



THE ELECTRICITY RISES AND THE PEOPLE START TO MOVE FORWARD BECOMING A NEW ENTITY

DO YOU BELIEVE WE CAN MAKE BELIEF?

WILL THE SEARCH LIGHT FIND ME ADRIFT?

SINKING FEELING GRIPS. LAY DOWN TO CLEAR MY MIND BUT FLOODED WITH FEAR?

CAN I FLOAT?

IS THERE SAFETY?

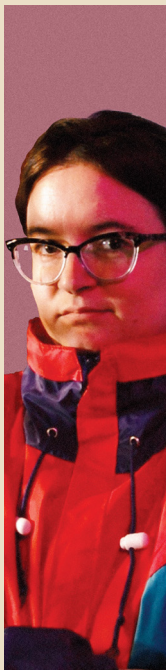
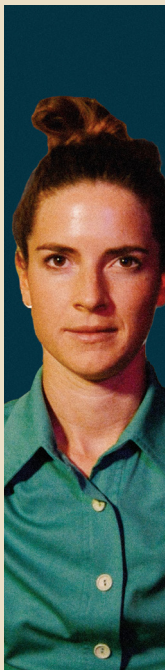
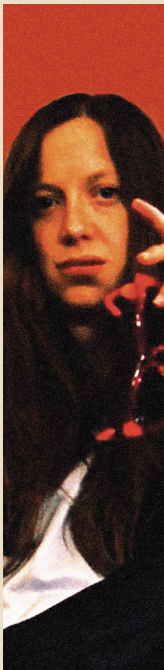
BREATHING EXPANDING  
KNOWING I AM NOT ONLY THIS BODY  
LEARN HOW TO SWIM

STAY CLOSE TO ME

ARTWORK BY DAMON LOCKS  
EDITED & DESIGNED BY FEDERICO PEÑALVA  
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# CATALYTIC QUARTERLY 16



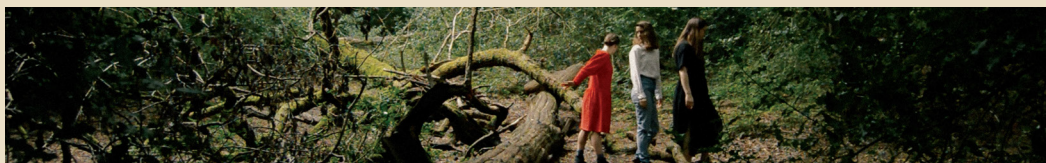


**STEPHANIE MCMANN    ELEANOR SIKORSKI**  
**FLORA WELLESLEY WESLEY**

# **NORA THE MANY**

**WITH ELEANOR BAUER**

**MUSIC BY ZEENA PARKINS**



**A NORA PRODUCTION. A FILM BY THE SOMETHING SITHERS**

**WITH STEPHANIE MCMANN, ELEANOR SIKORSKI, FLORA WELLESLEY WESLEY, FOX GILL-MCMANN & ELEANOR BAUER**

**MUSIC BY ZEENA PARKINS    SOUND EDITING & RECORDING MICHAEL PICKNETT    CINEMATOGRAPHY STEPHANIE MCMANN, ELEANOR SIKORSKI, FLORA WELLESLEY WESLEY**

**EDITOR ELEANOR BAUER    WRITTEN BY ELEANOR BAUER, STEPHANIE MCMANN, ELEANOR SIKORSKI & FLORA WELLESLEY WESLEY    BASED ON NORA THE MANY:**

**A CHOREO/GRAPHIC NOVEL BY ELEANOR BAUER    WITH NORA & COVEN PRESS    DIRECTED BY STEPHANIE MCMANN, ELEANOR SIKORSKI & FLORA WELLESLEY WESLEY**

**COMMISSIONED BY SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE    SUPPORTED BY ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND, SOUTH EAST DANCE, DANCEEAST, STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS**

catalytic artist album 047

# NORA THE MANY

music by ZEENA PARKINS



A choreo | graphic novel invites the reader into a collectively-authored universe of characters and events generated by methods of translating experiences of dancing together into writing. Images, logics, felt-senses and life-worlds conjured by dancing together have been woven into a narrative. Created in primary collaboration with Nora, with contributions from dancing-writing groups gathered by Bauer's research under the alias Coven Press, and edited by Bauer, swirls between fiction and reality, sensation and imagination, movement-thought and writing-thought, heralding a new genre of writing called Sensual Journalism.

