Every note was endowed with a lambent radiance. It was though the music instantiated a timeless logic that burned away the frailties of our corporeal selves, leaving a purity of being. Life can pass, but there is an eternity. I could hear it.

In the face of our desperate mortality, contemplation of our own definable limits, I think we all need to touch some kind of continuum somehow, through religion, through theoretical certainty in science, or even through a self-chosen, intentional ignorance, we need to deal with the material reality littered with statements like Bob's. I used the lens of music to focus my consciousness beyond the mundane and brutish aspects of day-to-day existence to a limpid sensing of the continual process of life.

Hit ten minutes about on the nose. Thank you.

Panel Response: Interactive Reading

Lydia Goehr: I think I'd like to make a comment more than ask you a question, if I may.

Bradford Garton: Sure.

Lydia Goehr: It occurs to me that from the three pieces we've heard tonight we're in the reinstated age of the artist. These, all these works, seem to be about lonely souls looking for big bangs, big gods, but more than that it seems as if these works are structurally very dependent upon the artists themselves, the composers, asserting themselves in the process of performance. So it seems to me, as I said, like a reinstatement of the age of intentionalism. And why I thought about this was when you made the one error in reading, when you missed that sentence out, "I'm not a music historian, that's why I enjoy teaching the Core," because I thought it would've made a great difference to reading your book had you not been reading it aloud. We then would've entered into it and the music in a completely different way.

But somehow I thought you had to be there, and you were putting yourself there as an indispensable element, and this I hold to be true of all the pieces we've heard tonight.

Bradford Garton: Yeah, that's a good observation. I have to tell you something. This book has had kind of a sad existence. I can't find a publisher that likes to do CD-ROMs, so this is like the artwork that wouldn't die. It's now turned into a performance piece.

Lydia Goehr: You could send it as a virus to everybody.

Bradford Garton: Right. Also I . . .

Lydia Goehr: I mean no insult.

Bradford Garton: I had to say I wasn't a music historian because Elaine and Walter are up here, and they can point out all the errors of fact that I make in my life most of the time.

Elaine Sisman: There were no errors of fact in your life story, Brad. I did want to say that I also noticed something about the three pieces we've heard, and that is how the individual is multiplied or enhanced. I felt that Maja was populating the stage with multiple beings. I felt that Pikapika was expanding and engaging the space as though she were more than one person, and I felt that you, when we heard the ambient sounds that resonated with, that further explored and

exemplified what you were talking about, you yourself and your words were part of something much larger. And in the way the interaction with technology, which we think of as not necessarily a human-friendly term, precisely multiplied and enhanced the humans that we have heard.

Bradford Garton: I'm glad you think that. That's what we try to teach here actually. It's funny because this was a very personal sort of book for me, and I guess I've been working with computers for so long that I don't really think of technology as an "Other" for me, you know, it's just part of the makeup of what I do and who I am.

So I guess, you know, when I put this book together it was just [that] I've got these materials, I'll just assemble them. And you're right, it's kind of an egotistical thing, because it is reflecting what I hear, what I'm saying, what my life is.

Arthur Danto: I would say this, that one of the things that struck me lately, looking at work, listening to artists talk about their work, is how incredibly autobiographical almost everything has become. In fact, I can't think of anything I've come across or heard or seen recently where if I pressed the artist, I would get the story of the artist's life. I think that's the moment we're in, so the frontier is the individual himself or herself. And everybody has that particular story, and is using their art to get that story told.

If you didn't have the artist, often I've thought you wouldn't know what this was about at all. I think that's not entirely true because of the universality of the language, but in general it's come to astonish me, as a matter of fact, what's happened in maybe the last two or three years. Maybe that's too thin a wedge of time, but it seems to be what's happening in the art world everywhere.

Bradford Garton: Actually I think that's a really cogent observation because, you know, one of the things I've noticed about technology is if it does anything, it just expands the individual. And we see that now with, you know, we've all read and heard about the blogs, right? Basically these are diaries that are writ large across the Internet, you know, so this is, I think, technology as an individual enabler. The downside of that is that you've got many giant egos all shouting, "Look at me, look at me, look at me," and that's not necessarily healthy.

Arthur Danto: I don't know whether it's healthy or not, but I give you a kind of an example. There was an exhibition on Twenty-sixth Street where one of the pieces that I really admired a lot was an enlarged toy, a Tonka truck. I'm too old to have had that figure in my childhood, but young men grew up with these Tonka toys, so this artist is enlarging these Tonka toys and they do almost look manufactured, and so they've come like Barbie dolls from a factory. And he's a very skilled craftsman. But I asked him, "How do you decide how big it's to be?" And then he began to tell me that the proportion represents his size at the time he received that toy, and as you began to discuss with him why he made this or

that decision, it all related to things that you wouldn't have known if they hadn't been confessed. And that just seems—and that's just an example of what I find happening.

Walter Frisch: This isn't even a question, it's another musicological footnote. But I was struck by how your piece was a very new updating of a genre that has been around for a couple of hundred years called melodrama, which is not melodrama as in intense emotion, but melodrama, spoken dialogue or spoken narrative with musical background that is played with it. It was very popular at a number of points in history, around 1800, again around 1900, and I think it can be seen as fitting into that genre in some way.

