

MENDI + KEITH OBADIKE PRESENT CROSSTALK

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CROSSTALK: BLURRED BOUNDARIES IN AMERICAN SPEECH MUSIC

One of the most surprising shifts in American music and literature of the last thirty years may not be the rise and fall of high level improvisation in the popular sphere, the dominance of digital tools, or the boom in self-publishing but, instead, the unlikely prevalence of recorded speech-based artworks between music and literature. Different nodes in this field of activity have been called many things over the years, including "spoken word", "text-sound", "rap", and "sound poetry". How did we arrive at this moment where a form of speech music (hip-hop) would dominate our popular radio, films, and corporate advertising campaigns, while recording studios would produce literature as influential as that produced by our major publishing houses? Some say this is what happens when griots go pop; others blame it on the avant-garde.

DIGGING AT THE ROOT

The centuries old practices of the griots are an obvious precursor to the best of popular hip-hop. Meanwhile, another commonly repeated history traces contemporary American avant-garde speech music to early twentieth century European Futurist experiments with sound, which were developed in search of onomatopoeic utterances that could invoke the sounds of war. Sometimes a tradition is traced to Hugo Ball's search for "verse without words". But the early part of the twentieth century also produced the musico-poetry of the Negritude movement. In the US, the poet Langston Hughes not only created poetic forms based on the moods and structures of blues and jazz, but also developed his own talking music by performing with musical groups. In Cuba, Hughes' colleague Nicolás Guillén was collaborating with composers and creating a poetic form based on the Cuban son. He was also crafting language in his poems to recall the sounds of African drums, a gesture linked both to the Negritude / negrismo movement (in which writers in the Americas were valorizing African

sounds and excavating African roots of European languages) and to the Spanish jitanjáfora movement (in which writers were making up words and exploring the possibilities of poetry in the sounds of the language alone). Such overlap in the experimentation with the music of speech has always come from a variety of communities with different interests and investments in the experiments. We call this overlap *crosstalk* - after the term used to describe the bleeding of signals across audio channels.

CRITICAL DECADES

The proliferation of communities experimenting with speech and music in the United States during the 1960s and 70s created an environment for more crosstalk. The Swedish collective Fylkingen founded a "text-sound" festival that generated a great deal of original work that traveled as far as to the west coast of the United States. American composers working in university-based computer music studios, such as Paul Lansky and Charles Dodge, were using speech synthesis to investigate the possibilities of spoken utterances in music. At the same time, there were popular and avant-garde poetry ensembles such as the Last Poets and Watts Prophets, and solo artists including Sonia Sanchez and Jane Cortez, who ushered in new modes of performance and reinvented the role of the griot in African-American culture. Ghanaian musician Koo Nimo, (who studied as a member of the Asantehene's court) brought his own form of speech music to the US in collaboration with the Smithsonian institute in the 1970s, while King Sunny Ade electrified and exported Nigerian talking drums to American shores. Meanwhile, Steve Reich translated his phasing concepts from his early speech loops to drums and set the stage for his later theater works. The influence of sounds that were at some points in pop music parlance called "third world" and at others called "world music" on the American music scene blossomed in the 1970s with innovative musical/literary works by dub artists Linton Kwesi Johnson and Mutabaruka, among many others. Whether the traditions were homegrown or imported, much of the interdisciplinary work in the United States during this period originated in collaborative communities, such as

Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians and the St. Louis-based Black Artists' Group.

This period also produced criticism that blurred boundaries between speech and song, or between literature and music, for a variety of reasons. For example, in an essay entitled "The Blues as Black Poetry", critic Stephen Henderson argued that in the context of contemporary black poetry, for which he found blues music to be a characteristic element, "many of the usual distinctions made between poetry and prose and poetry and song are often meaningless". In a related move, artist Dick Higgins, in his "Statement on Intermedia", argued that mass communication systems had changed our sensitivities, that as a result concepts like "poetry" and "music" had "broken down in their traditional forms", and that these terms were therefore mostly useful as reference points for critical arguments in which one might argue that a work is "basically musical, but also poetry".

In 1975, composer / producer Charles Amirkhanian and Thomas Buckner's 1750 Arch records released a ground breaking survey of American talking music entitled *10+2:12 American Text-Sound Pieces*. *10+2* emerged just before the bloom of hip-hop and was coterminous with the popularity of spoken songs by The Last Poets. (This album was later re-released in 2003 with a brief introduction by Amirkhanian that mentions related forms of speech music that had emerged since the 1975 release.) By the early 1980s, American talking music had produced a few international superstars of its own, including Laurie Anderson and Gil Scott Heron. This important work anticipated America's broad acceptance of hip-hop - speech music's most commercial mode.

