

MEETING

WITH

THE
BRIDGE

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The Bridge intends to form a network for exchange, production, and diffusion, to build a transatlantic bridge that will be crossed on a regular basis by French and American musicians as part of collaborative projects. And, in addition to the scheduled projects, encourage meetings and relationships between creative musicians and perpetuate them. In other words : to give them the times and spaces to join and rejoin on both sides of the ocean and to deepen their exchanges.

www.acrossthebridges.org

For *The Bridge* :

Rob Mazurek
Julien Desprez
Alexandre Pierrepont

Le Périscope, Lyon
Thursday, October 6th 2016

PaaLabRes (Pratiques Artistiques en Actes, Laboratoire de Recherches or Artistic Practices in Acts, Research Laboratory) is a musician's collective in existence since 2011, which attempts to define the outlines of artistic research led by the practitioners themselves, concerning artistic expressions that do not result in definitive works.

www.paalabres.org

For *PaaLabRes* :

Gilles Laval
Nicolas Sidoroff
Jean-Charles François

This encounter was organized at Alexandre Pierrepont's suggestion, taking the opportunity of the concert of The Bridge 4 ensemble at the Périscope (The Bridge 4 : Mwata Bowden, Julien Desprez, Matt Lux, Rob Mazurek and Mathieu Sourisseau.)

Thank you to the Périscope for having made this encounter possible.
<http://periscope-lyon.com/>

Introduction – Presentations

Julien Desprez : And you what do you do ? Alexandre told us that you are scientific...

Nicolas Sidoroff : (laugh) Yeah!

Rob Mazurek : A scientific percussion, a scientific trumpet, a scientific guitar, ...

Nicolas S. : Very logical...

Rob M. : You are scholars of improvisation ? What kind of work do you do? Is it theory or practice?

Jean-Charles François: Also pedagogy.

Rob M. : Nice!

Jean-Charles F. : We are a collective, which means that there are several groups...

Julien D. : What is the name of the collective?

Jean-Charles F. : PaaLabRes (with a double “aa”, p a a l a b r e s)

Julien D. : Paaaalaabres...

Rob M. : Is it French?

Jean-Charles F. : Pratiques Artistiques en Actes, Laboratoire de Recherche (Artistic Practices in Acts, Research Laboratory).

Rob M. : And you’ve known Alexander for a long time?

Jean-Charles F. : No, we met in Paris in March, and then I read his book, which is a very, very, good book.

Rob M. : And you, you write books?

Jean-Charles F. : Yes.

Nicolas S. : He writes books, he writes articles... We try to do research in parallel to academic lines, some kind of different ways of doing research, of publishing, and different ways of presenting the products of the research.

Rob M. : Alternative ways of sharing the circulation rather than being too academic about it?

Nicolas S. : Yeah. That’s why we laughed when you said “scientific”.

Julien D. : I was just trying to know what you do (laugh).

Rob M. : What do you want to know about us?

Jean-Charles F. : We would like to know about *The Bridge*.

Alexandre P. : We can talk about *The Bridge*, and I can talk about it. Not that I do not want them to talk about it...

Julien D. : This *Bridge* [the ensemble *Bridge 4*]...

Alexandre P. : Oh ! This *Bridge* yes! I am sorry. They wanted to talk about this *Bridge 4* and about improvisation, not just only about *The Bridge*.

Bridge 4 Ensemble

Rob M. : The *Bridge* is an amazing adventure; I mean not many people in the world have done this on that level, as Alexandre has. There are twelve groups.

Julien D. : Twelve bands, twelve “Bridges”. In three years.

Rob M. : Twelve working units that are out there, and the possibility of mixing them...

Julien D. : We met with *The Bridge* and afterwards we came across each other in different places in the world like in Italia... The idea is to make connections between people.

Rob M. : Yeah ! It is an interesting way of learning about someone else’s playing. It’s special you know. And soon after, when we did that duo concert in Paris, we have been part of each other’s music. The Web of *The Bridge* is expanding, you know, and contracting. All these activities happening are really relative towards a certain sound, or the opposite of a certain sound. Then you want to try that. Meaning you want to play with something you are totally comfortable with, but sometimes you want to play with the person you are the most uncomfortable playing with, and then, you know, socially I think, if everyone were doing this in the world, there would be no war.

