



Ornette Coleman



Karl Berger



Ingrid Sertso

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CREATIVE MUSIC STUDIO



Most fans of jazz and improvised music from the 1970s and on know of the various musical collectives that formed in a number of cities. Groups like Chicago's AACM, the Black Artists Group in St. Louis and the "loft scene" in New York City were centers of fervent creativity for the music. This CD set concentrates on an equally influential axis of musical experimentation based at the Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, New York. The vision for CMS is best described as creating collective synergy, having musicians from separate regions and backgrounds live and work together as they find common ground and develop a personal musical vocabulary. The Guiding Artists who participated in CMS ranged from artists rooted in jazz, such as Charles Brackeen and Oliver Lake, to artists coming at improvisation from the classical side, such as pianists Ursula Oppens and Fred Rzewski. "Any person in today's music scene knows that rock, classical, folk and jazz are all yesterday's titles," declared Creative Music Foundation co-founder Ornette Coleman. "I feel that the music world is getting closer to being a singular expression, one with endless musical stories of mankind."

In addition to Ornette, CMS was founded in 1971 by Karl Berger and Ingrid Sertso. Members of the original board of advisors included Buckminster Fuller, John Cage and Gil Evans. By the time it closed its 45-acre physical campus in 1984, the Studio had brought in nearly all of the leading lights of the creative music world as Guiding Artists. Musicians like Turkey's Ismet Siral and Brazil's Nana Vasconcelos came to CMS and added into the mix the musical traditions of their countries, helping to create the "elements common to all music" described in the Studio's philosophy. Central to the growth of what became "world music" was trumpeter Don Cherry, a frequent presence at CMS. Five Guiding Artists - George Lewis, John Zorn, Charlie Haden, Cecil Taylor and John Cage- went to become recipients of MacArthur Fellowships. While some musicians participated only in brief workshops and others came and lived at CMS for years, thousands of CMS participants were influenced by its spirit of freedom, exploration and collaboration.

After the CMS campus closed, Karl and Ingrid stayed in Woodstock and have continued to play concerts and conduct workshops, including Karl's recent work with a newly constituted Improvisers Orchestra. For over a decade, the couple took the concepts they developed at CMS all over the world, exposing musicians from Africa and India to Asia and South America to the insights gained at CMS.

ABOUT THE CMS ARCHIVE PROJECT

During the CMS years, the Studio had recorded well over four hundred hours of performances and workshops, a rich archive that CMS has been digitizing and re-mastering. The Creative Music Foundation has partnered with Columbia University's Library to preserve the CMS Archive for posterity. CMS is giving Columbia the full archive of recorded tapes, along with memorabilia and photographs from CMS. You are holding the first of the several CD sets of this exciting project. According to Berger, "We believe these compilations will present a vivid picture of CMS in very listenable CDs, selected for their outstanding artistic excellence, in the free-wheeling spirit of the Creative Music Studio. We have hand-picked each piece of this compilation for its musical vibrancy, historical interest and intersection with the other artists."

Weekly performances at CMS followed a week of workshops that also functioned as rehearsals for the concerts. Open to the public, the concerts attracted between 30 and 100 people packed into a large conference room. The room had a slate ceiling that offered great acoustics. A recording booth was built just to the side of the stage. Guiding artists composed and lead groups. Students, called 'participants,' were there to study, learn from masters and to collaborate with others to create new works, most of which were recorded. Participants would 'audition' by sending in cassettes showcasing their compositions and musicianship; about 20 were selected for each workshop with the goal of attracting broad instrumentation and musical backgrounds.

As part of its nonprofit mission, CMF is offering the Guiding Artists who made these rare recordings a digitized version for their unrestricted use free of charge, offering them the opportunity to benefit from the CMS Archive.

THE CMS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

This CD box set contains interviews with the artists who made the recordings (or people close to them.) These interviews, conducted as part of the CMS Oral History Project, aim to gather directly from CMS Guiding Artists and participants their anecdotes and insights from their time at CMS. Conducted in partnership with Columbia University and WKCR-FM (NYC), these oral histories fill a void in the historical retelling of this important and fertile time in music and education, and are continued in more detail at: <http://www.creativemusicfoundation.org/oral-history-project.html>.