Nora the Many is also a film based on the novel. Adapted, directed, filmed and performed by Nora and edited by Bauer, Nora the Many tells the story of Cindy's Bar and it's peculiar regulars: Divina the megalomaniacal performance artist, her child and faithful follower Tworden the Giant, Elba the Electric Child, and Tina the day dreaming bartender. Zeena Parkins' musical score and Bauer's narration invite us on a nonlinear trip through a multiverse of odd characters, with McMann, Sikorski and Wellesley Wesley's dancing providing a polyphonic bed of rhythm and emotion. It is a surreal and humorous study of a tight knit group and the planet they live on: the vast, volatile body of a giant.

zeena parkins: electric and acoustic  
harps, synth and objects  
william winant: percussion and balloon

the eclipse quartet:  
maggie parkins: cello and cello bass  
sarah thornblade: violin  
alma luis fernandez: viola  
sara parkins: violin

mette rasmussen: saxophone and voice  
brandon lopez: string bass  
megan schubert: voice  
lucia martinez: voice

nora speaking voices:  
eleanor bauer, stephanie mcmann,  
eleanor sikorski & flora wellesley wesley

## **Joe Morris / Complexity is one thing**

### **Concert Series**

In the summer of 2021 I was invited to run a series of concerts at Real Art Ways (RAW), a private arts center in Hartford, Connecticut. The director Will K. Wilkins called me and said that he would raise a good amount of money to support it. I was free to do what I wanted to do for eight concerts presented over the next fall and spring seasons. Will asked me to invite known musicians who can attract an audience. After eighteen months of low attendance caused by the pandemic they needed to get people to return to the place. The funding enabled me to pay everyone a very good fee. The audiences have been consistently good and of course the music is different every time. The series continues this fall and beyond. More on that below.

The invitation came as a surprise, even though I had a similar series at RAW before. That one was called, simply, *Improvisations*. My partner in that series was the trumpeter, cornetist Stephen Haynes. It ran from 2011-2016. Our objective—one that we shared well before we knew each other—was to find a way to work where we lived. Both of us were doing things in New York, a couple of hours from our homes; both of us had previously organized series in Connecticut and elsewhere, separately. Our shared determination to make something good happen, and our combined experience as organizers made it easier for both of us.

The *Improvisations* series plan was pretty simple, but it did take a couple of tries to make it work. The idea was to invite different people to play with each of us at each concert. At first I had a group and Stephen had a different one, each group played one set. That proved to be too complicated and expensive because many of the musicians we invited were from New York or Boston, so transportation costs had to be figured into the budget. Of course, like so many of these DIY things, we didn't have any budget. It was us using door money and our own money to pay for everything. We lost money on every concert. So we changed the plan and started inviting one person to play with both of us. We split the responsibilities, and with some exceptions Stephen did most of the marketing and promo for the series and coordination with RAW and I invited the guest musicians and arranged the transportation.

RAW gave us the space for free, did marketing of the series, and were very happy to have us there. Their own history of supporting Free Music was quite consistent going back to the mid 1970's, including presenting greats like Julius Hemphill, Ronald Shannon Jackson and even Ornette Coleman. In the original loft venue—before the current converted warehouse—RAW was an important stop for every improvising musician working in New York or touring the US, in groups or solo, they all played there. Will, the director, also gave us some very helpful advice about how to grow the audience in that particular space. You might think that after many years of organizing (*more on that below*) we would know that, but Will knew the local audience very well. He asked us to speak to them before the concert, to mingle with them in the set break and to ask

them what they thought of the music at the end. We would start each concert by telling the audience how much their presence mattered and that we were grateful for them being there, that the music could only be fully realized when it was heard. We invited them to have their own individual interpretation of the music and to please share it with us. This interaction combined with the programming and good music helped in growing a good sized very loyal audience for every concert. After two years, and for the next three years RAW provided funding in a lump sum plus the door for each concert, which meant that Stephen, our guests, and I were all paid.

