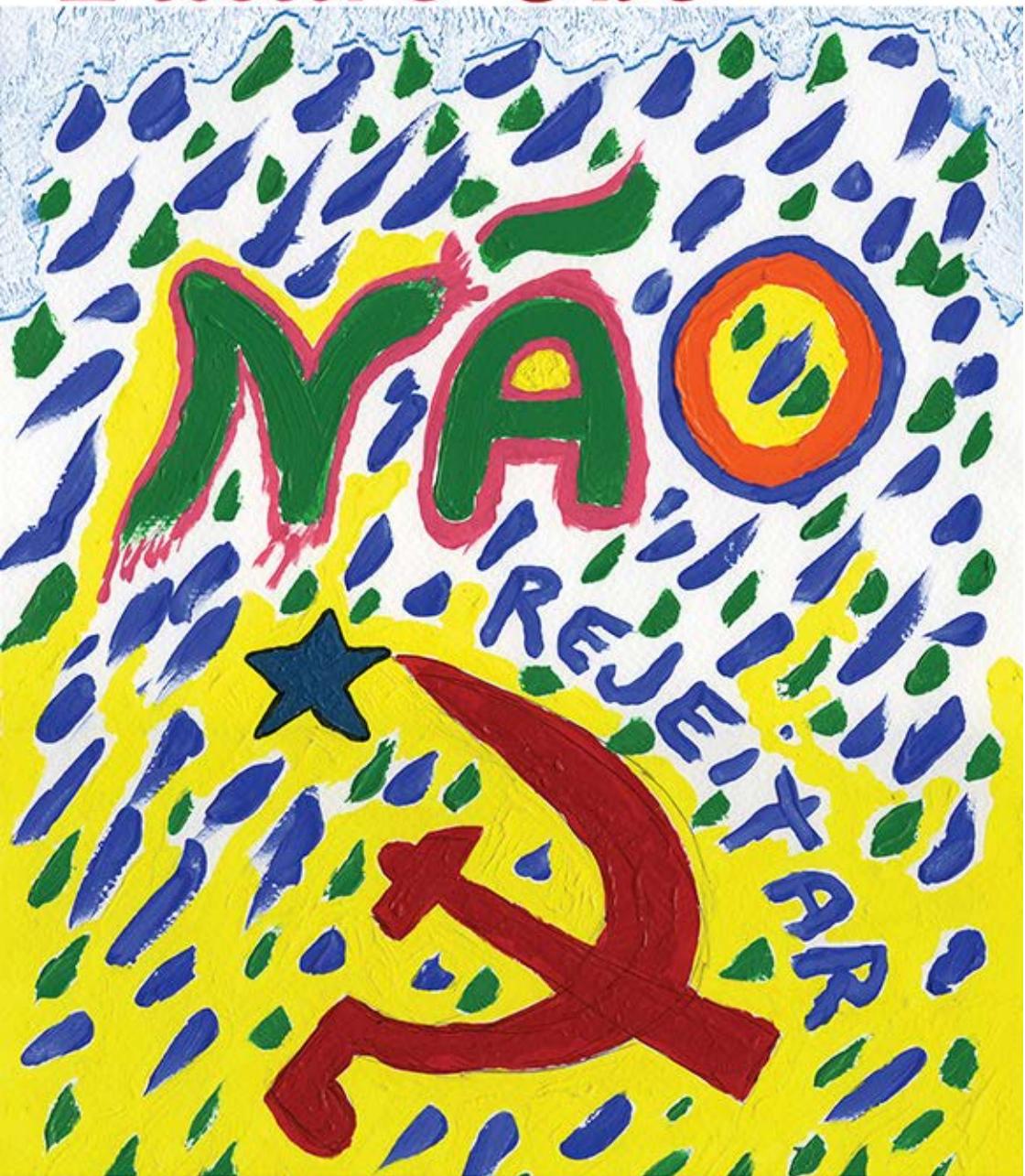


Future Che



John Gruntfest

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Future Che brings together, for the first time, the art, poetry and music of legendary free jazz saxophonist and composer John Gruntfest. Drawing on a critical theory of waves Future Che incites wave after wave of joyful insurrection.

This book-art-music object includes an introduction by Richard Gilman-Opalsky and a live recording of a performance at the San Francisco Metropolitan Art Center.

Gruntfest draws upon both western and eastern radical artistic and philosophical traditions, from Ives to Coltrane, Buddha to Marx, Goldman to Debord, Whitman to Artaud... embracing all those creative, questioning, and life affirming movements that reject the stultifying, alienating, and deadening culture of capitalist death.

