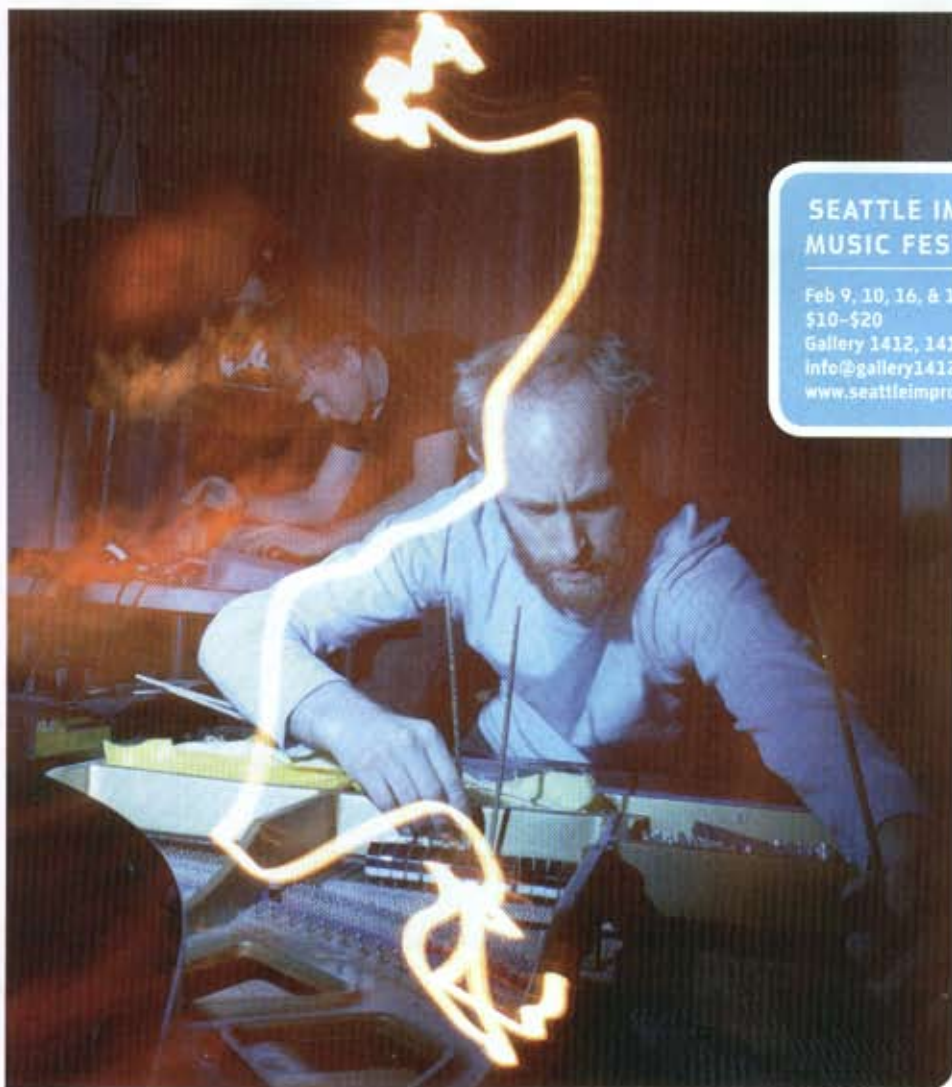


CONVERSATION PIECES

The Seattle Improvised Music Festival talks in tunes.



SEATTLE IMPROVISED MUSIC FESTIVAL

Feb 9, 10, 16, & 17
\$10-\$20
Gallery 1412, 1412 18th Ave E
info@gallery1412.org
www.seattleimprovisedmusic.com

percussionists scattering abstract rhythms over the narrative tones of reed instruments.

"Improvising with other people is, for me, another way to communicate," says Andrea Neumann.

She plays the aforementioned disembodied innards of a piano—plus or minus a few knobs and switches—and will travel from Berlin to "talk" with fellow artists.

"Truly improvised music develops through a sort of

mixing of personalities, experiences, and individual approaches to sound-making," adds Seattle-based Jason Anderson, who might play anything from an electronic sampler to a turntable. As one musician bleats out a few atonal passages, another answers by listening silently, and the next responds by tapping out a harmonic phrase or a quick series of anxious notes. "The specific moment the music happens affects the way it's shaped," Anderson explains. "The amount of time that passes, the presence of the audience—all of these are factors that go into the development of the music. It won't always sound the same. It's all about listening."

It can seem chaotic—which means that audiences can't merely kick back to tune in. Listening, for both performer and observer, is active and not always easy. "We are not necessarily trying to play something pleasing to the ear," Anderson concedes. But, he says, there's built-in time for reflection to make the clatter surprisingly digestible: "Silence is an instrument itself."

Nate Wooley is a New Jersey-based trumpeter whose solo work is noticeably imbued with quiet. "I tend to think of silence as a change in density," he notes. "Silence is more like a transparent density." At the festival, tilt your ear toward the discussion in those moments when the frequency shifts—you'll hear these conversationalists really getting to know each other.

—Laura Cassidy

For musicians, a key benefit of any festival experience is the opportunity to share the stage with their contemporaries. Locals open for national acts, one style warms up for another, and ideas about riffs, structure, and meaning cross-pollinate. For musicians who favor off-the-cuff explorations, that opportunity means even more. The 22nd annual Seattle Improvised Music Festival—the

longest-running gathering of its kind in North America—allows for a compositional conversation that depends on spontaneity.

Pianist and SIMF curator Gust Burns has put together both like-minded and aesthetically opposed duos, trios, and quartets from all over the map. A Northwest horn player may blast mightily while a German woman drags her bow across the strings of a dismantled piano. You may hear