

## On Transformation Focused Improvisation: The History and Grand Aesthetic of the Evil Clown Record Label

My name is PEK, and I play woodwinds (clarinets, saxophones, double reeds, and flutes) and many other instruments. I have a Do It Yourself record label called Evil Clown which documents the music of my band [Leap of Faith](#) (with cellist Glynis Lomon) and many other projects dating from the early 90s to the present.

This essay is in three major parts: First I discuss my own musical history and the birth and development of [Evil Clown](#) to the present (1973 to 2021). The second section discusses in detail my thinking about the Structure and Theory of the music that I have released on the label with the contributions of well over 50 Boston Area musicians. Understanding the story of all the related ensembles should give the reader context for the theoretical discussion in the second part. The final section is simply a list of hyperlinks to all kinds of Evil Clown material on the internet. I have also included many hyperlinks in the first two sections both to the Evil Clown content under discussion and Wikipedia content for further information on music theory concepts and the music history.

I was recently interviewed for [FreeJazzBlog](#) by Nick Ostrum in a written question and answer format, you can find the interview [here](#). Nick has reviewed several Evil Clown albums by different bands and has a good understanding of our work and our aesthetic. The timing of Nick's request was good: I spend a lot of time thinking about and writing about my music for liner notes and on the web, and discussing the theoretical underpinnings of our approach to improvisation. I had been considering writing a detailed essay on those ideas for the last several years to post on my website, and Nick's interview gave me the incentive and opportunity to write about these thoughts for a forum with more readers than my website generally gets. While the interview was a good start, a significant portion of my thoughts on theory were not recorded in the interview and I decided that I would expand on my interview responses in this essay format. What follows is as complete a statement I have ever made on my story, my aesthetic, and my working methods.

The discussion in Part II defines my **Theory of Transformation Focused Improvisation**. This Theory governs how music works in Evil Clown Ensembles, and perhaps the music of some other improvisors who use similar theoretical ideas. There are other Theories of Improvisation which govern music with different intent: For example, there are schools of drone music, schools of extreme minimalism, schools of energy music, and others; all of which have substantially different intent than mine. Even where those musics are fully improvised, my Theory does not apply. Jazz and the improvisation musics of diverse Cultures are governed by Theories specific to those musical styles that exercise very specific controls over the mechanics of those musics that are very different than the controls that my Theory exercises over the mechanics of the music produced by Evil Clown Ensembles. A feature of the modern music world is that musicians do not have to choose to use an existing Theoretical System to Structure their music. Everyone is free to use their own concepts to define the musical space in which they work, and they are free to draw on the entire history of music across cultures for inspiration. My **Theory of Transformation Focused Improvisation** has been developed over the last 35 years from my experience of improvising in a huge number of different contexts with a huge number of different players and my extensive study of the history of music across cultures and time.

## **Part I: History of Evil Clown (Early PEK History)**

I started playing the clarinet in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, then switched to piano lessons for a few years, alto sax in Junior High and finally tenor sax and flute in High School where I was also the drum major of the marching band as a senior. For about 5 years starting in Junior High, I studied classical and jazz saxophone with a guy named Kurt Heisig in San Jose California.

I then went to the University of California at Davis where I played in marching band for a year while majoring in Mathematics. I quickly got tired of the Marching Band and for a year or so I did not play music. I started taking Philosophy classes at Davis (including a course in Aesthetics which had a profound influence on my early thinking about art) and then switched to the University of California at Santa Cruz as a Philosophy major, with my good pal Jeff Mockus who was from Santa Cruz.

Once in Santa Cruz at age 20, I encountered a band of older musicians (in their mid to late 20s) in a rock band called Thieves, Villains and Scoundrels Union, Local 12; the name refers to a Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoon where Boris is on strike for the Union holding a sign proclaiming, "Unfair to Local Villains." Disenchanted with College, although I still liked both Mathematics and Philosophy, I left school and started to play with Local 12, taking a day job at a local backpacking and camping equipment store called Western Mountaineering.

Local 12 was a transformative experience for me. The other players were far more seasoned than I, and the material was eclectic and bent in a prog rock direction. I formed bonds with Jim Smith the vocalist, keyboardist and songwriter and Dave Murray the bass player. I learned a lot, but the environment was chaotic and after a few years the band dissolved. Determined to increase my skills, I went back to Kurt Heisig for more lessons, this time taking them very seriously and spending the next 5 years in the woodshed in Santa Cruz.

I joined another rock band called No Such Thing with my old high school buddy Mike Grialou (guitar and bass). This band also did not last very long, but after it broke up, I continued to play with Mike in various settings including another rock band called Ring of Fire. Mike and I created a dozen or so very experimental pieces with a four-track reel-to-reel tape machine, sometimes with Dave and Jim from Local 12. The most important work from this period is a duet with Mike on bass and me on tenor sax and vocals called *Whiskey is Wholesome* (1988), a 20-minute blues jam where we both got drunker and drunker as the performance continued. The piece features my improvised spoken (and shouted) words regarding the benefits of whisky drinking and the best recorded evidence of my improvisational language on tenor sax to date... We also did several recording sessions of compositions that I wrote including *The Safety Device* (1989) for about 10 musicians. Ironically, this early composition contained more dots (conventional staff notation) than any of my other composed works since except for some Berklee schoolwork that was never performed.

## **History of Evil Clown (Archival Period)**

In 1989, at the age of 25, I relocated from California to Boston MA to attend the Berklee School of Music. I had learned a lot from Kurt Heisig about how to control the tone, sound, and phrasing of saxophones, but I was still in need of formal education in music theory, ear training, composition and other topics covered at a real music college. While there, I studied tenor sax performance with tenor sax jazz titan [George Garzone](#). I was one of George's most Avant-garde students at that time and George and I had a great relationship, including performing together both at the school and in the Boston scene.

I decided that I would earn Berklee's 2-year certificate rather than a bachelor's degree, which I basically did in three terms, but stayed for five terms. I was able to take only courses which interested me for those last two terms without worrying about satisfying the full degree requirements. I doubled up on lessons with George and for the last two terms we ignored the standard prep for proficiency exams and instead played improvised duets on two tenor saxes. From this I learned about improvisation phrasing and interaction with a master jazz musician. To my knowledge no other Berklee student has ever used their lesson time like this. I had no trouble with the exams since I had used Berklee scale study books in my Heisig lessons for 5 years, and so the tests were easy, and I could prepare in just the week prior with no difficulty. I also took some advanced composition courses including one with Ken Pullig on using ideas of serialism in jazz composing. I composed a giant work called Nucleus for this class that was never performed.

Early in the Berklee period (early 1990), I encountered a Japanese percussionist and pianist, who was studying for a master's degree at the New England Conservatory (just down the street from Berklee), named Masashi Harada. Masashi had performed on percussion in a trio in Berlin a few years prior with [Cecil Taylor](#) and was deeply hooked into the improvisation scene in Boston. He also performed and recorded in an amazing trio with the saxophonist [Joe Maneri](#) (teaching at New England Conservatory at the time) and Joe's son, now famous, violinist [Mat Maneri](#).

While I had been interested in Jazz and Free Jazz in California, listening to Cecil Taylor, the [Art Ensemble of Chicago](#), [Anthony Braxton](#), [Sun Ra](#), as well as the more mainstream jazz of [Miles Davis](#), [John Coltrane](#), [Gil Evans](#), and many others, I had not had an opportunity to play with seasoned Jazz or Improvisation performers. The most experimental work I performed prior to that time was the tape pieces with Mike Grialou.

This changed dramatically once I joined the Masashi Harada Sextet. That band included cellist Glynis Lomon, who I still play with today in Leap of Faith, and master drummer Lawrence Cooke. At one performance our special guest was bassist [William Parker](#). Glynis had studied with [Bill Dixon](#) in his Black Music Program at Bennington College in Vermont, and Glynis and Lawrence both performed and recorded with Bill Dixon. Masashi's music was loosely composed with notated themes and pre-established aleatoric structures, but the content was essentially improvised. In many ways, the education I received in this band was far more important than the one I got at Berklee, which turned out to be far squarer than I had anticipated: Other music schools (Like New England Conservatory and Bennington) offer programs more focused on improvisation / creative music, while Berklee's approach is much more on commercial music. Even so, I did not regret my attendance since I wanted to understand conventional Western music's Theory and Structure and I did learn what I wanted to know. I learned improvisation elsewhere by playing with more experienced improvisors many of whom had studied in a new music curriculum.

While still at Berklee and playing in the Boston Improvisation Scene, I decided that I wanted to change the instruments I was using to broaden my palette. I had bought soprano, alto, 2 tenors and baritone vintage Selmer saxophones, clarinet, and flute from Heisig in California. I traded away the higher saxes and one of the tenors for a bass clarinet, a contrabass clarinet, and a bassoon. The three clarinets, two lower saxes and bassoon were my instruments from this time until 2001.

Masashi organized a performance of Cecil Taylor's composition Burning Poles performed at New England Conservatory. The performance featured a large orchestra of many gifted improvisors from the Boston area including two Cecil Alumni: Trumpeter [Raphe Malik](#) and tenor

saxist [Glenn Spearman](#). They were able to give a great deal of insight into how to interpret Cecil's composition, having played a lot in his larger units. Cecil attended the performance, and I was able to meet him at a party held in Masashi's loft apartment right next to Fenway Park.

When I left Berklee, I got a job at the Tower Records in Harvard Square where I worked for six years running the receiving department like I had done in California for Western Mountaineering. In many ways, this was a crappy job, but it had a key benefit: I was able to open and listen to essentially any recording I wanted to hear in the back room where we processed the store's inventory. I added another few thousand CDs to my collection and listened to every kind of music you can imagine. I specialized in free jazz and free improvisation, modern classical music (after 1900), and world music (especially from Asia and Africa). My work pal, Thom Jones aka Pointy Toes, introduced me to industrial music, noise music and other weird musics more from the popular culture. I acquired a profound knowledge of music history across cultures and time. Especially important to me was classical music after 1950 by composers [John Cage](#), [Iannis Xenakis](#), [Krzysztof Penderecki](#), [György Ligeti](#), [Harry Partch](#) (among many others) and performers [Arditti String Quartet](#) (among many others) from solo to Orchestral Works.

Post-Modern classical music breaks through all kinds of boundaries established by the Western music of the preceding centuries, essentially creating completely new musical languages, sometimes for a single composition only. I found these sound worlds provided a rich base of influence for developing my own distinct musical language for improvisation. The same is true of Asian and African musics which do not share rhythmic, harmonic, or melodic structures with Western music.

The other principal influence on my developing mature vocabulary was cellist Glynis Lomon from the Masashi Harada Sextet. I learned how to respond to and imitate the amazing sounds produced by Glynis including specialized extended techniques like glissando and multiphonics. When the MHS ended after a few years, Glynis and I committed to pursuing our playing together in our own band. This marks the start of [Evil Clown](#) record label (1992), although it would not be called that until much later.

Our first band, [Leaping Water Trio](#), was a trio with sax player Sam Lobel. After a few years, Sam left and was replaced by trombonist Mark McGrain, who had been one my teachers at Berklee (for notation and composition using non-traditional notation), and we renamed the ensemble [Leap of Faith](#). We were occasionally joined by bassist Craig Schildhauer and drummer Syd Smart who had been active in the New York City loft scene in the 1970s. There are a few excellent quintet sessions in the catalog from this period including [First Zeit](#) (1995), the first performance ever by anyone in the new music series at the Zeitgeist Gallery in Cambridge MA which would be a regular Leap of Faith venue for years. After a few years, Mark relocated to New Orleans, and the core Leap of Faith became PEK, Glynis and Craig Schildhauer. One of our most important Archival period performances was this trio with guest drummer Sydney Smart at the Autumn Uprising festival in Jamaica Plain, [Unified Fields](#) (1997).

In 1991 and 1992, I spent over a year preparing my first Frame Notation score for improvising orchestra entitled [Expansions](#) (performed 3 times at the amazing loft performance space, Mobius). The [score](#) organized Events on a timeline including composed lines and other notational devices like what I learned from helping to prepare and interpret Masashi's scores and what I learned from Mark McGrain at Berklee. At the time, I thought this would lead to more similar works, but partially due to the huge amount of effort involved, I focused for a long time on purely improvised works for smaller ensembles.

Another important band for me during the 90s was the jazz orchestra of [Raqib Hassan](#). This large band had several formulations but typically included Glynis, me and multiple drummers / percussionists including Sydney Smart and Yuri Zbitnov. We played Raqib's compositions and sometimes covered jazz standards or Sun Ra compositions. There were several big concerts including one dedicated to [Coltrane](#) and one dedicated to [Sun Ra](#). Raqib's compositions used sophisticated jazz ideas and are more "free jazz" than typical in my Evil Clown ensembles which are more "free improvisation" or "pure improvisation."

