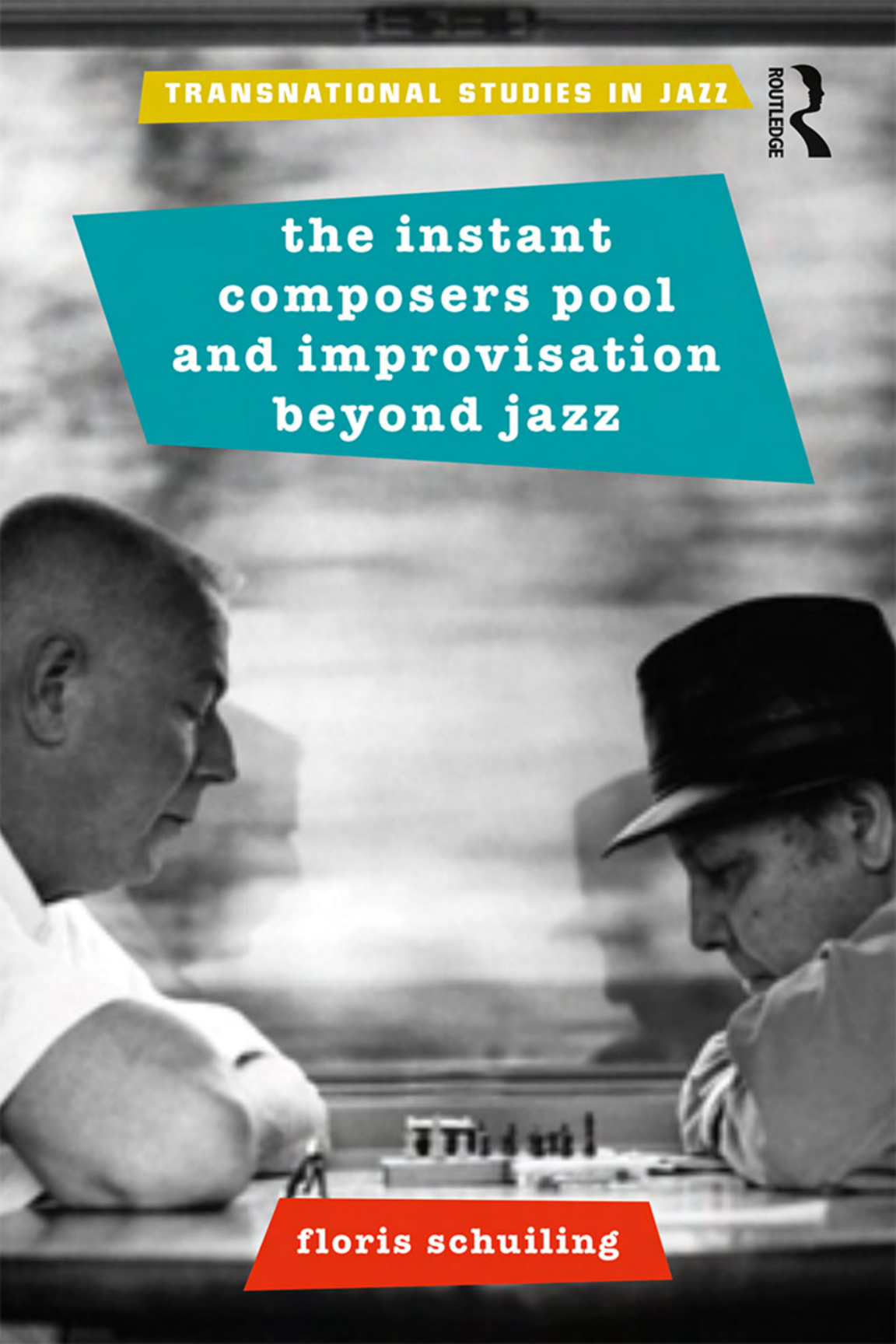
TRANSNATIONAL STUDIES IN JAZZ
ROUTLEDGE
the instant composers pool and improvisation beyond jazz
floris schuiling

THE INSTANT COMPOSERS POOL AND IMPROVISATION BEYOND JAZZ

The Instant Composers Pool and Improvisation Beyond Jazz contributes to the expansion and diversification of our understanding of the jazz tradition by describing the history and practice of one of the most important non-American jazz groups: The Instant Composers Pool, founded in Amsterdam in 1967.

