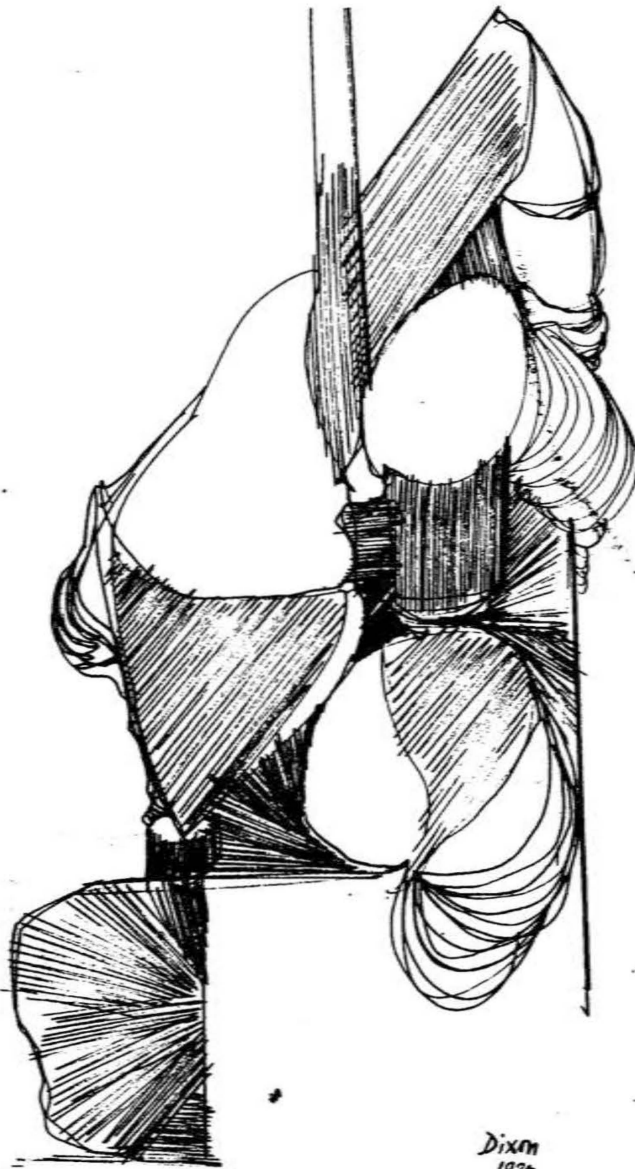


L'OPERA



Dixon
1982

By
BILL DIXON

*The
Crossett
Library*



BENNINGTON
COLLEGE
from the
collection of
Jack Moore

L'OPERA:

a Collection of Letters, Writings,
Musical Scores, Drawings, and Photographs
(1967-1986)
[Volume One]

by
BILL DIXON

Metamorphosis Music, BMI, 1986

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~~Dixon~~
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FOREWORD

When I was a small child, we moved from Nantucket to Harlem, with a small stop in Brooklyn (567 Gates Avenue to be exact). There were four of us children, my brother Milton and my sisters Mary and Lydia. Later, my youngest brother Benny was born in the apartment we moved into, 134 West 134th Street, not quite midway the block from where a place that was later to receive historical attention as a gathering place for some of the musicians in the vanguard of advancing the music (jazz, then) MONROE'S UPTOWN HOUSE.

We were frightfully poor and did our stint on Home Relief (precursor to Welfare). We had gaslight (before electricity) in that floor-through apartment that also had French doors and a dumbwaiter; and the belated, to me, architecturally historical elegance of that building, that naturally managed to elude me (a then completely unsophisticated, wide-eyed, young boy almost constantly being beaten-up in school because I spoke with a New England accent) has only been revealed to me now, as a man, through the painfully beautiful photographs of James Van Der Zee.

I went to PS 89 on Lenox Avenue between 134th and 135th Streets; so did BILL GREAVES, MONROE ROBINSON: the POPWELL brothers (ALFRED and ALBERT), ADOLPHE HENRIQUES, CHRIS COLUMBUS, JR. (SONNY PAYNE), the JOYNER brothers, RUDY PARKER, MARK DESGRAVES (who could speak French). Once, MATT HENSEN who went to the North Pole with Peary (and Black people /Negroes then/ always thought that he got there FIRST) visited our 4th or 5th grade class. Mr. Hocut often took my class to the Metropolitan Museum of Art where I would draw the knights in armor for hours on end. Once, I got lost in the Egyptian room and strange things seemed to happen, but that's another Foreword.

My mother and stepfather, a large man, who as a young man had been a very good athlete (and who was an incredibly gifted mathematician) were both vociferous readers, and even as poor as we were, there was always a small library of books (hard cover) in the apartments that the family rented; we moved a lot.

Books were relatively inexpensive. Along 125th Street (Harlem's then equivalent of 42nd Street, or so it seemed to me) there were numerous book stores that dealt in used books, and many of them had these books displayed out on the sidewalk in stalls and racks where one could browse. Good bargains could be had for five cents up to about fifty cents. One could also exchange books that one had read for other books.

My mother is a writer who then wrote continuously (in longhand, like O'Neill); and because I was the oldest, I served as both her audience and critic. She read to me; I listened and was able to intelligently discuss her work with her. Stylistically, she wrote epics much on the order of Frank Yerby, and I guessed then (and I'm in tune in terms of knowing now) that this involvement with her work

allowed her to keep a reasonable distance between the insane viciousness of the social situation as that related to Black people.

They read DuBois' THE CRISIS at the breakfast table; among other things were the subject of lynchings, the Scottsboro Boys' case, the rebuff Haile Selassie got when he approached the League of Nations concerning the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, riots, and other things affecting blacks adversely throughout the country, etc.; and it would seem to me that writing permitted her not necessarily to escape (where could she go?), but it did allow her to pour herself into something that SHE could control.

I have, sometimes futilely (in terms of pouring myself into my work), also sometimes been able to come to terms in a rational way with the myriad of things (not necessarily of one's own doing) social, political, economical, and (when there's time left) personal that seemingly appear to unrelentlessly engulf one.

This collection then is dedicated to my mother (my stepfather and two brothers have passed away) who lives with my two sisters. I want her to know that I have learned from her.

BILL DIXON
19 November 1986

In the years that I've been involved with teaching, my work as a musician and composer (in essence, that is what I teach) has become more siamesed with the act of teaching. Concomitantly, I find myself viewing teaching as the ultimate and, quite possibly, the most creative of arts. Teaching, as I define it, is the art of imparting knowledge, while at the same time, the teacher is required to stimulate creative activity on the part of those that would be taught. With this as the objective, teaching, in so many ways (especially, when those thirsting for knowledge and desirous of being taught are talented and not hostile to exposure to ideas that may be different as well as the modes or methods used to designate them) for me, is far more challenging and rewarding than either music or painting. As a teacher, it is incumbent upon you to know that both your positive and sometimes negative effect and influence upon your students will last a long time--in some cases, quite possibly a lifetime. Consequently, a good and dedicated teacher (a rapidly diminishing breed, unfortunately, doomed to extinction) teaches a triumvirate of things: the subject (its philosophy, aesthetic, method, and history); ways for the student to relate to that; and also (whether or not it is desired or contemplated) who he or she (the teacher) is through this work. Teaching is sometimes a brutal and thankless task, fraught with travail and, seemingly, mosaicked with completely unnecessary imponderables. In spite of this (or because of this) the tradition manages to continue. Good and dedicated teachers survive, and gifted and disciplined students finally move on to engage in their own work and make their contribution to the society. Sometimes (when the everpresent sages permit it) I have good feelings about being a part of such an illustrious profession.

(WORK, 1978-1979)
"The Annual Fund, Bennington College"

We have not met regularly in the classroom situation, simply because that has not been necessary. We do meet twice a week in the forum (where it's happening), the Ensemble IV rehearsals, however.

Jim is a very good player. Now what does that mean to the reader? Well, he has a very good sound--soft, yet strong and not strident or evidencing elements of those things normally attributable (for all the wrong reasons) to brass players. His attack is good. His range is very good. And his security in his reaching for, and placement of his notes in the very high register is proceeding as on shed-ULE (as the British say). He has speed and flexibility. He is 'Into the Hot' regarding WHAT this instrument should be doing as regards late twentieth century brass playing. There is a gentleness with strength about his playing that belies his visual countenance. He has come quite close to making the instrument his own speaking voice; the timbres quite closely match.

There are still 'problems', however, but, like for all of us, there will ALWAYS be those seemingly mechanical Hare and the Rabbit imponderables. But that is what makes playing so beautiful. Much as the junkie knows every day there is something he MUST do, so does the trumpet player. The glories of that brass, three-valved monkey on your back...

Sometimes in your pursuit of still the softer sound (the musical corollary of pushing that rock up that hill) you let TOO much air escape. When I say 'too' much, it is because at that point, the escaping air as a SOUND is in competition WITH the sound. Do you follow me?? Also, now is the time (thank you, Charlie Parker) for all good men to come to the aid of their country (sorry, I thought I was trying OUT this machine) and seriously start to think of constructing longer lines without the intellectual interference that generally goes along with the endeavor. I think that you understand what I mean, and if you don't--THINK about it. Much as with everything else, it will eventually come to you. Another thing, remember that exercise (laugh) that went from low Fsharp (below middle C) to the octave (in the first space) to the octave (on the line) to the octave (above high C) to the octave (altissimo Fsharp) done in long tones with only the one attack (throat) and in one breath??? Keep trying to work on it, no matter how discouraging it may appear. How do you know--maybe The Sages will help??

/Trumpet Tutorial with James Tifft/
/1973-1974/

The work in this ensemble has revolved around the following set principles: composition/notational and composition/improvisational, becoming realities through the process of performance. But there can be no performance without something to perform. And whatever is to be performed, in order for it to be a reality (one that renders unto the listener ANOTHER kind of experience), it (the performance) must be done with conviction. The key words then are: ideas (what is to be done); process (how it is to be realized); method (what are the techniques to be utilized to realize the realization); and systems (which one(s) will be used to put the musicians into the position of being able to do what it is that they must).

So we entered into various kinds of exercises. This had to be done because there were, this term, about four or five new members admitted to this ensemble, and they came with an equal amount of ideas, awarenesses, and sets of technical craft about what would be done in this situation, how they would relate to it, and how I and the ensemble would establish relationships with them.

Instrumental handling: what does one do in ensemble playing; what does one do in the time spans that one is designated to play 'solo', or alone?

How does one start to become aware of the various instrumental timbres or stratas that are both on and 'off' the horn?

How does one acquire stamina?

How does one learn to hear on the various levels necessary; hearing the 'outside' parts of the sound the ensemble makes--the inside lines, the percussion?

How does one relate to the idea of instruments forming constituencies, rather than the more generally accepted ones, such as the: saxophone SECTION, trumpet SECTION, rhythm SECTION, etc.?

How do you know when you are playing too loud and not with enough dynamism?

What about breathing, rhythm, line, harmonic considerations; how are they arrived at?

When you hear a sound, how do you know (if a voicing, a vertical alignment of the instruments) where to place your instrument in that setting?

And how do you train your ear to HEAR those things instantaneously?

And how do you come to grips with the new definition of the solo?

In order to more specifically deal with these things, in addition to exercises designed to focus on those things, I wrote a piece for this ensemble. It covered each of those areas. It is a long work and, at this point, to be considered 'in progress'. It has to take into consideration all of the known things about each of the members of the ensemble that relate to music, how it is done, how they will do it, attitudes, and the ability to sustain proper stances in the ensemble even when what they are doing is sometimes under rather strong criticism.

ORCHESTRATION, ARRANGING AND INSTRUMENTATION

There are essentially two formal ways of dealing with composition: notational (achieved by ascribing symbols on manuscript paper that serve as indicators of certain kinds of musical activity) and improvisational. In improvisational composition what is to be done is dealt with by the musician recalling from his subconscious things previously stored there. And when the creative juices flow hot, those things recalled are recalled in an order formerly unknown to the improviser. These are the beautiful moments known in the trade as inspirational. Composition is made up of both philosophical and methodological components. Ideas and emotion are those things that cannot be taught or even discussed except in those rare cases where, through the work or investigations of what work is, the necessity dovetails with the practicability of such verbal engagement. Those things that are in the domain of method, craft, techniques, devices or whatever can be taught, and for this reason this class was taught.

What we did in this class was, first, to make definitions for ourselves for orchestration (writing for the orchestra); arranging (the setting of those components of material, the compositional elements: line, rhythm, harmony, space, etc.); and instrumentation (instruments, their official ranges and 'unofficial' ranges, their colors, their parts that meld 'well' with their instruments, and their parts that didn't 'meld' well with their instruments, etc.).

Assignments were given to the class to complete for the following instrumentation or parts of: (2) tenor saxophones; (1) baritone saxophone, trombone, alto flute, trumpet. The pieces that were to be arranged were: BAG'S GROOVE (Milt Jackson), PEACE (Ornette Coleman) and NAIMA (John Coltrane). Each one of these had to be laid out in melodic sketch form and harmonic sketch form, in addition to each of the participants in the class assembling to the melodic line (the only part that they were given) their own chordal progression. This they had to do by listening to the recording and transcribing that material from the recording. Before the final arrangements were made, the pieces were played in class, and criticism was given as it related to: voice leading; quality of chords chosen; open and close position (harmony); densities and harmonic weight; use of the colors of the ensemble to be used; and notation. The other assignment was that each member of the class would write eight bars (metric) every day of both a harmonic progression and a melodic sequence.

(1974)

George is a beginning student on this instrument and has made very strong progress. Our meetings have dealt with the technical side of what goes into playing: the scales, intervals (running of the cycle of fourths in a progression that runs the gamut of the scales in this manner: C, F, Bflat, Eflat, Dflat, Aflat, Gflat, B, E, A, D, G back to C).

Focus has been on a good sound, articulation (the use of the non-tongued attack--the attack with the back of the throat which produces the softer, more musical sound, rather than the sharp, more secure tongued and less 'musical' attack). I have limited him, in terms of range, to about F on the line proceeding from low Fsharp (Concert E) below middle C. It is not advisable for beginners, especially if that person is a 'doubler' (plays another kind of instrument, and in this case, George is an alto saxophone player), to put too much stress on muscles that, in the way you are attempting to put them to use, have been used in an entirely different way. The embouchure situation for both instruments is diametrically opposed). And while there have been incredible 'doublers' in this situation (alto saxophonists BENNY CARTER and ORNETTE COLEMAN both are trumpet players, both of them approached this situation when they were much more secure in their musical goals on their original instruments.)

George wants to play the trumpet, and it is obvious that he is working at it. He is also aware the the 'lesson' thing is not enough and is spending the necessary 'extra' time exploring and learning the 'other' things that can serve only to make him more conversant with the instrument. He has learned a Miles Davis solo (almost note for note)--the classic one on FOUR; and while for study purposes this is both ideal and right, for such things as thinking that that is IMPROVISATION, it is NOT right!! The improvisation that belongs to another man can NEVER be yours. You have to make your own, much as when you eat a good steak, it tastes a certain way to you--only YOU know why you want it to be rare, or why you prefer sauce, etc. So continue to work in ANY way that you can and must. Continue to learn things, I recommend it; BUT.....you must not only TAKE from the tradition, it is incumbent that you ADD to the tradition. Much as those players you admire have had to risk, so must you. Remember that Miles Davis was twenty years old when he was playing some of those 'classic' things (that even terrified him in their 'incompleteness' and sometimes 'technical' waverings); and HE didn't outright copy Dizzy (Gillespie) his then idol and sometimes mentor because that would have been unthinkable. And if it was unthinkable almost thirty years ago, it is certainly out of the question in the space age. Keep working, George; like Virginia Slims and those ladies, 'you've come a long way'.

TRUMPET TUTORIAL WITH GEORGE MENOUSEK
(1975-1976)

The class took a rather different turn this term, something which I think made it difficult both for me to teach and for the class, itself, to really come to grips with in the beginning. And, of course, there were the distractions; the Literature Division has its reading on the same Thursday that I hold one of my classes, and this, in itself, presented a conflict to those students interested in both subjects. It also made some of the students miss classes that were both important and intrinsic to the development of the class. But there was little that could be done about it, because, as regards space, the nights that the class met were the nights (Thursday and Friday) that are assigned to the Division to teach some of its classes. So the best was made out of a rather poor situation.

As a focal point, the thesis of the class centered around the ensemble (how the ensemble pieces are put together /composed either through written notation, or improvisational practices, or what-have-you/), the tutorial (in theoretical practices) that I taught, the ensemble (itself), and the idea of composition for the large ensemble. What I tried to present to the class, which met as a whole, was the idea behind the creative process that gives fruition to a piece of music of this particular aesthetic; and in the case of aesthetics, how one comes to grips with the definition and defining of those things that are music and music materials for all music, but that in this music take literally a different turn.

Members of the class were able to examine and see the creative process at work in the shape of the pieces that the class formulated for the ensemble; they were also able to see the relationship of the theoretical, vis-a-vis the practical, vis-a-vis the implementation of the two.

Lectures were, naturally, given as well as criticism--largely to the musicians, as I felt that the music people who were taking the course as writers should get more of what it is they will have to have if they continue by the act of writing. Of course, I was available for the necessary out-of-class chats that do arise in such situations.

In the beginning, the class was slow /much too slow for my taste/ as I felt that (as usual) the students were much more verbal and critical than they were knowledgeable or capable of exposing their weaknesses (or even strengths) to scrutiny--a problem, I feel, that is running rampant with this current generation of 'rappers'. But then they worried about their children in Caesar's time, too, I am told. But the later portions of the class did appear to touch on bearing fruit; and when our visiting artist Bassist-Composer Alan Silva was present on campus, I made portions of my class available to him so that his almost reiteration of my previously stated views to the class

seemed to help them realize that what had been taking place in the class was not just a 'trip' contrived solely for their discomfort.

We touched upon many things in the Fall of 1976 and will continue to explore in the Spring of 1977. It is to be hoped that facilities and all that will allow us to reach more of a full capacity than that what was afforded in the past will be available.

I enjoy teaching this class, and I'm of the feeling that those students that take the class feel the way that I do.

AESTHETICS AND CRITICISM AS
THEY PERTAIN TO BLACK MUSIC (1976)

BILL DIXON

slowly

Handwritten musical score on page 8, featuring six staves of music. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings, with a tempo instruction 'slowly' in a circle at the top left.

Bennington, Vt. /1985/

Handwritten musical score on page 9, featuring three systems of staves. The first system has two staves. The second system is labeled 'A' and includes staves for 'Tenor saxophone', 'Tuba', and 'Trumpet Tenor uis.'. The third system is labeled 'B' and has two staves. The notation is dense with many notes and rests.

NUMBER 2 NYC /1968/
10 Stave Medium

At this stage of the game, one has to know when the idea of 'pulse' is relegated to the area of implication; and in that instance, the mere intellectual 'understanding' of what one is working on is not enough. In even a cursory examination of the Ellington works /theoretically the meat of this tutorial/ close attention has to be paid to the detail within which Ellington fuses his melodic concept to the harmonic underpinning of those works. For example, in the first four bars of IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD, ¹ supporting the melody we have: Dminor (2nd inversion) to Bflat (2nd inversion) allowing chromatic movement in the OUTER LOWER voice, which presents to the performer of Ellington's music a devisal tactic that is invaluable in terms of allowing a more cohesive fusion and understanding /PERFORMANCE understanding/ to exist, concerning the interaction of his lines and their harmonies and showing how they are almost inseparable from his thoughts. The mere DIGITAL understanding of this, however, is also not enough; duplication or imitation in the BEGINNING, to get one 'rolling', is alright. But that is only for the initiation. One has to assiduously practice this under ALL KINDS of performance circumstances until one can execute without pre-thinking or consciously thinking as one performs. The nature of this tutorial /theoretically an advanced one/ presupposed, and I hope not erroneously, that the student will constantly keep this idea and concept in the vanguard of her thoughts.

1/ Other Ellington compositions contain similar movement circumstances that make the observation of this pertinent to an understanding.

voicing sketch /score/ for Jay Ash's SENIOR CONCERT;
Shaftsbury, Vt. /1975/



BENNINGTON COLLEGE /1968-1969/

It was difficult; Calabro and I did not share the same ideas about how contemporary improvisation was to be dealt with. I always felt that it was composition /the assembling of musical materials that are generally accessible to everyone into a new order/. I obviously speak of composition, simply because when one does anything one has to do (whether one does it intuitively or by design), one does compose, one does assemble, one learns, one codifies; and in that beautiful moment of translucent freedom when all systems are working on go, one is able to summon forth material that has been stored in one's subconscious into a rare, new order, sometimes surprising even one's self.

We /Judith Dunn and myself in our work/ were working in ways at that time with these students, which would allow them to do something; and I was rather surprised to hear how the 'something' had been done here at Bennington College in the small instances where improvisation had first been taught, where one took such arbitrary situations as 'play 32 notes and then do something with those 32 notes', or do this, or do that, or play, again, the very programmatic idea--always something abstract, intellectual predilection that didn't allow a person to use one's self PHYSICALLY.

And then rhythm, the seat or citadel of all musical formations, could not even be recognized because it couldn't even be discussed. If no one had ever HEARD Charlie Parker SERIOUSLY, obviously, one couldn't know what Charlie Parker had done. If one thought that Cecil Taylor was only an effete intellectual whose 'music' really only hurt the ears or reeked of 'chromatic bullshit' /as one fabled BLACK musician-composer was reputed to have remarked in a fit of pique/, one could not deal with either the idea of extension or development of Charlie Parker's music as viewed through the workings of this same Cecil Taylor. If one thought that George Russell was only a very, very light complexioned Negro who really wasn't doing as much in theoretical terms as Howard Hansen, then one couldn't deal with how the ramifications of what Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane were doing were being dealt with in the Black, high art music community. And then, if one thought only of Miles Davis as an evil, black man who could only play "round Midnight", there was no way to deal with the other kinds of sonances that come from the trumpet. And if you didn't know who Miles Davis was, how could you know who Don Cherry was; and if you didn't know who Don Cherry was, how could you know who the man was who was standing next to you and what HE'D done with that same Bflat trumpet?

But we did, on some level, work, and I did learn things; and some of those things were very enjoyable; some of them were quite disheartening, seeing people resistant to new and other

ideas, to other concepts, seeing people deny, not only the existence of the music but also, in so doing, deny their own existence as persons who could grow, who could expand, whose minds had not been (as they say) 'closed off'. But I'm sure we all learned.

After I was here awhile, various musicians from the New England Conservatory, the Berklee School of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, and former musical colleagues of mine began to make themselves and their sounds accessible on the Bennington campus. In the Dance Division, the Division for which I WAS formally hired, my work and my approach to my work (though I always felt it was never really understood) was never denied its existence. And a lot of my energies and a lot of my teaching went into the classes that came out of that Division. In the class in composition which I collectively taught with Miss Dunn, where we could discuss everything from Cage, to Powell, to Monk, and Webern's music (of which I'm very fond), we could discuss those things in terms of students making dances. A dance is NOT just movement, a dance exists in the world; it exists in our vision; it exists in the breadth and scope of how we define time. It exists as something to be seen, sometimes blurred; we also hear this dance whether it is the labored breathing (after five minutes of very, very heavy rhythmic dealings) of the dancer, or as the music that psychologically or subliminally is being 'used' as the ferment for the dance.

Thoughts on the JAZZ COMPOSERS' GUILD

"I knew that we had to become stronger before we could speak to certain people. Albert Ayler was never a member of the Guild. I would have elected him to be a member of the Guild, but I wanted us to become stronger on our own before we made any overtures to any musician who had any real notoriety or standing in the then musical community in terms of any overt outside 'rank' or 'standing'."

"Don Cherry was never a member of the Guild. Trane was approached as was Ornette; both of these musicians were asked to support certain philosophical ventures that the Guild was then entering into in terms of asserting itself in the name of all musicians for the right to self-determination. I also felt that those of us who were a step 'below' them in terms of publicity (and I won't refer to musicality or stature at this point because history will be a much more accurate arbiter of that fact) should do something definitive first, and on our own, rather than hide under the mantle of their names."

(1971)

English Horn

Part VI

v. 122 - soprano
Drums

A

B

C

D

E

Orchestra work: rehearsed at the Free Conservatory
of the UNIVERSITY OF THE STREETS /NYC/ 1967

Tet Tenor UNIS

A

2 3

MP

3x

1x Tet
2x Tenor
3x Tromb (cello m. fusa)

UNIS

Tet Tenor Tromb (cello fusa)

cello

(8va UNIS)

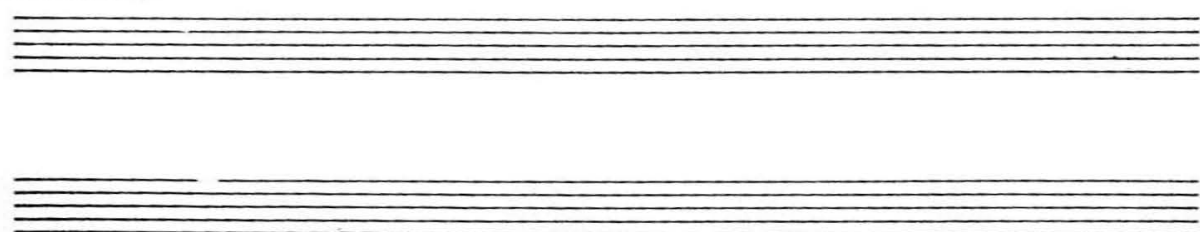
B

(8va UNIS)

NYC /1968/



Line sketch for for JAZZ COMPOSERS' GUILD Orchestra;
NYC /1965/



But it should be noted that the NYC5 was, in reality, the same group that Archie and I had had, with the exception that I was no longer in the group as a player; I did, however, write almost 99 percent of the book that they originally used that was first revealed to audiences in a concert at a place called HAROUTS, then located in the vicinity of NYU and subsequently lauded about by LeRoi Jones in a DOWNBEAT MAGAZINE article.

It was Tchicai, however, who hired me to do the music for the group; and that music included their theme song, George Russell's composition EZZTHETIC. I did that arrangement--lines of Shepp's, Cherry's, and Tchicai's.

So, if that was not 'being close' (a considerable amount of that time I was either at Tchicai's house talking, drinking, and discussing music or he was at mine) I don't know what it was. We 'fell out' over the rather superficial and divisive article that DOWNBEAT did on him (cover story) that was obviously designed to pit us (the members of the music) against each other. The article: "John Tchicai, a Calm Member of the Avant-garde" /DOWNBEAT, February 10, 1966. A quote: "Personally, he (Tchicai) seems more relaxed and at peace with himself, less aggressive and aggrieved, than the self-appointed spokesmen and standard-bearers of the new music."

Another quote had Tchicai saying: "But on the other hand, I think there is also a tendency among a lot of Negro musicians to only look at this--that they are Negroes and there will always be more opportunities for white musicians. But I think that is wrong; I think that since we are in 1966, and especially here in New York where the race question isn't as extreme as in many other places, I think that if one wants to go outside of that question, it's possible."

It is curious that Tchicai was never able /or was too secretive/ to divulge the methods as to how black musicians were to make believe that what their perception of what was or was not happening to them pertaining to the question of race was to be either avoided, sidestepped, or even casually ignored, so that 'business', as usual, could ensue. He also apparently suffered no inward indignity or feelings of discomfiture when, in making reference to the Jazz Composers' Guild (in response to a query), Tchicai said: "I thought it would be possible for us all to play together, playing the same music, and I thought that it would be possible for us to wind up with something fruitful for all of us. But it would end up with a childish masquerade that seemed to have nothing to do with any of us and least of all with music."

So here you have John Tchicai, the man that I had originally met in Helsinki, Finland. The person that both Shepp and I thought had so much of a feeling for the music and the sources of the music that we, individually and collectively, sought to persuade him to come to NY, which, subsequently, he did. And his coming to NY made it a better place, musically and otherwise. For John had

gifts; he was, in the beginning, sincere and probably REMAINED sincere. But he was extremely naive and failed miserably to see and thus understand exactly what the scene, musically and otherwise, was for those of us who LIVED here, who were trying to place work out there. I never felt that he fully understood that his being a Danish Negro /that was what he was called then/ made things considerably DIFFERENT for him. And John was quiet and quiet spoken; and THAT could make those that viewed some of us with askance tend to be a bit more comfortable with him. What is it that really happens INSIDE to people when someone attempts /with not too much effort, sometimes/ to convince them that in reality THEY are among the chosen few????

BILL DIXON
(1971)

FOR DUKE ELLINGTON

I got up yesterday morning. My car was out of gas. I stopped at Danny Frager's.
"did you hear the news, Bill?"
"What news?" I asked, my heart pumping a little more briskly, almost in anticipation of the answer.
"Duke died. It was on the seven o'clock news."

The Duke he referred to was Duke Ellington.
Edward Kennedy Ellington.
The inimitable, almost immortal Duke Ellington.
The suave, sophisticated, gracious elder Statesman of the Statesmen of music; the epitome of Black music; the savior and saving grace of American music.

In terms of his contribution to art (for music IS the summation of ALL art) there can never be a full measurement - his worth and value can never be fully comprehended and only one who has known the music through much listening, through in-person performances of the Duke and his magnificently Famous Orchestra can even approximate the fidelity and pragmatism of this music that once was described to me by a music student, at that time barely familiar with any Black Music, as being so 'ordinary'.

But it wasn't ALWAYS 'ordinary' and what IS 'ordinary'?

Could it be that what was construed the music's 'ordinariness' was really, in fact, the lack of time, perspective and motivation on the part of the annotator of the statement, to discern or even intellectually appeal to the insaneness of the idea that because something has endured and become a REAL part of our lives it is only utilitarian??

Ellington's music graced and emanated from virtually every cornice in the vast pavillion that allows music to emerge:
the concert hall;
the music hall;
the symphony orchestra;
the Hollywood film;
The commercial jingle;
the restaurant;
the restroom;
the airport lounge and corridor;
the elevator;
the cocktail lounge, and the list could go on and on.

That he was a giant is an understatement
that his work should be and is mentioned in the labyrinths that
also echo and pay homage to the names of
Picasso;

Stravinsky;

Armstrong and Casals;

is further testimony to its depth, breadth of achievement,
appeal and universal encompassment.

People who loved and knew music appreciated the Ellington sound
People who disliked music and who were ignorant of its
origins heard,
as daily fare, in the works of others,
Ellington, even though the essence was obviously missing.

In Europe this past summer I saw recordings of his music
in record shops that I'd never seen available in this country.

And I also remember when he was turned down for a Pulitzer
Prize - but...

Duke Ellington;

the man;

the musician;

the orchestra leader;

the pianist;

the composer;

the songwriter;

the lyricist;

the painter;

the titan inspirational force, to both significant
and insignificant musicians, was accorded much dignity,
given many honors and enjoyed by countless millions.

It is my hope that wherever he:

Billy Strayhorn, Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Blanton, Rex Stewart,
Ivie Anderson, Arthur Whetsol, Bubber Miley, Junior Raglan
and others, too countless to mention, are,
that they are collectively making music to further inspire
those others who are also resident there:

Albert Ayler, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, Bud Powell,
Lester Young, Hershel Evans, Billie Holliday...

We here, however, will indeed,

miss him madly.

BILL DIXON

"A man is an exceptional phenomenon,
occurring at long intervals,
perhaps by chance..."

Le Corbusier

WADE DAVIS: MUSICIAN

Last winter I made one of my now rather infrequent visits to
NY. It was a very cold night, and I was walking down Eighth
Street, hurrying to the subway. As I started to pass the Eighth
Street Playhouse /I was on the opposite side of the street/ I
heard a strong voice /echoing strongly because the streets were
deserted/ boom out from the doorway next to the Playhouse, which
I believe is or used to be a recording studio: "Hey, Bill Dixon."

I crossed the street and walked over, and there was Wade,
the fellow mentioned as being the bass player that had played
with Sunny Murray and Cecil at the old Cafe Roue. I hadn't seen
Wade, whose rather large head makes him rather resemble Franken-
stein, in quite awhile. In fact, the last time that I had seen
him had been when I had been directing the music program at the
University of the Streets /over on Seventh Street and Avenue A/
in 1967, the year before I left NY and went up to Vermont to
teach.

At that time, Wade had become a rather startling virtuoso
on the recorder. Much like Splivv /a rather existential drummer
who was around during the late fifties and early sixties in the
Village/ who knew all John Coltrane's solos and could play them
on the kazoo, Wade could /or can/ play all of the contemporary
things on the recorder. He had long since given up the bass,
but his love and dedication to the music had not diminished.

He was a rather strange person. I had once taken him off
the bandstand when he was high at the Roue; and he was the kind
of person that from time to time simply appeared--especially when
and where there was any of the music around. How he lived or
where, I never knew, and I don't think that anyone else knew ei-
ther.

Through the years, I had often had the feeling that there
was something unearthly and sort of uncanny and mystical about
Wade. And I had never known his last name. All that I had known
about him was that he loved the music /much like the rather legen-
dary Jeanne Phillips/, and that had things been different for
him, in terms of his mental stability, he could have mastered
any instrument that he chose to play; and that when he was lucid,
he exuded a plethora of information about many things. He seemed
almost brilliant, at times.