SWEATING THE TECHNIQUE

One of the goals of *Crosstalk* is to consider how our ways of listening to American speech music across genres have changed since hip-hop brought speech music to the mainstream.

We began a conversation with other artists who have worked with speech from the 1970s to the present about speech music made in this era. Their musical responses to our request varied due to their different relationships to speech music. While some of the artists on this project might describe their work as hip-hop or closely related to it, others were simultaneously working in older genres or parallel streams. Despite some differences in origin there are a few common practices in the group.

One common practice is the **doubling of the voice** with other instruments or **mimicry of the voice**. In some works (such as "Morning Blues for Yvan" and "Redemption Chant 2.0"), we hear instruments mimic human voices. Conversely, in other works, we hear the reverse situation: musicians "play" human voices in the ways they might play some other instrument.

A number of artists make use of **repeated or reordered utterances** to emphasize or change the contexts for the meanings of a given word, or sometimes whole narratives. In some cases, the repetition of entire narratives emphasizes a specific aspect of the narrative (such as the rhythms or melodies in the recorded speech), reveals more information about the narrative (by altering the processing or the order of presentation), or simply encourages new understandings of the original performance or text by allowing it to go by again. The repeated performance of the text makes a judgment by enacting the difference from everyday speech.

This difference is due in part to the third recurring practice: the use of **extended vocal techniques**. Many of the pieces presented here alter everyday rhythms and melodies of our spoken language(s) by crossing the border from speech to singing, by functioning primarily as rhythm, or by employing some other musical mode, such as yodeling. In some works, these techniques estrange the text from the everyday. When Hirsch holds on to the vowels

or esses in the language of "In The Basement", for example, she emphasizes both the passion and the musicality within her spoken narrative. When the drummer and sound artist Guillermo E. Brown rhymes in an invented language in "ElectroPrayer 5.0", however, the familiar vocal runs orient listeners and the emotional information translates where semantic meanings cannot.

Perhaps the most common practice is the **extrication of the meanings from the sounds of speech**. Most works presented here take as a given that sounds hold musical information, and that the rhythms, textures, and melodies of speech communicate whether or not the words in a spoken language can be understood. Some works begin with obscured text that gradually becomes more legible, and some begin with legible meanings that are eventually obscured. In both directions, the practice of extricating meanings from sounds, or even reuniting them, often depends on the use of other practices mentioned here: the pairing of the voice with other instruments, the repetition or reordering of phrases, and the extended vocal techniques.

There are also practices involved in the making of these works that do not fit so neatly with other artists' processes, and the common practices are no more important than the uncommon ones. Ultimately, we hope that you let your ears guide you through the linguistic and musical intersections and tributaries presented here. It is our belief that by listening to speech music across genre and generation we can come to a better understanding of this musical practice in America.

Mendi + Keith Obadike
NYC 2008

NOTES FROM THE COMPOSERS

"DECLARATIVES IN FIRST PERSON"

"Declaratives in the First Person" (2005) was originally created as a six-channel audio installation for an exhibition entitled "The Art of Artist Statement" at the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center in Chicago. The work was composed of three stereo pairs of varying lengths playing through 6 speakers surrounding the listener- all looping continuously to create ever-shifting layers of sound, so that one could listen all day and not hear the exact same combination of fragments. In response to the exhibition's subject matter, I sampled my own voice speaking this sentence: "I would like to think that the art itself would be enough of a statement." The text was then cut into fragments, compressed, expanded, and layered in various combinations. The version on this compilation is a stereo mix of one possible iteration of the six channels.

-- Pamela Z

"ELECTROPRAYER 5.0"

I'm trying to find ways to continue living inside with and breathing snds
Like my tinnitus on blast
I want to participate in the addition, accretion, subtraction and multiplication
Making snds that accompany snds that are already happening
Sometimes these noises are confident supportive musicking mates
Sometimes these voices disintegrate into the gone
Submitting to all of them completes the act of dreaming
or praying
That is exactly where I want to be

Here in Electro.Prayer:5

I am an active participant in the process of living
I am breathing, voicing these breaths as snds
Working these snds into a txt of my past present and future
Following out these rhythms with a code
Twisting this code into a moment
Letting the moment go

--Guillermo E. Brown

Guillermo E. Brown: Voice and Electronics. Brown Sound Studio. Brooklyn, NY

"AFRICA(N)"

I started working towards sound poetry, consciously at least, through hip-hop. . . . There was something hidden within the rhyme I was hearing as a teenager and young adult, and I was trying to articulate what it was, operating from an essential premise that there was nothing wrong with the way people in my neighborhood spoke. Eventually I began to work more and more with the sound itself (trying to tease it away from literal meaning) and started to feel it within the body and adjust it within the body. This led me to make physical not just conceptual segues, uttered and nonuttered choices. (At a certain point, it's impossible to distinguish between the two.)