The Instant Composers Pool describes the meaning of "instant composition" from both a historical and ethnographic perspective. Historically, it details instant composition's emergence from the encounter between various overlapping transnational avant-gardes, including free jazz, serialism, experimental music, electronic music, and Fluxus. The author shows how the improvising musicians not only engaged with the cultural politics of ethnicity and race involved in the negotiation of the boundaries of jazz as a cultural practice, but transformed the meaning of music in society—particularly the nature of improvisation and performance. Ethnographically, *The Instant Composers Pool* encourages readers to reconsider the conceptual tools we use to describe music performance, improvisation, and creativity. It takes the practice of "instant composition" as an opportunity to reflect on music performance as a social practice, which is crucial not only for jazz studies, but also for general music scholarship.

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Floris Schuiling

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The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to his subjects.

. . .

Hesitant, he does not utter words lightly.
When his task is accomplished and his work done
The people all say, "it happened to us naturally."

—Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, 21

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SERIES FOREWORD

Since the 1990s the study of jazz has changed dramatically, as the field continues to open up to a variety of disciplinary perspectives and critical models. Today, as the music's meaning undergoes profound changes, there is a pressing need to situate jazz within an international research context and to develop theories and methods of investigation which open up new ways of understanding its cultural significance and its place within different historical and social settings.

The *Transnational Studies in Jazz* series presents the best research from this important and exciting area of scholarship, and features interdisciplinary and international perspectives on the relationships between jazz, society, politics, and culture. The series provides authors with a platform for rethinking the methodologies and concepts used to analyze jazz, and will seek to work across disciplinary boundaries, finding different ways of examining the practices, values and meanings of the music. The series explores the complex cultural and musical exchanges that have shaped the global development and reception of jazz. Contributors will focus on studies of the music which find different ways of telling the story of jazz with or without reference to the United States, and will investigate jazz as a medium for negotiating global identities.

Tony Whyton
Nicholas Gebhardt
Series Editors

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This book would not have been possible without Susanna von Canon, the ICP's manager. When I came to see her for the first time after I started this research project, her response was (and I paraphrase slightly): "Great! We go on tour in three weeks. The bus leaves at 9—don't be late." I am enormously thankful for her openness, efficiency, and kindness. She has been more helpful than I could ever have imagined. The same goes for the ICP musicians: Han Bennink, Misha Mengelberg, Ernst Glerum, Mary Oliver, Tristan Honsinger, Wolter Wierbos, Michael Moore, Ab Baars, Thomas Heberer, Tobias Delius, and Guus Janssen. I thank them for welcoming me into their group, making time for interviews, sharing their scores, and for the great music they played during the years I spent with them. They have made my ethnographic work a real joy. I also thank Ernst Reijseger, Pieter Boersma, Peter van Bergen, Evan Parker, and George Lewis for our conversations about their experiences with the ICP. Gerard de Meij, who drove the ICP tour bus, deserves special mention for his good care, as do all the people who do such good work at the concert venues we attended. I am also happy to have gotten to know Amy and Andrea Mengelberg; it is sad that it had to be during such a difficult period.

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I have been extremely privileged for the various sources of financial help available for me to do this research. It would simply have been impossible if not for the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the University of Cambridge Home and EU Scholarship Scheme, and Corpus Christi College. The additional grants and awards from the Music & Letters Trust, the Society for Music Analysis, and the William Barclay Squire Fund for fieldwork expenses and conference attendance were also very helpful. After returning to the Netherlands, I was a recipient of a Veni grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research, which allowed me to finish writing this book.

The starting point of this research was a lecture by Sam Barrett in Utrecht, where Walter van de Leur remarked that little research was being done on jazz in the Netherlands. Already fascinated with Misha Mengelberg and the ICP Orchestra, I saw an opportunity. The ICP became the subject of my MA thesis, supervised by Barbara Titus, and then my PhD, supervised by Nicholas Cook. I am grateful to Sam, Walter, and Barbara for their help and support in the very early stages of this project, and particularly to Nick for his encouragement, and his uncanny ability to state clearly and succinctly what I was actually trying to say. In the course of my research I have had many inspiring conversations about my work with various other people, including Robert Adlington, Monique Ingalls, Tony Whyton, Nicholas Gebhardt, Kariann Goldschmitt, Georgina Born, Jonas Tinius, Eric Clarke, Loes Rusch, Emily Payne, Rachel Hodgson, Sean Williams, Michiel Kamp, Matt Pritchard, Ross Cole, Jenny Judge, Myles Eastwood, Michael Byrne, Sheila Guymer, John McKean, Andrew Goldman, and Ely Rosenblum.