The Creative Music Studio was fertile ground for education and music-making. Musicians from all over the world have credited CMS as some of the most exciting, innovative and important experiences they have had, not only as musicians, but also as people. The stories are endless but unfortunately the lives of the storytellers are not. In fact, some of CMS's greatest storytellers, such as Don Cherry or John Cage, have died, and with them their tales about CMS and its impact on their musical careers and lives. The Creative Music Foundation aims to conduct 10 interviews annually as part of its Oral History Project, with transcripts as well as audio/video recordings eventually available on its website.



Don Cherry with students in the Spring of 1978

Small Ensembles

Ed Blackwell/Charles Brackeen

Ed Blackwell's drumming, shaped by his New Orleans background, was the backbone of Ornette Coleman's revolutionary advances in jazz. Here he is paired with Charles Brackeen, a sax player from Oklahoma who was active until the mid-2000s. Their duet "conversations" dart and weave in a playful and masterful way. Blackwell excelled at the duet format, as shown by projects with fellow CMS artists Don Cherry and Karl Berger. Bob Sweet, author of a book about CMS called *Music Universe, Music Mind*, believes that "Ed Blackwell, as much as anyone else I can think of, was the perfect embodiment of the spirit of CMS. He was a very loving, gentle and generous soul. And the music just oozed out of him. I'm sure that he could have played with anyone and been right at home with what was happening."

David Izenson, Karl Berger, Ingrid Sertso

Like Blackwell, bass player Izenson was an Ornette Coleman sideman and a CMS Guiding Artist before his untimely death at age 47 in 1979. His work here with Berger and Sertso creates an airy feel, fed by Sertso's poetic vocals. Fellow bassist John Lindberg observed in an oral history interview in 2009 that "David had such a different feel from any other bass players...there was just nobody else doing anything on that level with the bow in jazz and improvised music."

Ursula Oppens/Frederic Rzewski

CMS was a "big tent" that attracted classically-trained musicians like Oppens and Rzewski, whose careers in experimental classical music have included "crossover" collaborations with jazz musicians such as Anthony Davis and Anthony Braxton. Oppens had a more intimate connection to jazz through her personal relationship with the late sax player Julius Hemphill, also a brilliant musician and a CMS Guiding Artist. Oppens credits Karl Berger with opening her up to the potential of improvisation, something that terrified her at first. The piano duet here is an exploration of space and texture and is a composition by Berger, "7 in C in 6."

James Emery/Leroy Jenkins

In their duet tracks, guitarist Emery and violin player Jenkins create a fascinating variety of textures and moods. Along with Billy Bang, Jenkins revived the use of the violin in jazz, taking it far beyond where players like Stuff Smith and Joe Venuti had left it. Jenkins invited Emery to New York in 1973 and they were soon active in CMS. When asked about the philosophy of CMS in an oral history interview, Emery commented: "What CMS provided was a broader range of expression and new opportunities for learning. You wouldn't go there just to study but also to perform and learn from other musicians who were performing new music. You would spend a week there instead of having a quick interaction. And CMS wasn't just about playing; it was a complete experience of exploring new ideas."

Ed Blackwell



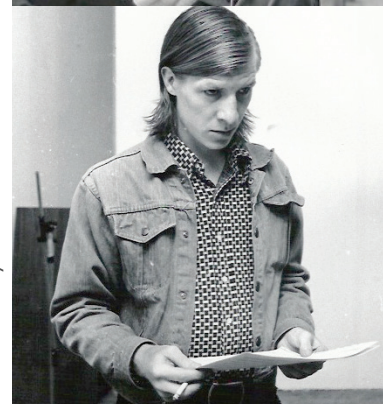
David Izenson



Frederic Rzewski



James Emery



Leroy Jenkins



Orchestral Music



Oliver Lake

Oliver Lake

Lake, an alto sax player with a career that has seen collaborations with a broad array of other artists, was a CMS Guiding Artist from 1975 to 1984. Interviewed a few years ago about the Studio, he observed that "it was a communal feeling, with all participants exchanging ideas. It was a very creative time. It felt like an equal exchange between the artists and the students." The tracks here show the range of Lake's skills as a player, with his piercing tone, and as a composer who can move successfully in any number of directions and still hold the listener's interest.

