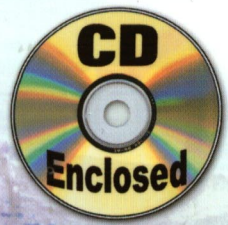


VOLUME 104



Free Play

**13 Musical
Landscapes**

by Kenny Werner

Book and CD Set
For ALL Instrumentalists and Vocalists

Jamey Aebersold Jazz

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PLAY-A-LONG CD INFORMATION:
 STEREO SEPARATION: Right Channel = Piano & Drums; Left Channel = Bass & Drums
 Tuning Notes: Concert Bb & A (A=440)
PERSONNEL ON PLAY-A-LONG RECORDING:
 KENNY WERNER - Piano; JOHANNES WEIDENMULLER - Bass; ARI HONENIG - Drums

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Free Play

Free music. What does that term suggest to you? Do you instantly think of Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, or the 1960s? The name "Free Jazz" was actually the title of Ornette Coleman's classic 1961 recording.

Human history moves forward through action and reaction. To a certain extent, every movement is a reaction to the previous movement. In times when forms reach their highest state of complexity, the seeds of desire for freedom are planted. As society shrouds itself in rules, the environment becomes ripe for rebels. It happens in cycles. By the 1960s, jazz music had achieved an incredible level of sophistication and many musicians needed to decompose and re-compose it for themselves.

Free music began to surface in the 1950s, although I once heard an interview with Willie "The Lion" Smith, who, when asked what he thought of Cecil Taylor exclaimed, "Sh__! We used to play that way in 1890!" In the early 1950s one could say that it was truly an act of courage to play free until it became more accepted in the following decade. Although free playing might have originated from American jazz musicians, it took much deeper root in Europe. But in America in the 1960s this movement had become relevant on many levels. There was a political component with the upheaval in the southern United States emerging over "Jim Crow" laws and institutional discrimination. Soon after, the Vietnam War was to politicize all of America. Music of that time was inundated with spiritual and emotional content. Given the mood of these times, there was a greater need for self-expression, to "get it all out" so to speak, rather than adhering to traditional musical conventions. And there was a much higher premium placed on "getting off" rather than "playing correctly." For these and other reasons, the free players of the time were ready for a new canvas from which to work.

From the late 1800s to the 1960s, the development of music theory had grown very steep. As a result, there were some musicians who found it necessary to knock it down and start again. These players needed to break free of the unforgiving rules of harmony and melody. There were a select few who could create freely within the rules, but most could not. For those who had not mastered what seemed to be oppressive rules, it became attractive to simply create a new game board.

A significant musician during that period told me that when they heard the ultra-sophistication of the Miles Davis quintet of the early sixties, they couldn't really understand what was going on. When that band played a simple standard it *sounded as if they were playing free*. Even today, musicians will listen to those recordings over and over again to try to figure out how, or even if - they were playing the form. The player's desire to be that free in time and form was one of the forces driving them to play free of time and form.

Some players released themselves from the shackles of harmony. That allowed them to experiment freely with intervals and patterns, giving rise to the development of a more rhythmic, less melodic form of improvisation. One might say that something was gained and lost. Being released from chords, they were free to play all kinds of loose rhythms and patterns. If one didn't have to follow an exact bar count, one could imply polyrhythms and modulated tempos. The forms often consisted of nothing more than a visual indication to go back to the main theme. That was enough to give the piece a general shape.

Some pieces were played out of time, or in a "rubato" style. Without an exact time, the soloist could hold notes as long as they pleased. Simple out-of-time melodies often took on the aura of prayer. In taking such broad license, the musicians felt free to express themselves emotionally and without constraint. There were grandiose expressions of anger and blues that were in sync with the developments in society. The need to bypass rules and conventional wisdom was sometimes justifiable and sometimes not. But, as free music developed into a style of music, it began taking on baggage from other musical styles. The irony of free music is that once it became an established style, suddenly, musicians were trying to play it correctly. I find it ironic that people feel inhibited playing free because they are trying to be stylistically correct. Most musicians today play free music from a sense of context. Terms like "twentieth century music" or "avant garde" serve to constrict true freedom in the mind and body of the player.

In a sense, every attempt to define and recreate steals the true notion of freedom from our souls.

Lest we think that the thought police only exist in traditional contexts, I was told an amusing story about John Coltrane, during his late period, when he and his band were really playing freely with incredible energy and spirit. One night when Trane was burning magnificently, some musicians were standing by the stage. One of them, who was the "authority," was looking at Trane and shaking his head critically saying, "Trane? No, he's not *really* free." I find that hilarious!

When I was coming up in the 1970s, I attended Berklee College and eventually moved to New York City. Slowly, other musicians I had gone to school with began moving there as well. As my contacts with other musicians kept widening in concentric circles, I continued to develop sounds along with my original "Rat Pack" of friends from Berklee. I had found a place to live where we could play all night. Musicians like Paul McCandles, Joe Lovano and Ed Blackwell used to come by. Anyone could have shown up at any hour of the day or night. We had flutists, vocalists, cellists, and guitarists. Sometimes there were as many as a twelve to fifteen people there, and sometimes there was just two of us.

About three-fifths of every session consisted of free music, and two-fifths were tune based. The tunes weren't usually standards. Often they were pieces someone

had written, and the blowing had indications of what kind of improvisation should take place. We explored so many different ways of playing with each other, that we eventually developed our own language. We began to use that language as textures in through-composed pieces, just the way the free cats had ten or fifteen years before us. We had our own scene, our own group of people, our own language. In fact, music history is rich in examples of improvising musicians who developed fluidity in their language through real-time improvisation, eventually evolving that improvisational language into the root material of their compositions.