Anyway, I walked over to him. He was standing in the door-
way with a sort of heavy woolen cap down over his ears, and he
had on this sort of army overcoat. I asked him how he was doing,
and, ignoring this, he said to me: "Say, Bill, wasn't it you
that started all of that music at the Cafe Roue on Christopher
Street around 1958 or '59? I said yes that I had. He continued,
"Didn't you have Sunny Murray and them cats over there playing?"
I again nodded, and then he said: "Well, why do those cats that
are writing the history always try to leave you out of these
things?" I told him that, in my opinion, leaving out things that
had occurred was something that they could do; that to make a

contribution to art was difficult, required dedication, dignity, and a semblance of honor; and that most musicians were generally used as pawns by both the writers and the ersatz writers. I finished; there was a rather strong moment of silence. I said that I'd see him the next time /the next time being whatever time that would be/ and walked off.

I got to the corner of Eighth Street and Sixth Avenue, and I heard his voice boom out: "Good night, Bill Dixon." And as I turned to go down the subway stairs, I heard the incredible sound of the recorder playing a Coltrane solo out of the MEDITATIONS recording, I believe. This was the Wade that, according to Sunny Murray, was "just a minor person of the streets..." who has "...lost all interest in music."

(Winter 1975)

SENIOR CONCERT/

... 's Senior Concert evolved out of more of a series of talks (philosophical, practical, methodological, and aesthetical) that He and I had, rather than excursions into the actuality of the music itself. What I am trying to say is simply this: I don't imagine we talked about what was going to happen, how it was going to happen, and to whom this situation should be addressed as much as we talked about this being a final summation about his work here as an undergraduate student.

... 's aesthetics concerning the music and the performance of the music differ radically from mine; and it is, therefore, quite difficult for a teacher to place upon the student's concert what is therefore 'right' about the situation or 'wrong' for the identical situation. From the standpoint of the performance of the pieces of music, which could loosely be described as a small series of pieces, briefly sequenced together by such devices as an extensive use of formerly anti-music techniques (such as, extensive whistling and very overtly percussive activities) which could, from the standpoint of conjecture, be construed as something that would set up a rhythm, that would be in the context of the rhythmic formation of the piece, a-rhythmic. From the responses that the concert elicited from those listeners and viewers (it was a packed house), there is no doubt in my mind, and I believe in Henry's mind, that the concert was a success.

However, what are we really about in this place and in this time artistically? Are we to plumb the depths of our own imaginations and stretch the range of our philosophy, or are we only to make do? In other words, is it enough for a talent that has been easily discernable in other musical situations to stop at this point? Is that talent merely to elicit musical 'excitement' or can we, in the deeper regions of our own minds, expect that those with talent will want to always stretch the bounds of that talent? An unanswerable question.

It should be obvious that I am saying that, in my opinion, musically this concert could have been more in depth. And, at the same time that I am saying this, I am skirting the thin line that does exist between one man's aesthetic and another man's aesthetic.

(1977)

THOUGHTS

Presented to the Faculty at the University of Wisconsin at Madison,
February 17, 1972

It is obvious that a school of music cannot exist today without at least basic recognition of the fact that up to the present time all of the areas of study that are indigenous to music have largely centered around one aesthetic. It is also impossible to ignore the fact that three-quarters of the earth's population is non-white, and that, as an example, the notational approach to music is but one of the obviously many thousands of ways that music can be done. Therefore, once this is recognized and established as fact, one would assume that it should be a simple matter to restructure the teaching of the many diverse things that go into the teaching of music (its craft, history, its techniques, aesthetics and the various subtleties and nuances) by focusing in great detail (much as this detail has for many, many years been focused on the so-called European tradition of doing and teaching music and assessing the merits and values of the music, etc.) on the multiplicities and complexities of the divergent world approaches to music.

For example, how many of the present music faculty really do believe that the concept of rhythm and the so-called counting of this rhythm and its notation is the sole (and the only good way) of dealing with this phenomenon called rhythm--this tremendously neglected prime ingredient of music? For, obviously, there can be no melody without rhythm, and there can be no harmony without rhythm, much as there can be no existence without time or some kind of idea of time and how that elusive quality passes. And all pulses are not either in the category of thesis or anacrusis. In the masses of complexity that embroider the rhythms of the world's music so many of these beats or pulses occur in other places.

How many of you have ever heard of John William Coltrane? How many of you know what he does or did, since he is now physically dead? How many of you recognize what he does as music in the 'great'

tradition, that tradition that houses all that is good in music? How many of you believe that his music was only 'popular' and, therefore, too 'common' to be worthy of serious consideration as music? How many of you feel that the Bflat tenor saxophone is a serious musical instrument? How many of you as composers have ever written anything for that instrument? How many of you have even known a tenor saxophonist (personally) who played more than "Saturday night horse's ass tenor?"^{1/} How many of you believe and feel that the tenor saxophone should now, in the twentieth century, be an instrument in the symphony orchestra? How many of you believe that a composer who notates music is more able to represent himself compositionally than a composer who does his composing by playing his instrument? How many of you believe that Mozart's compositions are better or more fully realized than those of Thelonius Sphere Monk? Is Webern's music or his ideas relating to theory superior to George Russell's? Is Stravinsky more profound than Edward Kennedy Ellington? How many of you feel that the interpretative process of realizing music has more value than the first act of creation, which is doing and performing (in music) one's own work? How many of you feel that a composer should be able to play his instrument well? How many of you would allow a DMA candidate his degree if he couldn't sight read music at all? If he couldn't improvise at all? Suppose he knew nothing of the following musicians: Tyner, Dolphy, Mingus, Davis, Young? If he knew nothing of the following musicians: Weber, Corelli, Monteverdi, Britten? How would you define American music? How would you define European music? How would you define Black music (whatever THAT is, according to Sam Jones)?^{2/} How many of you have ever attended a performance of Black music? How many of you have ever known a Black musician? Who is Andre Watts? How many of you have recordings of Black music? As composers, I would assume that you are conversant with the works of other composers, having facsimiles of their scores, etc.; is it true that the American avant-garde composer Earle Brown is only passing for white? And what about Seiji Osawa and Zubin Mehta? Do you, any of you, know the difference between a morning raga and an evening raga and what is the technical significance of Japanese rice paper painting? What

really caused Beethoven's deafness; and did you know that a great many Black people believe that he WAS a mulatto, much as Alexander Hamilton, Pushkin, and Dumas were? And why is Dean Dixon not conducting on a regular basis in America? Is it true that he can't read music well and too much of his 'natural rhythm' shows when he conducts Wagner? Who is John Birks Gillespie? What does he play? How many of you believe that if a Black man speaks and cannot be understood it is because he is inarticulate? How would you define being articulate? How many of you have ever heard the Ebony Concerto? Who wrote it, and what were the reasons for its being written, and what were the subliminal sources for that inspiration? What do TJ Anderson, Hale Smith, Olly Wilson, William Grant Still, and Ulysses Kay have in common? What does Walter Gill Fuller do for a living? What did he do in the late forties? How many of you feel that conducting is a creative art? Do you feel it can be taught? How many of you improvise? How many of you have ever tried? How many of you think that you need talent to improvise? How many of you are endowed with the not necessarily musical gift of perfect identification of pitch? How many of you can do all of your composing away from the piano--for a single instrument, quartet, orchestra? Who is Melvin Van Peebles? Where did he make his reputation? Do you find what he does incoherent, anti-white, and violent? How many of you feel that music expresses the basic emotions of man--love, fear, hate, sadness, tenderness, hysteria, etc.? How many of you feel that music only expresses music? What is a twelve bar blues, and how does it differ from the Elizabethan song form? What is vocal music, and how does one achieve a good sound on the piano? Is Horowitz a better technician than Taylor? Who expresses, of the two, more love in his music, more hate, more feeling; who is more cerebral? Should student composers be required to write student symphonies? If yes, why? Has Birgit Nillson a better voice than Betty Carter? Do Shirley Verrette or Grace Bumbry sing Black music? What are the origins of the ballet? Who was Mary Wigman? Who is Merce Cunningham? What was Katherine Dunham's and Pearl Primus' first vocation? Where is Tally Beatty now? And what are the "cultural needs of a contemporary society";^{3/} and, regarding music his-

tory and literature, WHOSE music history and WHOSE literature are we concerned with; WHOSE music theory and composition are we talking about? What music organizations, WHAT area of applied music, and what KIND of music and education and for WHOM? And if, as contained in the Statement of Philosophy,^{4/} the university music curriculum has enlarged on the "limited medieval concept of music, as related to a liberal arts curriculum" by greatly expanding it to, in the twentieth century, "encompass the threefold professional responsibility of training the composer, the performer, and the listener," how do you feel it has worked; and do you feel, in the light of things I've mentioned, it has been even remotely successful? And if it is true that performance is the 'door' through which all potential music historians, theoreticians, composers, and performers must enter the field of music is there a 'for white only' sign on that door? And if you are indeed aware that "changing patterns in contemporary society show an increasing interest in and need for cultural experiences," how do you account for the quite visible and audible foot dragging in the implementation of some of these changing patterns in the teaching of music in the contemporary university? Or are these words only words that, like muzak, serve only to make sure that we don't hear the REAL sound in the room? How do you feel that if it is believed by the School that "part of its function is to train and equip students to take an active role in the cultural life of their society..." this affects the non-white students at the University?

A major university which houses a school of music must house a major school of music. And a major school of music must, today, be in the vanguard of all that relates to music in the areas of teaching, research, scholarly pursuits, physical plant, technology, and expanding philosophy. To help close the gap that has existed for minority group people, especially Blacks, an Institute of Black Music Studies should be set up that, I feel, would offer to students and other interested teachers the knowledge, experience, and expertise of those musicians (composers, etc.), scholars, and research people who are able to do that very important job of teaching. This Institute would have a complete library (books, periodicals, record-

dings, manuscripts, scores, etc.); it would need, also, the necessary equipment (tape recorders, space, etc.), much as would any other Institute. A student would be able to major in Black Music, which in this Institute would be taught in strong alliance with its sister (or brother) arts--the dance, poetry, literature, painting and sculpture. Aesthetics (or the commonly referred to Black Experience) would play a strong part in these studies. The form and tenets of white criticism do not always apply, even in the technical sense, to the arts of many non-white peoples of the world. Adequate faculty would obviously be necessary as it is quite evident that the present set-up of the University precludes the implementation of this Institute with the present faculty only. At least fifteen (15) additional faculty would be needed. And, in the beginning, it would be highly desirable and practicable to have black faculty for reasons which can be gone into in more detail at a later time. The Institute would have a Director who would be responsible for the hiring of this faculty. Faculty slots would include the following: two composers, five instrumental instructors (i.e., in percussion, brass, reeds, piano, and strings), one dancer-choreographer, one poet, one writer, one painter, one sculptor, one historian, one filmmaker, and one artist-in-residence.^{5/} The Institute would work on a five-year plan and would outline its goals on a yearly basis. Students could major or minor (semantically the term 'split major' would be preferred) in areas of: performance, preformance-composition, research, or history. Ideally, cross interaction involving courses with the School of Music and the Institute (the Institute being a part of the School of Music) and were musicology to be a separate department within it also, would take place.

It seems to me that this venture could be a first giant step towards the realization of a more contemporary and meaningful and visable effort in the way of teaching about music and teaching music. Whether it is realized or not, ALL students of music have been dealt severe blows by the overtly monolithic ways and attitudes involved in the teaching of music from the currently accepted one point of view.

It is also not inconceivable that following this experiment,

other Institutes of Music (for Latin American music, American Indian music, etc.) could be set up. At this time in history we shouldn't hedge or worry about possible duplication or redundancies.

Endnotes

- 1/ This expression simply indicates that the person doesn't play too well.
- 2/ This was explained in the detail that was necessary to make the point in a faculty meeting.
- 3/ DIRECTIONS FOR GROWTH OF THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC: 1964-74, A Self-study Report.
- 4/ See page four of the above document.
- 5/ This position would rotate in the arts, one year a painter, the next a musician, the next a poet, etc., not necessarily in that order. The artist-in-residence would only do his work and would not be required to teach. He could lecture if he (or she) felt like it.

"Black intellectuals must at all costs avoid slavish borrowings or uncritical importations of ideologies and strategies from other continents or cultures, from other times, or even from other ethnic groups in the United States. The Afro-American experience is unique, and the irrevocable imperative of cultural self-definition demands that it be treated as such."^{1/}

"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function,... One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise."^{2/}

^{1/} THE CRISIS OF THE NEGRO INTELLECTUAL, a Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership, by Harold Cruse, Professor of History and Afro-American Studies, University of Michigan.

^{2/} F. Scott Fitzgerald

With reference to the 'discussions' that are taking place between the members of the Music Division and the members of the Black Music Division, it would now seem pertinent to air and make some kind of observation about the kinds of things that appear to be dominating the tone of the 'discussions', since there continues to be an air of absolute defensiveness that generally pervades most of the discussion that is almost entirely monopolized by members of the Music Division and the student representatives of that Division, who, as it may also be observed, seemed to almost wholeheartedly echo the identical sentiments of their teachers in that Division with respect to the 'joy' and 'magic' (rather curious terms to be ascribed to the idea of college teaching of any subject) of their both taking of courses and the teaching of them. It should also be noted that no one who has studied extensively in the Black Music Division (no student) has been extended an invitation to attend any of these meetings by the Music Division Secretary (who also, curiously enough, has been 'elected', selected /you name it/ to chair the meetings and by whom??); and since, of recent date, two seniors (one from Music) have presented Senior concerts (Eric Zinman /as a Black Music Major/ and Andrew Dillon /as a Music Major/), it wouldn't seem entirely out of place to have asked them to both attend the meetings to also offer their views of what, how, and to what degree they have been taught music during their four year stays at the college--especially, since one of them has already been accepted for graduate work at the New England Conservatory (Zinman).

Much as Arthur Brooks (Black Music Division) at the last 'meeting' has tried to present what might be thought of as a general prerequisite for the talks on curriculum (ideas concerning what it is that people teach /how and why/, in addition to what might be their expectations, in further addition to them responding to whether they might feel that there is no other way to improve upon the teaching of music at the college), it would seem that instead of the constant, repetitious cant about (i) how things are done at Bennington; (ii) this is the Bennington way of doing things; (iii) the specialness of the Bennington students (which, after a while, makes one just a bit

curious as to why so much time should be spent defending what is done rather than letting /as it does most eloquently/ one view or hear any of the works that are done, where one can immediately be made aware that there is, indeed, a 'Bennington way' of both learning and presenting what has been theoretically within the purview of the listener /in the instance of music/, there would be an attempt to let the work, etc. speak for itself.

It also doesn't seem to me that trying to spark a conversation about what might just be the EXPECTATION of a Bennington student who has made the indication of expecting to MAJOR in the subject (music) can at all be even remotely related to treachery or being negative. Why then the resistance to HONEST dialogue, since honest dialogue would certainly include those things that would have to be both wrong with the place (the inadequacies, probably other goals) that while not possibly attainable at this time might also be composed of those things and ideas that one might feel would certainly aid in the teaching and learning and thus would auger well for the future of the college in terms of an elevation of the program and a more forward looking attitude concerning the future. It is an ancient and outmoded idea that at Bennington the acme of teaching of the subject has not only been attained by those in the Music Division, but even worse, that there is no way (if that is the case) that it cannot only be improved upon but that one cannot even suggest it. Not refuting this, it obviously either affects preservation or protection of ideals or philosophies that serve to support or reinforce rather thoroughly entrenched ideas that music conceived and performed from the standpoint of Western formal concert philosophies (white, if you will) should always and unreservedly serve as the theoretical and philosophical modus operandi for all music study (at this place) with the result that any other idea or aspect of music and how it is done or taught (especially by Black Americans) can, when it might be considered convenient, sometimes serve as some sort of obscure, exotic phenomenon. Witness the recent Senior concert of a music major, where students, in the performance of what THEY might have considered to be from an 'improvisational' standpoint, showed only their more superficial and exotic awareness, since what they played, in terms

of what the music (the so-called 'freedom' movement, that music that had as its genesis the works out of the sixties as pioneered by Taylor, Coleman, Coltrane, Ayler, etc.) only touched upon and was first tried (through performances by the mentioned artists) and then ABANDONED when they had served their artistic and social purposes of providing the artist and the audiences for the music with the relevant information that was necessary--that this was PART of a beginning of INITIAL thinking about the usage of some musical materials. But how would those 'students' know (all Music Majors, by the nature of the content of their submitted Confirmation of Plans) since they have all seen fit to consciously avoid any serious or advanced study of the music (Black Music) and have been supported and encouraged by the Music Division in this choice by the people who could teach them? And some of these people were a PART of that music that they seek to mischievously attempt 'copying'. And this idea exists simply because in the Black Music Division, the music has systematically been taught as both a discipline and an art--not something that is easily attainable by silly flirtations. One has to work at it. And whether one wants to acknowledge it or not (despite arguments to the contrary and despite the hue and cry about their being no 'conservatory' or 'factories' on the premises), there has been a concentrated effort to inculcate students of music here that the REAL direction that is important for the study in music has and continues to lie within the domain of the Music Division and its methodological concerns regarding the 'teaching' of it. And despite denials to the contrary, counseling to support this objective has been a major launching pad for this; because if this is not the case, why would a student bassist-composer (by his written reports continuing to be plagued with 'rhythmic' problems) assiduously avoid a PRINCIPAL performance area (the Ensemble situation), where, certainly, some of those 'problems' MIGHT be successfully addressed? Especially in light of the fact, that this student is certainly no stranger to the information that in this music some of the principal practitioners and INNOVATORS on his instrument have been (and are) resident within the annals (as performers) of this area of music. Why hasn't there at least been musical CURIOSITY on the part of the preponderance of

of students studying music here in the Music Division (the cellists, the flutists, the pianists, the violinists) to EVEN INVESTIGATE a study of this music? Isn't it rather strange that being three hours from Boston and four and a half hours from New York, where students resident here spend a considerable amount of time when not in school, where the sound and activity of Black Music Expression is certainly not denied to them, and where they have to hear certain things and be aware of certain people and what these people do (whether they want to or not) hasn't at all prompted an iota of these students' musical curiosities regarding a legitimate study of the music here? For the 'serious' music STUDENT, it would seem that activities (as abovementioned) emanating from places where they visit would certainly serve as some sort of stimulant to either observe or make some kind of effort to find out what is indigenous to the study of the music, especially as THAT relates to performance; because when one performs, one's audience isn't at all concerned with the nature of the performer's studies; all they know is whether you are performing strongly and with confidence and whether you are in charge of your material. You either play or you cannot. That is the way it is OUTSIDE of Bennington College. And if students aren't, in some way, counseled to avoid a certain kind of study that could, at most, only make them aware of their musicality or lack of it, why is it that the preponderance of students attending the college that choose to study in the Music Division make believe that there is no music of substance, worthy of study, that has been produced by Ellington, Taylor, Coltrane; and there is a rather formidable list of musician-composers in this music? No matter how an even uninterested observer would choose to view it, there is a rather curious and political ring to this--much as people choose to get their friends (or colleagues that will probably lobby for their interests) 'elected' to committees. And of course even that is denied.

In light of both the seriousness and sadness of this and especially since one has to become suspect when after three, one hour 'meetings' there is the attempt to assure that there is 'progress' (what kind and for whose benefit) being made, it would seem that rather than continue with what everyone knows is no more than the

literal staging of a charade (that for all intents and purposes is expected to be digested by the community as otherwise), and rather than also to even moderately expect those with previous experiences to pander to the tastes of those who would only have them unthinkingly and quietly acquiesce to the majority that the time has come to place the ENTIRE matter in the hands of the students--all of the students, since no one knows when in their careers they might also consider the study of music as something to engage in. In this instance, there could be a referendum where a questionnaire could be designed with respect to both the school's and their (student) expectation pertaining to the study of music at the college. Of course there is always a danger present when one has to ASK, simply because one lacks the courage to make the necessary changes oneself (witness the college and university scene of the sixties because of a lack of leadership by the colleges themselves and what happened when the students 'took over', and it could be said that the identical thing is happening now, in a more serious vein in those same colleges and universities, with regard to South Africa). But what is one to do when those who should know only continue to attempt a holding back of the hands of progress?

Whether one wants to believe otherwise, the truth of it is that the 'discussion' in these 'meetings' (while not even remotely /with rare instances/ daring to touch on the subject, with the strategic defense of the Music Division's status quo attitude about teaching /from its often touted point of view relating to how it is done at Bennington College/), the general tone in the room is solidly matrixed to fear, boredom, and laced with a kind of dominance in terms of who does the talking by the as usual (they have done the talking since I've been here) few. And they say the identical things, and it should be obvious by now to all that they will continue to say the identical things forever. Because that is either what they believe, have been led to believe, or because there appears to be little necessity on their part to affect any other kind of thinking on the subject. In that instance, the idea that continued 'meetings' will do anything except occasionally raise the 'tension' in the room is also something that doesn't exist. Not for one minute does anyone

in the Music Division DISAGREE with anyone else in that Division, but there is almost a TACIT UNDERSTANDING among them that they will (as a group) disagree in principle with anything that is brought up by the members of the Black Music Division--those members that choose to speak in a public setting, that is. And while at this stage, this is no longer a curious phenomenon it hasn't ceased to be an extremely annoying one. How can one discuss anything if the preponderance of members witness to the discussion have already agreed in OTHER MEETINGS, perhaps where the strategies have been already worked out to manipulate and tether the 'meeting' in the room where ALL are present?

In conclusion, I think that the following should be taken into consideration. First, the idea of revamping MUSIC I to merely 'accommodate' any of the disciplines of the Black Music Division, unless carefully orchestrated or naturally included as a part of a new, more pointed music curriculum would literally serve no purpose. If students in the past have, for whatever reasons, found no need or have carefully avoided contact with courses emanating out of the Black Music Division, unless such courses were REQUIRED or unless there was a more BROAD ATTEMPT on the part of both the College and the Admissions Office (something that cannot at all be even remotely counted upon) to go out and attract students that would, by dint of background and interests, be as INTERESTED in the idea of Black Music study as present students enrolled are as interested in, for want of a better name, 'white' music study, little advantage for either the students, the department (except for cosmetic public relations ideas) or Black Music Division teachers can be expected to be forthcoming. The same students, given the opportunity or 'counseled', will continue to opt for the identical courses that they have taken in an abundance in the past in the regular Music Division. And since for the beginner, two fourteen week terms of as serious a study as music is short enough, I agree when it is argued that that period shouldn't be shortened. I also don't see the need to alter the nature of anyone's teaching. I do see the penultimate, however, of altering their PERCEPTION of what others teach and how they go about it. In that instance, there would be less intellectual 'shooting from the hip'. I'm making special reference to the idea and fact of

improvisation. As a subject, as an art form, I would insist that it IS composition (let's see just how convincingly to the world one can deny the works of Ellington, Taylor, Armstrong, Hawkins, Coleman, Coltrane /and the formidable list of Black artists who have made this word and this music a household item goes on/ are NOT compositions); and as an art form it is either learned, performed, or taught in a vacuum. Everything else that relates to other areas of the musical arts is also a part of it. I don't like the 'isolationist' attitude, especially by the tone that is adopted to its theoretical position in a theoretical curriculum. In light of this, it is also my feeling that it is easier, and less taxing, and less individually time consuming (if that is a real factor) for a beginning student (beginning music in college) to come to terms with learning both how to read and write conventional musical notation without KNOWING what it is, what the things will sound like, etc. than it is for a beginning student to BEGIN improvisation. But all students who come to Bennington College are not absolutely beginners. The student representative, to support his endorsement of Music Division policies, already, to some degree, had studied the guitar BEFORE he came to Bennington College. This, however, is not even to remotely suggest that a student could not begin an instrument or the approach to improvisation without previous study. On the contrary, some of us consider it rather imperative that the student start both the more 'formal' studies on the instrument in CONJUNCTION with the more 'exploratory' studies that may be ascribed as those belonging to improvisation. Much like learning to talk, one doesn't collect an entire vocabulary before one attempts to speak. It is generally done simultaneously, much as foreign students begin their studies of English.

In line with this, I would strongly suggest that if a more inclusive curriculum (note, I have said IF) is to be desired and if the thinking is serious about this theoretical 'merger' then it is extremely difficult to skirt the issue of a more formal outline and expectation of students (especially those desirous of majoring) in the Division. In that instance, it doesn't seem unrealistic or unreasonable (to me) to then expect that within the framework that I've previously outlined* that out of a possible twenty-two quarters of

their music coursework as majors, eight of those quarters would be required during their tenure of four years at the college, and then one could then affect a 'curriculum' that could more adequately reflect and respect the disciplines that would have been the separate but now combine disciplines of the two Divisions. It is always risky business having students select their courses based on what they theoretically want to study and with whom they want to affect these studies. Were the two Divisions to continue being separate (and the more that one views this and hears 'arguments' advanced against it that would be be another story resolvable in another way) there also seems to be scant evidence or merit attached to the 'merging' of the two that would certainly auger well for the Black Music Division aesthetic. And the conversations (or lack of them from the majority of the members of the Music Division) would seem also to reinforce that there has been little real creative thinking about the outcome of this issue as that outcome would benefit the members of the Black Music Division. I'm not making reference to those members (past or present) of the Black Music Division who may have, by their acquiescence, given the impression that the 'merger' doesn't offend or give indications of 'hampering' them in their 'teaching'.

Be that as it may and after a further examination of the eight quarters that I have suggested be included in the programs of prospective majors, I have come to the conclusion that if carried out properly and supervised (looked at carefully when plans are submitted and adequate counseling provided by all faculty), if someone wants that to work and works at it, that it can work. I can also see it as providing a better teaching platform for the Music Faculty and a more rounded and musically sound program for students--even for those for whom the quest (music study) would only be a modest or slightly inquisitive one. Much as in Dance there are things required, in Art there are things required, in the Black Music Division there were things required; and all these related to the better development of the student, no matter how 'serious' the student was about the study.

As a final note, as Arthur Brooks also attempted to say at the last session, there is still the idea of budget, space considerations, who tells whom to do what, when and how, etc., to be taken into consideration. It was also my understanding that having the Dean of

Studies and the Dean of Faculty present in the room would have theoretically provided a more constructive and creative atmosphere for this entire affair. At each of these meetings, however, each of the Deans has managed to affect an even lower 'profile' than at the previous one. And that only naturally (and predictably) augers for the maintenance of the status quo. I would like to see both Deans take a more active role, thus due to their theoretical impartiality, ensuring an unbiased platform for creative and constructive ideas that might be expressed in the room.

In conclusion, I can only say what I did at the outset; if the 'discussions' are to continue in the same tired, stagnant, and rhetorical fashion, I would then like to put a proposal on the floor that would then place the entire matter before the students of the College within the form of a referendum. If, as some of the Music Division faculty have both suggested and said that, they are here to 'serve the students' then it would only seem fitting that these same students should tell them what and how to serve. Barring this, I would like this document to be read as it was written, with sincerity of purpose and with the idea that, it is my feeling, that it or some kind of adoption or moderation of it can affect something meaningful for everyone. And much as one Music Division faculty member, when queried by Arthur Brooks as to the what and how of teaching, passionately said, "I also love my work."

Respectfully submitted,

BILL DIXON
28 April 1985

- (A) PERFORMANCE
- (B) COMPOSITION (notational and otherwise)
- (C) INTRODUCTION TO BLACK MUSIC & BLACK MUSIC II
- (D) OTHER

MUSIC I
MUSIC II (musical composition)

IMPROVISATION I*
IMPROVISATION II* (instrumental musical composition and performance)

KEYBOARD HARMONY I
KEYBOARD HARMONY II (musical grammar) [related to ear training]

ENSEMBLE I**
ENSEMBLE II** (performance units)

*Related to MUSIC I & II; serves to facilitate the learning of creating music by performance.

(A) and (B) are the two disciplines that can be considered principal to the nature of the study of music here. Everything else either relates directly to them or allows them to exist.

(C) The Black Music Division permits the non-musician to study in the Division by the inclusion of these courses in its curriculum. These two courses are also recommended for musicians with little or no background in the subject.

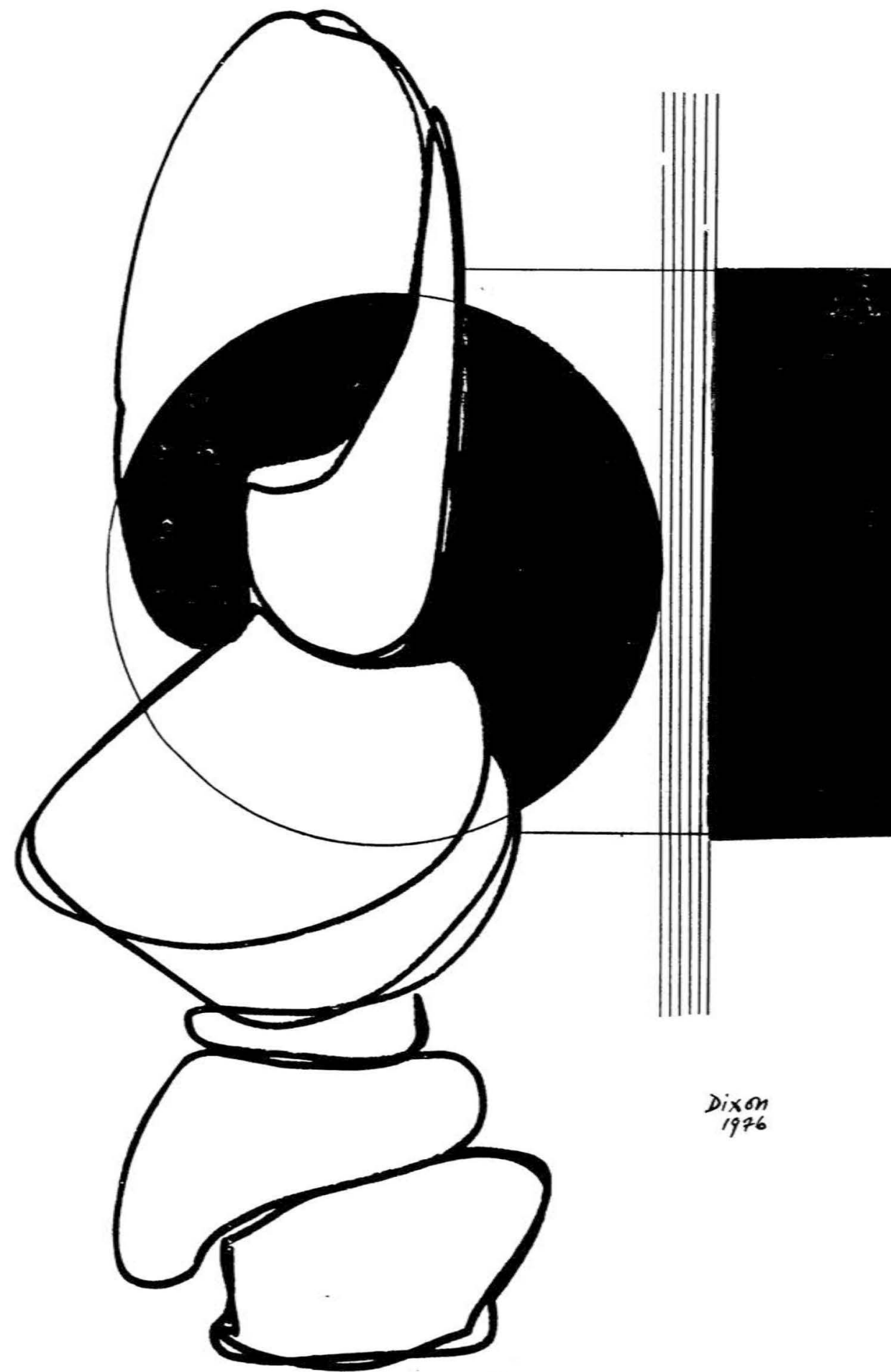
(D) Instrumental study (voice included); rhythmic [percussion**] studies; ear training.