Olu Dara

Like his fellow Guiding Artists, trumpeter Olu Dara credits CMS with being a seminal part of his development. "I think I was more musical then than at any other time in my life," he recalled in a recent interview. "Playing music off of the top of my head was a good stretch for me and my music. It freed me more and I've kept that spirit with me." Dara started in the free jazz tradition but branched out in the late 90s into a style that incorporates blues, funk, rock and reggae. He is in top form on the tracks presented here, his playing at times dominating the group and at times reacting to it. It is also a rare opportunity to hear Dara working with a large ensemble and playing harmonica.

Roscoe Mitchell

Like Oliver Lake, Roscoe Mitchell is a senior statesman of jazz with a career as equally varied and full of exploration. Mitchell taught composition at CMS, inspiring a new generation of composers. His piece here moves between moods and instrumentation with a master's touch. One of his former students, trumpeter Tom Dill, recalls that the heart of Mitchell's teaching was that "improvisation is fundamentally about listening. It's a reflective process before it is an expressive process. Roscoe put forward the grounding lesson that making music is very serious stuff, and demands a microscopic level of attendance to the moment. As I look back, I see in his manner of pedagogy that Roscoe embodied another fundamental teaching that reaches across those thirty-four years with a resonance: Simplify your materials and methods, and let complexity arise out of the interactions that naturally follow." Dill's comment encompasses the philosophy at the heart of CMS.



Roscoe Mitchell

World Music

Ismet Siral

Siral was a jazz innovator in his native Turkey, participating in some of the earliest jazz groups there in 1953. While on vacation in New York with Don Cherry in 1978, he and Cherry visited CMS and Siral became a fixture at the Studio for two years. He is still fondly remembered today by Karl Berger and other CMS artists for his enthusiasm and creativity. Tragically, his dream of recreating a CMS school in Turkey ended in frustration and failure by the time of his death in 1987. His vision lives on, though, in a series of concerts and workshops started in 2006 in Istanbul that are dedicated to his exploratory spirit. The tracks presented here show Siral's ability to blend improvisation and traditional Turkish forms.

Nana Vasconcelos

Vasconcelos brought from Brazil his skills as a percussionist and player of the berimbau, a highly expressive Brazilian instrument heard on one of these tracks. The other track showcases the "call and response" pattern heard in Brazilian vocal music and in many jazz compositions. Like almost all musicians playing in the "world" idiom, Vasconcelos came into contact with trumpeter Don Cherry when both lived in Europe in the 70s. Leaving Brazil and playing with jazz musicians gave Vasconcelos the confidence to develop a unique sound. He said in a 2007 interview that "the berimbau was incredibly important for me, because it made me realize that I have something that others don't have. It gave me the voice to contribute something original to a given context. I could suddenly play with jazz musicians in an original way."



Nana Vasconcelos

Foday Musa Suso

One of the unique qualities of CMS was that it was a focal point of what came to be called World Music. Musicians from all over the world came to CMS to play music that went beyond boundaries, cultures and traditions. Suso, a kora player from Ghana, formed the Mandingo Griot Society in the late 70s along with drummer Hamid Drake, percussionist Adam Rudolph and bass player John Marsh, all artists associated with CMS, all with flexible musical boundaries. Rudolph observed, "We had to at first go where he was. Suso was a strictly traditional guy and he played his songs. So how is it that we knew how to support what he was doing and still sound like ourselves? It happened naturally. We played a lot and it developed naturally." Rudolph credits CMS with giving him and others the ability to work with many master musicians from other traditions, helping to broaden their musical vocabulary.