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INTRODUCTION

When he was young, Misha Mengelberg, pianist and leader of the ICP Orchestra, went to see Duke Ellington and his Orchestra in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. During the intermission, he went back into the concert hall and saw the Duke play piano by himself. As the second half of the concert was about to start, all the musicians of the band got back on stage and joined in one by one. Mengelberg later described this as a formative experience; he said that he was fascinated by what he called the flexibility and informality that he saw being displayed. He continued that this seemed to him to be much better than the kind of music where everything is determined in advance, because

> such music can never respond to what happens in its environment. Some music sounds bad in certain halls and better in others, sure. You can compose according to the space in which you know the music will be played. But the flexibility with which improvised music can respond to its environment goes far beyond that.
>
> *(Mengelberg 1992)*

Mengelberg and Han Bennink, the two founders of the ICP who were still part of the group during my fieldwork, have each compared improvisation to scenes from everyday life. Mengelberg has compared it to buying a train ticket: nobody thinks about what they are going to say in such an everyday conversation, but despite this lack of preparation these exchanges are usually successful (Andriessen 1996, 18). Bennink has compared it to crossing a busy street, where you have to pay constant attention and be able to respond as quickly as possible (Challenge Records 2012). The differences between these two comparisons indicate the stylistic differences between the two musicians. The differences between their descriptions and the usual accounts of improvisation are more striking. Neither

seems to equate improvisation with a sense of personal expression; indeed, both of the scenes sketched would be rather awkward moments for personal expression. Neither also seems to value spontaneity: Mengelberg's example locates spontaneity in the most banal experiences, while in Bennink's case spontaneity is not so much a matter of joyous inspiration but a matter of responsiveness that could mean life or death. Neither scene, finally, depicts a situation of unbounded freedom, but of finding oneself in a situation that is already inhabited by social structures and material surroundings that one has to learn to deal with. This is not to say that expression, spontaneity, or even freedom do not have a place in the practice of the ICP. It does, however, suggest that improvisation has a very different significance for these Dutch improvisers.

In both definitions, and in the practice of the ICP Orchestra more generally, the improvisation is mainly defined in terms of responding to one's environment. From this perspective, it does not matter so much that the scene that Mengelberg describes, when watched without a child's naiveté, was probably prepared by Ellington, and may even have been a regular feature. This does not diminish the flexibility that Mengelberg perceived in this performance; indeed we might say that Ellington prepared just enough to make this flexibility possible, to construct part of the environment to which the musicians were responding. We might even say that Mengelberg, when describing his fascination for Ellington, is speaking as a composer rather than an improviser, as somebody who actually faces the choice whether to write a piece that determines everything in advance or that is able to more flexibly respond to its environment.

In its performances, the ICP uses an extensive repertoire of written material, most of it composed or arranged by Mengelberg. The orchestra is often praised for its ability to combine anarchic free improvisation with more traditional jazz drawing on the modernist bop of Herbie Nichols and Thelonious Monk as well as the big band repertoire of Duke Ellington and even older Dixieland-style jazz. Like Ellington's band, the ICP Orchestra is also frequently marked out for its combination of strong soloists (many of whom lead their own groups) and a highly polished group sound, a contrast that is made stronger because of the even wider range between entirely written-out compositions and entirely free improvisation in their concerts. Others comment on the influence of twentieth-century chamber music and other forms of western art music (Kurt Weill, Charles Ives) on their improvised and composed music, and yet others highlight the theatricality, humour, and absurdism that form an important aspect of their performances.

What personally drew me to the ICP, and what is perhaps most frequently emphasized by reviewers and audience members alike, is the way that the group can transition from a rambunctious collective improvisation to a brilliantly arranged big band tune in the blink of an eye, and then on to a soft piece of chamber music, without these transitions feeling forced or incoherent. Watching and listening more closely, you start to see that the musicians use cues and gestures, but you also wonder what is on their music stands apart from lead sheets

and perhaps some written-out compositions. When hearing the group perform more often, you start to realize that the rambunctious improvisation contains pre-composed elements, that some of the background riffs in the big band tune are improvised on the spot, and that in fact the chamber music piece is completely improvised. ICP performances are exciting, because the agreements on the basis of which the musicians interact with each other are constantly up for discussion; even a moment of "free" improvisation is shown to have certain boundaries and conditions when it is interrupted by a musician who wishes to take the performance in a new direction. This establishes a strong emphasis on the actual practice of making music, and an ICP performance is about more than just the sound; this is also why their performances are often called theatrical. Sitting in the audience at so many ICP concerts over the last couple of years, I frequently heard audience members wonder aloud whether the music at that point was composed or improvised. This uncertainty creates a sense of magic, as it makes you wonder where this music is really coming from.