It is not inconceivable that a MUSIC MAJOR would have had course work (studies) where credit could be conferred in:

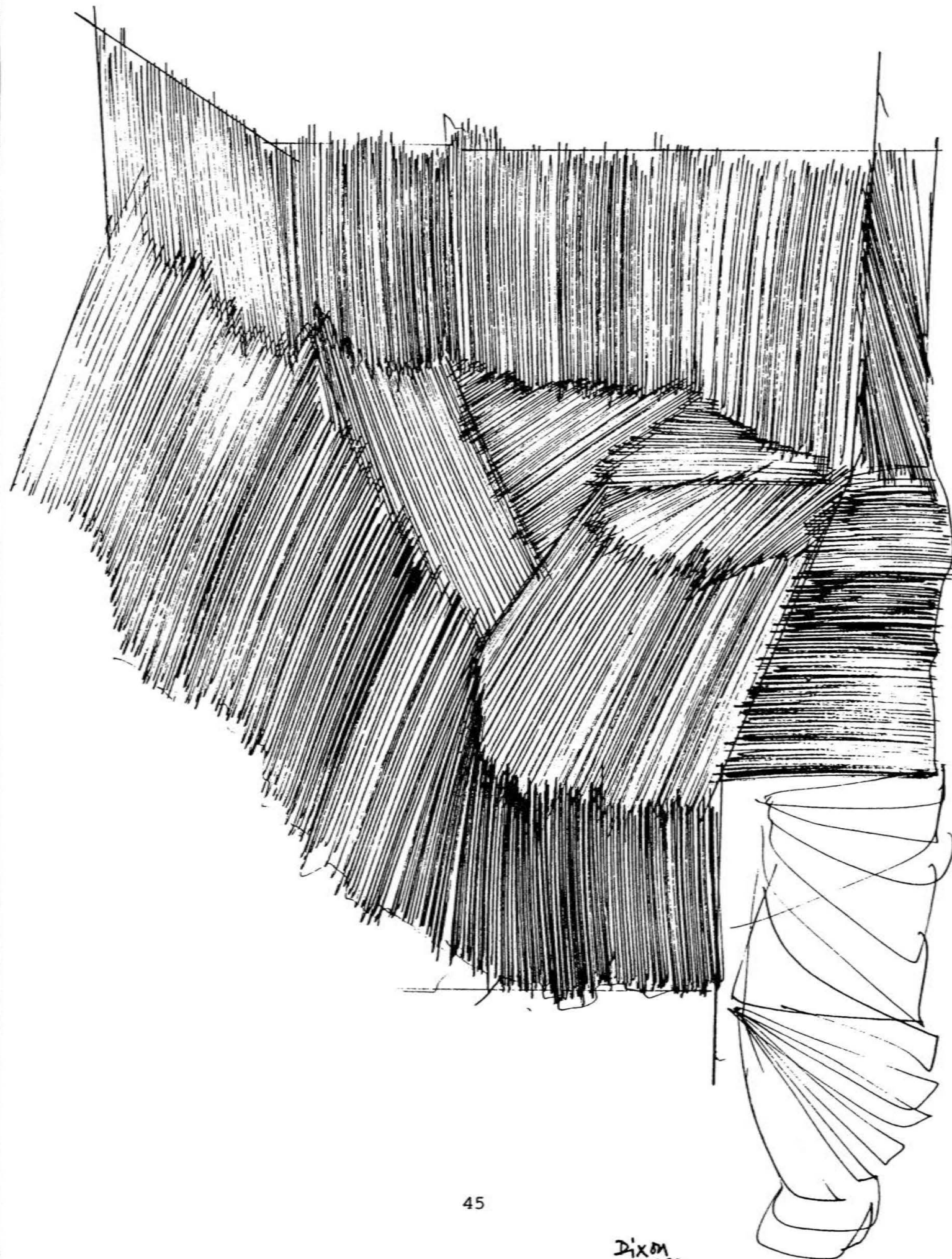
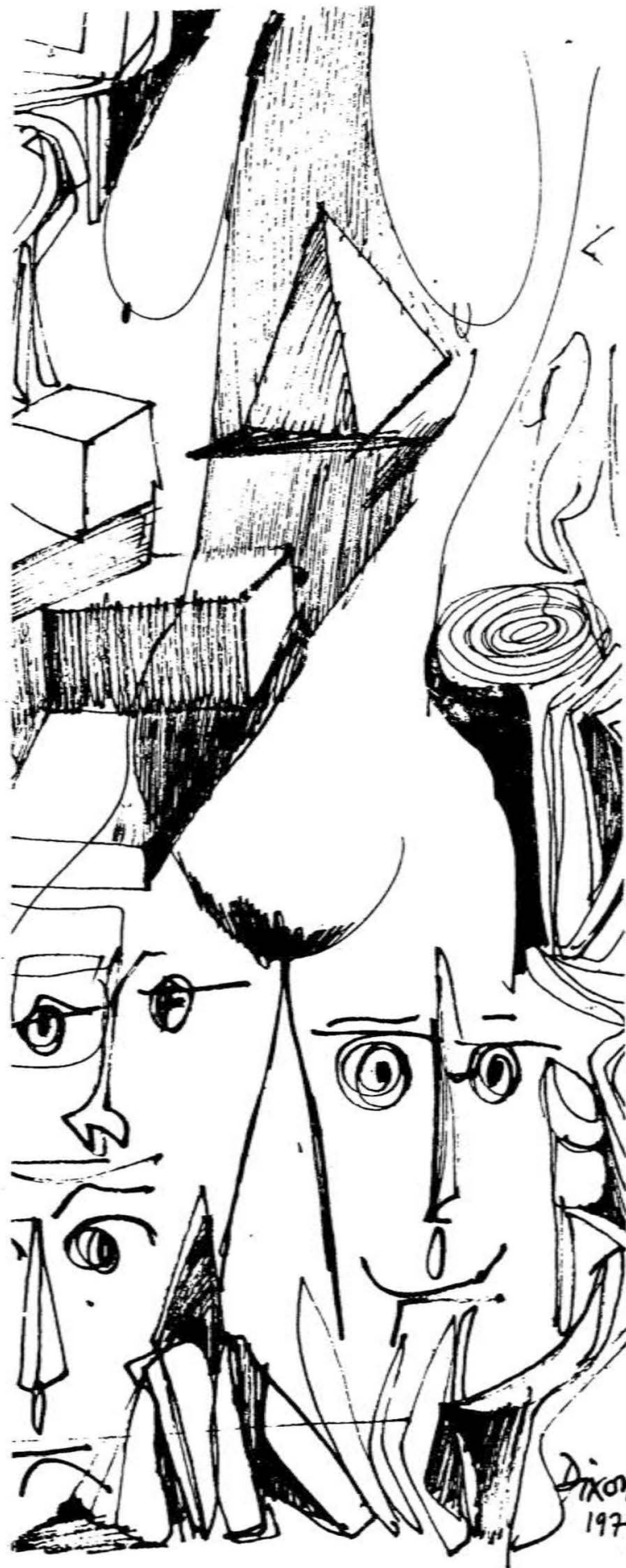
(FOR THE COMPOSITION MAJOR): MUSIC I, II; KEYBOARD HARMONY I, II; and INTRODUCTION TO BLACK MUSIC and BLACK MUSIC II. (totaling 8 quarters if Improvisation II were to be taken)

(FOR THE PERFORMANCE MAJOR): ENSEMBLE I, II, III would be included.

(FOR THE MAJOR IN COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE): Some combination of the above. It should be understood that the above only intends to serve as some kind of model. The student (by the time of the Tentative Plan submission) should have had: MUSIC I; KEYBOARD HARMONY I; IMPROVISATION I; INTRODUCTION TO BLACK MUSIC in some kind of sequential order.



Dixon
1976



"THIS////is OUR Strategy"

a composition for ensemble/voices/
pre-recorded tape/alto saxophone solo/
six people that move and chorus

"Intelligence and passion; there is no art
without emotion, no emotion without passion."

Le Corbusier

If I so chose, I could designate this second part of my long work LETTERS TO MYSELF FROM OTHERS AND TO OTHERS as Part II of that work. In so doing, however, I would place an unnecessary burden upon the listener who was not able to hear the first portion which was performed here last year. I would rather, therefore, have the listener approach the music with as little reference to LETTERS... (the title that is) as is humanly possible. In that case, and assuming that my advice has been taken, I can describe the piece as simply being a rather long work for 12 instruments, subdivided into several parts; the parts themselves subdividing themselves into various other textures, those textures sometimes being arrived at by the use of singular voices (instruments), groups, lines, rhythmic permutations, and pragmatic silence. The wedge that provides the necessary bloodline for this work is the apportionment of considerable strata of rhythmically organized sound layers, periodically separated by densely textured vertical interruption.

The derivation of this work has been its (and my) acknowledgement, consideration, and recognition of systems--oral and notational, compositional and improvisational. In my opinion, one does not and need not turn one's back on tradition or refute it. At the same time, one doesn't have to revel in tradition. One can BE; simply because until one dies, one IS. I AM and you ARE. If we are to survive, all we have to do is insist to ourselves (only then will others hear) that not only is it POSSIBLE--it is a must.

Program Note (1974)

There is always a pleasure involved in the creation of a new work/so many things have to fall into order/hopefully they will fall into a new order/one that you, the composer, will not have allowed yourself to have fallen into previously. There is also much work, time and soul searching concomitant with that pain, the pain of revealing to others what it is that you are in almost fruitless pursuit of. [The whippet and the mechanical rabbit/a man in hopeless pursuit of his behind or beginning?]. What does it all mean or why should it mean anything? Music in the final analysis only expresses music. It is the listener that provides the other things that are supposed to make listening to something an absolute possibility for them. Concerns: rhythm/time: its passage, or for so many, its lack of passage/harmony, that amorphous body of verticality that supposedly is the citadel of western music and then/ the lever of all; the totem pole of life, the structural pillar of all: RHYTHM/that which we, in our almost pseudo-sophisticated day to day existence seem to sneer at. Dance-music/programmatically-music/absolute music.

The sun comes out and then there are those
everpresent clouds. The Indians were right.

The sound of the saxophone/the vocal stridency of the alto flute cresting to what is not 'right' for its register according to Piston. The non-flexibility of the trombone/according to the tenets of Forsythe; but didn't Louis say "all music's gotta be folk music 'cause [he] hadn't heard no horse sing no song"? The politics of action. We are what we are/we can be no more and can, in a sense, be no less/although there are those among us that try.

So this piece is about all the things that you, the listener, will choose to bring to it. If the noise strikes your fancy/then be my guest/if the idea that there is something there that is indeed of substance and compelling; something that will make you both think and feel, then we will have touched fingers in the beginnings of a hand clasp. I have not done this piece for you. I have done it for myself as I have all of my work. I could not have done this particular work without the help, patience, anger/at times/ and devotion of all of the players: those that play the instruments in the work and those that help me play my ideas verbally to them/either by shouting; cursing; expounding on the unexpoundable and sometimes even letting the tears of both rage and frustration loose. The last ten years have been incredible: the last two have been almost indescribable.

BILL DIXON / 1976

"But there are no 'galleries' for Black music, and, unfortunately, too many of the reasonably gifted practitioners of the music are doing too many things that alter and affect the credibility of the music in terms of what they are doing and what they are saying about the music--too much pseudo-vaudeville, a preponderance of phoney theatrics, excessive posturing, and not enough sincerity or humility. There doesn't seem to be the urgency, the necessity (the terrible necessity that has always been the important reason for doing anything in any art) resident in their works."

"Black music, a term that still causes consternation among those that deny that there is such a thing, also requires the more than facile participation of the listener. It is said that music has no 'color', but it is easily and sometimes conveniently forgotten that white music, or music generally done by whites (coming out of a white aesthetic or experience), has been so firmly established and implanted by the literary elongation of the tradition of that music that it needs no further clarification or articulation concerning its pedigree. We know about that music. The idea of Black music, on the other hand, is a different affair. Denied tenantry to white music (a talk with Sanford Allen, recently resigned black violinist with the New York Philharmonic, might be informative), the black musician/composer has been forced and relegated solely to the domains of his own music and the nature of that kind of inflection or way of hearing and doing things musical. (I am not especially voicing this as a dilemma; but for those people who are constantly being 'concerned' about the fact that the innovators in the music being black, this should give them some general information.) Sometimes things that are 'known' are not really 'known' until they are openly stated."

"Jazz music (that socially offensive term, quite possibly coined and designed to limit the expressive qualities and developmental curve of the music) now, by most self-respecting musicians (black), simply called Black music, has, in the past few years, found its way into the classrooms (it was always in the dorms) of the college and the university. And, at first, it wasn't a totally unwelcome element (in terms of being an addition to various kinds of new curricula) as long as it wasn't and didn't take itself 'seriously'--seriously in terms of it being a serious course of study, much as any music. As long as this music was entertainment (because all music entertains) and served to make the listener 'feel good' (in connection with the idea that with this music the listener didn't have to THINK), jazz (NOT Black music) posed no threat, was easy to discuss and digest, and just as easy to forget in terms of the large grants for things cultural (the ballet, the symphony, the opera, the theatre, the visual arts, and even modern dance). But once the music compelled the listener to think and question, concerning what it was and how it was done, and who was doing it and for whom it was being done (took away the dancing shoes) the 'fun' of jazz /Black music/ was gone. It, consequently, became 'too serious' (what does that mean?), was consi-

dered 'pretentious', lost its formerly revered 'charm' and 'simplicity' (I would imagine that a painting by Motherwell would exude less 'charm' and 'simplicity' than one by Grandma Moses); and its practitioners, who in days of yore only wanted to 'swing', now became versed in the metaphor of their musical language, so that they, indeed, did know what it was that they did, so they didn't have to be told who they were or how well they were doing, what they did or who among them was really doing it. Subsequently, they became (to the 'collectors' of the music) a raucous bunch of undesirable 'angry revolutionaries'. These musicians were no longer playing jazz (and, indeed, THAT was true). According to their detractors, they weren't even playing music. Theirs was a savage representation of 'self-indulgence' that only showed off their lack of 'technique' (in the singular, of course); and their pieces of 'music' (which went on 'too long' [what is the correct length for a piece of music??]) also revealed their lack of knowledge concerning 'form'. Obviously, these musicians were not 'communicating', although the musicians seemed to hear and understand each other."

"But in spite of the attacks and the more strongly mounted adversary position, the music continued. And the music continues. And people are born and people die. The cycle goes on."

"The artist innovates; the listener, hopefully, extrapolates. Art, as history has shown, does not necessarily please or displease; so it is more than just unfortunate that so many musicians are finding it necessary to either totally corrupt their art for the moguls (hoping to 'get somewhere') or feverishly pander to questionable tastes of what is in vogue."

Excerpts from notes to NIGHTCALLER,
a recording by Arthur Brooks

Liner note by Bill Dixon (1977)

Notes on SUMMERDANCE

In the summer of 1971 before I left /late that August/ for a year's stay at the University of Wisconsin, dancer-choreographer Judith Dunn and I worked rather extensively on a long work for musicians and dancers called SUMMERDANCE. The title reflected that the work was done in the summer, and it was a dance. It was tremendously beautiful that summer, with hot, brightly sunlit days being spelled by darkly warm /with scattered breezes/ nights.

We, the musicians and dancers, would work a large portion of the day, commencing at about one in the afternoon. This allowed those who wanted to sleep late and others to get an early crack at their practice. We would take short breaks and work until four or five in the afternoon. After dinner, there would sometimes be conversation that generally centered around the work of the day. This talk was naturally fraught with the necessary criticism and suggestions that would make the approach to the next day's excursion one steeped with details more definitively revealed.

Cheryl Neiderman (now Lilienstein) and Megan Bierman we had met and taught our first year as teachers in the Dance Division. Both were freshmen and had taken technique classes that Judith taught. Cheryl, at the time a rather 'bouncy' free spirit sort, worked hard, had a strong sense of the oblique nature of time (as it was resident in Judith's work) and possessed the kind of inquisitiveness that has the mark of both the individual and the collective person able to seriously and creatively come to terms with the work of someone else. Megan, then slender and wiry, could always be counted upon as smiling and cheerful and, in terms of movement, was a rather 'long' person, a 'quick' line dancer. She was quite gifted with a kind of ebullient quality that was extremely infectious. Once when I had to deliver a lecture at Williams College, she drove me down there in a car that had only second and fourth gear. And both of these gears seemed to work when they, themselves, made the decision. It was raining that night; Megan, as usual, drove like a female Jackie Stewart. When the lecture was over and I was safely back at Bennington getting ready to retire for the night, I realized that, indeed, there was a God, because the way that woman drove, like a dancer in fervent pursuit of the long corruscating leap that has as its apex the cousin to the World Trade Center, there had to be someone watching over both of us.

Erika Bro, also a student at the college (I believe that she was a sophomore or junior when we got here), I had seen develop from a rather accident prone type (Erika could hurt herself pouring a cup of tea, so it then seemed to me) to a dancer of strong quality who was also quite comfortable being a musician. She also had sensitive affinity for the aesthetic, movement quality, and methodology that Judith was then engaged in. Barbara Ensley, a person I had known from New York, a beautiful dancer in the full

academic sense of the term, who had been both a serious student and devoted friend of Judith's when she was teaching in New York, was also one of the crew. Barbara was also later to teach briefly at the college. I'm writing so fast, trying to recall things that appear to have been from a time so long ago that I almost forgot that Richard Kerry was then resident designer at Bennington College and a member of the Dance and Drama faculty; and he was also the designer for the piece.

The musicians, with the exception of Steve Horenstein (who was utilized in this work on bass clarinet and who was then studying with me and also working as my assistant) and percussionist David Moss, Steve's old college friend whom he had encouraged to leave a farm in Virginia where he had been 'woodshedding' to come to Bennington to work and study with me, were all from New York. Gene Citronbaum, a classical trumpet player, I had known since 1965 when he had been a student at Julliard. Lawrence Cook, another percussionist, I had known from the time he had started to work seriously as a musician (he had been a painter previously); and to some degree, he had been involved with the large orchestra I'd had in New York that had been formed out of the situation created out of the University of the Streets in 1967. Scott Guyon, a young, sometimes brash, energetic sort, at the time, was attending Hampshire College and had arranged to do his music studies with me. He was a trumpet player, when he worked at it, and was capable of projecting a rather Bixish kind of tone on the instrument. Enrico Rava, the European trumpet player, was also free that summer and desirous of being out of New York. He had wanted to work with me (as I had with him) in this kind of fashion and setting for some time. In my opinion, he was then probably the most sensitive of the European musicians, relating especially to both the way I felt (then) about music and the manner which I went about doing it. Enrico had a strong sound, and, at that time, was aesthetically and stylistically 'in and out' of both Miles Davis and Don Cherry. He brought to the music the kind of flair and excitement that only the Italian musicians seem able to bring (consistently) to almost everything that they do. The instrumentation for the work as engaged in that summer was: four trumpets, one bass clarinet, and two percussion players. Had that piece ever been returned to, I would have added an additional bass clarinet and a tuba.

In terms of the manner of working, it was both quite direct and simple. In what is now Paul Robeson House (then the Carriage Barn) Judith and the dancers would work in the very large area. At that time, it was still a dance space so the floor was in relatively good shape. I would work with the musicians in the smaller room in the back, which, if memory serves me, I believe was an art gallery, sometimes used by the Art Division. I tape recorded everything; that is, from the minute we entered the room, the tape machine went on. Scott Guyon and Steve Horenstein served as recordists, and, periodically, I would play back things for both Judith and the dancers. The musicians, however, heard the playback results every day. This allowed them, on a day to day basis, to hear the piece

in evolution, as a whole, and to more carefully scrutinize their own playing. Every other day or so, we (dancers and musicians) would all work together--not from the standpoint of 'synchronization' (because the concept of the work had nothing to do with the dancers 'following' the music or vice versa) but to air and place all the elements, movement and choreography (and finally, dance) and musical ensembles and solos (finally, the composition) together. In other words, we (the musicians) saw and 'felt' how they looked and they 'heard' how we sounded.

When we were about a week into our schedules, Enrico's wife Graciela, a film-maker who is a very charming and sophisticated woman, arrived. That seemed to allow Enrico to 'settle' himself more into the movement of the music. There is a difference in the performance of music when music is the sole entity and when it is placed in the proximity of another component; and Enrico had had tendencies to project as one would do when in performance in the setting of a nightclub, which was inappropriate for this situation. I would rehearse the musicians rather strongly for the period of time that we had on the schedule, then I would usually take a long drive. Sometimes Enrico and I would go (my car was still being 'broken in'); and it was quite enervating to play until there was nothing to play and then get in the car and just drive.

After dinner, Judith and I would discuss the work, listen to the tapes of the music, or view video tapes (on the days that we videoed) and then, for relaxation, play darts. I was then rather good at the game, but she was better.

The work was given one performance for a specially invited audience. It was, however, 'performed' each time that we rehearsed, since it was our philosophy, and it continues to be mine, that everytime that we did something, that, indeed, was also the 'real' thing. I liked that work--the setting, the things that came out of it, the feelings that were generated, the discoveries, the long talks and the relatively short, savage rehearsals, siamesed to my own long and relentless late night practicing for the emerging next day. I'm glad to see that the piece SUMMERDANCE is going to be 'done' again. I feel good that Judy is working and that Cheryl and Penny are, again, involved in the work. It was a good, strong, and solid work. People should see and hear it.

BILL DIXON
19 March 1981

Program Statement, DEWHORSE

Judith Dunn first performed DEWHORSE without music; I believe that it was sometime around 1964 or 1965. In conversation, she once told me that a dance critic made the observation that she was a bit too 'fleshy' /or words to that effect/ to perform the piece, as she had, with bare legs. After she and I started to work together /1965/ we performed the work as a duo. She would dance, and I would do music. It was an incredibly rigorous work; there was so much detail; everything had to be just right, and the rhythmic arc that coruscated so closely with the subtleties of the performance arc /both in terms of the music and the dance/ required an intense concentration that almost always seemed to elude even the most sophisticated of dance audiences. I can remember that at the end of a performance both she and I would be dripping with sweat and extremely elated that we had been able to do a performance that both adhered to and met the standards that we had set for ourselves.

I don't know what the title meant or means. I was much too bright and respectful to ever ask her. I know what it meant to me; and because some things are private /or should be/ I always kept that to myself. Once, though, in a class that Judith and I were teaching in composition at Columbia Teachers' College /or was it George Washington University; memory doesn't serve me too well/ a student did ask her how she had managed to make the dance, and she related the following story that I found incredibly fascinating.

It appears that Judith had hurt herself /not unusual for dancers/; and this had occurred at a time when she was involved in the making of a piece that was to be performed as part of a series. She wanted to perform but was experiencing great difficulty in even going about the process of general movement, let alone the creative process of making a dance. One day she went into the Five and Dime /Woolworth's?? I believe/ and bought a lot of trinket-type things--things that made sounds /bracelets, bells, strings of beads, etc./ and took them to her studio. She placed a myriad of these objects all over her body and then proceeded, with the pain from her injury reminding her that she was indeed injured, to make movements. Her objective, or her plan, was to create movements that would emanate out of the things that she would do without the sounding of any of the things that she had affixed to her body. This was the movement genesis of DEWHORSE. This was not the intellectual force or even the artistic suggestion of the work. Anyone, or any artist, will readily grasp the idea that even doodling /for the painter/, or extemporaneous playing /that the musician sometimes does when caught within the throes of vacuousness that is practicing/, or just moving /as some dancers must do to get started/ as a thing that one might just do that sometimes provides one with the nucleus or outside perimeter of an idea that can later be developed into a work. And

when the artist is inspired and is ready to both perceive and receive--sometimes, a work of substance.

For me, DEWHORSE is a classic. It captures and classifies all the elements that are essential in modern art in terms of performance, ideation, and the permutation of the sociology of works that saw their birth with the unrest /or restlessness/ and exploration of those original people from Judson. For me, though, Judith Dunn was the gem. She was more than a dancer-choreographer. She was that rare bird; she had the soul of a musician; her intellectual sounding board reflected music. She was a musician. And this was true in the literal sense. She played the piano quite well and understood the language, physically and mentally, of music. Once, after she had undertaken her studies of this music, she was avidly learning Eric Dolphy saxophone solos on the recorder /which she played quite well/; and then later, she began to transfer some of this to the flute. Rhythmically, no one could move the way she did. There was an instinctive understanding of how time was passing and just how much one could subdivide and at the same time use rubato. And her daring soared after she went through the trauma of understanding that everything didn't need to be first written down and then assiduously learned and then performed--that things could just be, that they could happen when they were supposed to happen and were placed in the trajectory of her imagination and that she could then intellectually and aesthetically propose and technically dare to attempt.

For me, as the person who collaborated with her, we discussed everything concerning the works to be done: where would they be done; what was the duration; what would they look like; what were the artistic points to be made; why did the particular work have to be done; what would the movement be; what would the music be /in terms of both instrumentation and arrangement/; etc. I viewed, or heard, every movement that she did as a sound, as a configuration of textures, singular /solo/ or plural /group, small or large/. In other words, every move triggered a sound image to me; and with the fleetness and liquidity of her movement /siamesed to both the quality and subtlety of that movement/ there, for me, existed only one area of both composition and arrangement in terms of movement /in the piece DEWHORSE/ and that was the solo--solo trumpet. And that was hard, but I loved it. The challenge was to be able to play--lines, sounds, harmonics, slashing intervals that could evoke the plaintiveness of children's songs, and an a-timic order of stabs of color that could cement itself to the flow of the movement as it existed in the mind, in the mind's eye. And doing all of this with the necessary articulation and command so that the listener and viewer would not be aware that this /to the legions that favor being pejorative when it comes to this music/ was only a trumpet.

The structure of the performance of DEWHORSE is elusively simple. I play; and then she dances. I play again; she dances again. I play /and previously I would place myself in different places

within the performance space to effect a different sonority; and I would also use a different horn--trumpet, flugelhorn, muted trumpet, etc./ an ideal situation for the musician who, if he could, would be a dancer.

I met Cheryl Niederman-Lilienstein when she was a freshman student at Bennington College, the year Judith Dunn and I went there to teach. Cheryl worked and worked extremely hard as a student and as a person interested and committed to the aesthetic that Judith Dunn brought to dance. She also possessed the innate and necessary quality that is a must if one is to do /and do with originality/ the work of someone else. It is a gift, and she has it. She worked in the company of musicians and dancers that Judith and I had. I went to Wisconsin in 1971, and stayed a year teaching at the University there. I returned to Bennington and the company did a week-long series at Riverside Church, the company's last. Judith had other aesthetic and artistic concerns that had not been fully realized, and I was very heavily into some musical areas that required intense solo concentration. The Judith Dunn-Bill Dixon Company of Musicians and Dancers disbanded. Judith, Cheryl, Barbara Ensley, Penny Larrison Campbell along with other beautifully gifted people /along with Peter Lakowski/ formed the Company and did incredibly different, but always exploratory, works.

Last year, it was agreed that we would reconstruct SUMMERDANCE, a work originally done in 1971. The reconstruction was performed both at Bennington College and in Burlington, Vermont, where Judith lives. Cheryl, under Judith's artistic direction, did an incredible job of teaching the work /via videotape and her memory/ to the other dancers.

Cheryl has learned this dance, DEWHORSE, from a videotape that Judith has in her possession. It has been a staggering feat. A lot of sweat has gone into the work. Again, Judith has been the artistic advisor. Just one look from her /for those who have known her/ is more revealing than a tome the length of the Magna Carta. She knows; she approves, and that is the reason that I'm doing this work; now; here; in this city that I once lived in. And I'm grateful for the opportunity, because it is one of my favorites of the many works that Judith Dunn-Lakowski and I created together.

BILL DIXON
13 March 1982

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOXED SET

This set, a collection comprised of ideas and philosophies that has been realized through the mediums of line /the drawings/, sound /the music/, and the written word /the chapter from my autobiography/ has been in the works (theoretically, I have given considerable thought to it and the various ways available to me of realizing it as a practical document) for years; and it spans the period 1971 through 1976. Some memorable and eventful things transpired during that time. I had a beautiful year teaching at the University of Wisconsin at Madison /'71-'72/. When I returned East to Bennington College, the Black Music Division was created and officially formed. While in Wisconsin, part of my autobiography /then simply called a journal/ was published there. In 1975, I was turned down for a Guggenheim Fellowship in composition. In the summer of 1976, I recorded a half of a recording in Vienna at the invitation of a musician-composer there; and during the Fall of 1976, I was invited to Paris to perform a long work at the Autumn Festival. Later, the re-issue of INTENTS AND PURPOSES: THE BILL DIXON ORCHESTRA, originally recorded for RCA VICTOR in 1967, was published in Paris by French RCA VICTOR; and the list of events and things that were important to me and my work and survival continues.

As an artist who has been fortunate enough to be heavily involved and concerned with musical pedagogy /especially as that relates to contemporary American Black Music/, I have also been fortunate enough to have been able to resist /or ignore, or be ignored by/ the specially reserved channels /generally only too readily at the disposal of musicians of the Black Music persuasion/ that, in my opinion, have only served to reinforce the base ideas that a music listening public has found itself almost systematically having in regards to the 'seriousness' of this music--the attitude of 'take away the entertainment and the music has no basis or meaning.' In other words, the music must only always viscerally entertain, make the listener 'feel good', not feel something.

And musicians have gone for that one like an okie doke--costumes galore, pseudo-vaudeville galore, showboat galore. And after that, the whimpering of what 'they' have made me 'do'--the crying for respect, without attempting either to demand it or get it. As a result, a considerable number of theoretically significant artists, imbued with talent, technical considerations, and the like have systematically /when their gold and platinum records had to move over for an even newer 'talent'/ gone down the drain, their work and the artistic validity of the genesis of that work both limited and severely truncated.

Whether my work, relating to futuristic terms, will endure by my not having too faithfully travelled that aforementioned 'road',

naturally, only Time will tell--much as it has done faithfully throughout Man's history, documented or otherwise. I cannot control this; I cannot control Time. But then neither can anyone else.

A work, ultimately then, can be said to be either what it is or /when subscribing to 'pedantic analysis'/ what it isn't. Therefore, it is not unreasonable or unrealistic to say that something placed within the annals of Time and concurrently within Man's perception can be considered to have existed. But again, whether even that as a phenomenon is considered good or bad, only Time will tell.

As an artist, I have always worked with the minimal resources that have been available to me. Some of these 'resources', in order for me to even entertain the idea of continuing to work, I have virtually had to create myself. With these thoughts in mind, I offer this collection.

BILL DIXON
Milan, Italy
Summer, 1982

VIBES **PART II**

slowly *play evenly*

mf

play 4x *hold until there is no sound*

fast *mallets* *8x* *slowly*

Orchestra work: rehearsed at the Free Conservatory
of the UNIVERSITY OF THE STREETS /NYC/ 1967

Bb Clarinet *fast* *slowly*

Medium

fast

slower *fast*

medium

Bennington, Vt. /1970/

Bb Tenor saxophone

Handwritten musical score for Bb Tenor saxophone. The score consists of five systems of staves. The first system is marked "fast" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet. The second system is marked "fast" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet and a circled "slm" (slur). The third system is marked "fast" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet and a circled "slm" (slur). The fourth system is marked "fast" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet. The fifth system is marked "fast" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

3 Tenor phones , - vigorously -

Handwritten musical score for 3 Tenor phones. The score consists of five systems of staves. The first system is marked "3 Tenor phones" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet. The second system is marked "3 Tenor phones" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet. The third system is marked "3 Tenor phones" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet. The fourth system is marked "3 Tenor phones" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet. The fifth system is marked "3 Tenor phones" and includes a circled "3" above a triplet. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs. The word "vigorously" is written above the second system.

Handwritten musical score for Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, and Trombone. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include:

- Alto 1** and **Alto 2** parts.
- Tenor 1** and **Tenor 2** parts.
- Trombone** part.
- Baritone** part.
- KNOWS** (circled).
- TRANS** (circled).
- Alto Solo** (circled).
- Alto** (circled).
- Alto AS is** (circled).

N. Bennington, Vt. /1974/

Handwritten musical score for Piano and Trumpet. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key annotations include:

- 1X = with 13 figure / fast /**
- 2X = " " " / slowly as accented**
- 3X = " " " / slowly as accented**

"Touchings for Piano & Trumpet"

by Bill D



HOOSICK FALLS /NY/ 1976
1395 B'WAY, N. Y.

Handwritten musical score for a trumpet, featuring various chords and melodic lines. The score is written on ten staves, with a key signature of B-flat and a common time signature.