Over the five years we had Evan Parker, Tyshawn Sorey, Hamid Drake, Sara Schoenbeck. Andrea Parkins, Gerald Cleaver, Jerome Deupree, Zeena Parkins, Mark Dresser, Tim Berne, Ken Vandermark, Nate Wooley, Mat Maneri, Jean Carla Rodea, Chad Taylor, Ingrid Laubrock. Fay Victor, Bern Nix, Joe McPhee, Kyoko Kitamura, Carl Testa, Jim Hobbs, Anne Rhodes, Alex Ward, Dominic Lash, Noah K, Ben Hall, Tatsuya Nakatani, Jen Hi Kim, Mixashawn Rozie and many others. Suffice it to say that every concert was completely different.

In June 2014 we presented *Spectacle*, the first of five annual single day improvisation concerts. For this we mixed established musicians with young emerging musicians in ad hoc groupings. Jaimie Branch, Brad Barrett, Adam Matlock, Sarah Hughes, Gabe Terracianno. Zach Rowden, Jason Belcher, Andria Nicodemou, and Chris Cretella were among the participants in *Spectacle*.

In 2016 I was invited to be visiting faculty at University of Calvary in Alberta Canada. I was already feeling that it might be time for me to leave the *Improvisations* series and having to prepare to be away, I decided to end it. Stephen decided to stop too.

Fast forward to 2021 and the new series which RAW decided to call *ImprovisationsNOW*. I am alone on this one. I decided that I would do something slightly different from the first series. For this I invite the musicians and I play with them at every concert. Our first monthly concert featured William Parker-bass, Jerome Deupree-drums, and Rob Brown-alto and me on guitar. That was followed by Fay Victor's SoundNoiseFunk, duo with Mary Halvorson, quartet of me on bass, Tyshawn Sorey, Patricia Brennan, and Stephen Haynes, quintet with Joe McPhee, Jamie Saft, Jerome Deupree, James Brandon Lewis and me, trio of Peter Evans, Mat Maneri and me, and finally the collective group Geometry Tomeka Reid, Kyoko Kitamura, Taylor Ho Bynum and me. My second year starts with a duo with Ken Vandermark, then a quartet with Sylvie Courvoisier, Lester St. Louis, Jerome Deupree and me, followed by the trio of Anna Webber, Matthew Shipp and me and ending the Fall season with a quintet of Hery Paz, Angelica Sanchez, Juan Pablo Carletti and me. I'm planning now for Spring 2023.

I was told recently that my series will be funded for years to come. My plans for the near future are to add an alternating cast of young musicians that I've come to know through my activities as an educator to be the in-house ensemble that would play with me and an invited guest musician.

## History

Organizing and DIY presenting have been big parts of my creative direction since I started in New Haven in 1973. The arrival of Wadada Leo Smith, who moved to the area then, brought with him the model set by the AACM, BAG, the Loft Scene in New York, and those in London, Amsterdam, Wuppertal, etc.. His presence brought more focused attention to musicians who performed around town, by including them with him in performances he gave in churches, loft spaces, galleries, and occasionally in clubs. At the same time, the guitarist Loren Mazzacane Connors ran a performance space called *Theater in the Space* which featured local and touring musicians. In a short time the small local scene, which included Hartford, forty minute drive north, and Middletown in between—the home of Wesleyan University and master drummer Ed Blackwell—was connected to the bigger national and international one. The impact of this artist driven and controlled way of working has stayed with me and has grown in importance through thick and thin, everywhere I lived since then. The goal has been simple, to be as inclusive as possible, and to always promote the local scene by connecting it with as many other scenes as possible.

While New Haven was going strong and giving me great inspiration, I was 20 years old. I grew up there and I was ready to leave. I planned to move to New York. Instead, partly because I had friends in school there, and mostly because I had a girlfriend there, in 1975 I moved to Boston. Honestly, I felt I wasn't ready for New York. Boston was much less intense and therefore a better place to get more experience and grow my skills and ideas. I quickly discovered that Boston was missing the focus that I experienced in New Haven. The music scene was mostly fusion and straight ahead jazz. There were some artists run spaces like the *Friends of Great Black Music Loft*, run by the great drummer Syd Smart, and *Jazz Celebrations* run by trumpeter Mark Harvey. Both featured some great music that was less about connecting to the wider global scene, and more about covering a version of a different side of things in the enclosed and isolated city jazz scene, which was heavily influenced by music schools. Boston jazz clubs offered some great performances though, including Anthony Braxton, Marion Brown, Air, Sam Rivers and others mixed in with the more obvious and popular great jazz musicians.