Usually it was both, and neither. As I discovered in the course of my fieldwork, the pieces that Mengelberg wrote for the group are not just vehicles for improvisation, but actually have a significant impact on the nature of improvisation as practised in ICP performance. They include lead sheets and fully composed pieces, but also game pieces, graphic scores, as well as other kinds of indeterminate and mobile forms. In addition, the ICP always includes some freely improvised sections in its concerts, and regularly features a conducted improvisation. Moreover, the musicians were often improvising precisely by playing notated material, not just in the sense that performers are always improvising to some degree because notation cannot specify everything, but actually radically reinterpreting written music in the course of an improvisation, or using one piece to interrupt another. In this approach, scores function not as "models" or "frameworks" but as sources of creativity for the musicians. This raises questions about the nature of composition, improvisation, and especially about the role of these pieces in the social and creative interactions that characterize their performances. Such questions interrogate our common assumptions about intentionality, agency, and creativity in performance.

This book is the first history of the Instant Composers Pool as well as the first in-depth study of the group's music. However, it does not aim to be a holistic description of the group's history or indeed of its music. Although I try to paint as rich and complete a picture as possible, my concern is specifically to understand the history and practice of "instant composition" as found in the ICP Orchestra. The first part describes the historical emergence of the concept in an encounter between various musical styles and historical developments, including jazz, experimental music, and the 1960s counterculture. The second part forms an ethnographic description of the performance practice of the ICP Orchestra, and formulates a theory of creativity in musical performance that can accommodate the interpenetration of composed and improvised material that characterizes their work.

"Beyond jazz" in this regard should emphatically not be understood as "outside of jazz". Rather, it signifies an in-between space where the ICP positioned itself in relation to jazz, experimental music, contemporary composition, and performance art, but not squarely within any of those categories. Inherent to this positioning was also a reconsideration of the meaning and significance of composition, improvisation, and the relation between notation and performance. This in-between position, then, also applies to their performance practice of "instant composition", in which improvisation is defined as itself a kind of composition, and perhaps more importantly, the use of notated repertoire is by no means opposed to its improvisatory character. In this regard, a lot of "jazz" is in fact "beyond jazz", Duke Ellington himself being a prime example. I hope therefore that both my historical approach and my arguments about creativity in performance will be relevant to the study of other figures and groups in the jazz tradition, beyond it, and outside it.

The Instant Composers Pool

The Instant Composers Pool was founded in Amsterdam in 1967 by Misha Mengelberg, Han Bennink, and Willem Breuker. Mengelberg and Bennink had been playing together since around 1960, when Mengelberg was studying composition and music theory at the Conservatory of The Hague, and Han Bennink was attending art school at the Kunstnijverheidsschool. Mengelberg comes from a classical music family; his great-uncle Willem Mengelberg was a world-famous conductor, his father Karel was a composer and conductor as well, and his mother Rahel Draber was a professional harpist. Bennink comes from a decidedly more working-class background, but his father was also a professional musician. Rein Bennink played drums, percussion, and reeds, spending most of his career playing swing and big band music for Dutch radio and television. Mengelberg and Bennink had a successful quartet with alto saxophonist Piet Noordijk and a range of different bass players, and were one of the primary groups to support visiting American musicians, most notably Eric Dolphy, which resulted in his *Last Date*, which was Dolphy's last released recording before he died shortly after. Breuker came from a working-class family without any professional musical activity. He developed a taste for jazz, free improvisation, and experimental music from a very early age, and was a rising star in the Dutch jazz scene, playing freely improvised music on saxophone and bass clarinet in various formations, but also writing his own experimental compositions. He joined Mengelberg and Bennink in 1966 and the ICP was founded the next year. The ICP became a cornerstone of improvised music in the Netherlands, as it was emerging in the late 1960s. Parallel developments were happening in the rest of Europe, where improvising musicians were asserting their individuality and independence, both from their African-American free jazz paragons and also from the musical cultures and infrastructures in Europe as they organized their own institutions, festivals, and record labels.

The ICP was founded at a time of strong political engagement in the Dutch musical avant-garde, where musicians were fighting for democratization in musical practice not just in improvised music but also, and perhaps even more so, in contemporary composed music. In fact, improvised, experimental, and composed music significantly overlap in Dutch post-war art music, and the ICP is a case in point, as we shall see throughout Part I. Mengelberg is a conservatory-trained composer, and was part of a group of activist composers (also including Louis Andriessen, Peter Schat, Reinbert de Leeuw, and Jan van Vlijmen) organizing various demonstrations and political concerts as well as taskforces and public debates to address not only the political content of music, but also the role of music in the broader society of the Netherlands. They mobilized many other musicians, including free improvisers like Breuker but also early music specialists like Frans Brüggen, in their attempts to reconsider the status quo in classical music performance. Mengelberg had been looking for alternative musical practices since the early 1960s, initially experimenting with performance art and briefly joining the Fluxus movement, where he got the idea of "instant composition" from Tomas Schmit's "instant poetry". Mengelberg's compositional output has primarily been written for the ICP. The ICP—and perhaps European improvised music more generally—should thus not only be understood as a part of jazz history, but certainly also as one of the ways in which contemporary composers found ways of operating outside of the scope of traditional concert practice.

