

DuMaurier International Jazz Festival & the Western Front
present

THE NOW ORCHESTRA

COMPOSITIONS OF GEORGE E. LEWIS

ARTISTIC DIRECTORS: COAT COOKE & RON SAMWORTH

Saul Berson, alto saxophone; Paul Blaney, bass; Coat Cooke, reeds;
Ralph Eppel, trombone; Bruce Freedman, soprano saxophone;
Kate Hammett-Vaughan, voice; John Korsrud, trumpet; Peggy Lee,
'cello; Graham Ord, reeds; Paul Plimley, piano; Clyde Reed, bass;
Ron Samworth, guitar; Dylan Van Der Schyff, drums; George E.
Lewis, coordinator, trombone.

Endless Shout (1994), part one

Players (1978)

Endless Shout, part two

Unison (1978)

Endless Shout, part three

Interval

The Chicken Skin (1995)

Blues (1977)

Endless Shout, part four



My experience with the creative improvisors' orchestra is rather varied, both as improviser and as composer. Throughout all of my experiences with this medium, I was always afforded the space to try out fledgling compositional and improvisative ideas in a warmly supportive environment. Beginning as a student of Muhal Richard Abrams, one of the founding members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, I was allowed in 1971 to perform on trombone with the AACM/Experimental Band. For several years this ensemble, under Muhal's direction, performed weekly on Chicago's South Side, first at the Pumpkin Room on East 71st Street, and later at Transitions East Health Bar on Cottage Grove Avenue.

My first opportunities to hear my music performed were at the sufferance of the great artists who played in this orchestra, including Fred Anderson, Joseph Jarman, Kalaparusha Ahra Difda, Lester Lashley, Frank Gordon, Edward Wilkerson, Famoudou Don Moye, Malachi Favors Maghostus, Bernard Mixon, Ajaramu, Ari Brown, Douglas Ewart, Chico Freeman, Wallace McMillan, and others.

Later, I performed with a more traditional creative ensemble, the Count Basie Orchestra, where many of my nascent notions about trombone playing (including so-called free playing) were supported unblinkingly by its members. I performed with the creative orchestras of Roscoe Mitchell, Leo Smith, Anthony Braxton, Randy Weston and Carla Bley. I performed in several of Lawrence "Butch" Morris' "Conduction" works for large ensemble, where many of Mr. Morris' techniques of real-time, improvised shaping and conducting reminded me of similar techniques I had experienced under Muhal's direction many years earlier. Finally, I took part in some of the recent activities of the Globe Unity Orchestra and the Instant Composers' Pool, and created a work for the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra.

My experiences in this regard, I feel, clearly demonstrate a fundamental unity of interpretation across the breadth of the African-American musical tradition, and moreover, across differing international interpretations of that tradition.

In the waning moments of the 20th Century, current musical practice includes explorations of free improvisation, as well as processes that combine elements of improvised and composed behavior specifications for eliciting musical creativity. This kind of "experimental" music has as its focus not only concepts of timbre, extended techniques, pitch organization or formal devices, but the encounter itself, as a locus of communication between individuals and across traditions. Personal and cultural narratives are exchanged and blended, and the possible internalization of alternative value systems is implicit in the process.

I feel that the process of rehearsal and development that we as performers have undergone in order to produce tonight's performance exemplifies these notions. The NOW Orchestra is an outstanding and unique group of improvisors who are advancing the art of creative ensemble improvisation into new and challenging directions. In tonight's performance, music created by improvisors from widely differing conceptual viewpoints are framed by environments that I have tried to create. These environments take into account personal narratives as well as formal procedures, encouraging discovery through musical interactivity.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to the NOW Orchestra, whose intelligence, patience, sacrifice and insight were so essential to making this project a reality. I hope that we can continue to work together on many such projects in the future.

I would also like to thank the staff and friends of the Western Front, who have been so very supportive of my work over the last ten years, including its director, Zainub Verjee, as well as Hank Bull, Debbie Boyko, Robert Kozinuk, Judy Radul, Kate Craig, Eric Metcalfe, Jane Ellison, Peter Courtemanche, Conal Cook, Spencer Cathey, Mike MacDonald, Brice MacNeil, Glenn Lewis, and the late Martin Bartlett, and many others. The Western Front is a national treasure, and I hope people realize that.

Finally, I would like to thank the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society and the duMaurier International Jazz Festival for their advocacy of this project. I hope that this event can signal the start of a productive and

musically rewarding relationship.

For this concert I would like to pay homage to a composer whose works represent the pinnacle of originality and achievement in this medium, the late Julius Hemphill, the master composer for creative orchestra whose music is so important to all of us.

George E. Lewis
Vancouver, 23 June 1995

George E. Lewis (b. Chicago, 1952) is an improviser, composer, performer, and computer/installation artist. A member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians for 25 years, Lewis studied composition with Muhal Richard Abrams at the AACM School of Music, and trombone with Dean Hey. He holds a B.A. in philosophy from Yale College.

