

The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

FYS 129

David Keffer, Professor
Dept. of Materials Science & Engineering
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-2100
dkeffer@utk.edu
<http://clausius.engr.utk.edu/>

Various Quotes

These slides contain a collection of some of the quotes largely from the musicians that are studied during the course.

The idea is to present “musicians in their own words”.



Han Bennink

**Dutch drummer
(April 17, 1942–)**

Bennink on a Cheese Drum



Han Bennink playing a cheese drum set at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, 2005

Bennink on Humor

JC: I want to ask some general questions about your philosophy and approach to the use of humor in music.

Bennink: The humor thing is very delicate...It's not only the musical input. You can do more. Like Claes Oldenberg did, for example. You can play with an enormous drumstick, two very long ones, but really try to play with them, not only show them...Or sometimes I go with that big stick and simply play with it. That's a very delicate point: if it was only humor, that would disturb the music. And I play what I am and I do what I am because I am like that, and it never disturbs the music, it helps the music. Otherwise, I couldn't do it that long, you know? Sometimes when there are holes into the music you can hear people laugh, they are into the whole context, they fill that with their laugh like an opera. But how it exactly works? That is pure shamanism. I really don't know. It's daily life, all differences, all rules, and you can fight with the rules all the same.

Han Bennink, interview, from Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein, John Corbett, 1994, Duke University Press.

Bennink on Being Taken Seriously

Bennink: On the other hand, sometimes it [having a reputation for humor] also bothers me because I like to be taken very, very seriously. And as soon as the word “humor” comes, everyone gets a sort of strange idea. But I like to be taken very seriously.

Han Bennink, interview, from Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein, John Corbett, 1994, Duke University Press.

Bennink on Variety

JC: But there is also a lot of variation in terms of the way you can interact with any kind of other players or ensembles.

Bennink: I would like to play with as much variety in my life as I can. I'm not interested to play with heavy metal bands, but I did play with a punk band, just for one night. And they asked me to play a solo concert in a punk club. In the last year there are things I've been doing that are weird. I played with Art Hodes, who is dead now. Then I had four gigs with Percy Sledge. And I did a record with Cecil Taylor. [laughter]

Han Bennink, interview, from Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein, John Corbett, 1994, Duke University Press.

Bennink on Not Leading a Band

Bennink: But I never had a band myself. There never was a Han Bennink Trio or Quartet. It was Misha [Mengelberg] and Han or Willem Breuker and Han Bennink.

JC: Do you think there ever will be?

Bennink: No, no. I like to carry on like it is.

JC: You're in the tradition of the rhythm section accompanists.

Bennink: Yeah, I like to keep it like that and try to play with everybody.

Han Bennink, interview, from Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein, John Corbett, 1994, Duke University Press.