The ICP was initially set up partly as a political initiative: a grassroots organization defending the rights of improvising musicians, a platform for people to find like-minded musicians, and an independent record label. As a "pool", the idea was that an ICP concert could feature any number of musicians associated with the group. After Breuker left the group in 1973, Mengelberg became the unofficial leader of the ICP: he organized regular rehearsals for musicians to learn various improvisation techniques, he wrote a diverse and substantial repertoire of compositions for the group to play, and created musical theatre pieces, played by the ICP musicians and a host of actors. Meanwhile, although there were still various groups playing under the ICP banner and recording on the label, in the late 1970s the group started to revolve more and more around a standardized line-up of musicians, first known as the ICP Tentet and later as the ICP Orchestra, which is how it still performed during my fieldwork in a line-up that has not drastically changed since the early 1990s (Figure 0.1).

The rhythm section of the group consists of Misha Mengelberg on piano, Han Bennink on drums, and Ernst Glerum on bass. Mengelberg has often acknowledged the influence of Thelonious Monk on his piano playing, and his influence has also been noted by others (Arndt 2002). However, his style is much more diverse, containing aspects of not only Monk, Ellington, and Herbie Nichols (another important influence), but also Cecil Taylor and Romantic piano repertoire; it emphasizes motivic development and contrapuntal harmonic textures, and really sounds like somebody developing their compositional thought as they

FIGURE 0.1 The ICP Orchestra line-up during my fieldwork. From left to right: Ernst Glerum (double bass), Tristan Honsinger (cello), Misha Mengelberg (piano), Michael Moore (alto saxophone, clarinet), Mary Oliver (violin, viola), Han Bennink (drums), Ab Baars (tenor saxophone, clarinet), Wolter Wierbos (trombone), Tobias Delius (tenor saxophone, clarinet), Thomas Heberer (trumpet)

Photograph by Francesca Patella

are playing—including all the hesitations and clumsy ideas. Bennink, especially compared to Mengelberg's aloofness, is a force of nature. A big man with a big stage presence, he has a remarkable energy, and is stylistically incomparable to anyone else. Players often criticized him for being too loud, and particularly his 1970s recordings contain some outright violence on the drums. In that period, he was more of a multi-instrumentalist than a drummer, playing saxophones, conches, trombone, trumpet, violin, and all sorts of percussion instruments. He has always been an excellent time drummer, however, and relates more to drummers from the 1950s and before than to other avant-gardists. Since then, moreover, he has returned to the standard drum kit (with the occasional extra prop) and during my fieldwork he frequently played concerts on only a snare drum. Glerum, out of the whole group, is perhaps the least "avant-gardistic". He has played in a number of contemporary music ensembles, and outside of the ICP mostly plays in straight-ahead jazz groups. In between Mengelberg's eccentricity and Bennink's abandon, he truly forms the musical anchor of the group. His tone is sophisticated yet straight to the point, and besides his walking bass technique he frequently makes use of his classically trained bowing techniques.

Glerum plays a double role, in that sense, as he is also part of the string section, together with Tristan Honsinger on cello and Mary Oliver on violin and viola. Like Glerum, Honsinger and Oliver have a classical education on their instrument. Honsinger attended the New England Conservatory and later attended Peabody, but moved to the Netherlands after hearing ICP records in the early 1970s. In Europe, he became involved not only in improvised music, but in improvised dance, mime, and theatre. His role in the ICP is not just that of a musician, but as he himself put it, to do "all the other stuff", frequently leading conducted improvisations, reciting texts, and singing. Oliver started out pursuing a career in contemporary music, premiering pieces by Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, and Brian Ferneyhough, before moving to improvised music. She did a PhD on improvisation in San Diego with George Lewis, and moved to the Netherlands in 1995, joining the ICP shortly after.

