

Five

***Witold Wachowski:* You are a composer who has also ‘composed’ a part of his audience’s life, and you do it all the time. Do you feel a certain sense of responsibility or risk resulting from the fact that you significantly influence someone’s sensitivity, or even the way they approach the world? Those whom you unwittingly educate frequently follow their own paths of musical education.**

John Zorn: Taking responsibility is the most important step in a person’s life, a step that really brings you forward in becoming a thinking, conscious contributor to the world, and it is something I take very seriously. One needs to believe in something bigger than oneself to understand how one fits into the big picture. It may please me to learn that someone has derived some benefit from my work, but my focus is never on the audience and what benefit they may get out of it, but on the work itself, and the people who assist me in making it. Perhaps one of the differences between an entertainer and an artist is that that entertainer’s main concern is with the audience, while the artist’s main concern is with the work—in realizing a personal vision regardless of the demands or whims of the marketplace. The best way for an artist to serve the world of truth and beauty is in listening to their muse without compromise—and ignoring what the audience may demand of them. The entertainer listens to the voice of the outside world while the artist listens to their own inner voice.

Have you learned anything thanks to your audience?

Yes—that it is best to ignore them as much as possible and keep on working.

The musicians frequently talk about the spirit of improvisation. We are equally interested in the body of improvisation. Do you have your own concepts regarding the technical circumstances of improvising music in a group? It also works out great in the case of musicians who beforehand have not known each other in private life. We know that it is a ‘forbidden’ question. Do you know any answer, half an answer, a shadow of an answer? Or, do you know it, but will not tell us?

Improvisation is not a technique, it is a lifestyle—and everyone lives it in different ways and to varying degrees. There are as many different paths in improvising as there are improvisers. There is no right and wrong. There are only good improvisers and bad improvisers, good improvisations and bad improvisations. Part of the mystery is that a good improviser is capable of creating a bad improvisation and a bad improviser is capable of creating a good improvisation. It is therefore perhaps best not to subject it to pedagogy.

We would gladly talk to a few medieval mystics—the slight complication being that they have been dead for some time (but maybe we will come up with something...). Is there anyone from the old times—not necessarily in the field of music—whom you not only value for his/her output, but whom you would like to drag out of the void of time simply as a human being?

Hildegard von Bingen. William Blake.

Neuroscientists, having at their disposal increasingly developed methods of looking at the structure and functioning of the brain, have recently been performing research on musicians and music listeners (the technology permits also for doing such research during performing / listening to music). The results are interesting, and they do not seem to shake our perceptions of talent or spirituality of the artist, if we consider what the results really tell us about. If you were given an opportunity to take part in such research, would you agree?

No I would prefer to spend my time making music rather than analyzing it or being analyzed. My life is not to analyze or dissect—my life is to create.

* * *

John Zorn (born 2nd September 1953) studied at Webster Collage in Saint Louise. After returning to New York, he used to give concerts in his flat. These concerts have become The Events due to their unconventionality connected with the use of the instruments. It was then that he achieved fame as a experimental musician. In the eighties, he signed a contract with Elektra-Nonesuch. Afterwards, he established his own record label, Tzadik – “dedicated to releasing the best in avant garde and experimental music”. Indeed, tzadik is New York’s avant garde flesh as it participates in many musical projects. Releasing many worthy albums is the result of this activity. What characterizes Zorn is a multitude of muses that inspire him; the elements of jazz, rock, grindcore, country and trash metal etc. can be found in his works. He is also known for the usage of many different ideas, even a few in a piece. Zorn avoids being classified as a representant of a specific trend in music. He often emphasises that he is not intrested in such classifications but the music itself. Zorn uses unimarginably many themes, ideas combining and developing them in an original way; he feels comfortable in possibly every music style. He has composed music to cartoons, movies, documentary movies...

Selected Discography:

John Zorn - Ganryu Island (1984)
John Zorn - The Big Gundown (1985, corrected version w 2000)
John Zorn - Spillane (1987)
John Zorn - Spy vs. Spy (1989)
John Zorn - Elegy (1991) Tribute to Jean Genet.
John Zorn - Kristallnacht (1993)
John Zorn - Nani Nani (1995) (Zorn and Yamatsuka Eye)
John Zorn - First Recordings (1995)
John Zorn - Classic Guide to Strategy (1996)
John Zorn - New Traditions in East Asian Bar Bands (1997)
John Zorn - Music for Children (1998)
John Zorn - Godard/Spillane (1999)
John Zorn - Taboo & Exile (1999)
John Zorn - The Gift (2001)
John Zorn - I.A.O. (2002)
John Zorn - Dreamers (2008)
John Zorn - The Book of Heads (1995) (performance Marca Ribota)
John Zorn - Redbird (1995)
John Zorn - Duras, Duchamp (1997)
John Zorn - Aporias (1998)
John Zorn - Angelus Novus (1999)