It was amazing to hear how many relationships formed by playing freely rather than playing tunes, time, and form. For example, listening to Billy Drewes, (a great saxophone player, if you don't know him), and Joe Lovano (who you probably do know), play tenors together. You really couldn't tell one from the other as they played lines that seemed to shadow each other, or, as if you were looking at one thing moving that was out of focus and moving twice. Their lines would often resolve together in wonderful ways because they were moving freely through time. When you allow yourself to go there, all sorts of wonderful accidents can happen. So often, points of resolution would be a flat-nine interval instead of an octave or unison. We became so comfortable with the flat-nine interval that it was as satisfying to us as playing in unison. This taught us that by playing freely, dissonance could become consonance. Loving the sound of random intervals infuses them with purpose.

That is another great thing about playing free is, so often, free playing creates musical ideas that become fodder for new compositions. Today, as I listen to the music of any of the musicians from that group, I can hear the fruits of our many nights jamming and experimenting in the way they play their lines, rhythms, and in the type of pieces they construct. But this kind of playing also greatly affected the way we played standards. Because most of us weren't as free in form as we were when we were playing free pieces, we had to reign in our ideas and creativity. I know that I couldn't totally let myself go like I did when we were playing free. The freedom and consciousness we enjoyed were sorely missed when playing a standard. This changed my goals for playing standards. The drive was not just to play a standard, but to be able to play *free* on the standard. This urge is commonly referred to as "stretching." That hunger to stretch the time, changes and forms is what led to free music in the first place. One can see how the desire for form creates a desire for freedom and the visa versa. The desire to stretch leads to the dual exploration of freedom and form. When one plays a tune, one wants to experience that sense of stretching. That may cause one to lose sight of the form, thereby creating a greater desire to master form. So freedom creates a greater desire for mastery of form, and playing form creates a greater desire for freedom. It's a wonderful synergy.

As an interesting aside, I must mention something a great Chassidic Rebbe was quoted as saying. He said the problem with the sixties was that people desired to have "freedom from," not "freedom to." I have never heard that whole phenomenon summarized so clearly. What that means is that people just wanted freedom from their

responsibilities and their structures. They didn't seek freedom *through* structure, which is the only enduring freedom. Freedom without structure becomes decadence, and that is certainly what happened. Similarly, one of the definitions of the word yoga is "formlessness within form." One may work on mastering extremely stringent and severe positions, but the true goal is to relax and breathe into those positions. A dedicated practitioner of yoga may feel freer in those forms than when sitting in a chair! The same is true of masters of martial arts. This was the path of the aesthetics. And in music, this is the path of the musical aesthetics, to learn a form, master it, and then become completely free within that form.

To work towards that goal, it is good to practice on two levels. On one level, practice form, time, and changes. Practice all the constraints and master them so you don't have to think about them. On the other side, play at least equal amounts of free music, so that your fantasy can develop. Then, having mastered the form, you can have an experience that's better than both, asserting your freedom over the form. This is actually what the more creative and adventurous musicians have done. They are always learning new ways to "stretch" the form further, stretch the time more and play outside the changes. Have you heard the term "play outside the changes?" Where do you think that came from? Playing outside the changes provides the conditioning necessary to play freely through *changes*. That means enjoying the clash of tones that don't seem to be in the same key.

Coming out of the sixties with vigor, the free music movement slowly dwindled in America through the seventies. The eighties became a neo-classicist period, emphasizing training, roots and historical context. There was however, a real sense of the existence of the "thought police." In the early part of that decade we heard for the first time, recordings of young players who sounded exactly like someone else. Really, some of us were stunned. We had never heard that before. Until that time, every musician's goal was to develop their own voice and to have a distinctive and recognizable style of their own. We also began hearing talk about what was and wasn't "real jazz." I began to feel that I had to be a member of the party, or at least pretend to be.

The archival concept really took root and was not a bad idea as far as the American media was concerned. There was something to be gained from the title "America's only original art form" in the corridors of government. Suddenly there were a few "experts" who we were all supposed to listen to.

This was unfortunate for someone like me, who was trying to honor and probe the same part of my own heart, mind and soul as the great musicians who came before me. The reason I was attracted to Jazz was not because I was a history buff. *I thought jazz history was still being written.*

I was so attracted to the virtuosos of the day like Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Miles Davis, Keith Jarrett, and many more. Not only were they astounding musicians by any measure, but they were philosophers and *free spirits*. Their music

was defined note by note and not stuck in convention. Maybe it was the times that I came up in, but these musicians also seemed to be on a journey towards their own inner selves and music was their vehicle. This, more than anything was what attracted me to that form of improvisation.

I became inspired and motivated by this combination of high musicianship, virtuosity, composing direction, and the inherent freedom and versatility in all those aspects. These were the guys! No matter how sophisticated their music became, you could always hear the wild and free elements in it. If the political correctness of the eighties had prevailed when I was coming up, I wouldn't have been nearly as interested. I'll bet a lot of people my age feel that way. As I said in my book *Effortless Mastery*. I didn't want to play like anybody else, I wanted to feel as free to play like myself as the great artists who came before me. This, I feel, is the real tradition of Jazz. I wouldn't have been able to abide with the thought that this music wasn't mine to make, mine to accept or reject, or mine to determine its direction.

Through the 1970s and early 1980s, in an attempt to explore sound and my own mind, I was quite involved in playing free. However, it did seem in those days that some guys just picked up an instrument and started playing. There wasn't necessarily a high premium put on formal training. Although most players were trained to some degree, it was also possible for someone who was angry enough or wearing the right clothes to mess around with a horn and get a gig shortly thereafter. In saying this, I still wouldn't dismiss the powerful expression of those players. Their sounds were very personal. Sometimes the music was wrapped in the anger and politics of the day. The music scene had become highly politicized and "ethnicized," paralleling other areas of society. When I say "ethnic," I don't mean "racial." Racial injustice has always permeated art, music and entertainment in America, but in the 1960s and throughout the 70s there was more delineation between Afro and non-Afro centric elements in jazz.