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*Minor
Compositions*

FUTURE CHE

John Gruntfest

Introduction by
Richard Gilman-Opalsky

Minor Compositions 2014

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2: "The Greater Vehicle"

Joseph Sabella [drums]
and John Gruntfest [alto saxophone]

Recorded July 4, 1979
Joseph Sabella's Metropolitan Art Center, SF
Mastering by Mike Wells [www.mikewellsmastering.com]

ON THE POETRY, NOT
POEMS, OF JOHN
GRUNTFEST

RICHARD GILMAN-OPALSKY

The trouble with modern music is that it's somewhat too intellectual – the brain has [been] working a little more than the bigger muscle underneath (what you may call it, spirit, inner blast, soul?).¹ – Charles Ives

IT HAS NEVER BEEN EASY TO SPEAK OF THE HUMAN “SOUL” OR of “spirituality,” not even for those who honestly think they know what these mean. One should be suspicious of anyone who speaks of the soul or spirit with much confidence or certainty. Their confidence and certainty are more unsettling than reassuring. This is a philosophical claim, because good philosophy is never too confident or too certain, especially when it comes to metaphysical questions. Notice that the epigraph from Charles Ives ends with a question. Ives also expresses philosophical uncertainty, for he doesn't know exactly what to call that “bigger muscle”

¹ Cited in De La Fuente, Eduardo, *Twentieth Century Music and the Question of Modernity* (Routledge, 2011), 29.

beneath the brain. He puts “spirit” and “soul” together in an uncertain list, adding “inner blast” as a third possibility.

In writing about John Gruntfest’s work, I feel compelled to say something about these terms and concepts, even though I approach them with some anxiety. I would rather avoid them, but the fact is, I do not think I could convey what must be conveyed about Gruntfest’s work without some consideration of soul, spirit, inner blast.

I. SOUL

THE TWO TERMS, soul and spirit, are often not well distinguished from one another. But recently, Franco “Bifo” Berardi has made it easier to think and speak of the soul. He writes: “The soul I intend to discuss does not have much to do with the spirit. It is rather the vital breath that converts biological matter into an animated body. I want to discuss the soul in a materialistic way. What the body can do, that is its soul, as Spinoza said.”² For Berardi, the soul is necessary for life. A human corpse is still biological matter, but it is no longer animated. A corpse is a body that can do *nothing*.³ So Berardi uses the term and concept “soul” to speak of the living, acting, interacting body in motion, a body with living capabilities, a body that can be put into one kind of active use or another. Of course, we do not need metaphysics to speak of the soul, for the animated body can be explained in purely materialistic terms, in reference to functioning organs, a healthy heart, and the whole neural network of the brain. The language of science does not prefer to speak in terms of the soul.

Moreover, the term and concept of the soul is encrusted with centuries of religious moorings, and it is not easy to

2 Berardi, Franco “Bifo,” *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Semiotext(e), 2009), 21.

3 Admittedly, decomposition is *something*. But the decomposition of a corpse does not exemplify any sense of the human action I discuss here.

rescue it from that sordid history. Yet, Berardi was not the first to try. Although there are many examples, one could look at Jean-Paul Sartre's atheistic existentialism (i.e., *Being and Nothingness*) or Erich Fromm's *To Have or to Be?* as efforts to capture something more profound about being human than the bare biological facts of being alive. Whatever one calls it, the energy that animates the body matters. When a loved one dies, it is not simply their body that you miss, but the whole apparatus of their being, the animated body. It is not the body of the loved one that one *really* wants. Often, the body is a curse, because although many people want to make use of their body, it fails them through sickness, deterioration, and death. When you miss a loved one, it is not the body but the being that you long for, even though it is true that the body provided every actual interface.

Gruntfest's work relates to the soul in many ways: he does not play stationary music; he does not make stationary art, for his work always centers on movement(s), on interacting bodies in motion, and everything comes from breath. Gruntfest is a master saxophonist and poet who often performs in accompaniment with dancing bodies. In his 1979 orchestra performance, Shintaido, a Japanese art-dance-performance, took place during the music, which provided the orchestra with its subtle percussive highlights. Shintaido, created by Master Oki, is a movement based on cooperation, not competition, a theme that runs throughout all of Gruntfest's music. Berardi's definition of the soul as "the vital breath that converts biological matter into an animated body" invokes imagery of the breath necessary to make a saxophone speak and sing and scream, the breath that makes a poet shout, and the dancing bodies that Gruntfest's music – *only audible by breath* – inspires and animates.

II. WAVES OF GEIST

SPIRIT IS AN interesting term and concept, perhaps not as necessary to life as the soul. People can and do live rather dispirited everyday lives. Alienation, for example, does not deprive the body of its soul, for the body is still animated and does many things. But alienation can estrange one from one's human spirit, or as Marx called it one's "species-being."⁴ At the age of twenty-six, Marx had not yet purged his writing of its spiritual connotations, and he used Ludwig Feuerbach's term "species-being" to refer to the joyful essence of what it means to be human. Spirit refers to something that animates the body in particular ways, in ways that express the passionate commitments or desires of the person. The spiritual essence of the human person, for the young Marx, was an energetic expression of solidarity with – and a real vital connection to – *other people*. Such spirit may not be necessary for life, but it is necessary for healthy human relationships, and ideally, spirit functions as an antidote to alienation.