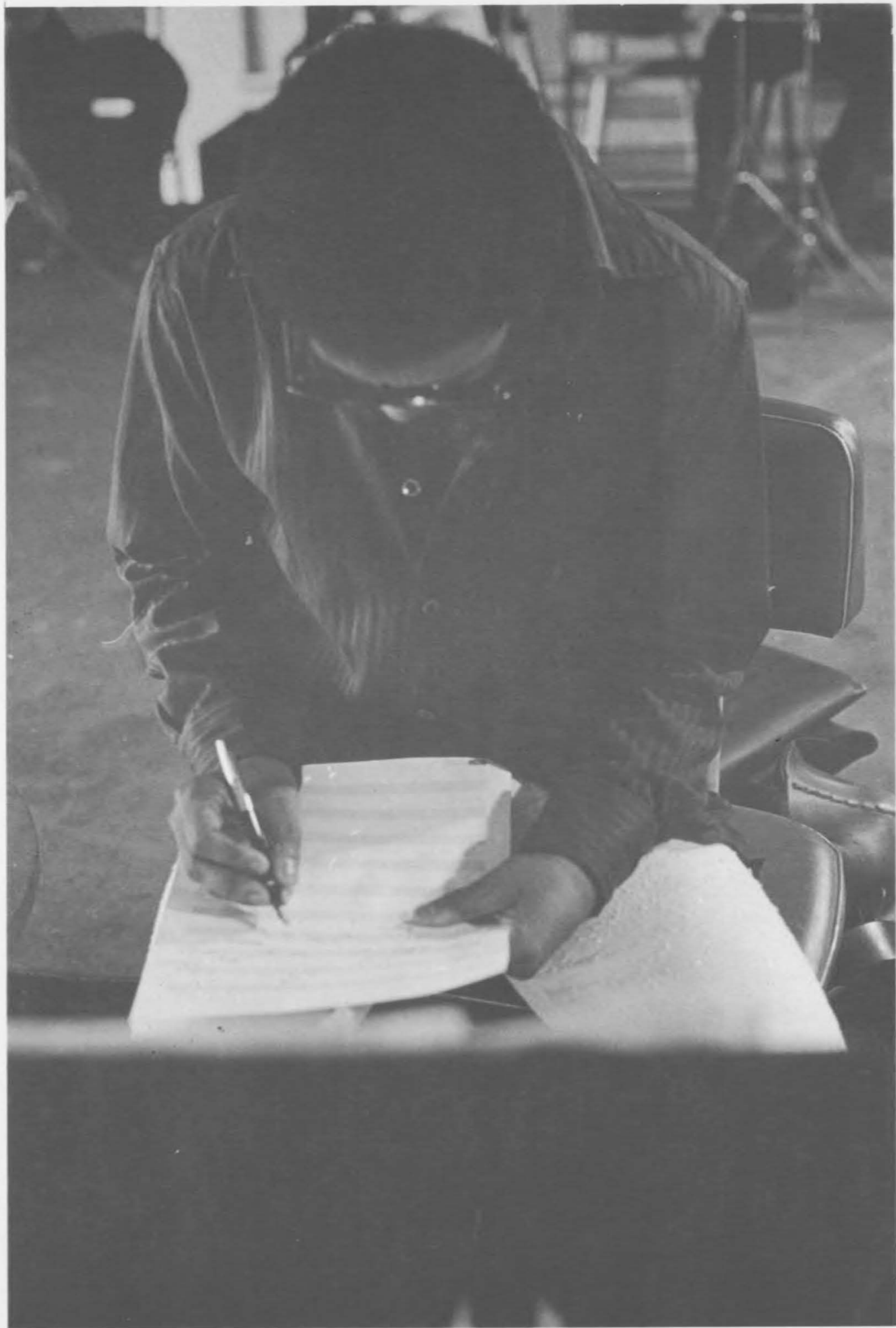
Chords and markings include:

- Bb
- $7(b5)$
- 6
- $Ab(9)$
- $A7(9)$
- $Fm7(b5)$
- $A7(b9)$
- $Fm7(b5)$
- $Fm7(b5)$
- $5b7$
- $Fast$

The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Im Sketch /ensemble/; Bennington, Vt. /1983/





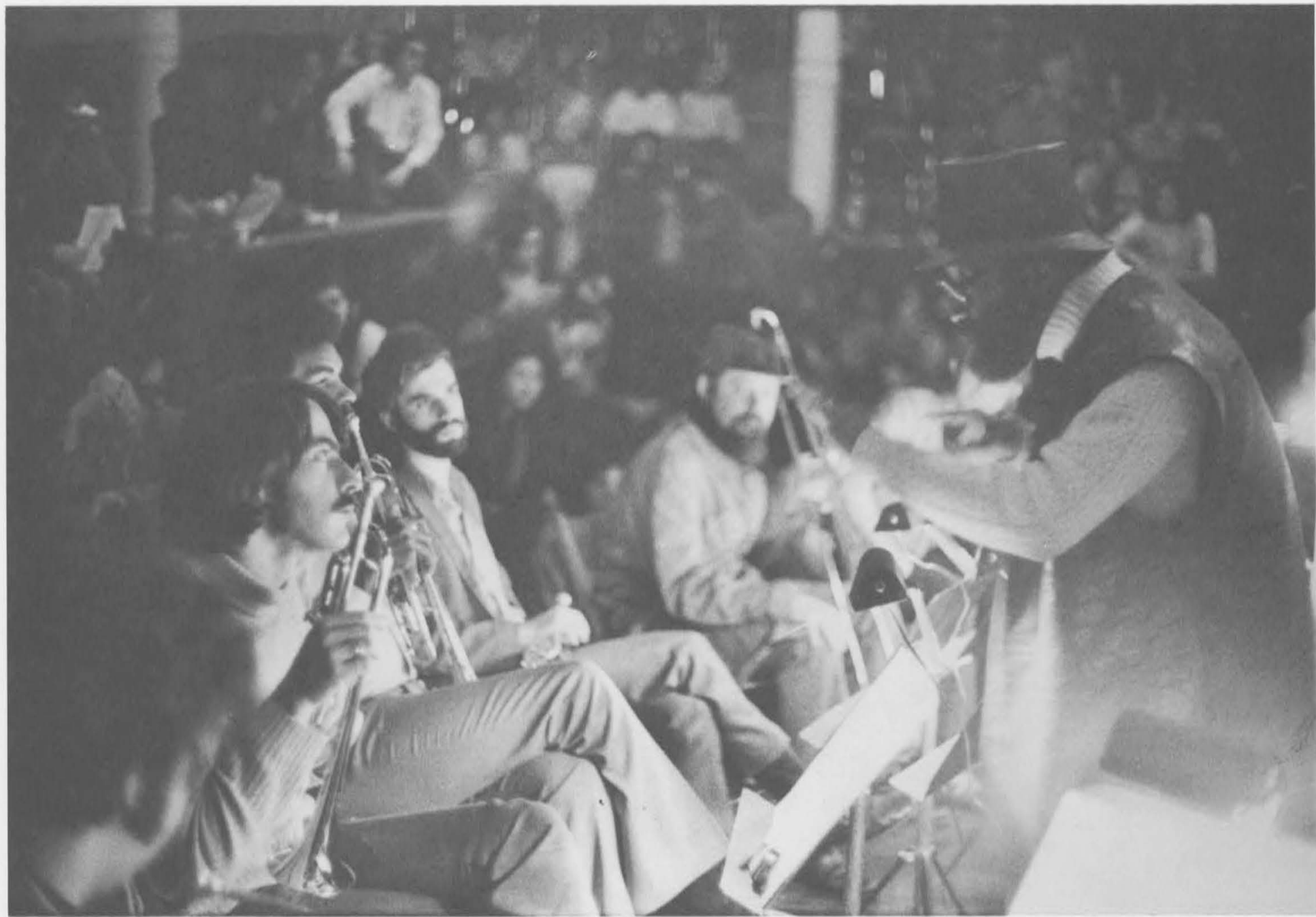








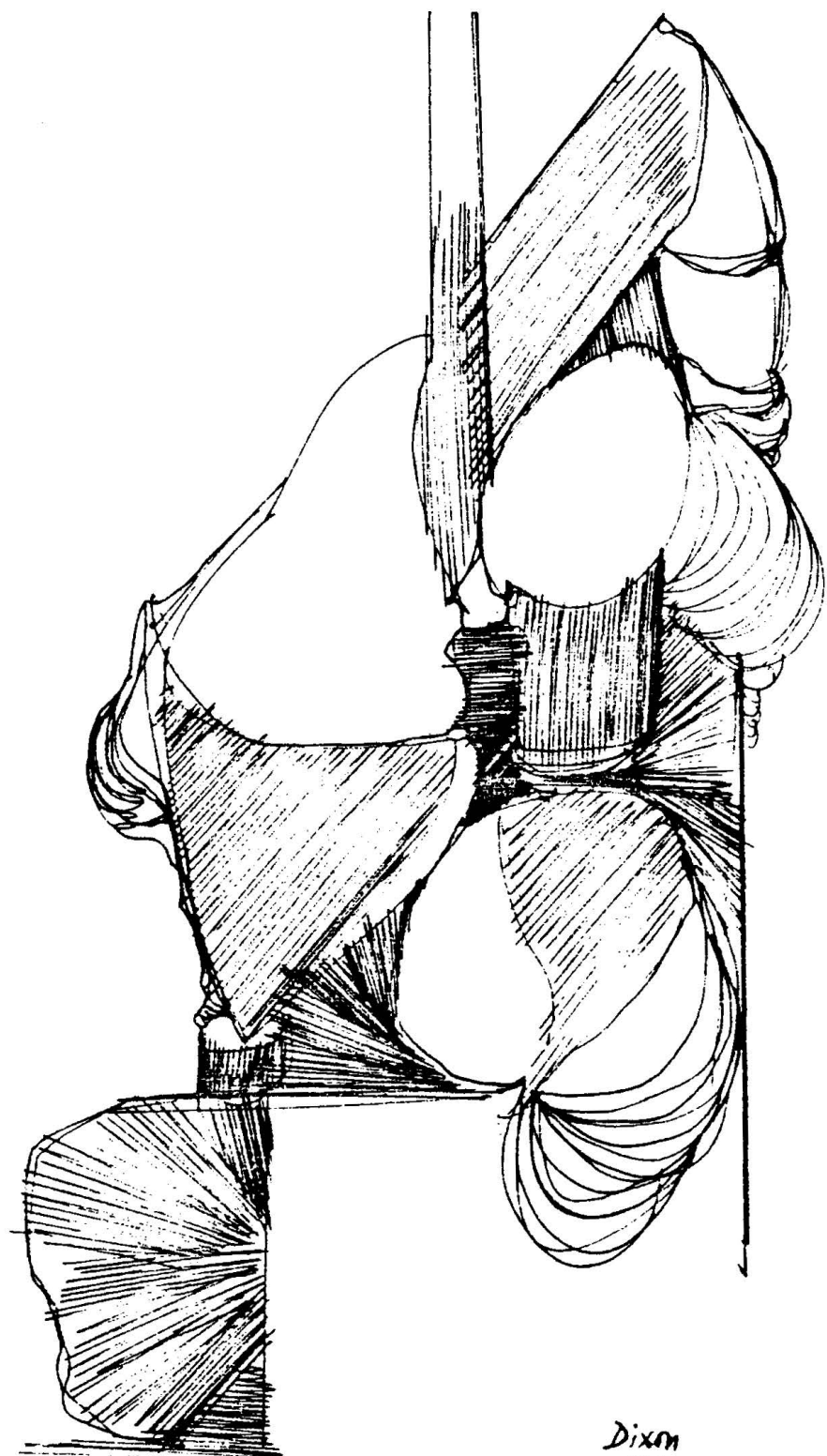




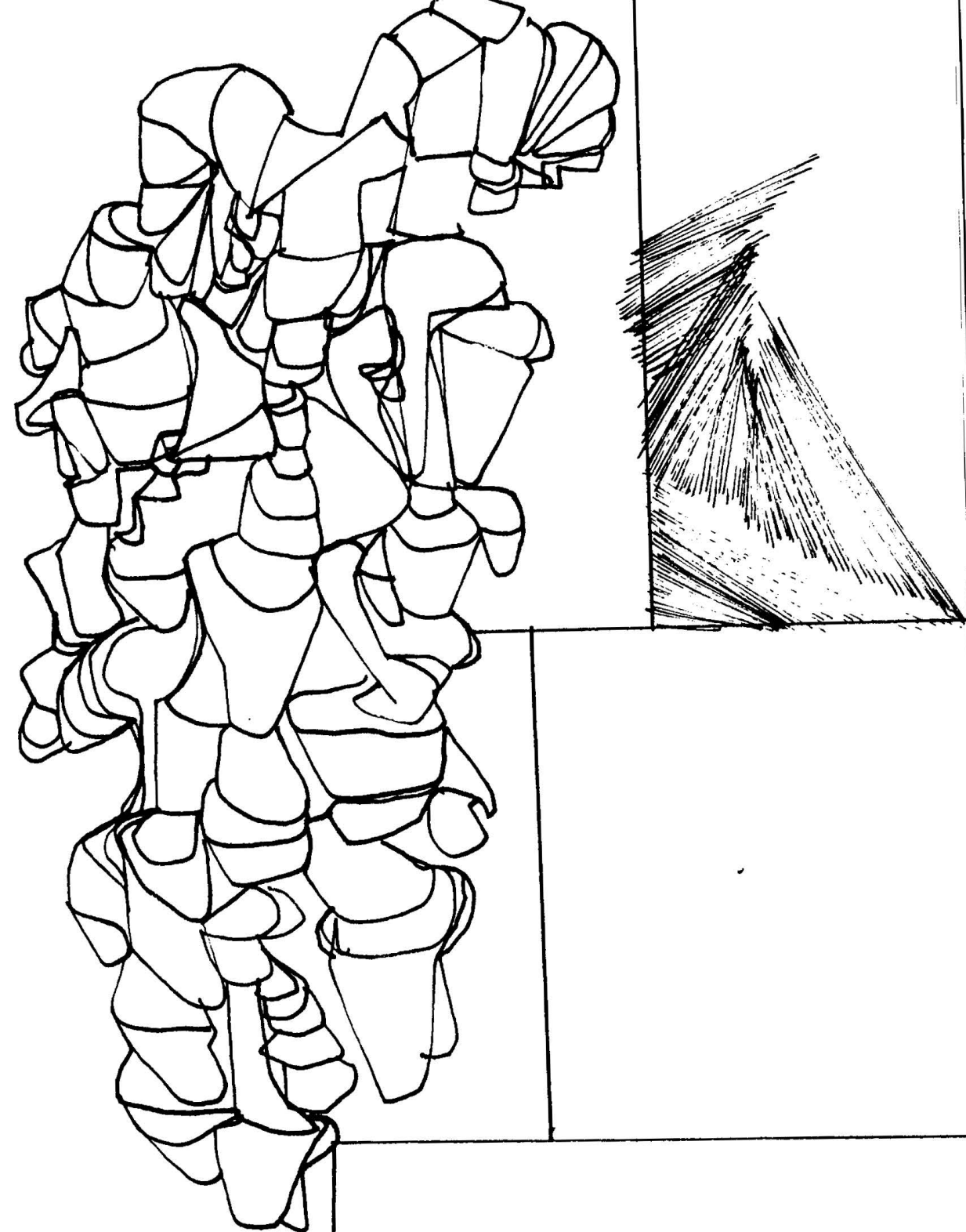


Dixon 1994





Dixon
1982



Dixon
1983



TO: JIMMY LYONS

Dear Jimmy:

Just a short note to say how much you were appreciated and enjoyed when you were here giving your workshop. Numerous enquiries, too many to go into, have come to me regarding whether you would be here in the Spring to replace me in the Division on my sabbatical. So let's get down to brass tacks.

As I have said before, I consider you one of the finest musicians on the scene. Your work and your background are impeccable. I had never seen you teach until you came up here, although the word had come to me when you were at Antioch with Cecil that your teaching was a source of inspiration to those musicians. So, what can I say but this, we would all 'dig it' immensely if you would consent to being here teaching (an ensemble and possible individual instruction) from your own musical and aesthetic point of view (for reed instruments, saxophone, oboe, English horn) on a two-day a week basis. It would start around the first week of March.

I teach my ensemble on Thursdays and Fridays; and since that slot (in terms of space in the Carriage Barn) would still be there, it would be very cool if you could think in terms of being here on campus those two days. In other words, you would inherit my Ensemble IV, which has all of the advanced players and as of this past term, five of the less experienced players. If, however, those two days don't fit your schedule, we will be able to work it out some other way, so don't worry about that. Please let me know as soon as possible whether this meets with your approval. In other words, tell me yes, right away (smile). The other details (as relates to money, etc.) will be worked out after I receive your letter telling me of your decision.

As I said to you before, Jimmy, please make sure that this doesn't interfere in any way with your work and relationship with Cecil. He is much too dear a friend of mine for me to want to interfere in any way with the workings of the Unit.

I'll close now.

Sincerely,

BILL DIXON
Fall 1974

MISS SOPHIE KANELLOPOULOS
RINIA F, T.T. 812, KIPSELI,
ATHENS, GREECE

Dear Sophie:

I am in receipt of your letter and was quite surprised and pleased to hear from you. I don't believe I have ever been in contact with anyone from Greece before, and it really made me feel quite elated to know that there was someone that far away who had an interest in this music.

You say that your English teacher used to be a student at Bennington College. I would be very pleased to know what her name is. This is just going to be a short letter to answer your letter.

I have been incredibly busy here, both with teaching and my work, and that is the reason why I didn't answer sooner; but under separate cover I am going to send you some things I think you will be interested in reading about Black Music. I will also send you some interviews that I have had recently that you might also find interesting. Do you read in French?

Now to answer some of your question, but you must remember that the answers that I give are really only a personal response to your questions, and I am sure that if you were to pose the identical questions to another musician, you might get a different answer. When you say, or when you ask me if I believe that White people can create 'real music' and 'show their feelings', I take it to mean that you are asking me if I feel that White music on any level represents an emotional experience? And, if that is what you mean, I would have to say 'yes' I do believe that does happen in some areas of music. There is a great deal of European music that I like and a great deal that has also served to influence my own music. When I was a student in the conservatory, courses in Black Music were not taught, and as a result all of our studies were centered around European music. I still like Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Satie, Mussorgsky to name but a few of the composers. I should also include works of Berg and Webern.

Now you ask me about performance, about the act of creation, about how a piece of music is both created and in the performance remembered in terms of my having knowledge of what I have performed. I can only say that the creative act, once one has been engaged in doing it for a long period of time, becomes much like anything else that one does without consciously trying to remember each of the components. For example: have you ever tried to walk down a flight of stairs and think about each step that you

are taking and think about that step? In so many instances, when one makes this attempt, one will find oneself tripping or almost falling because, obviously, we have interrupted an unconscious act by consciously drawing our minds to it. The same holds true for certain areas of improvisational music. When the improviser is playing, he has an idea. There is a shape that has to come out of this idea. Inside of this shape there are sounds that can be sub-divided into notes and rhythms, lines, melodies, spaces and silence. One cannot consciously think of the components as individual entities, but one is /on some level/ aware of them. The more experience one has in life, coupled with one's musical ability and technical facility on the instrument that is being used, the more likely it is (should the improvising musician be both a gifted person and a person of high musical integrity) the more likely (should the Sages deem it so) the musical product will be a good one. That is, the listener will most likely be quite pleased, should that listener and the performer be on the same musical wavelength.

I personally don't believe that Black people are 'more musical than Whites'. I think everyone has a form of natural rhythm. I do think, however, that the nature of how Black people have lived their lives, coupled with a very historical past, has made their need for music a much more realistic one than it has been for most Europeans. I will elaborate on that in my next letter to you; and in the interviews that I will send to you, you will see that I speak about this quite often, again in a very personal way.

I will close this letter now, saying again that I was quite pleased to hear from you, and I hope that this will aid you in some way with your class work.

Sincerely,

BILL DIXON,
SECRETARY
BLACK MUSIC DIVISION
10 March 1976

Mr. Herb Levy
4737 Brooklyn NE
Seattle, Washington 98105

Dear Herb:

I was very pleasantly surprised to receive your letter of 9 December 1975 along with the poetry. It pleased me very much, and I was especially pleased to see that your time isn't all spent involved with utilitarian efforts--that there is time for a creative endeavor. Of course, I remember you, and if I'm not mistaken, I ran into you after I left Madison, in New York up around Columbia University. Right??

Concerning your remarks about the AACM, as time has passed I am more convinced than ever, for me, that the STRONG and anticipatory group that made it possible for others that were to follow /even if their following was to be trepidatious and fraught with the frustration of whether to be artists, claiming their natural right in a free society to co-exist with other groups more naturally acceptable by that same parent society/ was the Jazz Composers' Guild. There was no placating in that group--no false theatrics, no pseudo politics. At the time, we meant what we said and what we attempted to do. At least I can recall in retrospect /exactly sixteen years ago, a hell of a long time to have to remember intent/ I did. There were no costumes, no grants from the National Endowment, no articles /save the one that appeared in DOWNBEAT/, no reviews of our work presented to the public--the public, that is, that was interested. There was no phoney 'militancy' among the musicians; and, unfortunately, so many were still hoping and praying to be the ones that would be let in the Village Vanguard, etc. We were alone in an alien and hostile world /and some of us still are/, and we could only know that we were right even though the time, as history has proved, wasn't. The AACM, much as any group that follows, was able to capitalize on what had preceded them, and with a modicum or paucity of musical ideas was able, for this music at least, to elicit the attention of a group of 'critical' journalists. This, in addition to whatever they had in the way of talent and innovation /the stuff of which art both survives and continues to point another way/, allowed them to do their work. For myself, the exoticism of a veritable 'battery' of instruments to supposedly project new 'colors' into the music in the way and manner in which they involved themselves was, to my way of thinking, more in tune with show business than it was or had any relationship with the furtherance of the art of music. But then that was, and continues to be, one man's opinion. And they have, as you so aptly put it, survived, while the idea and philosophy of the Jazz Composers' Guild is but a dim thing that remains only in the minds of those who either know or chose to find out. Not too many of either class, I must admit. Braxton is much too intellectual for my taste, and not in the sense that Cecil Taylor is intellectual or that Archie Shepp has a strong intellect. Braxton, for some strange reason, has also managed to stir the rhythmic curve of the current Black and non-Black

(formal) music intelligentsia (if you can call that group that); and while to my ear so much of what he does he doesn't do by artistic choice, it is obvious that he can play--as a composer, I don't know. Some things are better articulated (in words) than being heard /they seem to talk so much about themselves that they leave little for the imagination in the sense that they were conceived/.

As far as my own work is concerned, I've not made any commercial recordings. There are scores of tapes; until last year I taped almost all of my rehearsals. There have been peripheral attempts, however, but to date I've not been able to convince the record people that I mean what I say when I say that when I do record, I want to do what it is that I want to do. There is something that is sort of being worked out in Europe, at the present, that should it succeed will allow me to lease some tapes to a couple of companies there. This would give me maximum freedom as to what, at this present time, I would like for interested listeners to be able to hear of my present work.

In closing, let me say that I was very pleased to hear from you, and while I'm not as 'knowledgeable' about poetry as I am about music, the pieces that you sent me did seem to 'hang' together well and indicated to me that you are serious about your work. And that is good. One's work is very important. I doubt that I'll get as far, in this country, as Seattle. In 1954 on my way to Alaska where I worked in a band for a year, I did lay over at the airport there for about five or six hours.

Take care of yourself, and let me hear from you from time to time. If you have accessibility to a cassette recorder, perhaps I could send you a cassette of some areas of my present work. Let me know.

Sincerely,

BILL DIXON
(1976)

PS I miss Madison; it was one of the most important years, in terms of creativity and all that goes into it, of my life.

28 April 1977

Mr. Mike Hames
327 Durnsford Road
London, S.W. 19
England

Dear Mike:

This is a very belated reply to your letter of 21 February 1977. I am sorry for taking so long to answer. I guess that you must have realized that my teaching schedule cuts into an incredible amount of my time, even though in February I was off, and during that time I had to make the attempt to catch up on some music that I was writing, etc.

Now to reply to the specifics of your letter. I never received the other letter that you sent to Bank Street; I have not lived there in several years (I moved from there around 1965 or 1966) and am surprised that the letter was never forwarded to me or returned to you.

The concert that you make mention of that took place on Clinton Street, if memory serves me, was one that also included a performance at JUDSON HALL (as it was then called) on 57th Street. I think also that Milford Graves and the New Art Quartet that had Louis Worrell (bass), Roswell Rudd (trombone), Graves (percussion), and Tchicai (alto saxophone) performed on that Clinton Street thing also. I'm not too sure; it could have been another time. Regarding the performance of a work done at the Contemporary Center on 9-11 April 1965, that concert was taped. I have a bad copy in my possession, and as so many of my things from that period are in storage, the better copy of that concert is with those things. I don't recall Tony Williams performing in my piece; I do seem to get the feeling that for my work (there were many drummers that we in the Guild used at that time) the drummer was Barry Altschul. In fact, I think that I was using two drummers at the time, and I think that it was both he and Rashied Ali. As far as my association (musically) with the pianist Cecil Taylor, there are no other recorded evidences except CONQUISTADOR. There is a very memorable occasion when Ornette Coleman was in 'retirement' that brought together Cecil on piano, Ornette on violin, and myself on trumpet; and because I had left my horn at home, Ornette went home and got his trumpet. We played that one evening in 1964 or 1965, while Cecil and I were trying to get Coleman to endorse the principles of the Jazz Composers' Guild. The late Bud Powell was there as was the Baroness Nica Rothschild. She hated this rather 'glorious noise' that we were making. It seems so long ago...

While historians of this music have systematically ignored certain (and maybe all of them) of my contributions, also is the exclusion of the fact that Sonny Murray was, indeed, playing with me first,

and I, in turn, introduced him to Cecil. Sonny always had trouble with metric time, and it was my feeling that since Taylor's tempos were so terribly fast, it didn't make much pragmatic sense for the drummer to merely emulate him; and Murray, even at that time (around 1958) had indicated in his playing that his real talent was focused in another direction that had more to do with implications and abstractions than with the metricity of pulsative time. Cecil was looking for a drummer, so I introduced him; and Cecil had the opportunity to see Murray perform in my musical setting. It was as simple as that. Unfortunately, there are no tapes. Byard Lancaster, along with Robin Kenyatta and Bob Pozar, was also involved in my musical setting (all as students and performers of my music) for a considerable amount of time. Dancer-choreographer Judith Dunn and I were then doing works for the theatre, and Dance Theatre Workshop was one of the principal places where we performed, as was the Judson Church; Hunter College; and various other places in NYC. Alan Silva was also one of these musicians. There is a musician who is in Scandinavia who was also a student of mine and a performer of my music, Marc Levin, who, should you run into him, will be able to fill in some of these gaps. As far as tapes of my work are concerned, I do have scores of them, dating from around 1957. All of my principal performances and rehearsals (my work at the Cellar Club on 91st Street from 1964 through the demise of the JCG) are in fact taped; and among the musicians that I used are: Joe Farrell, Rashied Ali, Charles Moffitt, Reggie Johnson, Guiseppe Logan, Bob Porter, Bob Ralson, Alan Silva, Bob Carducci, Brian Trenthan, and the list goes on and on... I don't know if Tchicai's contribution to the October Revolution in 1964 was taped; I rather doubt it. It was hard for me at the time to make the musicians aware of the historical significance of what was taking place, and as a result their attitude towards documentation was somewhat cavalier. As I said previously, I arranged to have my portions taped. Regarding the stints at the Cafe Au Go Go, The Galaxy Art Center, and the Jazz in the Garden, since I was not present at those performances I cannot say much. The session at the Contemporary Center that Tchicai did himself could have been taped. There is another session that was done at WBAI Radio (around 1963, I believe) where I used a rather large ensemble: J.C. Moses and another drummer whose name escapes me (drums), L. Worrell and Jimmie Stevenson (basses), Guy Hampton and Tchicai (among the saxophones), R. Rudd (trombone)--oh yes!, Shepp was one of the saxophones and Perry Robinson was on clarinet (I hate the clarinet but love the way Perry plays) and I can't recall the others. Oh, by the way, I met Albert Ayler in Stockholm in 1962, and he and I did a considerable amount of playing there that summer in addition to much talking; and when I returned to NY, I told Cecil Taylor about him, and as a result, when Cecil went to Denmark later that year Albert, in some kind of capacity, hooked up with him; and when Cecil returned to the States and was working at a coffee house on Bleecker Street later on that year, Albert was formally introduced to the 'in' people of the then new music by his frequent (every night) sitting-in things with the then constructed Murray, Lyons, Taylor group. Albert was then playing tenor and soprano saxophones.

The project that was discussed with Valerie Wilmer concerning

the eight lp's has now grown. It is now about twenty. It is very ambitious to be sure, but it is also very creative and of historical significance. There is one drawback--the financial outlay needed for such an undertaking. To date, I do not have the funds, but the project continues to grow artistically. You might as well know that I have also (for the last seven or eight years) been at work on a trilogy of books: my autobiography, a theoretical analysis of the new music and its philosophy, and a contemporary history of the new music. If someone is interested, I would love to play in England. I expect to be in Paris this summer (my son wants to go to London; I was there on a visit in 1958). If I do come, I will give you a call. Sorry that I could not have helped you more in your well deserving endeavor.

Sincerely,

BILL DIXON

MISS TIZIANA RIOLFI
GALLERIA FERRARI
VIA C. CATTANEO 14
VERONA, ITALY

Dear Tiziana:

Enclosed are both color photographs and slides of the works for the exhibition in June. There are about twenty-two, and I have one or two more that I will possibly like to include. The sizes, as you note /in centimeters/ are also indicated. I have also indicated the concept /as to how I visualize their placement/--for the smaller panels /as to how I think that they should be framed/. It is, however, an indication. With regard to this, there are two (2) four panel works /black and white and color/ and one all color panel--this is the one on rice paper (46 x 60) with the black and green circles on yellow and brown that is 37 x 56. Your 'concept' or feeling as to whether they may be separate or placed in the configuration that I've outlined may aesthetically differ from mine, and that is alright. The photographs, however, should tell you something; and in terms of placement, as far as my eye is concerned, they manage to stand for what they are in either arrangement. I do think that everything should be placed under glass; there is a kind of 'fragility' about them. But you will see for yourself.

I have been waiting /before sending them/ to first hear about the dates for the seminar that I was to do in Milan this month. I spoke to Dario Barassi of FORE RECORDS (who had arranged it) on the 4th of January and was informed that he would be back in touch with me, concerning those dates /the first or second week in February/ around the 7th of January. At this writing, I have heard nothing and am both disappointed and a bit concerned. It was my intention and understanding that I would come to Milan for the seminar the first week in February and would have, naturally, brought the works with me on the plane. However, since time is of the essence and I cannot wait any longer to hear from Barassi, I am, today, placing the photographs in the mail and will start to make the arrangements to get the works to you.

I am also in the process of looking for another place to live. The house that I rent has been sold, and it is not that easy /and one cannot do it that quickly/ to find both suitable space at the money that is both reasonable and that meets the necessary requirements. I have been extremely busy; we had a rather strenuous festival here after I returned from Europe in November in addition to the fact that all of my school work had 'backlogged', and I was not able to fully catch up with the paperwork until the end of December. I also, as you will note, had to take both photographs and slides which also consumed considerable time.

I have also decided, after much speculation, that I'm not that interested in having LeRoi Jones do an introduction to the catalogue. He and I were never that close socially or on common terms aesthetically with regards to music, painting, or literature.

Anyway, here are the slides and the photographs of the works. If I am unable to come to Italy this month, I'll see to it that you receive all of them by the end of this month. Let me hear from you; I hope that you are well and think of you and Nicola quite often.

Sincerely,

BILL DIXON
8 February 1982

20 September 1982

Miss Tiziana Riolfi
Via Sirtori, 16/a
VERONA, 37128
ITALY

Dear Tiziana:

Enclosed you will find the answers to the questions for the catalogue for the Brescia exhibition. Some of them I have answered in detail, so you may find the interview rather lengthy. I hope that it won't be too much. I own an Olivetti Lexikon 82 typewriter (I've had it for about six years), and this year I've experienced considerable difficulty in having it repaired (the letters stick)--hence, the reason for my not being able to get it to you sooner. My secretary at the college has been frightfully busy with the work at the college (and also the reason for the many errors that had to be 'scratched' out. I have tried to make everything clear; there was no time left to do another copy. It looks quite legible to me.

Nicola has sent me a copy of the recording that was done for the gallery, and it is quite alright. I've only played through portions of it, but the sound generally seems to be of a good quality.

The two new works that I'm involved with now measure approximately: 71 inches by 63 inches. I have been frightfully busy with the work at school, but I expect to finish these in a few days so that I will be able to bring them with me.

I will close this now as I want to get it into the mail. I am glad that you are well and am very happy for you and your husband that you are expecting a child. As soon as I have the exact time of my arrival, I'll telephone you. William II also says 'hello'.

Sincerely,

BILL DIXON

1. When I first started to pursue what is generally referred to as my 'studies', I embarked upon that path in pursuit of a body of information that would not so much as many others had alluded to its providing them with possibly a raison d'etre, but that would allow me both technically and aesthetically (and in that order) to be able (should the time ever surface) to proceed with the work that would require that I be possessed of the kind of experiences, knowledge, awareness, etc. that, theoretically at least, one's studies are generally credited with doing. My studies in both drawing and painting (in that order) commenced at a very early age (I started to draw when I was about eight or nine and started copying the work of another eight or nine year old in my second grade class at that time; I can still recall his name, Wilbur Booker, even though I have had no occasion to remember it) and began formal studies in an art school (The WPA Arts School) when I was about twelve. I studied with a very strong woman painter and teacher at PS 139 (then known as Frederick Douglass Junior High School). Her name was Mrs. Kerwood-Evans. And the person that I studied with at the WPA Arts School was the gifted black American painter and teacher Ernie Critchlow. I had strong studies in high school in both drawing and draftsmanship and mechanical drawing. My serious involvement with music didn't begin until after my term of military service at the end of WWII. At the university, my studies in painting continued, and I also spent time at the ART STUDENTS' LEAGUE (after the war) with drawing, etc. At the beginning of 1946, I had a brief time as an apprentice in an art studio in NY. I must, however, qualify the nature of these studies because while, for me, the most important thing that was inculcated was the idea of discipline, the feeling for the art and the necessity for doing the art has, as far as I can remember, always been an active part of me. I was always drawing on the subway (faces of people), in the museums, in the park, etc. In fact, drawing at that time was painting. I didn't really touch color, except for the usual crayons, for a long time, and I guess that may be one of the reasons that I love color with the same intensity that I love black and white; it seemingly was 'held away' from me for so long. I love design and have done a lot of it. I have also done architectural design and calligraphy. For me, it is quite simple; I do what I like and don't see the rather recent twentieth century one of 'spreading oneself thin'. I also have no commitment to either fashion or vogue; what strikes my fancy, I do. If an idea occurs to me, I only strive to execute it; thus, it should be evident why I have no particular 'style', or said in a better way, no singular way of presenting my thoughts and ideas on paper via the mediums of drawing or painting. And I don't find it necessary to either labor or intellectually anguish about what is to be done. And there is no 'story' (at least that I know of or am aware of) inherent in the paintings. Things must look good to my eye. And everything isn't either asymmetrically or bysymmetrically balanced. Some things just 'are', the mind and what makes the mind work (the feelings) manage, for me, to seek them out; and when they work for me (because I don't know how others either see or perceive them since they are coming from me--a person who is more acknowledged as a musician and composer than a painter--the years of preparatory work simply indicated that they paid off.