A recipient of several awards from the National Endowment for the Arts in both music and inter-arts categories, Lewis has presented his interdisciplinary compositions across Eastern and Western Europe, North America, and Japan. His computer compositions have been premiered at the Banff Centre (Canada), IRCAM (Paris) and the Studio voor Elektro-Instrumentale Muziek (Amsterdam). Lewis's intermedia installations have been shown at the Randolph Street Gallery in Chicago and the Musee de la Villette in Paris, the Arte Elettronica Festival in Camerino (Italy) and the Kitchen (New York).

Lewis's work as a trombonist is documented on over eighty record albums on which he is featured as composer, improviser, or interpreter. He has taught at Simon Fraser University and at the Art Institute of Chicago, and was for two years curator of the Music program at the Kitchen Center in New York City. Most recently, Lewis served as Visiting Darius Milhaud Professor of Music at Mills College. Currently, Lewis is Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego.

The New Orchestra Workshop

(NOW), an artist-run society founded in 1977, is dedicated to producing concerts and workshops of west coast Canadian creative music. Its founding members include Paul Cram, Lisle Ellis, Gregg Simpson, Clyde Reed, Paul Plimley, Ralph Eppel and Coat Cooke. NOW's commitment to bringing creative music to the Vancouver community is exemplified by its extensive activity in the creation of concerts, such as the recent "Time Flies" series, featuring internationally-acclaimed artists such as Charlie Haden, Jay Clayton, Reggie Workman, Ray Anderson and Horace Tapscott; and "Jazz at the Gallery", a weekly series of creative music events at the Grunt Gallery in Vancouver. In 1988, NOW founded the "Glass Slipper" performance space, now an internationally-known venue for creative music.

NOW is known for its commitment to collaboration in performance and composition. Recent collaborations have included work with Vinny Golia, Claude Ranger, François Houle, and Andrew Cyrille. The NOW Orchestra, a 13-piece improvising ensemble, has spearheaded the development of performance repertoire and collaborative work for large ensemble. The Orchestra has performed with many of the leading improvisors in today's music, including Marilyn Crispell, Barry Guy, Hans Koch, Martin Schütz, Fredy Studer, Lisle Ellis and René Lussier. Many of these artists have composed works specifically for the Orchestra.

Members of NOW have recorded extensively, displaying great diversity of medium and texture. These recordings are available on labels such as Hat Art, Nine Winds, Music and Arts, Victo, and Word of Mouth.

THE NOW ORCHESTRA

Paul Plimley: A founding member of NOW, Plimley has distinguished himself as one of Canada's foremost improvising pianists, performing and recording solo or in ensemble with such improvisors as Lisle Ellis, Andrew Cyrille, and Gregg Bendian.

Coat Cooke: A NOW member since 1978, and current artistic co-director, Cooke has played with Lunar Adventures, EDAM Dance Company, and Barry Guy, and leads his own groups Stellar Sax Quartet and The Evolution.

Ron Samworth (guitar) has been a NOW member since 1986 and current artistic director, Samworth has performed with Wayne Horvitz, Butch Morris, Bobby Previte, George Lewis, EDAM Dance Company, and Claude Ranger. Leads his own groups Talking Pictures and FortWorth Travelogue.

Kate Hammett-Vaughan (voice) has been a member of NOW since 1988, Hammett-Vaughan is recognized across the country for her vocal work with the contemporary trio Garbo's Hat. She has performed with George Lewis, Fritz Hauser, Urs Leimgruber, and Claude Ranger. Ms. Hammett-Vaughan serves as the society's current president.

Peggy Lee (cello), is trained in European classical music as a cellist, and has Lee has established herself as a force on the contemporary music scene with Talking Pictures, Spirit of the West, François Houle Et Cetera, and Bugs Inside.

Dylan Van Der Schyff (drums) has collaborated with Vinny Golia, Myra Melford, Paul Plimley, Talking Pictures and François Houle.

Paul Blaney (bass) is known for his work in Garbo's Hat, with Stephen Fearing, Don Thompson, Bob Brough, Bob Fenton and Hagood Hardy.

Clyde Reed (bass), an original NOW member, has worked with the likes of Claude Ranger, Vinny Golia, and Peter Brötzmann.

Ralph Eppel (trombone), a founding member of NOW, leads his own quintet, has played and recorded with ESB, and currently manages the Glass Slipper performance space.

Bruce Freedman (saxophone), leads Chief Feature and the Bruce Freedman Quartet.

Graham Ord (reeds), is the leader of his own band Unity, and plays with Garbo's Hat, Brass Roots, Lori Freedman, and Sumalao.

Saul Berson (alto saxophone) leads his own band Above Ground, and has played with Steve Grossman and Jaki Byard.

John Korsrud (trumpet) is a graduate of the UBC composition program, and has recorded with VEJI. Korsrud is the leader of the Hard Rubber Orchestra.