-- Tracie Morris

(from "Sound Making Notes")

"IN THE BASEMENT"

The recording of "In The Basement" is an excerpt from "My Father Piece" which was recorded live in concert at The Kitchen in 2000. Composition, Text, Performance by Hirsch. Live sampling of her father Jerry's voice interjected by Matthew Ostrowski. Pre-production engineering by David Weinstein.

-- Shelley Hirsch

"CHATTER OF PINS"

Chatter of Pins is, for all intents and purposes, the nth in my "Chatter" series, which was itself inspired by early 80's rap. The text, spoken by me and by my wife, Hannah MacKay, is from an old English folksong, A Paper of Pins, in which a suitor woos a maid with different proposals, only to meet rejection until he offers her the key to his desk and, consequently, his money. She accepts but he then declines when he realizes she loves his money more than him. The text becomes clearer as the piece evolves, but don't worry if you don't get it all (you're not supposed to). I chose the text because of its particular emphatic rap-like (well, almost) rhythmic structure. The piece was made in the spring of 2006."

-- Paul Lansky

"THE PINK OF STEALTH" & "RODEO RED"

We have long been interested in relationships between language, color, and social position. In "The Pink of Stealth" we have traced the color pink as a way of accessing ideas around health, wealth, race, gender, and sexuality. The phrase "in the pink of health" comes from the English foxhunting culture of the 18th century, when fashionable hunters were said to be "in the Pink" -- that is, in Thomas Pink's (red) hunting jackets. We use this project to think about the associative properties of language and the way that a word or concept from one context can carry along the values of another context. Many of the non-vocal sounds in the piece are created from high-resolution recordings and processing of two ubo aka (thumb pianos used in our prelude to the hunt), a fox whistle (used to lure a fox in the hunt), and recordings of foxes themselves. We were commissioned to make the work for the Electronic Arts Inter-mix and New York African Film Festival exhibition "Digital Africa" and originally presented a 5.1 surround sound mix. In "Rodeo Red", we explore the color red as representative of blood or the heart; we also treat flags as representative not only of nations but also of warnings about places of vulnerability.

-- Mendi + Keith Obadike

Mendi Obadike - Vocals / Keith Obadike guitar, bass, drums, ubo aka, synths and treatments

"BEING BLACK"

I like to think that the process of sampling is about collision between the expected and unexpected results of collage: it's a process that has made an entire generation of musicians, software engineers, code writers, and yes, normal artists, free from the constraints of how older genres limited the way people could perceive their work. As a composer, I make material that is unapologetically complex, and as an artist much of my work is an essay on the kind of lyrical form of poetry and music combined with the fine arts. Multi-media, the digital arts, and a sense of interconnectedness are what drives my inquiry into how creativity can evolve in an information based world like ours. I want people to think about music and art with an eye towards literature's invisible hold on how we tell stories. Is a song an art piece? Can art be a text? Can a film foster a sense of transcendence? Entropy of form, instability, transience, and above all - a possibility that art can say, simply - another world is possible. These are things that linger in my mind when I engage the creative act. I never, ever, ever want people to think that life is simple. It is not. My participation in *Crosstalk* echoes the work of Ellison the trumpet player and composer-in-training who became a writer, and offers mental software - it's a kind of Ellisonian equipment for those deciding not only to shun the noise but to live with the momentum implied in jazz music and electronic music's inheritance from all forms of complex human expression. Like they used to say - it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing...

--PAUL MILLER

"BLIMP/SKY FROM DBR'S ONE LOSS PLUS"

As a composer, I want to create not only music but also strategies toward composing new music. These strategies help me organize the music and, ultimately, the ideas behind the music. Particularly in a work where music and ideas unite theatrically, it's important that my intention, from the beginning of the creative process to the end of any performance, remains clear and concise. So I began with a question, assembled a brilliant team of collaborators and together we created a new work entitled One Loss Plus. What is gained when

something or someone is lost? In early 2006 as I began composing this work, New York City and my Harlem home were mourning all types of loss (life, liberties, loves, lands — the list continues) and I realized I wasn't equipped or experienced enough to fully understand loss, particularly loss that went beyond something private or personal. I decided to prepare myself; as a composer, the most effective method was to answer this question both literally and musically. Working with a team of collaborators, we began to conduct a series of interviews with friends and family asking them to respond to (not necessarily answer) the question. These responses were then videotaped and audiotaped and set to music to form a complete, unified score.