By the time the neo-classicists arrived, they were responding to how completely surreal the scene had become. There was no longer anything solid, and more importantly, there was no identity. Although I largely resented these young "experts" for inflicting themselves upon us, I eventually came to understand that there are natural cycles of human history. Each chapter in human history is a reaction to the previous chapter. This generation came along and said, "Hey man, these guys can't play. They're not trained." Another objection they had was that jazz had been fused with so many other types of music from other countries that there was no pure identity anymore. They wanted to promote the idea that there is a "real Jazz" with definite characteristics. Whatever your personal feelings about that are, at least for me, I've come to understand it in terms of action and reaction. Ultimately it was a good thing because the musicians of the nineties and beyond seem to be an amalgamation of the best intentions of both schools of thought. They have the technology to play specifically the kinds of things that the free musicians were implying. They can meaningfully play blues and bebop, jazz and various forms, but with much more creativity. In fact, most improvisers today are classically trained as well. Indeed, it is so common today to find

young musicians who swing, groove, play the heck out of changes, burn, etc. But all that can be done with a feeling that the window is open or the window is closed. For the music to be approached with imagination, the player has to spend some time on a journey through abstraction.

Now I'm coming around to my point of exactly what free music is. You may like it as a style in history or not. It may be your heart's desire to have a career as a "free music musician" or detest it bitterly. But in either case, everyone should play free music-and a lot of it. I'll explain why.

When I was learning to drive a car, my father took me to a supermarket parking lot on a Sunday morning. On Sunday the lot was empty so I could drive the car without causing any damage. He got out of the car and told me to just drive around. It was the hippest thing he could have done. I had a great time steering the car in big circles, small circles, stepping on the gas, braking, doing all the things you have to do "abstractly" and with freedom. Well, that was certainly fun, but the point of this experience really hit home when we got back on the road. I suddenly felt much more in control of the car. Being allowed to freely experiment with all the parameters of driving gave me increased driving facility instantly. Later in life, it was a lesson that I was able to apply to controlling my instrument, or being able to successfully control the elements of music.

While teaching at New York University, one of my responsibilities was to direct an ensemble. I had a group of talented musicians who were not very well trained. Trying hard to play correctly, but without feeling, and with no tone, they played tunes stiffly without listening or relating to each other. It was basically the sound of kids scuffling. I felt very uninspired showing up for this class. However, I'm not one to sit there and just watch people struggle. I'd rather find a level of playing where they can relax. One week I said, "Let's not start with these tunes, let's play a free piece." "Free piece?" they said. They weren't into it. I said, "Yeah, I want you to just listen to each other for a while and see what develops." So they began very self-consciously, each tone very inhibited. Hence the joke, trying to play free music correctly. But as they continued, the music became more fluid. At one point I turned the lights off in the room. In the darkness we became more aware of the sound. It was kind of a trippy feeling. The music became even more fluid, and soon it became really deep. They were beginning to sound as deep as anyone I'd ever heard play. Unconstrained by form, which they had not mastered yet, they were able to focus on the deeper spirit of what they were doing, opening their ears to each other's playing, rather than their own. They were now able to feel a connection to their instruments and to each other. It was really quite beautiful, and it went on for a long time. The longer I let it go, the more profound the music became. Not only did the music become profound, they became more profound. They became more aware of the auspicious nature of what they were doing. In other words, their consciousness raised beyond the music. And as their consciousness raised, the music got deeper and deeper. It never would have happened if we had decided to play "Have You Met Miss Jones." It could only have happened

because I said, "Play free." When they finished, I turned on the lights. It was if I was looking at a different group of human beings. They were the same human beings, but on a new level of consciousness. Then we called a tune. They sounded two hundred percent better than before, because they were still drenched in the nectar of playing together with freedom. Now their music had much more awareness. The bass player had a better tone and swung harder, and the drummer was more responsive to others. That was a great day. That class really energized me.

Once I was coaching an ensemble at the Lake Placid Institute, and it's fair to say that many of the participants in that ensemble couldn't improvise very well. Although they all had their experiences, none of them seemed to have a lot of experience in jazz. When they played a tune, it would go awry one way or another. People routinely got lost. At best, everyone made it through the tune but the whole experience was terribly boring. Nothing good could happen unless we could find a form that everyone could play with ease. The bass player didn't know how to walk through changes so I asked, "do you know the G Dorian scale?" He did. "I want you to play quarter notes using any note of the G Dorian scale." I said to the drummer, "Can you tap four beats to a bar and just get into that without worrying about anything else?" He said he could. I advised him not to worry about fills, to just lay into those quarter notes. I said to the bass player, "Please play the G Dorian scale, which you told me you know very well." "Play any note within the scale, and play quarter notes, but while playing, only listen to the drummer, not to yourself." I told the drummer to tap quarter notes, and only listen to the bass player. Then I said, "I'm going to count it off. Once you guys start, just keep going." There were several horn players, maybe eight or nine. I said, "All you guys, play whatever and whenever you want. Just play!" I counted it off and to help them, I played a recurring rhythm on the piano, a simple motif that I just repeated. I kept it going so that the bass player and drummer would not weaken their resolve to play the groove. Now the horns started to play, in no particular order and at no particular place. They played in G minor, but as they got into it they started to drift away from G minor. As the playing went on and on the same thing happened to them that happened to the NYU group. They started to open up and make all these textures and sounds, not by calculating what to play, but by releasing themselves into the total sound of the room. Again I had someone shut the lights off. This piece went on for almost forty-five minutes, and by the end, I swear to you that, if I had them in a studio that would have been my next record. Because what they were playing was so deep. It was the composite sound of ten souls playing uninhibitedly in the same room. The bass player and the drummer had never experienced a groove so deep. Everybody that day had an experience that they told me they would never forget. These are the gifts of playing free or playing freely on something that's well within one's capability.

Regardless of one's feeling for free music as a valid art form, I've come to understand that it can be an essential link in one's training. You're playing free-free of harmony, free of melody, free of judgment, and in fact, that's really what true free music is.

The only true free music is music that is free of needing to sound good.

One needs to have times of suspending judgement and *just play*. The ultimate irony is that even free music doesn't contain any freedom when one is trying to play it "correctly." On the other hand, I've heard bebop solos that had the ring of freedom.

