

## **PANEL: Musicians, Critics, Journalists: Perspectives on the Future of Jazz**

**Chaired by Howard Spring (School of Fine Art and Music, University of Guelph)**

### **Panelists:**

#### **Jane Reynolds**

##### ***Bio***

Jane Reynolds is an improvising musician who has hosted a weekly jazz radio program since 1985 in Madison, Wisconsin on WORT-FM. During that time, she has recorded many interviews with musicians who have made appearances in Madison. In hearing about the colloquium, Jane decided to go back over some of the interviews for a look into the future of creative improvised music from the point of view of the musicians themselves. These musicians are Roscoe Mitchell (who was interviewed in May at his home), McCoy Tyner, Sonny Fortune, Marilyn Crispell, Malachi Thompson, Richard Davis and Sonny Rollins, whose interview is published in the current issue of *Jazz Improv* magazine.

##### ***Abstract***

“Musicians’ Perspectives on Creative Improvised Music”

My presentation will give you an overview of topics discussed in the course of these interviews (conducted at WORT-FM, Madison, Wisconsin), providing artist’s individual (and shared) insights through direct quotes regarding the past, present and future of creative improvised music. It provides a brief sampling of what I found to be enlightening and inspirational.

All of the musicians interviewed gave humble acknowledgement to John Coltrane. Upon listening to Coltrane’s “A Love Supreme,” Marilyn Crispell “...felt a bridge between that and the contemporary classical music” that she was doing.” Roscoe Mitchell, who was once invited to play with Coltrane, explained that Coltrane “...was trying to hone his music down into a very clear message so that it can be widely understood, which is what I’m trying to achieve in my music.” Malachi Thompson formed the Africa Brass, named after Coltrane’s album. He explained that he “was going back to the origins of jazz, but trying to project the music into the future to demonstrate how there is a thread running through the jazz fabric.”

One of the most influential groups is the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), formed in Chicago in the 1960s. Mitchell is one of its founding members. Malachi Thompson learned from the AACM that: “Experimentation itself is part of the tradition.” He went on to say, “It’s the role of the creative musician to push the music forward. If it weren’t for musicians

like Miles and Ornette and Trane and members of the AACM, that wouldn't be happening. Jazz musicians stand on the shoulders of the great masters in the jazz idiom."

Roscoe Mitchell pushes forward with his exploration of sound and space, scored improvisation and, most recently, interacting with computers. Marilyn Crispell performs on differently-tuned pianos and prepared pianos to develop new sounds. A common concern, however, was public exposure to the music. Although there was consensus on the importance of live performance, McCoy Tyner conceded that new technologies, i.e. the internet and iPods, were a new way to reach young people. He is concerned, though, that "...the media, the black media, don't play this music necessarily, from their culture....and they should support it." He also noted that in our public schools "...you hear about Mozart and others, but not Bird and Miles and John (Coltrane) back in jazz history." Sonny Rollins agrees, noting that "...there are no jazz television shows and jazz is not heard too much on the mass media."

Another common concern was the audience. Many musicians find their most receptive audiences somewhere other than in the United States. Mitchell noted that in Europe "...you get a wide range of audience there, from very young to very old, so people are exposed to music and art at a very early age." Sonny Rollins found that "...the interest in jazz in Japan was so overwhelming compared to what we experience here in the United States." He also "...realized how much jazz is loved by people all over the world, and how underappreciated the artists here at home were. I think there's a bigger appreciation of jazz in the United States since they've had jazz in the university curriculums." Mitchell seems to agree when he observed "...I do start to see larger audiences in the States now. So there is an appreciation for the music. Most people come up to me and say they need the music." As Sonny Rollins noted, "If people have a chance to hear jazz and appreciate it, they do and they like it."

When Mitchell toured France with the Art Ensemble, "...these concerts were sponsored by the government and were completely free to the public." Malachi Thompson mourned the fact that "...our society doesn't support the creative artists to the full extent that they should, especially with the cutbacks in the funding to the NEA." Sonny Fortune took matters into his own hands: "Because one of the problems with art is the movement of it, to the appreciator, I started my own record label." He summed it up by saying: "Art is important to the quality of life. So your creativity and expression of your creativity has a very important role to society."

### **Howard Mandel**

#### **Bio**

First published in *Down Beat* in late 1974 with bylines, Howard Mandel is a freelance jazz journalist, who has since been published in *Village Voice*, the

*Washington Post*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *Jazziz*, *JazzTimes*, *Musician*, *Signal2Noise*, *The Wire*, *Swing Journal*, and *Bravo* (Rio de Janiero), among many other publications. He has been an editor for *Billboard*, *Guitar World*, and *Ear and Rhythm Music*. Howard currently writes a monthly column in Finnish *Rytmit* magazine, produces arts segments for National Public Radio (most recently, a profile of Sonny Rollins), and is still published in *Down Beat* (in the July issue, the cover article on Maria Schneider's new recording with her jazz orchestra).