--Daniel Bernard Roumain
(from "One Loss Plus")

"THE SOCIETY ARCHITECT PONDERES THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE, OR WIE SIE KRIEGEN WAS SIE NICHT VERDIENEN" (Re-edit) 2000/2007

During the mid-1980's, my dear friend, Lawrence Weiner, was involved in an automobile accident caused by the driver of the car in which Lawrence was a passenger. The driver was drunk. Lawrence suffered pain and injuries, and his ability to earn an income was interrupted for a length of time. When it became clear that neither the driver, nor the insurance company, would accept responsibility for Lawrence's expenses, he took the case to court. "The Society Architect Ponders the Golden Gate Bridge" is based upon the transcript of this trial, in which Lawrence is the plaintiff. Over the course of the trial, Lawrence's life and artwork became the object of scrutiny by a hostile court. The notion of art and language is cross-examined by the opposing attorney, as well as the judge, who was not neutral in this case. "The Society Architect..." uses an electronic orchestration as a foundation, with the libretto (transcript) sung by vocal soloists (Joan La Barbara, Jeffrey Reynolds) and female choir. This is framed by Lawrence Weiner's spoken commentary. The chorus provides another layer, singing settings of Weiner's parables. The original production had a duration of

just under 50 minutes. For this recording, I have created a re-edited and re-mixed version from the live recording of a performance in the resonant hall of Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof (National Galerie).

--- Peter Gordon

Music composed by Peter Laurence Gordon / Direction and libretto by Lawrence Weiner • Vocal soloists: Joan La Barbara and Jeffrey Reynolds with the choir of Orchester Generation Berlin under the direction of Christian Borries. • Electronic score performed and produced by Peter Gordon • Additional live keyboards by Kevin Zoernig • First performed in Berlin and Bonn in 2000 as part of the series Musikwerke Bildender Kunstler, a co-production of Freunde Guter Musik Berlin, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart - Berlin, Hebbel Theater and Oper Bonn/KAH Bonn. • Conception: Ingrid Buschmann, Gabriele Kapstein, Mathias Osterwald

"MORNING BLUES FOR YVAN"

This is a real time laptop improvisation with electronically modified trombone, performed live on the radio in the Paris studios of Radio France as part of an interview by the presenter Yvan Amar. My current approach to laptop performance uses a library of sounds I originally developed for a DVD project by Lev Manovich, *Soft Cinema: Navigating the Database* (MIT Press, 2005). Manovich collected camcorder videos from his travels around the world and entered information about them into a database, classified according to geographic location, environment, camera movement, perspective, and other features. His process for this project dovetailed nicely with my own collection of videos from fifteen years of international travel. The sounds I sampled from these videos, along with detuned and remixed sounds borrowed from old sample players and the recordings of my longtime associates, comprise the base material I used for both Manovich's project and for this improvisation.

-- George Lewis

Live broadcast, Radio France-Culture, Paris, 02.11.2005, George Lewis, laptop, trombone, Duration: 5:13.

"LIFE STUDIES, MOVEMENT #1"

Life Studies is based on a recording of the literary critic Helen Vendler reading Shakespeare's sonnet number 65. It was released on a CD that accompanied her inspiring book *The Art*

of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Belknap Press, 1999). I transformed the recording using granular synthesis and comb filters that ring out in response to the varying rhythm and inflection of Vendler's reading. In the resulting composition a steady pulse becomes the background for a more gradual and multilayered development. The first movement traverses the entire sonnet with the method of transformation changing phrase by phrase. In the second movement [not presented here] the poem's first couplet is expanded to last almost eight minutes. Although the identity of the original recording as a spoken text is heavily veiled, the human music of Vendler's voice and Shakespeare's words shines out from the mechanical surface of the piece to reflect the poem's metaphorical paradox of bright love shining in black ink.

-- John Link

Recording of Helen Vendler reading William Shakespeare's Sonnet #65 ("Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea") used by arrangement with the publishers from *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* by Helen Vendler, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Copyright 1997 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved.

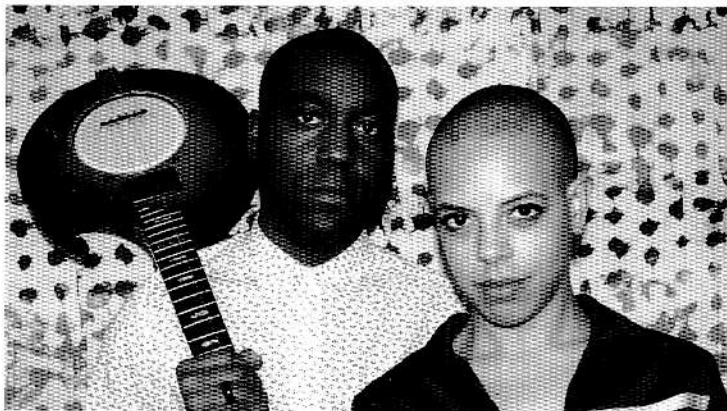
"REDEMPTION CHANT 2.0"