Jean-Charles F. : If you take the worst person to play with...

Rob M. : It is not the worst person!

Jean-Charles F. : ...there would be only war!

Rob M. : Or the opposite. (Laugh) Or the most pacific war!

Nicolas S. : And when we look through the *Bridge* site (www.acrossthebridges.org), we are not very sure how you met and if you chose yourselves or not.

Julien D. : I think it is different for each band. For this one, I guess, Rob, you made some suggestions to Alexandre to do a *Bridge*, or something like that, or we met as a duo in France...

Rob M. : Yes, I said I’d like to do something and then we did the duo first... I said I would like to work with you, probably, and then Alexandre had this idea of strings, you know, having two basses and guitar, with two horns: a baritone saxophone and a clarinet having a wide range of possibilities, and the cornet having a minimal range... It seemed an interesting combination that I never tried before. I might never have thought of doing a band like this. So I found that it was good to be part of the act of something I had never done before. Because I am so used to making

my own choice. I am very particular as to with whom I want to play my music, and I am not sure that it's always the right thing, you know what I mean.

Julien D. : Yeah, but I can tell you that the orchestration of the band is interesting. And, I guess, also for us the sound we do is pretty new. I am still surprised by all the sounds people in the group do and what they propose, and about the differences of musical cultures too, I guess.

Gilles Laval: You are the composers for this ensemble?

Rob M. : It is all improvised.

Julien D. : Yeah, there is no composer or leader...

Rob M. : No leader.

Gilles L. : How do you work during rehearsals?

Julien D. : No rehearsals, we just play. We only meet each other when we play...

Rob M. : We did the original shows in Chicago – how many shows did we play? Five ? Ten ?

Julien D. : Under ten, may be eight.

Rob M. : Eight shows in Chicago...

Nicolas S. : When ?

Rob M. : Last year.

Alexandre P. : The year before.

Julien D. : Yes two years ago, 2014.

Rob M. : And it is how we started this project [the Bridge 4 ensemble]... And even if the Chicago shows were trying to figure out what this thing is, initially all was working from the first note. But I think we realize that it feels like yesterday that we just did that.

Julien D. : It's really funny; the two or three first gigs in Chicago were good. And even if we were still looking for something, like he said, we knew that something was possible.

Rob M. : And really, I think, it was a cultural encounter and a way of perceiving each other too...

Julien D. : Exactly !

Rob M. : And we had to, like, learn, you know... or unlearn. Unlearn your own, may be, biases or something, and learn somebody else's working things. So, because it is a pretty diverse group, you know, as far as what each of us do, have done, and are thinking of doing. But, at the same time, the group is remarkably similar and, I am sure, very particular in its ways as well.

Julien D. : Gigs after gigs, things became easier and easier. I remember, the last gig [in Chicago] was really fucking great, very nice. And then we had a break for two years, and when we started to play again last Saturday in Toulouse, everything was still natural, it was as if inscribed in a continuity.

Rob M. : Exactly like the day of our last show in Chicago...

Julien D. : Yeah, we left the stuff during two years, but we found ourselves at the same place.

Improvisation and Recording

Rob M. : And we worked on one of the two recordings we made, we used it to make the CD that just came out. So we were thinking about that a little bit for the last three or four months.

Nicolas S. : You did the recordings in Chicago?

Julien D. : We recorded the first gig and...

Alexandre P. : It was a studio session.

Julien D. : ... and a studio session.

Rob M. : All right, a studio session.

Nicolas S. : In Chicago, at the time of the first gigs?

Julien D. : Yeah.

Rob M. : Yeah. Same time and same musicians. So it's amazing to continue here.

Nicolas S. : How do you prepare? What's happening when you do the duo? Is it a different situation? And why this duo, how did it occur?

Rob M. : I think we both like to make noise (laugh). May be it was the initial attraction. Of course it is much more than that, but – I think it's that, not having any inhibition to do it. We are not feeling that we need permission to do that, you know, I do not know if it's the way to put it. I don't ever want to be in a situation of walking on egg shells, you know what I mean? Or to play with someone who wants to control everything, it's a drag! So it is nice to play in a situation where you feel free.