2. I have been seriously influenced by everything that I have been interested in. I also have the ability to not invest any time in those things which have no interest for me.

3. I have never considered anything that I have done that even remotely relates to art as being secondary. Obviously, some things (especially those that have been made to exist for themselves alone--the paintings) have been what might be called 'primary', simply because they were made to exist for themselves alone. They had no story to either tell or to support. The other things: posters, designs, record covers, illustrations, etc. (while, theoretically, being more utilitarian) at the time of doing (and in retrospect) I could not conceive of as being secondary. I have a single motto: when you do something (or when, at least, I do something) if that thing is worth doing, then it should be done 100 percent.

4. The first show I had was held at the Countee Cullen Library in Harlem on 136th Street. I was fifteen years old. It was a set of drawings (largely portraits) and still life studies (that's what we did in those days). I was a frequent visitor to the library (I daydreamed and fantasized a lot, and the library with all of those books was an incredible place to do it in), and since my work was known to the people there (it was a librarian at the library, a Mrs. Edy who had initially informed my parents of the WPA Arts School, resulting in my studying there) it was a simple matter of arranging to have some works shown there. And being a teenager, I guess this was also my way of showing my friends and others who might care to look at what I was about.

5. I worked at the United Nations Secretariat in New York from 1956 to 1962 and became a member of the art club there. I showed in the juried shows there on a yearly basis--a show that was mounted in the lobby of the General Assembly. In addition, I showed at a gallery on Grove Street in Greenwich Village (the Village Art Center) with groups and also for a period of time in my own studio gallery. I showed (with groups) in the lobbies of several NY theatres (Cinema I and II) in the early sixties and was in a group show at the Lynn Kottler Gallery. Through all of this activity, I managed to make my work somewhat 'visible'. Gallery owners, the theoretically important ones, were rather aloof and to a considerable degree demonstrated a rather discernible bit of hostility towards black painters. To say that it was difficult is a severe understatement. There was also the incredible dilemma that people brought to the situation, siamesed to the idea that one was a serious musician and composer as well as a painter. In addition, there was always lurking somewhere the idea that people tried desperately to graft on to you that in reality (their reality) one should strive to have a 'style', that one should try to make oneself more easily identified and, thus, understood--something to an extent I have found more accessible in music, since in music there are so many things that I am not even remotely interested in doing anymore.

6. It is impossible not to know of the work of Pollock, De Kooning,

Kline, Tobey. This was, or ideas and things akin to it, what NY's art 'world' was about. One was literally inundated by it. Strangely enough, in the beginning I was not that attracted to Gorky's work. I did like Motherwell and Grace Hartigan. I also cared a great deal about the work of Soulages and Clyford Still. But then I also liked Reginald Marsh and Andrew Wyeth. And at one time, I was carefully engaged in Andrew Loomis' book on anatomy, and I still love looking at Burne Hogarth's drawings. Although I didn't care for many of his things, Rob Thompson was a strong and significant painter; and in the late sixties Alvin Loving's work attracted my interest. Both Ernie Critchlow's and Romare Bearden's work have held my eye and always offered up to me solutions to sometimes 'problems' concerning line and color and other ways of more subtly defining those two elements. (In music the idea of the singular line, the solo and the color holding up that solo might be the chord or the harmonic underpinning.) Barbara Chase's work I found to be quite strong, and both Sam Gilliam and Richard Hunt, at least their earlier works, elicited a lot of surprises for me. For draftsmanship and a certain kind of what might be called 'black classicism', one cannot leave out Charles White, and for storytelling beauty (inside and out) there is Jacob Lawrence. But then as I said earlier, my eye is open to a considerable range of painters. There are things to be seen in almost everything that has been done by the significant (significant to the extent that they have continued to produce their work) painters. This is not the case with the musicians. As far as a 'common element' existing between any of my work and any of the artists that you mentioned, it is not for me to say; the viewer has to make that decision.

7. If one is both clever and aware (and I may have more of the latter attribute in my makeup) one has to continue to be 'ceaseless' in one's so called 'research', simply because that is the only thing that one does indeed have almost complete control of. You can seek out what you want; devote your energies to what you want to do; make the attempt to either combat it or conquer it; and then embark on to the next venture or adventure. In so doing, one is certain to almost always guarantee the longevity of one's creative life, because there is built into that idea the idea of continuous quest--the basic nature of the creative soul. In terms of realizing the formalized viewing place (the gallery) for this research (the paintings) that is literally out of your control. Even the most sensitive of gallery owners or directors (with the few exceptions of course) know what it is that they like about your work and know what part of that work that they think should be shared with their public. And they know what they don't like and what they don't think should be seen as a part of your created body of work. If one has the temperament for the necessary dickering that is a part of making someone aware (the someone that is going to have to advance the financial remuneration to make the event possible) of the totality of the work, one can deal with galleries and all that goes into that. The last public viewing of my work was held in the lobby of the Harte Theatre in Bennington (a small series of line drawings), and that was arranged by a trumpet student of mine, Jim Tifft, who liked them so much he took it upon himself to arrange it. This was in 1975. Occasionally,

I will invite people (who may have an interest) to my house to see some newer things. It is easier for me this way because my main and sole purpose is in doing my work. I just don't have the patience to engage in the politics that are necessary for the other thing--admittedly a severe handicap in this contemporary world of mass everything.

8. I have never liked anything that was pop-oriented. I have never been enamored with fads. I liked some of Rauschenberg's work (the dancer-choreographer Judith Dunn introduced me to his work). I also never cared for the way and manner that both film and video were used in some of the later 'experiments' that were mounted. I always felt that the technology was way in advance of the 'ideas' that those people able to use that technology had. But that was just my opinion, because as history shows, they all thrived and prospered from it.

9. While I both knew and currently know Ornette Coleman, he and I have never discussed painting. John McNeil, whom I met in Washington, I knew more as a painter than as a musician. Ron Carter (whom I know rather well) and I have never discussed painting. In fact, the only musicians that I have ever discussed painting with have been the drummer Lawrence Cook, himself a good painter (he was into painting before he was into music) and Steve Horenstein (a former assistant of mine) who is himself a rather interesting 'painter' (he currently draws more than he paints), and his work, for whatever reason, is rather reminiscent of Schoenberg's.

10. I can easily understand the characterization of some of my work under the 'controlled gesture' idea, but I would resist the statement of 'freedom with prearranged patterns' simply because I don't consciously do anything from the standpoint of patterns--at least not overtly. That 'patterns' or more visually visibly acknowledged forms might appear in so many instances in my work I will not contest. But it is not a conscious element on my part. The idea of 'freedom' has to be defined. Freedom 'of' and 'for' what??? If freedom is to imply that there is a less 'restricted' search for the lines, shapes, colors, contours, then to be fused into the design that will reflect (as accurately as that can be done) the idea that has been lurking somewhere either in the mind (where it should have been) or on the paper then this 'controlled gesture' is the freedom, and everything comes after that; and then quite possibly one can analyse or see (after the fact--the fact being the work, of course) 'prearranged patterns'--even though that might not have been the actual genesis of the work. I work for the realization of the moment with the idea in mind that that moment be of such importance that it be able to sustain itself after that moment has moved on into time. In that instance, my research, or studies, or experiences, or what have you have led me to attempt being as direct as I can. If it can be done with one stroke, one color, one line, etc. then not to be afraid to do just that. To arrive at this I have had, in addition to the technical and other work necessary, to learn to trust my intuition and to edit both before and after execution.

11. During the entire time of my musical studies, I was actively involved with so-called jazz. It was the music that I loved; it was what prompted me to study in the first place. It was all around you, and even though I was in a conservatory where, theoretically, all other music save it was predominant; there was no way to avoid it even if one wanted to. New York was the Mecca for the music at that time. Many, many musicians have had a profound effect on my musical and other thinking: Ellington, Walter Gil Fuller, Gerald Valentine, Neal Tate, Miles Davis, Tony Frucella, Hassan Hamid, George Russell, Cecil Taylor, Anton Webern, etc.

12. I followed closely all of the significant (and not so significant) music of the 1950's.

13. In my opinion, the only part of so-called 'be bop' that 'was soon exhausted' and totally 'assimilated' by the so-called 'system' was that portion that revealed only the outside veneer. The central and seminal idea(s) of music was (and were) those things that were carried over into the music of the sixties. In other words, in my opinion, the music of Parker, Gillespie, Monk, Powell, etc. was not so much a revolution as it was (as is any art) the logical extension or next step that the music (if it were to survive and remain in good health, which it did) had to take. And no one could either predict it or make a formula for this step and the kind that it would be. As a consequence (again as in any other art) the step that the music took by making what was then considered a radical departure from the period that preceded the movement of the mid-forties was not a complete step. That step did become complete in the music of the sixties, where for the first time the music, in terms of all of its parameters, became completely its own person, no longer 'borrowing' from anything, for better or worse.

14. The music of the sixties was important and still is important simply because, as I said earlier, it finalized the break that the music of the mid-forties had initiated. The so-called 'rebellion' was more of a literary phenomenon than it was a musical fact, simply because the music that the musicians wanted to play (and had to play) was the music that belonged to them, and all of their efforts went into both trying to stay alive so that they could practice and propagate the music. Everything had to be invented for this enterprise--the places to play, the audience for the music, the methods of survival, etc. There was, as the case with the music of the mid-forties, no help forthcoming from the elder statesmen of the now 'older' music. In fact, there was more than just hostility, there was the jeering, the derisiveness, and the complete erasure from the minds of the non-hearing, older musicians; of the fact that not too many years prior to their negative assessments of a now new music had been the identical reaction to their music. So there was little to 'rebel' against. One can only rebel at what is being offered to one, and no one was offering anything except a hard time. Cecil Taylor wasn't working, neither was Shepp, etc. There was no acceptable way to continue (should the opportunity surface) performance of the now, to them, rather 'old' repertoire that was no longer sufficient for

the ideas of their now musical expression. In a way the nightclub-performable music was finished. The newer musical developments of the language required another forum. Nightclubs weren't going to change, but the music had. None of the practitioners had a reasonably sized (in terms of publicity) name to attract an audience that would make even a rationally thinking clubowner or concert booker (rational to the degree that if he were to remain in the business, he would have to come to some kind of terms with this music of the future) want to risk financial consideration of more than the sometimes Monday nights or Sunday afternoons for the new music. So there was no 'rebellion', there were more practical things to consider--how to stay alive so that one could continue to develop the music. The painters had made their 'break' in the fifties with the development of Tenth Street. Now it was the turn of the musicians, and it was also only fitting that the first real audience for the new music were the painters.

15. With the emergence of the new music, the idea, for the first time of all original music (everything in it being original: the lines or melodies, the harmonies /when they were overtly present in the forms of chords, etc./) was present in what had previously been called jazz music. There was no grafting onto established harmonies of so-called standards or blues progressions--new lines. That was now passe. As a result, there was no reason for there to be any established anything. The format of groups became different in terms of instrumentation. The necessity of the groups became different in terms of instrumentation. The necessity of the piano as a focal point or the formerly necessary center (as had been the case with the music of the mid-forties) was now no longer the case. Whereas in former areas of the music there had always (in form of the material being played) been something to sort of 'hold the thing together', something that all the musicians all played at one time or another during the improvisation; now to the uninitiated everything was the improvisation. And it was to a degree true, whereas previously one might play a tune and then improvise on that tune, or the chords which were more important to the improviser than some of the melodies; and since in certain cases these melodies were merely a form of 'windowdressing' why not dispense with them altogether and just play what was important? As a result, one couldn't really 'sit in' (as in former days) anymore unless one knew the special material and the different ways that the different groups went about playing their material. And one could only learn this by either rehearsing with all of the different groups (a veritable impossibility), because unlike in former days when all musicians knew the identical material, it was now a different situation altogether. The critics quite easily knew the more publicized, larger named groups. That was relatively easy; they got more of the meager exposure that was available. But the critics didn't (either because they didn't want to, didn't think it was necessary or didn't know where the things were taking place) get to attend the music scenes that were the 'laboratories' for those musicians that had to kind their own places to play. As a result, the critics rather soon lost contact with what really was happening in the music. But that has almost systematically been the case with criticism since the inception of this music.

16. The Jazz Composers' Guild 'failed' not so much because it was an idea ahead or in advance of its time, but also because (and quite possibly more importantly because) it was known that we were, in the beginning, quite serious. We didn't have that many clowns in the organization. The music was new, and the ideas, for musicians of this persuasion, were new. We were the new music. We had to be defeated. Consequently, the musicians, themselves, through fear (a severe lack of confidence for the successful implementation of a group idea, but making up for that with a large confidence in the singularity of purpose for their individual selves) aided in their own defeat. The issue of race also played no small part.

17. I was the musical director of the Cellar Cafe. I was allowed to do what I wanted, when and how I wanted it done, and with whom I wanted. Consequently, I tried to make it reflect my interests. We had art exhibitions there (I had a beautiful painting stolen which has never been recovered); we showed films; various poets read there; naturally, there was music, etc. It allowed me to express myself in the way that was the most all encompassing; and musicians who wanted to perform there knew how to deport themselves. I selected groups to perform there that I thought were relevant to the new music; it didn't mean to suggest that I personally had to like all of the music that was being performed. The artistic success of the Cellar led me and its then owner Peter Sabino to engage in the mounting of the music series The October Revolution in Jazz (its full title as annotated by Mr. Sabino), and the resultant success of that series led me to contact Cecil Taylor and the rest of those people for what I felt was then timely--the Jazz Composers' Guild.

18. When I produced the series of recordings for Savoy Records, it was because it provided me with an opportunity to record various musicians that I was involved with either as my students or associates, whom I felt were producing music of such a calibre as to warrant recording. I was given complete freedom to select the artist, design the albums, supervise the recordings, do the editing, and write the introductory portion of the liner note essay. It was quite a valuable, arduous, and thankless undertaking. But it was a necessary one that I felt, at the time, had to be done...

19. I had been teaching long before I finally came up to Bennington. I had taught at George Washington University (I was composer in residence there the summer of 1967 along with dancer-choreographer Judith Dunn); I had been a visiting artist at several universities; I had taught, again with Miss Dunn, at Columbia University Teachers' College in NY; I had founded the Free Conservatory of the University of the Streets in NY in 1967, in addition to periodically taking private students at my own studio. In certain ways, teaching had been the focal point of my research and as a result had become directly linked and vital to my work. When I left NY and came up to Bennington in 1968, I was beginning to feel that the impetus of the music that I was interested in was beginning to somewhat abate in NY. Things were becoming codified; attitudes among musicians were beginning to change. I had not fully recovered from my extreme disillusionment with the folding of the Jazz Composers' Guild (I left in late 1965 and went to Chicago for a brief spell to contemplate my future);

New York was becoming a place that had me (an old established New Yorker, I had thought) almost always feeling like a stranger; strange things were in the air. In a way, Bennington seemed to offer a way out. My son William II was three years old; free lancing was not offering me the now kind of financial situation that was necessary; I had almost totally isolated myself from things in NY, so the thinking went, why not make a real move. At first, I was at Bennington two days a week. I still worked in NY. Then I was at Bennington three days a week. Musicians came both from NY and Boston (Steve Horenstein) and Yellow Springs, Ohio (Antioch College /Arthur Brooks/) to Bennington to study with me in exchange for me using them in my fledgling (then) all girl ensemble.

At Bennington, I recorded everything--all my classes, rehearsals. This allowed me to analyse everything and make the proper corrections. I took a year off from Bennington and went to the University of Wisconsin and taught there for a year (1971-1972), and when I returned, I decided to leave NY altogether. A few offers were made to me during that period. Joachim Berendt, after hearing my recording for RCA VICTOR wrote to me asking me to come to Germany to perform. I had just finished an orchestra piece that I wanted to do, but we couldn't come to an agreement. I exchanged correspondence for a couple of years with Karl Faust of Deutsche Grammophon; they were interested in recording some works of mine, but a complication about the money came up. So, I abandoned that. During the same period, Television Station Ch. 13 (WNET?) in NY contacted me about doing a contemporary opera that I was working on, but after a few months of fruitless and time consuming talks, I had had enough of it and finally began to realize that I really needed the kind of 'isolation' that I was in. I had a large ensemble. I could do any music that I wanted. I performed when I wanted. All of my rehearsals were well attended by interested people, who seemed to respond to both my musical and other thinking. There was an interested group of students that were balanced by a rather aloof but critical and rather disinterested faculty and administration; so much like a man walking a tightrope over an ocean of piranha fish, I knew I could not fall. In certain ways, I guess, it was good for me. I produced a considerable body of work, including writings (the three books that I'm working on), paintings and drawings, and a catalogue of musical works embracing several genres.

20. In my own early work, I was rather strongly influenced by the work of Miles Davis. Very few musicians (none that I know of) have been able to resist the over seductiveness of both the approach to the instrument and the incredibly beautiful sound that he has been able to extract from it. I am not ashamed to admit that I hovered under that influence (musically and philosophically) for a considerable number of my early years. As with anything else, however, when I finally became myself the overtness of the influence abated because it wasn't necessary; it became an impediment. From what I know of life, everyone functions this way, especially those people or artists who finally do do something that may be considered as being 'theirs'. It is the nature of the human experience. An examination of my work during the 1970's (1972 to 1976 to be exact, released on the Fore label as CONSIDERATIONS I and II) will show what my musical concerns were during that period of time and how aesthe-

tically and technically I went about coming to terms with them. It is not for me to say whether Mr. Davis has in any way or manner been influenced by me. That is for your listener to decide.

21 I find the word 'jazz' both as it is used and what (to the overwhelming majority of the music publics of the world) it means a source of annoyance simply because it is always strongly suggestive of being pejorative. It too easily denotes one's social stance, limits one's artistic horizons, and codifies the financial area that is available for you. It is too limiting a term for me, and, certainly, it is too limiting for the music that I attempt to do.

22. They are 'festivals' and have nothing to do anymore with anything except some sort of festivities. The idea of new music is no longer in the vanguard of the thoughts of either the promoters or the festival goers. In the beginning, they were interesting events; now they are little more than showcase events of little significance or endurance--a mediocre haven of the same musicians playing the same old thing.

23. First, we have to define art.

24. The paintings are new simply because there is a need to do them. It is to be hoped that there is 'some change from the previous ones'. (smile)

25. First of all, there are three books that I have been working on for a number years; one is my autobiography (a portion of which has been published), an assessment of the music of the sixties as seen through my eyes, and a theoretical analysis of the thing that came out of the music of the sixties and the work--a lot of it continues. No one knows what the future will be about; we know what we would like. I will continue to work in all of the areas that currently hold my interest.

21 June 1983

Dear Judy:

This is just a short note to say 'hello' and to apprise you of some events. On Monday 13 June 1983, we had an evening of works presented in your honor, both as an artist and as a dedicated teacher. There were some dance pieces performed: Linda Dowdell presented a work for dance ensemble and music ensemble (this work had also been done previously in partial fulfillment of her degree requirements); Phoebe Neville did a striking solo (I believe she told me that it was circa 1978); Cheryl did a dance with a small group of musicians, including Arthur Brooks and Linda; and Cheryl and I did a performance of DEWHORSE. We also had mounted an exhibition of articles, interviews, critiques, reviews, posters, and many photographs (all of these from my collection) upstairs in the gallery area of Robeson House (all this took place in Robeson House).

Later, we showed RELAY to a small audience, and after that Martha, Phoebe, and myself discussed you both as a person and as a highly influential artist and teacher. I had also made a small cassette of a meeting (the last part) that had taken place in my studio in Jennings in April of 1973. You, Peter, Steve, a girl (then SEPC representative) Joanne Gallo, and myself discussed for several hours the details concerning the then emerging Black Music Division. The small part I included is at the end where we are just talking of everyday things--the meeting was over. All of this, that discussion of ten years ago and what we talked about concerning you and your work (on the 13th of June 1983) is on cassette.

I had photographs taken of the exhibit, and I'm awaiting delivery of them.

I tried to have the college proclaim that day in your honor, but something went wrong--and the technicalities indigenous to imponderables literally took over. Anyway, for those of us who were there, a sizeable and interested lot, it was your day--a day in your honor. And we all shared and basked in the knowledge that knowing you, working and studying with you, and receiving and viewing your work had made us all better people. More than anything, I hope that you can understand that.

Love,

BILL

9 April 1985

Mr. Lyle Glazier
Niles School Road
Bennington, Vermont 05201

Dear Lyle:

I have gotten the copy of the article that you have written for the Banner. I think that it reads quite well, and it will be interesting to see what the response, if there is any, will be. To my knowledge, and if memory serves me correctly, this is the first time since I've been here that anyone has seen fit to write a public review of my work for the paper, and, indeed, it is both flattering, illuminating, and manages to place me in the position of viewing my work from the vantage point of the person not being more than cursorily familiar with my work. What you have written is quite clear and a bit metaphysical, and I would imagine that that was your intention.

I am glad that you were both able to attend the concert and that, prior to that, I was able to get you a copy both of the article on my collaboration with dancer-choreographer Judith Dunn in the current issue of CONTACT QUARTERLY and the chapter from my book that is being published in the limited edition of the trumpet solos (ca 1970-1976) by CADENCE LTD; I can see that you were able to come to terms with the nature of my work as that work seeks to attempt clarification of both the philosophy that would naturally underline and underwrite that philosophy and the methods that I make use of in both the rendering (realization) and teaching of the principles that are matrixed to that work. You have made astute observations, some of which there would have been no way for me (as the person involved in the doing of that work) to have been consciously aware of at the point of entry (as Roger Riggins would say) of that work.

As you would readily know, when one works from the perspective of the work being the most honest and realistic representation of the artist (your own poetry and critical assessments of current things political and social attests to this /that that I've been made aware of/) there is sometimes (without that being the intent at all) of a kind of almost forced alienation that naturally manages to become created between the audience and the artist. And sometimes, I feel that this is so because the natural tendency of some of us to be that intense about what we do doesn't allow an iota of compromise, relating to a conscious feeling about either who the potential audience might be or what, conceivably, might be either their thoughts or feelings relating to the work. In other words, since for some of us compromise, when one is absolutely certain that one is right in both assumptions and attitudes (based on past experiences and current beliefs--especially when beliefs are continuously buttressed by confrontations that continuously serve to further cement perceptions), is something that cannot, as an entity, exist, one becomes almost intransigent about both the directions of the work and the intensity of that work. Obviously, I'm entering the arena of rambling, some-

thing that is not unusual for me, especially when I have become both interested and excited about something.

Anyway, thank you for reading the aforementioned articles, for attending the concert, and especially for the kind words that you have said about my work for those persons who might be both interested and desirous of that kind of comment about what I attempt to do. As I said at the concert, I expect to be recording the entirety of that work sometime in May in Paul Robeson House, and you most certainly will be invited to attend. Again, thank you for your observations and kind words.

Sincerely,

BILL DIXON

Mr. Donald Clarke
28 Anlaby road
Teddington, Middlesex
TW11 OPU
England

Dear Mr. Clarke:

I am in receipt of your letter of 7 November 1985. I would have answered sooner, but I am currently on sabbatical and have been rather busy with projects that literally seem to devour almost all of my time.

I am quite pleased that you are involved in the venture of which you make mention in your letter. It is my feeling that the more information that will be accessible to an interested readership /regarding this music/ the more positive things that we will be able to expect from younger students in the future.

I am enclosing my current brochure and vita. The information and material therein is quite up to date and serves to make a more accurate representation of both my work and where that work has been done than anything else that is currently available. There are some corrections in your compilation that I will, however, detail to you. Contrary to what has been annotated elsewhere, I met Cecil Taylor in 1951 /at the Sportsmen's Club up in Harlem/ NOT in 1959. In 1961 or 1962, I began to focus my musical attention on original compositions. The group that I co-led with Archie Shepp was the ARCHIE SHEPP-BILL DIXON QUARTET, which /after we had participated in the HELSINKI YOUTH FESTIVAL, held in Helsinki, Finland the summer of 1962/ I left when we returned to the States; and the NY CONTEMPORARY FIVE, for which I, originally, wrote all of the music, was formed with Archie Shepp, John Tchicai, Don Cherry, Don Moore /bass/, and drummer J.C. Moses.

For a more up to date discography, you can consult the material that I am enclosing with this letter. I was not only 'active' in the OCTOBER REVOLUTION IN JAZZ, it was I who organized it, along with a filmmaker, then living in NY, named Peter Sabino. Out of the workings of that, the JAZZ COMPOSERS' GUILD was then formed; and this came about when Cecil Taylor and I discussed the significance of it at the termination of the festivities of the OCTOBER REVOLUTION.

The Free Conservatory of the University of the Streets was only made possible through the original efforts of a group of young Puerto Rican men who had elicited the attention and some financing from some white entrepreneurs that allowed the University of the Streets to become an entity. After the University was formed, I was hired to teach music there; and out of that teaching situation, I then /in 1968/ formed the Free Conservatory of the University of the Streets. Due to the fact that both Arnold Johnson /the actor-teacher/ and I shared the same room for our work /he was teaching drama there/

and the fact that both factions were strong, while it was the University of the Streets that had applied for the grant that they received from Washington /I had had nothing to do with the application for the grant/, when the people who were from Washington arrived to assess the merits of the ENTIRE program by visiting my large orchestra rehearsal and Johnson's drama class, I was presented with the check for the grant. This, then, is what happened and has resulted in the myth of my securing a 'large grant' for the University of the Streets.

In 1976 at the invitation of the French Ministry of Culture, I was invited to perform my long work, especially written for the occasion, AUTUMN SEQUENCES FROM A PARIS DIARY at the French Autumn Festival in Paris. In the recording done for RCA VICTOR, INTENTS AND PURPOSES: THE BILL DIXON ORCHESTRA, recorded in 1966-1967, the works are: "Metamorphosis: 1962-1966" /for orchestra/; "Voices" /for a smaller ensemble; and alto flute (overdubbed)/; and "Nightfall Pieces II" /trumpet (overdubbed)/. To correct another myth, I have NEVER PLAYED WITH John Coltrane; although, while it was being prepared, I hoped that I'd get the call to participate on the ASCENSION recording. As is well known, that was not to be.

Anyway, here is some material that might serve to make your endeavor a more accurate one. Should you have anymore questions that you feel that I can help you with, feel free to be in contact with me.

I'll close now; it was good to hear from you, and I wish you success with your work.

BILL DIXON
3 December 1985

PS There is a WHO'S WHO IN THE INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY OF EDUCATION /2nd Edition, 1980/ that I've been informed was published in Cambridge, England. I am supposed to have an entry in that book. If it wouldn't be too much trouble, would you get a xerox copy of my entry and send it on to me when you have a spare moment? I'd be interested in obtaining a copy for my reference if THAT is possible.

PPS The ARCHIE SHEPP-BILL DIXON QUARTET was on the SAVOY label; the other players included: DON MOORE and REGGIE WORKMAN /on double-basses/ and PAUL COHEN and HOWARD McRAE /on drums/. I'm sorry, I don't have any biographical information on J. Cheatham. Regarding the limited edition of trumpet solos on CADENCE, it is both my understanding and the nature of the contract that there are only to be 500 RECORDINGS released PERIOD!

Mr. Wilhelm Bettelheim
Laxenburgerstr. 32
Vienna
Austria 1100

Dear Mr. Bettelheim:

This is a much belated answer to your letter that you sent to me while I was in Vienna last February. I am very sorry for not having answered sooner, but in the process of packing my papers, clothes, etc. when I left Vienna at the end of the Workshop, I managed to misplace your letter. Recently, or I should say, last June I moved, here in the States, to another address. Of recent date, in going through some papers of mine, quite by chance I came upon your letter. I hope that this explanation will serve to convince you that it was not by design that I failed to answer your letter sooner.

I do appreciate the kind words that you offer relating to your feelings concerning the nature of my work. It is always both of value and good for the ego when an artist, through correspondence with a listener, can be made aware that his work has, indeed, been both understood and valued.

With specific regard to your questions as to which players in the history of the music have been of special interest to me, I can answer that almost all of the strong and innovational players on all of the instruments have served to present me with something musical and philosophical that I have been able to make further use of. Of course, I have to make special mention of Louis Armstrong's work; and it might interest you to know that when I was a small boy, around seven or eight years old, I was taken to hear him perform at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem by my stepfather. I didn't know anything about music; I'd never heard, to my knowledge, an instrumentalist before, although I had heard piano players; and the minute I heard that sound, I knew that I wanted to play the trumpet. On the way home from the theatre that night, I told my stepfather that I wanted a trumpet.

I have always liked Roy Eldridge's work, and as a young boy, I heard Rex Stewart /who played with Ellington/ many, many times in person. I also liked Sunny Dunham, Henry 'Red' Allen, Bill Coleman, Peanuts Holland. When I started to study /after the war, in 1946/ I was immediately attracted to Dizzy's work, Miles Davis, Fats Navarro, Kenny Dorham, Tony Frucella. The latter two players I got to know personally.

Like many other trumpet players, I also listened to, enjoyed, and learned a great deal from the playing of Bobby Hackett. There was a recording he made with Glenn Miller /RHAPSODY IN BLUE/, and I THINK it's him, where he plays an incredibly beautiful, short solo that I can almost still remember.

As incredible a player as Clifford Brown was when he was alive, I failed to give him the attention that I should have. I guess it was because my interest in the horn leaned in another direction, and it wasn't until about seven or eight years ago that I fully began to appreciate the genius of his approach to the instrument.

I was incredibly caught up with the work of Booker Little. I thought that he was one of the finest players to ever touch the instrument. And I have spent many, many hours listening, as do other trumpet players, to the flawless work of Art Farmer, who, as you know, lives in Vienna.

Of the 'newer' players, I have found Don Cherry's trumpet playing AND piano playing to highly inspirational.

I must close this letter now, and I hope that I've been able to at least touch on a portion of your question. You must understand that while I have listed SOME of the trumpet players that I've listened to, learned from, and paid attention to, this by no means is a definitive list. A definitive list is, for me, impossible to give, since all of the good players have, for me, all done something special on the instrument. And in that capacity I HAVE to mention Maurice Andre and Thad Jones. You've given me an idea; perhaps I should do an article on trumpet players. Do you know of anyone that would want to publish it?

I expect to be in Vienna before March, and that event, I will look you up in the telephone book and give you a call.

Best wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely,

BILL DIXON
10 January 1986

PS There is no way to leave out the remarkable Clark Terry!!!

"Metamorphosis"

Slowly

ALTO English Horn

cello

BASS CLAR. BASS TRUMP

BASS I

BASS II

Col BASS I

128 256 704
 .04 64
 1.5 320

English Horn lead

ALTO E.H.

cello

B.C. B.T.

Basses

(I) (II)

(Col. BASS I)

rec: INTENTS AND PURPOSES:
 THE BILL DIXON ORCHESTRA:
 RCA Victor LSP: 3844/1967/

ORCHESTRA: [OUT]

percussion duet: sm. Triangle, Lge Triangle, med. Triangle

[Sporadic] trumpet

ON CUE: letters I-I-I

UNIS.

BASS I & II percussion: freely

rec: INTENTS AND PURPOSES:
 THE BILL DIXON ORCHESTRA:
 RCA Victor LSP: 3844/1967/

Percussion "Solos"

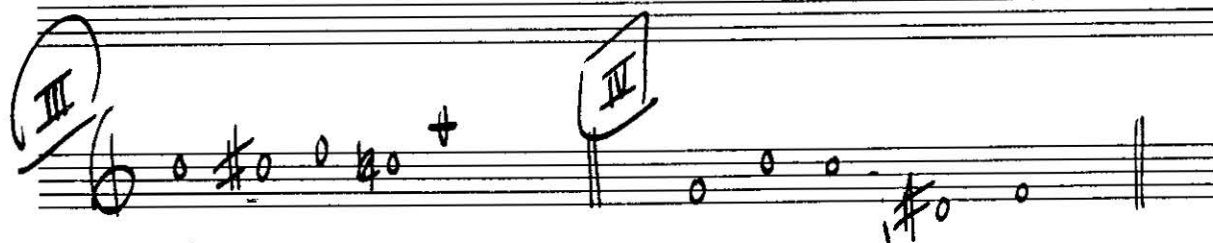
Handwritten musical notation for Percussion "Solos". The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines, with annotations such as "Flute plays freely", "Tom Toms & cymbals [letting them ring]", "trill (hoops)", "trill (hoops)", "Intensity (hit with Taste & abandon)", "horn throat sounds", "come down so that good tones are discernible", and "Tom Toms dynamically & sporadically".