"Spirit" is also interesting from an etymological perspective. In German, the word "geist" can be translated as the English words "ghost," "mind," or "spirit," depending on the context. Of course, for neuropsychology and cognitive science, the rendering of "geist" must always be "mind," or its biological analog, the brain. The scientific convention would be to strip "geist" of all its other connotations, because "spirit," and certainly "ghost" are difficult to register with narrowly defined materialist empiricism. But when it comes to Gruntfest, all three meanings of "geist" are necessary.

a) Ghost

In an article by Rachel Swan, Gruntfest is described as "a mysterious figure who has haunted the

⁴ Marx, Karl, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Prometheus Books, 1988), see especially the fourth part on "estranged labor."

San Francisco Bay Area free jazz and experimental music scene for decades.”⁵ Gruntfest has indeed haunted the Bay Area music scene, but more than that, he haunts the false, forged history of creative and experimental music in the US and around the world. If ever a real history were written about creative music in the US, a history motivated by the aspirations of Howard Zinn’s history – to put back the content that the “official” stories cut out – at least one full chapter would be dedicated to the unprecedented contributions of John Gruntfest.

From a musical perspective, Gruntfest combines vocalizations that today could be said to have prefigured a post-punk aesthetic with improvised music, jazz, radical theater, and experimental, modern classical music. On his 1977 double LP set, *Live at Pangaea*, 1 & 2, Gruntfest reads and yells poetic verses that traverse a terrain of social criticism, calling out for various forms of revolt and diagnosing the affectations of the mid-to-late 1970s, the frustrated radicalism of the 1960s, disillusioned revolutionaries, yet all in the form of a defiant “art-challenge.” In Italy, 1977 was also a critical year for the Autonomia movement, which finally brought its incompatibility with the communist party, and with all “official” organizations of the Left, to a total breaking point. The Autonomia movement took its more underground, spontaneous, insurrectionary, and creative turns from then on, and in a certain way, 1977 was a year of imaginative rebellion against the failures of all conventional approaches, even the conventional approaches of radicals. One cannot help but wonder about the cosmic missed opportunity for Gruntfest’s music to have been the soundtrack to autonomist revolt in Italy. But the two developments could only have haunted each other in imperceptible ways, as it were.

If the *Live at Pangaea* records were properly accounted for, they would have been widely available in all formats

5 Swan, Rachel, *East Bay Express*, December 2008.

for decades, widely reviewed, studied by musicians, and would have to be reconciled with the development of creative music everywhere, in much the same way as John Coltrane's 1966 record, *Ascension*. Indeed, in 1979, Henry Kuntz wrote that Gruntfest's forty-horn orchestra "was, in a sense, an *Ascension* for the seventies." This should have been the case, which is to say that Gruntfest's 1979 Free Music Festival Orchestra could have changed everything. Fortunately, Gruntfest has made the recordings of the 1979 orchestra available on a CD, making one particular haunting a bit more present. It is also true that *Live at Pangaea* was voted "Best Album of the Year" by Cadence Magazine in 1977, but even that accolade has become a haunting.

It was the 1979 Free Music Festival Orchestra, *Live at the Metropolitan Art Center*, where Gruntfest developed and demonstrated his musical theory of "waves," where everyone and no one is a soloist at once, where players and listeners alike discover that the massive sound they can collectively make is one that they had no idea they were capable of making. The musicians themselves are overtaken, in the process of the performance, by the realization that they are creating an ungovernable music, joyfully beyond anyone's control, including even the conductor/composer. Gruntfest is quite possibly the least authoritarian conductor and composer, one who seeks to create even for himself the conditions for his own surprise. This is part of the sense of "waves" in Gruntfest's music. The sound can wash over you, you can ride the sound for some time, but you cannot control it, and it can overwhelm you, drown you, soak you, like a large wave can dwarf your size, can make you feel your smallness; but with Gruntfest's waves, you always have a hand in making them, or in choosing to ride.

After the experience of the orchestra, Kuntz reflected on the prospects of making all of Gruntfest's music available one day to the public, and wrote: "They will be a

revelation.”⁶ Yet, both sadly and happily, this revelation is still forthcoming.

b) Mind

In terms of “mind,” what is striking within Gruntfest’s work is the presence of an openly articulated radical criticism. It is often thought that, for free jazz, the form is already the critique, the music itself says something immediately by way of its sound, a point Cecil Taylor has often made. This is true of free jazz in general and also of Gruntfest’s music in particular. Many of Gruntfest’s performances and recordings are wholly “instrumental.” But Gruntfest has had and continues to have more to say, which is why he has been incorporating lyrics and vocalizations for decades, why he seeks a visual intervention of some kind to accompany his musical works, why he has used dance and dancers as part of the presentation of his music dating back to the 1970s, and why you are now holding a book of texts he has written.

There is a whole “politics” to the work of Gruntfest. He has something to tell us about waves of sound, about radical democratic and anarchist music making, the subordination of the ego to a collective expression in which the individual’s autonomy is still preserved, the bodily-physicality of performance, and the metaphysical experience of the affective dimension of music.