Julien D. : Yeah. Amazing. It's a kind of stage of being ready actually.

Rob M. : Relaxed and ready, and also have enough respect for each of the musicians, to be on your toes at every moment. We make intentional silences. We never stop. And that's what I like about this group, particularly. Because some people will just stop just to stop without listening to other players. It is impossible, you know! You stop if you want to put an intentional silence in there, or not, at least for me. I don't know if it's like that for you, but that's how I feel. It's a collective process that improvises us.

Gilles L. : What about recording studio improvisation ? – For me it is a strange thing – How do you organize this? Because it is very strange to improvise in the studio.

Julien D. : Yeah, it is a bit the same for me, if you improvise with someone and it is not a gig.

Gilles L. : You have the choice in the studio, you want do this or this...

Julien D. : After a recording you have the choice, yeah exactly, you can keep the track as it is, or you could choose to edit it. For me it is the way to go. But, there is no contradiction between improvisation and recording, I guess. It's more something that is part of the process, for me. It's like he is saying, we do not see each other during three and a half years, but it's as if we just have done the recording, and today we play. And the record is not a trace of what we did then, as though we would have been on big stage...

Rob M. : ... elaborate...

Julien D. : ... like creating a new "Rite of Spring", or something like that. It's more something that is part of a process. But after, when you do it, for me, it depends on which process you choose to do it. Like, if you choose the process for recording a pop album, which means that you will be alone in a room with a headphone on your head, to listen to the other guys, I guess, it is not a good process for improvisation. But, if you are still recording, all in the same place, in the same room, this is practically the same situation as in a rehearsal.

Rob M. : That goes back to what I said before, for having ultimate respect for who you are playing with. Because, if you don't, you probably are going to be lazy and you will say to yourself: "I don't know what I am doing here". We have a studio, let's record for nine hours, this week-end, because we can do it, or whatever. Let's have some respect not only for the musicians but for the actual act of improvising.

Nicolas S. : And you did record for nine hours?
(Laughs)

Julien D. : No.

Rob M. : We might have recorded one hour. I think I remember I recorded one hour. I think that's it, man.

Nicolas S. : The recording lasted one hour?

Rob M. : Possibly, I think there is one take, or first take, second take, I don't know.

Nicolas S. : And you take all of it for the CD?

Rob M. : I think we took most of it.

Nicolas S. : From the beginning?

Alexandre P. : From two different sessions. In two different sessions. One is a studio session, one is a live session. So, two long pieces lasting thirty minutes more or less each, one live, and one in a studio.

Julien D. : Concerning recording, it is also an opportunity to record something and then, when you listen to it, it changes your point of view. Playing inside the group,

listening to it outside, is, I guess, very important when you work with a band – the band could play written or improvised music – I really think that this idea is really important. Because this creates a distance with what you do, and actually it's pretty cool, it just makes you think and understand more stuff. For me it's very important. With each band I work with, I like to do that. And I do it sometimes with shitty recordings, not necessarily with nice studio sound, etc. It's a kind of mirror and I like to record stuff and let it go, and listen to it one or two months later, after having completely forgotten what we did. It really changes your perception, you are really outside and you can begin to listen without a kind of ego and just think and reflect on the music.

Rob M. : Because in the act of making it, and in the act of listening to, I am completely against critiquing your music as one is just playing it. I can tell you, with some people, when you get off the thing and they say : « Oh ! And you did a thing, and a thing, and a thing, and a thing... but I thought that the thing over it was like... » What are you thinking man? Are you playing? Are you a critic or are you playing? And some people would say: "But you have to be a critic on stage because – you know – you are critically improvising, you are listening toward what people are doing [in an analytical manner]". But I don't think that's correct, I don't think you can be a critic and a player at the same time. I think it's impossible. A lot of people do it, and it confuses me. You would have to be an octopus, you would need two brains.
(Laughs)

Jean-Charles F. : If you record, you are a critic.

Rob M. : Exactly ! That's what I mean. It's two separated acts!

Julien D. : I have a bit the same feeling as Rob. I like to speak about music, but if you play music, you can speak after or before playing, but when you play, you play.

How sounds are elaborated

Jean-Charles F. : I come from a different tradition, because I am a classically trained musician, and involved with improvisation since 1972.