Percussion part for CLEVE POZAR NYC/ 1966-67
100

Handwritten musical notation for Percussion "Solos". The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines, with annotations such as "20 sec.", "play freely slow, long-held high harmonics & sounds", "repeat phrases in any order & play in an appropriate manner to material & orchestra", "on c6b: slowly", "count medium 2", "slowly", and "fast count 4".

Orchestra work: rehearsed at the Free Conservatory
of the UNIVERSITY OF THE STREETS /NYC/ 1967
101

Pitches*



* Tenor = I, II, III, IV
 Tuba = [A] [B] [C]
 Trumpet = microtone glisses + [A]
 Tuba = the same

NYC-Bennington, Vt. /1968/

© 1968 Metamorphosis Music



NYC /1969/

[A] TITIC-BASS CHAIR DRUMS

[B] BASS & PIANO + CYMBALS

I *slowly* *tenor + Tenor + Bass & Drums*

II *fast*

slow *fast* *slow*

Tenor (freely) + Tenor (freely) duet + Bass & drum

NYC /ca. 1969-70/

(3) $\frac{1}{2}X = \frac{1}{2}+$ $\frac{1}{2}-$
 $\frac{2}{3}X = \frac{1}{2}-$ $\frac{1}{2}+$
 $\frac{3}{4}X = \frac{1}{2}-$ $\frac{1}{2}+$

Bennington, Vt. /1974/

Armenian Sequences from A. H. H. S. D. I. R. K. Y.

"Entrances"

by BILL DIXON
MUSICIAN - COMPOSER

July 1976

Paris, /1976/

108

(B) Only

Vienna, /1976/; rec: FOR FRANZ;
Pipe Records, Vienna, Austria

109

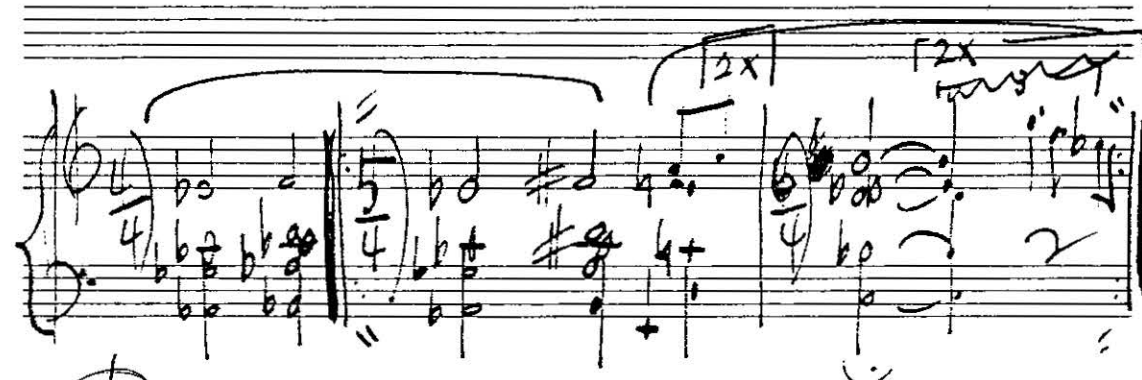
A4 played with **A3+**

X PIANO I

PIANO II
Plays **A + A1**

B PIANOS I + II **FAST**

PIANO **slow**



112

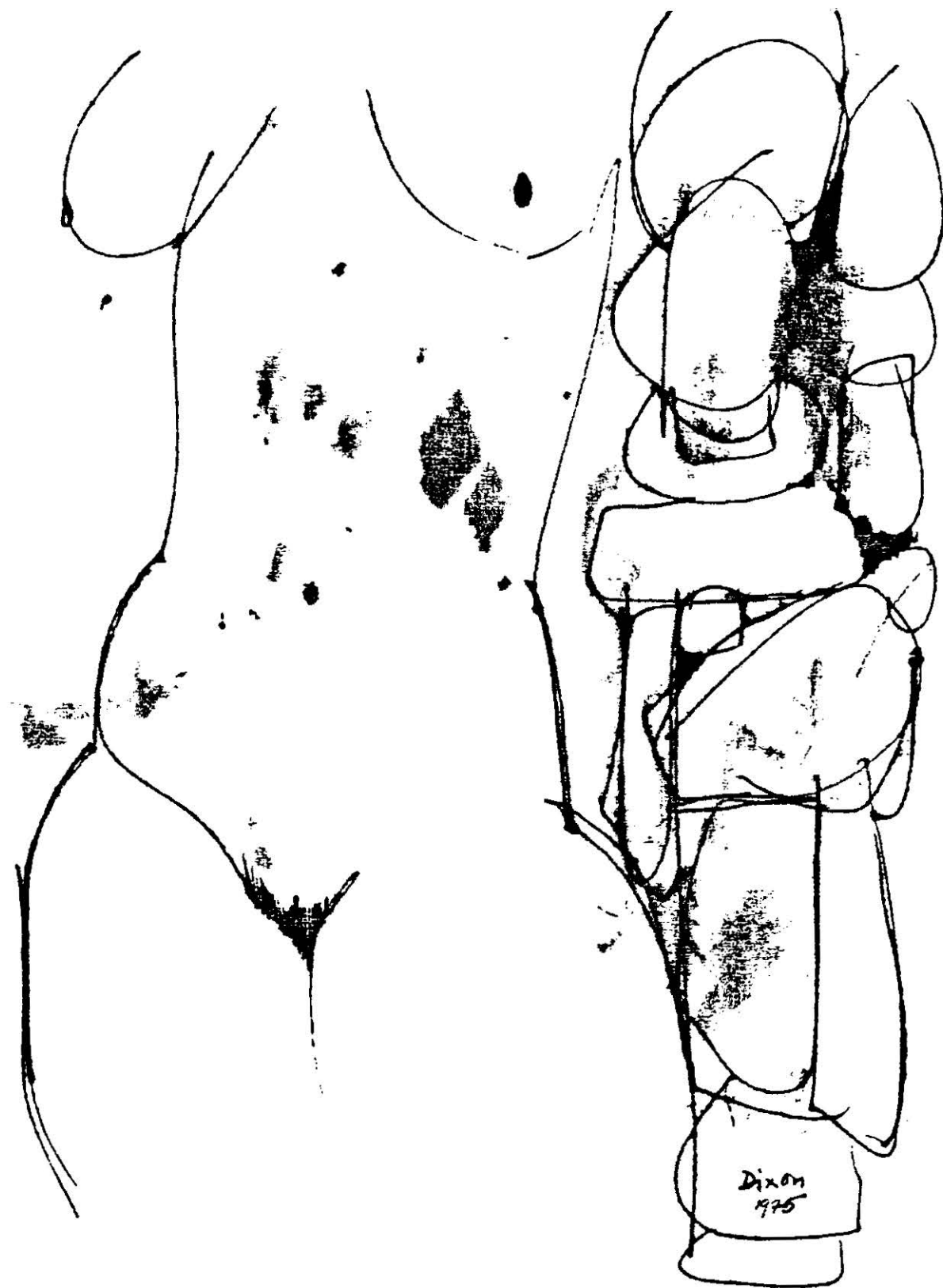


MEL BAY piano reduction for work for small ensemble,
Bennington, Vt. /1983-84/

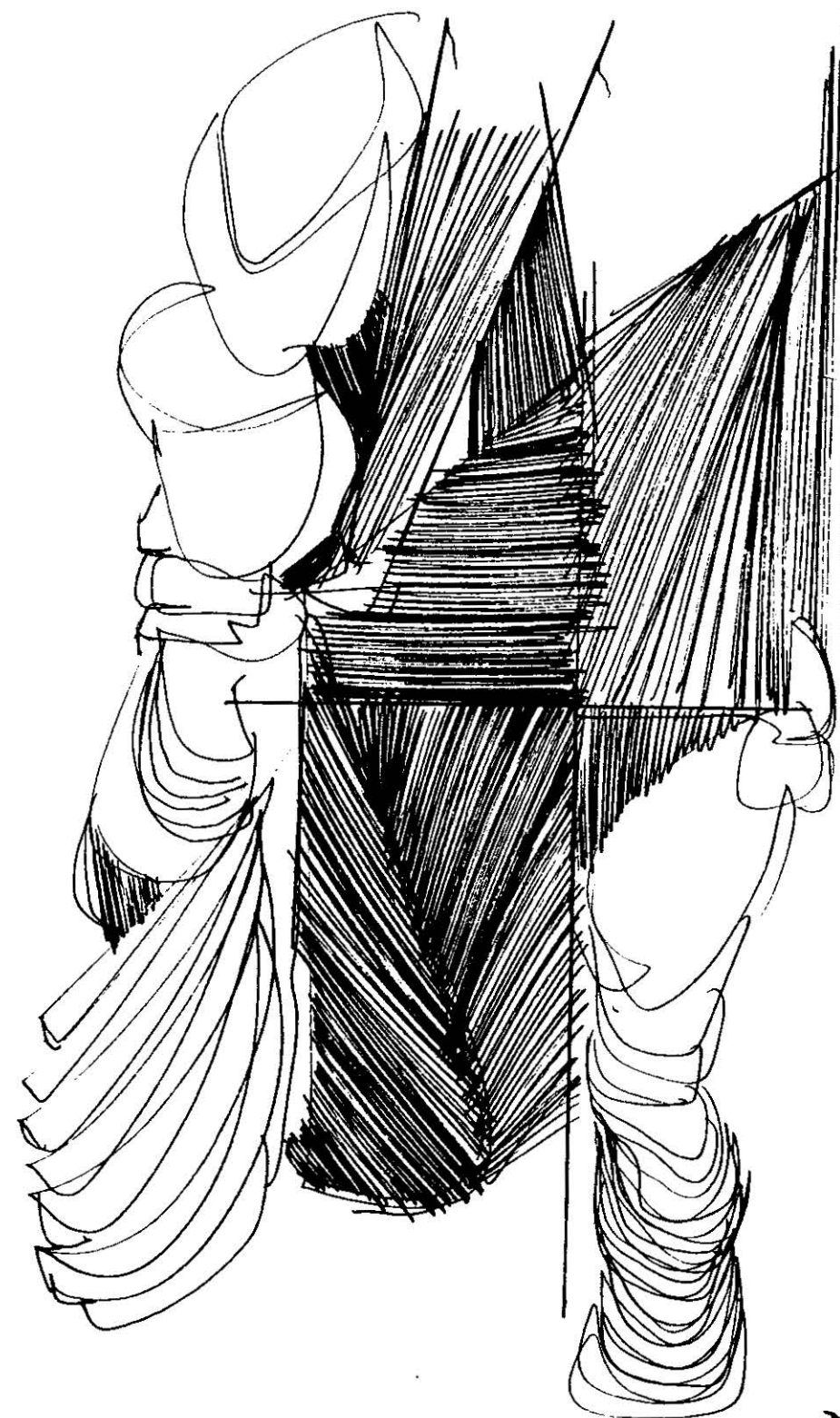


Dixon 1973

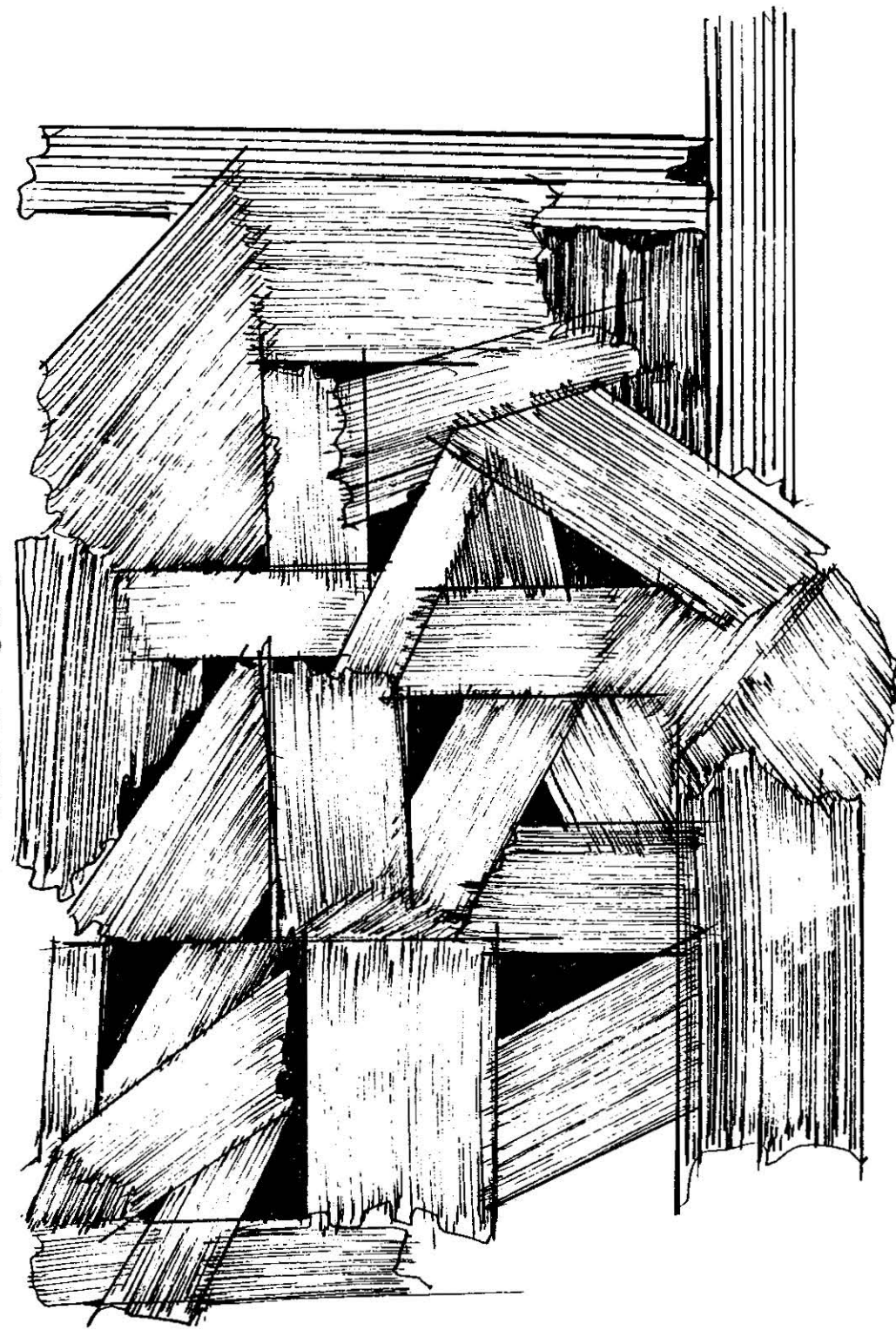
113



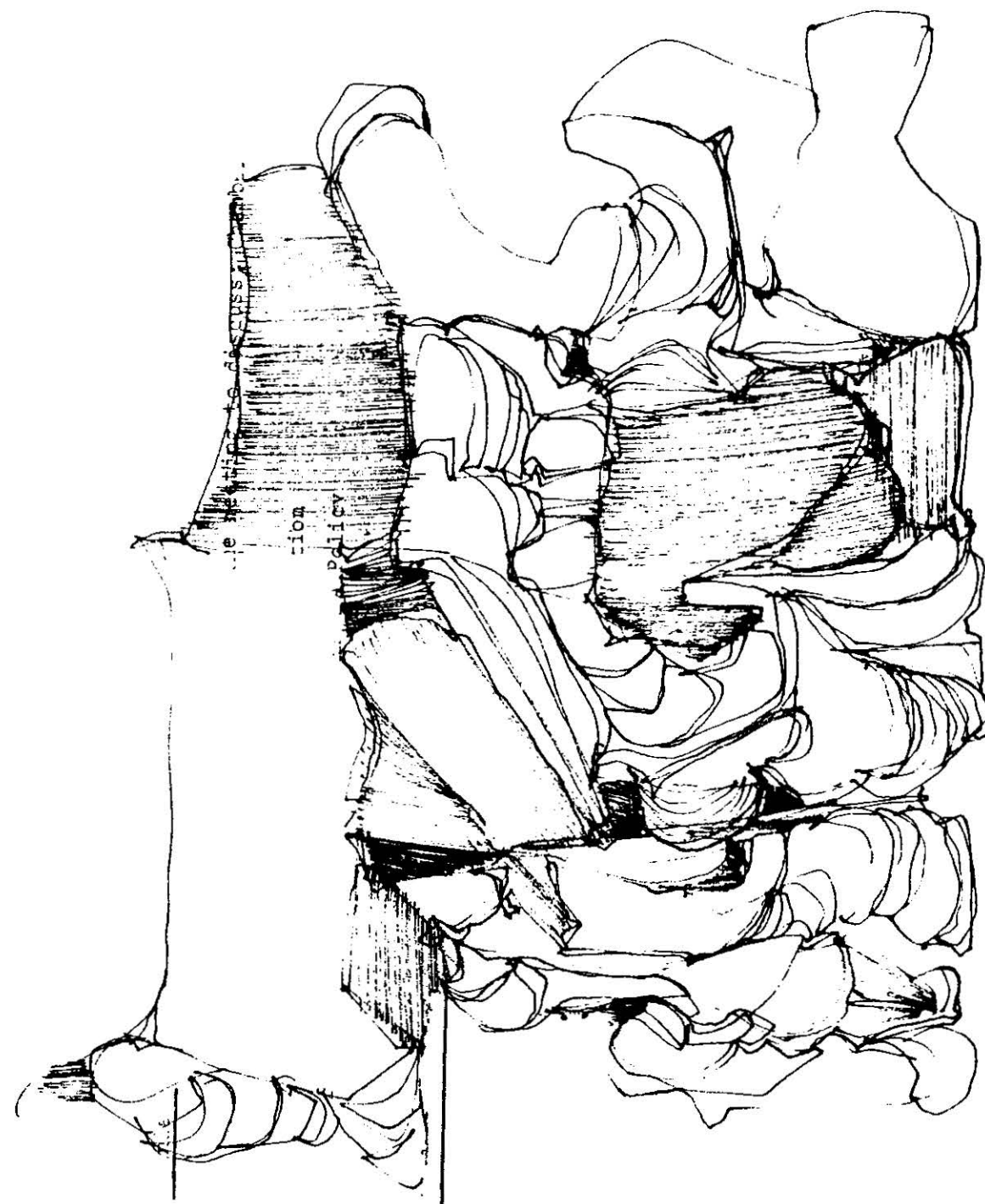
Dixon
1975



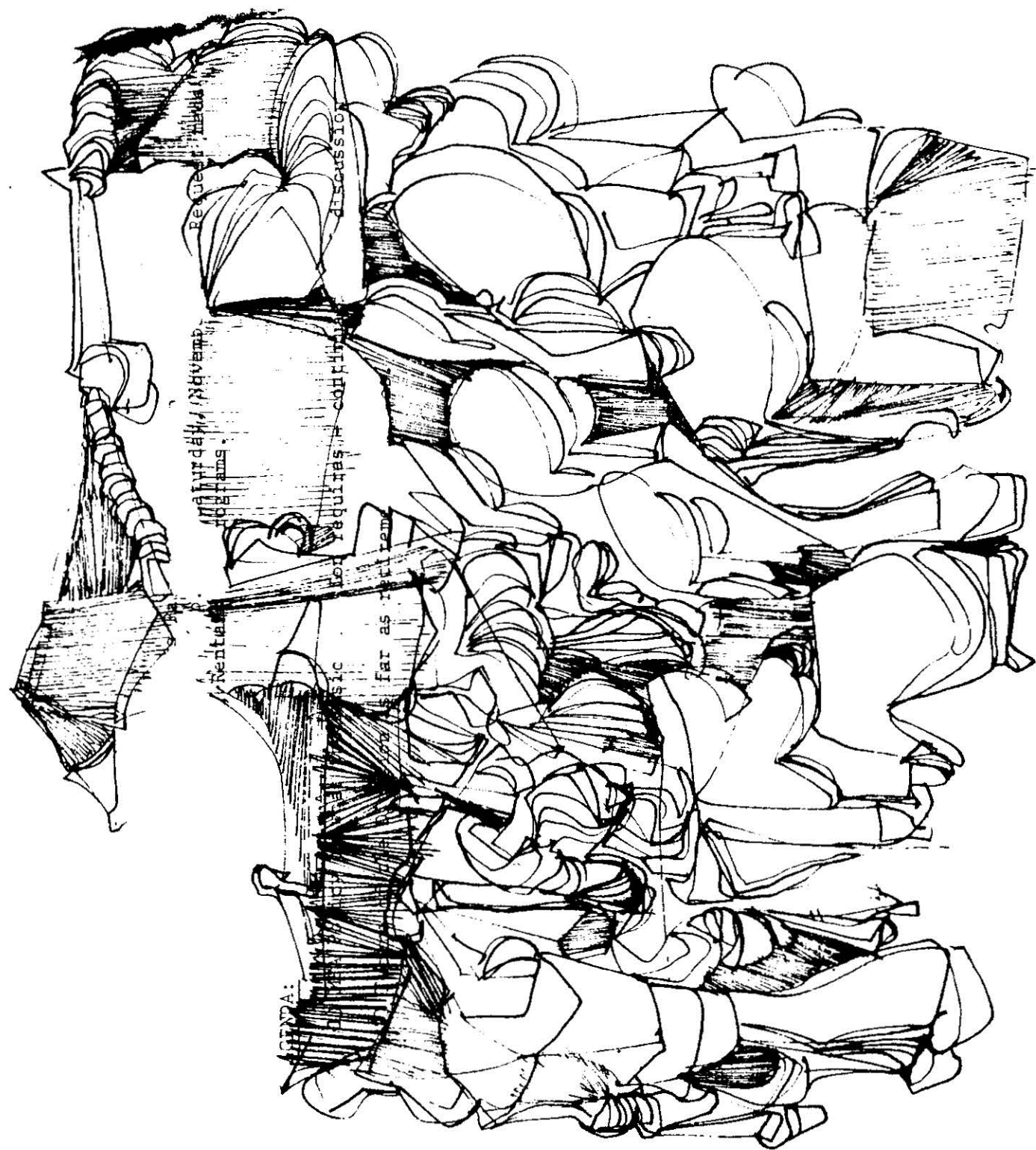
Dixon
1983



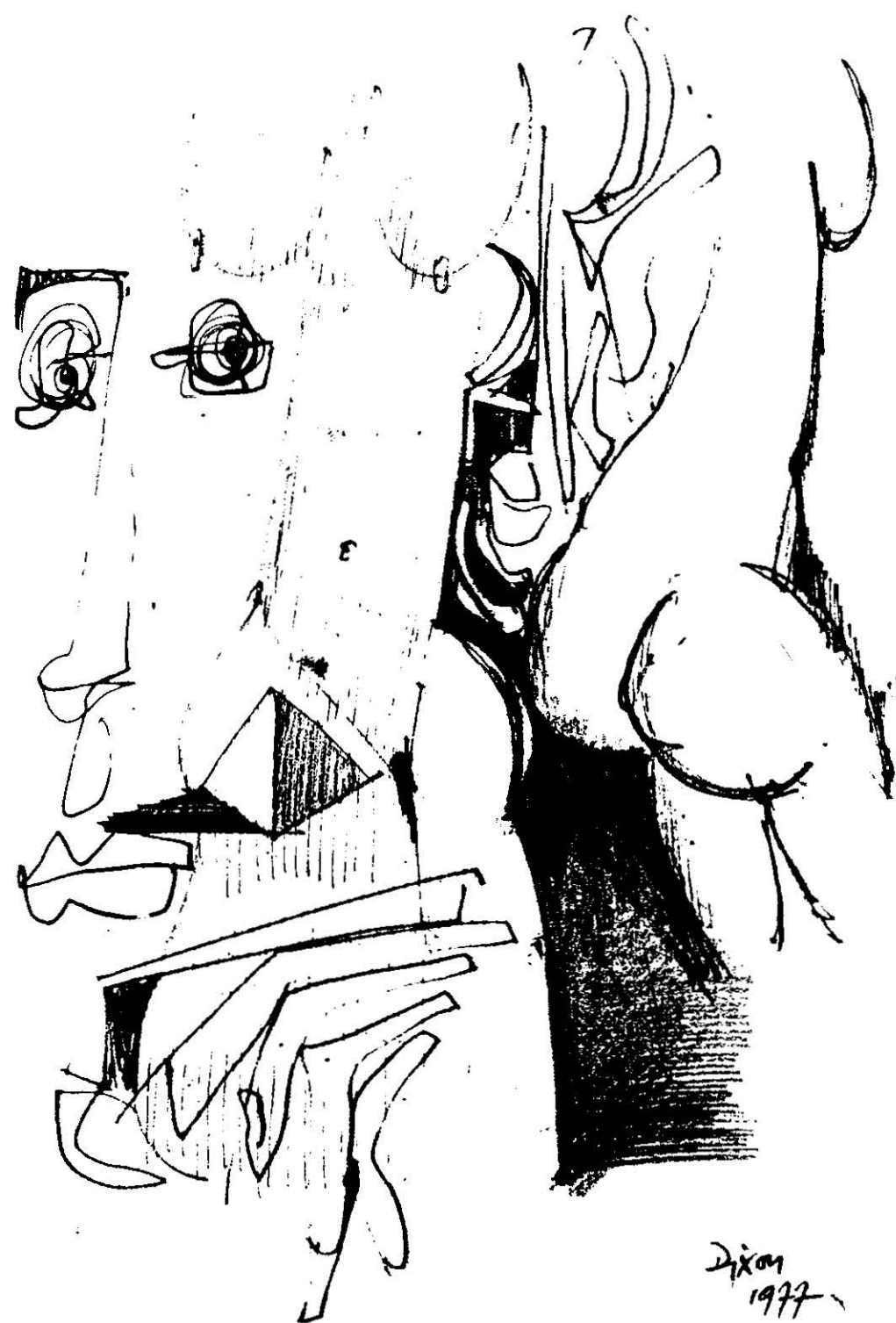
DIXON
1984



DIXON
1986



Dixon



Dixon
1977

Bass (A) **Part II**

Arco

8x

E

Orchestra work: rehearsed at the Free Conservatory
of the UNIVERSITY OF THE STREETS /NYC/ 1967

shaky

shaky

shaky

f

Tenor saxophone

Madison, Wisc. /1972/

A Tenor (b. So play)

other instruments:

Ten B - Bar - Tenor -

Brass high [intense]

Drum -

A1 Tpts = high harmonics

Piano = soloist. only
chords - etc.

Tpt enters

to A

to Alth (Don)

over

Drum = low - intense

performance score to LETTERS TO MYSELF,
/orchestra work/ Bennington, Vt., /1974-1975/

Handwritten musical score for page 124, featuring multiple staves with complex notation, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score includes parts for Tenor (Tenor), Bass (Bass), and various other instruments. The notation is dense and includes many handwritten annotations and corrections.

124

Paris, /1976/

Handwritten musical score for page 125, featuring multiple staves with complex notation, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score includes parts for Tenor (Tenor), Bass (Bass), and various other instruments. The notation is dense and includes many handwritten annotations and corrections.

'For Cecil Taylor'; rec. BILL DIXON IN ITALY,
Vol.1, SoulNote SN 1008 /1980/

3rd Trumpets

Handwritten musical notation for 3rd Trumpets, featuring staves A through D. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. Annotations include "HARMON" and "PUSH OUT" on staff A, and "OPEN" on staff B. The bottom staff includes the instruction "2X = 1/2 higher".

SUMMERDANCE; Bennington, Vt./1981/

Handwritten musical notation for 3rd Trumpets, featuring staves A through D. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The notation is heavily crossed out with diagonal lines, indicating a revised or discarded version of the score.

sketch done in Hoosick Falls, NY /1982-83/

For me, the JAZZ COMPOSERS' GUILD dissolved sometime around the end of 1965. William was born in September of 1965. Also, near the end of that year or the beginning of 1966, I completed my portion and performance of Aldo Tambellini's BLACK ZERO. GROUND SPEED, which had its first performance at the old Dance Theatre Workshop in February of 1966, was also, for the pre-performance regearsals, the place where I first met Jack Moore. A year later, on 24 February 1967, Jack performed in the work PAPERS, something for which I designed the costumes, made the constructions (an enormous amount of paper airplanes), designed and made the sound emitting jewelry of laminated balsa wood that the dancers (Jack, Barbara Ensley, and the late Judith Dunn) wore, and did the makeup--all of this in addition to the composition and performance of the music set for trumpet, tenor saxophone, cello, and tuba.

When we were children, because I was the oldest, it was my instructed duty and obligation to be the one that had to run the errands for the older people on my block. One couldn't accept money for this. And our games of stoopball, boxball, ringaleevey, or our sessions of storytelling were authorized for interruption for the servicing of these errands. It was incredibly annoying, but one (as a child) couldn't, even by alteration of facial countenance, reveal that this was other than an extreme pleasure that one was being called to attend to.

One of the older ladies (they weren't called women then) was quite well known as an eccentric. She always, in her infrequent appearances, dressed heavily in black, and her face was even covered to the extent that it was reminiscent of those women from the middle east and other places, who by cultural decree are obligated to keep their faces and bodies shroudedly from view. She was a small woman, and the air of strange, to me, exotic incenses seemed to cling to her. We always spoke in hushed tones whenever she appeared. As providence would have it, at least twice a week, she would appear on the stoop of her house (about four or five houses from mine) and would beckon in our direction until my attention was caught, and she would send me to the butchers. There was only

one thing that she ever bought, and that was a pound or a half pound of beef hearts. Only once in that period of time was I ever let into the house, because normally she would crack the door, as older people were prone to do in those days, and cautiously take the package from me with one hand and, in a similar reverse motion, suddenly seize my other hand and push into it four or five pennies. Of course, I had been forbidden by my parents to accept money, but this was one 'don't' I chose to ignore.

Once, I returned from the store more speedily than was ordinarily the case, and when she retired into a heavily velvet draped room after beckoning me to come in and "wait", I was able to see what the inside of the house looked like. The room was very ornately furnished; there were all of those photographs in gilt-edged frames on the walls, and the pictures themselves were placed on very oriental looking wall coverings. The rug on the floor was thick and almost the design of the wall coverings; there were small lamps and very old, heavily overstuffed chairs with velvet coverings. And the room was incredibly dark with no sound ensuing, and there was the smell of that incense. That was 1935.

It is now 1985, and as Cecil Taylor questions in his essay for UNIT STRUCTURES, "Where are you, Bud?", I too can ask where the other two are, because there were once three boys, and two have suddenly and without reason gone. And there is only one left.

"Jack, do you remember the sessions where we worked on simulating Lord Greystokes' great apes' victory cry for inclusion in the work RELAY?"

The ideal setting for this small song I originally envisaged as having 11 Balanese dancing girls reciting the Koran (in non-colloquial Serbo Croat), partnered by 13 seven foot Watusi male dancers, all dealing with a metrical setting of 11/13th time. The second setting, a substitute for the first, concerned itself with two lovely, slender women, dressed exquisitely in non-reflecting black who would periodically execute something of old world elegance in complete and total disregard to the rhythmic parameter of the music, while preparing for the serving of tea for the two of them and a solitary piano player dressed completely in white.

All of this would have taken place in the room that that little old lady inhabited in 1935.

Alas, there was no budget for this, and every airline that I contacted showed little appreciation for the idea when I suggested a donated trip on their parts.

"Jack, do you remember C. Avedon?"

I will miss your work here--your presence here. I have learned an incredible amount from you, and some of the songs that I continue to like owe their genesis to my being able to conceive, test, and work them out in your Tech Class. So, while your thesis will perhaps no longer serve to dictate the timing and placement of my anacrusis, I will continue to remember both you and your work.

Thank you, Dr. Moore.

Your friend and former colleague,

BILL DIXON

8 June 1985

Since my last commercially available recording INTENTS AND PURPOSES: THE BILL DIXON ORCHESTRA /released as RCA VICTOR LSP-3844 in 1967 in the United States, released in Japan as RCA 6022 in 1972, and released in France in 1976 as RCA FXL 1-7331/ I have made it a point to personally record for study and documentation all my performances and the preceding major rehearsals. The material on these two recordings have thus been extrapolated from a collection of works that span the years 1972-1976.

For whatever reason, I have been one of the few musicians in this area of what is designated Black Music to make rather extensive and creative use of a teaching platform as a base area for my work. In other words, for years now much of the actual realisation of my work has evolved from the teaching philosophies /and what might also be called the experimentations/ that are an important and vital part of creative teaching in the arts. This primarily concerns the dispensing of information /theoretical and methodological/ and material and the consequent coming to terms with both ideas and their realization.

