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INTRODUCTION

Sezgin Boynik, Taneli Viitahuhta

In summer 1962, the 8th World Festival of Youth and Students took place in Helsinki, bringing together more than fifteen thousand people from all around the world engaged with the struggle for peace and in solidarity with global liberation movements. Openly aligning with the socialist bloc, the festival happened during the most antagonistic period of the Cold War; with the mass movements of African decolonisation, the height of military bullying between superpowers, and the Sino-Soviet split. The summer of 1962 in Helsinki was a boiling point and the condensation of the principal contradictions of the Cold War.

This publication opposes conceptual simplifications when dealing with the global political forces unfolding into cultural and artistic manifestations. These artistic manifestations were broadly present during the festival and they expressed the need for envisioning new languages and a new world. The festival happened during an international moment when politics, especially for the militant youth, meant something else than the mere representation of the party or state interests.

The best way to picture this specificity is to look at one particular event within the festival that spoils the usual Cold War narrative. Presumptions remain subscribed to the mainstream consensus that jazz played an important role in defending freedom outside of Western liberal capitalism, and that jazz musicians were instruments in the United States policy of cultural containment. In this book we are uncovering one extraordinary act of black free jazz musicians performing at the festival: Archie Shepp and Bill Dixon, two leading avant-garde musicians from the United States.

The performance of Shepp–Dixon Quartet distorts the whole ideological construct of the international political mandate of jazz music, by openly aligning with the communist left. By presenting this free jazz act as a singular manifestation, we are unleashing the potential of the musical declaration that shatters this narrative of Cold War cultural politics.

With various contributions and archival materials, our aim is to present this act as a distortion of how we think about art in relation to global politics, and to actualise this moment within the current debates involving the question of race, international conjuncture, the social mandate of avant-garde art forms, and the importance of artistic autonomy against the hard currency of the state and capitalist machinations.

Departing from an art project, this publication distantiates from the dry and lazy academic practice of non-partiality regarding the pressing political questions. Initially we became aware of this history through an artistic project realised by Ahmed Al-Nawas, Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur and Minna Henriksson in 2015. Dealing with the silenced Youth Festival in Helsinki in 1962, the project presented the event as an important gathering of global decolonisation movements. During their research at the People's Archive they came across an interview with activist and journalist Pekka Saarnio, presented here as one of the voices of thousands of youth participants whose life was changed by the festival. Published for the first time in English together with Henriksson's annotations, the interview gives a picture of the collective spirit of the festival.

The book opens with Jeff Schwartz's informative text about the background of Shepp and Dixon's preparations in New York before travelling to Helsinki. Contrary to the common assumption, Schwartz discloses important materials pointing at the strong organisational affiliations with the Communist Party of the United States. This follows up with Taneli Viitahuhta's text concentrating on the conjuncture of concerts tracing the particular formation of official national discourse on jazz in Finland. By departing from the Shepp—Dixon act, Viitahuhta exposes the oppositional strength of free jazz excluded from national construction. Further, he delineates some broader conceptual merits of this music's strength.

To picture these dialectics we are reproducing an English translation of a few crucial examples from Finnish musical journals of the time that were central to this problematic point of view. Apart from this, we are also reprinting a few significant accounts of participants to the 1962 festival, including recollections by Perry Robinson, Angela Davis, Johan von Bonsdorff, and the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

We are proud to publish an interview with Shepp made this summer in Finland. With a telling title, "Black Music Survived not Because but In Spite of Capitalism", Shepp reminisces about the importance of the 1962 Helsinki festival for his musical and political formation, and draws some broader philosophical conclusions from this engagement. To support this philosophical aspect of Shepp's music and politics we are presenting three hard-to-find texts written by him. Two texts are from *DownBeat* magazine, often quoted but seldom read, which caused a stir when they were first published in

the mid-sixties. We are also reprinting a paper by Shepp presented at the 1977 conference organised by Työväenmusiikki-Instituutti (Institute of Worker's Music) in Helsinki.

This is followed up by Sezgin Boynik's text discussing the politics of free jazz from the perspective of the concrete historical determinants involving black militant organisations in the United States. By focusing on the political and artistic trajectory of Shepp, himself a member of a few of these organisation, the text is addressing the current discussions involving questions around racial capitalism, international forms of black struggles, and the role of avant-garde music in all of these.

With this book, we are giving a voice to a different sixties unburdened by Cold War ideology based on aggressive administration and bullying politics. By making a case for the act of free jazz musicians performing in the socialist festival, we intend to distort the liberal picture of the sixties. The testimonies we are reproducing and the concepts we are developing are evidence of the collective spirit of true international solidarity. What happened massively on the global conjuncture was happening locally on a smaller scale in Helsinki: the festival dedicated to peace was opposed with the counter-festival, dubbed as Young America Presents, secretly financed by the CIA as well as local conservative and anti-communist political actors.

The 1962 festival was a political event that divided the nation into two; on the one side there was the enthusiastic collective spirit of the global youth celebrating decolonisation and freedom, and on the other side there was the conservative right-wing paranoia and angst of the Cold War institutions. Helsinki, in summer 1962, became a stage for this confrontation, which as every political event should be measured only with its concrete effects. The effects of the festival itself were immense; it opened up the perspective of the most progressive social and political platforms in Finland, including anti-war activism, leftist feminism, anti-racism, and third world solidarity movements. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that 1962 was the year that still defines the contemporary in Finland, both socially and artistically. Much as the 1962 festival shapes the progressive tendency in recent Finnish history, and the opposite is true for the counter-festival, which promoted the conservative closure within the art institutions and maintained the status quo of a reactionary bourgeois class. The effect of this reaction can be seen, still today, in the cultural pages of *Helsingin Sanomat*, in the exhibition program of Ateneum National Gallery, as well as in the history of Pori Jazz

Festival. The telling anecdote of this artistic recapitulation is a fact that when interviewing Shepp in July 2019 at the Pori Jazz Festival, the main spotlight was reserved for a mainstream concert of right-wing psychobilly act of Stray Cats.

Refusing to capitulate to this depressing outcome of the conservative right-wing culture, we are intending to present the Helsinki Youth Festival and the act of Shepp—Dixon Quartet as an event introducing a standard into artistic experimentation and political engagement.