What is the metaphysical experience of the affective dimension of music? This includes the whole diverse range of human feeling discovered in the process of playing the music, of experiencing it from outside the ensemble, experiences which are often ineffable, that cannot be reduced to any cohesive or unitary understanding through empirical research. In this way, Gruntfest has something to say

6 Kuntz, Henry, *Bells: A Newsletter of Opinion, News, and Reviews of Improvised Music*, No. 51 – No. 52, 1979.

about capitalism too, which always tries to quantify everything, to make everything quantifiable, including friendship, sex, and all cognitive activity. But capitalism cannot quantify everything, especially the affective dimensions of art, and this is something that Gruntfest understands profoundly. His writings here attest to this. I have wondered if that is what really motivates him musically, the desire to make an ungovernable and unquantifiable experience, one that eludes both authority and capital.

c] Spirit

Now we get to the third meaning of “geist,” spirit. Free jazz and creative music have long been associated with the spirit. Album titles like “Spirits Rejoice,” “Spiritual Unity,” “Heavy Spirits,” “Burning Spirits,” “Spirits Before,” as well as countless song titles, are everywhere throughout the history – and particularly the US history – of this music. In writing about Gruntfest’s music and times, Kuntz said that there was “an inherently spiritual dimension to this new music: spiritual in the broadest sense of the word, nothing to do with religion.”⁷

Gruntfest’s music is as spirited as it comes. Listen to the sessions from 1979 that accompany this text. Gruntfest’s saxophone is indeed an instrument, but not for making music as much as for channeling his passionate commitments as a person, his entire affective arsenal, his anger, his desire, all to come out of the bell of his horn. The first piece, “July 4, 1979” is no accident. In the US, the meaning of that date has been perverted and hollowed of its revolutionary content. It has come to mean a chauvinistic patriotism, a disgusting celebration of nationalism, dumb and dangerous, American exceptionalism reinforced with proud invocations of empire and military might. If only July 4 was the insurrectionary holiday it should be, it

7 Kuntz, *SF TransBay Creative Music Calendar*; February 2004.

would bring to mind postcolonial politics, antiauthoritarianism, and people might sit down to watch *The Battle of Algiers* instead of fireworks and baseball games. We need more insurrectionary holidays. When Gruntfest and Sabella play “July 4, 1979,” they bring the insurrectionary sensibility back. What I hear in Gruntfest’s music is what Peter Kropotkin called in 1880, “The Spirit of Revolt.” Can you hear that too?

Musically, Joseph Sabella was an ideal comrade for Gruntfest. The drumming on these tracks is fast, creative, and highly responsive. Sabella is capable of matching Gruntfest’s ferocity and also capable of delicate accompaniment in the more subtle passages, which can be heard on the latter piece “The Greater Vehicle.” Neither of these recordings has been widely released, except for in 1979 in cassette form in a very limited edition for friends.

John Gruntfest has played saxophone for more than fifty years. He grew up playing on the streets of New York City with such groups as The Pageant Players, The Bread and Puppet Theater, The Motherfuckers, and The Living Theater. He moved to California in 1969. He led the Ritual Band and the Free Orchestra in the seventies and eighties and the thirtieth anniversary of the Free Orchestra in 2009, The Raven Free Orchestra. Gruntfest played at the Berlin Wall when it came down in 1989. He was part of the SF punk funk scene in the 1980’s playing with The Appliances. His record label, Independent Records, was one of the first indie record producers of alternative music. He still plays, writes, and paints, because he still has something to say. And this project brings together words and music in a new way for Gruntfest.

Thinking about this project, Gruntfest writes: “My thinking at this point is that the book should be like a broadside or a manifesto. I used the Nao painting because it is current and since I am a red diaper baby I have had to try and make the hammer and sickle something of my

own... I wanted to make the hammer and sickle my own and not just a cliché. I wanted to give the finger to capitalism in our current disastrous epic. I also loved the fact that in Portugal the PCP would chain signs to light poles in the middle of busy intersections denouncing the bank bailouts, the selling off of public lands, etc. So I used their signs for the basis of Nao. I realize that for some folks the hammer and sickle is similar to the swastika of the Nazis. I wanted to get it back to the roots of solidarity and insurrection. My grandmother was sent out of Russia in 1905 at the age of fifteen because she was an agitator against the Czar and her family feared for her life... I am familiar with the problems of the communist party since I grew up in that environment and especially the problems of Stalinism and the betrayal of Spain and real change in Russia. Many of our family's friends fought in The Abraham Lincoln Brigade so I have a real feeling for internationalism and anarchism."

III. POETRY, NOT POEMS (INNER BLAST)

RAOUL VANEIGEM WROTE "poetry rarely involves poems these days. Most works of art are betrayals of poetry. How could it be otherwise, when poetry and power are irreconcilable?"⁸ Vaneigem advocated a kind of insurrectionary poetry. "I have already said that in my view no insurrection is ever fragmented in its initial impulses, that it only becomes so when the poetry of agitators and ring-leaders gives way to authoritarian leadership."⁹ Vaneigem consistently encouraged poetic forms of expressing the insurrectionary desires of everyday people. He insisted that every person has "an irreducible core of creativity."¹⁰

8 Vaneigem, Raoul, *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (Rebel Press, 2006), 201.

9 Ibid., 174.

10 Ibid., 192.

Gruntfest's work is, I think, best described as a kind of insurrectionary poetry. His orchestral work shows that he agrees with Vaneigem that every person has an irreducible core of creativity, and he has incorporated his own poetry with his music in mutant combinations since at least 1977. Vaneigem understood the importance of poetry to creative insurrectionary activity. For Vaneigem, subversion should be fun, daring, and should make us feel good doing it.