"Redemption Chant 2.0" is a thorough reworking of a piece titled 'Redemption Chant' that appeared in our 2006 oratorio "Still Life with Commentator". The project as a whole is concerned with our emotional relationship to the news media landscape in a time of war; it explores the telematic aestheticization of terror and the addictive narcosis of digital culture. Each musical piece was constructed either as an instrumental response to one of Ladd's poems, or as an environment in which the text unfolded freely in dialogue with its musical surroundings. The original 'Redemption Chant' was of the former type, but Redemption Chant 2.0 is neither. Instead, a recording of myself reading the poem activates its own rhythmic template, which is set across a more regular heartbeat-like pulse. These two systems cut against each other in an echoic fantasia, the bodily rhythms slipping under the digitally reproduced, increasingly degraded cadences of the speaking voice.

--Vijay Iyer

*Vijay Iyer: composition, voice, programming, production, mixdown, Mike Ladd: lyrics, analog synthesizer
Iyer's voice recorded by Pamela Z, Brooklyn, NY, 2006. Mastering by Mike Fossenkemper, Turtle Tone Studio. Copyright (c) 2006-2007 Vijay Iyer & Mike Ladd. Published by Multiplicity Music (SESAC) for Vijay Iyer. Likemadd Music (SESAC) administered by Just Isn't Music (PRS) for Mike Ladd.

ARTIST BIOS



MENDI + KEITH OBADIKE make music, art and literature. Their works include *The Sour Thunder*, an Internet opera (Bridge Records); a sound installation entitled *Big House / Disclosure* (Northwestern University); and a book of poetry entitled *Armor and Flesh* (Lotus Press). They have received commissions from The Whitney Museum, Yale University, Whitechapel Gallery (London), and Scribe Video Center. Mendi + Keith workshopped a version of their opera, *Four Electric Ghosts*, in Toni Morrison's Atelier at Princeton. It will be performed in 2009 at The Kitchen. www.blacknetart.com



GUILLERMO E. BROWN: graduate of Wesleyan University (BA) and Bard College (MFA), 2001 Artist-in-Residence and 2003 Van Lier Fellow from Harvestworks. Featured on over 25 recordings, has performed/recorded with David S. Ware, William Parker, Matthew Shipp, Marlies Yearby, Rob Reddy, Roy Campbell Quartet, Spring Heel Jack, Anti-Pop Consortium, Anthony Braxton, DJ Spooky, El-P, Carl Hancock Rux, Vernon Reid/DJ Logg's Yohimbe Brothers, Mike Ladd, George Lewis, Vijay Iyer, and Grisha Coleman among others. His albums include *Soul at the Hands of the Machine*, *The Beat Kids' Open Rhythm System*, *Black Dreams 1.0. ...Is Arturo Klauft*, and *Handheld*. His one-man theatre piece, *Robeson In Space*, premiered at Luna Stage in Montclair, NJ October 2005. He is currently at work on a new solo Shuffle Mode premiering with a performances at The Apollo in June '08, The Beat Kids' forthcoming recording Sound Magazine, a performance piece Syrup, his jazz ensemble The Cut Up Quintet and new group BiLLLLz. He is an Adjunct Professor at NYU Clive Davis School and Gallatin School.

PETER LAURENCE GORDON (b. New York 1951) composes concert and dance music, as well as music for performance and media small and large. His Love of Life Orchestra (LOLO), founded in 1977, is noted for its integration of experimentalism with dance music. A seminal figure in New York's "downtown" music scene, Gordon expanded his musical palette to combine delicate compositional detail with raw improvisation and groove. In addition to his solo work and work with LOLO, Gordon has contributed to albums by Laurie Anderson, Suzanne Vega, David Johansen, The Flying Lizards, David Van Tieghem, Lawrence Weiner, Rhys Chatham and Arthur Russell, as well as soundtracks for film and television. Gordon has received the Obie Award for his music for theater, the Bessie Award for his music for performance, as well as grants from the National Endowment for

the Arts and New York State Council on the Arts, and residency grants from the DAAD (Berlin) and Japan-US Friendship Commission. Peter Gordon's music has been released on the Lovely Music, CBS Masterworks, Newtone, and Time-Warner labels, with a new LOLO retrospective planned for DFA Records. Gordon graduated from the University of California, San Diego and has a masters degree from Mills College. He is currently Associate Professor of Music at Bloomfield College.

LAWRENCE WEINER: A key figure in Conceptual Art, Lawrence Weiner has long pursued inquiries into language and the art-making process. From his pioneering installation works of the 1960s and '70s through his new digital projects, Weiner posits a radical redefinition of the artist/viewer relationship and the very nature of the artwork. Translating his investigations into linguistic structures and visual systems across varied formats and manifestations, Weiner has also produced books, films, videos, performances and audio works. Lawrence Weiner was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1942. He has received numerous grants and awards, including the Skowhegan Medal for Painting/Conceptual Art; Wolfgang Hahn Prize, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany; the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, and the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, among many others. In 2007-2008, Weiner was honored with a 40-year retrospective of his work, entitled *Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Weiner lives and works in New York.