In 1998, I predicted the decline of Tower Records, and sick of the low pay and rotten treatment of their employees, decided to return to college at the University of Massachusetts to study Computer Science. I had been writing mathematics to make Fractals in a computer program called Fractint with a Berklee pal, Martha Ritchie, for album artwork and for computer generated video at shows. I knew that I enjoyed that this mathematical programming and that I could complete the computer science degree and radically improve the quality of my day gig. Martha is a gifted pianist, we hung out a lot for several years and did record a few albums together (with animated fractals on the video versions) released with the band names Free Trance Ensemble and [Fractal Trance Ensemble](#).

Leap of Faith had several multi-media partners for a few years in the mid-90s including dancer Adrienne T Hawkins and action painter Guadulesa. Several performances included one or both of these artists culminating in a week with both at Mobius in 1997 with the PEK, Glynis and Mark McGrain Leap of Faith trio. The second set of each of the 3 shows included a videographic score of animated Fractals prepared by me and Martha. The video had slow movement and fast, agitated movement and provided a lot of information on energy level for the musicians to follow. The discs are titled [Mobius May 97, Vol. 1](#), [Vol. 2](#) and [Vol. 3](#). YouTube Videos of the videographic score are here: [5/23/1997](#) & [5/24/1997](#).

I left Tower Records and got a non-technical job at the company that I still work for, a Consulting Engineering Firm called [Simpson Gumpertz & Heger](#). As I completed my programming degree at night, this turned into a very good technical job. I still run the computer graphics department and do graphics, programming and data management for Engineers who are Expert Witnesses in huge construction litigations. I've worked on lawsuits regarding the Big Dig in Boston, the New York City Subway, the Washington Monument, the damage to subway tunnels under the river into Manhattan during hurricane Sandy and well over 100 others.

In 1999, Craig left the scene, and the core trio became me, Glynis, and drummer Yuri Zbitnov from Raqib's bands. In mid-2000, I reached out to George Garzone and proposed a concert at Killian Hall MIT with his trio, The Fringe, and this Leap of Faith trio with special guest James Coleman on Theremin. We would each play a set and then play a third set with both bands combined at the end. Leap of Faith worked tirelessly to prepare for this show for most of a year, doing many recording sessions at Yuri's house in Jamaica Plain. At one of these sets, the music at the very end of the piece resembled some crazy circus music. On the original unedited recording, you can hear me after the end of the piece saying, "[The Fucked-Up Circus Comes to Town](#)."

Of course, this became the title of the album and then I needed artwork for the cover. My housemate, Raffi, is a trained painter and together we conceived of a [digital painting](#) for the cover which Raffi then executed: A giant clown (Godzilla sized) stampeding through a circus, squishing people, while juggling an elephant, a circus wagon, and several other large circus objects. This is the origin story for the name of the label, Evil Clown. The clown's name is Sparkles, the Giant Evil Clown, and while he is perceived as evil by bystanders, he is not really evil, merely indifferent to the fate of the tiny insignificant bug-sized people he tramples.

Sparkles symbolizes Chaos – Chaos Theory is a key component of the theoretical foundation of our music which will be discussed in much greater detail later in this article. A [latter painting](#) (from 2015) by Raffi introduces Sunshine, a giant evil Bunny with huge sharp teeth, hanging out with Sparkles. Sparkles and Sunshine show up together a few years later in a third painting, and Raffi is currently (2021) working on a fourth painting with Sparkles and his pal Lurky, who is lurking behind the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Anyway, I worked my ass off for the year prior to the MIT concert with the Fringe, not only preparing the band, but going to school at night and working at the demanding technical day job. After the concert I was exhausted, and without really planning to in advance, I stopped scheduling new sessions and it gradually became clear that I was taking a break. I realized that the SGH job was an amazing opportunity to develop a career that would allow normal adult activities like buying a house that do not come easily or at all from a performance career in Avant Garde music. I often say that my approach to music is cerebral rather than emotional or visceral, and for a long time the technical demands of the job satisfied my need to exercise my brain and I did not miss music making.

So, the MIT concert (2001) concludes what I call the Evil Clown Archival period. The Leap of Faith set from this concert was released as [Hierarchies](#). I did record the combined set also, but for contractual reasons of George's, it has never been possible to release this recording to the public: Too bad, since it is a stellar performance.

The main band of the Archival period, of course, was [Leap of Faith](#) in three different core configurations. The core units performed with many different guests and I recorded everything on DAT tape. At the Zeitgeist Gallery shows we generally would play with a second band. Each group would play a set and then both groups would play one together – we played with a lot of interesting Boston area improvisors in this way. During that time, I did release about 10 Leap of Faith records on CD, but I recorded every LOF performance and lots of other projects also including:

- [Leaping Water Trio](#) (trio with Glynis and Sam Lobel)
- [Wind](#) (duet with Sam Lobel) even
- [Boston Improvisors' Collective](#) (Lead by Flutist Matt Samolis)
- [Sky Saw](#) (A rock project with Yuri and Core Redonnett on electric zither from the Blue Man Group)
- Various [Raqib Hassan](#) bands
- [Mental Notes](#) (an overnight radio program at the Tufts radio station with Craig Schildhauer and many others)
- [Free Trance Ensemble and Fractal Trance Ensemble](#) (with Martha Ritchey)
- [Composers Orchestra](#) (with Eric Zinman, Raphe Malik and others)
- [Equilibrium](#) (with Charlie Kolhase, Matt Langer, Tatsuya Nakatani and James Coleman)
- [Bottom Feeder](#) (with Craig Schildhauer)

## History of Evil Clown (Contemporary Period)

Even while I was inactive musically, I continued to hang out with Yuri, who came frequently to my house on Friday nights for movie night at my home theater. Around 2012, Yuri asked me if I wanted to record and perform with [Mission Creep](#), a rock band led by his pal Greg Grinnell. Also in this band was saxophonist Steve Norton who had played on [Expansions](#) and on one of the Boston Improvisors' Collective shows. Mission Creep has never played that often, but occasionally Greg would arrange a show and we would rehearse and then perform.

Doing these occasional performances made me realize how much I missed playing music. For a long time, my SGH day job required 65 or 70 hours a week and sometimes more: So much time that any kind of serious music activity was simply out of the question. I preferred to lay out completely, then to pursue music half-assed, so I had not considered resuming musical activity prior to this. While I still have occasional heavy demands on my time for SGH, it is not constant anymore and in Fall of 2014 I decided that I would start playing again. For several months that fall, I sampled the DAT tapes from the Archival period and created a bunch of new CDs of Leap of Faith and the other ensembles.

I had used Fractals, created with Martha Ritchey, for Album Covers and Posters during the Archival period. In the intervening time, computers had become far more powerful and there was a new Fractal Program called UltraFractal which is much better than Fractint. I got the new program and created a generation of fresh Fractal images, writing a lot of Fractal generating math in the process. My SGH gig had given me strong skills with Adobe Photoshop, so I made artsy digital alterations to the raw Fractal images for the new artwork. While the images are different from each other in many ways, they also have some strong similarities which made them excellent for a marketing brand (together with Sparkles) to give all the products of the various ensembles a visual theme tying them together. Occasionally, I spend a few days or a week adding to a huge library of Fractal Art images. Whenever I put out a new album, I just need to pick source images from the library, and I can design packaging. Fractals are Mathematical images of Chaos Theory with the property of self-similarity across scales: To me they symbolize mathematical chaos and abstraction just like Sparkles does and tie-in to the music Theory discussed in detail below.

In early 2014, while in NYC on SGH business, I visited [Downtown Music Gallery](#) and had a long conversation with proprietor Bruce Lee Gallanter. DMG specializes in the wacky music I listen to and I had been for years a weekly customer of the DMG list published at the end of each week. Bruce knew me well as a customer, but not at all as a player. After we discussed my music at length, I sent him a batch of the CDs from the Archival period. He wrote [great reviews](#) of every disc I sent and was able to sell nearly all of it, persuading me that there would be interest in newly performed music. Recently, for the 30-year anniversary of Downtown Music Gallery, an excerpt of the [Leap of Faith Orchestra – The Photon Epoch](#) was included in an hour-long YouTube program called [DMG 30th Anniversary - Episode 01](#). It is quite an honor for me to be included in this program with many well-known and less well-known accomplished improvisors.

In January of 2015, Leap of Faith started up again with a core quartet of me, Glynis, Yuri, and Steve Norton. This is the start of what I call the Contemporary Period. Now having financial resources from my SGH gig not available in the Archival period, I immediately started to acquire many new horns and percussion instruments to broaden my palette of sounds and the palette available to the Evil Clown ensembles. Six years later, I now have all the common and some uncommon orchestral woodwinds (6 saxophones, 7 clarinets, 4 flutes, 6 double reeds) and many other unusual wind instruments. I also extended my acquisitions to include electronic

instruments, string instruments and other sound-making devices. The collection of instruments is called the Evil Clown Arsenal and the collection of all the involved performers is called the [Evil Clown Roster](#). While I alone play the horns, the other instruments are open for other players from the Roster who want to double, enabling great transformation of Sonority over the length of a single performance. One feature of the Arsenal is large numbers of similar wood and metal percussion instruments like orchestral castanets and Tibetan Bowls and Bells. For example, there are about 75 Tibetan Bowls (from a few inches to 15 inches across), enabling a large group of players to collectively create a very complex texture built from instruments from a tight Timbre Set.

I decided I wanted to also have a Leap of Faith Orchestra which would perform new [Frame Notation Scores](#) based on the ideas of Expansions (1992). I had in mind a large improvising orchestra comprised of a horn section, a string section, a percussion section, guitars, piano, and electronics (up to 25 players). Unlike Expansions, the [scores](#) are designed to be performed without the need for rehearsal: Simple symbols and written English language descriptions are arranged on a timeline and the band executes the directions with the aid of a large sports clock.

To prepare the musicians to improvise in an orchestra of 20 to 25 players, I decided to form several smaller ensembles that would record and perform together. These bands were [String Theory](#) (Glynis, me and string players), [Turbulence](#) (me and other horn players) and [Metal Chaos Ensemble](#) (originally me and Yuri with other percussion players). The ideas which guide the Frame Notation Scores are discussed in detail below in the second part of this essay.

I started having concerts at the LilyPad in Cambridge, which is a nice small venue, but expensive. Eventually, I switched over to Outpost 186, around the corner: Less nice and with no bar, but very cheap by comparison. At Outpost 186, I had the third Saturday of the month from 2016 to the onset of the pandemic in 2020, and these bands and a few others alternated as the performer at those shows. For the first year, we did small ensemble sets from these bands and 6 shows to prepare the Leap of Faith Orchestra at Clarendon Church in Somerville where we could do larger ensembles. The last of the Clarendon Church shows was the first [Frame Notation Score](#) performed by The Leap of Faith Orchestra entitled [The Expanding Universe](#).

So, during the Contemporary Period, many different Evil Clown projects run at once, each with a different planned general focus and Sonority. I gradually set up a sophisticated studio called Evil Clown Headquarters at my house in Waltham. Over time many more instruments have been added to the Arsenal, the recording equipment has greatly improved, and I have set up a LIVESTREAMING to YouTube rig with 8 cameras, real-time video mixing and high-quality sound.

The Evil Clown catalog is wide and deep: According to my master spreadsheet, the total release count as of April 2021 is 312. I just finished updating the [Evil Clown Catalog](#) document which lists the track lists, dates, names and instrumentation for every Evil Clown release. The Evil Clown website includes all the [reviews](#) we have received by Bruce Lee Gallanter (over 100) and Darren Bergstein for Downtown Music Gallery, and by others for All About Jazz, The Squid's Ear, Free Jazz Blog, Jazz Right Now, etc. On my [YouTube](#) page, are videos for many of the Archival Period performances and nearly all the Contemporary Period performances. If you subscribe to the YouTube Channel you will get notifications at the beginning of performance broadcasts.

Following is a brief discussion of the arc of each of the units active in the contemporary period.

