

The Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet

Peter Brötzmann has led a number of internationally renowned, large group improvising ensembles since the late 1960s. The latest, called the "Chicago Tentet", is one of his best. First organized in that city during January of 1997, the band has toured extensively throughout North America and Europe in the last decade, and has released nine albums containing a huge variety of music. In 2007, the ensemble celebrates its ten years of work together with a tour in Europe during June, a festival performance in Molde, Norway, in July and an engagement (their only North American appearance) in Chicago, at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

The Chicago Tentet is a veritable "Who's Who" of contemporary improvised music and includes many of the most significant members from that scene's cutting edge. Since its inception, the group has had a rotating line-up and past versions of the band have included William Parker (bass), Toshinori Kondo (trumpet/electronics), Roy Campbell (trumpet), and Mike Pearson (a renowned actor, who participated in a special project integrating Brötzmann's music and the texts of Kenneth Patchen for the Chicago Humanities Festival in 2004). All of the musicians connected to the ensemble, past and present, have contributed their distinctive voices to the group, making each concert appearance of the Tentet a truly exceptional experience. For the concert schedule in 2007, the group's size will be expanded to include both Johannes Bauer and Jeb Bishop on trombone.

Though the Tentet is clearly directed by Brötzmann and guided by his aesthetics, since the band's outset he has been committed to utilizing the ideas of everyone involved. Initially, this meant allowing the other musicians to contribute their compositions; since 2005, however, the ensemble has been a total improvisation unit, foregoing scores in order to explore their music with complete spontaneity. This shift in approach has allowed the group to explore an outstanding range of material, and the Tentet employs almost every organizational strategy available to an improvising ensemble while developing their music for each concert. The scope of conception, plus the diversity in each individual's approach to playing, has helped the band to cultivate an extremely multifaceted performance style. As the Tentet improvises from moment to moment, it can explore musical intensities that move from spare introspection to raging walls of sound, using open-ended rhythms or those of a hard-hitting groove.

Since the late 1990's, the main work of the band has been done in concerts on the road. Though the economics of sustaining a large ensemble are a struggle, the Chicago Tentet has continued to find innovative ways to keep performing their music for audiences around the world. Through this ongoing effort they've been able to advance a sound and depth of communication impossible to find in any other contemporary music group, no matter what size or style.