Bradford Garton: It's funny, though. One comment I want to make: I actually wrote the book with the intention that people would read it individually and not have it read aloud. In fact, some of the times when I was skipping paragraphs I did think of this as a composition, and there's a flow to the music that goes behind it. And when I read it it takes too long for the music to change. So I was really thinking about it in terms of laying out time in a musical fashion. But, yeah, I wouldn't deny the charge of now becoming a melodramatist.

Panel Response: Improvised Music

Elaine Sisman: In a few minutes George Lewis will be offering us some closing remarks, but I wanted to give the panel a chance to ask the musicians about their work or offer comments. I'd like to dare anybody to find a narrative, but I found the points of convergence quite extraordinary and I wondered if you could say something about how you reach these points of arrival, of stillness, and then of acceleration and activity.

Miya Masaoka: Hello. You know, narrative is a funny thing, and I think actually an expanded sense of narrative that passes was invalid, at least for me. I studied traditional Japanese music and narrative is a big part of that tradition often having to do with oral history and telling stories and myths and finding things and searching for things and playing different kinds of sounds and then interacting with musicians creates narrative in different people's imaginations I think and can evoke different kinds of memories or feelings that perhaps are nonlinear but narrative just the same. And I guess to address your second question regarding where there’s joining and these points of—what did you say?

Elaine Sisman: Convergence.

Miya Masaoka: I think those things kind of happen intuitively to a certain extent, and I guess I can only speak for myself, but things develop and we’re all playing our own narratives internally and individually, and together we weave a sort of group narrative, I feel.

Simon Schama: I loved it, but one rather fatuous question I suppose. Since you've got two performers, why was the percussion the only kind of electronic? I mean have you used live percussion as well? Because actually just the sort of sense of watching you deliver the music from instruments rather than digitally was part of the drama, I thought. But maybe it's just you get a narrower range of these percussive effects if . . .

Damon Holzborn: Are you saying . . . the percussion?

Simon Schama: Yeah, yeah.

Damon Holzborn: Because actually where the sounds that I was using came from was feeds from George and Miya. So that was a . . . I was taking feeds from them and then processing that.

Simon Schama: Oh, I see, okay. So they're made sounds that are resynthesized or processed. I'm a technical idiot about that.

Damon Holzborn: And a lot of this, since Miya was processing herself as well, I think there might have been a lot of times that it would've been difficult to tell who the sounds were coming from. So I think that some of the sounds that you're referring to might have actually come out of Miya's processing rather than mine.

Simon Schama: Can I ask another just very short one? Do you kind of map out sort of sequences, in a sense, of where you're going to be, but within that give yourself a lot of freedom to play? You used the word *intuitive*, when there were convergence, or is it incredibly very, very precisely scored in the sense not just of time but exactly which sounds you want to come together and move apart?

Miya Masaoka: No, I mean completely the opposite. It wasn't scored at all.

Simon Schama: Okay, okay.

Miya Masaoka: Did it sound . . .

Simon Schama: No, I was just wondering.

Miya Masaoka: I see. Well, it was just we were starting from a blank slate actually and then building upon that.

Elaine Sisman: I think my colleagues are stunned by the sheer virtuosity of the performance which showed the limits of each of these kind of tone colors being divined in so many ways. It was really very powerful. Thank you very much.

Concluding Remarks: George E. Lewis

Elaine Sisman: And now after these quite extraordinary performances, I'd like to invite my colleague George Lewis up to the podium to deliver some concluding remarks to what I hope you will agree has been quite an evening.

George Lewis: Well, thanks to everyone, and I'll make these remarks fairly brief in honor of what's coming up in the evening. I'd like to really begin by thanking the artists, all of the artists, and the distinguished panel who have done so much this evening to animate and deepen and really challenge our understanding of the nature of the new. And, particularly, I wanted to recognize my colleagues professors Sisman and Garton, who really brought this evening to fruition, and as well, Douglas Repetto and Terry Pender of the Computer Music Center here. And I wanted to mention also that this is not over. After my remarks I would encourage all of you to head up the stairs, because the ArtBot installations that were curated by Douglas Repetto are going to be on the next level, and there are a number of very exciting installations of visual, digital, and other kinds of computer-based installations upstairs.

And there's also a reception outside. So I would say do one and then the other. And it's your choice.

I wanted to talk a little bit about this evening's work, and it really should be clear from what we've heard so far, what we've seen, that present-day artistic production really draws upon the debates and issues that are taking shape, and have been for a long time, in philosophy and sociology of music and art, in new media, musicology, ethnomusicology, cultural studies, and many other fields. Now these debates—as they sort of zealously, militantly decouple cultural production from postenlightenment notions of progress, including that uniquely American version of the trope embodied in our famous frontier myth and our cherished trope of exceptionalism. Our attention really gets drawn, I think, inevitably to descriptions and analyses of the connections with the larger social and historical settings from which the arts draw sustenance and intelligibility.