An early criticism of /and objection to/ my work centered around what was thought and advanced as my not being a 'strong leader' type or 'strong soloist'. The fact of the matter is that in a great deal of my work, I have never considered it to be a drawback to allow other members of the group to speak at length with their own voices in my music. On the contrary, I have felt that that approach revealed more of the totality of the situation and focused and attempted to show the entire scope approach to both composition and the ultimate realization of that composition, performance.

When one is responsible for the creation and design of a composition /the composer/ it hardly seems necessary whenever anyone takes a 'solo' /as long as that solo is within the aesthetic confines of the composition/ to separate that solo from the totality of the situation. In other words, it has always, to me, seemed a redundancy to write a

composition and then use musicians sparingly, simply because it was felt that I, as the leader, should blow my brains out to show some uncomprehending and insensitive critic that, indeed, I did have the capability of sustaining a large amount of hearing time through an overt use of physicality.

As the work in this collection will attest, I, also, like the solo form, principally because in that form, the performer becomes totally responsible for everything. The solo in this situation is constructed from the standpoint of orchestra--the solo as total piece. A beautifully thought out, felt, and executed solo can sometimes elicit feelings that can make one's hair stand on end. And in its elemental and primal nakedness, there stands revealed /in this solo/ all that we hear and experience in the best conceived and realized orchestra pieces. Therefore, the soloist should know thoroughly what he is doing or attempting to do, so that the idea of success or failure will exert only minimal influence. I have also worked within the framework of the duet or duo form, and there is an example of that work included here.

If you play for a year, upon later analysis of that year's work, both a method and philosophy will be revealed in that playing. If you play even randomly, without recourse to 'thinking' about anything for a year, the same principles will be extant. In essence, we can broadly say that there is always a method, always a technique. There is always an aesthetic concern. There is always a reason. These things simply have to be recognized as being in existence in the first place and then, sometimes, assiduously looked for.

The essential difference between what is called notational composition and instrumental improvisation lies in the fact that notational composition /in the truest sense/ allows the musician or composer time to either pre-think everything, to some degree think ahead, or after the act has been completed, if he is dissatisfied, to eliminate it and begin again. Whatever the improvising musician or composer does, whether he or anyone else is pleased with it, he's stuck with it. It's a final. There is no eraser on his 'pencil', his instrument. However, it is my feeling that there is always notation. Nothing appears either by itself or for itself. Things come from

somewhere, and for the group there are always 'directions'. When one is playing, if to the slightest degree any kind of reference is made concerning what is to be done in any form or manner /by physical reference, verbal reference, aural reference, 'signals' (a look)/, then you have proceeded to engage in notation.

For reasons far too numerous to detail here, I have been able to erect works arising out of ideas and concerns of interest to me without excessive recourse to contemplating the plausibility of cause and effect. The principal reason for this, however, is predicated on the fact that I have chosen to subsidize my music by my teaching. Therefore, I have not had to concern myself, as musicians oftentimes find it necessary to do, about the receptiveness of an audience. I have not made that my primary concern for doing music. True, that premise has also not allowed my music to reach the ears of, perhaps, other groups of interested persons, but, of course, that is something that generally is outside the domain of an artist anyway. When one does a work or when one has an idea, unless one is bound by the dictates of a commercial enterprise /a film score, music for a special event/ where the guidelines have been set by an outside person, one is free to explore and should develop the idea in the way and manner that seems most logical and suitable. Naturally, what happens after is contingent upon luck.

I'm not, however, even remotely suggesting that one does anything to consciously make an audience suffer. What I am saying is that in art music, it has been understood and expected /subsequently, those musicians engaged in those areas of artistic expression have been subsidized to deal exclusively with ideas and the realization of those ideas/ that audiences would, naturally, be small.

As an artist I do music that I like, music that I want to do, music that arises out of ideas that excite me and that I feel I must do. I cannot be concerned with what the tastes of the moment are. Pragmatically speaking, whether I wanted to change or in any way alter the tastes of mass audiences I could not, simply because neither I nor any other musician or composer possesses that kind of power. Therefore, it is my feeling that one must always affect or make the attempt to do what one thinks is psychically and philosophically the

best, the most productive, and the most spiritually rewarding. In fact, were everyone in the world to do those things of paramount interest to them /admittedly, some form of anarchy/ and attempted to do those 100 percent, it would undoubtedly make the world a more pleasant place.

For those who love, respect, and need it, art and the idea of art is, obviously, of tremendous importance. It is probably even more important, albeit subliminally, to those incapable of conceiving an idea from the standpoint of purity because of considerations that compel them to measure almost everything in terms of 'top ten' and other financial considerations. How many people will attend the performance; how many will purchase recordings; who is number one; will the piece of music make the charts; etc. As a result, in their feverish endeavors to 'create' /always fusion or synthesis/ because theirs is a world affected by a paucity of ideas, they are forced to go directly to the sources of art.

The role of the artist /what is he; what is he supposed to do; for whom is this 'thing' done and why; etc./ and the manifestations of that role continue to serve as source material for debate and discussion. As far as I'm concerned, the artist, as a functioning person in the society, has principally one purpose and consequently one role, to, as faithfully as possible, come to terms with the work.

Whether we want to or not, we must remember that it is always prime time for the buyers of anything. Consequently, those gifted and creative people who have made gains and have advanced their work /on any level/ to an interested public, who have, at the same time, been able to avoid complete surrender of their souls, have not only been an extremely talented and enduring lot but also talented in their abilities to resist the overt artistic domination of the awesome 'cultural' powers that be.

THOUGHTS ON THE FORMATION OF THE ENSEMBLE (1968-69)

For many of these young musicians, the nightclub, which had been the mainstay of the music, was never to serve as any kind of financial or artistic (a place to play and be paid for the playing) reality. The day (or night) of the session was obviously over. Obviously, for the simple reason that with so many of the musicians now, almost for the first time, only concentrating on the writing, performing, and perfection of original works (and in this instance not original melodies written over the harmonic framework of show tunes or the 12-bar blues, but original from the standpoint that everything was invented and 'belonged' to the composer) it would be impossible for a musician to 'sit in' with another group without the kind of attention to detail to that group's music, much as formerly musicians had had to give to the learning of the blues and the standards and originals that were based on those standards.

The music was gloriously played in painters' lofts, photographers' studios, dance studios, at parties, and almost every location (with the exception of the by now almost 'commercial' nightclub) that you can imagine. In the Village the coffee house became the contemporary headquarters for almost all of the experimental groups without a 'name' and, therefore, not too risky for anyone to employ. In the early sixties Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, Pharoah Sanders (known then as Little Rock), Don Cherry, Wilbur Ware, Billy Higgins, Sunny Murray, Dave Pike, Sonny Clarke, Don Ellis, etc. were all playing on Bleecker Street. Of course there were others, but this isn't meant to be a Who's Who of the musicians thus involved.

In a relatively short time, it became obvious to the more than casual observer where (if the music was to continue to survive as an art force /by now the audiences that, formerly in the fifties that is, had been the audience for the music were heavily with the rock scene/) it was to go. And what the musicians, who for the most part were never going to receive any reasonable financial remuneration for their endeavors, were going to have to do was to find (as visual artists had always had to do in the past) patrons.

The music (the music that was of the time, being made in the time, but not being HEARD by enough people AT the time) was going to have to be subsidized. The 'patron', it was naturally thought and assumed, was to be the college and the university; and this became necessary for the musicians and composers who were in the vanguard of the music's development, although many of the more successful other musicians were 'scared' into thinking that the music had died, this time for good, or was very ill.

In the college, naturally, the student musicians were going to prove to be quite a different kind of musician. He was, first of all, a student, not in a conservatory but in an institution that was oriented towards dispensing to the student the trappings that go into the making of what is strangely defined as a well-rounded person. This student could not, in all fairness to himself and to reality, be expected to practice his instrument the necessary four to five hours a day. Although some of them did indeed find it necessary to do just that. This liberal arts college student, generally, did not come prepared with some of the basic necessities that are almost a must for the improvising musician. And how many times were the words to be echoed in the classrooms: "I just don't understand what John Coltrane (circa FAVORITE THINGS, at that) is doing," it being known by some, at the same time, that they also didn't 'understand' (if 'understanding' is ever really possible) what it was that Mozart had done either, but that it finally had generally been ACCEPTED.

They didn't know chords, chord progressions, scales; the construction of scales, harmony, or theory; and couldn't read or understand chord symbols. So, literally, one had to start from scratch. And scratch led to the formation of the Ensemble.

Excerpted from THE FIFTH OF OCTOBER, the autobiography of Bill Dixon

The true, essential, and unblemished beauty of human existence is predicated upon its fragility. At one moment there can be this almost silent vortex of what might be called sensitivity--all is fine--all will be fine. And then, faster than the visibility of a bolt of lightning, the metamorphosis of all that is opposite descends.

I was born on Nantucket in Massachusetts on October fifth, 1925. At that time, in terms of population and popularity, the Island was, indeed, a very small place--beautifully desolate and remote. The early days of my childhood were spent there on this piece of land, thirty miles out in the Atlantic Ocean, where extremely cold, snow-filled winters were spelled by hot, beautiful, and lilac-scented summers.

I remember the many times that my stepfather, a very large athletic man, would hit tennis balls up to what seemed to me to be miles and miles into the cloudless blue sky. At other times, he would bounce the beam of a flashlight off of the low-hanging, cotton-like clouds. I can also remember Mr. and Mrs. Ford, and especially Mrs. Ford, feeding cookies and candy to my brother. One time on my way to the Ford's, the big rooster, that belonged to someone that I can't remember, knocked me down and was pecking away at my face when my stepfather saved me. Then there was Mr. Kelly, the Scotts--all friends of my grandmother.

There were many times when my brother and I would visit 'haunted' houses on the Island, 'Sconset as it was called; and we would also sometimes sneak out to the moors and watch the mist stealthily rise out of the ground. My stepfather smoked some broken glass once, and we watched an eclipse through it and were awed and rather uneasy when it suddenly got dark and chilly, as in the evening, and the chickens went into the henhouse. And then, minutes later, the eclipse over, the rooster crowed, much as he did in the morning, and the chickens came back out, and it was just as though it were morning and everything had started over again.

My grandmother (Nana, we called her) was a very tiny woman, but she would tolerate nonsense from no one; and there was no 'seegar' (as she referred to some of the larger boys that would sometimes attempt to bully my brother and myself) that was 'too big' for her 'to smoke down'. This, unfortunately, applied equally to both my brother and myself, and there is no way to banish into the recesses of forgetfulness the times we had to go out in the yard to cut the switches (small branches) from the bushes that she was going to put on our behinds for having done something that we should not have.

It was in that same yard that I wrenched my shoulder by running (I had been warned numerous times not to) and trying to jump into the homemade swing. It hurt so badly that if I think hard enough about it now, I can mentally feel the pain.

Sometimes, being around small children during the Christmas Holiday season makes me recall the first time my brother and I met Santa Claus and when he boomed out to us whether or not we had been good boys, how my brother became frightened, took off, and speedily exited the church.

There was a lot of fun in those days--walking along the beach, even in the late Fall, with no shoes on, feet sinking into the wet sand and the roar of the ocean to be almost forever inscribed upon my mind and hearing. In fact, it was years after we had moved to New York that I discovered that what was 'wrong' or 'missing' was the absence of that sound.

Someone owned a fantastically fireman red Duesenberg on the Island, and it was an event to see that beautiful, long automobile with the whitewall tires slowly moving like some twentieth century chariot. Once, a whale made the disasterous mistake of running into a ship, and when the carcass finally washed up on one of the beaches, we went to see this tremendous oil and ambergris-giving mound of flesh.

During those rather idyllic summers, it seemed as though there was always a gathering at our house. There would be all those beautiful people talking and eating, while the portraits of my ancestors that decorated the walls of the house seemed to be staring out and watching with a rather forbidding tone. There was always someone playing the piano or there were piano rolls on. I can remember the

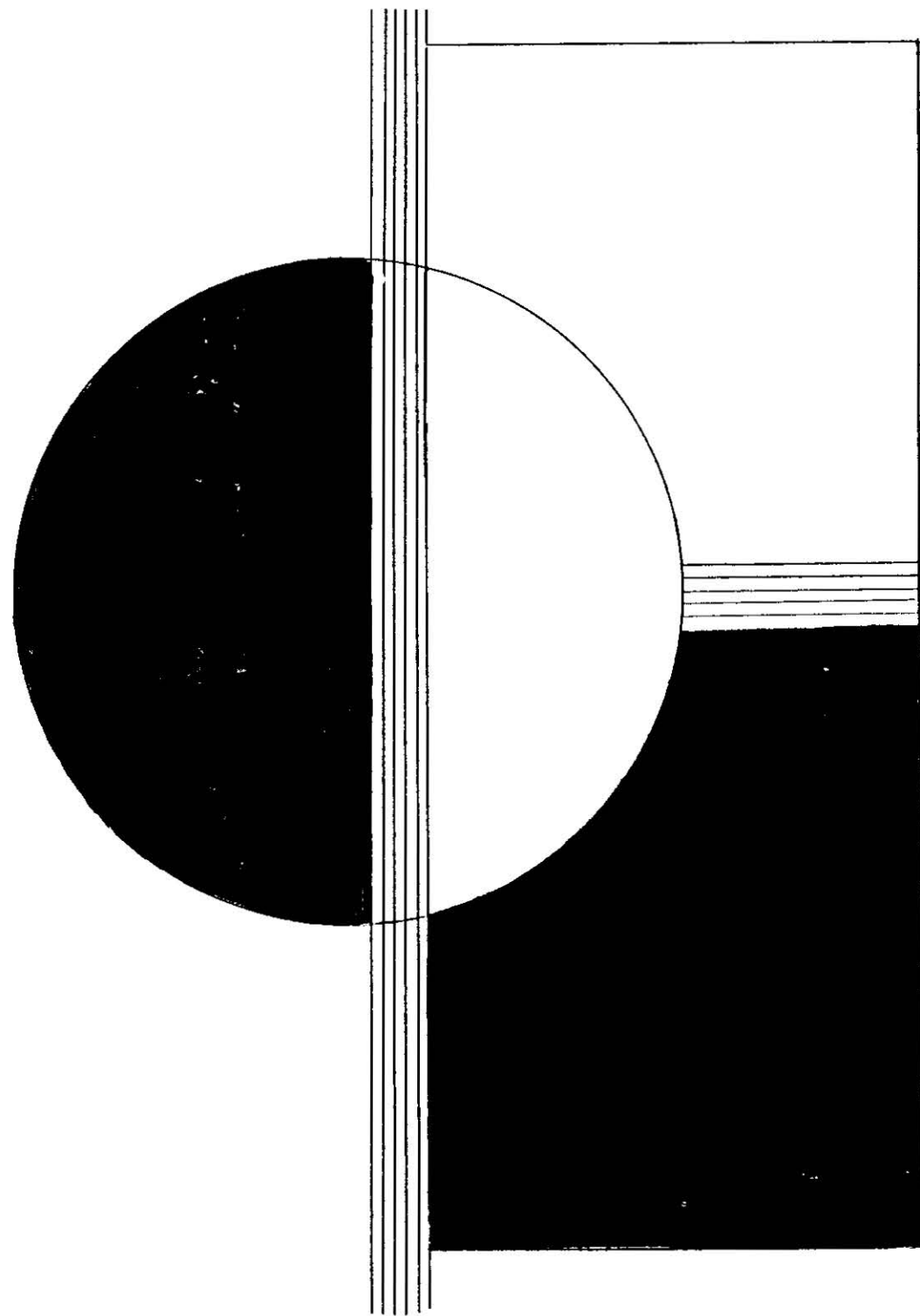
name George Brinson, and there was a woman named Silvia who smelled like the lilacs that virtually surrounded the house.

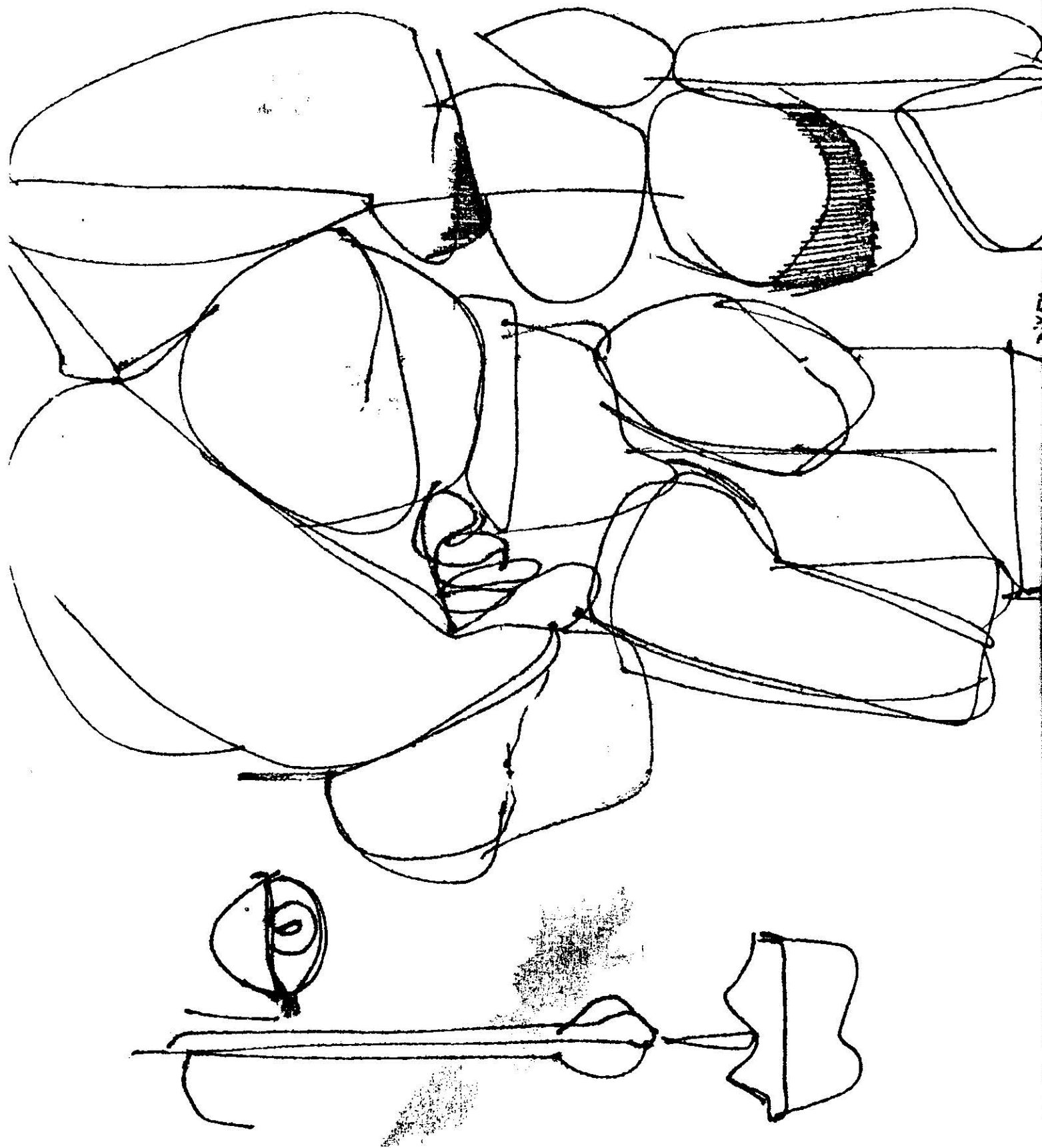
Upon occasion, my mother has reminded me (and I do have vague recollections) that during the beer season (sometime in the Fall when they made their own beer) that even before I was able to walk, I'd come noisily crawling down the stairs the minute I heard the escaping air as the top was being taken off a bottle of beer.

My grandmother listened to the radio a lot, and Lowell Thomas was one of her favorites. I never went to look behind the large radio because I thought, in childish fantasy, that the people who spoke on the radio were behind or in the radio, and I didn't want to know for sure.

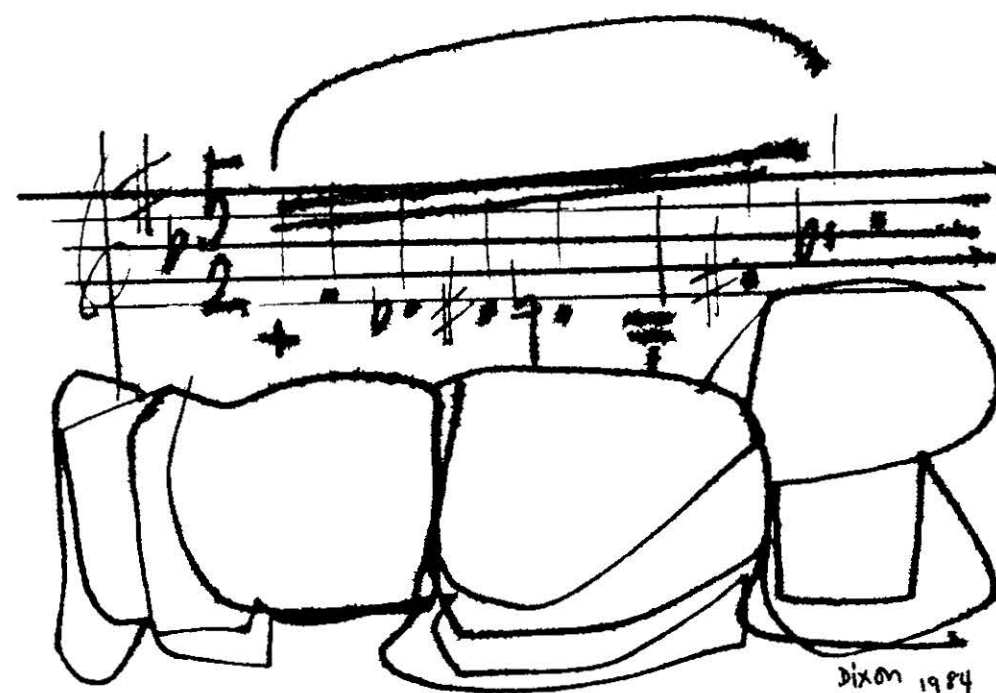
I remember the Redden boy almost always beating me up and my stepfather finally telling me not to come home from school crying again. The school itself was something out of Little House on the Prairie with four rows of chairs facing four blackboards, one for each of the four grades that went from first to fourth.

I remember a lot about Nantucket.





Dixon
1985



/The following pages are from journals and jottings that reveal some of the things that are dealt with in the rehearsals of works of music for the ensemble/

SYSTEMS OF ANALYSIS

MUSICAL

SOCIAL

MATHEMATICAL
USE OF THE COMPUTER,
ETC.

what is the music about

what is the vocabulary

who are the people

TRANE

RUSSELL

TAYLOR

ORNETTE

what are the pieces

what are the systems used
to designate and define

ORAL
kinds

NOTATIONAL
kinds

"There's a point when you become absolutely conscious of almost everything you can do."

"But you've got to practice these things."

"Whether you write for people or not, if you construe or do believe that everything that's done is notated SOMEPLACE, then you'll make the best use of people."

"Now when Ayler said it's not about notes, people kept saying, 'it's not about notes, it's not about notes'. That's what it meant. We're now into the fourth and fifth dimension of music making--for those discriminating connoisseur ears who hear the difference. That's all I mean, if you can hear it, then it's there. If you can't hear it, then it's not your cup of tea."

"But before it can be heard, people have got to play. That's it. And you have got to know when you are going deeper into the music (or the music you can make) or you've decided to close the door, and you're now very comfortable where you are now. And a stylist can be an artist, but there is a difference. Trane, if he were alive today, wouldn't be doing any of the things that so many of the other players influenced by him are doing. And if you don't believe it, check the history of his playing and the development of that playing. When it became 'comfortable' for others to dig, BOOM!, here comes a change; not because he wanted to be different, it is just that some people don't close off the door to experience--some people do, some others don't, that's all. I personally find the ones that don't generally to be the most interesting, and obviously it is the most difficult. It also doesn't mean to say that everything that is done in this area is going to be great or even of small significance or successful by any definition of that word. It does mean to say, though, that you have attempted to get through another theoretical epoch in your musical life. That's all that it means. You may make the decision that what you're working on this year is significant; you may be happy with it and the other things that appear to be developing out of it or because of it. Next year you may make the discovery that what you were musically about two years prior to that contained both the elements and the meat of what your musical ideas were in their most CONCRETE form. These things do happen, and in most instances they happen in the work and the thinking of the innovator who is rarely content to 'merely' forge a style."

"Now that's where the tradition (of anything) doesn't become a prisoner but a GUIDE to what you're doing, because you don't give up anything..."

"...now if I can tell you by playing, and you can hear it in the playing, then I'll do it that way; if I can give you the notation, and you can go home and you can find it out that way, then I'll do that. If I have to sing it to you, then I'll do that... On a day to day basis, then, it is incumbent on you to both discover and to remember the genesis of the subtleties... That's what the percussion players have to do. That's what is meant when a large body of African music is described as being an oral music, existing from one generation to another."

THE CONCEPT OF THE SOLO

THE CONCEPT OF THE ENSEMBLE

SOUND

MUSIC

SILENCE

RHYTHM

MELODIC

HARMONY

lines=scalar=intervalic

subdivisions

instrumentation

triadic and other

(The very 'hip' composer, the individual who invents the material)

"...he puts himself in the position of knowing what your instrument does, what you do, and how it can move without it all sounding like HE has done it. That's what a very hip composer does, because he doesn't want it to sound like HE has written all those parts... So then, logically, the next step would be not to try to imagine how you would do it but to let you do it (by imposing the least amount on you)... That would be to give you blocks of things, and then let you decide on the movement then. That presupposes that when you play, your ear is going to be opened up to everyone else and the sound everyone else is making..."

"It's impossible to play something you don't know... You can't go to Africa, stay at the Ghana Hilton for three weeks, and come back and write a piece of music 'inspired' by Mother Africa."

"The notation we're talking about now has to do with words. That's the clearest representation. Five thousand years from now if they find a tape of what went on in this room, they'll have a more clear-cut picture than someone whose doing a Ph.D. thesis on what performance circumstances were back on this dead planet..."

"You cannot separate the notation from the performance and the people who are doing it... That means to say if one person here reads incredibly well and cannot do it any other way then you're a fool to make that person try to do it with the other kind(s) of notation... You're using only a couple of the other faculties when you play from THAT kind of notation, but you're using all of your faculties when you have to play from the air..."

"You can use EVERYTHING you know."

"We're not making a piece, but if you will consider how if every time you were playing your instrument, you were playing a piece..."

THOUGHTS

"Oh, Trane just ran those sixteenth notes," this, of course, uttered pejoratively and facilely in reference to Coltrane's work of the mid-fifties to the early sixties when the saxophonist-composer was in the height of ferment in terms of his explorations with both linear constructions, the long lines, and harmonic considerations--his, through extensively intensive forays into shaping melodic configurations through his utilization of scalar constructions that took form and shape through his almost ingenious use of rhythmic subdivision, played at such frightening speed as to lay on the ear an almost assault in terms of its periodicity and seemingly ferocity of execution.

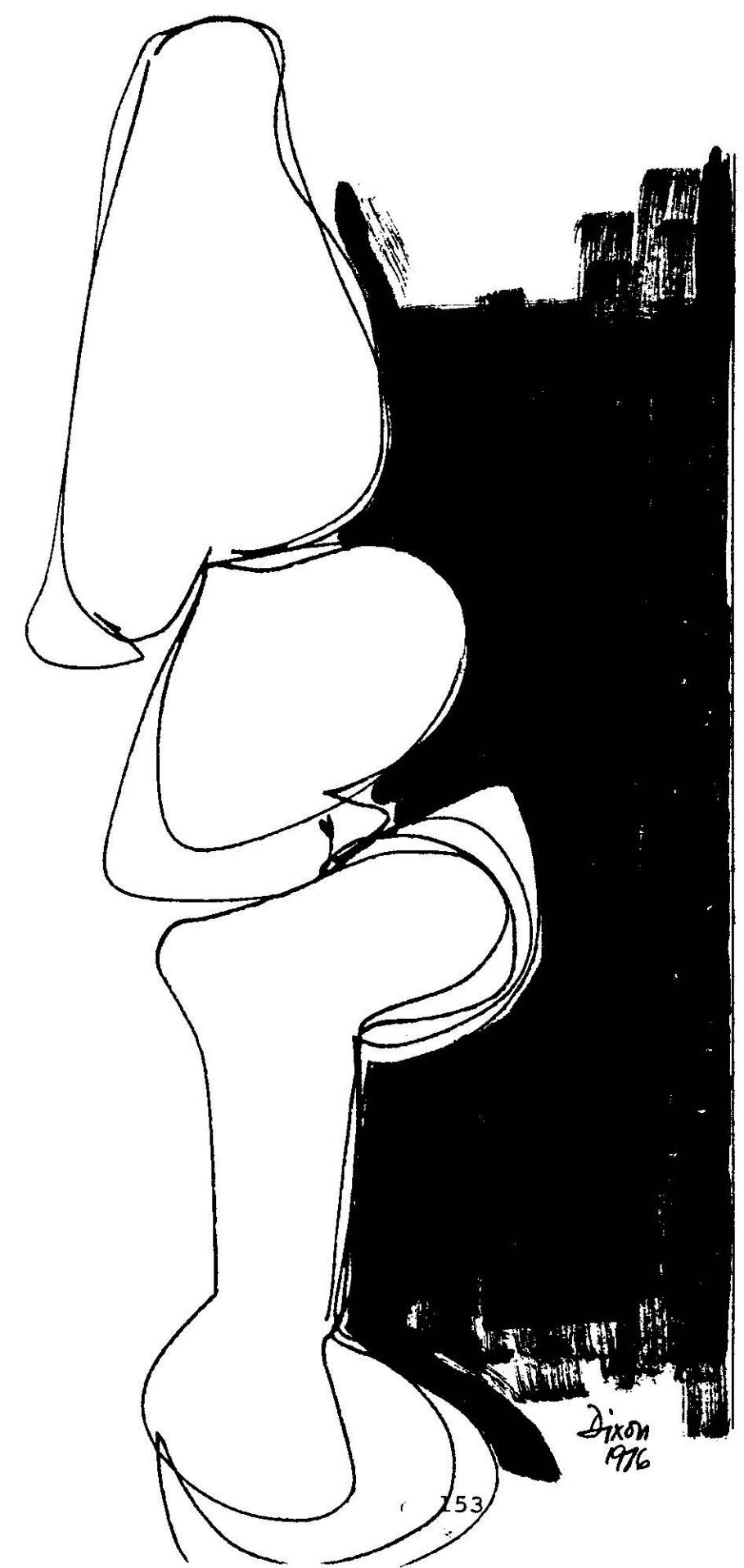
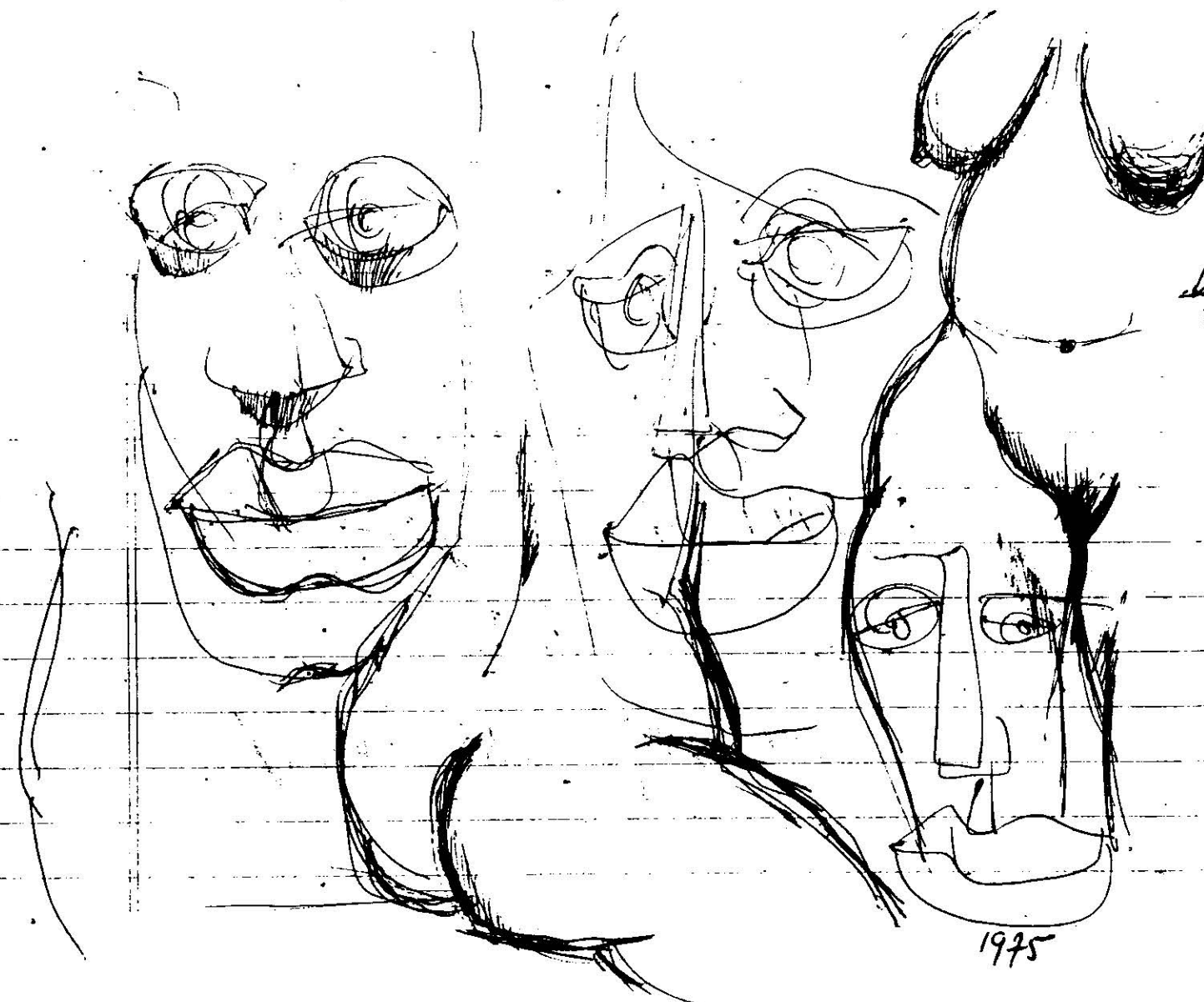
For something of historical value to be denied entry to the annals of history (if history can be defined as that which has happened /when we've chosen to view or acknowledge it/) simply because it is either not understood, not liked, or is felt unworthy of being IN history is the Achille's heel of today's writer-critic (who also sometimes postures as a historian of sorts in terms of this music). How can one say "only" played those sixteenth notes when the person who has foolishly articulated the statement cannot, under any set of circumstances, even APPROXIMATE the technicality of playing in that manner?