- **[Leap of Faith \(99 releases\)](#)**: For the first year or so after the 2015 reboot, the core unit is quartet with me, Glynis, Yuri, and Steve. Then Steve moved to Maine to go to graduate school, and we continued with the core trio. Nearly all performances of Leap of Faith have guests from the Evil Clown Roster, and quintets or sextets are far more common than performances limited to the core unit. At the end of 2019, Yuri decided to withdraw his participation in Evil Clown except for Metal Chaos Ensemble, and so now the core unit is duet. Leap of Faith is, and always has been, my band with Glynis to leverage our deep interactions dating back now 30 years. The various core units and the dozens of guest performers have served to give us different settings to explore our musical relationship, to make the performances different from each other, and to bring players from the LOFO and other units into our improvisation concept.
- **[Leap of Faith Orchestra \(35 releases\)](#)**: Following the warmup work at the Sommerville Church leading up to the first contemporary period Frame Notation Score, The Expanding Universe, I found a nice larger venue called Third Life Studios in a different area of Sommerville where I scheduled 5 shows a year (two months apart excluding the one show in the middle of winter when hauling a lot of equipment is too difficult). We performed 13 times at this venue between 2017 and 2019 when Susan had to give up the space due to the radical increase in the rent required to renew her lease. At the conclusion of this run, I offered a 25 CD box set of the complete performances which you can find on bandcamp: [The Complete Leap of Faith Orchestra and Sub-Units Performances at Third Life Studios 2017 to 2019](#). These performances do not use scores but did provide practice at unplanned improvisations with the ensemble size from about 7 to 15. Each show (except one) started with an hours' worth of short 15- or 20-minute sets by small Sub-Units of the orchestra (usually trios or quartets). Each time I filled my van to the roof with equipment from the Arsenal so the musicians could play these auxiliary instruments as doubles to their ordinary instrument(s) and improvise with each other in both small units and in the largest pure improvisation settings with no score. The auxiliary instruments are assigned as doubles in the Frame Notation Scores and the players got to experiment with them in these performances which were preparation for the scored performances of which there have been 6 to date. I need a venue with a big stage for these shows which is expensive and difficult to arrange. I bring a significant portion of the Arsenal for these shows requiring a large U-Haul truck:
  1. [The Expanding Universe](#) (6/4/2016 - Nave Series, Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church)
  2. [Supernovae](#) (11/19/2016 - Somerville Armory)
  3. [Possible Universes](#) (5/28/2017 - Somerville Armory)
  4. [SuperClusters](#) (12/1/2017 - Pickman Hall, Longy School of Music)
  5. [Cosmological Horizons](#) (7/14/2018 – Killian Hall, MIT)
  6. [The Photon Epoch](#) (4/27/2019 - Pickman Hall, Longy School of Music)

There is further detailed discussion of the theory and practice of the LOFO scored performances at the end of this essay.

- **[Metal Chaos Ensemble \(49 releases\)](#)**: MCE, the most prolific Evil Clown Ensemble besides LOF, has always included Yuri and me with a ton of different guests. The

original intent was to have mostly percussion players with my horns to prepare the percussion section for the LOFO. Over time, there have been widely varied sets including many that have included more rock elements than present in other Evil Clown ensembles. Great early albums included a trio with vibraphonist Andrea Nicodemou ([Intermetallic Compounds](#)), a trio with Bill T Miller on crazy gadgets and electronics ([Chrononauts](#)), a sextet with a guest black metal drummer and guitars ([Corrosion](#)), and a trio with guitarist Catherine Capozzi ([War Tuba](#)). Over time, we did many more sessions with these players and others. In 2018, Mission Creep played a bar gig where the one of the other bands included analog synthesis wiz Eric Woods. I recruited Eric for MCE and the LOFO and we started to deliberately introduce more rock elements. Yuri enjoys playing groove music and we looked for ways to bring in more rock elements including electric bass. Cecil Taylor alumni Albey OnBass joined us that fall on electric upright bass for [Syncretic Discipline](#), [Beyond the Holy Mountain](#) and several others. We had been invited to do a show at a nice theater in Delaware and we planned to do a power trio edition with Albey, but he moved to New Orleans after we booked it, so we needed to find another bass player. We found Mike Gruen for the gig ([Basalisk](#)), who is an excellent electric bassist, and was looking to stretch out from the song-oriented playing that he does most of the time. The next four MCE sets (Fall 2019 to March 2020) are either quintet or sextet sets with the same band: PEK & Mike Caglianone (reeds, percussion), Bob Moores (space trumpet, guitar, electronics), Eric Woods (analog synth), Mike Gruen (electric bass), Yuri Zbitnov (drums, percussion) and Joel Simches (recording, real time signal processing). These albums each feature spoken words sections with the text derived from literature or movies, hard groove sections, spacey electronics sections, percussion sections, and freak out sections: All improvised apart from the words of the selected text. Those 4 albums are [Proteus IV](#), [The Nameless City](#), [Call of Cthulhu](#), and [The Riddle of Steel](#). This free rock formula is very satisfying for the performers and has been well received by our audience and critics who review our work. Once the pandemic set in, Yuri and I did a few duets including [Don Quixote](#) which includes studio overdubbing mimicking the real-time interactions of the sextet format. We also did a great power trio edition set with Mike Gruen ([Atomic Tuna](#)) just before the third wave of the virus forced me to shut down ECH altogether until now.

- **[String Theory](#) (13 releases):** During the Archival period Leap of Faith recorded [Linear Combinations and Transformations](#) at Killian Hall, MIT. The middle of three movements of this CD length work was a septet comprised of me and Mark McGrain on horns, a String Quartet (Glynis - vc, Craig Schildhauer - b, Rob Bethel - vc, and Forest Larsen - vla), and Lawrence Cook at the drum set. In preparation for the septet movement, we did several sessions with just me and the strings. String Theory is the contemporary period implementation of this idea. I love playing with free improvisation string players, but they are hard to come by. Orchestral string players are highly in demand and most of them are classically trained and not particularly interested in playing weird music. Even so, we have had some great string players come and go and whenever the Evil Clown [Roster](#) has active string players, I scheduled sets for String Theory. This band name will likely not produce more recordings since Yuri has left Leap of Faith - new performances in this category will be Leap of Faith sets. A great String Theory set from 2016 featuring me, Glynis, violinist Mimi Rabson and cellist Jane Wang was released as [Condensed Phases of Matter](#).
- **Turbulence [<https://turbulence2.bandcamp.com/>] (29 releases):** Turbulence is the band that is mostly horn players, although there are relatively few releases that are horns alone. The horn players often double multiple horns, percussion and/or electronics and sometimes we have a drummer. There are 4 relatively early sets with

the sub-group name Turbulence Doom Choir with me and Yuri with two tubas (Dave Harris and John Baylies) and electronics (one is [Lava Flow](#)). There is a great performance ([Upheaval](#)) from 2019 with horn only quintet (PEK, Bob Moores, Michael Caglianone, Jim Warshauer and Ellwood Epps). The most recent album, [Friction Coefficients](#) (2020), from just before the pandemic, features tenor saxophonist and flutist Bonnie Kane and her drummer John Loggia from Western Mass along with several Evil Clown regulars on horns.

- **[Mekaniks](#) (5 releases) and [Chixculub](#) (3 releases):** These are other bands with more of a rock focus each featuring Yuri and me. These projects occurred prior to the sextet free rock period of MCE and comprise our earlier work on introducing more rock elements. Both units created good albums, but these groups were hard to schedule, and we did not continue them. A good Mekaniks set to check out is [The Great Clown Panik of 2016](#) and a good Chixculub set to check out is [Impactor](#).
- **[Axioms](#) (1 release):** A one-off ([Manifestations](#)) featuring Albey OnBass and Jane Spokenword who were closely associated with Cecil Taylor's final period. Albey also performed on many Leap of Faith and Metal Chaos Ensemble Sets during the year he was in the area. A very unusual item in the catalog since it features Jane's spoken word poetry. Shortly after this set Albey and Jane moved to New Orleans.
- **[Sub Unit #1](#) (2 releases):** The Orchestra shows at Third Life Studios were credited to Leap of Faith Orchestra and Sub-Units. The short sets in the first half of the show were credited to Sub Unit #1, Sub Unit #2, etc... So, the meaning of Sub Unit in the Evil Clown lexicon is a small ensemble composed of members of the [Roster](#) not assignable to one of the other ensemble names. The two releases not from Third Life LOFO concerts with this band name are a duet with pianist Eric Zinman at Outpost 186 ([Potential and Kinetic Energies](#)) and a duet ([Main Sequence](#)) with percussionist Michael Knobloch at ECH.

## **History of Evil Clown (Pandemic Period)**

Both me and my housemate Raffi are diabetic and therefore at elevated risk from Covid and we have been extraordinarily careful. Apart from the few small ensemble MCE sets mentioned above and one Leap of Faith trio set, [True Representations of Reality](#), with me, Glynis and Eric Zinman (piano, piano interior, synth, percussion) performed at Eric's Studio 234, I kept Evil Clown Headquarters locked down and focused on producing solo work during the Pandemic.

Every once in a while, there is a break in the crazy schedule, and I have some time to do a solo album. Our Grande Olde pal, the Corona Virus, has provided such a break in spades.... At the beginning of 2020, it appeared that the year would be our busiest yet... We did a bunch of albums in January, February and the first weeks of March, and then I was forced to cancel a bunch of wonderful performances scheduled for the months that followed. So, I caught up all my old business: web site, social media, distribution, and the other non-musical activity required to drive the enterprise. Then I took a month off... my biggest rest since I started up in 2015 after my long hiatus. In mid-May 2020 I started up again, conceiving new means of producing some of the enormous output normally achieved by Evil Clown.

Now in the second calendar year to be affected by the Stupid Virus, I really miss playing with others... For obvious reasons, I have been producing a lot more PEK Solo albums than I do typically. Solo performance constrains the Sonority Set to resources that I alone use and to me alone as the performer. As with larger ensemble Evil Clown sessions, the planning involves

selecting sound resources from the massive Evil Clown Arsenal and setting up the studio with these instruments to allow rapid changes in instrumentation and therefore in Sonority. I conceived of a formal system which provides a framework for creating solo works that are sufficiently different from each other that I can continue to produce new work at something close to my usual rate even while I can't perform with others.

The [PEK Solo](#) albums fall into four categories:

- 1) One continuous track (no overdubbing) of PEK playing one or many instruments with or without signal processing.
- 2) One continuous track of PEK playing one or many instruments with a prerecorded mix of samples drawn from the Evil Clown Catalog or specially recorded at Evil Clown Headquarters. Some of the recent batch use Looper electronics. Solo albums from before 2020 fall into the categories 1 & 2.
- 3) A Quartet of PEKs – Four continuous tracks of one PEK each playing many instruments on each pass. Some of these use broad palettes and some use very focused palettes.
- 4) An Orchestra of PEKs – Many tracks of PEKs performing on a broad section of the Arsenal.

20 of the 32 total PEK Solo releases were recorded and released so far during the pandemic (January 2020 to May 2021) including two four-hour Category 4 (Orchestra of PEKs) compositions each in three 80-minute movements on 3 CD sets ([Some Truths Are Known](#), [Semantic Notions](#)), a category 1 (PEK Solo) Requiem for my Father ([Requiem for Raymond](#)) performed within hours of learning of his passing in California last fall, and three category 3 (Quartet of PEKs) focused palette sets ([Schematic Abstractions for the Clarinet Family](#), [Fixed Intentions for the Saxophone Family](#), and [Completeness for Flutes and Double Reeds](#)). Ironically, while my output slowed down a bit from usual, I spent more time playing than in a typical year due to the amount of overdubbing and studio construction.

As with all artists, my work naturally falls into periods as my story unfolds. When a chapter concludes, there is an opportunity to collect that chapter's work together in a big package. Doing so helps to make clear the reasons for the grouping and to give the Evil Clown journey definition. After the venue, Third Life Studios, in Cambridge was forced to close in 2020, the Leap of Faith Orchestra and Sub-Units project which occurred there concluded and I put together a 25 CD Box Set of the 13 performances: [The Complete Leap of Faith Orchestra & Sub-Units performances at Third Life Studios \(2017 - 2019\)](#). When the virus fired up, I similarly created a 26 CD box set of selected performances by [Metal Chaos Ensemble: Best of MCE 2015 to 2019](#). Like these earlier Box Sets, the new 25 CD PEK Solo Box Set, [Fundamental Units - Complete Solo Works from Jan 2020 to May 2021](#), collects performances by one ensemble belonging to a particular period: PEK Solo projects during the Stupid Corona Virus. Downloads and CDs of these giant box sets are half price compared to individual CD orders on my bandcamp sites.

I see the pandemic as a stupid interruption which we simply need to wait out. People need to experience art and some people need to make art (myself included). The audience for pure improvisation is small, but enthusiastic. Improvisation performance is best experienced in person – the music is about the moment, so the audience being physically present in the same

moment matters to their perceptions. They can see the performance actions that result in the Sonority produced which helps many to process such abstract music.

I don't see a change in the role of music or art of any kind, just a limit on availability. When the Virus is over, Live Performance will resume, and the interruption will be over. One wrinkle for Evil Clown is that Outpost 186 in Cambridge where I have had a monthly residency for years may not survive, or at least not reopen soon. While I search for reasonably priced performance space in the new world, performances will be streamed live to YouTube as often as I can schedule them from Evil Clown Headquarters. YouTube LIVESTREAMS will resume mid-May, if you subscribe to the [site](#), you will get notifications at the start of each performance. An upcoming shows page on the [Evil Clown Website](#) and the [Evil Clown Facebook Page](#) contain calendars of pending performances.

Difficult music challenges public perceptions of "just what is music?". As with all art, the avantgarde pushes boundaries and broadens art for everyone. This is the important role of progressive music. Access has been interrupted, but the music continues, and its importance is unchanged.

