



Music

April 2nd, 2015

## Outtakes

*by Steve Dalachinsky*

“I marvel at how delicate the song is, music being the only art without physical form.”

—David Samuels

“Drama is the sex life of ideas.”

—Lee Brauer

“...they’ll freeze her eggs then they’ll probably have to hunt for semen.”

—man to woman, overheard on street

It’s rare that I get badgered over and over again by a publicist to listen to his/her client’s work, not really being a credible/full-time so-called critic/journalist, but for the past two months such was the case with so-and-so about listening to such-and-such CD and possibly attending a gig at an upscale club (which believe it or not, I turned down). Well, I did finally say yes to the CD and it arrived in the dead of winter and I listened to it on one of the coldest, snowiest, most miserable days of the year after just getting back from ditto weather in Boston. The artist, a singer/songwriter, was from a comparatively warm country, one of our neighbors to the south as they used to say, and sang in a language I understood very little of. I could tell by the titles and English description that it was a folksy commentary on society, politics, and personal loss, as in death. Sadly the singer was no Paco Ibañez, and the orchestration was over-produced, so I decided not to review it for the artist’s sake and for fear of reprisals—since the publicist had my name and address and I concluded that the singer’s origins were a country where many people are killed.

Around that same time two other CDs arrived at my doorstep by drummer/percussionist Andrew Drury. I put them on later that night as the snow turned to freezing rain and they warmed me up a bit. Drury, a student of Ed Blackwell, has been one of the most sought-after sidemen on the scene with such luminaries as Frank Lacy and J.D. Parran, but of late has come to prove himself as a formidable leader, as these CDs and his recent 50th birthday concert at Roulette have shown. The concert included Lacy, Parran, Jason Kao Hwang, Stephanie Griffin, Ken Filiano, and Drury’s working quartet of Ingrid Laubrock, Brandon Seabrook, and Briggan Kraus. It also included a 20-

minute solo set by Drury of astounding “sound.” The CDs are on Drury’s Soup and Sound label, the name of an ongoing series he runs at his Brooklyn residence. S&S 50001 is the quartet, aptly titled *Content Provider*—the contents are all Drury originals, except for a rare cover of Clifford Brown’s “Daahoud.” S&S 50002 is simply titled *The Drum* and is a solo adventure not unlike his brilliant performance at Roulette. As Drury puts it: “Music has given me meaning since I was about 10 and began to sense that I was being lied to. I’m trying to provide content for people, to connect people, including myself, to ancient traditions of transcendent, mind-blowing human activity, the divine here and now and us.” I highly recommend both CDs for their diverse approaches.



“...she whispers to the Empire State Building...”  
Illustration by Megan Piontkowski.

Pick up and relish Bradley Spinelli’s *Killing Williamsburg* (Le Chat Noir). It starts like a whisper and ends like the future unfolding, to misquote the author. If you’ve ever contemplated suicide this book will either dissuade you or help you on your way. But I am trivializing and over-simplifying what Spinelli has set out to do. The book deals with all the hipster elements of its time, and in some cases we can compare these events with those of the ’50s and ’60s art world of scenesters and “miscreants.” Since I am supposed to refer to music, there’s plenty of that in this novel, from Pete’s Candy Store and the debut of a “cheesy indie band,” to Tina Turner playing for Oprah, to the Flaming Lips, to salsa, to Small’s Jazz Club, to Spinelli’s use of natural and unnatural sounds of the city to create what he refers to as a soundscape of rain, traffic, “cigarette butts flicked to the pavement,” and “the suicidal sounds of nails on cardboard and imploding glass windows.” You can almost set your watch by this book as some of his characters do as they venture down to Wall Street, feeling their “hatred of suits,” the “rush of wind,” and “the echo of a scream ... ringing and rising in a crescendo of lust,” as another body hits the sidewalk.

Amy Ouzoonian’s *Found In Phoenix* (Fly By Night Press), wallops us with a different sort of impact. Through her plays and poems it takes us through the personal and universal in one fell swoop, accompanied by photos taken by Amy and others. In her beautiful poem “The Music Box,” for the late, lamented, composer/conductor/cornet player Butch Morris, she begins, “Life in a music box is a waiting journey.” She later states, “Art is art until it is not,” and concludes that “a new body emerges / and if it lives / let it dance in a new box.” The book takes us from New York, where she whispers to the Empire State Building, “I would never change you / but I never promised to stay,” to her new digs in Phoenix, where “Spring’s whistling wind enters / Summer’s arrowhead always facing north.” Pick this up and I promise you that you’ll stay with it.

Brian Boyles graduated from Tulane University in New Orleans and decided after Katrina to take up permanent residence there with his college sweetheart. They soon married and dedicated themselves

to helping in the recovery, which they've been doing for the past eight years. Boyles, one of the founding members of East Village Radio, and now director of public programming at the Louisiana Humanities Center, recently published *New Orleans Boom and Blackout: One Hundred Days in America's Coolest Hot Spot* (The History Press). The book deals with the ups and downs of New Orleans's recovery in the hundred days that preceded the 2013 Super Bowl. It contains riveting chapters of conflict between the actual needs of the people of New Orleans and the capitalistic façade of rebuilding to get the city ready for this event. One chapter, "The Music Business," takes us through a local brass band's conflicts with the city and itself, in its quest to be part of the procedures while remaining apart from them, maintaining their individual outspoken voices and their right to stake a claim on the corner where they regularly play. Boyles shares intimate stories and encounters, giving us as clear and honest an account as possible, at once tearful and angry and filled with politics, anxiety, hope, despair, corruption, and how all these factors affect everyday life on both personal and grand scales. Like New Orleans itself, the book reveals a living creature that is always moving, shifting, changing.

To quote poet Ted Joans, from a 1966 article he wrote on Albert Ayler: "So blah and blah, blah, blah, blurr, bu, bah, etc, etc, words, words, words, words, clever words, impressive words, sincere words, wrong words, expressive words, words, trade words, phony words, silly words, whacky words, mighty words, wasted words, finally the only right word—which is just one word—and that word is LISTEN!!!!!"

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## CONTRIBUTOR

### Steve Dalachinsky

Poet/collagist STEVE DALACHINSKY was born in Brooklyn after the last big war and has managed to survive lots of little ones. His book *The Final Nite* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2006) won the PEN Oakland National Book Award. His most recent books are *Fools Gold* (Feral House, 2014), *A Superintendent's Eyes* (Unbearable/Autonomea, 2013), and *Flying Home* (Paris Lit Up Press, 2015), a collaboration with German visual artist Sig Bang Schmidt. His latest CD is *ec(H)osystem* with the French art-rock group, The Snobs (Bam Balam Records, 2015). He is a 2014 recipient of a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. His poem "Particle Fever" was nominated for a 2015 Pushcart Prize

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## RECOMMENDED ARTICLES

### WINTERJAZZFEST



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## MAR 2016 | MUSIC

It's the first night of the Winter Jazzfest and a sold-out show. I'm looking forward to Colin Stetson who I've heard twice before and want more of, also the Ex, whom I haven't heard in years. Don't get me wrong: I'm not a fan, just curious.