My girlfriend and I were living on the cheap side of Beacon Hill. On a walk down Cambridge Street we ran into a friend of hers who was living with Jack Powers the poet and owner of *Stone Soup Gallery*, four blocks from our apartment. The gallery sold poetry books from its press and other small imprints, hosted poetry readings, art showings and presented music of various kinds, but mostly folk. Jack Powers was a hardcore jazz fan who was exceptionally knowledgeable of its history in Boston, especially of those players who were overlooked in the city. To say that Jack Powers was dedicated to artist controlled action is a gross understatement. He paid the rent, printed the books, scheduled and presented the poets and musicians, hung the art shows, set up the chairs and cleaned the space, and he did all of it because to him it was all art, every bit of it. Jack and I became close friends and in the Spring of 1976 I played my first solo guitar performance at *Stone Soup*. The gallery became a regular place for Free Music, and Jack was a great source for info about other alternative

spaces in town that presented interesting music or would rent us their space for self-produced events.

Over the next few years I played whenever and wherever I could. A group of us that included drummer Samm Bennett, saxophonist Barry Miller and others organized things and shared what we had, and it helped. Our community of players grew and we were able to play more in more places. We always looked beyond Boston and though we were young and broke we were determined to connect as players with the global scene. I went to New York to hear music wherever I could. On one visit I attended a solo concert given by Jerome Cooper at *Environ*, a loft space on lower Broadway. The audience consisted of me, Cooper's girlfriend and Muhal Richard Abrams. The music was amazing. I was able to talk to Jerome. That night taught me two lessons that stay with me today and that I often share with young people. First, great art happens in spite of limited support, and second, access to the artists is a special part of Free Music that sets it apart from more popular music. (Incidentally, through my friendship with Jack Powers I met the poets Allan Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlingetti. All of whom worked in the area of self-publishing.) The inspiration I got from Cooper's performance further solidified my DIY approach.

Around 1980 Samm Bennett and I spoke often about going to Europe to see what it was like and if we could have a better chance to play there. We knew all about the opportunities the Art Ensemble, Braxton, Steve Lacy, Barre Phillips and others had there earlier. In the Spring of 1981 I borrowed some money from a friend and bought a round trip plane ticket to Brussels for \$200. I got my first gig in Europe the day I arrived. While walking from the south train station to the north where the cheap hotels were I encountered a man hanging a sign for a James Blood Ulmer concert. I stopped to look and upon noticing that I had a guitar, he asked me what kind of music I played. I said "that kind". He said he owned the *Bloomdido* club where Blood was playing and asked if I had a demo tape. I went to the club that night and he hired me to open for Blood. While I was waiting in Brussels I attended a concert given by Gunter Christman and Trorsten Muller. There I heard of an open session that I later attended and played with some Belgian and English improvising musicians. Doing the *Bloomdido* gig helped me get my first gig at the Bimhuis in Amsterdam a couple of weeks later. More things like this happened during my 3 months in Europe in 1981. But the thing that had the biggest impact on me was the sense of community, the notion that more people were helping, that the individual local scenes worked because they were connected. Everything was on a very personal scale. It was possible to talk to everyone. I arrived back in Boston with a new energy and the determination to do more to strengthen the local scene and by doing so better connect it to the wider one.

In the early '80s, after months of discussion, the trumpeter Frank London and I co-organized the Boston Improvisers Group (BIG) with the idea that we could share one name for the mostly separated individuals and groups working in our area of music. And by doing so we could give focus to a community that had grown in size and was actively performing all over the city, but was still being ignored. BIG lasted a couple of years. But during that time we presented a regular series of concerts in a number of spaces and

ran a week-long festival. Unfortunately, some of the local musicians missed the point that this was collective action that required them to bring something to the process, to do something rather than ask for me or others to do it. When I got a few calls from people asking me for a gig, like I was a club owner or agent, I knew that BIG was doomed. So I went back to working on my own.