Howard Mandel is president of the Jazz Journalists Association, for which he produces "Jazz Matters" panels at the New School Jazz program and at jazz festivals throughout the U.S. (notably, Portland OR, Newport RI, Chicago, Detroit) as well as producing the annual JJA Jazz Awards. He is an adjunct associate professor at New York University, where he teaches "The Arts: Jazz," "Arts: The Blues," "Roots of American Music" and "World Music." His book, *Future Jazz*, profiled music made since 1975 that he asserts will continue to have influence for decades to come (among those profiled were everyone from the Art Ensemble of Chicago to John Zorn). He was general editor of the *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Jazz and Blues* (Billboard Books/Flame Tree Publishing), and contributed to the *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Country Music* as well as the *Oxford Jazz Companion* and Leeds School of Music's *The Source: Challenging Jazz Criticism*. He is currently planning a blog to be distributed via ArtsJournal.com, and the redesign of his website [www.HowardMandel.com](http://www.HowardMandel.com) will feature the publication of *Miles, Ornette, Cecil – Jazz Beyond Jazz*.

### **Abstract**

"The Future of Jazz – Thanks to Miles, Ornette and Cecil"

In this presentation I will discuss what Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor have brought to the music that continues to be the pathway for exploration and development, with examples of things happening now (and upcoming) that are building on their foundations. I will allude also to the manner in which they built on what preceded them, directly, though not always obviously, so as to emphasize that the future grows out of the present, always.

This is a point of my book titled *Miles, Ornette, Cecil – Jazz Beyond Jazz*, which Routledge will publish in later fall 2007, which comprises interviews with the three musicians and many of their associates, overview of their recordings and performance careers, analysis and personal memoirs designed to contextualize the "avant-garde" among other manifestations of culture and the arts since roughly 1950 (my discussion of Miles starts a bit earlier, with his recording with Charlie Parker of "Now's The Time"). My interest in this book, as always, is to "cut across a range of social and institutional locations" and to identify essences of the music that are broadly appealing and affective in language vivid and pertinent enough to interest the general public, yet solidly grounded in knowledge and research so as to satisfy the academics among

us. I love the use of Mayfield's civil rights-related anthem (in the title for this year's colloquium), because a lot of the writing in *Jazz Beyond Jazz* has to do with the social circumstances that the music reflects and reflects on -- and to me it seems clear that the vale of this music (future jazz, to cite the title of my first book, from Oxford U Press in 1999) is as a continuing mirror to the larger society/societies in which it exists – whether mainstream elements of that/those society/societies are paying attention or not.

In the view I will present, jazz is far from dead; it is a secured cultural location from which other explorations begin; generic boundaries are mostly useful for sales and marketing purposes, but hold little interest beyond self identification for musicians pursuing their personal creative/innovative imperatives. Jazz and improvisation are vehicles for cultural memory and memorialization no less than history books, and in fact more, as jazz and improv in constant flux allow for reinterpretations of the past with each occurrence. The major strategy of jazz- anchored improvisers such as Miles, Ornette and Cecil regarding technology is to bend it to their will, but not to be swept up in it for its own sake (vis a vis Miles studio techniques and instrumentation from *In A Silent Way* through doo-bop, Ornette's interest in sound effects and collage starting with *Science Fiction*, continuing through *Tone Dialing*, and Cecil's use of layered sound in *Chinapas*, though overall he's ignored multi-media manipulations).

### **Jim Merod**

#### ***Bio***

Jim Merod has written about jazz for 25 years. He has been a jazz critic for the *Los Angeles Times*; *Jazz Now*; the *San Diego Union*; *La Folia*; *On Sound and Music*; *Stereo Times*; *Positive Feedback*; *Jazz News*; and the *San Diego Voice & Viewpoint*.

His book of interviews and essays, *Jazz as a Cultural Archive*, was published in 1995 by Duke University Press (Boundary 2 Journal). In addition, across 30-plus years Jim has recorded a who's who of jazz luminaries: Herbie Hancock; Wynton Marsalis; Kenny Barron; Art Farmer; Tito Puente; Wayne Shorter; Cecil Taylor; Sarah Vaughan; Red Rodney; Clifford Jordan; Tommy Flanagan; Chris Potter; Tom Harrell; Kenny Burrell; the World Saxophone Quartet and many more. Jim teaches jazz as well as literary and critical studies at Soka University in Southern California.

#### ***Abstract***

“Is the End in Sight For Jazz As We Know It? (A Reply to Red Rodney, Charles Mingus, and Stephen Hawking)”

This paper looks at a predictive narrative defined by the unfolding, entangling careers of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Lucky Thompson, Bill Evans, George Russell, Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Rahsan

Roland Kirk, Hank Jones, Maria Schneider, Chris Potter and Donny McCaslin. That narrative spans the music's history and comprehends its generic diversity and increasingly global reach. On one hand, this narrative emulates the remarkable span of classical compositional gestation from J. S. Bach to Beethoven. On the other hand, it suggests that Adorno's critique of classical modernism inadvertently provides insight into the fertility and self-renewal (the continuity and exfoliating structural and aesthetic complexity) of the jazz heritage.

This paper will share comments regarding the future of jazz drawn from private interviews with Benny Golson, Nick Brignola, Tommy Flanagan, Art Farmer, Mike Garson, Tom McIntosh, John Hicks, Sweets Edison, Red Rodney, Maria Schneider, Kenny Werner, Herbie Hancock and Jimmy Rowles.