Another experience I'd like to share is that of being a teacher at Gunther Schuller's summer workshop in Sandpoint, Idaho. One of the participants was a very talented player. He had a problem that many young players experience. As well as he played, and as talented as we all knew he was, he had fallen into the habit of getting down on himself no matter what he played. The feeling that he "sucked" was prevalent most of the time. One can only indulge in that fantasy for so long before it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. When I first met him, he was in a deep funk, depressed and perhaps with a few other problems as well. We talked a lot about being positive as a state of mind, and about taking responsibility for one's own consciousness. I told him that if he was going to attach an arbitrary value to all his playing that he might as well *honor everything he played*.

Since our judgements of what we hear are subjective, not objective, we could regard every note played as the most beautiful sound we've ever heard, or as "it could have been better." We could also decide that every note we play is pure garbage. It's up to us. Music has no objective meaning. It's all a projection of the mind. Once he got that message, he made the decision to project the highest value on to it and he discovered a whole new way of playing his instrument. He called me one day and told me that he had been playing tones and noticing how they vibrated back up into his nasal passages and up through the rest of his head. He had found a whole new level of resonance. It was the first time I considered the word "resonance." He really gave me something in that conversation. I realized that when you set your mind free, free to love unconditionally, every note that comes creates a resonance. When the ensemble at NYU started their free piece it was so inhibited that it didn't resonate at all. Then, as they released themselves, they began to resonate. The drums resonated. The bass resonated. The horn resonated. The piano resonated. Just as this young guy was now resonating and noticing how the sound resonates through his body. When you have become free on your instrument, and you let yourself experience all the parameters, sensually, physically and emotionally, there is resonance. Not just in a room, or on an instrument, but *throughout the universe*.

One has not really experienced the intent of free music unless one has freed oneself from self-judgement. This doesn't mean that one may never exercise judgement, but that times of absolute freedom, from within and without are also essential.

This concept also relates to being free of technical restraints. For example, if a wind player were to temporarily suspend judgement on their tone and *just connect with*

their breathing, they might be able to experience the raw sensation of playing. What does it feel like to play soft or loud? What does it feel like to scream? To whisper? What does it feel like to play in the low or high register? If vocalists were to experiment with the same dynamic, many would find the experience revelatory. Vocalizing is such an inherently intimate and personal act that the potential for emotional gestalt is so much greater. I've seen a few vocalists moved to tears while letting go in that way. *The way to discover your tone is not to worry about tone!* As you embrace your sound unconditionally, it begins to flourish. It's very similar to how a friend or loved one's personality wilts under the glare of steady criticism or how they grow and flourish when there is unconditional love. This is the practice of unconditional love, of unconditional acceptance. This is not love based on the "correctness of tone." When one makes that shift in consciousness there can be profound results on any instrument or in the human voice.

One of the most frequent compliments I get is on my piano touch. I am often asked by students what method I used to achieve that sound? What physical machinations did I practice to liberate the sound? I tell them that I subscribe to no method at all for touch or tone. What I did was program myself (brainwash, actually) to love the sensuality of pressing a key. I trained my ears to crave the next sound coming from the piano upon pressing those keys. I imagined that my ears were thirsty for sound the way a man wandering in the desert is thirsty for a cool glass of water. I programmed my ears and heart to welcome the sound with that kind of delicious expectation. Over the years I became so persuaded to the idea of reveling in this sound and touch that the tone simply revealed that state in me. Really, I can't say this emphatically enough, If you presume great enjoyment of the touch, *if you presume the unconditional divinity of the sound, divine touch and tone is the natural result.*

So let's validate-whether or not we agree with free music as a style of music-let's appreciate how it helps to raise a musician's awareness. Most musicians have never gotten in touch with themselves because from day one it's been about playing music correctly. Most of us have had teachers who were focusing on the right notes. How many of us had teachers who focused on the *feel* of playing? How rare is it to find teachers who show us how to touch the instrument in the most natural way? Beginning from the first lesson, the natural relationship between one's body and the instrument has already been lost.

Whether it's the sensual feeling of pressing piano keys, a reed vibrating on the lips, or the feeling of picking a string, these simple connections are usually never found on one's musical journey. Playing an instrument should feel as comfortable as the warm sensation of taking a bath. Instead, most musicians are so unaware of this that it's like trying to unravel a deep mystery. They feel doomed to only have such experiences for seconds at a time. When one has formed such relationships, one becomes aware of the body as being the *instrument that plays the instrument.*

Free music, or playing freely is a way to connect with those sensations. Similarly, enjoying the sensation of wrong notes on a chord or playing in two unrelated keys or two unrelated tempos can give one a unique awareness of those elements. By violating parameters you come to know those parameters sensually, emotionally, and even spiritually.

This CD affords one the opportunity to experiment with all the parameters of music and their own emotions. Many musicians are not fortunate enough to have a group of friends who are tenaciously playing together, so the play along has a very practical purpose.

My trio and I have laid down different textures. There are long tone pieces, short note pieces, pieces with many notes, pieces with few notes, free pieces with sounds from the instrument (rather than notes from the instrument), pieces that are in time but have no changes and pieces with suggested harmonies that are not in time. The following is a brief description of each piece with suggestions on what to play. Where it is helpful to do so, I give a few brief musical examples. Each piece is a texture, a chance for you to interact in ways I might suggest and in ways that I've never thought of. It's a chance for you to be really creative, *really free*.

Allow yourself to make a joyous sound! In other words, allow yourself to let go. In this world, the highest wisdom is to understand that all things are made from one source. In eastern philosophies, and the particular path that I study, they say that everything is God. The world appears to have an infinite amount of objects in it, but in truth, they're all made of the same root substance.

Playing freely, we can open ourselves to this awareness. We could play one way or the opposite way and they both become the perfect way. Go with what you hear or totally against what you hear. *Both ways can be thought of as forms of worship.*

Music is not spiritual simply because it speaks of God. Nor is it worldly because it speaks of blues or lost lovers. *Music is spiritual when the light is revealed within it. All music is consonant because there is only The One.*

Use this type of playing to discover that within yourself. If you're fans of *Effortless Mastery*, look at free music as the second step. I call the second step "experiencing flight without flight patterns." What you'll gain will be priceless.