The next phase started by finding places to present my own groups. This worked out well, and I had pretty regular performances in town. In 1983 I started my own record label *Riti* and released my first trio LP *Wraparound*. Among other things it drew the attention of a rather unusual local character named Chris Rich, who was involved with WMFO-FM the Tufts University radio station, where he played Free Music. He got me a weekly show, which I used to play music I liked and promote local music. Lewis Porter the musician and jazz historian was the Jazz Department chair at the university and he was very supportive. Through him we were given the use of spaces on the campus. I produced concerts there with John Zorn, William Parker, Billy Bang and Andrew Cyrille. In 1985 Chris and I produced the *Jazz Now Festival* at Tufts. That included Jimmy Lyons Quartet, Butch Morris Ensemble, Wadada Leo Smith, Lowell Davidson, Jameel Moondoc and my group. After that Chris and I were able to coordinate with a lot of touring musicians. I brought Peter Kowald in to play duos, and we had Peter Bortzmann with Kowald and Cyrille perform in a local movie theater.

A mutual friend sent me to meet the owner of Charlie's Tap, a bar in Cambridge that could best be described as a gin mill. He didn't know anything about music but he wanted to have what he called "the best jazz club in town". He asked me if I wanted to program the music and I said yes. He said he couldn't pay me, then asked me if I wanted to be a bartender. I told him I had never done that. Then he showed me how to draw a beer and said, "I have to go to the bank." and left me to tend the bar. Within five minutes I became a music program director and a bartender. Charlie's Tap drew huge attention immediately due to my programming. But the character of the partners who owned it was borderline gangster and certainly crooked. They paid the musicians, so their sorted qualities were foisted on me and the customers. I programmed the place for one year then quit. It ran as a jazz club for 20 years at which time they had a big celebration but didn't invite me, thankfully. During my time there I was able to play there with my groups and in Dewey Redman's group. I also became a kind of adviser for the 1369 Jazz Club suggesting Free Music musicians for a while. Much better people. At a gig I played there a young guy came up to me at the end of my set and said "Excuse me Mr. Morris, My name is Ken Vandermark." Which I think makes me the first musician on our scene to know him. I'm glad that by getting Joe McPhee to play at both of these places I gave Ken and his father Stu, who was a very supportive person on the scene and a huge McPhee fan, two of their first chances to hear him.

After releasing my first LP I was able to perform in New York more and meet more musicians there and elsewhere. Considering the hassles I endured in Boston I planned my move to New York. Rather than move to the city I bought a small house near Woodstock for \$21,000 in the summer of 1986. New York didn't need my programming duties. DIY was going fine there. For personal reasons in January 1989 I moved back

to Boston. The last real burst of programming/organizing in Boston centered around working with Chris Rich to build a series at the Middle East Cafe. We managed to get it going and a lot of great music happened there. It was mostly all local musicians including Mat Maneri and Ken Vandermark. We had to struggle mightily to keep our thing going there because two other people worked like crazy to drive us out, take it over and change it. After intense battles I gave up. By that time I had opportunities in New York and elsewhere which soon became quite busy and included regular touring in Europe. I did play sometimes in Boston but not as much.

In 2001 I moved with my family back to New Haven, back home. It didn't take long to meet nice helpful people who gave me money to program music. The difficult issue here has always been finding available space. I worked with local public libraries to use their community spaces and started a series I called *Just Play* that included Connecticut musicians and those from out of town. Other musicians ran DIY series too, and so far in the 21 years I've been here we've all worked together supporting each other and never competing. Since then I curated the premier season at *Firehouse 12* in New Haven, was artistic director for the *Jazz in the Park* series in Hartford and co-ran with Bob Gorry the *Multiplex* series at the State House in New Haven. The combination of presenters that program a mix of local, regional and internationally known musicians have made Connecticut an especially vibrant statewide scene that is diverse, multi-generational and working extremely well.

As an educator I meet many great young musicians who are worried about the difficulties of surviving in Free Music. I always suggest that they live where they want to and work to build a scene. Many have done that.