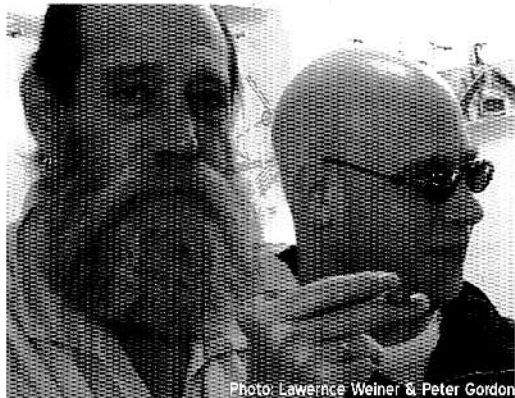


Photo: Lawrence Weiner & Peter Gordon

SHELLEY HIRSCH is a vocalist composer, performing artist whose work encompasses story telling pieces, staged performances, compositions, improvisations, collaborations, installations, and radio-plays, which have been presented on 5 continents. Her most recent grants/awards include a music commission for a surround sound choral work from NYSCA, a Harvestworks Artist in Residence grant (her 5th!) and The Alpert /Ucross Residency prize.



She is a recipient of a grant from Creative Capital, 3 from NYFA and ones from the NEA, Mary Flagler Cary Trust and more. Aside from her mostly solo staged performance works, Hirsch has performed 100's of concerts of improvised music worldwide with Aki Onda, Anthony Coleman, Tony Buck, Christian Marclay, Okkyung Lee, Ikue Mori, Shahzad Ismaili, Uchihashi Kasuhisa, and many more. Hirsch appears on over 50 CDs including her solo CD "The Far in Far out Worlds of Shelley Hirsch" and her autobiographical musical "O Little Town of East New York" with her longtime collaborator David Weinstein both on Tzadik. Anne Lebaronin her essay on Surrealism in PostModern music published by Garland Press wrote that Hirsch "relentlessly mines her life experiences, concocting brilliant collage-like reminiscences that are alternately, and sometimes simultaneously, disquieting and euphoric."

VIJAY IYER was voted #1 Rising Star Artist and #1 Rising Star Composer in the Downbeat International Critics Polls for both 2006 and 2007. His most recent albums include Reimagining and Tragicomic under his own name, Simulated Progress and Orbis Tertius with the trio Fieldwork, Raw Materials in duo with Rudresh Mahanthappa, and Still Life with Commentator with poet-performer Mike Ladd, commissioned by Brooklyn Academy of Music. He received the 2003 CalArts Alpert Award in the Arts, a 2006 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, and project grants from the Rockefeller Foundation MAP Fund, the New

York State Council on the Arts, Chamber Music America, Creative Capital, American Composers Forum, Meet the Composer, Arts International, and The Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. He has performed his music around the world, and has collaborated with Steve Coleman, Roscoe Mitchell, Wadada Leo Smith, Amiri Baraka, Butch Morris, Ethel, Miya Masaoka, dead prez, Karsh Kale, George Lewis, DJ Spooky,



John Zorn, and many others. He is a faculty member at New York University, New School University, and the School for Improvisational Music. His writings have been published in Music Perception, Journal of Consciousness Studies, Current Musicology, and Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies. He lives in New York City. www.vijay-iyer.com.

MICHAEL C. LADD, writer and music producer, was born in Boston, MA. He received his BA in Black expatriates in the nineteenth century from Hampshire College and an MA in poetry from Boston University. He has published in the literary magazines Long Shot Review and Bostonia. His work is also featured in the book Swing Low: Black Men Writing and several anthologies, including Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Café, In Defense of Mumia, Bum Rush the Page, Pour la Victoire, Everything But the Burden, and Rip It Up: Essays on Black Rock in the US. Ladd is the writer and producer of nine albums, including Easy Listening For Armageddon, Live From Paris: The Iran/Contra Memorial Album, Welcome to the AfterFuture, The Infesticons: Gun Hill Road and The Majesticons: Beauty Party, Nostalgiator, Negrophilia: The Album, and Father Divine. As a Fellow at the Institute for Arts and Civic Dialogue at Harvard University, Ladd produced and directed Blood Black and Blue, an audio documentary/performance about Black police officers in the United States. Ladd also col-

laborated with pianist-composer Vijay Iyer on the song cycles *In What Language?* and *Still Life with Commentator*. Most recently, Ladd was a teaching fellow at DasArts institute in Holland and in the High School for the Cité in Nanterre, a Parisian suburb. Ladd currently lives in Paris with his wife and son. myspace.com/likemadd