Let's recap. The purposes of free music are:

- 1) To help you recover, or in many cases, *discover* for the first time, the natural way to play your instrument.
- 2) To experience different attacks, different volumes, and different speeds of playing notes.
- 3) To develop a sensual relationship to the elements of music, rhythm, harmony and melody.
- 4) Learning what it feels like to tune into the rest of the ensemble and forget yourself, or only hear yourself in the greater context.
- 5) Enjoying an expansive feeling while playing free, you will then crave that freedom while playing in form, time and changes. That will necessitate mastering those elements on a much deeper level.
- 6) It allows you to practice ideas in an abstract way without worrying about where you are. It's like *practicing flight without flight patterns*. You emerge with a whole new desire to "stretch."
- 7) Playing all the wrong notes against the harmony, you dive into a pool of sound. Open your ears to sound in an ecstatic way.
- 8) Everything becomes personal. Everything becomes inwardly guided and the keys to true self-expression are there.

Through these recordings, through playing free, we have the luxury to adopt an enlightened stance in music. That is:

All music that comes through you is the highest music. Your music is the brightest and most brilliant music possible to be made at that moment. There are no levels of music, there is only the perfect sound.

No matter how you relate to each of these pieces, you are playing that perfect sound. Practice that awareness through interaction with these pieces.

No matter what note you play, no matter what key you're in, no matter what else is going on around you. Whether you hit the resolution together or miss it, whether you land on the unison or the flat two. Whether you blow into the horn or just tap on it. The composite sound you're hearing is the "perfect sound." Get in the middle of the sound, not just your sound. Get in the middle of the whole ensemble so that you can't distinguish your sound from the rest of the ensemble.

Again and again, just let go...

Meditate: Take a deep breath, using, he she or I, say to yourself...

I am the listener, I am the musician, I am the music, I am the composer, I am the music, I am the vibration, I am the air on which vibration travels.

Track # 1 Random Sequence Piece

The first piece is comprised of slow pitches being played in random sequence. *Expand your mind to play a series of random notes against the notes on the CD. Practice hearing everything as consonant. Don't recoil at the collision of notes. Hear them with the same equanimity of mind as you hear multiple car horns when you're on the street. Accept it with perfect stillness. Take a deep breath and let go of your responsibilities.* You may notice that the bass player is not trying to match keys with me. He plays a note and I play a note, and we just let those notes hang in suspension. *Play long tones and meditate on the sound. Don't try to pick the notes. Instead, accept the notes you play and get in the middle of the entire sound.*

Play with the understanding that there are no right notes and there are no wrong notes. Every possible note is in perfect harmony with the piece. As you play each note, become more in touch with the release of your body. Release the idea that some notes have more meaning than others. Imagine every note you play to be unison with every note in the piece. As you play the piece again and again, allow this belief to grow stronger and stronger within you.

Track # 2 Just Sound Piece

The second piece goes a step further than the first. We're not really playing well-tempered notes here. These are sounds and effects that we can create on our instrument or with anything that happens to be lying around the room. This piece is a sound texture. It allows you to abandon the well-tempered scale or any sound resembling music if you wish. You might try to play your instrument in ways that it was not meant to be played. Try using the keys on a horn without blowing. Try hitting the rim of the drum or scrape a cymbal. What kinds of sounds can you get by touching the strings of the piano rather than striking the keys? Experiment with the non-musical aspects of your instrument while playing with this improvisation. But feel free to do anything else, even play Gregorian Chant if you like. No matter how you interact, regard it as the perfect sound...

Allow your resolve to love every note increase. Become so dispassionate that you're not even playing music, you're just making sounds in the same room that the CD is playing in. Allow yourself to fall into the space. Allow yourself to settle into the natural alignment of your body, your breath, and your mind. Fall into a oneness with the sound as your body falls into oneness with the air and the mind falls into oneness with the body. As this awareness expands, feel yourself disappear, leaving only the sound, nothing but sound.

Track # 3 Short Note Piece

This is a staccato improvisation. The only parameter of this piece is that all the notes are short and they contribute to some sort of rhythmic shape. However, there's no specific time or form. You are just free to dot the piece with short notes. You might allow yourself to experience the physical sensation of staccato. Freely attempt to play counterpoint to the notes you hear in the piece. Don't try for anything too specific. Don't try to be "correct." Experiment with different attacks and volumes, or play long notes against the piece, or anything else you can think of. It gives you a chance to interact with that kind of movement.

Completely harmonize yourself with the rhythms you are hearing. Although your attacks are pointed and rhythmic, allow the body to become totally comfortable, knowing that there is no way to ruin the piece. Anywhere you drop your attacks is the right place. You can relax into that. Think of the sound of leaves rustling, of feet walking, of horses cantering. Is the rhythm of those sounds not perfect? React to the percussive flow with your own percussive flow and allow it to be as perfect as it is in nature.

Track # 4 Cascading Notes

These sounds are ascending and descending glissandi. As you interacted with long notes on track 1, with sounds on track 2 and with staccato rhythms on track 3, you might try interacting with your own glissandos. Practice long, legato cascading phrases and find the technique to do it on your instrument. Stay with that texture and allow yourself to "speak" with those glissandos. Converse with the glissandos on the CD. Or again, would you like to do the opposite? Experiment with notes very fast, but without a lot of separation between them so you can perform cascading answers to the statements you're hearing on the recording. Notice the physical sensation of playing fast legato textures. Feel how gravity aids the descending phrase. Imagine the "lighter-than-air" quality of the rising, ascending phrase. Feel it drawn upward. Put your head in the middle of the sound. Don't allow your awareness to isolate on your own playing, but float into the center of the entire sound. You'll find that your music will be infused with the power of the whole. You won't need to find strength or inspiration. It will pour through your body.