Rob M. : OK.

Jean-Charles F. : But in a sort of very different way, I have always developed my music through permanent groups.

Julien D. : Non ephemeral.

Jean-Charles F. : There were lots of meeting with other groups, but the focus was really to try to develop a collective sound within a single group. So it is a different situation. Is it possible or not possible to have some coexistence between the two models?

Rob M. : Absolutely ! It is just two different approaches, I mean, we can choose...

Jean-Charles F. : Because the issue, I think, about the scene of improvisation would be: if it's only a question of people meeting on stage with no permanent link, but belonging to a particular world community of improvisers, then it becomes a collective global sound, in which all the concerts might sound the same. How would you go about

differentiating the sounds? And of course my point of view about improvisation has nothing to do with composition: it's not written, not being written at all. It has the same philosophy as what you are talking about: playing without planning, playing without criticizing what you are doing or thinking if it's good or bad, it is the same philosophy. But the big difference would be: how do you collectively co-construct a sound, a sort of collective sound different from all the other groups...?

Julien D. : The improvisation network is certainly a big community, it is a worldwide community...

Jean-Charles F. : Right !

Julien D. : There are people from everywhere and when you play in this kind of network, you meet a lot of people,... I know it's a kind of... Yeah ! It's a kind of permanent group in a way, you know.

Jean-Charles F. : It's also something that I have found more in rock groups: the idea of working together to build a collective sound.

Alexandre P. : I would like to just say this, for me, and it is not about The Bridge: we all know in historical improvised music that Derek Bailey was all about what he was calling ad-hoc ensembles in order to always create surprising surprises for others, and we know that Evan Parker has had a trio with Paul Evans and Alexander von Schlippenbach for more than thirty years – may be forty years now: just the opposite. Well, I will now say something – and it is true also about what they do together [Bridge 4], and from shore to shore – that, as a listener, and this is from the listener perspective here: lots of times, when I listen to all improvising ensembles, people who do not know each other, there can be magic, but they would all stop at some point, because either they are too polite, so it feels like : « Oh ! I should not play solo too long, because, you know, I know that they don't know me, I don't know what they have in mind ». Or, they go for the contradiction too much, because it's about being provocative. You know, with a band, a walk in band, not an ad-hoc ensemble, that gets to know each other – as Julien is used to Rob, and Rob is used to Julien, and with the three others – and not just them, and not just The Bridge, you know, walk in bands, they know that: "OK, if I want to play crazy, noisy, white noise stuff for twenty minutes, you know, it's a strong decision, but they know me, so I'll not be afraid that, if they agree or disagree, like or do not like, they'll find their way, because we have a close relationship, they will deal with that, and with confidence, you know, and I feel free to do it, if I want". That's why, again from the listener's perspective, me, I am impressed sometimes with the magic in a new meeting, but I am much more impressed by walk in bands.

Rob M. : Yeah, for sure.

Alexandre P. : (en français) Tu vois ce que je veux dire, c'est qu'à ce moment-là, tu peux y aller, tu n'as aucune peur, l'autre te connaît, il ne sera peut-être pas content, mais il saura se débrouiller avec ça. [You see what I mean, at that moment, you can go at it, you have no fear, the other knows you, he might not be happy, but he could deal with it.]

Jean-Charles F. : There is a phrase in your book that struck me: that one where Anthony Braxton, talking about Bailey, and about the British scene [during the 60-70s], is saying that they all sound like Webern¹.

Alexandre P. : Yeah, and I think in a way that it was the case at that time, but may be not now, may be not for the new generation.

Jean-Charles F. : And while they were claiming to create the music in an immediate way, and in a sort of spontaneous way, to the ear of Braxton it sounded like Webern. So that is the question, how do you go about so that it would not sound like something else? This is my question.

