

Anthony Braxton's Interview by the NewMusic.gr magazine
The interview was taken in 13th of November 2022, London

NewMusic.gr (NM): So what about tonight's quartet? How was it formed?

Anthony Braxton (AB): I am in a period where more and more I'm looking to find and meet new musicians. I get with Lalo and we search and see interesting people who might be able to work in my music. It's part of an attempt to evolve myself by working with younger musicians, people who are serious about their music and would be serious about my music. So this is the beginning of a time - space for me where there will be other collaborations with new people. And that's really what it's about: to bring in new people to keep the music fresh. Plus it's good for an old dog to play with younger dogs and dogets. It keeps everything fresh. That's what I want.

NM : What about the future plans?

AB: About two years ago, I would have finished the "Ground Floor Structure" of the "Tri centric Musics". By that I am referring to the 12 different stages of the music and that has now been completed. The next stage is the "Air Musics". What am I talking about when I use the expression "Air music"? "Ground floor music" starts with "Sonic Geometrics". "Sonic Geometrics" says building blocks, from one to 12. If I get your email address, even this afternoon I'm going to send you the "Tricentric thought unit" notes in terms of the form and how it's evolving. This will give you a clearer picture of the evolution of the music and the inner components of that evolution. Also, should you decide that you are interested in the mechanics, science and metaphysics of the music and where it's going, I'm gonna mail to you the system notes.

NM : Wonderful. This could be very helpful, as there are people in Greece who study your work.

AB : This would be good for me too. I'm 77 years old. I want the system of the music, of the "Tricentric thought unit" construct, to be available for anyone that's interested. I will seek to help to get materials to people who are interested.

NM : Do your future plans involve ideas or hints of something that is foreign to you, very new that you don't even know how to begin approaching it?

AB : I began with talking about the "Ground floor" of the system. Tonight we will play musics from the "Lorraine" system. In the future I will start on the next continuum, which will be "under earth Musics" like the subway or caves. What is the idea? The idea is a system of three continuums, starting with the "Ground Floor Sonic Geometrics" moving into the "Air musics". "Lorraine", "Thunder Musics" is already complete, but it's not complete yet. It will be complete maybe in six months, not complete, but one of the compositions will be completed. The "Thunder musics", like the "Lorraine Musics" will be a continuum of compositions, maybe from 15 to 30 compositions like the "Ghost Trance Musics". I am in the process of finishing up the "Lorraine Musics", and from there to move on to the "Thunder" Musics and to build this Tri-Part System of "Ground floor", "Air Musics" and "Underground Musics". And from there, I will make linkage systems.

And going back to your question, my motto says, “unknown - known and intuition”. And so I'm very much interested in the meta reality of the music. Whether we're talking of magic, whether we're talking of supernatural, whether we're talking of musics that are moving through time and space, or new fantasy structures. There's everything to do. We are now living in a serious period of change. And among the things that I am working on at present, is an idea that came to me by listening to the president of the European Union, Ursula von der Leyen, who used the expression “we have tools”. Now by saying we have tools....

[the interview is shortly interrupted by the entrance of Mariá Portugal]

...When [Ursula von der Leyen] said “we've got the tools”, she was talking about Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, and Miss Meloni, the new president of Italy. And by saying “we've got tools” in other words, “you're gonna do what the EU wants”.

In fact, a part of the challenge of the coming time space will involve, in my opinion, the creation of new forms, new interaction strategies. More and more it is becoming possible for me to talk about a fresh set of tools as a component that will be related to the new time era that is coming. So when I begin to talk to the musicians about the system, I'm gonna talk about the system in terms of a set of new tools that is not just about theme and development, but rather a set of tools that each musician in the ensemble will be able to use either inside of a host composition, like what we're gonna play tonight. We're gonna play Composition 434 tonight.

That composition will open up to the House of the Circle, mutable logics, House of the Rectangle, structural logics, House of the Triangle in terms of metaphysics and fusion logics. Inside of those parameters the musicians will begin to learn how to think in terms of new tools that can happen in real time as opposed to the “fifth restructuring cycles” of Charlie Parker or the atonal music of Coleman moving in the Cecil Taylor the great musical Stockhausen in 50s and the evolution into his opera systems, that he calls “Light” or Iannis Xenakis. More and more when I look at the possibilities that we're moving into, it seems to me that this is the right time to think in terms of tools. The new tools will be tri centric tools. Tools, for the individual, tools for the interaction dynamics of the groups and tools for the mechanism of the music as it moves into different spaces.

And so, I'm very excited about the idea of a set of tools rather than thinking in terms of composition, in the traditional sense of composition. When in fact, in my music, there is what it could be called the “Origin Identity”, which is writing a piece of music in a traditional writing, defining the instrumentation and people will play it in the traditional way. I call that “Origin identity”.

Number two, “Secondary identity”. By “Secondary identity”, I'm saying a piece for a creative orchestra can be played by four harps or any instrumentation. A piece can be played by 20 garbage cans or 40 harmonicas. Secondary in this context is part of a deconstruction of the origin composition. And finally, number three, the “Genetic Identity”. By genetic in this context I'm saying: take a measure or two measures from composition 103 or put it in composition 95. You know about Legos, the game Legos, where you have the blocks you can put together and build things. In the third degree of the “Genetic Identity”, you can take small segments from any composition and put them together like Legos, build an airplane, build a train set. The model that I'm trying to build seeks to address itself to composite reality, to scientific reality, to metaphysics.