Track # 5 Harmonic Piece

Practice playing through thick harmonies without regard to key or tonality. Allow yourself to play lines and don't be afraid of their compatibility with the chords. In fact, don't hear them as chords. Hear them as sounds and hear your notes as sounds. This can be an important deprogramming process for you. On repeated plays, you'll notice that you are beginning to tune in to the harmonies without even knowing what they are. Don't try to figure it out. Just open your ears and take in the sounds and play the notes. You'll find that when you get out of the way the music organizes itself with an eerie correctness.

Please have a look at music example # 1. I transcribed most of what Johannes and I played. I did this so you could check out the elements that made up those sounds. You can see what I played and practice playing complimentary notes or scales to the chords or you could not think about the chords at all. You might find the voicings interesting to look at, but it's important for you to know that I was just playing sounds using an approximate sense of voicings. They sound so solid because I am not attempting to define them. That mindset even affects the touch, perfecting its ringing quality.

Also, these transcriptions are not perfect, particularly the bass notes. Sometimes you can hear where Johannes was trying to play the right notes. In those places he is playing in between two notes because he is not sure which one will work. There is something to be learned in these moments of searching for correctness. The music sounds tentative, *and that affirms the idea that a state of fearlessness creates a sense of order.*

Go into the space where you are nothing but ears. Let the chords resonate in your body and let that resonance pour into your instrument.

Track # 6 Free Rhythmic Groove

In this piece Ari sets up a very simple rhythm in 4/4. In fact, it's freedom can be heard in *how content he is to do play that simple pattern.* (look at music example # 2) However, more rhythmic freedom can be seen in Johannes' approach. (ex. # 2) It has a pulse. We know it's 4/4 by Ari's pattern, but look at how Johannes starts a simple melodic pattern and begins displacing it right from the start. This piece is an example of formlessness flowing in form. Ari's pattern gives the piece form. Johannes' general repetition seems to give shape and form as well. But within that he varies the placement in a spontaneous way. The freedom to vary stems in part from the fact that there is no specific amount of bars. The pattern Johannes plays gives a feeling of a pedal, or root harmony but it doesn't define a specific harmony completely. I am free to interpret his ostinato in a number of ways. Do you see that by being free within this shape, one can have a much greater range from which to create? And like track 5, the thing that makes it go is that we are more guided by rhythm than harmony. I enter with sparse comments and now we are all contributing to it in a contrapuntal way. This approach gives you freedom in every dimension. You can express a very undefined harmony and you can vary and displace your ideas without worrying about the resolutions. The common thread that gives this piece the feel of being a piece is simply that *everyone is playing the same pulse.* This piece will really help you practice a sort of "rhythmic harmony," or "harmonic rhythm." In other words, you are expressing the pulse through a selection of tones and patterns, and the notes you select are all good.

John Coltrane used to like to practice with only drummers. He and Rashid Ali practiced together, just the two of them, for many hours a day. This allowed Trane to develop a linear approach that expressed rhythms through melodic patterns. Without other tonal instruments to define the harmony, he was free to concentrate on the rhythm his notes were creating, and to play through chord progressions rhythmically. Let yourself be free over this groove texture.

Track # 7 Drone in E

This track is a spiritual journey. It's very simple. Allow yourself to slip into meditations on an E sus chord. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, go into the space (as I say in *Effortless Mastery*) and play from the place of your deepest love on the E sus chord. It could be an E major scale or the E mixolydian mode. (See example # 3) Take the time and the breath and the space that this piece allows. Blend your tones into the tones of this chord until you disappear into waves of bliss. But also remember that you can play just as spiritually or just as soulfully and from a place of love in the *wrong key* if you embrace that sound as the *new right key*.

Track # 8 Time, No Changes

This piece is in time and the rhythm walks like a jazz groove. It has no changes and no specific bar count. Much of it may seem to be in four bar phrases, but it's not intentional. Take the pulse, and let yourself swing. Relate to your notes rhythmically rather than harmonically because there's no specified harmony. This way of playing was so prevalent in the history of free playing. Ornette Coleman is one of the primary architects of the "time, no changes" concept. It allows you to create rhythmic and harmonic shapes in midair. If you fall into harmonic alignment for awhile let it happen. When you fall out, let that happen. Don't inhibit yourself in any way. Just allow yourself to *swing* effortlessly throughout this piece. That is the joy of "time, no changes." On this piece I solo quite a bit. I do this for two reasons. One, I wanted to give you an example of how this kind of playing might occur and secondly, it's a common practice for two or more soloist to be playing at the same time. Feel free to keep solo while I'm soloing and interact with me in any way you feel. Or, fortunately, you can also turn me off and just play with the bass and drums.

Track # 9 Fast Time With No Changes

This is the same concept as # 8 except at a faster tempo. The bass player is walking in an implied melodic way, but actually there are no changes. His way of relating to the time is more purely rhythmic. This is the way that many so-called "modern" soloists play. Their lines are more rhythmic than harmonic or melodic. In this way, harmony and melody give way to pure rhythm. The patterns that these players tend to use (yes, they do play extremely patternistic!) have a strong rhythmic effect. The intervals help to create syncopation as much the force of the eighth notes.

There can be a sense of key signature or no sense at all of key or harmony. Again, since there is no definite form, one may play at different speeds or hold long notes against the time. Try to play small motifs and shift them around the bar. Find out what it feels like to be windsurfing over the time. Play long spacious phrases and enjoy inner stillness while the groove is burning beneath your feet!

Track # 10 A Prayer in C Minor

This is a drone that has a much different feeling than the E sus drone. Although both chords are sus chords, the scales that are typically used are different from each other. (see example # 4)

Again, breathe deeply into this space of this timeless harmony. Play as soulful, as deep, and as much from the inner self as you can.

John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner championed this kind of sound. Sometimes it would be a preamble to a roaring groove. I called the piece a prayer because that's what this type of improvisation feels like to me. Feel free to find the deepest prayer in your own heart on C minor.

The next three pieces are a series of duets between you and each of us.

Track # 11 Unaccompanied Drums Piece

This is a common configuration in free playing. Many musicians have done this. Just tune into your relationship with the drums. Even if you're another drummer, play along with this piece.