## Collaboration

For me, organizing and programming are also related to a specific idea of a way of making new music, and a completely necessary part of my expression, my music. It's composition in a different and very intentional way. Following the idea that every improvising musician is their own orchestra, I want to engage with as many different communities and disparate musicians as I can. Derek Bailey's Company performances were a seminal version of that idea. Mixing people who compliment and contrast each other increases the possibilities that new music will happen.

My methodology for playing in an open form improvised performance is configured as an ontological array of complex objects consisting of the meta properties of melodic, harmonic, or sound structure, multiple expressions of pulse and different modes of interaction, all working in real time to generate a resultant form. Working this way, with a momentary scheme, allows the music to compose itself, rather than having the improvisation expand the composition. This methodology also relies on being able to hear how my collaborators are using these meta properties whether they do that as intentionally as I do or not. So I don't mix individual players in groups to arrive at a particular result, but rather to arrive at a wide variety of results, assuming that if my programming is done well and with creativity, the ensemble of players will adjust to each other, we will all listen and signal each other musically to confirm our connection, and we will all confront the contingencies that emerge creatively with improvisation, making every performance distinctly different.

My interest in having a composite understanding and facility of what I see as four seminal methodologies, Unit Structures, Harmolodics, Tri-Axiom Theory and European Free Improvisation has guided all of my activities. They are the major inventions that created free playing. I hear them being used in pure and combined ways all over the improvised music scene. I believe that a conscious and intentional use of their shared properties is the best way to create a new methodology. Considering that it is so broad, I don't care to have ownership over it, because that would limit its possibilities. Instead I see it as an open-source methodology that in some form or another is already present in every player who performs in this way. Some are some more conscious of what they are doing than others, more inventive than others of course,

All of this, including the organization and programming are necessary to arrive at the complexity that I seek in music—the type that expresses what I think and feel to be heard. I don't want a limit, or a style. I don't want to be defined by one thing.

Sometimes presenters tell me that they would like to book me for their festival or whatever, but I do so many things they can't figure out which one of them is what I do. My response is, "Doing all of those things is what I do!". It's one thing. The complexity is one thing. For me, it's the way to avoid predictability on the micro and macro levels of operation. And it allows me to constantly reach for a new thing, the next thing, without excluding any parts that matter to me. It keeps me at a kind of continuous starting point. And as programming has taught me, one new collaborator can open a whole new possibility.

Brandon Lopez

13 de septiembre de 2022, 12:38:09 p.m. GMT-3

Para: Federico Peñalva

Re: CATALYTIC QUARTERLY 16 SUBMISSION??

Thinking a lot about future and hope with this one.





Through the financing of intellectual or artistic endeavors, the elite have a means of corralling and neutering the ideas and movements that present or bring to light an alternative to their systems of control.

I was having a conversation this past weekend with a preeminent scholar/intellectual and they were discussing a particular university which happens to be the oldest continuously operating university in the world and how that university's beginning was a means for the Italianate city state elite to corral and control knowledge.



If you remove and cloister the artists and scholars you end the transmission of types of knowledge to a majority.

If the state or the elite fund the arts, they're able to passively dictate what information and what art is produced and by whom it is produced.



We were walking on stage and asked  
*what the fuck do we do?*  
and he replied  
**assemble in small groups and keeping fuckin' with em.**

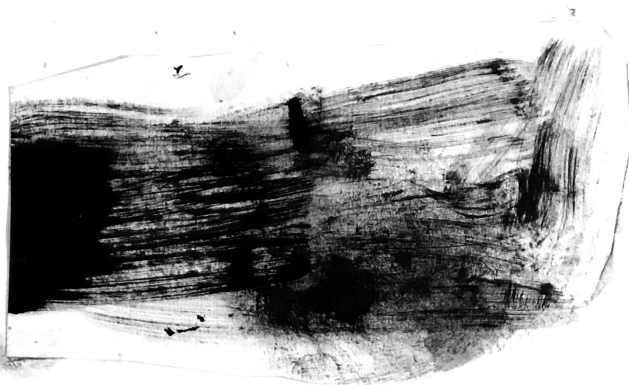
- papi



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