Rob M. : That's the question. I think about that every day. You have, you know, hundreds of influences, and you hold it down to few influences. It really sticks to you, but then, absolutely, you have to let that stuff go at some point. I was a Miles fanatic when I was younger, in my twenties and stuff, even when I was older. When you are learning, you don't hear too many good fairies that really get that, do you know what I mean? Lester Bowie, Bill Dixon and other people have been important to me. I mean, it is like these people who blame their parents their whole lives: "...because my parents brought me up this way, that's why I am like this, it's fucked up, or not fucked up, or whatever!" But at some point we have to become kind of your own fucking person... For me, at one point, I completely stopped listening to the music I was completely influenced by. I did not listen to Miles for ten years. This is just one example. What I am saying is... for me I had really to break off with that, that whole thing, and really search for the center of your own sound. So many things are referential – these days – I am fifty-one now, and people still write songs. It sounds like so and so, it sounds like so and so, and it sounds like so... I do not know if this happens to the mass, but I ask myself: at what time people are going to stop telling us that Bowie sounded like somebody else? No ! It sounds like fucking Lester Bowie!
(Laughs)

Or Don Cherry, one of my dudes... I mean, there is so much sound to listen to... There is only so much time in a day... So, you have to work on your own, finding your own sound, and in doing so, you are going to keep plugging someone else's sound... It is probably a combination of both. Is it what you were asking?

Jean-Charles F. : This is partly yes...

Rob M. : Influences can be dangerous, as can be dangerous no influences. No influences, no vocabulary.

Julien D. : For me, it's a bit the same: I was really influenced by some guitar players, like Bill Frisell and Marc Ducret, when I was twenty. And at one point, I decided to stop that, a bit like the same as Rob, saying to myself, "OK, stop listening to them". In the first place, I listened to them so much, that I wasn't surprised anymore, so it was something that was a bit boring to listen to, and after, when I was playing, I would just hear my reflexes – like my usual things, you know, directly coming

¹ Anthony Braxton : « British musicians say that their music is free : it is false. I played with them and I heard a synthesis of Webern, pointillism, with a logic of sound mass, and timbral changes. But this is a language and any language has an identity and consists of elements that function together in a certain way. One is never totally free, nor totally prisoner. » (Interview realized in Vienna and Lisbon, July-August 2000). Alexandre Pierrepont *La Nuée, L'ACM : un jeu de société musicale*, Marseille : Parenthèses, 2015, p. 207, note, page 178. Trans. Jean-Charles François

from this one or this one. So I decided to break it, and just work, and when I felt it was a reflex, I just stopped playing, and tried all the time to experiment different stuff, and from time to time something began to appear. And you don't forget what you did during your twenties, because, like it is part of you, of course.

Rob M. : It never leaves you...

Julien D. : But, at one point, you have to take a position with that, you have to say to yourself: "OK, I know that is my influences"; and you can say: "no, that's not true, I never listen to these guys and blablabla..."; but you can say: "yes, I listen to them, him, but, now, more and more I move away from them..."

Rob M. : But then you start building you personal vocabulary...

Julien D. : Yes, exactly !

Improvisation : Immediate Production and Communication? Collective Production ?

Jean-Charles F. : Yes, but it's a sort of a paradox because there is that improvisation idea that claims to be immediate – an immediate communication – ...

Julien D. : But this concept does not work...

Jean-Charles F. : ... and at the same time, individually, there is an enormous work of preparation...

Julien D. : ... Yeah, but for me, this concept, which pretends that improvisation means when you do something, that it's immediate and completely new, it's not true. And after that, I think it is not an interesting point, because, like you said, we all work around something, around the personality, looking for who we are, so that creates a memory...

Jean-Charles F. : But it's an individual approach, not a group thing, it is not a collective approach.

Rob M. : It can be a collective thing...

Julien D. : It could be also a collective thing, because when we improvise for two years with the same guys, some reflexes are created too.

Jean-Charles F. : True.

Julien D. : So... there was a time when I considered that this concept was kind of cool, that when I get to impro, I am really into it. But today, I don't know. For me it is not the interesting point; improvisation is only a process to the music. Exactly like writing is a process. So, it's only that for me. After, I like to listen to music and play music, providing it is good. But writing could be also nice, and I had a good teacher [...], a guy from Chili, during the 70s in France, and his main pitch was all the time like that: "You know, when you play improvised music, you have to sound like written music, and when you play written music, it has to sound like improvising music". And this conception, it's only a process. This is not a goal. The goal is to play music with improvisation, that's my feeling.

Nicolas S. : You speak of reflexes in the groups?

Julien D. : Yeah.