PAUL LANSKY'S recent work includes a mixture of electronic and acoustic compositions. His most recent electronic work includes an interactive laptop quintet, *A Guy Walks Into a Modal Bar*, as well as *Chatter of Pins*, included on this CD. His most recent electronic CD, *Music Box*, was released on Bridge Records in 2006 (Bridge 9210). Recent acoustic works include *Threads*, for percussion quartet, *Pieces of Advice*, for horn and piano, and *Shapeshifters* for two pianos and orchestra. An all-acoustic CD, *Etudes and Parodies*, was released on Bridge Records in 2007 (Bridge 9222). His acoustic music is published by Carl Fischer. For more information on Paul Lansky visit paulansky.org.



GEORGE E. LEWIS serves as the Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music at Columbia University, and the Director of the Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia. The recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship in 2002, an Alpert Award in the Arts in 1999, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Lewis studied composition with Muhal Richard Abrams at the AACM School of Music, and trombone with Dean Hey. A member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) since 1971, Lewis's work as composer, improviser, performer and interpreter explores electronic and computer music, computer-based multimedia installations, text-sound works, and notated and improvisative forms, and is documented on more than 120 recordings. His published articles on music, experimental



video, visual art, and cultural studies have appeared in numerous scholarly journals and edited volumes, and his book, *Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*, was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2008.

JOHN LINK has composed for diverse media including orchestra, chamber and jazz ensembles, rock bands, and electroacoustic instruments. He has received commissions from the Athabasca Trio, Ionisation, Flexible Music, the Irving Lippe Project, the Lincoln Friends of Chamber Music (for the Ames Piano Quartet), The High Mountain Symphony, and the Composers Guild of New Jersey, and awards from the Centre Acanthes, ASCAP and Meet the Composer. His music is recorded on the New Focus Recordings, Bridge Records, and 60x60 labels. He is a founding member of the New York City composers group Friends & Enemies of New Music and his writings have appeared in books and journals in the U.S., Italy, and England. Link is Professor of Music at William Paterson University. His web site is: www.wpunj.edu/coac/music/link/.

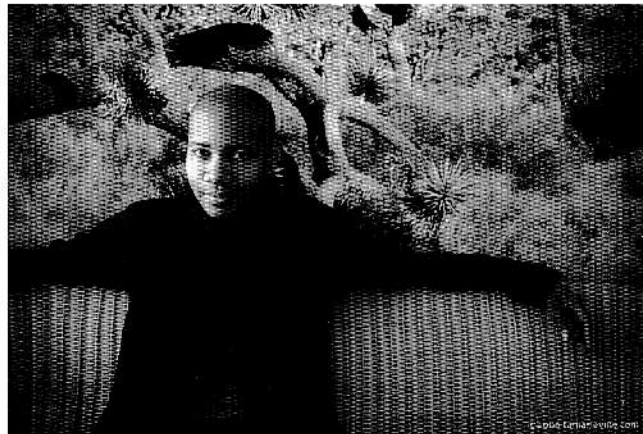




TRACIE MORRIS is an interdisciplinary poet who has worked extensively as a sound artist, writer and multimedia performer. Her installations have been presented at the Whitney Biennial and the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning. She has worked with numerous jazz, classical and experimental musicians and has recorded extensively. Tracie is the recipient of numerous awards for poetry and performance and has contributed to, and been written about in, several anthologies of literary criticism. She holds an MFA in poetry from Hunter College and a PhD in Performance Studies from New York University. Dr. Morris is Associate Professor of English and the Humanities at Pratt Institute.

DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN (DBR) is a composer, performer, violinist, and bandleader who seamlessly blends funk, rock, hip-hop and classical music into a new, personal sonic vision. Serving as a classical-urban ambassador for a widening global audience, he embraces his classical music roots with a multicolored spectrum of contemporary black popular music. As a composer, his dramatic soul-inspiring pieces range from orchestral scores and energetic chamber works to rock songs and electronica. According to the New York Times, his "*eclecticism was wide-ranging as ever*" in *One Loss Plus*. DBR's evening-length, multimedia work for electric/acoustic violin, prepared/amplified piano, electronics, and video which debuted at BAM's 2007 Next Wave Festival. The second commission to be premiered at BAM's 2008 Next Wave Festival is *Darwin's Meditation for the People of Lincoln*, a musical setting of a new pocket play by Daniel Beaty exploring an imagined conversation between Darwin and Lincoln featuring the chamber orchestra SymphoNYC, and internationally renowned Haitian recording artist Emeline Michel.