The brass section consists of Wolter Wierbos on trombone, Tobias Delius and Ab Baars on tenor saxophone and clarinet, Michael Moore on alto saxophone and clarinet, and Thomas Heberer on trumpet and cornet. Wierbos, like Bennink, combines virtuosic extended techniques, including multiphonics and split tones, with very traditional playing styles. He is particularly competent with the plunger mute, and often plays the melody line on more lyrical melodic pieces in the ICP repertoire. Delius is the most recent addition to the group, having joined in 2003. He greatly admires Sonny Rollins, and has something of his warm yet sharp tone. His playing is upbeat and has a percussive edge, but is mostly characterized by his snake-like melodies that twist irregularly through different registers with a broad range of dynamics within a single phrase. Baars is a master of extended techniques, both on the saxophone and on clarinet, for which he took lessons with John Carter. He has an extensive repertoire of cross-fingered notes and multiphonics, and a very abstract soloing style, using extreme timbres, but his playing also has a fragility that makes it emotionally very direct. Moore studied at the New England Conservatory in the 1970s, when Gunther Schuller, George Russell, Jaki Byard, and Joe Allard were teaching there. Shortly after graduating, he settled in Amsterdam in 1982. He is best known for his warm, lyrical tone, at times reminiscent of West Coast cool jazz musicians, and is in that sense perhaps the most "straight-ahead" player of the horns, although he is also capable of derailing the musical situation with an understated sense of humour and subversion. Heberer grew up in Germany, where he played with Manfred Schoof and Alexander von Schlippenbach, and joined the ICP in the early 1990s. He is particularly skilled at circular breathing, having recorded possibly the first continuously played solo LP, but his solos also frequently use a more classical tone, with big vibrato and laidback tempos in a style that seems to recall early jazz trumpet and cornet players.

Guus Janssen, finally, was not really a member of the ICP during my fieldwork, but frequently played with the group, sometimes sitting in for Mengelberg who was suffering from ill health. He became the standard pianist of the group when

Mengelberg stopped performing. He was trained as a concert pianist but chose to pursue a dual career as an improviser and a composer. His Septet in the 1970s featured many of today's ICP musicians, and like Mengelberg he has written much material aiming to combine compositional and improvisatory elements. His playing is influenced, apart from his classical education, by Lennie Tristano and boogie-woogie. He also plays harpsichord, organ, and a range of other keyboard instruments.

Beyond Jazz History

The history of jazz in Europe remains a somewhat marginalized part of jazz history, although this is fortunately changing both in jazz criticism and academic jazz studies. What is clear, however, is that concepts of a "European identity" in jazz obscure more than they clarify; they fail to account for the diversity of jazz in both Europe and in North America, and by distinguishing these traditions they also overlook the complex interrelations between musicians from these two continents. Moreover, such constructions of different national or continental identities in jazz disregard how the identity of jazz itself was frequently at stake in the intercultural exchanges that form part of this history.

As I said, "beyond jazz" is not the same as "outside of jazz", but rather signifies an in-between space, an interstitial moment from which to appreciate the contingencies of genre formation.[1] The ICP shows some strong similarities to the Art Ensemble of Chicago and other groups and musicians associated with the AACM active from the mid-1960s onwards, who can be said to be beyond jazz in quite a similar way, occupying a boundary position between jazz, experimental music, and performance art, and looking for ways to combine compositional and improvisatory practices (Lewis 2008; Steinbeck 2017). However, these musical similarities should not be over-emphasized, as the musicians of the ICP and those of the AACM were responding to very different environments, including lived realities of race, class, and culture. Whereas AACM musicians were struggling not to be pigeonholed as jazz musicians and to be taken seriously as composers and experimental musicians, the ICP was trying to get away from a restrictive environment of contemporary composition through free improvisation, while also realizing its own cultural distance from the jazz tradition.

The practice of the ICP cannot be fully understood without also taking into account their position vis-à-vis contemporary composition, experimental music, and performance art. Instant composition was the result of a complex negotiation of such cultural influences. In the first part of this book I trace its genealogy. I describe Mengelberg's early experiments with performance art, the relation of the ICP musicians and Dutch improvised music to American jazz, and the foundation and early years of the ICP in the context of the political activism in contemporary composed and improvised avant-garde music. Throughout these three chapters, there are constantly recurring negotiations of the idea of music as

a social practice, of the meaning of improvisation, and of the relation between these two questions. The history of the ICP, and indeed the history of European improvised music more generally, shows how musicians have practically negotiated this entanglement of musical practice with the boundaries of genre, which in turn are bound up with cultural and national identities. For the ICP, this negotiation meant a reconsideration of the significance of improvisation as a social practice, the political efficacy of music performance, and indeed the meaning and value of improvisation itself. These were questions to which musicians of the ICP did not have an unambiguous answer.