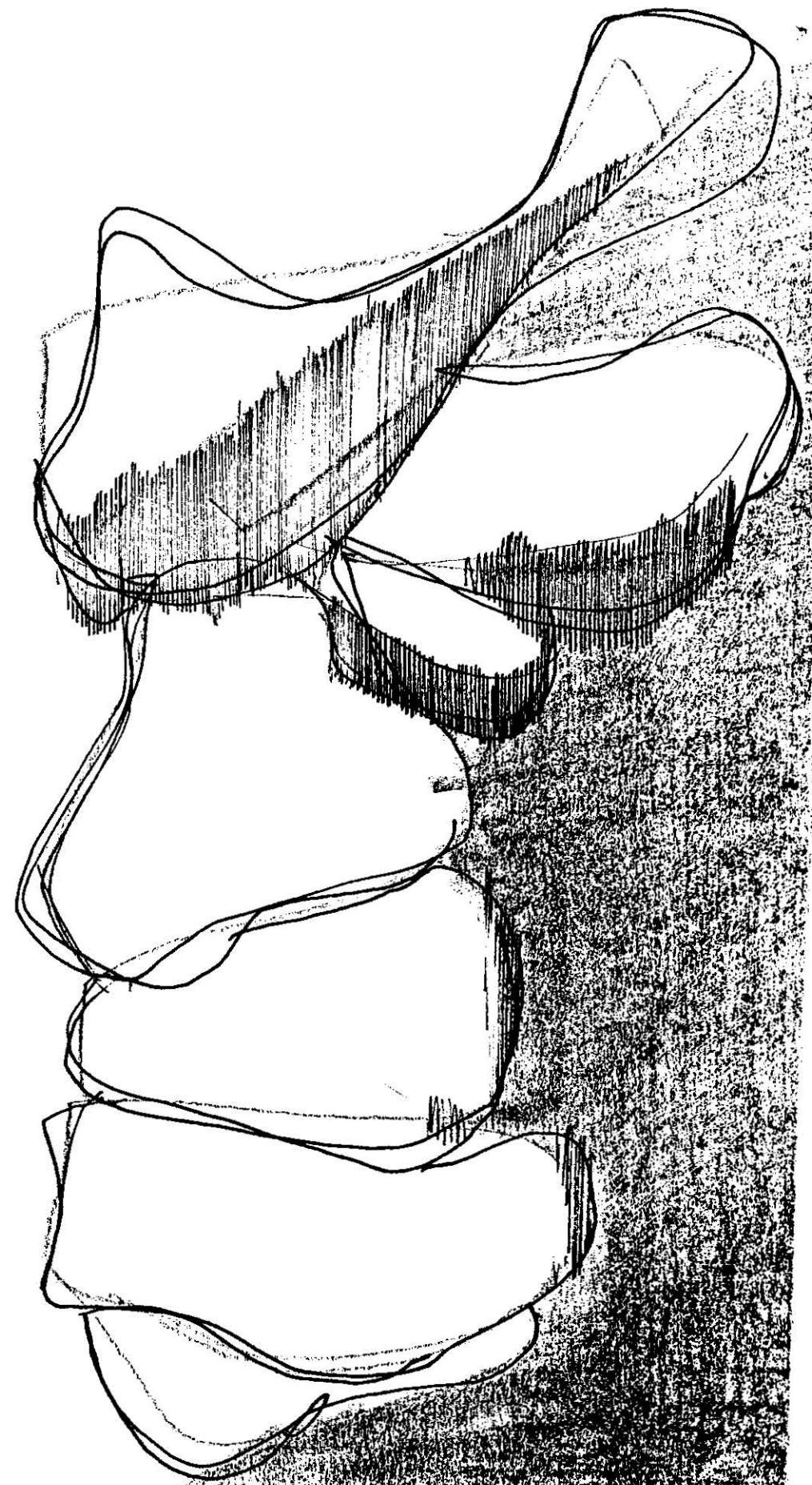
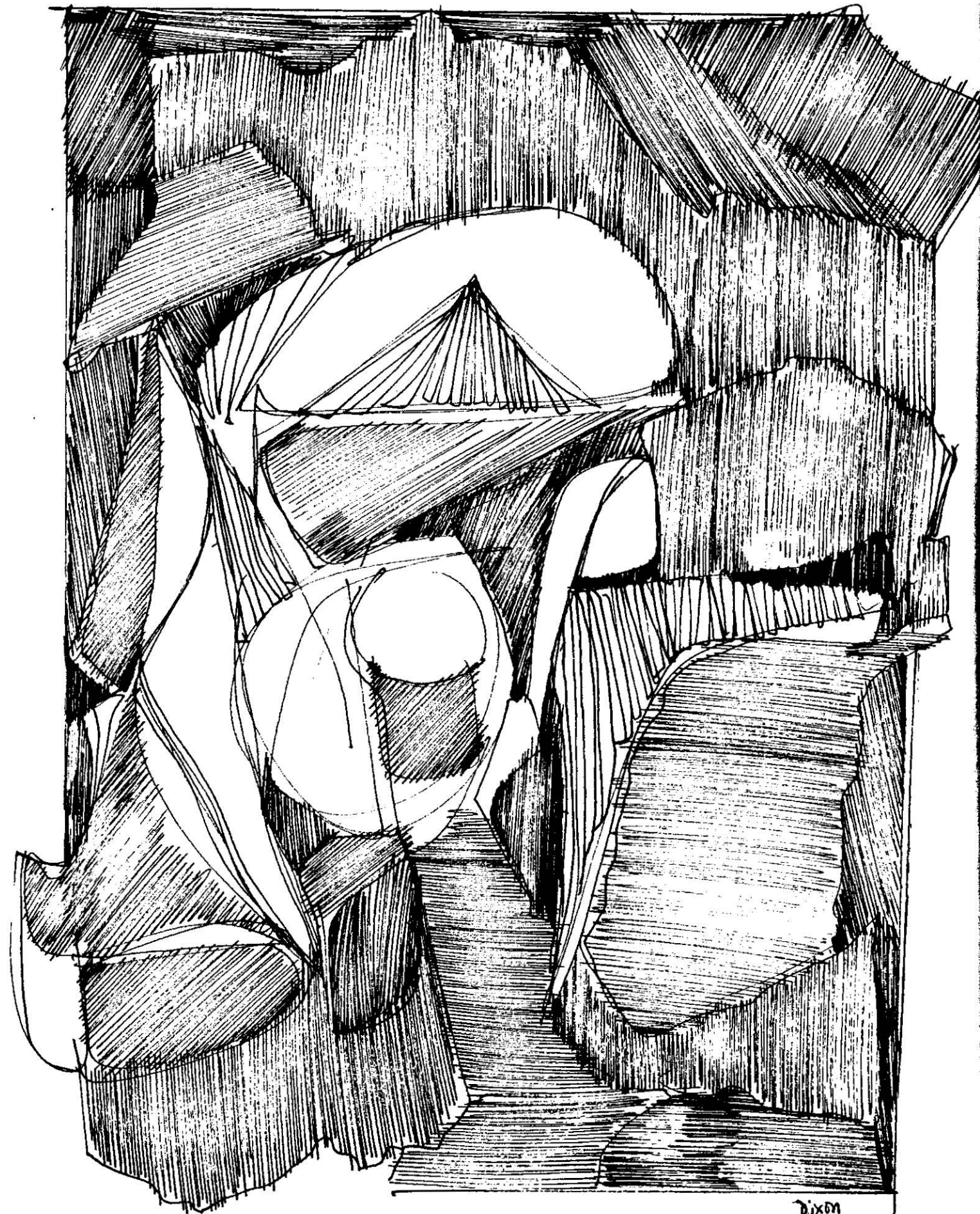
To say that someone has played 'too much' or 'too long', or not without enough 'brevity' or 'fire', or with too much 'sentimentality', or not without 'variation' imposes upon the writer the idea that he is in command of something that allows him to make a declaration that wipes out altogether the efforts or work of the musician that he is attacking. Yes, attacking, because were it not an attack, it would not have necessitated an articulation. If the music is bad or if the artist is dealing with bad art (and what might be considered bad if art can be considered as the thing that man does to express himself) time, with its marvelous ingenuity of dealing with mediocrity, will relegate to its rightful place. And how can anything, in terms of historic value, be considered too 'remote' for inclusion in a discussion or a serious writing that is

purporting to render to either listeners or readers information that should elevate them both intellectually, socially, and spiritually??

But what IS being done HERE, BEING DONE, CURRENTLY BEING DONE, has twice in the last few years been labeled by the cajolers of taste as being far too 'remote' for inclusion in any serious dialogue that relates to the music, its history, its social metaphor, and its resultant ramification syndrome. Why??? When did God die and leave these social misfits in charge? And if HE is NOT dead, but only on vacation, why hasn't His Assistant been in charge; and in this instance the assistantship could be, should be, or IS in the hands of those musicians who also have not received their just due either in terms of financial remuneration or social and historical recognition? Why have they not spoken out??? Why are they afraid? Why are they silent? What are they waiting for? Do they, in their vaped dreams, still think that the Sages will smile favorably upon them if they remain silent in their stupor of denial, that, indeed, they are aiding and abetting their own deaths? Is there always to be with us the stigma of Bennington Summers? Must we Tom forever///??? MUST we Tom FOREVER!!!; while feverishly changing our names to those of the Arabic nation; changing our clothes to the robes of the past; changing our gait but being unable to change the inflection of speech; bowing to Mecca (but, alas, in the wrong direction); being Nationalistic when it is favorable (and pays); being 'in the community' when IT pays (remember the poverty programs?); being 'black' AND nappy haired (when it pays); and saying whatever it is that THEY want us to say, WHEN it pays?? And those critics, can they be called that///??? What, in the way of being constructive, do they do???

It IS true too, that maybe Black cats ain't winning; but it is also true that SOME of us ain't taking the crap anymore....No bullshit....!!!!





We know that every note of music, or sound, as generated by a musician is comprised of several practical and theoretical elements. The first thing that we hear when we hear a sound, the first thing that has had to have happened, is that there has been an attack--the literal starting of this sound. Following this is some kind of duration. In other words, the sound is going to have been initiated and at some point will end--at least its audibility to our hearing threshold will terminate. The interim time between the attack and the termination of its audibility is the period of its duration--the period that this sound lasts, its life span.

There is going to be quality to this sound. Also, there is going to be decay. In other words, the sound will have an initial stage of amplitude (loudness) which will then gradually diminish. There is also a speed or velocity to the sound after the initial attack.

As far as attacks go there are generally two kinds to be considered: the sharp pointed, more accurate tongued attack (for brass instruments) and the more diffused, softened, throat-generated attack. for example, a trumpet player in a large band will generally utilize the pointed tongued attack, which has at its base much more security in realizing the note or notes in quest. The other attack would be used by players utilizing another kind of concept (more artistic) that would concern itself more with ideas (personal) and less with demand for the punctuation and articulation of musical ideas that would be needed to penetrate the largeness of the orchestra.

/Ideas to be expressed and developed for a lecture-demonstration on contemporary trumpet performance, 1973/

/MATERIALS AND IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION FOR WORKSHOP IN CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION AND COMPOSITION AS THAT RELATES TO THE PERFORMANCE/

What is (or are) the methods of presenting the material to be used in the performance /rehearsal situations to be used/

How are the pieces of material to be practiced by the members of the ensemble

What will be the methods of notation: aural; instrumental (trumpet, cello, piano, vocal); spoken; use of calligraphy; the assigning of pitch systems laying out of textures on the piano

From the standpoint of rhythmic propulsion

Setting a harmonic situation on the piano and then playing out all the parts on the horn (the various members of the ensemble left then to notate their own parts at will after their parts have been 'described' to them)

'Loosely' attacking the situation by the immediate approaching of the musical idea through instant playing; setting the mood and character of the piece and cueing the other members of the ensemble as to when they should enter; also giving them the range area in which they are to explore and indicating by hand signals the density each individual member will use on his instrument; and also whether or not they will play (by hand signal) melodically or vertically (as the case may be); also indicating whether they will 'trade' off with other instruments (as far as their space situation in the composition is concerned) and indicating the level of the dynamics

Define the role and character of the solo

How are solos to be taken

What is the content of the solo

How is it determined whether it will be: harmonic; melodic; rhythmic; or a combination of all three

Define the use of space; silence; rhythmic silence; and the sound of the room

Describe how the soloist makes use of the material; makes use of what has preceded his lone entrance; what takes place (if anything does) while he is playing alone; and what will take place at the termination of his 'alone' playing

Describe how the entire ensemble sets and maintains textural balances as this relates to the individual horns and the horns in tutti

How are balances (orchestral) entered into and maintained

Define (for this type of ensemble) the use and designation of the term 'energy'; define the use of line; define how rhythmic complexity is entered into and maintained (the introduction of lines stated at different times/tempi/

Describe how all of these so-called 'restrictions' will limit the element of freedom of choice for the player and how the players relate to it

Discuss also the idea of the sometimes complete abandonment of the constituency idea (the being able to single out the identity of individual instruments); discuss the idea of the 'feeling presence' of certain instruments (the new idea of color); the fact that even though some of the instruments cannot themselves be 'heard' by the listeners, the players can 'feel' the presence of the instruments and, therefore, this 'feeling' plays a heavy role in the selection of the material they have at their disposal

Discuss the interchangeability of the pieces of material even after they have been assembled in the slot of final playing order (or performance order) and how sometimes this 'order' changes, depending upon the circumstances of performance; the room (the sound that the room 'makes'); the audience; the mood of the players; the composer; the idea of defeating the over 'slickness' that is almost ever-present when a piece of music is played or rehearsed for a long period of time; etc.

Describe some of the technical achievements that have been entered into and dealt with

SOME EXPLANATIONS OF THE MATERIALS THUS FAR USED IN CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION

At this point, it might be both interesting and a bit elucidating to make reference to the essential materials, methods, and approaches that have been within the province of the contemporary musician performer--the performer especially concerning himself with improvising music.

References to scales are of necessity often made, kinds and qualities (their construction), kinds and qualities (their technical and aesthetic use). For the purpose of this paper, however, and also because it represents a personal point of view regarding the contemporary aspects of improvisation, I will define the scale as being that property that can be designated as a form of tone ladder. That is, once you have one note following another in some form of melodic order (whether or not you can name or call the series of notes) it is some kind of scale or scale pattern. And as long as the series of notes conform to the improvisor's idea, insofar as representing accurately his linearity to the vertical structure that may occur (any series of so-called chord progressions or chord movements), that scale is a scale (tone ladder) that is acceptable. The more commonly accepted and known scales that have been utilized by musicians as they worked to formulate the sounds of the chords by lines have been the major, minor, diminished, and the augmented scale. The scales that spelled out the tonality of the blues were called the blues scales and the scalar formation that worked with the raised fifth situation of a chord, the whole-tone scale. In fact, as I suggested earlier, any formation of sequential tones that form any kind of melodic curve, when analyzed, will reveal themselves to be scales of some form or another, sometimes scales that have incorporated characteristics of other scales, scales that we might label composites of more than one kind of scale.

Chords, those vertical structures of piled on tones, most of the time in thirds but often in seconds, fourths, fifths, and (at the discretion of the composer) sometimes an amalgamation of possibly all of those intervals, serve (in some songs that improvisors use for their improvisations as the basis of those improvisations) as sort of 'stations' that cause rest from a kind of tonality. When the chord 'changes', another kind of tonal gravitational situation occurs. Chords, as do scales, have their positions of placement in which they can be used; and rarely, for instance, are scales used in the performances by the improvisor, in their note to note position as constructed for analysis (root, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and octave). Chords, however, which use positions of the root, inversions (first, second /for triads/ and third /for seventh chords/) are generally used by the improvisor, sometimes with alterations added to the chords in all of these positions.

A major chord doesn't necessarily have to be 'scaled out' by only using a scalar formation based on the major scale. With the aesthetic judgement of the improvisor as the prime factor and con-

cern (obviously the technical means of arriving at this point is of paramount importance) whatever scale formation or series of notes used to designate that chord or the idea of that chord is acceptable as long as the improviser is able to convince that what he has played he has indeed heard and means to play based on what preceded it and what follows it. This also will determine whether we, the listeners, will 'hear', feel, or accept what has been done as being either 'wrong' of 'right'.

In previous eras of Black Music, improvising musicians have generally settled for one or another of two accepted kinds of improvisation. The forms being (1) improvising off of the chord; that is, in a chord progression the player upon hearing the vertical structure constructs that formation of verticality into a line situation--linear in the sense of playing one note at a time and one note after another, or arpeggios. That is, he would 'run' the chord or some attitude of the chord, creating melodies of some kind or attitudes that reflected melodies with a certain (personal) inflection, which when coupled to a certain (personal) inflection or sound, allowed him to successfully (musically and artistically) deal with this chord, sometimes to the point of genius. I refer to any number of players: Coleman Hawkins, some of John Coltrane's earlier work, Ben Webster, Roy Eldridge, Charlie Parker, and the list goes on. The other method (2) was to, hearing the chord (the same vertical structure), create linear melodies or scale patterns (but not the intellectualization of this formation) that would make the sound of the chord--still using the process of playing one note at a time (which the horn player has to do) with one note following another. Many, many beautifully organized melodic solos have been constructed and created in this manner--the work of Lester Young, some of Miles Davis' work, some of Trane's work, etc., and that list could go on and on.

Rhythmic improvisation has also been one of the areas of interest and necessity to the improvising musician. That is, no matter what or how (it) was being played, stress on the variables of rhythm (and how rhythm and the interruption of time as relates to sound and silence and the punctuations that the rhythmic schematic creates /once understood/) allowed even the most simple musical situation to adorn itself with the most complex aura. A good example would be the early work of Ornette Coleman.

When the piano was 'dropped' as the harmonic factor (that dictated in so much of the music of the late fifties and sixties) the realization that chords had served as the basis of the music for the improviser for a long time tacitly began to be questioned. Whether the piano was 'dropped' out of choice, because of Taylor's work and the strength and insight that he brought as to the instrument's capabilities as related to the newer and other directions that the horn players were seeking and making valiant efforts to find (because unlike in the Bop period when the pianists were legion and were in the vanguard of the movement /insofar as being contemporary in the sense of the rhythmic and harmonic and technical evolution of the happening in the music/ there were fewer who understood the newer role of the instrument and who could do more than comp or play the,

by then, tiresome, unnecessarily complicated chords that only served to stifle the kind of melody-making that was taking into consideration /for the first time/ other kinds of sound that formerly had not been accepted into the vocabulary of the music), it is hard to say. But with the temporary 'dismissal' of that keyboard instrument, the melodic invention and subsequently more adventurous, harmonic and modally influenced playing began to exert a considerable amount of influence on the music and its practitioners.

For example, a solo which had formerly been forced to concern itself with: the playing of a 'head'; the playing off (in some instances) the chords of the 'head', being also restricted to the song format (the song form still being used as the vehicle, and even the jazz ballad or original still had its very plainly formal structure); and the kind of rhythmic structure, insofar as to the distances between cadences, the chord stations, the kind of chords, the kind of tonality, and the static kind of tempo situation (and by this I mean the almost incessant four, four kind of rhythm) could now be extended.

A solo could now be the piece of music. There didn't need to be an excuse for it. It went where the soloist wanted it to go. It could be composed of the elements that were necessary for its being and being done. It could be pulsative and metric, but it could also change. The time could change. The tempo could change. The tonality could change. The sounds that were to be secured from the instrument could change, much as in speaking when one changes the voice for accent or emphasis. All manner of sounds could be used. In effect, almost all systems were go. The aesthetic had become broadened, and because of the strength of the tradition, because of the work of the past innovators in the music (the music of Ellington, Armstrong, Young, Hawkins, Parker, Gillespie, Monk, Rollins, and others far too numerous to mention), the music could now take complete advantage of all that had been done (and thoroughly done at that) and advance that tradition by continuing to seek new ways and means for the expressions of new concepts emanating from the horns and pens of another breed of musician. Much as in the wider regions of the world, the African nations had, commencing in the fifties, started to shake off the cloak of colonialism and declare their independence, and in this part of the world, the sixties had ushered in a new generation of everything, so it was with the music, musical innovations, inventions, discardments, and newer proclamations that musicians were to begin to make about wanting to be freer with their music--more in control of all the accoutrements that had something to do with the music (and, as a result, with them and their lives), and also a desire to seek out more of the origins of the original originals of so much of the past of the former music.

"Voices"

rec. on INTENTS AND PURPOSES: THE BILL DIXON
ORCHESTRA; RCA Victor LSP 3844 /1967/

rec. on INTENTS AND PURPOSES: THE BILL DIXON
ORCHESTRA: RCA Victor LSP 3988 /1967/

Handwritten musical score for page 164, measures 1-4. The score includes staves for Soprano (SOP), Tenor (TN), Horn (HN), Trombone (TRMB), Baritone (BARI), Bass (B.C.), and Tuba (TUBA). The music is in 4/4 time and features various notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Handwritten musical score for page 164, measures 5-8. The score continues with the same instrumentation as the previous system, showing further musical development with notes and rests.

Orchestra work: rehearsed at the Free Conservatory
of the UNIVERSITY OF THE STREETS /NYC/ 1967

SIP-
TENO
TRMB
B.C.
BARI
TUBA

SOP
TN
HN
TRMB
BARI
B.C.
TUBA

SOP
TN
HN
TRMB
BARI
B.C.
TUBA

Handwritten musical score for page 165, measures 1-4. The score includes staves for Soprano (SOP), Tenor (TN), Horn (HN), Trombone (TRMB), Baritone (BARI), Bass (B.C.), and Tuba (TUBA). The music is in 4/4 time and features various notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Handwritten musical score for page 165, measures 5-8. The score continues with the same instrumentation as the previous system, showing further musical development with notes and rests.

Handwritten musical score for page 165, measures 9-12. The score continues with the same instrumentation as the previous system, showing further musical development with notes and rests.

Orchestra work: rehearsed at the Free Conservatory
of the UNIVERSITY OF THE STREETS /NYC/ 1967

Voice

Handwritten musical score for voice and piano. The score is written on five staves. The first staff has a circled 'Voice' label. The music includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'pp'. There are also some handwritten annotations like '8va' and 'ped'.

Madison, Wisc. /1971-72/

(I) Saxophone + Basses + drums

(I) [Pianos in 4 places]

Handwritten musical score for saxophone, basses, drums, and pianos. The score is written on five staves. The first staff has a circled '(I)' label. The music includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'pp'. There are also some handwritten annotations like '8va' and 'ped'.

(I) Pianos

Song I
[elements]

① P. T. Chaz

walk into room + start
Song II To play
[events]

① walk into room + start
② walk into room + start
③ TPT hill + unsemita trail
④ dancers + video tapes
plus spoken word

Madison, Wisc. /1971-72/

Solos

In Silence + ensemble
quiet sound

Alto + Alto
Tenor + Tenor
Baritone

SAXOPHONES

Mute
Tuba

UPPER

UBA

CONTRA BASS CLAR

BASS

guitar

drums
mallets

sound suspends

Madison, Wisc. /1971-72/

Feb. - 1973

4 4 5

5 5 5 4

5 4 4

+6 = 1/2 up

+3 = 1/2 up

+6 = 1/2 up

9"

9"

12"

9"

15"

Bennington, Vt. /1973/

Bennington, Vt. /1973/

171

score/outline/: 'For Cecil Taylor';
 rec: BILL DIXON IN ITALY, Vol. 1
 SoulNote SN 1008

B-2

score/outline/: 'For Cecil Taylor';
 rec: BILL DIXON IN ITALY, Vol. 1

SoulNote SN 1008

Handwritten notes: "Piano" and "Solo" with arrows pointing to specific parts of the notation.

score/outline/: 'For Cecil Taylor';
 rec: BILL DIXON IN ITALY, Vol. 1

SoulNote SN 1008

Score/outline/: 'For Cecil Taylor';
 rec: BILL DIXON IN ITALY, Vol. 1
 SoulNote SN 1008

TENOR [Riders] PART I
 + SOPRANO
 SAXOPHONES

Orchestra work: rehearsed at the Free Conservatory
 of the UNIVERSITY OF THE STREETS /NYC/ 1967/

























Handwritten musical score on ten staves, featuring various musical notations and annotations.

The score is divided into several sections:

- Staff 1:** A treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes a series of notes with accidentals (sharps and flats) and a circled "END" marking.
- Staff 2:** Continuation of the melodic line with various note values and accidentals.
- Staff 3:** A wavy line indicating a sustained or tremolo effect, followed by notes with accidentals.
- Staff 4:** Continuation of the melodic line with various note values and accidentals.
- Staff 5:** A treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The notation includes a series of notes with accidentals and a circled "10" marking.
- Staff 6:** Continuation of the melodic line with various note values and accidentals.
- Staff 7:** A treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The notation includes a series of notes with accidentals and a circled "10" marking.
- Staff 8:** A treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The notation includes a series of notes with accidentals and a circled "10" marking.
- Staff 9:** A treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The notation includes a series of notes with accidentals and a circled "10" marking.
- Staff 10:** A treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The notation includes a series of notes with accidentals and a circled "10" marking.

Additional annotations include:

- "END" circled in the first staff.
- "10" circled in the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth staves.
- "BASS" circled in the eighth staff.
- "BASS (P.L.)" circled in the ninth staff.
- "Sym" circled in the tenth staff.

(1) Saxophone + Basses + drums
 (last) [Pianos in 4 places]

(Pds) Pianos

Song I
 Elements
 1 Pitch

- 1 walk into room + start song II to play [events]
- 2 make the room start recite (C. PARKER quote)
- 3 1st bill + ensemble fall
- 4 dancers + video tapes plus spoken word
- 5

"A Journal Sequences From A" "Letters that illuminate"
 by BILL DIXON
 MUSICIAN - COMPOSER

Am7/E

3

4

2

12

8va

Ab7

3

4

Paris /1976/

Published by Metamorphosis Music
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Handwritten musical score on page 180, featuring four systems of staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals), and dynamic markings (p, f). There are also triplets indicated by a '3' over a bracketed group of notes. The staves are connected by horizontal lines, and some measures contain multiple staves.



NO. M-1 12 STAVE
1985 B WAY, N. Y.

Bennington, Vt. /1983/

Handwritten musical score on page 181, featuring four systems of staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals), and dynamic markings (p, f). There are also triplets indicated by a '3' over a bracketed group of notes. The staves are connected by horizontal lines, and some measures contain multiple staves.

Bennington, Vt. /1985/

AFTERWORD

The works contained here have been labored over and completed under a variety of circumstances, good and bad, social and otherwise; and while it has always been my feeling, in reality, that one's work only represents work, these works make an attempt at a representation of thoughts or reflections on things that I've managed, rightly or wrongly, to attach enough importance to over the last few years to the extent that they've been able to both influence and to some degree, sometimes (unfortunately) adversely affect my thinking.

Some of these things are quite personal, and to some people they may appear trite--trite, in this instance, sometimes being defined (by those that would dictate the way and manner that we attempt to breathe this now solidly polluted air) as those things that pointedly affect ONE and not, in terms of the immediacy of influence, anyone else in the parent society.

We can go to war and kill a man that we've never seen before, someone we don't know and who hasn't done anything to us personally, simply because to do other than that, to resist when called upon (again by those that would rule and dictate the path of our lives) would be considered both unpatriotic and, indeed, treacherous.

On the other hand, someone can enter one's home and in defense of that home (sacred to its owner) one fatally injure the one that has broken in; one has to then PROVE that the force used to deter was equal to the intent of the person who broke in to just 'steal' or 'burgle'.

Someone can permanently blacken one's name or attempt to sully a hard earned reputation by slurs, innuendo, or libel, and one has to endure that; because in the wider regions of existence, HOW one is supposed to 'take it' and keep smothered one's natural passions (in terms of 'retaliation') is also ordained by others, and because of this, to do other than acquiesce can then be considered only 'emotional' or too fraught with the idea of 'revenge'.

Thus, many people, perhaps born with the idea of dignity (and perhaps not) learn to accept (and some readily adopt without any feelings of misgiving whatsoever, or so it seems) the idea of survival at any cost. I have known my share of them. They take from you and literally hate you when you are able and willing to give them what they have asked for. And, at this time, they try to destroy you, and their ways of doing this, while sometimes seemingly effective, are not even clever because eventually they have to reveal themselves.

And their eyes water, and they further seek a continuance (with you) of their vile ways. And this only continues because their public (so confused and young NOW public) through THEIR silence, blindness, and lack of awareness seeks to support THEM, while at the same time (because they KNOW they are superior) despising them.

And the world is made bad; and we all have nothing; and we all have to face the man; and we all die.

But there is no dignity in their death; there is no waste FELT in their demise; there are no real tears shed for them.

But, unfortunately, there is no noticeable absence in the way of their kind of behavior, because much like the locusts, their places are (even before the earth covers them) almost eagerly taken over by others that will, in time, 'silently whisper' (to those that will hear) 'vile things for personal gain'.

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PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

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#6/	Unknown	1967	NYC
#7/	Unknown	1966	NYC
#8/	Unknown	1967	NYC
#9/	Susan Opotow	1971	NYC
#10/	Philippe Gras	1976	Paris, France
#11/	Elena Carminati	1980	Verona, Italy
#12/	Elena Carminati	1980	Milan, Italy
#13/	Philippe Gras	1976	Paris, France
#14/	Steve Albahari	1982	NYC
#15/	Steve Albahari	1982	NYC
#16/	Steve Albahari	1982	NYC
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WILLIAM R. DIXON/BILL DIXON*

Musician-composer

- **GUEST ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE:** Ohio State University/1967/.
- **COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE:** George Washington University, Washington, D.C./1967/.
- **INSTRUCTOR:** Columbia University Teachers' College, NYC/1967-1970/.
- **VISITING PROFESSOR OF MUSIC:** University of Wisconsin-Madison/1971-1972/.
- **FOUNDER and first PRESIDENT:** United Nations' Jazz Society, NYC/1958/.
- **ARCHITECT:** The Jazz Composers' Guild/ for the performance of contemporary American Black Music, NYC/1964/.
- **ORGANIZER and PRODUCER:** The October Revolution in Jazz/ a concert series devoted to newer developments in American Black Music, NYC/1964/.
- **DIRECTOR:** Music Conservatory of the University of the Streets, NYC/1967-1968/.
- **CREATOR and CHAIRMAN:** The Black Music Division/a music department specializing in Black Music aesthetics, philosophy and methodology/Bennington College, Bennington, Vermont/1973-1985/
- **PROFESSOR OF MUSIC:** Bennington College, Bennington, Vermont/1968-Present/.

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/Foreign/:

Paris; London; Stockholm; Italy; Helsinki; Vienna; Amsterdam; Zurich.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

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FOR FRANZ, PIPE Records; /Limited Edition/ (Vienna, Austria, 1977)
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CONSIDERATIONS 1 and 2: BILL DIXON, FORE 3 and FORE 5 RARETONE MUSIC LIBRARY (Milan, Italy, 1982)
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* Listed in *WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA; WHO'S WHO AMONG BLACK AMERICANS; WHO'S WHO IN THE INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY OF EDUCATION/2nd Edition, 1980/Cambridge, England*