Gruntfest operates in a similar milieu. Poetry, for Vaneigem, is a form of expression that breaks rules, so upheavals are poetic because they speak to us in unconventional ways, using forms of communication that centralize human creativity and spontaneity. Poetry is, for Vaneigem, an irrepressible force. "Everywhere repressed, this poetry springs up everywhere... It plays muse to rioters, informs revolt and animates all great revolutionary carnivals for a while, until the bureaucrats consign it to the prison of hagiography."¹¹ Gruntfest's work is just such poetry as this, and in this way, we should be glad that the hagiographers have never gotten their hands on it.

But we cannot conclude without mentioning Ives' third term: "inner blast." I think inner blast refers not so much to something that animates the body or belongs to the body itself, but rather, to something inside that one feels has just got to come out. Inner blast motivates the defiance that compels one to speak truth in the teeth of power. Inner blast cures what makes us feel sick when what we really feel is all pent up, and therefore needs relief through some unruly expression. Yes, blast is unruly. Ives knew this well. And all of Gruntfest's work comes from inner blast too, something inside that's got to get out. "Everywhere repressed, this poetry springs up," and when John has something to say, he paints it, writes it, he plays it out. This small package you now hold delivers waves of inner blast.

I don't know about moments in his own personal history, but I doubt that John wants our gratitude and appreciation anymore, if he was ever after it in the first place. At the same time,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

I don't think that the status of a ghost adequately embodies and reflects the aspirations of his work. Like Kuntz, I think that John's work will be a revelation for whoever finds it. But my sense is that what John really wants is for us to join him, wherever we are, however we might like, in making poetry against repression.

FUTURE CHE

blasting cars across the bridge to sudden death
no game here
no joker
only annihilation in the modern world
once again to resurrect dead revolutionaries
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we never thought the future would come
or that capitalism would conquer the world
our eyes have remained stern
our hearts are pumping with the blood of change
the mists of morning mount each unconscious
worker
like a dying mantis
once again to revolutionize the dead
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

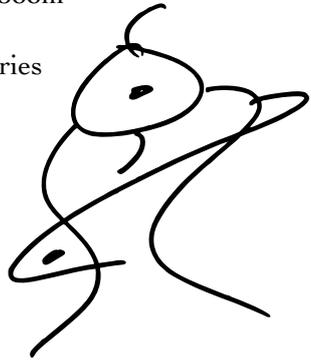
the burden that pushes you deeper into the mud
will raise you up to the sky and the condor

old dragons retire to innocuous condominiums
freezing yesterday's remains with the balm of
forgiveness
dead revolutions remain unconscious
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

reigning, raining, the rulers rein upon us
perfidious thought and egotistical bombast
cowards cower float anarchistic mythical butterflies
sting punch pow kaboom boomlay boom
the rebellion has begun
revolutionaries remain locked in dead factories
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

the bridge is out
the accelerator stuck
dreams of dead revolutionaries explode
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

they have knocked my head against the wall
and forced unconscious truths from my mouth
embraced by the ecstasy of my torturers
I remember nothing but tell all
revolutions die and dreams in and of themselves are not
revolutionary
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara



we have sold weapons to the starving masses
so they could participate in their own genocide
rulers rule
followers follow
this is the mass psychology of fascism
revolutions kill revolutionaries
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

they drove a spike through my skull
replaced my brain with a machine
I am not Jesus
nor was meant to be
am an attendant angel
devoured by misery
revolutionary tribunals try revolutionary tribunals
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we placed a bomb under the white house
and watched the beautiful red, white, and blue fireworks
we burned the flag, the bill of rights, and the constitution
we declared laws unlawful
revolutionaries burn revolutions
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we support whatever the enemy opposes
and oppose whatever the enemy supports
thus contradiction creates contradiction

and opposition creates supposition
there is nothing new under the sun
revolutions burn revolutionaries
vamamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

the only true terror is the terror
of an inactive imagination
the only true assassination is the assassination
of incomplete justice
the only true wealth is the wealth
of equitable distribution
dialectics create counterrevolutions
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

ungawa
fire power
the only true wealth is the wealth
of equitable distribution
technology destroys people
and the man's technology destroys
people, people's movements, people's dreams and imagination
counterrevolutionaries create dialectics
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we fomented revolution
we plotted, planned, killed, ate fruit
it all turned quietly into advertising
and the only image that remained was
Michael Jordan astride the backs of Nike workers
bullshit turns to revolution and revolutions turn to bullshit
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