## **History of Evil Clown (Looking Forward)**

As I am writing this essay in April of 2021, having received my first vaccination shot and having the second one scheduled for next week with full vaccination to be achieved in mid-May, the CDC says that fully vaccinated adults can be together indoors with no masks. Nearly all the players involved in the cancelled sets of April through June 2020 are still around and interested in resuming their involvement with Evil Clown.

I have emailed the [Roster](#) indicating that Evil Clown Headquarters (ECH) will be open to musicians who are fully vaccinated for LIVESTREAMING to YouTube performances starting after May 15. As of today (4/24/21), I have 5 sessions in May and June on the book for Leap of Faith, Metal Chaos Ensemble, Turbulence, and the newly formed Expanse (with Michael Knoblach). Yuri has decided to withdraw from Evil Clown altogether, and Steve Niemitz, a great drummer from western Mass, is going to commute into Boston for MCE sets to replace Yuri. I'm planning a new ensemble called Simulacron to feature mostly electronics.

I expect that the schedule will get full and stay full very quickly and we will probably average about 3 new releases per month in line with pre-pandemic times. I also expect that the new work will come out strong right from the beginning since all of us are desperate to perform music with others and a key element in all great shows is the passion of the players for the moment of performance!!

## **Part II: Transformation Focused Improvisation** **Evil Clown's Grand Aesthetic Problems and Solutions**

In the recent [FreeJazzBlog interview with Nick Ostrum](#), he asked a very probing question which I placed first in my responses since it directly led to a detailed discussion of the Aesthetic and the underlying framework of theoretical concepts that enable it. Here is his question:

**NO: In a discussion we had about the sheer and growing volume of your catalog, you once mentioned that individual releases and performances “are solutions to aesthetic problems posed by big ideas.” What did you mean by this?**

Due to space limitations on FJB, I did not discuss the Evil Clown history in detail as I have done here (which I think provides helpful context for the following discussion of Theory responding to Nick's question). I also did not fully elaborate on all the key components of the Grand Aesthetic. What follows is a reorganized version of my interview answers with additional material added. As I stated in the introduction, I have been carefully considering these issues for many years, and the purpose of this essay is to put the ideas that drive the Evil Clown enterprise and my own playing on the record. Hopefully, these words make clear my artistic intent and the processes I use to achieve that intent.

I present a brief statement on the Big Idea of Improvised Music, and then discuss my Theory of Transformation Focused Improvisation in several sections: The Application of Chaos Theory to Structure in Improvisation, the Application of Set Theory to Sonority in Improvisation, the Role of Tension and Release, The Role of Imitation, The Role of Line, and The Role of Harmonics in Improvisational Languages as set-up for the description of my Big Idea that drives the Evil Clown enterprise. Finally, I will discuss the Application of the Big Idea to Evil Clown's processes generally and to the PEK Solo and Leap of Faith Orchestra projects in particular.

### **The Big Idea of Improvised Music**

[Free Jazz](#) started in the late 50s or early 60s and [Free Improvisation](#) a decade or so after that. The original players were looking for a way to make music which does not rely solely on melodic / harmonic relationships in a fixed harmonic rhythm and meter. Over time, a widely practiced style of improvisation has developed where texture has replaced the melodic / harmonic relationships and action density has replaced regular metered rhythms as the core organizing principles of the music. This is the Big Idea of the improvisation scene from the 1950s to the present, and many musicians and ensembles have created successful and highly varied solutions to this aesthetic problem.

I have been a student of this approach since the early 1980s. I have a vivid memory of hearing as a high school senior in 1982 for the first time the album Tin Pan Alley (ECM, 1981) by [Jack DeJohnette](#), [Chico Freeman](#) and [John Surman](#) play saxophones in a very free style with lots of altissimo register playing and multi-phonics on this album. Although I had been playing saxophone about 6 years at this point, I had not realized that these kind of sounds were possible on my instrument. Hearing these sounds eventually led me to read all the available literature I could find about free jazz and post-modern jazz history which in turn led me to late period [Coltrane](#), [Ornette Coleman](#), [Cecil Taylor](#), [Sun Ra](#), [Anthony Braxton](#), and the [Art Ensemble of Chicago](#), etc. Art Ensemble of Chicago was particularly important to me since it established a precedent for very broad palates and woodwind multi-instrumentalism. [Roscoe Mitchell](#) is clearly a primary influence for me. All these artists use preplanned structural elements or even composed Structures at least some of the time. Eventually it became more

common for ensembles to improvise without any predetermined Structural elements, I call this kind of playing Pure Improvisation and it is how I would categorize almost all my music.

## **The Application of Chaos Theory to Structure in Improvisation**

Merely because there is no preplanning does not mean there is no Structure: Structure is an emergent property of the decisions made by and the interactions between the performers. I don't like the terms **Free Jazz** and **Free Improvisation** used to classify our music because "Free" implies to many people that no rules are in place to guide the decision making of the musicians. In fact, every improvisation is performed by musicians who have developed a specific musical language (or vocabulary) comprised of the sounds that they can make on their instruments, and the logic they use to arrange those sounds in sequence and to react to other musical sounds. Disciplined improvisors expend a great deal of effort developing a musical language which is specific to their own Expressive intent. This responsibility of each improvisor has equivalent importance to the discipline and training of players of more traditional styles of playing like Jazz, Rock or Traditional Classical where Structures are transparently evident in the melodic / harmonic relationships expressed, the Structures are compositional and determined in advance, and performer training regimens to develop mastery of a style are firmly established.

I have often heard people say that improvisation is like having a conversation and I think that is true in many ways. I express sound sequences in my musical language and other players respond with sound sequences from their own musical languages. Sometimes there is a significant overlap in the languages of all the participants (like between Glynis and me) and sometimes there is not, but always I am reacting to the Expressed sound and Predicting the likely sounds about to be Expressed. All the players do this simultaneously with skilled ensembles able to make spontaneous group decisions controlling the Development of the work as it unfolds. Structure is revealed as Transformation through a sequence of Sonorities over the duration of the work.

Prediction is especially important and is much easier in two different situations: 1) Long history between the players; and 2) Playing with mature, highly skilled players (even if unfamiliar). In both cases, players exhibit clues (which I call cues) in what they are currently playing that indicate pending Transformation. For example, if I am playing a fast aggressive Line and I gradually slow down the motion and play in the middle or lower register of my horn, that is a cue to the other musicians to lower the energy level. It is easier to read cues in Case 1 due to thorough familiarity with the musical language of the other musicians. It is easier to read cues in Case 2 due to the focus and precision present in the improvisational languages of mature improvisors. Psychic level communication occurs when all the players in an ensemble satisfy both conditions.

The rule framework in place during a particular improvisation does not have to be stated in advance, understood to be the same by all participants, or even clearly able to be articulated: It exists, nonetheless. Some ideas are well understood even if not discussed: For example, when the Phrasing of all the players ends together, there is a node of opportunity where each player can continue with a similar idea or introduce a new idea. If all the players introduce a new idea together at a node, there is a sudden transformation to a completely different Sonority. At many performances, I have heard from audience members who thought our improvisations planned-in-advance because these group actions are really tight.

I use [Chaos Theory](#) to think about Structural Development in improvisation. "Chaos" means something very different to scientists who deal with complex systems (and me) than it does in general usage where it typically means "random". Chaos Theory describes complex systems

such as the weather or the economy where the observable patterns are emergent properties of those complex systems. In the weather, the observable pattern of an event (like a hurricane) is deterministically caused by billions of interactions between local points in space each containing their own discrete temperature, humidity, direction, and speed of airflow, among many other properties. Chaos Theory tells us that the behavior of the overall system is unpredictable because the huge amount of information required to precisely map those interactions cannot be completely measured. It does not mean random: In fact, if in a computer model a starting state is completely described, and the interaction rules are applied to that starting state, the system will evolve in the same way every time the model runs. However, a tiny change in those initial conditions or in the interaction rules will lead to very different global behavior in the system over time. This property of complex systems is called Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions, also known as the [Butterfly Effect](#).

Unlike in the weather, where the interaction rules are strictly determined by physics and chemistry, the rule structures in improvisation governing the interaction of sounds are subject to the free will of the performers who make decisions about which sounds to introduce into the system and the timing of the placement of those sounds. Multiple choices conforming to the rules are always available, and it is each player's job to evaluate the options within their musical language and select a choice which comports with their expressive intent and contributes to the Sonority of the moment or to a Transformation from the current Sonority to the next one. Global patterns in the music emerge from the simultaneous decisions of the players. If you analyze an improvisation from this point of view you can evaluate the skill of the ensemble and the quality / success of the music without having to rely on any of the regular rules of Western music that do not apply. In general, I consider an improvisation to be successful if its aesthetic intent is interesting, if the performers achieve that intent, and if there is Development across the work.

## **The Application of Set Theory to Sonority in Improvisation**

I use [Set Theory](#) to think about texture. [Timbre](#) Sets are collections of similar sounds from similar instruments (for example, sounds made by the saxophone family of instruments or sounds made by wooden percussion instruments). A Sonority Set is the Set of Sonorities available to an ensemble or a performance. The word "Sonority" means different things to different people and has multiple dictionary definitions, but to me it means the overall effect of the combined sounds from the entire ensemble at some particular point in time or across some particular duration.

In my observation, many ongoing improvisation ensembles establish a consistent Sonority Set which they use across all performances. They work towards complete control of the selected Set and refine that sound over time. Lots of great music has been achieved in this way, but in my opinion, there is a fundamental limitation in this approach. Traditional Western music achieves Development within the environment of melodic / harmonic relationships by melodic variation, harmonic development, modulation, and other devices which date back centuries. Pure Improvisation typically lacks these Structural devices and must achieve Development via other means. Ensembles that make new improvisations on the same or similar Sonority Sets every time make music which is very similar over time. Any one performance may be incredible, but the next performance may be very like the previous one in Sonority.

To me, this limitation is overcome when the music Transforms between distinct Sonorities over the length of the work. Skilled ensembles can achieve these Transformations within a small instrumentation by utilizing extended techniques and having each player always focused on the overall unit sound. However, a path to the widest possible world of Transformation lies in increasing the size of the Set of musical resources as large as you can to make available a

larger number of distinct Sonorities to the Sonority Set. Over the duration of a work following this approach, each section may be comprised of completely different Set of sounds than any other section. Most Evil Clown albums contain a single CD length work with at least 20 to 25 distinct movements.

The most obvious means to change the Sonority is to change the sounds utilized: The Sonorities Expressible by a clarinet and a cello are completely different than the Sonorities Expressible by a drum set and a guitar. However, there are a huge number of more subtle means for transforming Sonority within a fixed instrumentation. There are continuums of sound properties of individual performers or the unit sound that when varied strongly impact the Sonority. Here is a partial list:

- Soft to Loud
- Sparse to Dense
- Slow to Fast
- High to Low
- Smooth to Rough
- Tension to Consonance
- Tonal to Atonal to Microtonal
- Points to Lines
- Fixed Pitches to Glissando
- Pure Tones to Multiphonics
- Suspension of Sound to Abrupt Change in Sound
- Decay to Sustain
- Clean to Dirty
- Imitation to Contrast
- Low Energy to High Energy
- Playing to Laying Out

A successful improvisation often is comprised of the combined sounds of the ensemble where over the duration of the work different regions of the continuums from this list or others not listed are Expressed in the different movements of the piece. If one section is Soft / Sparse / Tonal / Lines and the next section is Fast / Dense / Atonal / Points, there is Structural Development from the first section to the second one. Generally, I like to keep to the middle of these continuums for most of an improvisation and introduce the extremes on both ends for smaller portions of the work. For example, good Development for dynamics might mean 50% of the duration at mp to mf, 25% of the duration at ppp to pp and 25% of the duration at f to fff.

Different ensembles have different solutions on how to distribute the regions of a continuum over the work. For example, the proportions of the dynamic continuum expressed in the previous paragraph are appropriate for a Leap of Faith performance. Metal Chaos Ensemble is generally louder and might have 50% f, 25% p to mf and 25% ff to fff and an Expanse performance with Michael Knoblach (who typically makes much quieter sounds) might have 50% mp, 25% ppp to p, and 25% mf without ever Expressing a forte or louder dynamic.

Except for in unaccompanied Solo, every player should constantly consider appropriate times to lay out and let the balance of the ensemble continue. The set of musicians Expressing sound should be changing over the work. In a trio with improvisors A, B and C, for example, there are eight permutations (ABC, AB, AC, BC, A, B, C, and silence) and larger ensembles have many more options. During the time spent laying out, each player can change their instrument, or otherwise make some preparations to change to their sounds while waiting for an appropriate

re-entry point. Several categories of re-entry are common including: Raising the energy level, lowering the energy level, imitating sounds being made, contrasting sounds being made, one subgroup of the ensemble starting while another stops (I call this a hand-off), and plenty of others.