Nicolas S. : You did eight gigs and one studio in Chicago...the process was in fact, just playing and chatting to each other, to create the sound of the group. Is there a reflex now? Or after eight gigs, were you able to notice some reflexes from each other?

Julien D. : Yeah... Yeah. I don't know if it's already a reflex, because when we began to play last Saturday, after two years had elapsed, something was really easy. I think this was because reflex was there, but reflex in a good way, which means still surprising. I guess today, we have a bit of reflex together, but not too much. It's all the time a question of balance, you know.

Rob M. : Yeah, but it's also because of a better understanding of people's vocabulary, for instance, and as the days grow wiser, and thinking of past years, it is definitely an awareness of people's vocabularies, and also, not only that, but knowing that that stuff evolved for the last two years, that we haven't had enough experience together yet, so there are plenty of surprises as well. I mean, I have two groups – *Chicago Underground Duo* for about twenty years, and *São Paulo Underground* as well, we have been playing for ten years, every year – so, it's really consistent, those are two groups I feel that are absolutely good examples of what I am talking about. Your mind is totally like: you don't have to say a fucking word, man, you can step up and just experience the joy of making sounds together, and, at that point even, if you think you did the worst show of all times, you listen back and it's still magic. I guess it's the idea of: you keep building, you keep constructing, keep imagining, keep the vocabulary moving with the respect thing, and I keep talking about that... No one talks about that, it's just having the utmost respect for each of the players and musicians. And if you don't, don't do it anymore, unless you want to have it as an exercise and not making it work (laugh)... you either do that or not.

Jean-Charles F. : Yes.

Rob M. : You know, may be I was having a hard time trying to figure out what was happening...

Someone: What ?

Rob M. : Not everything clicks on the scene level, I mean it's impossible. It takes time, takes energy, takes respect.

Julien D. : Yeah ! That's why you have to listen to musicians when you play in a kind of an innocent way. Like all the stuff varies in different quality, but you have to keep the same attitude, you can play with everything.

Rob M. : Sure. I am a strong believer in beginner's mind, everything could be possible...

The Collective PaaLabRes

Jean-Charles F. : A few words about our collective PaaLabRes. At the origin of the collective was the creation in 1990, 26 years ago, of a center in Lyon for training future teachers

of music schools². We developed the project little by little. At the beginning of the project only students trained in classical music came to the center, because music schools in France, at that time, even if they included a little jazz did not include other kinds of music outside classical music, and the dominant methods in those schools were mostly oriented towards reading and playing what's on the score. We developed a center in which students in traditional music or world music, jazz, popular music like rock, and classical music, could meet together, in a program which was not only based on mutual respect of different practices in their own terms, but also on putting the students in situations where they had to develop interactive projects together. This, I think, is still more or less the only place in France, which has been doing that within higher education institutions.

Rob M. : Oh, nice...

Jean-Charles F. : And I think, there might not be many places in the world in which the different kinds of music meet... There are a lot of institutions where different kinds of music exist, but they tend to ignore each other very nicely, so that they never meet there in reality. And then, there is another very important place in the vicinity of Lyon: the music school at Villeurbanne [ENM de Villeurbanne], where Gilles is teaching and which was developed by a composer...

Gilles L. : Duhamel.

Nicolas S. : Antoine Duhamel.

Jean-Charles F. : It was exactly the same idea that was developed right from the beginning (during the 1980s) of having rock music, jazz, classical music, African traditional music, Latin-American music...

Gilles L. : ... Baroque music...

Jean-Charles F. : ... etc.

Gilles L. : ... electroacoustic music...

Jean-Charles F. : ... electroacoustic music, and it is still today a very important place for the development of multicultural projects. And so, one of the objectives of the collective is to bring together artistic acts, like the ones produced on stage, with pedagogical situations, and also with academic theoretical studies of music, which tend to be very, very, separated (at least in France). That is, if you are a teacher in France, you are not considered as a musician, and if you are a musician, you probably teach, but you don't tell anybody that you are also a teacher. There are also difficult relationships between two very closed spheres, the academic world and the reality of the artistic practices. We are trying to fill those gaps between these contradictory worlds. And also, bring artistic domains closer together. At the moment we have an experimental project going on at a place called Ramdam, near Lyon, directed by choreographer Maguy Marin, with her dance company in residence. This project is an artistic encounter between dancers and musicians improvising together.