As we shall see, the musicians of the ICP often ended up choosing music over direct political action, and indeed frequently dismissed descriptions of their music as a vehicle for political ideas. This is not to say that their music had nothing to do with politics. Of course, the very distinction between music and politics is a political one—something of which these musicians were all too aware. But it is to suggest that the very association of avant-garde improvisation with political subversion is something that needs to be reconsidered in the light of a more global view on different forms of improvisation. As the chapters in Part I will make clear, the ICP was an active part of the emerging counterculture, and this movement had important influences on their approach to music. However, this "counterculture" was by no means uniform, and neither was its influence on these musicians.

In this regard, the first part of this book does not simply form a "context" to the ICP's musical practice in the sense that it describes concentric circles around a single point which is the "text" of the ICP's performance practice. Such a metaphor cannot account for the variety of different contexts in which the ICP participated, and neither can it account for the dynamic, ambiguous, and variable connections between these contexts and the ICP musicians. The debates about groupings and inclusion that will recur in Part I—who was or wasn't "part of" Fluxus, or the jazz tradition, for instance—also suggest that contexts are not quite so easily delineated. In this sense, the very idea of "context" includes a degree of unwarranted generalization, something that Bruno Latour captures well in his description of context as "simply a way of stopping the description when you are too tired or too lazy to go on" (Latour 2005, 148). Of course, all writers and readers will at some point become too tired or too lazy, and some such generalizations are necessary for successful description. However, the three chapters of Part I will focus on the interstices and intersections between contexts to show how these categories are in constant formation, and how particular actions and events may resonate at different registers in society.

The practice of the ICP was developed in a reciprocal connection to these processes of formation. As an alternative to the metaphor of text and context, Georgina Born has proposed a topology of intersecting planes of social mediation (Born 2011). She suggests four such planes: musical practice with its creative interaction and division of labour; the imagined communities of audiences and

subcultures; social identities like class, age, race, and gender; and finally the musical markets, institutions, and organizations. This approach takes as a given that the emergence of musical practices, identities, and institutions cannot be studied in isolation, but has to take into account "their complex interrelation and imbrication with contiguous musical systems existing in the same or proximate physical, geographical, historical or social space" (Born 2010a, 209). The advantage of this topology is that it makes clear the multiple levels at which musical behaviour and experience are socially mediated, thus avoiding the uniformity of the idea of "context", while identifying some of the specific dimensions in which such mediations may take place.

Born refers to these planes as making up the musical "assemblage", a term drawn from the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who also use the term "planes" (Deleuze and Guattari 2013). Such assemblage theory is an increasingly common way to approach the concept of genre, not as uniform and stable musical category, but as an unstable, constantly redefined, and heterogeneous process of categorization, that moreover concerns not just musical qualities but also matters of identity and social behaviour (see for instance Brackett 2016). In 1991, Scott DeVeaux wrote an important critique of jazz historiography, questioning the validity of the overarching category of "jazz" when it implies "the idea that musics as diverse as those of King Oliver and the Art Ensemble of Chicago are in some fundamental sense *the same music*" (DeVeaux 1991, 530–531). Pointing out that jazz history is in fact filled with disputes about whether or not new, old, or revivalist styles could be called "jazz", DeVeaux argues for a way of writing history that does not pass over such debates in favour of all-encompassing categories, but attends to such moments of disagreement precisely to show the music's diversity and constantly shifting boundaries. Although DeVeaux did not use the term "assemblage", it is a useful concept to achieve such kinds of genre descriptions where the process of categorization does not presume an analytic totality but rather proceeds by negotiating difference. His argument inspired various jazz scholars to document how such genre boundaries have been used by musicians to claim positions of power, to cultivate outsider status, or to find new expression of racial or national identity (Gennari 2007; Ake 2002; Ake, Garrett, and Goldmark 2012).

Similar arguments in other genres have recently been made by Eric Drott, who describes genres as "acts of assemblage", and by Benjamin Piekut in his work on experimental music (Drott 2013, 10; Piekut 2011). Both draw explicitly on Latour's Actor-Network Theory (itself deeply influenced by Deleuze and Guattari), specifically his statement that "if you stop making and remaking groups, you stop having groups" (Latour 2005, 35). This view emphasizes the work involved in constructing, stabilizing, and maintaining such categories. As Piekut argues, genre is not "something that magically coalesced around shared [musical] qualities", but "a network, arranged, and fabricated through the hard