## **The Role of Tension and Release**

In conventional music, [Tension and Release](#) is purely a function of harmony. For example, Berklee teaches the II-V-I cadence found in Major keys in jazz and classical music. In the key of C Major, the II chord is D minor, the V chord is G7 which contains the dissonant interval called a tritone between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> notes in the chord, and the I chord is the very consonant C Major. When the tense G7 chord moves to the consonant C Major Chord the B and F tritone (3 and 7) notes in the chord move by stepwise motion to C and G (1 and 5). This creates a very palpable feeling of arrival – A famous example that many will be familiar with is the Amen Cadence (V7 to I major) which occurs at the end of nearly every hymn.

In Pure Improvisation, the harmonic context required to make a [II-V-I cadence](#) is nearly always absent, but resolving Tension is still a significant device indicating arrival and contributing to Development. However, there are many more levels in the amount of Tension available. On the low end of this continuum are the tense intervals in regular harmony: the tritone, the minor second, the minor ninth, clusters, and a few others. However, there are much more tense intervals available such as two pitches less than a half step apart, which produce an audible “beating” sound when sounded together. This “beating” sound is an example of a Resultant – a sound within a Sonority created by the physical interaction of two or more sound waves each not containing the Resultant. Players can create dirty sounds (for example with multiphonics) which by themselves are more dissonant than the regular intervals available in the 12-tone scale. The densest improvisation textures, where many players create active moving sounds simultaneously (often called a Wall of Sound), are much more dissonant (tense) than any harmony that typically occurs in regular music.

Resolution in improvisation can be a Release from a higher level of Tension to a lower level of Tension or to a consonance. If the unit sound moves from a Wall of Sound to a dominant chord which contains a tritone ordinarily considered dissonant, that is still perceived by a listener as a release even though jazz theory tells you that the tense V7 chord wants to resolve to its associated major tonic chord. Beating of microtonal intervals has an extraordinary resolution if the notes are slowly bent until they make a unison. In my frame notation scores, I have directed the ensemble to build a Wall of Sound and then abruptly halt at the same instant gongs are struck. Depending on which gongs are struck together, the decay of the sounds may be more dissonant or more consonant, but the combination of the radical reduction in volume and density of action, and the suspended and decaying sounds from the gongs ringing out is a very strong Release. In Improvisation, Tension and Release is about far more than harmonic motion. It can be movement from dense to sparse, dirty to clean, sound to silence, many instruments sounding simultaneously to few instruments, and many other possibilities.

## **The Role of Imitation**

Imitation in improvisation can take many forms: Motivic Exchange, Phrasing Structure, Timbre Imitation, Energy Level, Consonance Level, and many others. As I hear a sequence of sounds, I abstract information about that sequence’s properties, and I decide to complement those sounds with my sounds or contrast those sounds with my sounds. The Imitation can mimic a single aspect of that abstraction (for example, the energy level) or multiple aspects (for example, the rhythm and the pitch sequence). A motive is a short musical phrase that has a

particular rhythm and shape; when I hear a motive, I can respond with the same phrase or a variation of the phrase and that is perceived by the observer as motivic Development. If I hear short choppy phrases separated by pauses and respond with my own short choppy phrases in the pauses of the other Line, the Sonority becomes about the exchange of these phrases: I call this a Chase Texture. If Glynis is playing a thick and sustained harmonically rich passage with the bow on the cello, I can Imitate her sound on an instrument like a low clarinet in such a way that it is very difficult to tell which player is creating which sound: I call this a Blended Sound, and it is very common when Glynis and I perform together. In fact, I have developed technique specifically to respond to certain sounds she commonly makes: For example, she often makes long glissandos, and I have learned to play long glissandos on woodwinds to Imitate her sound. If both our glisses are in a higher register where there are fewer harmonics and, therefore, the sounds are purer, the sliding nature of the notes and the timbre of the notes are both Imitations simultaneously.

Obviously, other available choices are sounds that provide Contrast to the rest of the ensemble. If Glynis is playing that thick and sustained harmonically rich passage with the bow on the cello, I can respond with something that in no way Imitates any property of her statement, like sparse sharp percussive attacks. Each musician in an improvisation is constantly deciding when to make an Imitation and when to make a Contrast; what category of Imitation and how close an Imitation, or what category of Contrast and how severe a Contrast. Sonority changes dramatically as these decisions are made, so an obvious means of initiating Transformation is to switch between Imitation and Contrast or change the category and level of Imitation or Contrast. This change can be either gradual or abrupt. A sudden new big sound like a gong strike or a strong attack on the [d]ronin electric spring instrument provides a node where the current movement can end, and a new one can emerge from the decay. Imitation and Contrast are critical concepts used by players to create Development in the improvisation.

## **The Role of Line**

Conventional music involves Melody, defined on the web as “a sequence of single notes that is musically satisfying.” My Mom used to say to me all the time, “Where is the Melody?” when I was listening to Art Ensemble of Chicago or Cecil Taylor in the early 80s. I would often say to her, “Listen to the pretty Melody” about the same music. I was kidding her, of course; Melody is generally understood to be “pretty”, a relatively simple rhythmic sequence of pitches that is a center of focus in the music presented. One generally expects the melody to be memorable and perhaps even non-musicians can it sing or hum it back.

Another web definition: “[Melody](#) is the principal part in harmonized music.” Generally, Melody contains the highest notes in the harmonized passages with the lower parts referred to as Harmony parts. Sometimes conventional music contains multiple Melodies that interact with each other, each part having roughly equivalent importance to the Sonority expressed. This is called [Counterpoint](#).

While I think all of what I play fits the requirement in the first definition to be musically satisfying, I would not call much of it melodic. Some of what I play clearly violates the first definition: Multiphonics, or a dirty texture generally is not a “sequence of single notes” since the sounds are each complex. However, I do play lots of “sequences of single notes” pleasing to me that I do not consider melodic: They are probably not hummable, they probably don’t occur in a standard Western scale for very long, the note sequences might be very fast, or for many other reasons. Sometimes I do play melodic passages; I especially like slow moving low register atonal melody on low clarinets and play them frequently. I also often play melodic Lines over

highly dense and active Sonorities. There is a sound continuum from Melody to Noise, all of which can be an appropriate choice to Express in some Sonority.

Around 1905, [Arnold Schoenberg](#) and his students [Anton Webern](#) and [Alban Berg](#) created the twelve-tone technique, which was called [Serialism](#), a form of [post-tonal](#) thinking. In Serialism, the 12 notes of the chromatic scale are arranged in a 12 note [tone row](#). Material for a composition is derived from 48 variations of the tone row – 12 each of Prime (a transposition to a different starting pitch), Inversion (a forward directed upside-down form), Retrograde (a backwards right-side up form), and Retrograde-Inversion (a backwards upside-down form). Composing with this universe of materials creates music which is atonal, music which does not imply any particular key. These ideas were extended in the 1950s by [Pierre Boulez](#) and others to Total Serialism which creates rows for other musical elements including rhythms, dynamics, and timbres.

In 1938, [John Cage](#) invented the [Prepared Piano](#) to mimic a percussion orchestra when the space available for instruments at a concert hall was limited. He called the sounds produced by the modified piano “aggregate”, meaning that a single action produces a compound (complex) result. Many extended instrumental techniques of mine and other performers produce aggregated sounds instead of simple pure pitches which preclude ordinary melodic / harmonic relationships.

Over time, these ideas which originated in modern classical music, have greatly influenced music in all kinds of other settings. Free improvisation, in particular, often utilizes free-atonal structures, microtonal structures, aggregate sounds, and non-pitched sounds which avoid any implication of a tonal center. As I discussed in the first section of this essay, I have thousands of CDs containing music outside of conventional Western music which utilize these or other Structural concepts. Studying this music gave me a conception of sound and sonority which I have built into my musical language.

I prefer the concept of Line over the concept of Melody to describe a sequence of single notes. The meanings are similar, but with several important distinctions. Line does not necessarily imply any hierarchy of importance between the multiple Lines expressed by multiple players. Line does not have to be “pretty” or “musically satisfying”. Line does not have to operate at a slow enough tempo to be memorable in detail or hummable. Lines can include sequences with complex sounds that are not simple pitches. Lines can be made with instruments (like some percussion) that make sounds that are not pitch-specific. Line is a generalization which broadens Melody to include any sequence of pitches and aggregated sounds.

Critically important to a player’s mature improvisational language is how they construct Lines. This is a big part of the work that every improviser must perform to achieve maturity. Musicians from different cultures learn different scales to use in the improvised music of their culture. Many cultures have improvisational music with Structures of similar sophistication to Jazz: Improvised content within a well-defined Structural system. Indian music, for example, uses [raga](#) scale modes and rhythmic patterns to create very sophisticated improvisations. Jazz education is all about the construction of improvised Melody from the sequence of scales implied by the harmonic motion. I studied scales for a decade with Kurt Heisig and then again at Berklee, so I know how to transpose various scales, so they start on different notes on my various instruments. However, this is not how I think of my pitch material when I am selecting pitches to form Lines most of the time.

I mostly construct Lines with notes selected from the [chromatic scale](#). What I choose from the chromatic scale sometimes is Atonal and sometimes chunks of phrase are selected from

conventionally used scales embedded in the chromatic scale. Sometimes I construct Lines where the pitches are microtonal and do not belong even to the chromatic scale. I have developed a vocabulary partially relying on intervallic moves that don't occur as much in conventional scales and do not imply a particular associated tonality. My Lines are often constructed with lots of tritones, half steps, microtonal intervals and bent or sliding tones. They often involve repeated variations of a motive kernel transposed and transformed. For example, I might play a short fragment of 4 or 5 notes in a low register, transform the fragment slightly and vary and repeat it a bit higher and then again, a bit higher, etc. If all these repeated fragments use notes from the same scale, then some tonality is implied. However, I typically place the variations into different scales or atonal/microtonal patterns as I move up in register, so that tonality is not implied.

Every improviser makes different choices of pitch material when constructing their musical language. Some players are very flexible, and others are not. Greater flexibility allows more options in creating Lines while reacting to and predicting the Lines and sounds of the rest of the ensemble. Some players construct musical languages comprised of noise elements (complex sounds not identifiable as distinct notes) without any reference to specific notes from the chromatic scale. I consider my playing to be very flexible; the Expression of my musical language in a particular performance is deeply impacted by the Expressed musical language of the other performers.

Line selection is equally as important as Texture to Sonority. The Musicians each choose when to play a Line or some other category of sound, how that Line is constructed, how consonant or dissonant it is within itself and relative to the other Lines, and other decisions. These choices, combined with the Timbre of the sound sources, create the overall impression of the sound sources that comprise the Sonority Expressed at that moment. So, it turns out that pitch choice is important after all, but not that the selected note have the "correct" harmonic relationship to the harmonic motion. Instead, the Line, which is a sequence of notes (or sounds), needs to contribute constructively to the Sonority.

The juxtaposition of ensemble member's individual Lines, which I call Line against Line, is a key element in the Structure of the music, equalizing the importance of each performer's role. In regular music, the most "important" part is the Melody, with the other players providing context and support. A critical difference between improvised and conventionally composed music is the deconstruction of the hierarchy of importance among the parts of the ensemble: One player's contribution is not more important than the other players contributions. In a typical rock song, for example, the vocalist has the most important part, followed by the guitar player who would take the solos, with the bass and drummer providing support. In improvisation, all the players are much more equal: Ensemble sections occur where all the sounds are equally important contributors to the Sonority, and other sections occur with players providing support to each other. Even ensembles with very traditional instrumentation like a sax, bass, drums trio follow this pattern. In a Sonny Rollins sax trio, the hierarchy is very strong, in an Anthony Braxton or Evan Parker sax trio all the players are much more equal in importance. Like Sonority, these role relationships should be under Transformation across the duration of a performance.

## **The Role of Harmonics in Improvisational Languages**

Modern Western scales are transposable within a system called [Equal Temperament](#). I can play a Major Scale starting on C and one starting on D in the 12-tone system and the relationships of the notes sound the same. This is because 18<sup>th</sup> century European composers wanted to be able to compose in different keys and modulate between keys. Instruments,

especially keyboards, were tuned with the half steps all equal on a logarithmic scale. Wikipedia says, "This means the ratio of the frequencies of any adjacent pair of notes is the same, which gives an equal perceived step size as pitch is perceived roughly as the logarithm of frequency."

Earlier scales are based on whole number ratios of the length of the frequency. A string which is twice as long as another string produces a note an octave lower when sounded. The other notes of the just scale are derived from other whole number ratios. Wikipedia says, "In music, just intonation or pure intonation is the tuning of musical intervals as whole number ratios (such as 3:2 or 4:3) of frequencies. Any interval tuned in this way is called a just interval. Just intervals (and chords created by combining them) consist of members of a single harmonic series of an implied fundamental."

