

Sergio Armagoli & Evan Parker Dialog



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Sergio Armaroli and Evan Parker's collaboration on *Dialog: Two Rooms One Vibraphone 1 to 6 & Five Interludes* was made possible by state-of-the-art 2022 digital technology, on which it was wholly reliant. But the structure of the music itself – call and response a.k.a. antiphony – predates the digital era by an unknown number of millennia. Located in different studios hundreds of miles apart, on different days, the two players used file-sharing to engage in what is, if not the oldest form of music making, then almost certainly the second oldest. One day in October 2022, Armaroli recorded five short and one longer solos in Milan, Italy and a little over two weeks later, Parker recorded his responses in Ramsgate, a town on England's south coast. ("I only responded to the shorter solos," says Parker. "The long one was so rich and full that I thought the best response was silence.")

Surviving medieval manuscripts show call and response to be a defining feature of contemporary European liturgical music, albeit precomposed rather than, as here, entirely improvised. And in those cultures which possess oral rather than written musical archives, we can reasonably assume an even older provenance. In Africa, the cradle of humanity, call and response extends into prehistory and remains central to music

making across the continent today. In the African diaspora, it figures large in gospel, blues, various forms of jazz, son, salsa, rumba and so forth.

Karlheinz Stockhausen affirmed antiphony's place in modern European symphonic music when he made it a feature of *Gruppen*, which he composed for three coactive orchestras. Stockhausen completed the monumental work in 1957. The same year roots-modernist Charles Mingus wrote his miniature masterpiece "Original Faubus Fables," in which, with call and response centre-stage, he eviscerated Arkansas governor Orval Faubus for his refusal to comply with the US Supreme Court's ruling to desegregate the state's schools. In perhaps its most powerful recorded version, on the album *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*, the instrumental call and response between Mingus' bass and Eric Dolphy and Ted Curson's (vocalized) horns is augmented by vocal exchanges between Mingus and drummer Dannie Richmond.

So call and response has thoroughbred global bloodlines. But it was not Armaroli and Parker's first choice of format. Their original plan was to go into a recording studio together during a tour of Italy that Parker was scheduled to make in 2022, and lay down a set of freely improvised music in real time. As the start date of the tour approached, however, the plan fell apart because Parker became unable to leave Britain. With regret, Parker

cancelled the tour and the recording session with it. But, happily for us, Armaroli was keen to consider alternative scenarios.

The two players considered several options. At the time of writing, software is close to being signed off which will overcome the problem of temporal latency and allow musicians in distant locations to record together in real time without even micro-temporal lapses occurring between them. But the computer coding was still being finessed in October 2022. Nor was Parker prepared to overdub his improvisation over Armaroli's solos. "The idea of clamping a pair of headphones on and pretending to be in the same room does not appeal to me," says Parker.

"Structurally, whatever I did would be on top of what was already there rather than in an interactive relationship with it."

The format Armaroli and Parker ultimately arrived at was (vibraphone) call and (saxophone) response using file sharing. "I have never before used file sharing in such an organic way," says Armaroli. "It has not been necessary. But the idea always precedes the possibility of concretely realizing a project. I mean, despite all negative circumstances it is possible to find a contact, a relationship, mediated first by the microphone and

then by the distance which in listening is cancelled by presence. The result is a kind of a trans-improvisation that only the listener can create."

"We were on two different planes of reality," says Parker. "Different times, different places, brought together only as a final artefact. One person leads and another person follows, but it is still a conversation. It is like a Platonic exchange, in which Plato expounded a proposition and his pupils replied before he went on to the next proposition."

Dialog: Two Rooms One Vibraphone 1 to 6 & Five Interludes differs, however, from the classical Greek idea of dialectics, that of thesis-anti-

thesis-synthesis, in one respect. There is thesis, from Armaroli, and antithesis, from Parker, but it is a third party, the listener, who provides the synthesis. And there will be as many syntheses, and as much diversity among them, as there are those of us tuning in.

Chris May

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Sergio Armaroli vibraphone,
tracks 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 & 11.
Evan Parker soprano saxophone,
tracks 2, 4, 6, 8 & 10.

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|----|------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Two Rooms One Vibraphone #1 | 6:33 |
| 2 | Interlude 1 | 1:50 |
| 3 | Two Rooms One Vibraphone #2 | 4:43 |
| 4 | Interlude 2 | 2:20 |
| 5 | Two Rooms One Vibraphone #3 | 3:20 |
| 6 | Interlude 3 | 2:55 |
| 7 | Two Rooms One Vibraphone #4 | 5:43 |
| 8 | Interlude 4 | 2:45 |
| 9 | Two Rooms One Vibraphone #5 | 8:44 |
| 10 | Interlude 5 | 2:15 |
| 11 | Two Rooms One Vibraphone #6 | 26:49 |

Total Time DDD ²⁴Bit 67:42

Two Rooms One Vibraphone 1 to 6, recorded October 15, 2022 by Raffaele Stefani at BlackStar-RecordingStudio, Milano; Interlude 1 to 5 recorded November 2, 2022 by Filipe Gomes at Arcobarco Studio, Ramsgate UK. Two Rooms One Vibraphone 1 to 6 composed by Sergio Armaroli. Interlude 1 to 5 composed by Evan Parker.

CD ISRC coded

Mastering by Michael Brändli, Hardstudios AG;
Cover photo by Hagen Stockhausen; Liner notes by Chris May; graphic concept by fuhrer vienna;
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