Track # 12 Unaccompanied Bass Piece

Do the same thing with the bass as you did with the drums on track 11. And remember anything you do *works*.

Track # 13 Unaccompanied Piano Piece

I transcribed some of this piece for you to look at. (See example # 5) You might find this trickier because of the overwhelming harmonic nature of the piece. I show it to you to remind you that *those notes were free selections*. Looking at that, you can understand how a free flow becomes complex music when written down! What about all the time signatures? I was just moving where and when I wanted to. Do you think I could improvise in those meters? It's interesting to look at, but ignore them and move intuitively. That's all that is - a transcription of someone's intuitive movement.

I would suggest that you tune in on a very deep level, eliminate all distractions in your mind, and *allow your ears to find the harmony*. As with all the pieces, go with it or against it. I would also suggest playing with it many times and, if possible, *do not try to hard to fit in*. See if your instincts don't blend with the piece more and more. Even if you are not playing exact scales in correlation to the piano, let your ears arrive at a relative place and let the *two instruments blend into one*.

Remember, with every piece, and in every group you play with in your career, seek to achieve unison with everything going on around you and inside you. Attain the unison of the heart!

In summation, by playing free you can concentrate on different attacks, different strengths, different volumes, and different registers. You can focus on the sensuality of playing your instrument and the spirituality of laying on one note. You can experience the enlightenment of hearing all notes as consonant, as beautiful. You can concentrate on the resonance in your body when playing an instrument. Or you can concentrate on the organic relationship between your mind and your body. If the struggle to be a musician has contracted you mentally and physically, you can actually get back to, or discover for the first time, the most natural way that the instrument wants to be played. The boundaries are unlimited. That really is the meaning of the term "free music." And remember that free music doesn't refer to music that has no form, time or changes. It simply refers to music that is played from a state of liberation.

May your interactions with this CD help to set you free!

Track #5

Ex #1

Improvised

The musical score is presented in four systems. Each system contains a grand staff for Piano (treble and bass clefs) and a single staff for Acoustic Bass (bass clef). The music is in common time (C) and features a variety of chords and melodic lines. The first system shows a piano accompaniment with block chords and a bass line with quarter notes. The second system continues with similar piano textures and a more active bass line. The third system features more complex piano textures with some grace notes and a bass line with a long note. The fourth system concludes with a more intricate piano texture and a bass line with a melodic run.

First system of musical notation, featuring a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music includes complex chordal textures and melodic lines, with a prominent bass line in the lower register.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece. It features dense chordal textures and a melodic line in the bass clef. A handwritten annotation "Leo." is present in the middle of the system.

Third system of musical notation, showing intricate chordal structures and a melodic line in the bass clef. The notation includes various accidentals and dynamic markings.

Fourth system of musical notation, concluding the page. It features complex chordal textures and a melodic line in the bass clef, with various accidentals and dynamic markings.

First system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are grouped by a brace on the left. The top staff is in treble clef and contains complex chordal textures with many notes. The middle staff is in bass clef and contains similar complex chordal textures. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a single melodic line with notes and rests.

Second system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are grouped by a brace on the left. The top staff is in treble clef and contains complex chordal textures. The middle staff is in bass clef and contains complex chordal textures. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a single melodic line with notes and rests.

Third system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are grouped by a brace on the left. The top staff is in treble clef and contains complex chordal textures. The middle staff is in bass clef and contains complex chordal textures. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a single melodic line with notes and rests.

Fourth system of musical notation. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are grouped by a brace on the left. The top staff is in treble clef and contains complex chordal textures. The middle staff is in bass clef and contains complex chordal textures. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a single melodic line with notes and rests.

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef, containing complex chordal textures with many sharps and naturals. The lower staff is a single bass clef staff with a few notes, mostly rests, and some tied notes from the upper staff.

The second system of the musical score also consists of two staves. The upper staff is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef, featuring more complex chordal textures and some melodic lines. The lower staff is a single bass clef staff with a few notes, mostly rests, and some tied notes from the upper staff.

Track #6

Ex #2

Improvised

The musical score is arranged in four systems, each containing three staves. The top staff is labeled 'Piano' and uses a treble clef. The middle staff is labeled 'Bass' and uses a bass clef. The bottom staff is labeled 'Drums' and uses a bass clef. The time signature is common time (C), which is equivalent to 3/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The Piano part consists of rests in the first three systems and some chords in the fourth system. The Bass part features a melodic line with frequent accidentals (sharps and naturals). The Drums part maintains a steady eighth-note pattern throughout.

Ex #3

Track #7 Drone in E

Improvised

Indian Style Drone

Piano

Optional Repeat

Over this ostinato you can use:

E Mixolydian

E Major Scale

Track #10

C Minor Drone

Ex #4

Improvised

Afro-American style drone

Piano

Over this pedal chord you can use:

C- Ascending Melodic Minor

C Minor Dorian

C Minor Aeolian

Ex #5

Track #13 Solo Piano

Improvised

Piano

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems of two staves each. The first system is in C major, 4/4 time, with a 'Ped.' marking. The second system is in B-flat major, 4/4 time, with triplets and a 'Ped.' marking. The third system is in 3/8 time, with a 'Ped.' marking and a '5' marking. The fourth system is in 3/8 time, with a '5' marking. The fifth system is in 3/8 time, with a '5' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

First system of a musical score, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The piece begins with a series of eighth-note chords in the right hand and a bass line of eighth notes in the left hand. The system concludes with a 9/16 time signature change.

Second system of the musical score. It continues with the same key signature and 2/4 time signature. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The system ends with a 3/16 time signature change.

Third system of the musical score. The right hand has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand continues with a bass line. The system concludes with a 6/8 time signature change.

Fourth system of the musical score. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The left hand has a bass line with eighth notes. The system ends with a 2/4 time signature change.

Fifth system of the musical score. The right hand has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand continues with a bass line. The system concludes with a common time (C) signature change.