Some modern composers (most notably [Harry Partch](#)) have constructed pitch systems that include many [just intonation](#) intervals very different than those of Equal Temperament. Partch's system includes 43 different pitches across several octaves, and he built amazing instruments capable of playing his very different scales. He wrote a very important book, published in 1949, called [Genesis of a Music](#), which defines and describes his system in detail. This is a great example of an extremely refined musical system existing entirely outside of traditional Western music theory. Many musicians and composers have pursued modern just-intonation music theories since this time. Just intonation intervals can sound very consonant due to the simpler pitch relations. These scales are constructed from the physical properties of sound derived from a single fundamental pitch.

Harmonics are parts of a sound which give an instrument its specific tone color or Timbre. The reason that the same note played on a clarinet, a piano, a guitar, or a trumpet all sound different is that the relative strengths of the harmonics are different on each instrument due to the physics of how each sound is produced.

Wikipedia says

"A [harmonic series](#) (also overtone series) is the sequence of frequencies, musical tones, or pure tones in which each frequency is an integer multiple of a fundamental.

Pitched musical instruments are often based on an acoustic resonator such as a string or a column of air, which oscillates at numerous modes simultaneously. At the frequencies of each vibrating mode, waves travel in both directions along the string or air column, reinforcing and canceling each other to form standing waves. Interaction with the surrounding air causes audible sound waves, which travel away from the instrument. Because of the typical spacing of the resonances, these frequencies are mostly limited to integer multiples, or harmonics, of the lowest frequency, and such multiples form the harmonic series.

The musical pitch of a note is usually perceived as the lowest partial present (the fundamental frequency), which may be the one created by vibration over the full length of the string or air column, or a higher harmonic chosen by the player. The musical timbre of a steady tone from such an instrument is strongly affected by the relative strength of each harmonic."

It turns out that the harmonics of a sound produced by an improviser are critically important in determining the instrument's speaking Texture and the Sonority it contributes to. My Musical Language contains a great deal of extended technique that relies on controlling overtones with the combined physical systems of my body and the instrument I am playing. Extremely high notes (the altissimo register) can be sounded on woodwinds by a combination of armature, throat

position and venting keys on the instrument to force a high harmonic to sound and the low fundamental to be suppressed. On lower woodwinds, like contrabass clarinet, with very low fundamentals, the range of the instrument can be extended up to notes which are almost too high to be audible by human hearing. Clarinets traditionally have a range of about 3 octaves, my range on contrabass clarinet is about 7 or 8 octaves (as long as the piano). Another technique, multiphonics, involves the simultaneous sounding of multiple overtones in the sound, bringing audible pitches out from harmonics that are naturally present to a fundamental from their ordinary role of defining the timbre.

Harmonics are present in all acoustically generated sound. Control of the harmonics on an instrument comprise a critical portion of any improviser's Musical Language. Players learn to control the harmonics by paying attention to the physical feedback of the sound compared to the physical input into the instrument. The physics of the behavior of sound is leveraged with instrumental Technique allowing all kinds of statements that do not adhere to any conventional musical rule structure but are nonetheless well-ordered and controlled by the performer.

## **The Big Idea**

So, here is my Big Idea: Assemble a huge collection of instruments and a huge [Roster](#) of musicians and take fundamentally different sections through these resources for different projects and recordings. The idea of **Transformation Focused Improvisation** and the associated performance techniques are the same on different pieces of music, but the Sonority Set is different for each performance due to the Set of resources utilized and the resulting music is therefore different each time.

The first aesthetic problem for me individually is to learn to make as broad a palette of sounds as possible. I play multiple instruments each from at least the following Timbre Sets: Saxophones, Clarinets, Double Reeds, Flutes, [Free Reed Aerophones](#), Strings, Electronics, Electro-Acoustic, Wood, Metal, and Membranes. Unlike in conventional Jazz, where I would not use a new instrument until I achieved the significant mastery of the scales and control of the sound to "correctly" navigate the chord changes with "correct" tone, I will use new instruments as soon as I can make interesting sounds (most often, immediately). Anton Webern pioneered the idea of klangfarbenmelodie (melody of colors) in the early 1900s where a Line is built from a few notes each played by a sequence of different instruments. Sequences of sounds from different instruments or Timbre Sets are another method of decoupling Development from melodic or harmonic Structure.

I make a distinction between naïve instruments and instruments that I have formal training on. I studied saxophone and other woodwinds for 10 years privately in California and at the Berklee School of Music in Boston from 89 to 91. I play many other instruments that I have not been formally trained on which I categorize as naïve, but this does not mean that I lack a sophisticated understanding of how to leverage and control that instrument's sound. An example is the Sheng, which is an ancient polyphonic Chinese Free Reed Aerophone. I have had a modern keyed version of one of these since 2015 and was able to use it immediately in my bands at that time. Over the years since, I have increased my vocabulary on this instrument dramatically despite being largely ignorant of the ordinary use of this instrument in traditional Chinese music. My solution to the first aesthetic problem continuously evolves as I acquire new instruments and extend my control and vocabulary on these instruments.

Musical instruments are complex systems which take in physical input and output sound. Designers optimize the layout of instruments to achieve some goal: For example, scale pattern, drone notes, dynamic responsiveness, polyphonic or monophonic sound, microtonal or

continuous pitch, quality of attack and decay, or many others. In conventional jazz improvisation, the player is supposed to understand the scales that are implied by the chord changes and construct improvised Melody which fits the harmonic motion: Pitch selection is the most important element of the music, the sound or tone is far less important. In my music, sound is much more important than pitch selection. Notes are important to Lines, but almost never considered “wrong” since they do not have to fit with the harmonic motion (if there is, in fact, any).

Any instrument provides immediate feedback data to the player when it reveals what sound output results from what physical input. For simplicity, consider just my woodwind instruments: Control of the sound of each instrument is achieved by a whole group of physical inputs which act in concert. Among these are air speed, armature position, throat position, diaphragm backpressure, angle of mouthpiece or air stream, pressure on mouthpiece or reed, and finally, at the end of the list, fingering. I can make dozens of very different sounds on a woodwind without changing the finger position. Some instruments, like a saxophone, have a huge variety of possible sounds while others, like a bell or a foghorn, make basically one sound. To me, the aesthetic problem of learning any new instrument to broaden my Arsenal's Sonority Set boils down to leveraging the instrument's physical system and creating a mapping of the set of input techniques to the set of sounds created.

My rhythmic concept uses Phrasing rather than strict alignment with a meter or time signature. I can Phrase equally well to a metered or an ambient environment with no clear beat. Consider the rhythm of speech where syllables and words are unequal in length and the spacing of the words and speed of verbal delivery are dynamic. A sentence or a clause from a sentence is a Phrase with an Expressed rhythmic delivery which is not likely aligned with a regular pulse. Many African rhythms are based on speech patterns. This rhythmic concept is transferable across all the instruments I use, and together with the ability to make at least a few interesting sounds on a new instrument, allows me to use most new instruments immediately. While my control over the new instrument improves over time, I accumulate new vocabulary and can use the instrument for greater stretches of time within a performance.

Expression occurs when ideas flow right into sound. I hear the current Sonority, Predict the upcoming Sonority, then decide what sounds to contribute and where to place them. The first stage of Expression is Technique. The second stage of Expression, Musical Language, arises from Technique: The Set of possible physical inputs to the instrument maps to the Set of sounds on my instruments along with the logic for placing the sounds in sequence. Expression occurs when I speak ideas in my Musical Language without thinking about the mechanics of Technique. I think about the sounds I want to use, not about how the sounds are made, and then I simply speak the sounds. This is the same process that happens with verbal languages: A fluent speaker Expresses ideas in words without having to consider the meaning of the words or the structure of word sequences: Ideas are effortlessly Expressed through fully assimilated Language. The ultimate goal of the first aesthetic problem is to fully assimilate Technique across all the instruments I use into my evolving Music Language which is the basis of my Expression.

The second aesthetic problem has to do with ensemble organization. Evil Clown produces recordings of my music in a bunch of different bands. These bands are defined more by selection of Sonority Sets than conventional bands which are defined by selection of band members. The bands are all highly modular and have different players and instrumentation for different sessions. Here is a list of the contemporary ensembles whose history was discussed in some detail in the first section of this essay along with the constraints on the Sonority Sets imposed on each.

- [Leap of Faith / Leap of Faith Orchestra](#) – Core duet of myself and Glynis Lomon (cello, aquasonic, voice) with various guests to make ensembles varying in size from duet to orchestra of 25, featuring horns, strings, and percussion.
- [Metal Chaos Ensemble](#) – MCE has been the core duet of myself and Yuri Zbitnov (drums, percussion) with various guests. This band features metal and wood percussion instruments and rock elements including grooves which are not present in the other bands. Recently, there has been a stable sextet version of this band which has created a sequence of albums. This sextet band is in flux due to Yuri's recent withdrawal.
- [Turbulence](#) – ensembles comprised of only, or mostly horn players who may also double other horns, percussion, or electronics.
- [String Theory](#) – ensembles comprised of me with string players.
- [PEK Solo](#) – performances by myself with or without studio construction (overdubbing).
- [Expanse](#) – Core duet of myself and Michael Knoblach on exotic percussion where the dynamic range is much quieter and there is more open space than the other bands.
- [Sub-Units](#) – performances by a small group of Evil Clown Roster members not assignable to one of the other band names.

Each of these “bands” uses a different focused subset of the total Evil Clown resources and therefore creates music fundamentally different that of the others. I encourage the other musicians to play multiple instruments and I make the percussion instruments, the electro-acoustic instruments, and the electronics in the Evil Clown Arsenal available to the other performers. The number of different Sonorities available within a performance increases substantially as the number of multi-instrumentalists increases.

The third aesthetic problem concerns output. The whole system is consciously defined to create a great deal of highly varied music which is different in Sonority but shares the same theoretical underpinnings. I think of my music as the collected work of all the ensembles, so I put out on CD and on the internet recordings of virtually every session. Interested observers can trace the evolution of the ideas over time and perhaps track back to the Big Idea.

We use a sports clock to track the elapsed duration, so each performance is well timed to fit on a CD (typically, 70 minutes). One session produces one CD's worth of music, and since the music is nearly always recorded Live-to-2 track, there is a minimum of mastering required. Typically, it should take a week or less to record the music and put it out on Bandcamp, YouTube, and Soundcloud, to submit the recording for small run CD production, and to do some promotion on Facebook.

The final aesthetic problem in this discussion is specific to each performance. Once the musicians and the instrumentation have been selected for a session, we play the whole duration of the work continuously. Sometimes we discuss the Sonority selection for the opening or the closing of the piece, and sometimes certain sections have minimal preplanning (for example, recent Metal Chaos Ensemble CDs have thematic spoken word sections drawn from movies and literature which are recited during quieter sections). Each performance is a specific and distinct solution to the aesthetic problem posed by the Big Idea and constrained by the decisions made on the specifics of the resources utilized for the ensemble generally and the

performance specifically. We solve the posed problem with the individual sound action decisions of the performers and the combination of those decisions over the duration Expresses the solution.

## **Applying The Big Idea**

My main goal is to get my ideas on the record. When I came up in the 80s and 90s, Live Performance was how people consumed your music except for a few CDs you might sell. Now, the internet has completely changed everything, and people have widely different preferences on how they consume music. Back in the Archival period, Leap of Faith would draw a pretty good audience for every performance, but those people would be basically the only ones to experience it: A small group of improvisation fans in the Boston Area. Now the internet provides worldwide exposure, so I try to get our work on as many platforms as possible to spread my ideas as widely as I can. It has simultaneously become much more difficult to put asses in seats for Live Performances. Some fans are YouTube viewers, some download from Bandcamp or iTunes, some buy CDs from Bandcamp, Downtown Music Gallery, Squidco, Amazon, etc. Some fans stream on Spotify, Soundcloud or other vendors. The way to maximize your exposure to the listener pool is to leverage as many platforms as possible. I keep detailed records tracking the steps I take for each release, to make sure that everything goes on every platform. Generally, the initial steps for each release should be completed within one week of performance.

I love Live Performance. There is a feedback loop between the performers and audience members that does not occur in other music performance environments. For me, Live Performance forces a narrowing of resources by the amount of equipment I am willing to haul, the space available in my van, and the space and time available in the venue for set up. This constraint on the Sonority Set focuses the aesthetic problem posed to the performance. I do miss a real audience and look forward to performing in public again as soon as it is safe to do so.

In 2019, I worked a great deal on updating the video recording equipment in the ECH studio. I have eight good video cameras mounted to the walls and wired to a video mixing console in another room. There are a bunch of video lights mounted to the walls controlled with a DMX program on another computer in that room. Raffi runs a real time video mix which is combined with the good sound from the audio mixer into a LIVESTREAM to YouTube and Facebook. This setup turns any session at ECH into a Live Performance, not only to the recording but to any people who watch over the internet during the performance or its Archival post afterwards.