work of composers, critics, scholars, performers, audiences, students, and a host of other elements including texts, scores, articles, curricula, patronage systems, and discourses of race, gender, class and nation" (Piekut 2011, 19). Piekut's work on experimentalism is particularly relevant to the history of the ICP, as experimental music has played a large part in the development of the group and its approach to performance. His argument further develops the work of George Lewis, who interrogated the idea of American experimentalism as a distinct genre, particularly the way in which it is implicitly distinguished from the African-American avant-garde (Lewis 1996). The music of various musicians and groups associated with the Chicago-based AACM, for instance, is clearly closely related to experimental music, but by virtue of its racial identity such practices were often designated as a form of "jazz". Lewis' argument centres on different definitions of "improvisation", and how these conceptualize the role of history, identity, and agency in performance, questions that are intimately bound up with racial prejudice. Thus, Lewis shows how musical performance is, as Nicholas Cook would say, "not just a *metaphor* but a *metonym* of social interaction" (Cook 2012, 196); not just a separate sphere in which broader social issues are reflected, but a place where these issues are actively negotiated.

Downbeat critic Kevin Whitehead, the author of the primary publication on Amsterdam's jazz and improvised music scene, in which the ICP plays a major role, calls this genre "New Dutch Swing" (Whitehead 1998), a term that has since stuck with some critics. On the cover of his book, he sums up the emergence of this genre as "jazz + classical music + absurdism = *New Dutch Swing*". Although he identifies important influences—indeed, in a different order they can be mapped on the three chapters of the first part of this book—such a formula implies a logical necessity that disregards the contingency and heterogeneity of this constant negotiation over boundaries. It is this contingent nature of the emergence of musical genres and practices that the first part of this book aims to portray. In these chapters, we will see repeated intersections between the various planes that Born identifies. In the first chapter, which describes Mengelberg's connection to Fluxus performance art and the ICP's ambivalent relation to the emergent counterculture which used similar performative means in their ludic protest, these intersections revolve around the question of the institution of "art" and whether artistic aims are at all compatible with the democratizing movements of the 1960s. Chapter 2 describes the relation of the ICP to American free jazz, and Dutch musicians' responses to claims of cultural ownership by some African-American musicians, while there was already a debate within the Dutch jazz community about the legitimacy of free improvisation vis-à-vis more traditional jazz. This chapter directly addresses the previously mentioned debates about genre and processes of legitimization and authentication. The third chapter revisits the first's emphasis on politics, but through a focus on the political activism of contemporary composers, improvisers, and other musicians in the 1960s and 1970s. It specifically discusses the theme of organization, describing

the foundation of the ICP in the context of activism for the reorganization of the musical infrastructure and the foundation of various other grassroots ensembles and organizations, as well as debates about the democratic organization of musical practice itself.

The three chapters may be seen as tracing "lines" along which the different planes of social mediation repeatedly intersect. For Deleuze and Guattari, part of the dynamics of assemblages is described by "lines of flight", which generate transformation and development, destabilizing and subverting the original status quo and thereby creating novel assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 238–242). Such talk of "lines" may seem to go against their championing of chaotic and heterogeneous "rhizomatic" connections instead of "linear" roots (4–5). Indeed, it may seem antithetical to my description of Part I as a "genealogy" of instant composition, of which Michel Foucault argues the point is to subvert teleological historical narratives as it traces how practices, values, and concepts emerge not by any design or historical necessity but rather through chance, irony, discontinuity, and "haphazard conflicts" (Foucault 1977, 154). In describing the historical developments in Part I as "lines", I may seem to invoke precisely such a "linear" teleological narrative. Anthropologist Tim Ingold, elaborating on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, argues, however, that in such an understanding, lines are only a "sequence of dots", "succession of instants in which nothing moves or grows", while real lines are better thought of as a process, in a way that attends precisely to the erratic, unexpected variation through which they are formed (Ingold 2007, 3). In following these erratic lines in the emergence of instant composition, my aim is precisely to describe these processes of cultural and transnational musical encounter and exchange as what Steven Feld, describing jazz in Ghana, describes as "performances and imaginaries of connectedness, detoured and leaped-over pathways storied and travelled from X to Y by way of Z [. . .] These performances of connectedness are necessarily erratic, uneven, and ironic" (Feld 2012, 49).

Beyond Jazz Practice

In the second part of the book, I describe the results of ethnographic fieldwork conducted with the ICP Orchestra, exploring its approach to performance, composition, and improvisation in depth by presenting material drawn from interviews and observations. The ICP's practice draws particular attention to their music as a form of social practice, so my description of their music will focus primarily on this aspect. Although they have made several excellent recordings throughout their history, I will not go into much detail on any of them. Recordings are of very limited use in describing the creative interactions of musicians on stage—although I am certain that readers will notice new things about their recordings after reading this book.[2] Nor will I discuss the musical styles of the musicians or, in the case of Mengelberg's writing for the group, discuss his harmonic language or his talent for making arrangements. All of these