- John Zorn - The String Quartets (1999) (Cat o' Nine Tails, The Dead Man, Memento Mori and Kol Nidre)
- John Zorn - Cartoon S/M (2000)
- John Zorn - Madness, Love and Mysticism (2001)
- John Zorn - Songs from the Hermetic Theater (2001)
- John Zorn - Chimeras (2003)
- John Zorn - Voodoo (1985) By the Sonny Clark Memorial Quintet
- John Zorn - Buried Secrets (1991)
- John Zorn - Execution Ground (1994)
- John Zorn - Live in Osaka (1994)
- John Zorn - Filmworks I: 1986-1990 (1992)
- John Zorn - Filmworks II: For An Untitled Film by Walter Hill (1996)
- John Zorn - Filmworks III: 1990-1995 (1997)
- John Zorn - Filmworks IV: S/M and More (1997)
- John Zorn - Filmworks V: Tears of Ecstasy (1996)
- John Zorn - Filmworks VI (1996)
- John Zorn - Filmworks VII: The Cynical Hysterie Hour (1997) S
- John Zorn - Filmworks VIII (1998)
- John Zorn - Filmworks IX: Trembling Before G-d (2000)
- John Zorn - Filmworks X: In the Mirror of Maya Deren (2001)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XI: Secret Lives (2002)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XII: Three Documentaries (2002)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XIII: Invitation to a Suicide (2002)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XIV: Hiding and Seeking (2003)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XV: Protocols of Zion (2005)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XVI: Workingman's Death (2005)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XVII: Notes on Marie Menken/Ray Bandar: A Life with Skulls (2006)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XVIII: The Treatment (2006)
- John Zorn - Filmworks XIX: The Rain Horse (2008)
- John Zorn - Moonchild (2006)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Locus Solus (1983)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Cobra (1985)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Cobra Live at the Knitting Factory (1992)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Cobra: Tokyo Operations (1994)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Lacrosse (1997)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Archery (1997)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Pool (1997)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Hockey (1997)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Xu Feng (2000)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Cobra (2002)
- John Zorn Game Pieces - Locus Solus live (2004)
- Masada - Number One: Alef (1994)
- Masada - Number Two: Beit (1995)

Masada - Number Three: Gimel (1995)
Masada - Number Four: Dalet (1995)
Masada - Number Five: Hei (1995)
Masada - Number Six: Vav (1996)
Masada - Bar Kokhba (1996)
Masada - Number Seven: Zayin (1998)
Masada - Number Eight: Het (1998)
Masada - The Circle Maker (1998)
Masada - Number Nine: Tet (1998)
Masada - Number Ten: Yod (1998)
Masada - Live in Jerusalem (1999)
Masada - Live in Middelheim (1999)
Masada - Live in Taipei (1999)
Masada - Live in Sevilla (2000)
Masada - Live at Tonic (2001)
Masada - First Live 1993 (2002)
Masada - Masada Guitars (2003) (performance: Billa Frisella, Marca Ribota, Tima Sparksa).
Masada - Voices in the Wilderness (2003)
Masada - The Unknown Masada (2003)
Masada - Masada String Trio Live (2004)
Naked City - Naked City (1989)
Naked City - Black Box (1989, 1990) (include: Torture Garden i Leng Tch'e).
Naked City - Grand Guignol (1992)
Naked City - Heretic (1992)
Naked City - Radio (1993)
Naked City - Absinthe (1993)
Naked City - Naked City Live #1 — At the Knitting Factory (2002)
John Zorn, George Lewis, and Bill Frisell - News for Lulu (1989)
John Zorn, George Lewis, and Bill Frisell - More News for Lulu (1989)
John Zorn, Wayne Horvitz, Elliott Sharp, and Bobby Previte - Downtown Lullaby (1997)
John Zorn, Mike Patton, and Ikue Mori - Hemophiliac (2002, limited edition)
Bill Laswell, John Zorn, Mick Harris - Guts of a Virgin (1991)
Derek Bailey, George Lewis, John Zorn - Yankees (1992)
Mystic Fugu Orchestra (Zorn and Yamatsuka Eye) - Zohar (1995)
William Parker, John Zorn, and Derek Bailey - Harras (1996)
Fred Frith and John Zorn - Art of Memory (1999)
Talisman: Painkiller Live (2002) Live in Nagoya in 1994.
Milford Graves and John Zorn (2004)

Filmography:

Money (1985)

Put More Blood Into the Music (New York avant garde music), episode 292 of *The South Bank Show*, aired Sunday March 12, 1989

Step Across the Border (1990)

A Bookshelf on Top of the Sky: 12 Stories About John Zorn (2004)

Masada Live at Tonic 1999 (2004)

Celestial Subway Lines / Salvaging Noise (2005)

Sabbath in Paradise (2007)

Astronome: A Night At The Opera (2010)

Sources:

<http://jazzarium.pl/tags/john-zorn>

<http://www.scottmaykrantz.com/zorn01.html>

<http://www.diapazon.pl/PelnaWiadomosc.php?bn=Artykuly&Id=2>

<http://jazztimes.com/articles/24597-john-zorn-the-working-man>

<http://www.tzadik.com/>

<http://www.thestonenyc.com/>

<http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-no90-12240>

<http://scottmaykrantz.com/zorn01.html>

compilation: Bartłomiej Alberski & Błażej Brzostek