

have a little competition.
 MISHA: Yes, maybe...
 ANDREW: You have two unions for performers and only one for the composers, so in a sense it balances out.
 MISHA: And you get six dollars eighty cents...
 ANDREW: Sometimes much more, sometimes less. They throw the figures into a computer at Capac and certain amounts are withdrawn and cheques made to Andrew Timar and Gordon Lightfoot. Of course pop stars subsidize Canadian concert hall performances of "serious" music through the formers' airplay...
 MISHA: That's the same in Holland...
 ANDREW: Which is fair enough, but the roles we play are very fuzzy, and that's because of the state of copyright legislation.
 MISHA: The law is also very complicated in Holland. At this moment I am a member of the board of the people who run the authors' rights organization BIMA and...I don't know...
 ANDREW: (laughing)...the computer knows?
 MISHA: The people who are actually doing the job--they know of course, but it is so complicated that lawyers have to explain it and I still don't understand.
 ANDREW: I don't understand why it should be so mysterious, although it has to do with money and money is a very mysterious substance.
 MISHA: That's right...good point.
 ANDREW: Though I should say that in Canada, Capac at least has gone as far as licensing and paying for certain non-published and even improvised musics (at a reduced rate of course).
 MISHA: Unfortunately not every country has such an enlightened policy. In 1964 I made a record with Eric Dolphy and I got 250 guilders from Phillips and that was all. No rights.
 ANDREW: Did you sign a contract?
 MISHA: Yes I did, as a matter of fact. Everybody did and it was to be a limited memorial record, but (laughing)

It was a tuesday, regular CCMC night at the Music Gallery, when Misha Mengelberg walked in. It was an October evening and I had come to meet him for the first time. He wore a wrinkled brown leather jacket and stooped slightly. A cigarette was hanging from his mouth and he spoke correct, good English with a soothing helping of vocal humms...Yes, he was the composer/improviser from Holland who was artist-in-residence at the Music Gallery for the whole month; I knew that. What I didn't, was that he had fondness for the game Go. He had found out that the Chinese groups in town playing the game didn't allow Westerners--that couldn't happen in Holland said Misha. He was amused. Or rather, I was and suggested he look westward--to Japan. He introduced himself to the person answering the phone at the Japanese Buddhist Temple as Misha Mengelberg of Holland and wanted to get in on a game. He took down the time and place. That was our first meeting. We had three others during his stay and two of those we spent in lengthy interview. I recorded approximately two and a half hours worth of talk. I never did find out if he got in a decent game of chess or Go.

--A.T.

they got hundreds of thousands of copies in the U.S. There is a composition on it that I wrote, but since it was not published in the United States, I never got any financial benefits from that.
 ANDREW: Isn't taping it and sending it to the Library of Congress a form of publishing?
 MISHA: No, you have to have it edited and written out.
 ANDREW: Well, you can send it to yourself then, that's legal.
 MISHA: Send it to yourself--how do you do that?
 ANDREW: Mail the score to your address and never open it. It's legally registered through the postmark.
 MISHA: What happens then?
 ANDREW: If there's any dispute, then it's a legal document of your authorship before the postmarked date.
 MISHA: Shhh...oh well...
 ANDREW: Maybe you should send yourself some music... (laughs).
 MISHA: ...in the next five minutes. (laugh). Phillips sold the master tape to some American enterprise...
 ANDREW: and there are bootlegs?
 MISHA: Oh yes.
 ANDREW: and you never got any...
 MISHA: never.
 ANDREW: not one guilder...
 MISHA: that's right. It was one of the reasons why we

started the *instant composers pool* I would say; a record company in which we were in control of business and not some fucking company...
 ANDREW:...Did the performance rights organization stick up for you?
 MISHA: They said that there were particular difficulties with the U.S....
 ANDREW: and that was that, (rubs hands together, imitation of washing).
 MISHA: Exactly.
 ANDREW: Had you received your money from that record, you could have hired a lawyer to protect your rights...
 MISHA: Yes, ha, ha...that's right...ha, ha...I probably could have made a lot of money from that record, but it would have probably been too early. I was still at the Conservatory then...
 ANDREW: I guess that opportunity of selling a record in the hundreds of thousands doesn't present itself too often to an improvising (jazz) artist.
 MISHA: No that's true, yet you cannot live on making one record.
 ANDREW: Pop music where a record goes triple platinum before anybody even hears it is true business.
 MISHA: Business...we're not into that anyhow.
 ANDREW: But that's by default, no? It's the law of supply and demand--the demand isn't there so we're out of business.
 MISHA: No, I don't think it's like that--there is never a demand for any music. There was nobody who asked Beethoven to write.
 ANDREW: He had to create his own demand.
 MISHA: That's right! That's what done always in music. The industry is very much aware of that in manipulating peoples' tastes with their controlled pop music. They make the money. If they tried to popularize your music they would not make as much money as they do off of those seamy guitar players who hardly own the equipment they use. The players are told to play this or that.
 ANDREW: Those sort of musicians of course make money for the record industry.
 MISHA: That's right, plus the authors who are dead more than fifty years--you don't have to pay for their performance rights.
 ANDREW: Yet you get the benefit of their work--it's a beautiful arrangement.
 MISHA: Not bad.
 ANDREW: I read that in the past there were publishers who were interested in developing talent of composers, and I'm not simply referring to the popular streams, but to composers working with classical ensembles and the concert stage.
 MISHA: There are always idealists...It's like the art galleries which buy work from unknowns and turn them into a known quantity--money.
 ANDREW: It's a long term proposition (to allow a composer to develop) which few these days want to wait out. More and more record companies are being run by senior accountants, money men who know (or feel) little about artistic development and values,--they look for the yearly bottom line. I think this matter comes down to the question of the intrinsic and social value (worth) of our artistic activity.
 (long pause)
 MISHA: We've been speaking all day! So we are rather tired (to John Oswald who turns up and then leaves for another recording project).
 ANDREW: John is a true improvising musician, that's all he does.
 MISHA: Oh, that's possible. What does he play?
 ANDREW: He's a saxophonist. He has a couple of records out...but you don't listen to records--
 MISHA: If possible, not. I'd rather talk to the person or another person about the music, that's more interesting. Maybe I should listen more...I want to be really informed about things. My knowledge of music should be as compact as possible. As I told you before, one has to choose between making things and listening and I choose (very much) making things...but I know you disagree on this point.
 ANDREW: Well what does an improvising musician do, does he make or listen?
 MISHA: That's a situation in which he influences somehow the process of music. You listen in order to react, to do something with what you've heard. In a way you are responsible for the whole musical result of the group that's playing.
 ANDREW: When did you get involved with improvised music?
 MISHA: In the Conservatory I *had* to go through other people's music--it's part of that education.
 ANDREW: How did you discover your own music and get involved with the community of improvisors?
 MISHA: I've been improvising all my life. I started playing the piano when I was two or three and didn't bother to play any other music than my own.
 ANDREW: Your father allowed that?
 MISHA: Yes, he did. He was kind of permissive.