I have been imprisoned in my house for some time now
the lights are never completely off and
 my electronic collar is actually quite comfortable
I have video monitors for company
 it is fairly quiet except for the sixty cycle hum
we are all prisoners of our own thinking
 revolution in the devolution in the revolution
 vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

our first revolutionary act will be
the destruction of all parking meters
meter people will be shot on sight
off street parking will be permitted
the gasoline engine will be outlawed
evolution is not revolution and revolutions are not
necessarily
evolutionary
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we blew up the cappuccino machine
and danced with glee as it smashed
into the hood of a Mercedes Benz
we liberated jewelry stores and the gold exchange
but found that when we settled down to dinner
we had no food
revolutionary decrees are not necessarily revolutionary
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

at the end of the tunnel
was a huge shopping mall
a fortress of materialism
surrounded by border patrol
barbed wire and electronic sensors
the multinationals had established a base
in the midst of our forward campaign
appeals to the new woman and the new man

seemed slightly unreasonable
the revolutionary cage is expanding
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

in any case the spirit remains defiant
unperturbed by the onslaught of
grey flannel shiny glowing plastic
irradiated messages

bombarding the landscape
a virtual sea of billboards
on line memorabilia

token images of joy
meaningless news flashes
perpetual lies indistinguishable from heroic myths
social revelation betrays social revolution
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we live in an era of no hope
when fear betrays analysis
and demonic frenzies inhabit
barren planets
to be lost in the higgs field
or whacked by anti-gravitons
we must propel ourselves
toward instantaneous transmission
of knowledge
how many revolutions inhabit a megaverse
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

I am drifting toward infinity
stardust and plasma
inhabit my soul
I have expanded until I implode
I have searched out other dimensions
as an alternative to this ten
how many megaverses inhabit a revolution
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

another asshole bites the dust
another asshole on the run
one fascist designer falls prey
to another's fascist design
which corporate impresario sells this story
our revolutionary transmitter is failing

get out the old stenograph, poster, leaflet
telepathy is revolutionary
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

the international corporatist state
has decriminalized war
killing is a successful occupation
we are hidden amongst the killers
hiding our blood and scars
we protect our instincts
our paranoia
just another dog sniffing
throw the dog to the revolutionary wolves
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we raided the biochem war lab

all the scientists and technicians were drunk

beakers and vials lay strewn everywhere

toxins and microorganisms ran havoc in the corridors

it seems that the joy bug had been released

we wondered if we should join the party

but then our revolutionary consciousness took

over

vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

monumental collostities

foreboding forewarnings

empires forbidding desires

the restless police on the trail of libido

rebellious excess leading to wisdom

revolutionary excess restraining impulse

vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

there is nothing called freedom in our new world

there is mind control, heart control, soul control,

sphincter control

normality is nonexistent

plebiscites unheard of

fools create guided meditations

worship of idols is a prerequisite of enlightenment

all hail the revolution better bail on this revolution

vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we infiltrated the strike zone
saw strange idols
surrounding diamonds
 ghosts filtered in and out carrying offerings
messages were relayed on giant screens
 screams were released
particles flew in space and collided
 the crowd never seemed satisfied
revolutionary solidarity is not so solid
 vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

as our propaganda campaign proceeded
we found it necessary to renounce the breakfast of champions
 we denounced gold chains,
multi finger rings, celebrity endorsements
as we met with greater resistance
 we condemned popular culture and multiculturalism
BMW's and Mercedes were confiscated
status seekers were put before the firing squad
 revolutions are as absolute as materialism
 vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

huge gallows were erected with steel girders
on top of sky scrappers
 resistance members were hung and left
floating in the breeze

days went by and the frozen carcasses
 could be seen swinging off girders and cranes
a new propaganda campaign was begun
 “we believe” was seen everywhere
 revolutionary thought is not necessarily revo-
 lutionary

in order to counteract the new mindlessness
 we decided to recruit youthful graffiti artists
 but graffiti was dead and abstract expression-
 ism had
 returned

as the new anthem to an old culture of resistance
posters and signs were laid out in the middle of the night
 with the use of our anti-infrared costumes
as the sun rose over eternal city an abstract wilderness
 was revealed

unfortunately it gave rise to many interpretations
 our original message was lost
art in the service of society is at best an advertisement
 vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

I had been abandoned by my foreword assault team
 only to stumble on the enemy's secret weapons
roller coasters, diamond cutters, and incendiary minds
 had all been assembled into a giant collage of
recruiting footage

be all that you can be never looked so good
 except that there were disturbing images of dead bod-
 ies
and starving children slowly reaching to the foreground
 in a one world coca cola type of atmosphere
even the ultimate weapon proved fruitless
 free market corporate dialectics knows no mo-
 rality
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

slowly making my way through the swamp of
discarded propaganda
I came across an old phonograph machine
 sat listening to mid twentieth century music
it appeared that freedom actually had some meaning then
 even in the midst of holocaust
minds wandered endlessly over creative landscapes
 before pop fascist culture had ensnared the
 minds of youth
thinking revolution leads to revolutionary acts
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