That having been said, and I find myself sympathizing to a certain extent with Professor Schama's unease with the title of the event, "Frontiers in Creativity," but at the same time I think it's been made pretty clear that the artists whose ideas we've heard from tonight are not really trading in the shock of the new or hawking the snake oil of a technological frontier. I think that's become fairly evident. Rather, these artists, like ourselves, have probably heard by now that the quest for the new is chimerical, at best, and, at worst, a dangerous delusion.

At least in my own case, my activity as an artist and scholar tend to complement and extend each other, and I confess freely my addiction to the emotional directness and immediacy that I derive from both activities.

But none of this ecstasy is really based on the hubristic idea [that] artists and theorists such as ourselves might be "shaping the future." But you know, I could really sympathize with, let's say, Schoenberg, you know, sitting there in turn-of-the-century Vienna and getting all excited about the idea that in his famous phrase, he may have discovered something that might, you know, ensure the superiority of German music for the next hundred years. You know, that's amazing. Or I can sympathize with Charlie Parker in that Chili House, hearing those upper intervals and thinking I'm really onto something here, to speak of landmarks and signposts announcing the new.

Now on the other hand, Schoenberg's famous postwar work, *A Survivor from Warsaw*, really demonstrated a kind of tempering of that optimism, given the course of subsequent political events. This earlier example, and Parker's as well, illuminates the reality that the folk psychology, at the very least, the folk psychology of the new, exerts an inexorably powerful, even irresistible, attraction upon us, both as social actors and as simple human beings.

We want to believe in the new or, better put, we want to believe in change itself. We want to believe that these things are still possible and that through purposeful discovery, we can have an effect upon the world.

So much of the creative work we've encountered this evening—also as I observe, in fact, perhaps each of the pieces in some sense—draws upon the integration of contemporary technologies with improvisative practices and techniques. Now improvisation being one of the most practiced yet least studied and perhaps rather poorly theorized forms of art making, but has long been viewed as valorizing uniqueness, nonrepeatability, the idea is could you do it again? Well, why would we want to? There's always something new coming up, isn't there? New—there we are.

And consciously, improvisation attempts to open out to the new, not only to a new aesthetics but also to new and really often quite utopian models of social, economic, and political relationships that tend to foreground agency, personality, and difference.

So we find that improvisative practice ends up serving as a developmental site for emerging intercultural and transnational discourses, providing an atmosphere for articulating, through expressive means, new conceptions of identity, the body, and history and memory.

So in this regard it's really important to note that improvisative musical practices in the West, including its experimental musical cultures, have been thoroughly imbued, albeit sometimes with great reluctance, with Afro-logical models of sound. Max Roach's observation, for example, that our music is not one that demands, Okay, we're going to turn out a group of Charlie Parkers, points up the

routine admonition to the fledgling improviser, from an Afro-logical standpoint, to get your own sound.

Here the notion of sound implied in that statement does not certainly imply a kind of deracinated, timeless, ahistorical, autonomous, analytic morphology of timbre disconnected from the realities of everyday life to the impossible construction of "letting sounds be themselves."

Instead, sound in this sense implies a crucial real-world connection with individual and collective expression, with agency, personal responsibility, community, uniqueness, and social and historical and political content, all of which, in turn, are premised upon the idealism implied by the avoidance of imitation. That is to say, if it really is your own sound then, by definition, [it] hasn't been heard before and constitutes something as new to the world as your very own birth was.

And you know, perhaps this isn't the place to speak of it, but in the end, this conception, this optimistic conception of the possibility and even the danger of the new, the tricky part, the Elegba Eshu part, of the new is framed really by the biological. And in the best case the new, like the process of birth, is in the end nurtured by love and motivated by hope. Dare we speak of those things right now? We should.

So then you've got this process-product dialectic that informs so many of the debates on improvisation, and I feel this also lies at the root of debates over the ontology of the new. If the new functions as a kind of virtual object of desire, a product bathed in historicity that can not be directly grasped, then renewal, which we see here, the "re-new," is the term that best describes the process that the practice of improvisation seeks to produce, that is to say, in a political and economic context it routinely privileges product over process. Improvisation is easily seen as a transgressive act, preparing fertile ground for a politics of permanent contestation, which lets me resonate with Professor Danto to some extent, a process of permanent contestation where process and product are equally valued. Here the new becomes something to be pursued in a process of achievement that nonetheless never quite reaches the finality of attainment, and certainly not the self-congratulatory eschatological triumphalism implied by the phrase *the end of history*.

So really to sum up, all I can really say is that we have really been privileged to witness an extraordinary outpouring of creativity this evening, and we will witness still more and perhaps similarly astonishing creativity upstairs with the ArtBothic exhibitions, but also when we leave this rotunda and venture back out into the streets of New York City, a complex organism, that I have recently rediscovered living here again after a 15-year absence. And here it seems that improvisative performance is really essential to finding creative solutions in real time to

unexpected situations. It becomes clear that improvisation is a human birthright, fundamental to our continued existence as a species.

As we learn and practice on the streets a particular kind of acoustic ecology, a form of directed improvisation of listening and awareness that exemplifies the survival value of parsing gesture and sonic utterance.

In this case, since the new is really all around us, it's a good thing that we do have ears to hear. Thanks.