Gilles L. : (In French) It is our everyday life.

² Cefedem Rhône-Alpes (now Cefedem AuRA). Centre de formation des enseignants de la musique, Auvergne Rhône- Alpes : <http://www.cefedem-aura.org/>

Jean-Charles F. : This is what we are doing.

Rob M. : That's right...

Nicolas S. : It's not only dance and music that is at stake here, it is the practice of dance and the practice of playing music. It means a very different kind of attitude...

Jean-Charles F. : ... of perspective...

Nicolas S. : The idea is not to be speaking about music, but about the way you do music.

Rob M. : sure...

Nicolas S. : You want to react?

Rob M. : It is fantastic. It reminds me of what is going on in Chicago, where the mixing of different artistic practices, jazz, free jazz, classical, electronic, is becoming more and more respected and mixed. I think it's my perception.

Improvisation and Written Contemporary Music

Jean-Charles F. : Where you associated with the AACM?

Rob M. : I played with many of the musicians of the AACM, and I consider myself a student of that aesthetic for sure. Of course the AACM is the perfect example. But in Chicago, people from Chicago Symphony, improvisers from the North side, people from the AACM world, are improvising together, you know. I think some of the groups – I am not sure – in The Bridge, are built around that idea, I am thinking about a cellist [name?] or people like that. I think it was nice to get to know you. We have to do the respect again. I mean improvising is one of the most intellectual, challenging things you could do in life. I mean you can learn a Xenakis score, you can learn, you know, the most difficult music...

Jean-Charles F. : ... Some musicians playing written contemporary music would be unhappy if you said that to them! They might even punch you in the nose (laugh)...

Rob M. : It would start a war!

Jean-Charles F. : Because they would say exactly the contrary, they don't want to hear about improvisation...

Rob M. : ... If they can't do it!... It's a matter of being able to do something or not able to do something. But then again if you get super deep in things, and not only learning the Xenakis score, but also how to interpret it, yes it can be a lifetime of work. I understand that, but why do you want to do that, I am not sure, you know... But it's some of my favorite music, yes, you know, I love it. And I know Boulez too, in spite of the whacking stuff he said about improvisation and jazz music and what not...

Jean-Charles F. : Yeah, yeah. He said many stupid things.

Rob M. : You don't have to respect me, but I can respect you.

(Laughs)

You know what I mean. So, who wins, you know? It is the whole Stockhausen thing, right? I am in this circle and in this circle, but I am going to be in the complete circle, or something like that. And I don't even know Stockhausen's complete endeavor. I studied enough to know that so much does he know, he doesn't know everything (laugh)... Now I know what you are doing, and if you don't know what I am doing, then you have to do something... if you want... Or use violence, and punch me in the nose, but you still don't know what I am doing. Now I know even more of what you are doing...

(Laughs)

Julien D. : (In French) Well, see you later, then.

Conclusion

Gilles L. : And to come back to what we are trying to do, we have a first circle in Lyon, we have a second circle in France, and a third one at the international level. But the problem is that we have no place to work.

Jean-Charles F. : We have no place !
(Laughs)

Gilles L. : We have no place to practice.

Jean-Charles F. : That's why we developed the digital space www.paalabres.org

Gilles L. : But the school sometimes can be dangerous, because the school is part of my personal project. We need here to have some independence. But with the school, the ENM at Villeurbanne, a long time ago, I invited Fred Frith, René Lussier, and Joëlle Léandre, because we had some budget at that time, but now there is no more money.

Rob M. : Yeah. Cultural money is at its lowest everywhere.

Alexandre P. : They are supposed to go for dinner now, in order to be able to take some rest before the concert. I am sorry to stop you, but...

Gilles L. : At what time is the concert ?

Alexandre P. : At 8 h. 30.

Julien D. : (In French) It's at 8 h. 30, but in my opinion we will not play before 9.

Rob M. : Thanks for talking to you.

All: Yeah !

Jean-Charles F. : Thank you.

Julien D. : If you stay after, we can have a beer.

Jean-Charles F. : We are looking forward to the concert.

Gilles L. : (In French) We will stay!
(Laughs)