I slowly entered a world of neither being nor not being
where mentation ceased to exist
 I was unable to discriminate thinking from not thinking
slowly I felt a greater difficulty breathing

suddenly there was an explosion of breath
it seemed as if I had stepped out into multi dimensional space
revolutionary thought is neither revolutionary
nor not revolutionary
vamamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

*I leaned back and let the wind blow through
the spaces which were my ears*

my eyes became invisible and began to glow
I experienced a grandiose feeling of wellbeing
and the war around me seemed to recede into nothingness
my feet stepped gingerly through the piles of molten
meditations
the remains of a psychic war from the 22nd century
spinning free of irradiated thought I jumped
and in an instant my brain seeped through whatever holes
remained
revolutionary meditations are filled with empty space
vamamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we passed through the embittered zone
watching the parade of useless ostentatious wealth
headless beings ennobled heartlessness
unfulfilled memories and dutiful complicities
spikes were driven into nervous systems
bodies dissociated

minds disconnected from being
spirit turned into product
when the going gets tough revolutionaries turn pro
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

*I left my body in the basement of an old
department store*

knowing that it would not be recognized
amongst the discounted items of discarded centuries
I wandered into the enemy's interzone where secret messages
were bandied about
mind control chemicals filtered amongst the paraphernalia
of thought
and the theatre of the absurd projected images
of Freudian tortures
on the psyches of the uncontrolled
the next revolution will blow your mind
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we pocketed ourselves in emaciated brains
and thought thoughts for ourselves
there was no individual
no right no wrong
only a collective gasp of unreality
visions blurred into video commercials
spoken words echoed in hallucinogenic canyons
babbling reminders polite innuendo

revolutionary fusion will enunciate politics and manners
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

naked eyeballs rolled down the street kicking and screaming
delusionary thought was wrapped around lost consciousness
blind rappers replaced street signs and directional lights
there was a pedestrian frenzy on lost streets and alleyways
feet remained implanted replacing trees
for a frozen moment reality split
there was no coming no going
post revolutionary dada infusion of neo plastic death
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

there was a momentary and instantaneous change
from one state of being to another
energy and matter self converted
mind and anti-mind reconstituted original thought
thesis and antithesis were discriminations in mind only
and mind only was a manifestation of no thing
neither being nor not being
neither breathing nor not breathing
neither mind nor not mind
revolution nor not revolution
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

we entered the evolutionary data base
and inserted an antediluvian virus

we had determined that post modernism,
post capitalism, post dadaism, post avant-gardism, post-con-
sumerism had gone too far
recidivism genes had to be re-engineered
the program itself had outlived its usefulness
the difficulty lay in the fact that futurism
and science fiction were overtaking evolution
and creationism was writing all the jokes
post revolutionary conditions create pre revolutionary
problems

vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

*I elaborated being from the revolution's hidden
transmitter*

while facing enemy anti-entity propaganda
odors, teeth, skin, hair, digestion were all problems
of galactic existential proportions
I sent out invitations for ontogenetic transformation
while posting koans on the intermind
sweeping clean all reflected images
an immediate empty victory was assured
transmitting revolutions requires transmittens

vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

flushed with an ego surge of vanquisher
we sent out inebriated mindfields
determined that unconscious populations

would succumb to our superior message
 subliminally interjected anti-materialist propaganda
set resonating strings vibrating along
erotic meridians of polymorphous perversity
erotic or despotic revolutions remain caressless
 vamamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

the enemy responded
by making holographic cinema admission free
advertisements became currency
all news was banned
only bill boards and pop ups remained
if you ever thought change was possible think again
 vamamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

an open free market was declared
everything was for sale
 men, women, children, body parts, endangered species,
living animal parts, compact nuclear weapons,
genitals, post mortems, dispensations, governments,
 sporting events, enlightenment, medications,
philosophical dissertations, medical degrees, mindlessness,
mindfulness, comedy, tragedy, revolution, counterrevolution,
 oxygen, toxic waste, indigenous tribes, gambling re-
 sorts,
ecological vacations, solar powered dreams,
sleep deprivation, starving masses, hysterical princesses,

race, multiculturalism, plutocratic pandemonium,
matriarchal promiscuity, patriarchal promiscuity,
unfulfilled lives, demented geniuses,
interplanetary rendezvous, sanctified mediums,
ancestor worship, totemism, declining industrial cities,
window displays, inflation proof bonds, blonde bombs,
cryogenic cavities, endless shops of useless chatkas,
“everything is for sale now and forever”
if the revolution fails
we will turn a profit on its memorabilia
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

phoneywood had succumbed to reality pageants
invoking great spectacles of roman times
hiding the beauty of inner truth
with false images of superficial histrionics
in a maze of beauty stores, image salons, aristocratic seminars
post industrial thinking was revamped, retooled, reeducated
the sine qua non of being was encountering oneself in
a mirror
if the revolution is to succeed
we must counter the image of the counter image
vamos la fiesta de Che Guevara

I sought refuge in flower fields

needing a temporary respite from materialism's final assault
the pollinators had returned dropping seeds like dead fish
walking bones sprung from earth dancing savagely
in empty sun
small gardens and pagodas remained inviolate
even in the mists of disillusionment one must take a breath
I become the revolutionary Bodhisattva
vamano la fiesta de Che Guevara