The video rig does not quite make up for real persons in the room while we perform, but it has some huge advantages. I don't have to haul equipment (LOFO shows require a large U-Haul truck and smaller ensembles usually require a full van). The Video and Audio recording equipment are always in place and so breakdown and setup effort is minimized (although still non-trivial). All the Arsenal is available to each session: While the studio room is big and we also use the kitchen (usually for the heavy and orchestral percussion), there is not enough space to ever use all the available instruments from the Arsenal at one time even with only a few musicians in the studio. As in Live Performance, there is a constraint on how many instruments will fit in the space forcing a Sonority Set selection for every different studio performance. Those selections are made with the size, personnel and Sonority focus of the performing ensemble in mind.

Both for Live and Studio Performances, I typically use very long durations for each work. We use the sports clock and set it to count time up from zero. I announce the total duration to the

ensemble in advance, often 70 minutes, so that all the players know when the ending will occur. In some improvisation settings it is difficult to create definitive endings; having the clock enables all the players think about their final statements and how to implement them well before the ending occurs. It is typical to think of openings this way, and a bonus to be able to do the same for conclusions. It also provides excellent information about the length of movements and when it might be time to trigger Transformation to a new Sonority: It is possible to numerically consider elapsed time as a basic feature of the music.

The goal of a performance by any of the bands is to create a sequence of different Sonorities Transforming over time. The concert-length duration gives that process time to breathe and develop organically, and it also always fits within the full available length (80 minutes) of a CD. Each performance always fits on and fills one CD. I enjoy reading books about Science and Mathematics and keep a list of titles for concepts encountered in that reading. When I need a title, I simply select one from the list. Long durations require fewer titles... If every CD had 5 or 10 pieces, I'd need a lot more titles!!

## **Applying The Big Idea to PEK Solos**

Due to the pandemic, a great deal of progress has come in the last year on PEK Solo Projects. The following discusses applications of the Big Idea to this recent portion of my output.

As described in some detail above, my basic approach to music is to define a set of resources for a particular performance optimized for creating Transformation over time. While the kind of output has changed due to the virus to include much more Solo work, I have not reconsidered my approach to music generally in any way. The set of aesthetic problems posed by solo work is a bit different than the set posed by ensemble work. I have simply used my existing approach to solve problems of a specific subgroup of the whole class of aesthetic problems I work on generally.

In general, I consider Pure Improvisation to be fundamentally about the moment. As an improviser, I predict and react to the evolving Sonority as I make my musical statements. For this reason, I have always preferred playing music that is performed entirely in the moment with all the players simultaneously interacting. When I have used sampling and electronic transformation of samples in works prior to the virus, I controlled the volume and presence of those premixes in real time while the performance of the live instruments is proceeding to preserve the sense of real time decision making. I also sometimes use loopers to capture and layer sounds from the evolving improvisation to replay later in the piece.

One thing that I have done, which is brand new since Covid, is to use overdubbing and studio construction techniques to create category 3 (Quartet of PEKs) and category 4 (Orchestra of PEKs) performances as defined above. The studio techniques mimic the interactions between players in ensemble improvisation with a few key differences:

- The interaction is one way. The current track reacts to the previous tracks and not the other direction.
- The waveforms of the previous tracks are visible in the recording software and provide definitive information about the Phrasing of the previously recorded tracks that is estimated and Predicted in real-time ensemble performance.
- The Phrasing used on the other tracks is my Phrasing. It is super-easy to respond to and match my own Phrasing concept.

- I plan, in advance, some instrument selections for parts of the work based on what has been established in the previous tracks.
- I plan, in advance, opening and closing Sonorities in much greater detail than in ensemble performance.

Unlike the studio technique used in rock and other studio recording where one instrument or a small group of instruments are recorded at a time and for small sections of the overall work, I fill the room with instruments and microphones and record the full duration of each track of the work with many instruments serially. This is very similar to how you perform working in real time with an ensemble.

One impact of the Virus is it has both slowed down my production and increased the amount of time actively spent playing. The studio construction works (Categories 3 & 4) require at least 4 1/2 hours of my performance compared to 70 minutes for a regular ensemble set. Those recording sessions are stretched over days instead of concluded in the real time duration of simultaneous ensemble performance. The Orchestra of PEKs performances have taken as much as a month to do a single disc, since the intermediate mixes used as a basis of samples for the premix are also recorded over days. Since 2015, Evil Clown has generally had over 30 releases per year, instead of just over 20 achieved in 2020.

The Orchestra of PEKs solo albums address the same aesthetic problem as the Frame Notation Scores for The Leap of Faith Orchestra: How to ensure music with a really large number of available resources does not turn into chaos (in the common meaning of randomness) with little or no Development. The Orchestra of PEKs Solo sets use an entirely different mechanism to solve this problem: Instead of specifying activity on a timeline, I conceived of an algorithm for the steps in the studio construction. Following the algorithm results in a work which is compositional, in that it is planned, while all the sounds are still improvised. Both solutions bridge the difference between composition and improvisation in different ways.

The first step is to prepare Premixes (sometimes the length the whole CD) of multiple tracks with instruments from the same Timbre Set. These Premixes have used the Timbre Sets of wood instruments, metal instruments, hand chimes, saxophones, clarinets, double reeds, bass sounds, string instruments and others. Next, I select different Premixes and take samples ranging in duration from about 30 seconds to 10 minutes. I transform these samples on the computer by speeding them up and slowing them down and moving the pitch up or down. Sometimes I build new Premixes from the samples at this stage to create really thick textures from the altered samples from the same Timbre Set. Once a set of Premix samples is prepared and selected, I arrange the samples onto a 75 minute or so timeline in the DAW software. This arrangement is a Density Map, where each section of the work has a single Premix sample, a few overlaid Premix samples, many overlaid Premix samples, or no Premix samples. Finally, I perform the full duration of the work multiple times with different instrument sets available on each track. The last pass or several passes are typically mostly horns. I have offered many of the Premixes as bonus download tracks on the releases where they were used. In addition to Orchestra of PEKs sets, I have also used this algorithmic approach with Yuri Zbitnov on [Don Quixote](#), a Metal Chaos Ensemble studio duet construction.

John Cage performed a work with David Tudor in 1959 called [Indeterminacy](#), where Cage recited short 90 second poetic stories and David Tudor separately recorded improvisations with electronics: These performances were then overlaid, so that the interactions of the two tracks produce a new sound world with the alignment of events of the two recordings governed by

chance. According to Wikipedia, “Indeterminate or chance music can be divided into three groups: (1) the use of random procedures to produce a determinate, fixed score, (2) mobile form, and (3) indeterminate notation, including graphic notation and texts.” In Cage’s career of boundary shattering concepts and compositions, I have always believed these ideas among his most important.

Cage produced compositions in all three of these groups, including many from group 1 which are through-composed with his compositional decision making guided by tosses of the I Ching. I use group 3 (graphic notation and texts) for my Frame Notation Scores discussed in the next section. I use group 2 (indeterminate or Aleatoric alignment) in this definition in the studio construction process used for Orchestra of PEKs recordings.

While the alignment of events in Cage’s Indeterminacy is governed by chance, the Sonority is not. Each of the two distinct recordings occupies a well-defined Timbre Set. While the actual alignment of events is governed by chance, the sounds Expressible by the combined performances belong to a well-defined Sonority Set. If you are aware in advance of the different sounds available to each Timbre Set, you can predict the kinds of possible Sonorities available to their combination. The basic building block of improvisation is not the note, it is instead a complex texture of sound. Just as conventional harmony training tells me how to predict how two pitches a fifth apart will sound when played together, my theory of **Transformation Focused Improvisation** tells me how to Predict how two or more complex textures will sound when sounded together.

My Orchestra of PEKs studio construction works all contain both Determinacy and Indeterminacy. Premixes are mostly Determinate and comprised of sounds from within well-defined Timbre Sets: For example, a four-track recording of overdubbed hand chimes where I listened to the previous tracks while recording the new one. I take several of these Deterministic premixes and transform them with the computer to slow them down or speed them up and raise or lower their pitch. Then I sample these premixes and overlap them in various combinations: This process is Indeterminate: Combining textures together with chance governed alignment to produce rich textures with a predictable general character. The final tracks are again Determinate since I am overdubbing on top of the final combined Premix while listening to it, already knowing how it sounds.

## **Applying The Big Idea to the Leap of Faith Orchestra**

For the Leap of Faith Orchestra, I compose Frame Notation Scores that give the players instructions comprised of English language descriptions and simple symbols on a timeline (the ensemble tracks the time on a sports clock). These works address the aesthetic problem of how to have a large improvisation ensemble play a concert length work without becoming total chaos (in the common sense meaning random). The Orchestra of PEKs solo sessions address this same aesthetic problem from a completely different angle. There is a page on my website ([Leap of Faith Orchestra Performances of Frame Notation Scores by PEK](#)) which discusses the six Frame Notation Scores each in detail and contains links to the scores, the album page on the Evil Clown site, Bandcamp for CD orders and downloads, YouTube and other content.

I give my Frame Notation compositions for the LOFO astronomical/cosmological titles - It seems fitting with the scale of these long complex works and fits well with my usual Leap of Faith/Evil Clown titles which largely draw on Scientific and Mathematical ideas. These very special full orchestra events occur infrequently and are currently on pause due to the Virus and the current lack of an acceptable and affordable venue. For each performance, I compose a Frame Notation Score specifically for that show which is simultaneously a Density and Sonority map

prescribing the improvised development of the work. These very special scores intend to solve a very tricky problem of composition for large improvisation ensembles: How do you rehearse complex works for large ensembles when all the participants are extremely busy?

Answer: Compose works that do not need to be rehearsed.

When deciding that I wanted to create a large improvisation orchestra version of Leap of Faith in early 2015, I reflected on my prior experience with large groups in the 90s and early 00s where we tried with difficulty to gather the entire group to rehearse. I decided to take a different approach and to develop the orchestra slowly over time by working with many smaller sections and combinations ultimately leading to the full unit. For the first year and a half, we performed pure improvisations with each other in various combinations, and created a lot of great work by smaller units in the process. This preparation work was performance and not rehearsal.

The Frames control who plays what instrument and at what times during the 75-minute duration of the composition. The score does not contain conventionally notated melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic information; instead, the Frames, aligned with Time Indices along the top of the page, contain simple graphic symbols and English language descriptions for each performer dictating the instrument played and texture desired for the Frame's Time Window specified by its Duration Bar. The score prescribes Timbre Sets (clouds of sounds of similar texture) by assigning auxiliary instruments (mostly wood or metal percussion) to each player and using the many possible permutations of primary and auxiliary instrument groupings across the orchestra to create an organic stream of Transformations through highly varied Sonorities. The ensemble tracks the time on the score with a large digital sports clock.

This system allows me to compose detailed Events without having to notate pitches or rhythms in conventional staff notation which would require significant rehearsal to accurately achieve and not take advantage of the distinct improvisational languages of the musicians. Skilled improvisers, like the ones I have recruited, can easily follow these instructions to create a highly structured improvisation without the need for rehearsal even when the ensemble is quite large as it is in the orchestra. This allows enormous freedom of decision making for each performer and means that we do not have to rehearse these pieces prior to performance. We rely on all the work of the overall Evil Clown project to tighten the ensembles' improvisation across its many cross sections while the score provides directions on timing, Sonority and Transformation.

Each of the scores has continued to utilize the compositional symbols and devices of the previous scores while adding something new to my notational system. Some examples of recurrent devices are large texture blocks with auxiliary instrument groupings (like wood or metal texture), pulse tracks with unison attacks at irregular intervals from different sub-groups, using the attack and decay from large gongs as structural divisions of the work to pivot into new Sonority, and Group Action Frames assigned to named sub-groups in the ensemble each with a Group Leader.

For the last three scores I have used different time scales for different sections of the work on the page timeline (1-, 3-, and 5-minute page widths), each of which allows the Events to lay differently on the page. Short, detailed Events are easier to notate and interpret when the page is a one-minute wide and longer, more general Events easier to notate and interpret when the page is five minutes wide. For [The Photon Epoch](#), all the page scales trigger Frames at the 1 second interval (i.e., 12:27), as opposed to a 5 second interval (i.e., 12:25) of the earliest score. I use spreadsheets with random number functions to generate time Structures at several scales which are used in planning the Events. These Structures are in use in nearly every section of

the work, and the 1 second interval is required at every page scale to represent these Structures.

Most of the musicians have performed several of or all the earlier scores, so they have learned how to interpret the basic Group Action Frame symbols and the other notational devices. I have increased the rate of and the number of Transformations in each score and new Group Action Frames are added to my compositional vocabulary for the next one. I have learned how the notation is interpreted by the ensemble and that, in fact, they can interpret detailed directions successfully even without rehearsal. With a much larger well-defined universe of notation and a knowledgeable pool of performers each of the scores has become significantly more sophisticated than its predecessors. The audience experiences a steady flow of distinct Sonorities over the duration of the performance.

All the other contemporaneous Evil Clown performances and recordings by all the ensembles, Leap of Faith, String Theory, Metal Chaos Ensemble, and the Sub-Units, are preparation for these full Leap of Faith Orchestra performances. The performances by these smaller ensembles stand by themselves as improvisation performances as well as getting us ready to improvise in a full orchestra setting.