DJ SPOOKY (Paul D Miller, born 1970, Washington DC) is a composer, multimedia artist and writer. His written work has appeared in *The Village Voice*, *The Source*, *Artforum*, and *Rapgun* amongst other publications. Miller's work as a media artist has appeared in a wide variety of contexts such as the Whitney Biennial; The Venice Biennial for Architecture (2000); the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, Germany; Kunsthalle, Vienna; The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh and many other museums and galleries. His work "New York Is Now" has been exhibited in the Africa Pavilion of the 52 Venice Biennial 2007, and the Miami/Art Basel fair of 2007. Miller's first collection of essays, entitled "Rhythm Science" came out on MIT Press 2004. His book "Sound Unbound," an anthology of writings on electronic music and digital media was recently released by MIT Press. Miller's deep interest in reggae and dub has resulted in a series of compilations, remixes and collections of material from the vaults of the legendary Jamaican label, Trojan Records. Other releases include *Optometry* (2002), a jazz project featuring some of the best players in the downtown NYC jazz scene, and *Dubtometry* (2003) featuring Lee 'Scratch' Perry and Mad Professor. Miller's latest collaborative release, *Drums of Death*, features Dave Lombardo of Slayer and Chuck D of Public Enemy among others. He also produced material on Yoko Ono's new album "Yes, I'm a Witch."



PAMELA Z is a San Francisco-based composer/performer and audio artist who works primarily with voice, live electronic processing, and sampling technology. She creates solo works combining operatic bel canto and experimental extended vocal techniques with found percussion objects, spoken word, digital processing, and a MIDI controller called The BodySynth™ (which allows her to manipulate sound with physical gestures.) In addition to her solo work, she has composed and recorded scores for dance, theatre, film, and new music chamber ensembles. Her large-scale multi-media works have been presented at Theater Artaud and ODC in San Francisco and at The Kitchen in New York, and her audio works have been presented in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum in New York and the Diözesanmuseum in Cologne. Her multi-media opera Wunderkabinet - based on the Museum of Jurassic Technology (created in collaboration with Matthew Brubeck and Christina McPhee) has been presented at The LAB Gallery (San Francisco) in 2005 and at REDCAT (Disney Hall, Los Angeles) in 2006. Pamela Z has toured extensively throughout

the US, Europe, and Japan. She has performed in numerous festivals including Bang on a Can at Lincoln Center in New York, the Interlink Festival in Japan, the Other Minds Festival in San Francisco, Pina Bausch Tanztheater Festival in Wuppertal, Germany, and La Biennale di Venezia in Italy.



She is the recipient of numerous awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Creative Capital Fund, the CalArts Alpert Award in the Arts, the ASCAP Music Award, and the NEA and Japan/US Friendship Commission Fellowship. She holds a music degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder. For more information visit www.pamelaz.com

Producers: Mendi + Keith Obadike

Executive Producers: Becky and David Starobin

Mastering Engineer: Charlie Post

Photo of Pamela Z: Lori Eanes

Photo of Vijay Iyer: Prashant Bhargava

Photo of Guillermo E. Brown: Davis Moss

Photo of DJ Spooky: Tamar Levine

Photo of John Link: Alan Schaefer

Graphic Design: Douglas Holly

Liner Notes: Mendi + Keith Obadike

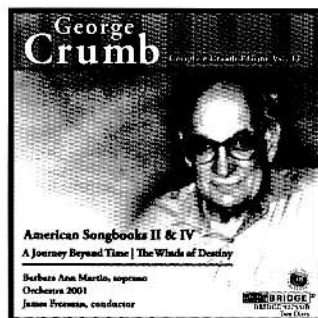
Traycard and Cover Art: "So the Ecko Said. 'Yall wa in bad shape!'"(detail): Torkwase Dyson, 2007

Acknowledgments: Mendi + Keith Obadike would like to thank all of the artists included in *Crosstalk*, for playing along with us in this mix; painter Torkwase Dyson, for her beautiful work; as well as Becky and David Starobin and all of the staff at Bridge. Special thanks to the University Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences of Princeton University and the College of Arts and Communication of William Paterson University. Their generous support helped to make this project possible.

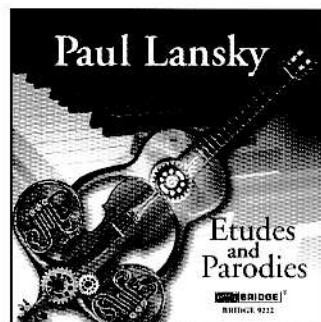
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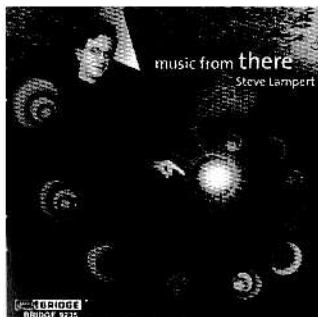
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