Foday Musa Suso

CD Content

58:53

CD1: SMALL GROUPS

(Enhanced CD: Insert in computer for complete booklet notes PDF)

1. Untitled 1 8:58
2. Untitled 2 5:29
3. Untitled 3 7:37
4. Untitled 4 2:28

Ed Blackwell/Charles Brackeen Duo

Compositions by Charles Brackeen and Ed Blackwell
Ed Blackwell, drums; Charles Brackeen, soprano and tenor saxophone
Recorded November 22, 1980, CMS Campus, West Hurley NY
(West Hurley is a township adjacent to Woodstock NY)

5. May Day 2:12
6. Child of the Night 5:40
7. I Am a Leaf for Today 4:09

David Izenson Trio

Compositions by David Izenson (Lindy Publ. Co, ASCAP)
Ingrid Sertso, vocals; Karl Berger, piano; David Izenson, bass
Recorded April 30, 1977, Grog Kill Studio, Willow NY
(Carla Bley's Studio. Willow is a hamlet in Woodstock NY)

8. 7inC 8:03

Frederic Rzewski/Ursula Oppens Piano Duo

Composition by Karl Berger (GEMA)
Frederic Rzewski, piano; Ursula Oppens, piano
Recorded October 1978, Carnegie Recital Hall, New York NY

9. Ashiata 6:23
10. Okidanokh 7:30

Leroy Jenkins/James Emery Duo

Compositions by James Emery (JANEM/ASCAP)
Leroy Jenkins, violin; James Emery, guitar
Recorded April 23, 1977, CMS Campus, West Hurley NY

59:54

CD2: ORCHESTRAL

1. Untitled 1 6:43
2. Untitled 2 10:57
3. Untitled 3 6:34

Olu Dara and the CMS Orchestra

Compositions by Olu Dara
Soloist: Olu Dara, trumpet, harmonica; CMS Participants
Recorded 1981 1981 at the CMS Campus in West Hurley NY

4. CMS Scene 1 4:32
5. CMS Scene 2 6:43
6. CMS Scene 3 5:13
7. Two by Two 4:54
8. Untitled 13:59

Oliver Lake and the CMS Orchestra

Compositions by Oliver Lake (Talking Stick Music, SESAC)
Soloists: Oliver Lake, alto sx, fl; Michael Gregory, gtr; James Harvey, trb
Recorded 1976 (4-6) and 1979 at the CMS Campus in West Hurley NY

Roscoe Mitchell and the CMS Orchestra

Composition by Roscoe Mitchell
Soloists: Roscoe Mitchell, saxophones; Garrett List, trombone
Recorded 1977 at the CMS Campus in West Hurley NY

58:55

CD3: WORLD MUSIC

1. Oy 6:28
2. Untitled 10:17
3. Merdevin 4:45

Ismet Siral and Friends

Compositions by Ismet Siral
Soloists: Ismet Siral, ney, fl, sop sx; Steve Gorn, bansuri flutes
Recorded July 1980 at the CMS Campus, West Hurley, NY

4. Call and Response 7:20
5. Berimbau Solo 7:42

Nana Vasconcelos w/CMS Participants & Solo

Compositions by Nana Vasconcelos
Soloist: Nana Vasconcelos, voice, berimbau
Recorded July 1979 at the CMS Campus, West Hurley, NY

6. Kuumba Sora 6:58
7. Demba Tenkeren 7:25
8. Disco Gate 7:40

Foday Suso and the Mandingo Griot Society

Compositions by Foday Musa Suso (Suso Music, BMI)
Foday Suso, kora; Adam Rudolph, perc; Hamid Drake, dr; John Marsh, e-bass
Recorded 1980 at the CMS Campus, West Hurley, NY

CD Notes & Credits

CREATIVE MUSIC FOUNDATION MISSION

The Creative Music Foundation makes it possible to profoundly experience and express our deep connection with the transforming energies of music, our universal language. CMF programs focus on the common elements of all music, emphasizing keen awareness, personal expression, intensive listening and cross-cultural communication, and providing unique opportunities for musicians, students and listeners from different backgrounds and traditions to explore together, share, develop, and broaden their musical understanding and sensitivity. CMF pursues its mission through workshops, residencies, coaching, concerts, recordings and archival projects that engage both listeners and musicians in the USA and around the world.

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www.creativemusicfoundation.org