The vision of the overall Evil Clown project is to create an extremely broad universe of sound and to realize music which Transforms into widely different Sonorities within a single performance. The full Leap of Faith Orchestra performing a PEK Frame Notation Score is the most complete implementation of that vision. The large ensemble size and the details provided in the score directing the improvisation allow us to create a story through a huge number of controlled textures over the 75-minute duration of the works.

I have composed a seventh score ([Systems of Celestial Mechanics](#)) which I plan to mount at some point in the future... There is a lot of advance work to do before I can do that including locating an affordable venue, raising the ensemble, and creating the parts customized for those players. I'd like to get this project up and running on a regular basis again, but it is a huge amount of work for me, and I think I will focus on smaller and medium sized ensembles for a while. Ideally, I'd like to use the completed works to get a feature venue with time enough for a rehearsal and several performances across adjacent days. Although the design allows for a minimum of rehearsal, I know that if we play one of these compositions several times, the results will be very different each time, and probably improve as we go along. Time will tell.

## **Conclusion**

My Big Idea is designed to rapidly produce many distinct works; each is about a distinct moment in time and all the moments are necessarily different. I am constantly acquiring new resources, either instruments or performers, those new resources are used in an appropriate context and lead to a session specific aesthetic problem to be solved in performance. This is my plan, and I think that it works. Most of my fans who purchase downloads and CDs are repeat customers... Once they find out about the music and like something, they try something else, eventually becoming repeat customers when they find the recordings all interesting and sufficiently different from each other.

PEK – May 2021

## **Part III: Web Links to the Work of Evil Clown Ensembles**

### **Evil Clown Website**

- Home Page: <http://www.evilclown.rocks>
- Album Pages by Ensemble: <https://www.giantevilclown.com/recordings.html>
- Album Pages by Performance Date:
  - 2021: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/2021-performances---sessions.html>
  - 2020: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/performances---sessions-2020.html>
  - 2019: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/performances-and-sessions-2019.html>
  - 2018: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/performances-and-sessions-2018.html>
  - 2017: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/performances-and-sessions-2017.html>
  - 2016: <https://www.giantevilclown.com/performances---2016.html>
  - 2016: <https://www.giantevilclown.com/photos---videos.html>
  - 2015: <https://www.giantevilclown.com/performances---2015.html>
  - 2015: <https://www.giantevilclown.com/photos---videos-2015.html>
  - Archival period: <https://www.giantevilclown.com/performances-90s--00s.html>
- Leap of Faith Orchestra: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/lofo-scored-performances.html>
- Bios: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/bios.html>
- Reviews: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/press---newsletters.html>
- Upcoming Shows: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/performances-upcoming.html>

### **Bandcamp for Downloads and CD Orders**

- Contemporary Ensembles (2015 – 2021)
  - Leap of Faith: <https://leapoffaith1.bandcamp.com/>
  - Metal Chaos Ensemble: <https://metalchaosensemble.bandcamp.com/>
  - String Theory: <https://stringtheory6.bandcamp.com/>
  - Turbulence: <https://turbulence2.bandcamp.com/>
  - PEK Solo: <https://peksolo.bandcamp.com/>
  - Sub Unit No.1: <https://sub-unitno1.bandcamp.com/>
  - Axioms: <https://axioms1.bandcamp.com/album/manifestations>
  - Expanse: <https://expanse1.bandcamp.com/>
  - Mekaniks: <https://mekaniks.bandcamp.com>
  - Chixculub: <https://chixculub1.bandcamp.com/>
  - Simulacrum: <https://simulacrum3.bandcamp.com/releases>
- Archival Ensembles (1992 – 2001)
  - Bottomfeeder: <https://bottomfeeder2.bandcamp.com/>
  - Mental Notes: <https://mentalnotes1.bandcamp.com/>
  - Wind: <https://wind3.bandcamp.com/>
  - Leaping Water Trio: <https://leapingwatertrio.bandcamp.com/>
  - Boston Improvisors' Collective:  
<https://bostonimprovisorscollective.bandcamp.com/>
  - Raqib Hassan: <https://raqibhassan.bandcamp.com/>
  - Free Trance Ensemble: <https://freetranceensemble.bandcamp.com/>
  - Composer's Orchestra: <https://composersorchestra.bandcamp.com/>
  - Skysaw: <https://skysaw3.bandcamp.com/releases>
  - Equilibrium: <https://equilibrium.bandcamp.com/album/fitness-landscapes>

### **Squidco for CD Orders**

- [Evil Clown available at Squidco](#)

### **Evil Clown Catalog**

- A [formatted pdf list](#) of all of the Evil Clown Releases with album covers, track listings, musicians and dates for every release.

### **Evil Clown FaceBook**

- <https://www.facebook.com/GiantEvilClown/>

### **Evil Clown YouTube**

- YouTube Menu on Evil Clown Site: <https://www.evilclown.rocks/youtube-sites.html>
- Main YouTube Site: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIfRITeeHnSxRsJTkFakiJw/videos>
- Archival and Early Contemporary YouTube Site: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCprJy4kMIRs51FIFQF12dw/videos>
- Fractal Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8g8mSAFZcqSOuBzHyPUTvw/videos>

### **PEK & Evil Clown Profiles:**

- Feature Article by Karl Ackermann: <https://www.allaboutjazz.com/an-evil-clown-and-a-leap-of-faith-leap-of-faith-by-karl-ackermann.php>
- Jazz Right Now: <https://jazzrightnow.com/artists-m-z/peck-david-pek/>
- All About Jazz: <https://musicians.allaboutjazz.com/pek>

### **Soundcloud:**

- Main Page: <https://soundcloud.com/pek-746320808>
- Recent Releases: <https://soundcloud.com/pek-746320808/sets/last-5-evil-clown-releases>
- Leap of Faith: <https://soundcloud.com/pek-746320808/sets/leap-of-faith-since-2015>
- Metal Chaos Ensemble: <https://soundcloud.com/pek-746320808/sets/metal-chaos-ensemble>
- String Theory: <https://soundcloud.com/pek-746320808/sets/string-theory>
- Turbulence: <https://soundcloud.com/pek-746320808/sets/turbulence>

### **Apple Sites**

- Metal Chaos Ensemble: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/artist/1129869837>
- Leap of Faith: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/artist/4111164>
- Leap of Faith Orchestra: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/artist/1127530852>
- String Theory: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/artist/29836613>
- PEK Solo: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/artist/1364704313>
- Turbulence: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/artist/1389911517>

### **Evil Clown Reviews**

Reviews page on the Evil Clown Website [\[https://www.evilclown.rocks/press---newsletters.html\]](https://www.evilclown.rocks/press---newsletters.html)

Free Jazz Blog

Leap of Faith – Principals of an Open Future

<https://www.freejazzblog.org/2021/05/leap-of-faith-principles-of-open-future.html>

Free Jazz Blog

PEK Solo, A Quartet of PEKs

<https://www.freejazzblog.org/2021/05/pek-solo-quartet-of-peks-strange-theory.html>

Squid's Ear

Metal Chaos Ensemble - The Riddle of Steel

<http://www.squidco.com/cgi-bin/news/newsView.cgi?newsID=2364>

Squid's Ear

Metal Chaos Ensemble - Cryptomorphism

<http://www.squidsear.com/cgi-bin/news/newsView.cgi?newsID=2215>

Squid's Ear

String Theory - 3 of 9 Dimensions

<http://www.squidsear.com/cgi-bin/news/newsView.cgi?newsID=2231>

Squid's Ear

Leap of Faith - Topological Constructions

<http://www.squidsear.com/cgi-bin/news/newsView.cgi?newsID=2175>

Squid's Ear

PEK Solo - Fulcrum

<http://www.squidco.com/cgi-bin/news/newsView.cgi?newsID=2165>

Squid's Ear

Metal Chaos Ensemble - Luminiferous Aether

<http://www.squidsear.com/cgi-bin/news/newsView.cgi?newsID=2145>

Contemporary Fusion Reviews

Leap of Faith Orchestra - The Photon Epoch

<https://contemporaryfusionreviews.com/audaciously-delicious-experiments-leap-of-faith-orchestra-the-photon-epoch/>

Squid's Ear

Leap of Faith Orchestra – Cosmological Horizons

<http://www.squidsear.com/cgi-bin/news/newsView.cgi?newsID=2111>

All About Jazz

Leap of Faith Orchestra – Cosmological Horizons

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/cosmological-horizons-leap-of-faith-orchestra-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

Contemporary Fusion Reviews

Leap of Faith Orchestra – Cosmological Horizons

<http://contemporaryfusionreviews.com/rich-sonorous-frame-notation-improvisation-leap-of-faith-orchestra-cosmological-horizons/>

All About Jazz

Leap of Faith Orchestra - SuperClusters

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/superclusters-pek-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

All About Jazz

Leap of Faith - Domains

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/domains-leap-of-faith-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

All About Jazz

Leap of Faith Orchestra - Possible Universes

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/possible-universes-pek-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

All About Jazz

Under the Radar by Karl Ackermann - An Evil Clown and A Leap of Faith...

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/an-evil-clown-and-a-leap-of-faith-leap-of-faith-by-karl-ackermann.php>

All About Jazz

Leap of Faith Orchestra - The Expanding Universe

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/the-expanding-universe-leap-of-faith-orchestra-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

All About Jazz

Leap of Faith / Thomas Heberer - Solution Concepts

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/solution-concepts-leap-of-faith-thomas-heberer-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

All About Jazz

Metal Chaos Ensemble - War tuba

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/war-tuba-metal-chaos-ensemble-evil-clown-review-by-glenn-astarita.php>

All About Jazz

Metal Chaos Ensemble - Intermetallic Compounds

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/intermetallic-compounds-metal-chaos-ensemble-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

All About Jazz

Turbulence - Vortex Generation Mechanisms

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/vortex-generation-mechanisms-turbulence-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

All About Jazz

Leap of Faith Orchestra - Supernovae

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/supernovae-leap-of-faith-evil-clown-review-by-karl-ackermann.php>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith - Domains (The Continuing Adventures of Damon Smith)

<http://www.freejazzblog.org/2017/09/the-continuing-adventures-of-damon-smith.html?spref=fb>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith Orchestra - Helix

<http://www.freejazzblog.org/2017/06/leap-of-faith-orchestra-helix-evil.html>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith w/Steve Swell - Live at New Revolution Arts, Brooklyn, 8-15-15 (concert review)

<http://www.freejazzblog.org/2015/08/leap-of-faith-wsteve-swell-live-at.html>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith / New Language Collaborative - Abstract Structures Vol 1 & 2

<http://www.freejazzblog.org/2015/06/leap-of-faith-abstract-structures-vols.html>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith Orchestra - Hyperbolic Spirals vol 1 & 2

<http://www.freejazzblog.org/2016/02/leap-of-faith-orchestra-hyperbolic.html>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith - Regenerations

<http://www.freejazzblog.org/2015/03/leap-of-faith-regenerations-evil-clown.html>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith Orchestra - Supernovae

<http://www.freejazzblog.org/2017/01/leap-of-faith-orchestra-supernovae-evil.html>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith / Thomas Heberer - Solution Concepts

<http://gapplegatemusicreview.blogspot.com/2016/03/thomas-heberer-leap-of-faith-solution.html>

FreeJazzBlog

Leap of Faith / Steve Swell - Factorizations

<http://gapplegatemusicreview.blogspot.com/2015/11/steve-swell-leap-of-faith-factorizations.html>

Gapplegate

Leap of Faith - Regenerations

<http://gapplegatemusicreview.blogspot.com/2015/07/leap-of-faith-regenerations.html>

Gapplegate

Leap of Faith Orchestra - The Expanding Universe

<http://gapplegatemusicreview.blogspot.com/2016/08/leap-of-faith-orchestra-expanding.html>

Jazz Right Now

Leap of Faith Orchestra – Possible Universes

<https://www.evilclown.rocks/review---possible-universes.html>

Jazz Right Now

Metal Chaos Ensemble - Intermetallic Compounds

<https://www.giantevilclown.com/review-intermetallic-compounds.html>

Jazz Right Now

Leap of Faith Orchestra – The Expanding Universe

<https://www.giantevilclown.com/review-the-expanding-universe.html>

Jazz Right Now

Leap of Faith Orchestra – Supernovae

<https://www.evilclown.rocks/review---supernovae.html>

Contemporary Fusion Reviews

Leap of Faith Orchestra - SuperClusters

<http://contemporaryfusionreviews.com/leapoffaithorchestra/>

Contemporary Fusion Reviews

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<http://contemporaryfusionreviews.com/rich-sonorous-frame-notation-improvisation-leap-of-faith-orchestra-cosmological-horizons/>

Boston Noise

-Leap of Faith Orchestra - The Expanding Universe

<http://thenoise-boston.com/2016/08/cd-reviews-aug/>