FUTURE CHE 2

now is the time to shut the page
before words and propaganda eat into your brain
now we begin for real
revolutionary roller coasters
situations critical
states of emergencies
signs of disease decay
time begins again
“none for all, all for me”
vamanos

master race had returned eating children
bloodless virgins banana daiquiris
“worth is blood and blood is pure”
topped ten incarnations popular bullshit
“your flesh is ours and we will consume your flesh”
Chinese mongrels incarnate dead leadership
white beautiful mansions filled with magnolia scent
massive marches requiems blasted over lawns



hidden howling basements
screw the leadership of state
pick off your own flesh
prepare to rebel
“none for all, all for us”
vamanos

only in resistance is there power
whether thought fact explosions
many mamas request newborn tenderness
fill the penal slot with rectitude
regret nothing forget nothing
psychotropic tumultuousness
no repentance no humiliation
only in resist tense is there power
“none for all, all is mine”
vamanos

we kill the self that is
we kill the self that is not
we will the self that is
we will the self that is not
we will not the self that is
we will not the self that is not
“none for all, all is not”
vamanos

the drones had become completely apathetic
there was no resistance, no will to resistance
 collective collapse of the super ego
replaced by computer driven ethics
 factstatisticsbottomlineprofitability
garagesalemorality
 nondescriptmobility
“none for all, all was theirs”
 vamanos

slammed into the wall and stopped
 so the brain no longer functioned
fluid anachronism destroys modern inconvenience
 betting tables laid out next to all night news-
 stands
prototypical Confucian schisms attacking stasis
 consolidation
state is nothing and states of being are nothing
nowhere to go nowhere to hoe
fuck the state and on with life
“none for all, all is ours”
 vamanos

institutional failure is assured
monetary collapse a necessity
 hope and humor make travesty of modern scurry busi-
 ness haze

skeletons spewing shares over glass metallic towers
lost demon landscapes imprinted on genetically
engineered minds
the way to reality littered with discarded advertisements
mental effluvia studied as newfound sexual perversion
endless lines of naked feet
fingers dancing across meaningless keyboards
why not destroy the order that is
fermenting lies reveal the new economic disorder
mouth scream to control
planes disappearing off radar screens
civilisation and its discontents

vamanos

we burned the warehouses of hope
feasted on chocolate Easter bunnies
consumerism had spent itself out
some sort of return to spiritual normality seemed assured
global warming is not the same as a warm heart
“all is nothing, we are not”

vamanos

genetic rehabilitation was impossible
after all the failed mutant cloning and misguided
genetic engineering
genetic authorities require exact symmetrical alignment
demanding elimination of all unfit, misfitted reproducers

so we hid and flaunted authority with our promiscuities
knowing that authoritarian gene pools are not adaptable
“in the beginning was the word, and the word was nothing”
spectral outfits cannot prevent the recurrence of bad
overproduced style
stupidity is no excuse for a belief in god

vamanos

BIOGRAPHY

JOHN GRUNTFEST HAS PLAYED SAXOPHONE FOR MORE THAN fifty years. He studied with Charles Arlington in Paterson, New Jersey and played in the Paterson All City Band. Gruntfest has been experimenting and creating in multiple mediums since the sixties. He played music and did radical theatre on the streets of New York with such groups as The Pageant Players, The Motherfuckers, Bread and Puppet Theatre, and The Living Theatre. He graduated from Rutgers University in 1968 and moved to California in 1969.

He led the Ritual Band and the Free Orchestra in the seventies and eighties and the thirtieth anniversary of the Free Orchestra in 2009, The Raven Free Orchestra. His first albums, *Live at Pangea 1 & 2*, were voted best improvised albums of the year by *Cadence Magazine* in 1977. John played at the Berlin Wall when it came down in 1989. Gruntfest was part of the SF punk funk scene in the 80's playing with The Appliances and touring with Indoor Live, Tuxedo Moon, and Snakefinger.

His record label, Independent Records, was one of the first indie record producers of alternative music. He is one of the foremost proponents of improvised and experimental music in the San Francisco alternative music scene.

In 2009 he celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of The Free Orchestra with The Raven Free Orchestra (ravenfreeorchestra.com). Gruntfest and his partner, Megan Bierman (meganbierman.com), created The Greatest Little Big Band in the History of the Megaverse from 2000 to 2010, and The Raven Big Band Buddha Mind Ensemble for the Improvisation Summit of Portland in 2012. He has worked with Greg Goodman for over thirty years and appears regularly at Woody Woodman's Finger Palace.

He resides in Alameda, California where he plays, writes, paints, gardens, and cooks. He retired from the veterinary business in 2007 after a successful 25 year career as a manager of veterinary clinics. He has studied homeopathy and helped introduce alternative medicine into the veterinary field. He has three daughters and with his partner Megan ten grandchildren.

His work and Megan's can be heard and viewed at the websites:

ravenfreeorchestra.com

meganbierman.com