Kenny Werner Biography

Born November 19, 1951 in Brooklyn, Kenny Werner's introduction to music and performing came at the age of four when he joined a children's song and dance group. At the age of eleven, he recorded a single with a fifteen-piece orchestra and appeared on television playing stride piano. His love of the classics was nurtured when, while still in high school, he attended the Manhattan School of Music, where he became a concert piano major upon completion of his high school studies. Werner's emotional need to improvise began to take him out of the classical world, and into the world of jazz. So, in 1970, he transferred to the Berklee School of Music. There he began to find his creative direction.

In 1977, Werner recorded an LP that featured piano solos of the music of Bix Beiderbecke, Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and George Gershwin. Soon thereafter, Werner found himself recording with the great Charles Mingus on 'Something Like a Bird'. In 1981, Werner recorded his own solo album of original compositions entitled 'Beyond the Forest of Mirkwood'. The following year, Werner recorded the sounds heard coming from his Brooklyn-based studio, a hotbed of late-night jam sessions, and titled the record after his address, '298 Bridge Street'.

In the early '80s Kenny Werner toured extensively with Archie Shepp. In 1984 he joined the Mel Lewis Orchestra. His appearances also included solo concerts in Europe and New York City and duos with such notables as Rufus Reid, Ray Drummond and Jaki Byard. Werner received performance grants from the National Endowment for the Arts in both 1985 and 1987, allowing him the unique opportunity to present his own music in a concert hall setting at Symphony Space in New York. He was also commissioned to compose and conduct a memorial piece for Duke Ellington at St. John of the Divine Church in New York. The Manhattan School of Music's Stage Band and the New York City Choir performed the work. Werner has also written compositions for the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra, now known as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. In 1981, he began to play with bassist Ratzon Harris and drummer Tom Rainey. They weren't to make their first CD until 1988 for Sunnyside records entitled, Ken Werner, 'Introducing The Trio'. He would do another trio album for Sunnyside and a beautiful quintet album featuring Randy Brecker, Joe Lovano, and Eddie Gomez entitled 'Uncovered Heart.' The trio with Harris and Rainey was an association that would last 14 years.

In the fall of 1987, Kenny Werner joined the faculty of the New School's jazz department in New York City, where he taught jazz harmony and theory for six years. He has given clinics at many universities in the United States and abroad, and teaches privately as well. Out of his teaching experience Werner had published articles in music and health magazines. It was the beginning of good things to come for him as an educator. Currently, he is the artist-in-residence at New York University and the artistic director for the Banff Center Jazz Program for 1999-2000.

In over a quarter century of performing, Werner has played with such jazz greats as Bob Brookmeyer, Ron Carter, Joe Williams, Chico Freeman, Sonny Fortune, Peter Erskine, John Abercrombie, Jackie Paris, Bobby McFerrin, Lee Konitz, Billy Hart, Marian McPartland, Joe Henderson, Tom Harrell, Gunther Schuller, Ed Blackwell, Paul Motian, John Scofield, Jack DeJohnette, Eddie Gomez, Dave Holland, Charlie Haden, and Toots Thielemans. He continues to share a long and creative relationship with good friend Joe Lovano, and can be heard on several of Lovano's albums.

In 1993 he was awarded another grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to present a concert in tribute to Mel Lewis, featuring some of Werner's original compositions. That same year he also won the Distinguished Artist Award for Composition from the New

Jersey Council of the Arts for a piece entitled 'Kandinsky' from his CD 'Paintings'. And, in 1995, recognizing a talent in composition that rivals Werner's phenomenal talents as a pianist, the NEA awarded Werner yet another grant, this one for the purpose of composing a piano concerto dedicated to Duke Ellington, performed in February 1996 by the Cologne Radio Orchestra. The early '90s also found Werner making his first appearance on the Concord Jazz label with his 'Maybeck Recital Hall Series' solo piano recording, volume thirty-four. Released in September 1994, the recording was met with much-deserved accolades from the jazz press. UPI jazz critic Ken Frankling listed the album as one of the Top 10 Jazz Recordings of 1994. "Werner's set," wrote JazzTimes critic Fred Bouchard, "is one of the very best in a series that has quietly become the pianists' yard stick of our era."

In 1997, Werner began recording for BMG/RCA with a new trio featuring bassist Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette entitled 'A Delicate Balance'. In 1999 he released, also for BMG/RCA with another trio, featuring a longtime collaboration with Billy Hart and newer-friend, Drew Gress. The CD 'Beauty Secrets' featured different groups and different sounds that make up Werner's world, including duets with as diverse forces as Joe Lovano and Betty Buckley. Perhaps no tune on the album exemplifies Werner's renegade spirit and independent thought as their duet on Stephen Sondheim's 'Send In the Clowns'. Another notable event on this album is one composition featuring a quintet of (at the time of this writing) younger spirits. The rhythm section of Ari Hoenig on drums and Johannes Weidenmueller on bass constitute what would become his current trio. After a few years of experimenting with various combinations, he has settled on these two young and fiercely talented players (Ari Hoenig on drums and Johannes Weidenmueller on bass). "This is the first time since Rizzo and Tom that I feel I am featuring a unique relationship, not just a trio".

From the mid-nineties till this time (2002), he most often plays in duet with Toots Thielemans or performs his own music, mostly with his current trio that features Ari Hoenig on drums and Johannes Wiedenmueller on bass. Most recently he is performing his works for Jazz orchestra, orchestra, and other ensembles. He has been invited to classical festivals to play his music and write for those various ensembles. In September, 2002 his new trio CD is coming out entitled Beat Degeneration and in January 2003 a new CD of his big band compositions with the Brussels Jazz Orchestra. The title of the CD is "Naked In the Cosmos".

To that end, in January of 1997, his book, Effortless Mastery was published and has caused ripples in the music world, changing many musicians conception about how to practice, play, and listen. It is also causing those who have read the book or heard his clinics to grow spiritually and accept the true purpose of musicianship.

Kenny Werner's Trio featuring Johannes Weidenmueller & Ari Hoenig

